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## A REVIEW OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 DISASTER IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Disasters have become an issue of global concerns as occurrences of events that have been catastrophic have raised apprehensions about human survival. The emergence of the novel COVID-19 pandemic is evidence that such apprehensions are not misplaced because the infection has raised serious concerns across the local, regional, and global levels. The experience of the virus globally, which transcends social class and status, has continually demonstrated and exacerbate risks such as mortality, food insecurity, economic crises, institutional weakening, and disruption of economic, health system, and social activity. However, even though COVID-19 is a global problem, its management is dependent on the socioeconomic characteristics, the available physical and social infrastructures, as well as the functional efficiency of key institutions within the specific affected region which, in turn, determines the level of its impact. In Nigeria, various measures targeted at reducing the communal spread of the virus have become imperative since the authorities could not prevent the spread of the pandemic into the country. To this end, personal and environmental hygiene, social distancing have become the societal norm while ban on large gatherings and partial and total lockdowns were imposed on the people. Despite all these strategic initiatives, the incidence of COVID-19 continues to escalate across the country. A possible explanation for this is the failure of policy makers to consider the country's local peculiarities and socioeconomic system in the deployment of mitigating plans for checking communal transmission of disease. Thus, this paper examines the influence of the socioeconomic institutions within the political boundary on the effectiveness of disaster management strategies. The paper also underscores ways of preventing and managing a pandemic impact with respect to COVID-19.*

**Keywords:** Impact; COVID-19; Prevention; Mitigation; Management; Nigeria

### **Background to the Study**

COVID-19 is a contagious respiratory infection that originated from the animal market in Hubei District, Wuhan-China as a suspected outbreak of pneumonia in November, 2019 (Olapegba *et al.*, 2020). This has since risen to a global pandemic that continues to spread across the world with multiple cases of infections and deaths recorded. The index case for Nigeria was an imported case that was reported on February 27, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). To date, the total tests carried out stands at 433, 206, the total number of confirmed cases is 55, 632, active cases are 10, 952, total discharged patients stand at 43,610. Unfortunately, however, the total deaths recorded are 1,070 in the country (NCDC, 2020). The advent of this unfortunate occurrence prompted the declaration of a global public health emergency by the WHO to enhance concerted response to the disease across the globe. This was due to the widespread of the disease and the devastating harm it has continued to cause globally (WHO, 2020). This further implies that a high contagious rate coupled with the containment difficulties, and limited epidemiological knowledge of the disease heightened the fear in most people and the authorities. Consequent upon this, a lockdown was imposed by most governments to stop everyday political, administrative, and economic activities, with the hope that this will slow down the high morbidity and mortality caused by the disease.

The lockdown means travel ban, border closures, cancellation of local and international sporting events and compulsory quarantine for infected individuals (Ogoina, 2020). Lavell & Lavell (2020) highlighted also that the negative impacts of the virus cut across the organised sectors, and institutions, notably, the health sector, the political, administrative, and economic institutions, education, sports and others, which include the stock markets, oil prices and trade, airline revenue, international trades, tourism and so on. Furthermore, the informal sector, which include individuals, families, and petty businesses were affected. It is therefore not surprising that the situation has metamorphosed into the deepest historical global recession, with more than two-thirds of the world population placed on lockdown.

The 2011 Global Assessment Report of UNISDR (GAR11) reveals that economic losses incurred due to disasters in 2011 stood at a record \$366 billion. This figure is a far cry from the estimated cost of COVID-19 outbreak, which was put at US\$2 trillion by UNCTAD [<http://cseaafrica.org/the-implication-of-covid19-on-the-nigerian-economy/>]. UNCTAD's estimated cost of the virus confirms the fact that, the COVID-19 pandemic is an economic pandemonium; its impact on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of most countries is a pointer to this. For instance, GDP decline was reported for Australia and France (7% & 5.8% respectively in the second quarter), USA (expected 9.1% annual decline), India (23.9%) [IMF, 2020]. Furthermore, the GDP of the UK contracted by 20.4%, the economy of Japan was also reported to have shrunk by 7.8% (National Bureau of Statistics; NBS, 2020). The IMF after re-assessing the 2020 and 2021 potential for economic growth declared that the global economy has gone into a recession that is as dreadful as the 2009 recession or even worse (UN, 2020).

Locally, the decline in the Nigerian economy was by 6.1% in the second quarter (NBS, 2020). An obvious consequence of this is the loss of many jobs while the widespread of the infection persists, with no transmission terminus in sight (NCDC, 2020). Therefore, most countries have been trying so hard to curtail the spread of this deadly virus by observing personal and environmental hygiene measures. To this end, this study was embarked upon to examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the various sectors in Nigeria, while not leaving out the social ills such as gender-based-violence. The study does not also leave out the actions taken by the government and the private sector to contain the transmission menace.

