

Title

Effect of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on political leadership in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria like other countries of the world had great expectations for year 2020. These hopes were cut short by the emergence coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and its sudden spread. The resultant effect was the closure of national economies, imposition of lockdown in cities, boarder closure and many more. COVID-19 became a pandemic having adverse effect on human sustainability. Using qualitative approach through content analysis of secondary data, this study will consider the global pandemic and the spiral effect on the nation and spiritual leadership with particular reference to Nigeria. It will bring to light the preparedness, position as well as adequacy of the nation to tackle the pandemic. The study revealed that pandemic has permeated religious settings causing a disruption in order of services, and also has affected government finance, administration as well as demand on social service delivery. This paper therefore, recommended that government should promote indigenous research and adequately finance the health sector to aid in properly positioning the system towards sailing through similar occurrences.

Key words

COVID-19, government, Nigeria, pandemic, political leadership

Key dates

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Indexing



Introduction

The entrance of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) into the country by an Italian spurred the government to make decisions on curbing the spread of the disease but that confusion persisted among the less enlisted due to its novel nature. It was considered to be the disease of ‘whites’ and the elites. This for confusion and spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria resulted to the closure of banks, business, ministry, activities, and the borders. Weight of the effects of these steps is diverse in terms of economy, insecurity and anxiety in the job security. Therefore, this article aimed at analyzing the role of political leadership on disease and prevention as well as effects of COVID-19 on government during a post pandemic period. The outcome would aid to proffer recommendations to prepare, prevent and curb future eventualities.

Background

The year 2020 came full of expectations from a lot of people. It was a year expected from the beginning to produce positive outcome and output in terms of finances, infrastructure, social welfare as well as spiritual growth. Spiritual leaderships showed impulse of positivity in their theme declaration for the year such as year of Perfection, Supernatural all round sufficiency among others. The government of Nigeria was not left out in the optimism. The government tagged 2020 budget as ‘Budget of Sustaining Growth and Job creation’ totaling N10.59 trillion, Nigeria’s biggest budget ever (Omilana, 2019). Unfortunately, less than four months of the budget expected to sustain growth a review has been called. This is consequent upon the outbreak of coronavirus with particular reference to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) which has been declared a global pandemic due to its spread and defiance to existing treatment (WHO, 2020).

COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan China with a presumption that it came from sea food (Zhu, Wei & Niu, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020). This disease surfaced in 2019 categorized as a virus under the corona family. It has become a dread to the global community causing devastating effects to both human life and national economies. Several countries have been forced to lockdown their citizens in order to curb the spread of the pandemic. Europe and America seem to be the worst hit, on this, going by records of mortality recorded in recent times. The pathetic issue about this novel virus is that cure or preventive medications are not available in the world. WHO averred that there was need for social distancing and other precautionary methods such as washing of hands, use of face mask and essence of proper hygiene (Adhanom, 2020). One can opine that there is still confusion in the air about how it spreads. It was

at one point said that it stays or spreads through the air, also it was refuted with further observation (WHO, 2020; Amzat, Aminu, Kolo, Akinyele, Ogundairo & Danjibo, 2020). This confusion spreads with COVID-19 to nooks and crannies of the world. Nigeria is not an exemption.

Conceptual clarification

Disease is an unpleasant situation where there is malfunction or disorder in the activities and physical strength of an organism. In other words, disease caused a state of disorderliness in the functionality of the carrier and it is the opposite of being in health. The result of disease in the society as led to deaths. On this account, many diseases are identified to be causal of death in human lives, of which the newly discovered COVID-19 is a chronic one. Due to the fact that COVID-19 causes disruptions to the physical capabilities and social identities it can be referred as a chronic disease as opined by in the description of De-Graft, Unwin, Agyemang, Allotey, Campbell and Arhinful (2010).

World Health Organisation (2020) defined it as an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. It was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Afterwards, it was declared to WHO in December, 2019 before it was globally declared a global pandemic on 11th of March, 2020. It is speculated to be airborne and contagious from person to person but there are doubts to this assertion.

