

**IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON POLITICAL AND
SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA AND THE
POLICY RESPONSE BY THE GOVERNMENT**

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ABSTRACT: Obviously the outbreak of COVID-19 crisis has caused unexpected damage to the global economy. African countries, including Nigeria were not spared. The paper examined the impact of corona virus pandemic on political and socio-economic activities in Nigeria as well as the policy response of the government to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Data for this paper were generated from secondary sources such as journal articles, newspaper publications and official reports from Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and World Health Organisation (WHO). Findings revealed that COVID-19 pandemic presented a twin problem of a health and economic shock. In the economic front, Nigerians were affected by the corona virus pandemic, especially through the imposition on restriction of movement (lockdown rules) by the states and federal governments which invariable affected social interaction, political and economic activities. It was also revealed that the lockdown policy measures grinded the Nigerian economy, especially in non-essential sectors that depend on daily activities of income for survival. Thus, the informal sector was badly hit by lockdown policies of the government. Based on the findings, the paper recommended that fiscal policies should be adopted to address the public health emergency situation in Nigeria, those individuals and businesses affected by the lockdown should be empowered and revived by giving them non interest loan without collateral and Nigerian economy need to be strengthened by the Federal Government by providing stimulus package targeted to households, businesses, manufacturers and healthcare providers, and in the long run, a well-diversified and inclusive productive economy policy should be adopted by the government.

Keywords: Covid-19, Political Activities, Socio-economic Activities, Policy Response,
Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of corona virus in December 2019 took my nations and governments all over the world by surprise and off-balance. The outbreak of corona virus disease also known as COVID-19 has imposed a tremendous threat on health, economy, social relations and political activities globally. Due to outbreak of COVID 19, the Nigerian Government announced a lock down in Lagos State, Ogun State and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on 30th March, 2020 for 14 days. As at that day Nigeria had 131 confirmed cases and two deaths in 12 states. However, as at 13 April, 2020, Nigeria had 323 confirmed cases and ten fatalities. As a result of the increased victims of the virus the lock down was extended for

another 2 weeks that was from 13th to 28th April, 2020. The lockdown was further extended for one week that was from 28th April to 4th May 2020. Thereafter, there was gradual easing of the lockdown.

However, the easing of the lockdown was followed with other measures and conditions. These measures were as follows: Selected businesses and offices were allowed open from 9am to 6pm; Overnight curfew from 8pm to 6am was imposed on all states of federation except Kaduna state that total lock down was imposed for 14 days. This means all movements were prohibited during the period of curfew except essential services; There was a ban on non-essential inter-state passenger travels until further notice; There was partial and controlled interstate movement of goods and services to allow for the movement of goods and services from producers to consumers; There was mandatory use of face masks or coverings in public in addition to maintaining physical distancing and personal hygiene and; There was a further restriction on social and religious gathering and the State Governments, corporate organisations and philanthropists were encouraged to support the production of cloth masks for citizens.

Thus, in response to curtail the spread of the virus most countries of the world, including Nigeria have imposed restriction measure which led to total and or partial closure of the economy. In the process, economies were grinded to a halt, jobs and livelihoods were lost on scales never seen before. The impact is huge and increasing in low and middle-income countries, especially in Nigeria with over 202 million population (World Bank, 2020). The actions of the government to curtail the spread of COVID-19 posed economic hardship to households especially those in informal sectors who depend on daily activities for survival and the vulnerable groups like unemployed youths and the elderly. As such, the lockdown affected individuals whose activities have mostly been focused on non-essential categories (Babatunde, 2020). The health crisis is now coupled with an economic crisis. The interplay of forces is such that the health and economic crises are mutually reinforcing to the monumental detriment of people's welfare (Komolafe, 2020).

Problem Statement

Apparently, the restrictive measures adopted to control the spread of coronavirus disease inevitably affected political and socio-economic activities in Nigeria and the Federal Government had applied economic policies, both fiscal and monetary policies, to mitigate the negative effect particularly on the Nigerian economy. However, these policies had some drawbacks. These policies include Economic Stimulus policy aimed to provide tax rebates to businesses that are registered under the Companies and Allied Matters Act so they can use this saving to continue employing their current workers. However, the policy focuses on providing relief to formal sector businesses, whereas 65% of Nigeria's total GDP comes from the informal sector. The informal sector employs more than 90% of the workforce, and these workers need urgent support to survive (Center for Policy Impact in Global Health, 2020). In addition, the CBN's stimulus package has offered a credit of 3 million Naira to poor families impacted by COVID-19. However, the loan can only be availed against collateral. Yet many of the households affected by COVID-19 are poor and do not have any collateral. In addition, the loans are not interest-free (Center for Policy Impact in Global Health, 2020). Thus, the extended lockdown led to people facing hunger in many regions of the country. The government was not been able to provide food support to everyone who needs it, as the distribution system of government palliatives were marred by corruption and politics. It is

against this background that this paper examines the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on political and socio-economic activities in Nigeria and the effectiveness of policy response by the government in mitigating the impact of the pandemic.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this paper include:

1. To ascertain the impacts of covid-19 pandemic on political and socio-economic activities in Nigeria.
2. To examine the policy measures in response to controlling the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria
3. To elucidate strategies that can mitigate the impacts of covid-19 pandemic on Nigerian economy.