### **COVID-19: A Disaster View**

A disaster, according to the UNISDR (2009) is “a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or society causing widespread human, material, economic, or environmental loss which goes beyond the day-to-day ability of the affected people or community or society to cope using its resources”. This definition highlights some salient points which sync perfectly with the consequences manifested by the novel coronavirus. This line of thought supports the perception that the pandemic is a disaster or a calamity (Lavell & Lavell, 2020).

There have been several debates amongst scholars centering on the justification of whether the COVID-19 pandemic is a disaster or a social phenomenon. According to the United Nations (2020), the world is facing a health pandemonium that is unlike any since its inception 75 years ago. It is a crisis that is causing death, compounding people's suffering, and a source of nervy confusion. Critical to this debate is the assertion that a disaster is the resultant effect of natural hazards and social vulnerability.

The argument is not on the social vulnerability aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic, rather, the bone of contention lies in its justification as a hazard. Kelman's (2020) opinion throws a searchlight on the subject in this respect. He stated that the incessant ecosystem tampering by mankind has led to the creation of various hazards which include HIV, Ebola, and now, the novel coronavirus. This suggests that man's endless tinkering with the environment has often been counterproductive, as justified by the series of emanating hazards. The UNISDR definition, however, illuminates the social vulnerability content of the virus. This is because; its advent caused a serious disruption to societal routines and daily functioning. Furthermore, the high morbidity it causes gives it a social and economic dimension, hence, its description as a health and socioeconomic disaster is justified (Lavell & Lavell, 2020). In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic is unequivocally a disaster.

### **Conceptualisation**

Globally, newer approaches to disaster management are emerging. Kamal (2007) stated that the conceptualisation of disaster as a physical or social phenomenon has been a long-standing debate between physical and social scientists. Kelly (1988) also recognised the roles of disaster management in the conceptualisation process, which has led to the generation of knowledgeable contributions; notably, the evolution of newer perspectives (physical and engineering views to social, political, cultural and psychological views).

According to USAID (2012), the situation of increasing disaster incidences has prompted the development of a disaster response and recovery concept with a strict emphasis on prevention and preparedness in countries. Furthermore, Kamal (2007) stated that a new trend that is geared towards an active involvement of local people in disaster management is being promoted.

This is prompted by the fact that crisis after disasters is similar to everyday difficulties; the only difference being the intensity and magnitude of the difficulties encountered (Kamal, 2007).

Based on the foregoing, the concepts aim to build on disaster mitigation and possibly try to prevent the impacts of this hazard in the long run. It is to this effect that the awareness on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) concept, since the World Conference for Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan in mid-January 2005 has increased (Ahmed, 2006). The best form of defense is always to prepare and prevent natural disasters by strengthening our infrastructures comprehensively, develop policies and programmes to reduce risks and exposures. Although the World Bank and the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) have been investing about \$5 billion in disaster risk management and urban resilience projects annually, most countries have not been able to key into this, hence, the reason for many devastating consequences from the outbreak of the virus in different countries (Wahba, 2020).

Nations around the world, regardless of whether they are developed or otherwise, were all afflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic; thus, it is understandable that the needs of these countries are similar. Such needs according to the NCDC (2020) include the purchase of more Personal Protective Equipment, more emphasis on testing, detecting, isolating, contact tracing, and taking care of the COVID-19 positive cases so as not to infect others, especially the vulnerable in the society. It is also pertinent to note that some countries are experiencing more than one natural disaster (such as flooding) at the same time with the COVID-19 pandemic. This could cause greater problems unless authorities make flexible efforts to avoid further escalation of the problems in an already perilous situation. It is therefore advisable that the authorities should be prepared to tackle issues; especially the perennial ones whenever they occur.

### **Socioeconomic Impacts of Covid-19 Disaster on the Economy, Some Sectors and Social Ills in Nigeria**

According to UNESCO (2020), the outset of COVID-19 pandemic in Africa resulted in the introduction of strict measures targeted at containing its spread. However, the modalities of these measures as stated previously involve the

shutting down of activities across the various sectors of the everyday life. Some of the affected sectors and the manifested effects are:

***Nigeria's Educational Systems***

Globally, a population of 1.723 billion learners has been impacted by the closure of educational facilities in response to the coronavirus pandemic (Adelakun, 2020). This decision, which was taken by authorities of different countries in April, 2020 affected 191 countries where a total closure was implemented, while 5 countries implemented local closures (UNESCO, 2020). In total, this decision affected 98.4% of the global student population. In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education ordered the closure of all schools for one-month duration to prevent the spread of the virus among students in the country. This affected over 51 million students nationwide. This does not leave out about 400, 000 children in the IDP camps in the north whose education has been disrupted as a result of multiple crises arising from security challenges which led to their displacement (Ifiok, 2020). This development, however, necessitated that schools globally switch to online learning.