Political leadership is a constituted authority overseeing a defined jurisdiction. In this study, government is the supervisory head of the nation that sees to implementation of rules, laws and policies as well as delivery of needed services for the preservation of lives and properties of inhabitants of the country. This concept visualises the expected function of government in the communities as stated by Keman (2006) that “ruling and regulating public affairs according to constitutional rules and conventions (Rule-of-Law) is a role to be played by government.” However, this study tilts towards health care delivery due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Theoretical frameworks

Systems theory

Theories aid to explicitly define and reflect the propensity of our understanding. For this study, the systems theory is considered as apt to understand societal influence in arresting the challenging clamper of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on global economy and spiritual capital theory is considered for understanding spiritual leadership necessary in tackling COVID-19 pandemic. The systems theory was originally being used in the field of microbiology to explain a systemic situation in the

human body using the cells (Watkinson, 2011). He corroborated the interaction of the cells in line with its workability to reproduce. This has been adapted to other disciplines such as political science and management by David Easton in the 1960s. The management aspect concerts to the study through emphasis of the influence of people in the system. This is synonymous to the ideology of critical model theory which emphasizes the need for the participants to be heard. In the submission of Katz and Kahn, a system has four stages; the first is the input, followed by transformation/through-put, output and finally the recycling (Ónday, 2016). These stages can be used to depict two theories in tackling the menace of COVID-19 on government, spiritual leadership and the community. Application of systems theory could aid the boosting of national economy if the Nigeria system are able to produce vaccines to cure/prevent the spread of the much talked about corona and enable the government to formulate policies that will curb/prevent future occurrences.

In other words, the first stage which is the input consists of government officials and other stakeholders coming together to have an input in the formulation of relevant health policy to fight any anticipated. The output is the policy being introduced to the country whole adequate feedback which is the fourth stage is the evaluation of the impact of the policy on the society. Another application of systems theory is evident with the example of Madagascar. The country was able to harness their local raw material and transformed it to a drug called Organics which is used to fight the spread of corona virus in the country and other parts of Africa. Though, it may have not been approved by the WHO but the country’s management of the virus thus far proven the efficacy of the drugs. The presumed efficacy is purported by demands made on the drugs by Nigerian, as well as the financial commitment of N25 million from the United States of America for more productivity of the drugs. The implication is that the drug is attracting financial resources into Madagascar economy. The development will further strengthen the infrastructures in the country and generally promote national development. This is an area that Nigeria as a country needs to delve into in order to reduce her over dependence on petroleum.

Ubuntu theory

However, it is germane to view the research in the light of its environment, referring to Africa. It is observed that some western theories are harmful to the African environment due to philosophical reasons that are quite different from that of Africa (Africa Social Work Network, 2022). Consequent upon this, the article adopts Ubuntu theory which is concerned about collection of values and practices that Africans particularly the blacks view as authentic to the people and community (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020).

This theory is made up of six pillars namely, the individual, the family, the community, the society, the environment and the spiritual. The relevance of this theory to the work is anchored on these pillars especially in the areas of individuals, community, environment and the spiritual. It covers the sanctity of human life and human wellbeing especially in the areas of knowledge, skill, possessions and inventions. However, the essence is that it should be of benefit to mankind. This perception coupled with the concept of community promotes interaction at the grassroots with various individuals. In other words, the cooperation of individual Nigerian with the government as well as the environment cannot be overlooked. For there to be any meaning development, there is need for there to be a cordial relationship between government officials, individual and communities as well as a flow of communication at gatherings. Africa is a continent deeply engrossed by spiritual philosophy (Masango, 2006). This philosophy has helped to shape the lives of Africans particularly before colonialism by the whites. The idea of having ancestors and God manifesting in the society is of utmost relevance so that the fear of higher spiritual authority will check ambiance of government and other leaders. In the words of Masango, “Africans are connected to God as much as creation is part of God. We are therefore charged to care for it. We finally need to go back to basics, the spirit of Ubuntu” (Masango, 2006, p. 943).

Methodology

This work made use of explanatory research design and discussed relevant literature on the focus study. This will proffer understanding of the challenges encountered by government during the global pandemic. An analysis of relevant literature were sought to establish the effects of COVID 19 on the government. This approach is qualitative. Data were collected from relevant journals, newspaper and internet sources such as web pages of international organisations such as WHO and other related pages. These were selected based on their connection to issues on leadership with focus on political aspect as well as its extant literature to buttress the analysis. These were with a view to providing answers to the role of political leadership on prevention and effects of COVID-19 on government during a post pandemic period.