Research Questions

1. What are the impacts of covid-19 pandemic on political and socio-economic activities in Nigeria?
2. What are the policy measures in response to controlling the spread of covid-19 in Nigeria?
3. What are the strategies to mitigate the impact of covid-19 pandemic on Nigerian economy?

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature and data were generated from secondary sources such as journal articles, newspaper publications, official reports from Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and World Health Organisation (WHO), Government news bulletins, radio and television programmes on coronavirus and internet materials. Simple descriptive-analytical and deductive methods were mainly employed to analyze the data. The period of analysis is from March to August, 2020. Thus, this study captured the events and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Political and Socio-Economic Activities in Nigeria and the Policy Response by the Government between the periods of March to August, 2020.

Conceptual Clarifications

The Concept of Corona Virus (COVID-19)

Based on initial laboratory findings, the disease named Coronavirus disease 2019 was described as an infectious disease that is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020; Ladan, 2020). The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome known as SARS-CoV-2 broke out in 2019, in Asia in the Hubei Province of China. SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus that is responsible for the outbreak of respiratory illness known as COVID-19. Corona virus belong to a group of viruses that may cause symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, difficulty in breathing, lung infection, sneezing and coughing (Awaji, 2020; Ladan, 2020). Historically, on the 12th of December 2019, the first case of coronavirus occurred in Wuhan at the seafood market, China. Since then, there has been a wide spread of the virus which became a global pandemic that the World Health Organization

(WHO) restructured the name in 2019 as COVID-19 (Ushie, Ushie, Egidi, & Tangban, 2020; Kowalik et al, 2020).

This virus is spread in human population through physical direct contacts affecting the respiratory tract organs. Common clinical manifestations/ symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, sore throat, and headache. Beyond this, the patients sometime manifested gastrointestinal symptoms, with diarrhoea and vomiting (Yan-Rong et al., 2020). Most of the mortality and morbidity arising for the infectious Coronavirus is as a result of factors like low immune system, old age, and others with underlying medical problems such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, cancer and among others are likely to develop serious illness (Ushie, et al., 2020).

Thus the virus is mainly spread through close contact between persons and by small droplets produced during coughing, sneezing and talking (ECDP, 2020). The people that are more likely or susceptible to acute coronavirus infections are the aged or elderly people and people with underlying medical conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, HIV Aids and others (WHO, 2020).

Since the report of the first case of the disease in December 2019, cases of the disease have spread rapidly around the globe emerging as a significant public health threat worldwide (Suleiman, 2020; Kowalik et al, 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak has since spread to about 196 countries and territories in every continent and one international conveyance across the globe. While there are ongoing efforts to curtail the spread of infection which is almost entirely driven by human-to-human transmission, it has accounted for over 400,000 confirmed cases with over 18,000 deaths (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020). The virus is also taking its toll on health facilities and infrastructures across the globe. Italy is currently the largest affected country with a number of deaths surpassing China, since the outbreak of coronavirus. Across northern Italy, the virus has pushed the country's National Health Service to a breaking point, emphasizing the test that other countries, especially developing and low-income countries, might face in their approach to contain the virus spread (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020). At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19. However, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. WHO will continue to provide updated information as soon as clinical findings become available (World Health Organization, 2020).

Timeline of COVID-19 Outbreak in Nigeria (March- August, 2020)

Coronavirus or COVID-19 that broke out in 2019 at Hubei Province of China and then spread rapidly to other parts of the world emerging as a significant public health threat. The disease has since spread to Africa with Nigeria presently ranked the third most infected country after South Africa and Egypt (Suleiman, 2020; Kowalik et al, 2020).

The coronavirus (COVID-19) was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 and in Nigeria, the first case was reported on the 27th of February 2020 in Lagos State. The first case was linked to an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria on the 25th of February 2020. He was confirmed by the Virology Laboratory of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (Ushie, et al., 2020; Adamu, 2020).

On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen. Thus, the first case in Nigeria was an Italian migrant worker who landed at Lagos on 24th February 2020. The disease infection then spreads to Ogun State that shares boundary with Lagos and later to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (Adamu, 2020) Since then, the numbers of confirmed cases have increased and spread across the states in Nigeria and as at 31 August 2020, Nigeria had 54008 confirmed cases and 1013 deaths as indicated on the table below.