Ifiok (2020) also pointed out that with 40% of Nigerian citizens living on less than \$1 per day, internet access is only available to one out of four people. Thus, the outbreak of the pandemic further exposed the lacuna caused by socioeconomic disparity in educational access. The rich in the country send their children to expensive private schools most of which have very well-equipped ICT facilities that aid learning, so their wards might not experience too many challenges accessing learning. On the other hand, students from poor homes are highly disadvantaged without access to computers, tablets and are therefore denied the opportunity to learning (Plate 1). More importantly, this means that millions of children in the country without remote-learning access will not be carried along. In addition, most of these children live in areas where there is hardly any internet connectivity and very poor electric power supply, even when they have access to computers at all. Even those that have Internet connectivity, power supply or access to computers also have their challenges in the form of high data tariffs and network issues.



**Plate 1: Government Secondary School, Tuda Wada, Abuja**  
**Source: Ifiok, 2020**

### ***Low-Income Earners***

Low-income earners are more likely to contract the COVID-19 disease (Fisher & Bubola, 2020). This is predicated on the emerging facts from the socioeconomic indexes about the people in this social class. Low-income earners live in vicinities with poor accommodation which are characterised by chokiness, crowdedness, poor ventilation and availability of scanty basic amenities. The likelihood of transmission and infection is heightened in such conditions as self-isolation becomes a daunting challenge. Furthermore, low-income earners usually work in low skill jobs, such as, grocery stores, supermarkets, pharmacies, which are very essential during the COVID-19 disease outbreak (Buchanan *et al.*, 2020; Madrid, 2020). This means that the low income earners of the society are more exposed and are likely to be infected.

### **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**

Auzzir *et al.* (2018) posited that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are important actors in social inclusion, innovation in rural areas, and local employment. They contribute immensely to the efficient operation of any economy by aiding the delivery of goods during and after public emergencies (Burton, Confield, Gasner, and Weisfuse, 2011). However, they are highly prone to economic crisis because of their low-savings capacity, and lack of

proper succession plans, which is why most SMEs suffer during emergencies (Turner & Akinremi, 2020).

This sub-sector of the Nigerian economy is among the sectors that are affected by the partial lockdown and restrictions in movement, as most of them had to halt their services. This subsequently led to a drop in the profitability of their businesses and to consequent layoff of their employees. As a matter of fact, about 50,000 workers have lost their jobs in the MSMEs sub-sector of the economy already; with about 10,000 MSMEs businesses shut down completely across the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Iloani *et al.*, 2020).

These small and medium scale businesses are ensnared by the daily transaction flow; hence, they rarely have savings because most of their money go back into the business to keep it going. The lockdown occasioned by the COVID-19 outbreak has overwhelmed many of such businesses and they have sunk in under the weight of reduced demands while most of them are struggling to survive. It is important to note also that most businesses suffering the brunt of the pandemic are those that deal in perishables, subsistence farmers, street hawkers to mention but a few. These are also people who depend on daily turnover and whose patronage has been limited by the restricted movement; they might be consumed by the COVID-19 crisis if no helping hand is offered to them.

### ***Religious Organisations***

Religious institutions also had their fair share of the pandemic. The decision to restrict people from congregating in public places and moving en mass seriously affected faith houses. Its impacts range from cancellation of worship services, the closure of Sunday Schools, cancellation of pilgrimages surrounding observances, festivals and so on. Estimates show that the Christian population comprising about 46.3%, the Muslim population, comprising about 46% and about 7.4% of traditional worships were affected by the measures put in place to slow down the curve of the spread of the pandemic (Tofe, 2020). Governments around the world opted to limit mass gathering and large movements of people to the barest and advocated the stay at home and stay safe initiatives. Hence, there was a massive cancellation of crowd gathering of religious and faith-based activities globally



(<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation.pdf>).

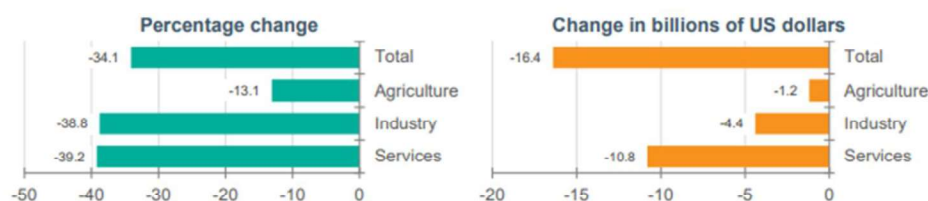
Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, and Temples offered worship and other religious activities through live-stream on the internet, Apps, Television houses amidst the pandemic (Tofe, 2020; Parke, 2020). In a country where the people do not believe much in the political class, the religious and traditional leaders comprising mainly the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) have a huge role to play, as the Government's mouthpiece, in talking to their members who believe in them more than they (the members) believe in the Government (Campbell & McCaslin, 2020). Indeed, these bodies greatly supported the lockdowns instructed by governments and have even gone as far as working with some local and state governments to give out non-pharmaceutical guidelines and to encourage compliance.