Table 1: List of sources and publications used for this article

Source of article or publication	Title of publication	Main information obtained
Vanguard online newspaper	COVID-19 pandemic: Technology displaces over	Information on downsizing of workers

	100 workers in Bowen University	
World Health Organisation online	WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19	Ways of curbing the spread of COVID-19
African Social Work Network	African Theories of Social Work	Ubuntu Theory
Urban, Planning and Transport Research (Journal)	The COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity: the furiousness in Nigerian communities	Effect of COVID-19
University of Ibadan, Nigeria online publication	COVID-19, Peace and security in Nigeria centre for petroleum, energy economics and law	Effect of COVID' 19
Journal of Infectious Disease	Coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria: Burden and social medical response during the first 100Days	Characteristics of COVID-19
Online article	Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)	Explanation of COVID-19
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Review	Coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) current status and future perspectives: A narrative review	History of COVID-19
Online article	Here's how COVID 19 has Battered Africa's Largest Economy. World Economic Forum	Effect of COVID-19
Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems (Book)	Government and Politics Vol. – Structure of Government	Functions of government
Biomedical Journal	COVID-19: The first documented coronavirus pandemic in History	History of COVID-19
Online article	The effect of COVID-19 on government debt, borrowing, and spending. national security program	Effect of COVID-19

African Journal of Social Work	Now, the theory of Ubuntu has its space in social work	Ubuntu Theory
Guardian News	Buhari signs 2020 budget into law	Year's expectation/Budget
Organizational Behaviour (Journal)	Theories of organizations and environments: From organizations and system concept of Katz & Kahn to corporations and industries of Carroll & Hannan	Systems Theory
Politikon (Journal)	Nigeria's security governance dilemmas during the COVID-19 crisis	Effect of COVID-19
Religion (Journal)	Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on organization of religious behaviour in different christian denominations in Poland	Effect of COVID-19
World Health Organisation's report	Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report	Effect of COVID-19
World Health Organisation's report	Corona	History of COVID-19
Online article	The novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China. Global Health Research and Policy	History of COVID-19

Findings

Increase debts

The world woke up with a shock of a novel disease called corona virus disease of 2019 from within a town in china. This turned to be a menace to several economies particularly in Africa. However, Africa is not alone in the crisis as debts have increased in government balance sheets across advanced economies like America, Germany, United Kingdom and Japan (Miller, 2020). These countries are

compelled to hand over cash to workers, by paying their salaries while they seat at home and guaranteeing debt so that companies can stay afloat. Kazeem (2020) corroborates that due to COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in lower volume of exports such as oil, Nigeria's economy contracted by 6.1% in the second quarter of year 2020. He argued further that it has resulted in increasing government's borrowing to finance its services including provision of palliatives to ameliorate the economic effects of COVID-19 pandemic on citizens.

Closure of national boarders

The disease started spreading due to the influence of globalization with movement of tourist professionals and other activities. The first index case in Nigeria was alleged to have been brought into the country by an Italian. This prompted the Buhari's Administration to put machineries in place by setting up isolation centers. However, the government's attitude towards prevent the virus from spreading may be referred to as lackadaisical due to the address of President Buhari who decided to close the boarders of the country four days after he made the speech. It is averred in some quarters that responsive government will act immediately. Amzat, Aminu, Kolo, Akinyele, Ogundairo & Danjibo (2020) reported that due to increasing evidence of community transmission, apart from imported infection of COVID-19 in Nigeria, government took several measures which includes creation of isolation centers, ban on social gathering, lockdown of citizens' movement as well as closure of national and international borders. They reported that though, government introduced palliatives and economic stimuli to minimize the adverse effects of lockdown and border closure, but were not enough to prevent economic downturn in Nigeria.

Inadequate health facilities

Furthermore, the state of hospitals in Nigeria has been a major area exposed in this period. A number of the hospital s lack needed facilities to combat the ravaging disease. The public hospitals founded by the government are the worst hit. Late Abba Kyari who was the Chief of Staff to the President was flown to an unknown private hospital in Lagos State for medical attention. The Federal Government had to cry out that the country lacked ventilators for patients in general. The case worsened with sudden death of a former Governor of Oyo State who had complications from COVID-19. The hospital he was taken to in Lagos could do little to sustain his poor state of health. The situation further revealed that there are not enough trained medical personnel to handle the challenge posed by the novel virus. Al-Saidi, Saad & Elagib (2022) reported that health systems in the Sahel region of Africa which includes Nigeria are fragile with challenges of financial problem, poor

workforce and poor management practices. They stated further that health systems were overwhelmed. The average density of healthcare worker per 100,000 people is 57 compared to 583 for advanced economies. Though, the health impact of COVID-19 for the African region was actually lower than in other world regions as regards reported cases and death cases.

