

A REVIEW OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ETHICAL MANAGEMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF COVID-19 PALLIATIVES IN NIGERIA”. *PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES (INTERNATIONAL EDITION), VOL. 16, NO. 1, APRIL, 2020. ISSN: 0794-3210 PAGES 59-66.*

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Abstract

The Federal Government of Nigeria has implemented palliative steps for targeted communities in society to mitigate the effects of the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The delivery of government palliatives by the masses has, however, been traced by lamentations. People say that the mechanism of palliative delivery has been politicized and impaired. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that, the delivery of palliatives across the country is disorderly and uncoordinated. This is not surprising because Nigeria does not have a verifiable digital archive that captures disadvantaged and marginalized people. The lack of a strong and systematic database in Nigeria has influenced successful delivery to a limited degree. The study uses a systematic review approach to analyze and synthesize relevant information that can be applied to the existing body of literature to develop a deeper understanding of the subject under review by carefully reviewing the already published study articles. The paper also suggested solutions for the effective future management of Nigeria's palliative distribution strategy.

Key words: Covid-19, Nigeria, Ethics of Palliative Distribution

Introduction

Coronavirus disease is an extremely infectious disease that records worrying mortality rates. New cases are being identified and recorded regularly across the globe. Statistics show that the outbreak of coronavirus disease (Covid-19) was confirmed in about 210 countries, including Nigeria, as of April 29, 2020, infecting 3,154,085 individuals worldwide, killing a total of 218,764. The nations with the largest number of casualties are the U. S. A., Spain, and Italy. The number of infected persons in Nigeria was 1,532 (Statista, 2020). The novelty of this coronavirus outbreak is indicative of how a biological and epidemiological issue became a social, economic and political subject (Sadati, Lankarani&Lankarani, 2020). On February 27, 2020, in Lagos State, Coronavirus

Disease first arrived on the shores of Nigeria. It was carried out by an Italian resident who, after some time in a hospital in Lagos, later tested negative, thereby becoming the index case for Covid-19 in Nigeria. Since then, it has spread to nearly all of the federation's nations, infecting thousands of persons and taking more than a hundred lives (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020). This was first in two states, Lagos and Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory, and later in other states,

after the closure of all public and private businesses, the prohibition of travel and all modes of social contact. The paper answers the following questions against this backdrop: What was the understanding, level of knowledge and attitude among Nigerians towards the coronavirus disease? How does Covid-19 effect on Nigerians' livelihoods?

What are the government's steps to cushion the effects of the pandemic on the citizenry and how successful have they been? The novel Coronavirus, commonly known as COVID-19, is an infectious disease caused by the first discovery of a new strain of Coronavirus in Wuhan, China's Hubei region. 'CO' means corona, 'VI' means virus, and 'D' means disease. First referred to as '2019 novel-corona virus' or 2019-nCoV, the disease was. The COVID-19 virus is associated with the same family of viruses, including Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Extreme Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Some forms of common cold are also related to it. Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

According to a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) titled: UNICEF Key Messages and Prevention and Control in Schools (March, 2020), “in more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These are similar to flu (influenza) or cold symptoms that are far more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is needed to confirm whether someone has COVID-19. The virus is transmitted through direct contact with an infected person's respiratory droplets (generated by coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated by the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, and mouth).

The COVID-19 virus can live for many hours on surfaces, however quick disinfectants can kill it, UNICEF says. The Federal Government of Nigeria has, on many occasions, implemented targeted lockdown measures in areas with a rapid rise in cases of Covid-19 in an attempt to slow the rate of spread of the virus. Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja were the states in which the federal government implemented the targeted lockdown. The partial lockout and closure of interstate borders were enforced by some states in the country. In all states nationally, curfews have also been enforced. The Federal Government of Nigeria has introduced the following palliative steps for the targeted groups in order to cushion the impact of the lockdown: three months

of interest holidays for those holding loans from Tradermoni, Marketmoni and Farmermoni, issued by the Bank of Industry, the Bank of Agriculture and the Nigerian Export and Import Bank.'

The moral issues that have arisen and are unable to be addressed by both the federal and state governments are: who are the vulnerable? Has the federal government been unable to establish a consistent mechanism to ensure that palliatives are distributed fairly? Is the notion of unknown insecurity a trick of governments to hijack the palliatives for the faithful of their party? What about those people who have lost their jobs or income? Should they be considered vulnerable? In the common sense, vulnerability is when, as a result of a prevailing circumstance he / she is faced with, a person is unable to care for him / herself or family. This is in line with the detailed yet all-encompassing description provided by James M. DuBois of vulnerability. Ordinarily, vulnerability simply refers to susceptibility to injury, according to DuBois. Everyone is fragile in this sense, since all humans are capable of being harmed in several different ways.