Table 1: Timeline of Monthly Confirmed Cases of Covid-19 in Nigeria (February-August 2020)

DATE	NEW CASES CONFIRMED	TOTAL CONFIRMED CASES	RECOVERED & DISCHARGED	DEATHS
February 27, 2020	1	1	NON	NON
March 31, 2020	4	139	9	2
April 30, 2020	204	1932	319	58
May 31, 2020	307	10162	3007	287
June 30, 2020	561	25694	9746	590
July 31, 2020	462	43151	19565	879
August 31, 2020	143	54008	41638	1013

Source: NCDC, 2020 (covid19.ncdc.gov.ng)

Theoretical Framework

There are different theories that suit this study. However, we adopted ecosocial theory. Ecosocial theory was first proposed by Nancy Krieger of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in 1994 with the aim of describing and explaining causal relationships in disease distribution (Krieger, 1994). The theory incorporated biological and psychosocial influences on disease occurrence. The theory is also suited to analyze the relationships between social factors and disease development in public health research. Thus, the core constructs of Ecosocial Theory are: Embodiment; Pathways to Embodiment; the cumulative interplay between exposure, resistance, and susceptibility; and agency and accountability (Krieger, 2011 & 2020). The theory specifies that all constructs must be considered in concert, as they work together in a synergistic explanation of disease distribution. The theory assumes that distributions of disease are determined at multiple levels and that analyses must incorporate historical, political economic, temporal, and spatial analyses

Apparently, ecosocial theory weighs materialist and psychosocial positions in the society (Obioma, Reuben & Elekwachi, 2020). According to Krieger (2001) the theory is about an

analysis of current and changing population patterns of health, disease and well-being concerning each level of biological, ecological and social organization. Ecosocial theory is multifaceted-it provides the grounds on which human biological construct, social intercourse and the human environment can be perceived in terms of the effect of disease on these conditions as well as the factors within these conditions that endangered health, due to the disparity in people's social and economic conditions (Obioma, Reuben & Elekwachi, 2020).

Thus, the promoters of this theory assert that it involves the materialist or social production of disease perspective, which is linked to biology. It also talks about disparity in the experience of health conditions, amid inequality in socioeconomic status (Obioma, Reuben & Elekwachi, 2020). This has led fear often expressed concerning the outcome in the developing countries that lack the facilities for the containment of the disease, as well as poverty, ignorance, bad leadership and lifestyle of the masses that is often laced with high level of poor environmental and personal hygiene (Obioma, Reuben & Elekwachi, 2020).

The Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on Political, Social and Economic Activities in Nigeria

The COVID-19 pandemic presents a twin problem of a health and economic shock. On the health front, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has indicated that older persons aged 60 years and above or persons with underlying health conditions such as lung or heart disease or diabetes or HIV/AIDS that affects their immune system are at a higher risk of dying when they contract the corona virus. Consequently, the WHO has advised that such categories of people require health interventions that can either boost their immune system or quickly deal with the pandemic. The immunity system can be enhanced through proper nutrition and drinking of sufficient water (Kavuma, 2020).

On the economic front, the COVID-19 pandemic has manifested as a huge economic shock due to the containment measures that have been implemented worldwide to stop the spread of the coronavirus. These containment measures include; a ban on public gatherings, closure of businesses and non-essential services, closure of land and air borders, hotels, schools, universities and other businesses activities that attract crowds, the lockdown of entire cities, requiring essential businesses to run skeletal operations and employees should work from home and encouraging people to stay home (Kavuma, 2020; Ozili, 2020). Consequently, at micro level, in the initial weeks of the lockdown, it was evident that many households were failing to meet the basic necessities of life such as food. This however necessitated the distribution of palliatives which did not go round to the needy and households. AT macro level, the containment measures have resulted into unprecedented contraction of the economy, hitting hard the services sectors such as tourism, trade, education, the hospitality industry, aviation, transportation, etc (Kavuma, 2020). Thus, the lockdown measures ordered by the government have hurt the Nigerian economy, especially in non-essential sectors that depend on daily income for survival.

Generally, COVID-19 has affected day-to-day life and is slowing down the global economy. Basically, the economic effects of coronavirus include: the slowing of the manufacturing of essential goods, disruption of the supply chain of products, losses in national and international business, poor cash flow in the market, significant slowing down in the revenue growth while the social consequences include the cancellation or postponement of large-scale sports and tournaments, disruption of celebration of cultural, religious and festive events,

undue stress among the population, social distancing with peers and family members, closure of hotels, restaurants and religious places, closure of places for entertainment such as movie and play theatres, sports clubs, gymnasiums, swimming pools and so on (Haleem et al., 2020; Obioma, Reuben & Elekwachi, 2020)

Specifically, the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on political, social and economic activities in Nigeria are elucidated below.