Decline in economic growth

The devastating effects of this virus are on the economy. Businesses and government civil service has been on hold as a result of the lockdown put in place by the Federal Government. A global dimension to this degradation is the fall in price of crude oil in the international market which has culminated to a fall in Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria. It shows a sharp decline in the growth of the country's GDP, in year 2020 under the present global pandemic the GDP went to an all high low (Kazeem, 2020). The rippling effect is the sacking of 500,000 NPower participants. However, the private sector is not left out. Majority of private secondary schools have stopped paying the salaries of their workers. Access Bank, a financial institution in Nigeria, initially dismissed some workers before Central Bank of Nigeria intervened. The chaotic situation has reflected in the state of affairs of the nation. Abubakar (2020) reported that COVID-19 pandemic resulted to the sacking of over 100 staff which equals 10% of the workforce in Bowen University, Nigeria. This adds to the existing high rate of unemployment in the country leading to many economic implications in Nigeria.

Insensitivity of government

A federal law maker called for a pay cut for all civil servants. This is arguably considered as a view exonerating the essence of patriotism on the port of the law maker. This reflects the hollow in governance of the nation where citizens are treated different under the same arm of the law; some treated preferentially and others forgotten. The menace of COVID 19 has led to rise in security failures across the country (Akanmu, Salisu, Daramola, Ogunesan, Fasina, Adejare, Sanni & Olatunji, 2021; Osemene, 2021; Albert, 2021). This is evident with the crime rates in Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna and many more States.

Discussion

The study has provided various qualitative evidences of the effects of COVID-19 disease on political leadership in Nigeria. The study reported Miller (2020) that coronavirus disease has increased debt in government balance sheet across Africa as well as advanced economies of United State of America, United Kingdom, Japan, among others. Miller's findings were supported by Kazeem (2020) affirming

that due to the contraction of 6.1% in the economy during the second quarter of year 2020, government at all levels in Nigeria resulted to borrowings in order to finance its various activities.

Amzat *et al* (2020) revealed that due to increasing evidence of community transmission, apart from imported cases, political leadership resulted to banning social gathering, lockdown of citizen's movement and closure of national borders. The political leadership under Buhari's administration put machineries in place by setting up isolation centers and closed borders to avert uncontrollable spread of the COVID-19 disease in Nigeria. Also, the study discovered that the state of hospitals in Nigeria has been a major area exposed by coronavirus disease, as hospital lack needed facilities to combat the ravaging disease. The study reported that Late Abba Kyari who was the Chief of Staff to the President was flown from Abuja to an unknown private hospital in Lagos for medical attention due to the lack of facilities in government owned hospitals, even the National hospital, Abuja. The finding was supported by Al-Saidi *et al* (2022) that health systems in Nigeria are overwhelmed that the average density of healthcare worker per 100,000 people is 57 compared to 583 for advanced nations. This shows the poor state of health sector in Nigeria, where the number of medical personnel to patients is not on the encouraging side and the capability of the sector to combat sudden outbreak of diseases calls for urgent attention.

The study also discovered that coronavirus disease resulted to a sharp decline in the growth of the country's GDP. Kazeem (2020) reported that the decline resulted to the sacking of 500,000 NPower participants; stoppage of salary by majority of private schools in the country, and even Access Bank, a financial institution initially sacked many workers before the intervention of the Central Bank of Nigeria on the case. Abubakar (2020) corroborated that COVID-19 pandemic resulted to the sacking of over 100 staff, which equals 10% of workforce in Bowen University, Osun State, Nigeria. This adds to already existing high rate of unemployment in the country.

Recommendations

- a) Formulation of Infectious Policy- there is need for formulation of a policy that will prevent and curb the spread of existing or anticipated diseases. However, there should be no force in implementing it most especially in a democratic government.
- b) Adequate Financing of Health Sector- Government needs to focus on paying attention to reviving the hospitals in terms of providing much needed facilities. Health

workers must be well paid to reduce brain drain experienced in the health sector.

- c) Promote Indigenous Research- this is the time for our researchers to be encouraged to discover medical alternatives to combat diseases. An example of this is Organics produced by Madagascar to prevent COVID 19.

Conclusion

It is obvious from scholars' view of the analysis of COVID-19 on current affairs that the repercussion will be a scourge. The connectivity of economic development to the effect of globalization of COVID-19 is appalling and colossal. In Nigeria, the novel disease had impacted negatively on employment, Gross Domestic Product and religious matters. The challenge of lockdown in different parts of the country has destabilized interstate connectivity. The situation has led to anarchy at the state border causing insecurity problem to the state. The religious centers that are custodians of morals are rendered incapacitated or non-existent at this period. Thus, the danger of the dreaded disease is alarming. This calls for urgent cooperation and attention to curb the menace of the virus.

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