#### ***Nigeria's Economy***

COVID-19 recession is the economic recession happening across the world's economy in 2020 (Schwartz, 2020; Horowitz, 2020). As this virus spreads around the world, many countries went into total and partial lockdown, which led to the disruption of businesses and economic activities leading to stock markets experiencing their worst crash since 1987 (Jones *et al.*, 2020). Partial restrictions on movements led to consumers spending more on essential goods and services thereby reducing consumption of non-essential commodities, leading to the unequal balance between essential and non-essential commodities, which have reduced their income generation levels.

Nigeria is Africa's leading economy with over 200-million population. Going by the volume of the country's GDP, it is the 30<sup>th</sup> largest economy worldwide but largely dependent on oil exportation. This makes the country susceptible to crude oil price fluctuations such as the 2014 oil-price slump, which led to a decline in the country's GDP to 2.3% (Economic Outlook Interim Report Coronavirus, 2020). The country's economic recovery effort remains fragile and has been further worsened by the COVID-19 onslaught, culminating to a further shrinking of the GDP to 2% due to oil prices decline in February 2020 (Economic Outlook Interim Report Coronavirus, 2020).

The impact of the five-week lockdown in Abuja (FCT), Lagos State, Ogun State, and Kano State in some sectors in Nigeria showed an aggregate impact on the GDP and its components. From Figure 1 below, it shows that the highest losses were recorded in these three sectors: industrial (-38.8%), services (-39.2%) and agricultural (-13.1%) (Akanni *et al.*, 2020).



**Figure 1. Estimated changes in Nigeria's GDP during the COVID-19 lockdown period**

Source: Akanni *et al.*, 2020

Further restrictions imposed on non-essential wholesale and retail trades account for 30.3% of the total GDP losses recorded in Nigeria during the period of the lockdown. Also, during the lockdown, the poverty rate increased to 13.7% nationally, which means that 27million more Nigerians went below the poverty line (Akanni *et al.*, 2020).

Additionally, the pandemic created high levels of uncertainty, creating some negative forecasts by firms on possible investment projects. These restrictions also affected border closures resulting in a huge decline in exports (Amara, 2020). With these many consequences attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government and policymakers were forced to be in a dilemma on the appropriate course of action to take in order to salvage the economic crisis. Therefore, if nothing is done by the Government to improve the economy, the GDP by December 2020 will drop to as low as -5.2/-5.5 (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2020).

i. Tourism

Tourism occupies an important place in the global economy (UNCTAD, 2020). This is mainly due to its contributions to the international economy. UNCTAD (2019) highlighted some of these salient contributions to include 29% of the world exportation services and an estimated 300 million jobs globally. Hence,

it is an income and employment source for developed and developing nations. The advent of a disaster of global dimension like the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the sector immensely. This is especially critical for developing countries that depend on tourism for a sizable part of their GDP. Cumulatively, the UNWTO (2020) estimated the losses in international tourism arrivals and export revenues to be between \$850 million to \$1.1 billion, and \$910 million to \$1.1 billion respectively. Furthermore, job losses in the sector were put at 100-120 million globally.

Tourism in Nigeria before the COVID-19 period has been on the decline across the country due to security challenges such as kidnapping, banditry, insurgency, and so on. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country, the impacts have plunged the sector deeper into a further decline in tourist inflow. This is particularly heightened by the containment modalities introduced to check tourism and other activities. Some of these modalities are listed below:

- ban on International flights;
- quarantine restrictions;
- fear of mass gatherings;
- fear of illnesses abroad;
- issues with cross-border medical insurance; and
- damage to the image of the cruise company if there is any exposure to a COVID-19 patient.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, 2020 that Nigeria would have about 4.7 million travellers less, which was expected to lead to a revenue loss of US\$0.89 billion which could further lead to the loss of about 125,400 jobs in the country; all due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Olalekan, 2020). Some further impacts of this deadly virus on the country's Tourism include increased cancellations of hotel bookings, rescheduling of entertainment events, leading to loss of jobs running into millions. At this rate, without external support, the sector may not be able to return to normalcy even after the pandemic ends.

#### ii. Hospitality and Entertainment Industry in Nigeria

This industry represents an important part of the tourism industry, and includes the lodges, resorts, tourist homes, restaurant, guesthouses, cinemas, eateries and others (Biwota, 2020). The outbreak of the coronavirus affected the sector

globally as Deloitte (2020) stated that the decision to close down hotels, theme parks, restaurants, cinemas as well as the disruption to the travel schedules have a sizable effect on worldwide tourism. Furthermore, Ozili & Arun (2020) reported that the worth of the hotel booking cancellations is huge; hence, the hotel industry required a bailout of \$150 billion.

The situation was not different in Nigeria as the country was also negatively impacted. The directive for social and economic lockdown by the Federal Government towards the end of March 2020 also affected the industry's operations as outlets became restricted to takeout orders and delivery. This translates to job losses for waiters and bartenders. Also, Cinemas, Game houses, and other Entertainment gatherings were put on hold indefinitely. The pandemic therefore caused the cancellation or postponement of major events around the world.