Impacts on Political Activities

Due to the coronavirus pandemic all political activities in Nigeria were suspended. Looking towards the political perspective, the pandemic has impacted the political structure of about 85 nations across the world, causing postponements of parliamentary activities, lockdowns, quarantine, and deaths of many including politicians. The Nigerian parliament has locked down its chambers since March 2020, and only resumed duty sparingly after the restrictions were relaxed. The Federal Executive Council (FEC) commenced virtual meetings to deliberate on issues affecting the nation, while the pandemic soars with rising cases and death toll. It has been argued that, the Nigerian government responded too late to the looming crisis (Albert-Makyur et al, 2020).

However, some elections were conducted during this period of corona virus pandemic. These elections include: Ebonyi State local government elections, Ondo State local government elections held on 22nd August 2020, Bye-election of State House of Assembly as well as House of Representatives and Edo State Gubernatorial Election held on 19th September, 2020. Due to the pandemic these elections were characterized with non registration of new eligible voters by Independent National Election Commission (INEC); Voters' registers were not updated, there was no movement of voters from one polling unit to another and there was voter apathy – majority of voters did not turned up to exercise their civic duties during the elections due to fear of contracting COVID-19. For instance, voters' apathy was witnessed in Edo State Gubernatorial Election where 2,210,534 voters registered for the election but only 537, 407 voters actually voted in the election.

Impacts of Social Activities - The severe social effect of the coronavirus crisis was felt through the imposition of movement restrictions in many African countries including Nigeria (Ozili, 2020). In the homes, there have been reported cases of an increased in domestic violence and intimate partner violence attributed to lockdowns amid the coronavirus pandemic. Again, hardship, financial insecurity, stress, and uncertainty have led to increased aggression at home among couples and households.

The pandemic has denied citizens' basic rights of peaceful assembly and association and right to freedom of movement as enshrined in chapter iv sections 40 and 41 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. For instance, the pandemic has impacted on religious activities in various ways, including the cancellation of the worship services of various faiths, the closure of Sunday Schools, as well as the cancellation of pilgrimages surrounding observances and festivals. Hence, churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples have offered worship through livestream amidst the pandemic which were not always accessible due to erratic power supply in Nigeria.

The pandemic has also led to the closure of schools nationwide. This has affected the educational system in Nigeria. Although, the COVID-19 pandemic is now revolutionizing digital and online education globally but kids in rural and underserved communities in Nigeria, are being left behind as they are not equipped to adapt or transition to the new methods of learning (Adelaja, 2020). They don't have access to smart phone or laptop, electricity and internet services, this has created a big gap of inequality between students of rich and poor parents and between the students at urban and rural areas. According to a 2019 Executive Summary on Poverty and Inequality by the National Bureau of Statistics, 40.1% of the population in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and the largest producer of oil in Africa, is classified as poor. That is, on average, four out of 10 Nigerians has per capita expenditure below \$400 (Adelaja, 2020). Thus, while the coronavirus has forced schools globally to switch to online learning, in developing countries like Nigeria, millions of children without remote-learning access have been left behind. Forty percent of Nigerians live on less than \$1 a day and only one in four have internet access (Ettang, 2020). Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics says only one in four Nigerians have internet access but three out of four have mobile phones. Looking at the cost of data, and even the devices to use for effective learning, it is a bit problematic to Nigerians (Ettang, 2020).

Impacts on Economic Activities – Generally, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in disruptions to global supply chains, a sharp drop in global crude oil prices, turmoil in global stock and financial markets, massive cancellation of sporting and entertainment events, and intercontinental travel bans/restrictions across critical air, land and sea routes around the world.

Economic turmoil associated with the coronavirus pandemic has wide-ranging and severe impacts upon financial markets, including stock, bond and commodity (including crude oil and gold) markets. The Nigerian federal budget for the 2020 fiscal year was prepared with significant revenue expectations but with contestable realizations. The approved budget had projected revenue collections at N8.24 Trillion, an increase of about 20% from 2019 figure. The revenue assumptions were premised on increased global oil demand and stable market with oil price benchmark and oil output respectively at \$57 per barrel and 2.18 Million Barrels Per Day (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020). The corona virus pandemic has led to global reduction in the price of crude oil and this has affected the Nigerian economy. The annual budget of 2020 was pegged at \$50 dollars per barrel. Consequently, this has been reduced to \$20 dollars per barrel due to drastic fall in global oil price. Besides, the downward review of the budget and contractions in public spending could be devastating on poverty and unemployment (Obioma, Reuben & Elekwachi, 2020).

The last unemployment report released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) ranked Nigeria 21st among 181 countries with an unemployment rate of about 23.1%. The country has also been rated as the poverty capital of the world with an estimated 87 million people living on less than \$2 a day threshold (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020; Komolafe, 2020).

