

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC: A CHALLENGE TO THE  
ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS (SDGs) IN NIGERIA**

**Uzoma D. Nosiri<sup>1\*</sup> & Chiaka Umoh<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of General Studies, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, Owerri, Nigeria

\*polysporting2@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT:** This paper looked at COVID-19 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria. Specifically, this paper aimed to show how COVID-19 pandemic is a challenge to sustainable development goals in Nigeria and suggest possible means to solve the consequences of COVID-19 for achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria. The system theory of David Easton was adopted as a framework for analysis. Data were collected from secondary sources using documentary method and the qualitative method was employed to analyze the study. This paper shows that the issue of COVID-19 pandemic is a strong challenge to the achievement of the first phase of SDGs in Nigeria because the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increase in rate of poverty, unemployment and food insecurity, increase in cost of living, closure of business activities, reduction of access to income, fall in oil prices and GDP etc, which are the some of the indices needed for successful implementation of SDGs in the country. Therefore, this study recommended for among others, the encouragement of low interest loan to SMEs, adequate measures for reduction of inflation rate, adequate investment in education, promotion of agriculture and economic diversification and increase in government spending (mainly on infrastructure).

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Development, Sustainable Development Goals

## **INTRODUCTION**

For any state to achieve sustainable development, it must develop a realizable development plan or strategies (either long term or short term) with specific objectives and goals which must successfully operate in a conducive environment. Therefore, the achievement of sustainable development in any society must need a sustainable or conducive environment that promotes development. Societies that are under the problem of constant hostilities, (war or crises), natural disasters, experiencing pandemic or epidemic will find it difficult to achieve development plans and sustainable development.

The Sustainable Development Goals involves the proposed set of attainable goals, targets and indicators designed and adopted by United Nations in 2015 for the betterment of the world society which set to be achieved by 2030. The SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (that expired in 2015) which was designed for realization of a better and more sustainable future for all nations (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs, 2020).

Following the adoption of SDGs 2030 agenda, Nigeria took an urgent step for successful implementation of the SDGs for sustainable development. This was done by the

establishment of institutional frameworks at both national and sub-national levels and implementation of several strategic initiatives (Voluntary National Review, VNR, 2020; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2017). Nigerian government also launched the medium term development plans or strategies and programmes like Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (NERGP), Conditional Grant Scheme, National Social Safety Net programmes etc. The implementation of the SDGs in Nigeria is designed in three phases: Phase 1: 2016-2020, Phase 2: 2021-2025 and Phase 3:2026-2030 (Nigeria's Road to the SDGs..., 2015; Voluntary National Review, 2020). Achieving the SDGs in Nigeria has been confronted with several challenges such as insecurity, corruption, weak institutions and more recently, the issue of COVID-19 (Corona virus).

The corona virus commonly known as COVID-19 is seen as an infections respiratory disease that is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, 2022; Fagbemi, 2022). This disease was first identified in Wuhan city, China in December 2019. In January 2020, it was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, while in March, 2020, COVID-19 was declared as a pandemic which had spread to more than 190 countries. COVID-19 as pandemic has shocked the world because of its devastating effects on the world economy, health system, political and social activities. Some economic experts had predicted that COVID-19 could lead the world into a global recession (Otache, 2020; Farayibi & Asongu, 2020). As of 12th March 2022, COVID-19 had infected more than 455,675,890 populations with more than 6,038,904 deaths (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, NCDC, 2022).

In Nigeria, the first index case of COVID-19 was recorded on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 and it had spread to all the states of the federation including FCT. As of 11th March 2022, 254,894 confirmed cases had been reported with 3,142 deaths while 207,254 persons recovered (NCDC, 2022). This issue has mainly affected the economy, health system of Nigeria because of lockdown measures like closure of business activities, restriction of movement, interstate travels, restriction of religious and other social gathering, closure of schools, seaports, office and public institutions.