The Nigerian entertainment industry was not left out of the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. It greatly affected the Nigerian Film Industry (NFI) 2020 revenue projection, which had been projected at USD1 billion (Olaniwun, 2020). The International Film Festivals and Markets were cancelled until further notice. Some foreign and local movies due for release were also cancelled due to lockdowns and restrictions arising from the pandemic (Olaniwun, 2020).

### iii. Transportation

Transportation has always been the backbone of any thriving and successful business (Olurounbi, 2020). For demand and supply to occur successfully, the transport system must be of immense importance. But due to the surge in the positive cases of the COVID-19 disease in the country, the Federal Government had ordered two phases of lockdown in metropolitan areas such as Lagos State, Ogun State, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja which ran for five weeks. International and Domestic flights were banned, same for the Railway services and interstate passenger bus travels. On the 4th of May 2020, the lockdown was eased on the condition that Nigerians would adhere strictly to non-pharmaceutical guidelines provided for compliance in public spaces. The transport sector is a great enabler of the spread of this virus.

Similar to the situations in other sectors, certain guidelines were extended to the transportation sector to serve as lockdown guidelines against further escalation of the infection. However, inconsistencies in the enforcement of these guidelines in key states like Lagos, Ogun and Abuja (FCT) and other States led to a severe impact on the livelihood of workers in the informal sector, which was about 70% loss (Obiakor, 2020); interstate travels continued, causing the further spread of the virus, (Aliyu, 2020). Consequently, Mobile Courts were established to enforce and punish violators of the lockdown guidelines. Although, all these efforts were put in place to contain the spread of the virus and flatten the curve, its enforcement impacted the sector negatively as it caused a huge revenue drop in the transport sector in the country. According to Olurounbi (2020), 80 million Nigerians utilise public transport on daily basis. An assessment of the impact of the lockdown on the average national fare of ₦150 per day for five weeks implies that an estimate of ₦3 trillion had been lost by the sector (Olurounbi, 2020). Otunola (2020) also emphasised that the public transport sector and supply chains linked to transportation have been the most affected by the pandemic and the lockdown (Otunola, 2020).

In the Aviation sector, revenue declined drastically due to the grounding of about 120 domestic aircraft nationwide. Nigeria's Aviation Minister reported that the sector had been losing 21 billion naira monthly with thousands of job loss since the outbreak of the COVID-19. This is because this sector relies solely on flight operations for its sustenance. The Association of Nigerian Travel Agencies (ANTA) also reported that in the first two months of the global lockdown, the Nigerian travel industry lost more than 180 billion naira and thousands of jobs to stay afloat (Akinsanmi, 2020). Knowing that, after the pandemic activities such as online e-learning, e-commerce activities such as working remotely, home delivery services, holding of virtual meetings, and working from home generally will increase, thereby reducing traffic on all segments of transportation, which will further impact the sector implies that the operators across the transport systems will have to find a balance on how to rise above these disruptions.

#### iv. Unemployment

The unemployment statistics released by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as at August, 2020 indicated an increase from 23.1% in the third quarter of 2018 to 27.1% in the second quarter of 2020 (NBS, 2020). Jobs had become very

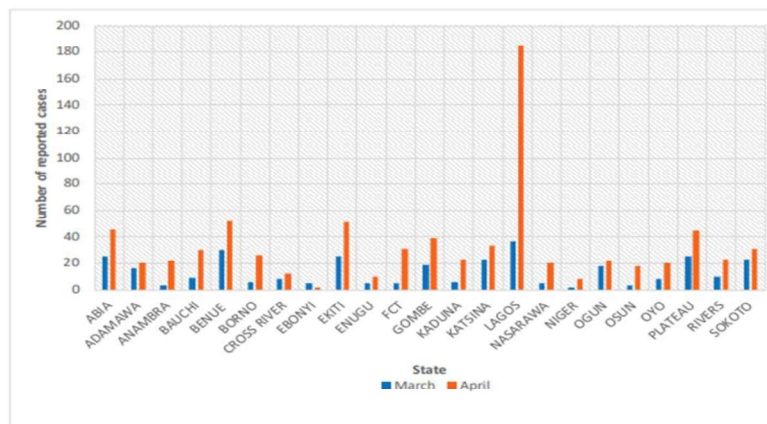
scarce as the COVID-19 outbreak had deepened the economic crisis, thereby causing a further rise in the unemployment rate in the country. Different sectors had retrenched their employees to try to mitigate the negative effects of the virus. About 42% had lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more were still losing their jobs (NBS, 2020). With more youths thrown into the labour market, we cannot but expect an increase in the crime rate in the country. Also, with the surge of the pandemic, the Government had been experiencing reduced tax revenue leading to a hike in the production of substandard goods, inflation, etc. (Victoria, 2020). With the outbreak of this virus, therefore, an additional 5 million Nigerians will be plunged into abject poverty by December, 2020 if something is not done to mitigate its impact and spread (IMF, 2020; World Bank, 2020).