Obviously, COVID-19 pandemic led to the crash of crude oil prices globally. Nigeria being a mono-economy that depends majorly on oil revenue was greatly affected. As a result, Nigeria had two crises; health and dwindling government revenue to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Nigeria's economy. Moreover, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) constitute about 90% of all the businesses in Nigeria. The steps taken by the Nigerian governments to contain the spread of the virus by instituting partial or total

lockdown within their jurisdictions had a hard hit on Households and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The (MSMEs) were literally grounded to a halt during the lockdowns.

Furthermore, the pandemic has had a significant impact on aviation industry due to the resulting travel restrictions as well as slump in demand among travellers. Significant reductions in passenger numbers has resulted in planes flying empty between airports and the cancellation of flights. In terms of employment, no fewer than 42 per cent of hitherto employed Nigerians lost their means of livelihood to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) cited in (Emejo, 2020). It stated that the impact on employment and income had been widespread as “respondents who were working before the outbreak reported that they were not currently working due to COVID-19. According to COVID-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey (COVID-19 NLPS) report, which was published by the statistical agency, 79 per cent of Nigerians also reported that their households total income had decreased since mid-March while some households struggled to purchase staple foods namely yam, rice and beans during the seven days prior to the interview with 35-59 per cent of households who needed to purchase these staple, reporting that they were not able to buy them. The report which monitors the impact of the pandemic, using May 2020 as baseline, essentially highlighted the cost of the pandemic on employment, education, economy and households within the review period. It stated that the impact of the pandemic was most severe in the commerce, services and agricultural sectors of the economy (Emejo, 2020).

Moreover, the lockdown prevented many Nigerians working in the informal sector from commuting to work and conducting their business. The vast majority of people outside of the formal system were affected by the lockdown. The informal sector, in which more than 80 percent of Nigerians work, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen, and artisans to food vendors and hairdressers. Any interruption to their daily livelihood has a significant impact on their ability to meet their most basic needs. Local food vendors and traders, who survive on daily earnings, have raised the alarm over increasing difficulty at feeding their families. Increase in food prices has also meant that many cannot stock up on necessities.

Policy Measures in Response to Controlling the Spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, different policy measures have been taken to control the spread of the virus and mitigate its impacts on the citizens by governments worldwide. Nigeria being one of the African countries great hit by the pandemic have also responded through different policy measures at federal and state levels. To enhance a comprehensive response to the crisis, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Presidential Task Force for the Control of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Disease on 9th March 2020. The Task Force is responsible for implementing the Government’s National COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Pandemic Response Plan.

Since then, the Federal and State Governments in Nigeria have adopted a number of measures in response to controlling the spread of corona virus disease in Nigeria. Basically, the Federal Government has responded to the disease outbreak by outlining a number of measures that were announced through presidential addresses to the nation and other

measures conveyed through the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Coronavirus that gives daily briefings to update the people on the situation at Abuja (Suleiman, 2020; Ladan, 2020).

At the level of the State Governments, many States in the federation have adopted different measures to respond to the curtailing of the disease. Various State Governors have instigated their own containment measures of COVID-19 such as banned on interstate travel, closure of state boundaries, banned on social, political, religious and family gatherings of more than 20 persons, banned on social and religious gathering, suspension on public gathering including weddings, seminars, conferences, burials and any other large gatherings, closure of schools, closure of their sea, air and land borders into and out of the state, imposition of curfew, limiting markets operations to only traders selling food and medicines, banning public gathering like worship centers, market except for food items and pharmaceutical products, closure of learning institution, physical distancing, use of face mask, regular hand washing, use of alcohol based hand sanitizer, stay at home directive among other measure (Ushie, et al., 2020; Suleiman, 2020). Some of the policy measures undertaken by the federal government are indicated in the table below:

Table 2: Timeline of important policy steps taken by the government of Nigeria

DATE	POLICY MEASURES/ACTIVITIES
March 9, 2020	The president constituted the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 chaired by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, with membership from various MDAs
March 17, 2020	Federal Government of Nigeria postponed the 20th national sports festival that was supposed to hold in Benin City, Edo State from 22 March to 1 April
March 18, 2020	The management of the National Youth Service Corps suspended the 2020 Batch A stream one 21 days orientation exercise indefinitely. The orientation exercise commenced on 10 March and was expected to end on 30 March, before it was suspended after just 8 days
March 18, 2020	The president first placed a travel ban on 13 countries with high cases of the corona virus. The countries were; United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, China, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Japan and Iran
March 19, 2020	Federal government ordered closure of all schools (tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools) in Nigeria.
March 23, 2020	The president banned all International flights and announced a total closure of the nation's airspace and land borders
March 23, 2020	Central Bank of Nigeria announced stimulus package of 50 billion Naira targeted credit support facility for Households and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria.
March 24, 2020	Economic Stimulus Bill 2020 passed into law by the House of Representatives. The bill that seeks to provide a stimulus for the Nigerian economy
March 27, 2020	Raising funds from market—Nigeria calls for private sector donations to raise US\$330 million
March 29, 2020	The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, ordered the halt of all movements in Lagos, Ogun and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) for an initial period of 14 days.
March 29,	The federal government also suspended the movements of all passenger