Despite the ease of lockdown and other measures by the Nigerian government, the negative impact of COVID-19 mainly in economic aspect is still felt in Nigeria like rise in unemployment, rise in food prices, low standard of living, closure of businesses, low income etc which are challenge to development. Therefore, this study is set to critically demonstrate how COVID-19 has posed a challenge to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria and suggests measures to government towards solving the consequences of COVID-19 for effective implementation of SDGs in Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Development**

Todaro and Smith (2006, cited in Mensah *et al*, 2019) argued that development is “a multi-dimensional process that involves major changes in social structures, attitudes and institutions, as well as economic growth, reduction of inequality and eradication of absolute poverty. According to Seers (cited in Okolie, 2016, p. 29)

The questions to ask about a country's development are three; what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has happening to inequality? If all these three have declined from high levels then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned.

Furthermore, Nnoli (1981, cited in Okolie, 2016, p. 29) defines development as "a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and society interact with their physical, biological and inter-human environments transforming them for their own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process". Okolie (2016, p. 26) stated that:

Development should better be projected as man-stimulated phenomenal socio-economic and political transformations and automation of self and entire structure of a given polity. These involve acquisition of new and relevant ideas, skills, drive, propensities, preferences, predispositions and psychic motor which are directed toward transformation of the existential and material conditions of the given people. These subsequently translate into improvement in man's potentials and capabilities; elimination or rather reduction of poverty, inequality, unemployment and thus improvement in life sustenance, self-esteem, freedom and value orientations. Development is therefore largely a process and dynamic enterprise. This process must first and foremost make room for an awakening of the inner potentials of human beings who are both initial protagonists and its ultimate target.

Development is a process where there is improvement in quality of lives in terms of access to food, income, education, shelter and employment. Development is the political, economic, social and environmental improvement in a society.

### **Sustainable Development**

The Brundtland Commission (cited in Soares & Quintella, 2008) defined sustainable development as:

A transformation process in which the exploitation of resources, direction of investments, orientation of technological development and institutional change are reconciled and reinforces present and future potential, in order to attend to needs and future aspiration (...) it is that which attends to present needs without compromising the possibility of future generations attending their own needs (p. 110).

Mensah and Casadevall (2019) sees sustainable development as the development that is continuous either indefinitely or for given period of time. They also viewed that sustainable development provides a mechanism through which society can interact with the environment while not risking or damaging the resources for the future. It is a development paradigm that calls for improvement of living standards without jeopardizing the earth's ecosystems or causing environmental challenges (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019).

Klarin (2018) viewed that the concept of sustainable development is based on the concept of socio-economic development in line with ecological constraints, the concept of needs (redistribution of resources for achieving quality of life for all) and the concept of future generation (the possibility of long-term usage of resources to ensure the necessary quality of life for future generations). Klarin further stated that sustainable development is based on

three dimensions or pillars of sustainability settled in balanced, namely: Ecological, social and economic sustainability. Furthermore, Sustainable development can be defined as the economic, social, political, environmental and technological improvement that is stable which does not only benefit the present generation, but also the future generation. It is the development that has long stability that will benefit both present generation and future generation.

### **Corona Virus**

Corona virus with the code name COVID-19 is defined as an infectious respiratory disease which is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Fagbemi, 2021; Oyefolu, 2020; CDC, 2022). It has common symptoms like cough, fever, fatigue, difficulty in breathing, pneumonia; loss of smell and taste and acute respiratory distress syndrome. The incubation period is mainly five days but may range from one to fourteen days (CDC, 2022). This disease is spread mostly when people have close physical contact. It spreads easily through the air via small droplets and aerosols when an infected person coughs, talks, sneezes, breathes and also may be through contaminated surface or environment (CDC, 2022).

