



## AN ASSESSMENT OF COVID 19 RESPONSE BY NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

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### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

COVID 19 is the first global threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Individual countries and global body such as World Health Organization came up with policies aimed to address it. This study examined the response by the Nigerian Government. The study relied on qualitative analysis of data from secondary sources. Public Policy was used as a framework of analysis in this study. The study discovered that the Nigerian Government spared no time in formulating policies to stem the spread of COVID 19 pandemic. Such measures included contact tracing, imposition of curfews, interstate travel ban among others. The foregoing have affected the Nigerians wellbeing more especially the less privilege. It was recommended that there is need for collaboration between ministry of health and Nigeria's Immigration service in keeping record and tracing people coming and going out of Nigeria. Citizens on their part should be supportive and comply with safety measures to avoid contracting COVID 19 virus.

**Keywords:** COVID 19; response; assessment; Nigerian; government.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The entire world witnessed a serious challenge that affected almost all the countries in the World. The COVID 19 pandemic remains one important issue that shaped and continues to influence the happening in the whole world. This posed a serious problem to the world at large. The first case of the COVID 19 virus was found in Wuhan, China but quickly spread across the globe and thus it was declared as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 World Health Organization [1].

In Nigeria, the first case of COVID 19 was recorded in Lagos State, on the 27th of February 2020. Following the returned of Italian citizen who travelled to Milan, Italy on the 25th of February, 2020. He was confirmed by the Virology Laboratory of the Lagos

University Teaching Hospital, part of the Laboratory Network of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control.

Upon detecting the first case, the Nigeria's government embarked on policies and measures geared towards containing the spread of the virus. This study seeks assessed the COVID 19 response by the Nigerian government as relate to: 1. what are the COVID 19 Response measures taken by the Nigerian Government? 2. And what is the impact of these policies on the Nigerians?

### 2. METHODOLOGY

This study relied on secondary sources of data such as journal articles, textbooks, national dailies, as well as publication by relevant government agencies. The data were qualitative in nature. Hence content

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analytical framework was used during data analysis while bearing in minds the objectives of the research.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Public Policy is a framework of analysis adopted in this study. Government is expected to formulate and execute public policies for the betterment of society. According to Harris [2] public policy consists of the goals and assumptions that underline what government does. It is a kind of guide for governmental action. Ogbeide [3] also viewed public policy as a purposive direction or course of action undertaken by governmental institutions and officials to address a specific social problem or issue in society. Similarly, it is an attempt by a government to address a public issue by instituting laws, regulations, decisions, or actions pertinent to the problem at hand. Within this context, public policy is a deliberate governmental action and as such, not all governmental activities are policies. Public policies must be directed at resolving specific societal problems of public concern [3].

Social or public policy according to Olurode as cited in [4] is a set of affirmative action which are designed to confront a particular social issue with the hope of ameliorating a worrying or problematic situation or bring about improvements in social conditions. Olurode further buttressed that the worrying situation itself constitutes a social problem about which social policy has been formulated to arrest the situation through actionable programs as opposed to mere paperwork or theories. Furthermore, [5] opined that public policies are those policies developed by governmental bodies and officials, although non-governmental sectors and factors may, of course, influence policy development. This provides the basis for government and political authorities to take actions that are accepted as binding most of the time by most members of the society so long as they act within the limits of their roles and powers [6].

From the discussion so far, it can be understood that the response measures by the Nigerian government against COVID 19 is a deliberate policy geared towards solving a problem perceived to be destructive to Nigeria's society.

### 4. POLICIES RESPONSE TO COVID 19 PANDEMIC BY NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

The Nigerian government formulated and implemented several policies in an attempt to prevent the spread of COVID 19 after recording the first case. These Policies and measures included:

Osasume [7] observed the first measure taken by the government after the first case of COVID 19 was contact tracing. The government through the Federal Ministry of Health engaged in tracing all persons who had a contact with the persons tested positive so as to stem community transmission of the virus. Though this is a good effort, the lack of a good information system coupled with the lack of cooperation on the part of individuals was the set back. However, the effectiveness of this measure can be seen in the fact that, government had been able to trace especially those having contact with the first person with the virus as well subsequent individuals having contact with the infected person.