2020	aircraft all over the country, including commercial and private jets
March 30, 2020	Lockdown order issued by the Federal Government began in Federal Capital Territory, Lagos, and Ogun states for an initial period of fourteen (14) days. The lockdown affected the movement of people across the states, except for people in the essential services sectors.
April 1, 2020	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development announced free food rations to needy. It also announced the transfer #20000 to poor households registered in National Social Register.
April 2, 2020	More states go into lockdown —Bauchi first, followed by many others
April 6, 2020	Raising funds from multilateral donors —Nigeria reaches out to multilateral institutions to raise US\$6.9 billion
April 13, 2020	Federal government extended the lockdown of Lagos State, Ogun State and the FCT, for another two weeks from 11pm on 13 April.. The lockdown was expected to be relaxed on 4 May
April 20, 2020	Nigeria extended the closure of airports to another 2 weeks
April 27, 2020	Federal government announced the locking down of Kano State, for a period of two weeks with immediate effect. The government also extended the locking down of Lagos State, Ogun State and the FCT, for a period of one week, announcing an indefinite nationwide curfew from 8pm to 6am starting on 4 May, while also placing an indefinite ban on non-essential inter-state passenger travel, allowing partial and controlled interstate movement of goods and services, announcing the mandatory use of face masks or coverings in public places, and extending the ban on social and religious gatherings
May 2, 2020	Federal Government imposed Nation wide overnight curfew (8pm-6am)
May 4, 2020	The easing of a federal lockdown on Lagos, capital Abuja and Ogun states. Some key guidelines issued with respect to public places include: Mandatory wearing of face masks, adherence to temperature checks, strict handwashing and use of sanitizers, observance of physical distancing and ban on public gathering. Banks and financial institutions, category of government offices and corporate sector will also operate between 8 am and 2 pm. Schools, places of worship, clubs, bars and gardens are to remain closed
May 6, 2020	Domestic & international flight ban extended to June 7
May 18, 2020	The Federal Government of Nigeria extended the gradual easing of the COVID-19 lockdown across the country by two weeks.
May 21, 2020	CBN introduced N100 billion credit intervention scheme to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses, particularly those in the health sector. The scheme, which was planned to be funded from the Real Sector Support Facility – Differentiated Cash Reserves Requirement, is to have an interest rate of 5% per annum until March 1, 2021, when it will revert back to 9%.
May 28, 2020	Central Bank of Nigeria has approved and disbursed N10.5 billion out of the N100 billion credit intervention on the healthcare industry to cushion the impact of the Coronavirus on the operators in the sector. The apex bank disbursed the fund for the establishment of advanced diagnostic and health centres and the expansion of some pharmaceutical plants for essential drugs

	and intravenous fluids
June 4, 2020	The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) developed a contacts tracing software application that would be deployed in all its location across the country.
June 8, 2020	The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) announced that households and SMEs applying for the N50 billion COVID-19 Targeted Credit Facility would not be required to provide guarantors before they can access the credit facility.
June 11, 2020	The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) has announced that alongside with its partners, it would be investing 53% of the N21 billion COVID-19 donations from the oil and gas sector to be used in construction of hospitals across the six geo-political zones. The oil and gas sector had pledged N21 billion in kind to be used for intervention in the healthcare delivery system.
June 15, 2020	The Nigerian Government has released its Economic Sustainability Plan which it hopes will address the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan was put together by the Economic Sustainability Committee (ESC) assembled by President Muhammadu Buhari.
June 26, 2020	The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has announced the disbursement of over N49 billion out of N50 billion targeted facility for households and small businesses to over 80,000 families and households. Central bank introduced the N50 billion Targeted Credit Facility as a stimulus package to support households and micro, small and medium enterprises that are affected by the coronavirus pandemic.
June 29, 2020	The Federal Government of Nigerian announced the lifting of the inter-state lockdown. The new directive will take effect from July 1st, 2020, in accordance with the curfew restrictions. The eased lockdown was extended by another four weeks, which will take effect from June 30 through July 27, 2020.
July 26, 2020	The Federal Government announced that it has opened 14 airports across the nation for full domestic operations.