### **The Sustainable Development Goals**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) involves the 17 goals with their 169 targets and about 230 indicators set up by the United Nations which covers a wide range of economic, social and environmental development issues ranging from ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, prospects of more peaceful and inclusive societies to combating climate change and protecting the environment (Nwosu, 2017). The SDGs involves a collection of 17 global goals to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all nations. 17 goals of the United Nations sustainable development goals are:

1. No poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Good health and well-being for people: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. Quality education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Gender Equality: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Clean water and Sanitation: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Affordable and clean energy: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Decent work and economic growth: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reducing Inequalities: Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Sustainable Cities and Communities: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

12. Responsible consumption and production: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Climate Action: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Life below water: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Life on land: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Partnerships for the goals: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (SDGs, 2020; United Nations, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopted the system theory as the framework for analysis. The general system theory was first developed by an Austrian biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in the 1920s in his work "General System Theory (GST). This theory was developed in social sciences, first in Anthropology, later to sociology and psychology, then arrived in political science (Ekwonna, 2016; Uche & Uche, 2014). This theory was made popular in political science by the works of David Easton, Robert Dahl, Gabriel Almond, Morton Kaplan, Karl W. Deutsch etc. So, for the purpose of this study, we adopted the David Easton System Theory

David Easton viewed the political system as a typical system of the body such as the circulatory system (Ozeh & Ofodum, 2018). Easton's approach to system is to describe political system and the manner in which it copes with stress, their persistence in the face of changing and stable environment. Therefore, his concept of political life is that of system of behaviour that is determined by the environment to influence of which the political system itself is exposed and in turn reacts. (Mbah, 2014) Therefore, the way the political system works is determined by its environment and its ability to react to environment will lead to stability and equilibrium.

Easton defined the political system as that "system of interactions in any society through which binding or authoritative allocations are made and implemented (Mohita n.d, cited in Ozeh & Ofodum, 2018, p. 194). Easton's definition shows certain aspects of political system. Firstly "political system is just one among other forms of social systems. Second, the political system allocates by means of policies. Third, its allocations are authoritative. Finally, its authoritative allocations are binding on society as a whole (Das & Chouldbury, cited in Mbah, 2014).

Easton shows the existence of a functional relationship between a system and its environment, therefore, a system exist within an environment. Furthermore, the political system is open to influence from its environment and the environment is determined or influenced by the reactions of the political system. To Easton, the political system and its environment are linked into input-output relationship (Ozeh & Ofodum, 2018). This implies that there is a relationship between the political system and its environment, because the demands and support that the environment brings affect or influences the intended and actual actions, reactions or output of government. Also, the reactions, actions, policies, rules and

regulations of government in turn can influence its environment which will lead to other demands (feedback) from the environment affecting the political system. So, the environment makes input into the system, while the system (political system) brings out output into the environment. For further understanding of Easton's system theory, he viewed the political system as operating in the following steps:

1. Changes in the social or physical environment surrounding a political system produce “demands” and supports for action or status quo directed as “inputs” towards the political system through political behaviour.
2. These demands and supporting groups stimulate competition in the political system, leading to decisions or “outputs” directed at some aspect of the surrounding social or physical environment.
3. After a decision or output is made (e.g specific policy), it interacts with its environment and if it produces change in the environment, there is “outcome”.
4. When a new policy interacts with its environment, “outcomes” may generate new demands or supports and groups in support or against the policy (feedback) or a new policy on some related matter.
5. Feedback leads back to step 1, forming a never-ending cycle (System Theory in Political Science, 2018).

Accordingly, if the system functions as described, then we have a “stable political system”. If the system breaks down, then we have a “dysfunctional political system” (System Theory in Political Science, 2018).

### **Relevance of the Theory**

This theory is relevant to this study because it helps to explain that the response of government towards realizing the SDGs has been affected by the environmental situation which COVID-19 is a typical example. The spread of COVID-19 in the Nigerian environment and the world at large has posed a great threat which had killed millions of people in the world and thousands of people in Nigeria. This situation in the environment has led to closure of business and other economic activities, thereby undermining the government ability to respond towards realizing the sustainable development goals. The COVID-19 as a disease has spread throughout Nigeria and had affected other sector of the economy as a result of the lockdown measures adopted by Nigeria government and other countries. This incidence contributed to high rate of poverty, poor access to income, high unemployment, closure of some business operations, and poor access to food/high level of food insecurity rate. These effects in the environment can incapacitate the government towards realizing sustainable development goals.