v. Gender-Based Violence

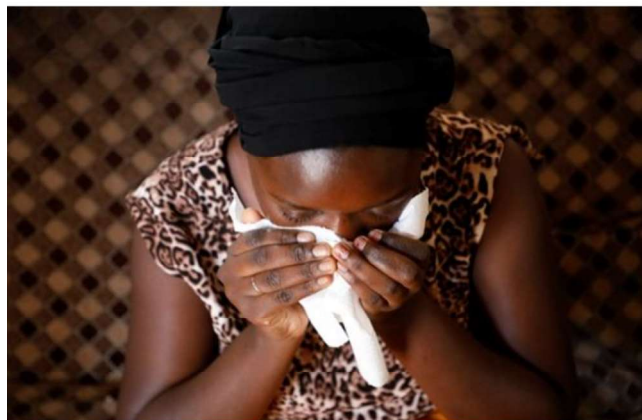
Women and girls are usually on the receiving end of any disease outbreak, economic crisis or emergencies generally (UNDP, 2020). About 35% of women and girls globally have already been exposed and experienced some form of violations but this figure goes as high as about 70% when there is a form of crisis (WHO, 2020). The partial lockdown and restriction of movement ordered by governments worsened the incidence of gender-based violence in countries because most of the affected women and girls were forced to remain at home with their violators, exposing them to more domestic violence. These consequences are severe on the survivors of these violences because they suffer some form of trauma for a very long time and some for a lifetime.

The UN Women Report (2020) stated that approximately 243 million women and girls of between ages 15 and 49 years have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in the last 12 months. This figure had definitely increased as health, security challenges, poor living conditions, and reduced cash inflow due to the COVID-19 pandemic increased, leading to a build-up of tensions among citizens (UN Women, 2020). Gender-based violence (GBV) during the lockdown skyrocketed with Lagos, Benue, and Ekiti States taking the lead. The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team recorded a three-fold rise in the number of telephone calls on their hotlines between March-April, 2020. This rise in distress calls relating to GBV was reported by most service providers in the country. From the Figure

2 below, data on reported cases in the country revealed that total GBV was 346 in March, while in the early part of April the figure rose drastically to 794 cases (56% rise) due to the two-week imposed lockdown to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The incidents of GBV ranged from rape of children, intimate partner abuse (Plate 2), tenant-landlord assault to mention but a few (UNODC, 2020; UN Women, 2020).