As the cases of COVID-19 in the country continue to increase with many cases coming from those who had recently returned from high risk countries of COVID19, the Nigerian government took several stringent and drastic decisions to curtail the pandemic. Some of these decisions include the shutting down of both international and local airports and other entry points –land borders and ports into the country were closed; public and private schools including tertiary institutions were shut down nationwide; churches and mosques were stopped to hold services; nightclubs, cinemas, and sports events were closed; civil and public servants providing non-essential services from grade level twelve (12L) downward were asked to either work from home or stop going to work [8].

It should be noted that, some of these actions including the banning of congregational prayers in churches and mosques were carried out in various states of the federation by the state governments, through the setting up of their committees on the COVID-19 pandemic. Physical/ social distancing was strongly advocated while all social activities such as weddings, funerals, going to parties, beer parlours and eateries were prohibited. A mandatory stay at home order was also declared in some states by the state-governments [9].

Also, the federal government gave an order to residents of Lagos, Ogun and Federal Capital Territory (FCT), to stay at home for an initial period of 14 days with effect from March 30, 2020. Later, residents in Kano were also ordered to stay at home by the federal government [10]. It should be noted that the order exempted hospitals and all related medical establishments as well as organizations in healthcare-related manufacturing and distribution services [11].

Besides, the government on April 27, 2020, announced a ban on inter-state travels and also imposed a curfew from 8 p.m to 6 a.m nationwide. All inter-state movements were prohibited during the period of enforcement, except transits of essential

goods and services which were permitted across state boundaries, as Nigeria grappled to combat the spread of the pandemic [12].

## 5. IMPACT OF COVID 19 CURFEW AND INTER STATE TRAVEL BAN ON NIGERIANS

While the lockdown policies were critical for disease containment, they undermine the economic and social foundations of survival and resilience structures of the country's most vulnerable [13].

**Human Rights Violation:** How security operatives enforced the lockdown orders to ensure compliance in several areas across the country resulted in the reports of human rights abuses including unlawful killings. It was reported by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) that security agents have killed 18 people in their enforcement of directives to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, since the commencement of the lockdown in 8 separate incidents of extra-judicial killings [14, 15].

**Increase in Domestic Violence:** According to the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Senator Pauline, each of the 36 states of the federation recorded at least 100 rape cases during the COVID19 induced lockdown. No fewer than 3,600 cases of rape were recorded nationwide [16]. Many of these victims –girls and women -- were stuck in various abuse environments as the lockdown compromised their escape routes and access to life-saving services and justice at a time when these were needed most [17].

**Worsening the Living standard of the less privileged:** Lack of social determinants of health, water, power supply, appropriate housing rendered many in the informal sector more vulnerable to difficulties in the absence of social safety nets [15]. And with deficient levels of savings, the continued lockdown financially and economically incapacitates them; cost significant hardship and hunger; and then raised the odds in favour of anger and protestations [18].

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COVID 19 pandemic hit the world and Nigeria is not an exception. The country had its share in this global challenge that disbursed economic development with long lasting effects.

Government formulated several policies in her attempt to stem the spread of COVID 19 pandemic.

These include contact tracing; imposition of curfews, inter -state travel ban, banning of public gatherings, closing of worship centers among others.

The policies implemented though have succeeded in preventing the spread of the virus but had severe impact on the citizens. It led to human rights violation; increase in domestic violence and affecting the living standard of less privilege. Therefore it recommended that:

Funding of Federal Ministry of Health should be increase in order for the ministry to be pre-active always and address COVID 19 and any of its kinds.

There is need for collaboration between ministry of health and Nigeria's Immigration service in keeping record and tracing people coming and going out of Nigeria.

Government should be ever ready to provide basic needs during future lockdowns so as to support the welfare of its citizens.

Citizens on their part should be supportive and comply with safety measures to avoid contracting COVID 19 virus.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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