### **Methodology**

The research design of this study was expository because the study is intended to expose or show how COVID-19 had posed challenge to sustainable development in Nigeria. It is also historical in design because it looked at the trends regarding the extent of achieving some of the goals pertaining to SDGs in Nigeria. Documentary method of data collection was employed with focus on secondary sources and the analysis was done qualitatively. The scope of the study is restricted issue of COVID-19 and the sustainable development goals which is limited to goal 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **COVID-19 as a Challenge to Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria**

Here, we indicated how COVID-19 pandemic has served as a challenge to sustainable development goals in Nigeria. This was done by showing the extent of the effects of COVID-19 on socio-economic development of the state.

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a challenge to the prospect of SDGs realization in Nigeria because of its devastating effects on Nigeria economy and other essential sectors. This is in line with views of the Federal Government that posits that the outbreak of the corona virus has constituted a threat to the drive of achieving the SDGs by 2030 (Nnorom, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had contributed to high rate of job losses or unemployment, drop in income level, poor functioning of business or business closure, decrease in Agricultural activities and food security, decline in oil revenue, school closures, death toll, decline in GDP, increase in inflation rate. These had contributed to high rate of poverty (Voluntary National Review, 2020; Amare, *et al*, 2020; Andam *et al*, 2020; Farayibi & Asongu, 2020; Otache, 2020; Iwuoha & Jude-Iwuoha, 2020).

To properly show how the COVID-19 is a challenge to SDGs realization in Nigeria, our analysis or discussion was based on the selected Sustainable Development Goals. That is, we looked at COVID-19 as it has affected the realization of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9.

#### **1. COVID-19 and SDG 1: End Poverty in all its Forms Everywhere**

The issue of COVID-19 poses a strong threat towards ending poverty in 2030 in Nigeria. It shows that the COVID-19 has made the government unable to reduce the poverty rate of the people in the first phase of the country's SDGs plan. This is evident in terms of increase in unemployment, decrease in access to income and low level of savings.

With respect to job losses or high rate of unemployment, Otache (2020) discovered that "many people have lost their jobs as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and many jobs are still in jeopardy in the near future? The study of Farayibi and Asongu (2020) proved that COVID-19 had an increase in unemployment level in Nigeria.

In area of income, studies proved that the COVID-19 has drastically reduced people's accessibility to income which is associated to job losses and closure of business (Otache, 2020; Andam, 2020). Otache (2020) proved that income level of informal workers (like petty traders, taxi drivers etc) and the poor declined because they were no longer engaging on their daily trading activities. The study of Andam *et al* (2020) indicated that the national rate of poverty increases by 13.7% points which accounts for about 27 million additional people falling below poverty line during the lockdown.

The aspect of low saving can be associated with increase in inflation rate of goods and services. It indicated the core inflation was 12.26% in April 2020 and later increased to 12.40% in June 2020. The rise in inflation rate will definitely make people to pay more, thereby reducing the saving rate. According to Madubuegwu (2020)

A walk to our urban and rural markets across the states of the Federation reveals that prices of common food commodities such as tomatoes, pepper, onions, garri, beans, fish, bottle of groundnut oil and palm oil, including bottle

drinks, indomie noodles are costly and unaffordable by millions of Nigerians who live below \$ 1. For instance, a 50 kg of foreign rice and local (the stone) rice is sold at N35, 000 (from pervious N24,000) and N22,000 from (N15,000) respectively. Also, a painter of garri previously sold between 300 and 350 naira is currently at price of 1,200 and 1,350 naira. Consequently, the unpleasant social condition had in the recent time accelerated figures of poverty index, criminalities and malnutrition challenges (p. 27).