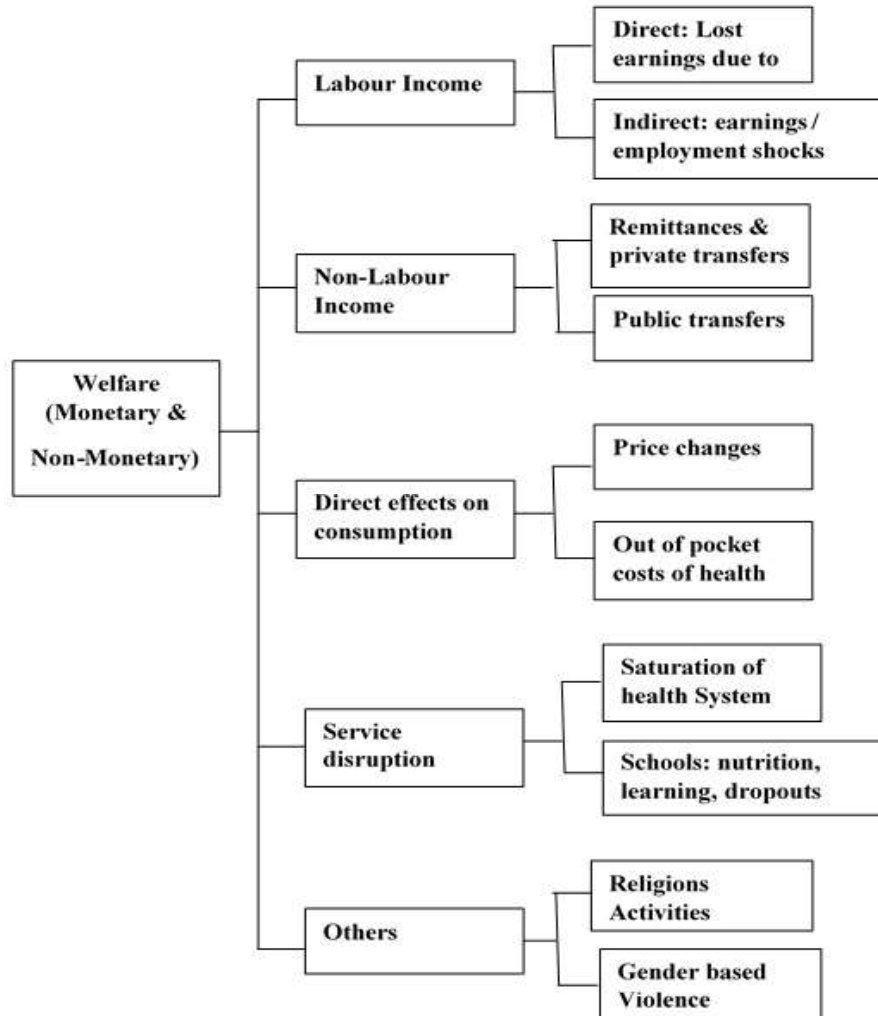


**Figure 2: Spike in the number of reported Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases from 23 States in Nigeria during the lockdown (March-April)**  
**Source:** Federal and State Ministries of Women Affairs, 2020



**Plate 2: A Victim of domestic violence**  
**Source:** UN Women/ Khadidiatou, Ndiaye (2020)

The World Bank (2020) summarised the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on welfare in a chart which was adapted to include other effects on a country like Nigeria. This is presented in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3: The main channels for short-term impacts of COVID-19 on welfare**  
Source: *World Bank, 2020*



### **Measures Aimed at Mitigating the COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts in the Different Spheres and Sectors of Nigeria**

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic varies from one country to another. This is influenced by several factors which range from the morbidity to mortality rate, available health and social infrastructures, the wealth at the disposal of the government among and other related factors. The measures deployed by the Nigerian Government to manage the different socioeconomic, political and cultural dimensions manifested by the pandemic are discussed as follows:

***Policy Response and Intervention Measures Aimed at the Economy***The Nigerian government, as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided the stimulus checks, monetary policy initiatives, and palliatives. Small businesses were completely exempted from company income tax while medium-sized businesses tax rate was reduced from 30 to 20%. The 2019 public budget increased from 8.83 trillion naira to about 10.59 trillion naira in 2020; 11% of the nation's GDP (Chukwuka & Amara, 2020). The CBN arranged a fiscal stimulus package of about 50 billion naira, which was to assist in raising demand and supply forces because most businesses had been obeying restriction orders. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund also came to the aid of the nation by granting loans to assist the country in financing the country's budgets (Chukwuka & Amara, 2020).

Again, the country has about 4.7 million MSMEs and about 50,000 jobs from the MSMEs had been lost to the COVID-19 pandemic already (NBS, 2020). The CBN rolled in palliatives to save MSMEs from sinking by giving out about 50 million naira as credit facility, with a single-digit interest rate of 5%. The intention of the apex Bank was to alleviate the sufferings of households and MSMEs that had been worse hit. However, the 5% interest rate, which was celebrated though, still came as a burden to MSMEs who had been struggling with the previous loans taken from cooperatives, commercial banks, micro-finance banks, and so on (Victoria, 2020).

It therefore came as no surprise that these MSMEs were clamouring for a moratorium on loan repayments, decrease in existing loan rates, liquidity relief, provision of grants to achieve short-term responsibilities, rise in working capital loans at a negotiable rate, amongst others, to assist them from crumbling further

to support the economy. Without these forms of support, it would mean the country was not far from being plunged into deeper crisis that could range from increase in unemployment to crime rate, especially among the youths (Iloani *et al.*, 2020).

### ***Health Sector***

About 100 billion-naira loan was granted to the health sector and 1 trillion naira to the manufacturing sector. The state governments tried to provide palliatives in the form of foodstuffs to the vulnerable in the different states to lessen the effects of the outbreak (Okenna, 2020). The private sector response to the mitigation of COVID 19 pandemic has been magnanimously awesome and of great support to the country. The private sector has contributed millions of naira in cash, medical consumables, provision of isolation centres, heavy medical treatment equipment, and has continued to support the health system. The sector has also been part of the training and re-training of health workers on detection, infection, treatment, isolation and prevention to reduce infection of health workers and to better fight the virus outbreak across all states in the country (Chukwuka, 2020). The oil and gas industry also contributed in the fight against the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Acting through the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), the industry donated about 21 billion naira, 250-bed space facility, and several ambulances to aid the Nigerian Government in the fight against the unseen enemy. To further reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy, the Central Bank of Nigeria dropped all CBN Interventions interest rates from 9% to 5% (Chukwuka & Amara, 2020).

### ***Gender-Based Violence***

Prioritisation of gender-based violence centres should be recognised as essential services by the Government. For example, the Mirabel Centre for Sexual Assault as a referral centre on their own decided to open daily from 10a.m. - 2p.m. to provide services to survivors of violence. Women should be included in decision making to enable gender issues to be well captured. Furthermore, the UN Women were in talks with State Governments to provide vehicles and drivers to ensure prompt action at the centres (UN Women, 2020). In Nigeria, support was provided to victims by non-profit and non-governmental organisations which planned and organised training programmes for lawyers to defend women's rights in domestic violence. Various campaigns

and protests were also carried out to end brutality against women in the country, to prevent discrimination on women across the board. The government, NGOs, Donor and Civil society organisations were developing a system to enhance centralised data collection and management of gender-based violence. Livelihood opportunities and palliatives attributed to the pandemic were aimed at the Survivors of GBV (UNFPA, 2020).