Source: Author's compilation

Apart from the above policy actions by the government, economic measures in terms relief and incentives were given to individuals and some business enterprises. Thus, to reduce the social and economic impacts on the population due to corona virus lock down measures, the government introduced palliative measures like the conditional cash transfer to the poor and vulnerable, sharing of relief materials among other palliatives. International organizations like the World Bank, African Development Bank, private and cooperative individuals made donations to most of the African countries including Nigeria as palliative to fight the pandemic (Ushie, et al., 2020). Again, the Federal Government and its relevant agencies, especially the Central Bank of Nigeria, responded with policies to cushion the effect on the economy, restore investors' confidence, and support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and households (Odutola, 2020).

Federal Government through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) distributed fiscal stimulus package, including a 50 billion naira (\$138.89 million) credit facility to households and small and medium enterprises most affected by the pandemic, a 100 billion naira (\$277.78 million) loan to the health sector, and a 1 trillion naira (\$2.78 billion) to the manufacturing sector. In

addition, the interest rates on all CBN interventions were revised downwards from 9 to 5 percent, and a one-year moratorium on CBN intervention facilities was introduced on March 1, 2020 (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2020; Albert-Makyur et al, 2020).

The CBN through the fiscal policy measures reduced the crude oil benchmark price from USD 57 to USD 30; cut planned spending in the 2020 budget by about ₦1.5 trillion (USD 4 billion), including a 20 percent cut to capital expenditure and a 25 percent cut to recurrent expenditure; suspended the new electricity tariffs and reduced the price of Premium Motor Spirit, PMS to ₦123.50 per liter, with effect from April 1, 2020 and further slashed the price to ₦121.50 per liter which took effect from 1 June 2020 (Albert-Makyur et al, 2020). In addition, an “Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill, 2020” was passed by the House of Representatives (HoR) to: Grant a tax rebate of 50% of the actual amount due or paid as pay-as-you-earn tax, to Nigerian companies who retain all their employees from 1 March 2020 to 31 December 2020; Suspend import duties on medical equipment, medicines and personal protective gears required for treatment and management of COVID-19 for six months, effective 1 March 2020; Introduce a new moratorium on mortgage obligations of Nigerians under the National Housing Fund.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that Federal Government of Nigeria have initiated health and socio-economic policies such as economic stimulus package, food assistance and cash transfers as palliatives to cushion the effect of the pandemic on Nigerian citizens especially the vulnerable groups. However, most of these welfare packages were inadequate and or marred with serious challenges such as politicization of food assistance, lack of transparency in distribution mechanism, exclusion of informal sector in economic stimulus packages, and the palliatives did not reach most of the needy, poor and vulnerable citizens of Nigeria.

Way Forward: Possible Ways to Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Nigerian Economy

The World Health Organisation has warned that COVID-19 infection rates are likely to remain for a long time. There is therefore a need for countries to plan one step ahead of the epidemic curve. Nigeria is no exception. Nigeria is one of the African countries with the highest number of cases. While the numbers remain low compared with many other countries in the world, it continues to rise gradually. Worryingly, the mortality rate stands at 3.1%. This is higher than some of its neighbours. For example, Ghana, which has similar age demography and socioeconomic characteristics, is reporting a mortality rate of 0.5%. (Ogunyemi, 2020). In the long run, the following strategies should be adopted by Nigerian Government;

1. Massive Investment on Health Infrastructure and Adequate Research Funding on the Health Sector - The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call to policymakers and the government to revamp Nigeria’s ailing health sector as the crisis of the pandemic has made it impossible for citizens to rely on foreign health care services and more difficult to solicit for international support given the competing demand for medical supplies and equipment. A more integrated response spanning several sectors—including the health, finance, and trade sectors is required to address structural issues that make the country less resilient to shocks and limit its range of policy responses (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2020). The Nigerian government through the Central Bank should offer long-term financing for the entire healthcare value-chain (including medicine, pharmaceuticals, and critical care), and work

with healthcare providers to consolidate on the current efforts to rebuild our medical facilities in order to ensure Nigeria has world class affordable hospitals for the people of Nigeria. Moreover, this pandemic has shown how critical health investment is to national security. Our health system has been stretched and we have worked very hard to adapt. But we must prepare better for the next pandemic. We must have the laboratory, emergency preparedness and response structures that can adapt very quickly in the event of another pandemic. Nigerian governments should use fiscal policies to immediately address the public health emergency. After that, fiscal resources should be used to provide direct support to affected individuals and businesses in order to protect the productive capacity that will be needed to revive the economy when the coronavirus crisis ends (Ozili, 2020)..