In addition, Fagbemi (2021) suggest that Nigeria is likely to add eight (8) million people to poverty rolls in 2020. To Mahler *et al* (cited in Fagbemi, 2021, p. 5) “even employing the less demanding World Bank threshold of counting countries that are off track to attain the SDG goal of eradicating poverty, the COVID-19 impact could escalate poverty in Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria would be among countries that might have the largest rise in poverty rates at least 3% points in 2020.” In one of the findings of the study conducted by Inegbedion (2021) it is indicated that COVID-19 undermined the circular flow of income which posed a challenge to economic growth in Nigeria. The research conducted by Kharas and Dooley (2021) indicated that

The current surge in COVID-19 cases in India may make the economic rebound in 2021 smaller than predicted, prolonging the COVID-19 induced poverty increase. Nigeria was also severely impacted. Nigeria had 84 million people living in extreme poverty in 2019; this figure rose to potentially 92 million in 2020. Due to high population growth and economic stagnation, poverty is set to rise further in 2021 to 94 million. Nigeria was home to the largest number of the extreme poor in 2019, and on current trends it will hold this title through 2030. Nigeria represents the new face of extreme poverty – middle income, fragile and conflict affected, and located in sub-Saharan Africa (p. 4).

They further revealed that “before COVID-19, we predicted poverty in Nigeria would reach 96 million by 2030. We now predict that poverty will reach 112 million by 2030, an increase of 16 million and effective international action will be required to reverse this trend” (Kharas & Dooley, 2021). So, all these effects of COVID-19 on job losses, and accessibility to income and saving is a challenge to realization of SDG 1 in Nigeria because it has increased the level of poverty in the country.

## **2. COVID-19 and SDG 2: Zero Hunger (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture).**

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a threat to SDG 2 because of the following: reduction of production and marketing of agricultural product and increase in food insecurity (Otaele, 2020; Amare *et al*, 2020; Andam *et al*, 2020). With respect of agricultural activities, COVID-19 has disrupted farming activities leading to shortage of crop harvest and labour in planting of crops. In terms of food accessibility or security, the study of Amare *et al* (2020) indicated that a significant increase in all food security indicators like skipping a meal, run out of food and going without eating in the last 30 days increases by 47, 32 and 20 percent respectively. Furthermore Amore et al noted that 72% of households under study reported that the income from farming and agricultural activities has reduced and 83% reported reduction in income from non-farm business (Amare *et al*, 2020).



The study of Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) (2020) indicated that “COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a slowdown in production and intra and inter-regional agricultural trade in North eastern Nigeria, including the movement of key agricultural commodities” (p. 21). In addition, Madubuegwu (2020, p. 26) stated that

The current rise in food price has pushed Nigeria’s inflation rate to 13.2% in September, 2020. There is widespread hunger and malnutrition among millions of Nigerians who cannot afford essential food commodities in highly inflated food market... At the height of the pandemic and national lockdown in May, the food inflation rose to 15.4% the highest since March 2018. Invariably, the National Bureau of Statistics in its report on living inflation survey in June 2020, revealed that more than 37% of Nigeria households are challenged by the persistent increase in prices of food commodities where 12% of the household are currently reducing food consumption in order to manage the impact of the pandemic. Similarly, it is also projected that food inflation may likely rise to additional 12% by the end of September from 15.18% as observed in June 2020.

The above incidences are indication that realization of SDG 2 is a difficult task.

### **3. COVID-19 and SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being for All**

The spread of COVID-19 has served as a threat to public health by infecting a lot of people in the country and the world at large. The COVID-19 as at 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022 has recorded about 254,894 cases and killed 3,142 persons. This has led to drop in physical activity and social interaction. This incidence indicates fall in improvement of people health and well-being in Nigeria thereby undermining the effort of realizing SDG 3. The COVID-19 threat to good health of the citizens is worsen in Nigeria as a result of the poor state of facilities in the health sector. This is in line with the view of Oyefolu (2020) who noted that:

In more concrete term, the poor state of infrastructure in public health sector in Nigeria became so obvious in all facets. Initially, ventilators, quality testing tools and personal protective equipment that could assist in the situation of Covid-19 were in low supply and as such the process was practically slow and ineffective... In critical sense, this failure of government in building standard health infrastructure raises some fundamental questions with respect to death of Chief of Staff (CSO), Abba Kyari, Governor of Oyo State, Abiola Ajimobi, Senator Buruji Kashamu representing Ogun East Senatorial District, Senator Adebayo Sikiru Osinowo representing Lagos East Senatorial District among others. Undoubtedly, no comfort to their family but they fell victim to Nigeria’s comatose health care system (p. 35).