Statement of Problem and Justification

The introduction of the latest coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created a global threat to health, the economy and social ties. The disease has spread to 216 countries as at mid-July 2020, with a total of 13,150,645 confirmed cases and 574,464 deaths. Cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Nigeria in 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Most countries in the world, including Nigeria, have implemented restriction measures in response to the reduction of the spread of the virus, resulting in complete and or partial closure of the economy. Economies are grinding to a halt in the process, jobs and livelihoods are losing on rates never before seen. In low and middle-income countries, particularly in Nigeria with over 202 million inhabitants, the impact is enormous and growing (World Bank, 2020)

Refugees and asylum seekers have faced a multitude of problems since the COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria. The initial report of the UNHCR Sub-office in Ogoja³ shows that the lockdown in the state of Taraba has impacted mobility with restricted access to basic needs, including food and other resources, affecting the livelihood prospects of refugees employed as casual workers in cocoa farms and small-scale business markets in various Sardauna, Ussa, Takum and Gembu local governments. In the Cross River Province, because of the steps placed in place during the ongoing

pandemic, refugees (like other residents) have to pay double for transportation. The cost of living in Benue has been high given the rise in food commodities such as rice and gari. In order to comply with physical separation measures, many refugees are unable to access basic health and hygiene services.

Objectives of Study

The purpose of this paper is to explore the nature of the distribution of palliative government to the vulnerable poor in Nigeria.

To illustrate that the federal government's policy for palliative distribution lacks an effective data-driven strategy to the degree that a significant number of the most disadvantaged people have been excluded from palliative distribution patterns.

To propose options for the implementation of a more equitable strategy for palliative distribution

Significant of Study

It is anticipated that the study will serve as a body of enlightenment; a reference material; a source of secondary data and a framework for future research with a similar thematic and ethical framework. Some of the social and ethical obstacles to the national ambitions of Nigerian growth are supposed to be brought to light. It will also help to address problems related to providing the poor and most disadvantaged people in Nigeria with a safety net.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Nigeria, a major regional player in West Africa, accounts for about half of the population of West Africa, with about 202 million people and one of the world's largest youth populations. Nigeria, composed of 36 independent states and the Federal Capital Territory, is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse federation. With an abundance of natural resources, it is Africa's largest exporter of oil and has the continent's largest reserves of natural gas. Although Nigeria has made some socio-economic progress in recent years, due to under-investment, its human capital development remains poor and the country ranked 152 out of 157 countries in the 2018 Human Capital Index of the World Bank. In addition, the country continues to face massive development challenges,

including the need to reduce oil dependence and diversify the economy, tackle inadequate infrastructure, and construct effective and efficient institutions, as well as issues of governance and public financial management systems.

There are many social problems such as child neglect, armed robbery, homelessness, mental health issues, divorce, and single parenting issues prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. Only with serious social welfare policies and programmes can these social issues be solved. Social welfare activities in Nigeria, however, are currently under-developed, poorly funded and inaccessible to the majority of those who need them. There are many social welfare programs in Nigeria, such as NEMA, but they only serve a particular function, such as a disaster in a specific region that can be easily identified. With the Covid-19 outbreak situation at hand, no traditional government-adopted approach could be used to provide welfare relief to targeted poor and disadvantaged people in Nigeria, and this was a major challenge.

During the coronavirus outbreak of 2020, the effect of not having a regular palliative delivery system became apparent. A distributive palliative mechanism was adopted by the Federal Government to target the poor and disadvantaged people in the country, but many of the proposed approaches were not appropriate to citizens because of their shortcomings in one way or another, and were still subject to serious debate.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has introduced the following palliative steps for targeted groups as a way to cushion the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown: three months of interest holidays for those holding loans from Tradermoni, Marketmoni, and Farmermoni issued by the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, and Nigeria Export and Import Bank. It is part of the Federal Government's Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) project, being introduced by the Bank of Industry.

With TraderMoni, when the individual pays back, an individual will obtain interest-free loans starting from Nigeria Naira, N10, 000 (exchange rate US \$1 = N400) and rising all the way to N100, 000. As a first loan, beneficiaries get N10, 000. They automatically qualify for a second loan of N15, 000 when they pay back the first loan. They qualify for a N20, 000 loan after the payback of the second loan, then N50,000, and then N100, 000.³MarketMoni, also known as the

Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP), issues interest-free loans to women and merchants, craftsmen, youth and farmers on the market. It is one of the Federal Government's social investment projects and is being introduced by the Industry Bank (Tradermoni). *Available at <http://tradermoni.ng/about.html>. Accessed 18 March 2020*

Market Moni has begun disbursements to its early set of beneficiaries and is expanding across Nigeria. Beneficiaries earn loans ranging from N10, 000 to N100, 000 per borrower for up to 6 months. Market Moni attracts little attention except for a one-time 5 per cent administrative fee. To date, more than 24,000 beneficiaries have used Market Moni. Farmer Moni is a Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) initiative created to improve Nigeria's economy through leverage and access to finance for farmers. Farmer Moni is designed to help small traders grow their trade by offering collateral free loans. The loans shall be repayable for a term of six months. Under the scheme, beneficiaries will have access to a higher facility, ranging from N300,000 to N2,000,000, when they repay within a defined period of time. *(Marketmoni. Available at <http://www.marketmoni.com.ng/Accessed 18 March 2020>)*