2. Diversification of Nigerian Economy - The security and well-being of any nation is contingent on building a well-diversified and inclusive productive economy. In immediate response to mitigating the effect of COVID 19, the Nigerian economy need to be strengthened by the Federal Government by providing stimulus package targeted to households, businesses, manufacturers and healthcare providers. These measures would not only help to immediately cushion the effects against COVID-19 pandemic but would also help to build a more resilient, more self-reliant Nigerian economy (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2020). Basically, the Nigerian government essentially must lead economic diversification drive. It is one practicable way to saddle through the current economic uncertainties and instabilities. The consequences of COVID-19 pandemic have shown the Nigerian economic managers and policymakers that the one-tracked, monolithic reliance on oil is failing. Therefore diversification priorities to alternative sectors such as agriculture, solid minerals, manufacturing and services sectors, should be further intensified (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020). In the long term, tougher decisions need to be made, including but not limited to diversifying the country's revenue base away from oil exports and improving investments in the health care sector in ensuring that the economy is able to recover quickly from difficult conditions in the future (Onyekwena & Ekeruche, 2020).

3. Transformation of the Economy – In the long run, the Nigerian economy needs to be fully transformed to be self-sufficient, industry driven and less dependent on foreign goods and services. To achieve these, the Federal Government should adopt the following measures: Build a base of high quality infrastructure, including reliable power that can engender industrial activity; Support both smallholder and large scale agriculture production in select staple and cash crops; Create an ecosystem of factories, storages, and logistics companies that move raw materials for value-added production, and finished goods to markets; Use our fiscal priorities to create a robust educational system that enables critical thinking and creativity, which would better prepare our children for the world of tomorrow; Develop a healthcare system that is trusted to keep all Nigerians healthy, irrespective of social class; Facilitate access to cheap and long-term credit for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) and large corporates; Develop and strengthen pro-poor policies that bring financial services and security to the poor and the vulnerable; and expedite the development of venture capitalists for nurturing new ideas and engendering Nigerian businesses to compete globally.

4. Government Aid and Investment in Education- The pandemic has unmasked substantial inequities in the education sector in Nigeria. Education should be viewed as a high government priority. There are measures that must be taken to help bridge the divide in educational sector. This should be centered on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and government aid. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) can do much to improve the quality of,

and increase access to, education for poor children in rural and urban communities. Government aid is needed in terms of investing in educational tools of the future alongside a total revamp of the educational sector. Reforms in the national curriculum post-pandemic would be an effective way to bridge the gap in inequality. Priorities should include the introduction of courses such as coding and robotics which can usher students into the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and prepare them for jobs of the future. It should be noted that aid provided in this direction can be viewed as an investment in human capital; the more educated a country is, the more productive (Adelaja, 2020).

5. Government Subsidies and Incentives -Nigerian governments at all level should maintain the implementation of a tax compliance relief programme for individual taxpayers and business to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. A comprehensive economic package that would be informed by the reality of the situation should be put in place by the economic managers. The National Economic Council, created by the constitution, should be involved as the package is being put together because the state and federal governments should work with unity of purpose to stave off the economy from the path of crisis. The implementation of some of the policies may require a replication of efforts at the state levels so as to mitigate the impact on the poor (Komolafe, 2020).

Other indirect measure to consider is to provide a sustained general safety net for everyone during the pandemic using social and economic policies. There are several ways of doing this, such as providing free electricity to all citizens during the pandemic and making cash transfer payments to all households. Policymakers in African countries need to also think about measures that will reboot the economy after the coronavirus crisis is over such as reducing the price of energy products such as fuel and gas and provide bailout relief to small and big businesses so that they will not lay-off workers during the crisis and during the recovery process (Ozili, 2020)..

Policy makers across the world are taking actions to boost their crippling economies and provide some relief to citizens and businesses who are most affected by the pandemic The government needs to immediately explore provision of economic assistance, such as small interest-free loans or small grants through registered microfinance institutions, to enterprises in the informal sector. This will provide much needed cash flow to businesses to restart their operations (Center for Policy Impact in Global Health, 2020). Collateral-free loans should be made available to poor households, or community leaders should be allowed to guarantee loans to these households. The loans should be interest free or available at a low interest rate and a long moratorium and repayment period (Center for Policy Impact in Global Health, 2020).

Conclusion

This study has shown that coronavirus pandemic affected negatively all human beings and every socio-economic and political activity across the world. Nigeria was not an exception.

The impact of the outbreak of disease on the Nigerian citizens was tremendous. In effort to control the spread of the disease government all over the world including Nigeria imposed a lockdown measures. This further compounded the situation especially in Nigeria on economic and social activities. The Nigerian economy was tremendously devastated and the informal sector that depended on daily income for survival was badly hit. Consequently,

Nigerian government instituted various policy measures to mitigate the impact of the lockdown on the citizens but these were marred with lack of transparency and accountability. These calls for continuous, concerted, proactive, transparent, integrated response and intensify efforts across the various governments and sectors of the country to address the challenges posed by the covid-19 outbreak in Nigeria.

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