### **4. COVID-19 and SDG 4: Quality and Inclusive Education**

The Realization of quality education was also threatened by COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 spread had led to closure of all level of school system from March to October 2020 and also from December 2020 to February 2021. This issue had led to disruption of academic calendar, postponement of examination, cancellation and postponement of national and international conferences, creation of teaching and learning gap (Iwoha & Jude-Iwuoha, 2020). Another point in COVID-19 effect on education is that the closure of schools has created more e-learning gap between the rich and poor, and people in rural and urban areas on digital accessibility and this undermined the government effort to achieve inclusive

education. According to the report by the Voluntary National Review on integration of the SDGs in Nigeria, the spread of COVID-19 has created additional constraints to inclusive education by exposing the digital divide in education (VNR, 2020). The report further noted that COVID-19 pandemic has led to:

- 1) Widened the inequalities in the education sector between urban and rural children, rich and poor
- 2) Reduced children access to quality education because of the shift from the normal active teaching method to online learning that is not engaging or participatory
- 3) Exposed teachers that are not familiar to ICT and cannot cope with online teaching and;
- 4) Revealed the inability of most children in the public school to be involved or participate in online learning because of lack of funds and huge cost involved in online learning in terms of purchase of ICT requirement like laptop, Android phones, computer (Voluntary, National Review, 2020).

Furthermore, Fagbemi (2021, p. 7) noted that “as schools shutdown, with lost opportunities to learn, vulnerable students may find it difficult to return to school. This can lead to lower long-term learning in the country, and thus triggers increased inequality and reduced human capital development.”

## **5. COVID–19 and SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth**

The COVID–19 pandemic also negatively affected the Nigeria government effort for achieving the goal of sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. In area of employment level, COVID–19 had contributed to job losses as a result of business closure, downsizing of staff and disruption of informal economic activities. Some studies have estimated that the COVID–19 pandemic will lead to 33 or 33.5 percent of unemployment rate at the end of 2020 (Otache, 2020; Fatayibi & Asongu, 2020). Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Productivity estimated the total number of job losses during the pandemic to about 39.5 million in Nigeria (Farayibi & Asongu, 2020). It revealed that in March and May, 2020, the employment level declined which stood at 37.4 and 24.5 points in the month of March and May respectively indicating the adverse effect of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria economy (Nwosu, Marcus & Metu, 2020). Furthermore, it proved that the pandemic did not only led to decline of people employed in informal sector but also in the formal sector particularly in the public and corporate services (Madubuegwu, 2020).

In terms of economic growth, the COVID–19 pandemic has contributed in mitigating the effort of government in achieving sustainable economic growth. This can be observed in the low rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capital income, and reduction in oil revenue prices, devaluation of the currency (Naira) etc (Onwunyi; & Ostar, 2020; Madubuegwu, 2020; Inegbedion, 2021; Saka, 2020). The study of Farayibi and Asongu (2020) indicated a decline rate of GDP from 2.55 percent in the last quarter of 2019 to 1.87 percent in the first quarter of 2020. Furthermore, Andam et al (2020) discovered that there was GDP decline in all sectors of the economy during the lockdown. They further proved that the COVID–19 has led to decline in GDP or total GDP losses in agricultural services and industrial sector.

With respect to oil revenue which is major source of Nigerian export, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the price of crude oil in the international market. The decline in crude oil had reduced the revenue generation of the government from achievement of economic growth and development. This incidence adversely affected the 2020 budgetary plan of federal government leading to budgetary review. The COVID-19 pandemic led to decline in oil proceeds by 55% between the last quarter of 2019 and April 2020, while as of 18 March 2020, the price of crude oil was low as 29.6 US dollars per barrel (Voluntary National Review, 2020, p. 14). The oil benchmark that was based on 57 US dollar per barrel was later reduced to 30 US dollar per barrel. The 2020 budget was reduced from N10.594 million to N10.276 trillion (Otache, 2020). With these effects of COVID-19, realization of sustainable economic growth and high employment rate will be very difficult in the year 2030.