Nigeria also responded by engaging in In-Kind Transfer, President Buhari approved the release of 70,000 Metric Tons of Grains from Nigeria's National Strategic Grain Reserves, for distribution to poor and vulnerable people in the COVID19 frontline states, as well as to people whose livelihoods will be affected by the lockdown. The federal government also donated 10 rice trucks, 30 grain trucks and 2 vegetable oil trucks to the FCT, among others. COVID-19 palliative measures, other individuals. State government has also engaged in similar in-kind transfer, the governor of Imo State, Governor Hope Uzodinma distribute in-kind palliatives through faith-based organization. The governor donated 4000 bag of 10 kg rice, 1000 tubers of yam and 40 cartoons of vegetable oil and 40 cartons of tomato to the Catholic Arch-Diocese of Owerri and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) to assist them in the provision of food item to the poor and vulnerable community.

In addition, the Federal Government also declared an increase in the initial number of households that would benefit from the direct distribution of food and cash from 2.6 million households to 3.6 million households, which it described as the most vulnerable in society. The Government has therefore directed the Ministries of Industry, Trade and Investment; Communication and Digital

Economy; Science and Technology; Transportation; Interior; Health; Works and Housing; Labor and Employment; and Education to jointly establish a comprehensive strategy for the Nigerian economy operating under the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are, however, lamentations about the distribution of government palliatives by the people, and this is a significant negative discrepancy against the much praised distributional strategy adopted by the government. For example, the national newspaper Business Day on April 19, 2020 reported: "It is lamentation and bitter wailing in Lagos and parts of the country as Nigerians complain the stimulus packages announced by the federal and state governments of Lagos to cushion the impact of the lockdown on some states and the Federal Capital Territory to contain the further spread of coronavirus. According to Business Day Newspaper (2020), people also claimed that the method of transmitting whatever might have been made accessible for this reason has been politicized.

Methodology

The study used a systematic analysis approach including a thorough review of previously published study papers in order to examine and synthesize the relevant details. The paper has used a number of secondary data points, including magazines, newspapers, websites, government documents and the related published works.

Discussion and Findings

There is widespread belief among Nigerians that the country is not stripped of good policies to make life better for its people. What they see as a missing link is a lack of political will and unalloyed sincerity to give life to such policies. Those who hold that view say that they see positive policies stuck in the mud either because someone did not do their job for personal purposes, or because they did so for selfish motives. This view has resonated among many Nigerians with regard to the implementation of the COVID-19 palliative steps outlined by President Muhammadu Buhari to cushion the impact of the government's efforts so far to control the spread of the virus to Nigerians.

To date, however, significant concerns have been raised about the answer. Some individuals and members of Nigeria's wider civil society have asked why banks that make up a large proportion of the CACOVID coalition have chosen to make donations to the federal government when they can directly reach their most vulnerable clients through existing internal databases. Others have still questioned the sincerity of the Federal Government in its response, especially with regard to the reception of donations and the disbursement of palliatives to the most vulnerable. Reports of lopsided distribution of palliatives based on political and sectional prejudices have been rife in local newspapers following the government 's announcement when the lockdown was instituted that it would leverage the distribution mechanism of the Conditional Cash Transfer program it created in 2015 to distribute the palliatives.

Coalitions of (I)NGO's and other CSO's, including Upright4Nigeria, led by ActionAid in Nigeria, while implementing their own palliative schemes in an effort to make up for the lopsidedness of the federal government scheme on 22 April, demanded that all governments disclose to citizens the value of all donations received and publish a list of palliative recipients.

On 4 May, another NGO coalition led by Oxfam also called for transparency on the part of the federal government in the use of an additional \$3.4 billion IMF emergency aid loan granted in response to the pandemic. Though philanthropy in Nigeria has mobilised to respond swiftly to the COVID-19 crisis, Nigerians are still waiting for answers to the questions raised in the course of this response.

Conclusion

There are several lessons learnt from each of the countries where a national palliative care policy has been developed.

Firstly, there should be assessments performed by the Federal of Nigeria for policy development to help Nigeria identify key gaps that need to be covered and addressed by policy implementation. This will include models for palliative care delivery that need strengthening as well as training and human resource needs.

Secondly, palliative care policy development would also commits the Federal government of Nigeria to bring back palliative care both as a discipline and as a service package of health care that it must deliver. In addition this becomes a first set of steps for the federal government of Nigeria to start committing resources, however, little to palliative care delivery across the country.

Recommendations

- The Federal Government of Nigeria should develop guidelines and strategies on integrated palliative care across disease groups and levels of care, addressing ethical issues related to the provision of comprehensive palliative care;
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should Promote increased access to palliative care for children (in collaboration with UNICEF);
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should also establish an agency for implementing palliative care access and evaluating progress made in palliative care programmes across the country
- Developing indicators for evaluating palliative care services; encouraging adequate resources for palliative care programmes and research, especially in resource-limited countries.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

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