### ***Public and Private Gatherings***

Some of the measures and guidelines provided to prevent the spread of the virus through social gatherings include the following:

- Prohibition of gatherings of more than 10 people: This includes gatherings of non-residents in private homes. Workplaces are exempted from the restriction on indoor and outdoor gatherings of 10 or more people. Workplaces should at all times maintain a distance of 2-metres between individuals;
- Limiting public outings to essential needs such as markets, pharmacies, hospitals, etc;
- Religious gatherings, weddings, funerals were also limited to 20 people at a time with strict compliance to the 2-metres safe distance;
- Most offices were advised to engage in virtual meetings (NCDC, 2020).

### ***Hotels and Public Accommodation***

The measures recommended include:

- Common areas and surfaces such as doorknobs/handles, reception desks, elevator buttons, light switches, and washrooms and guest rooms should be cleaned and disinfected regularly;
- Buffets, dispensing of public drinks and the option of self-serve should be disallowed, rather such services should be restricted to employees who adhered to the proper hand hygiene requirements;
- Recreation centres, dining and breakfast areas at restaurants should be shut down to reduce people coming together. Events centres and conference rooms should be locked if strict non-pharmaceutical guidelines cannot be followed;
- Prohibition of regular housekeeping services to rooms of self-isolating individuals. Housekeeping provisions should be left at the door step of the room occupier;

- Customers who are self-isolating should remain indoors;
- Rooms occupied by self-isolating customers, when vacated should be cleaned, and potentially infected surfaces should be disinfected exhaustively and all clothing items should be laundered (NCDC, 2020).

### ***Transportation***

- Public transportations should only be used when possibility of escalation is reduced;
- Practice social distancing. 2-metres safe distance from fellow passengers on buses, larger vehicles and at bus stations;
- Alternative payment methods to cash handling should be encouraged;
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water for 20-seconds or use of alcohol-based sanitiser.

### ***Private Homes***

- Regular disinfection of surfaces and doorknobs to check virus spread;
- Laundry should be done at the highest temperature settings possible;
- Isolate any member of the household who becomes ill, limit contact to caregiving provisions, clean and disinfect the room and surfaces regularly and wash hands when leaving the room;
- Shopping should be done with facemasks and preceded by hand washing and immediate hot water bath once you get home;
- Receiving of packages from external sources should be preceded by practicing good hand hygiene by washing hands with soaps after handling items (NCDC, 2020).

### ***Educational System***

The temporary closures of schools have made educators, policymakers and stakeholders to devise alternative means of learning such as online learning, WhatsApp and radio programmes to reach remote areas in the country. The Government provided computers, tablets, transistor radios to students to enhance their distant learning practices (Taibat, 2020).

In Nigeria, the Government was mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic impact by providing educational gadgets powered via solar-energy, which were pre-loaded with offline academic aids, to learners in disadvantaged and vulnerable

communities. Furthermore, educational lessons were also broadcast on radio and television stations in the country while the lockdown persists (Taibat, 2020).

### ***Religious Bodies***

Measures introduced include:

- Provision of different forms of palliatives such as material and financial support;
- Rendition of prayers to end the pandemic in the country and the world at large by members of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) while also asking God to grant the right wisdom to scientists and caregivers to fight the disease.
- The Pope in the United Kingdom designated a National Day of Prayer for this same purpose (Parke, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

It is always better to attain some level of infrastructural development in preparation for any form of disaster. Hence, the country should develop policies to enhance preparedness, resilience and management of disasters to reduce the potential negative impacts of disasters on the country's economy, lives and properties.

No country all over the world has come up with any vaccine yet at the time of this study to prevent COVID-19. Since this was the case everywhere, the best that could be done to prevent contracting the virus or spreading it to our loved ones was to adhere strictly to the non-pharmaceutical guidelines laid down by WHO, 2020 and the NCDC, 2020).

### **Recommendations**

In view of the foregoing, this study recommends as follows:

- The enactment and enforcement of more federal and state policies that can cushion the effects of the pandemic on the economy and support its recovery;

- Government should identify and associate with gender-based violence organisations and provide strategic supports to them to enhance their services during disaster times such as the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Provision of financial palliatives for vulnerable groups like the poor, disabled, peasant farmers, small businesses and others;
- Provisions of subsidised mobile data packages through governments and telecommunications providers partnering with schools;
- Formulation and implementation of policies on economic diversification targeted at developing alternative sectors to the oil sector to increase productivity and combat poverty;
- Improved educational funding to raise the quality of education. Provisions of back to school kits and revamping of classrooms and the school community to ensure safety and protection in and around the schools.

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