#### **6. COVID-19 and SDGs 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

The government effort in building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation has been hampered by the spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria. The negative effect of COVID-19 on crude oil price, GDP growth, and decline in 2020 budget has gone a long way to pose a challenge to government to finance infrastructural projects and promote industrialization. More importantly, the COVID-19 issue had led to closure of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which some of them do not have the chance of surviving after the COVID-19 pandemic issue (Uzoechina, Ogbu, Ozoh & Ibikunle, 2020; Madubuegwu, 2020; Nwosu *et al*, 2020).

The study conducted by Nwosu *et al* (2020) proved that the COVID-19 pandemic led to the decline in the growth rate of both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sector activities in Nigeria. Most of the factories in Nigeria were shut down because of the COVID-19 shock on the global supply chain (Madubuegwu, 2020). Fate Foundation (as cited in Uzoechina *et al*, 2020) revealed that COVID-19 has made most of the business entrepreneurs (94%) under study to most likely to lay off staff as a result of decline in business growth. Furthermore, Falokun (2020 as cited in Uzoechina *et al*, 2020) discovered that the COVID-19 has undermined the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria because many businesses becoming financially fragile and considering layoff of staff.

#### **Conclusion**

Though there are many challenges to the realization of sustainable development goals, the issue of COVID-19 has proved to create a strong challenge to global effort for successful implementation of SDGs which Nigeria is not an exception. This paper has exposed how COVID-19 is a challenge to the achievement of sustainable development goals in Nigeria (by relying on SDG 1, 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9).

It is observed that COVID-19 pandemic has to a large extent brought negative impact on the socio-economic development in Nigeria. This is because the COVID-19 pandemic had increased the level of poverty (which has a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups), increased food insecurity, reduced income level, led to poor level of nutrition, increased level of disease and mortality rate. COVID-19 also contributes to over burdening of the health system and undermined quality and inclusive education. Others are high rate of unemployment, increase government deficit, decline in GDP rate, increase in inflation,

decline in industrial output, high incidence of closure and bankruptcies of some SMES and industries and fall in oil prices.

### **Recommendations**

For Nigerian government to solve the problem of COVID–19 and its effect on SDGs implementation, the following are recommended:

- i. Nigeria’s economy must diversify away from reliance on oil and focus should be based on agriculture, manufacturing sector, technology, service etc which are relevant for improvement in GDP and employment generation.
- ii. There is need for reduction of interest rate as regards to loan commercial banks give to small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). This will help local businesses or industries to cope with COVID-19 challenge.
- iii. The government should ensure adequate reduction of existing tax rate or give tax break to some SMEs in order to encourage them to operate effectively. This will prevent closure and bankruptcies of SMEs mainly as result of the COVID-19 challenge.
- iv. Government should increase spending in area of infrastructure in terms of improving road network, health system, electricity etc. This will encourage the effective operation of SMEs and encourage employment opportunities.
- v. Revamping of the manufacturing sector is very necessary to solve the problem of COVID–19 effects on the economy. This will reduce the over dependence on imported goods and increase the Nigeria’s level of export and improve the exchange rate.
- vi. More effort should be done towards revamping the health sector or system by providing the necessary health facilities required in the health system and adequate funding is also needed to cope with challenge during COVID-19.
- vii. Adequate funding or investment of education is very necessary for realization of sustainable development goals. Investment in education should be on research and development, adoption of ICT, improvement educational infrastructure and effective incentive to teachers and promotion of science and technology.
- viii. Government should take necessary action to adopt effective measures for control of inflation rate. Adequate steps should be taken to ensure that prices of goods and services are affordable to consumers or people.

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