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QUESTION: WRITE A REPORT ON THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA

THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN AND THE RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS.

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Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). This report aims to provide details about coronavirus and effects of the lockdown and restriction of movement on Nigerians.

The first confirmed case of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus, caused by SARS-CoV-2. On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen. The cases in the country began to increase till date causing the government to announce lockdown in affected states and restriction of movement in the country. The lockdown was said for the safety of the citizens but it is also affecting the citizens and the economy of the country.

The effect of this lockdown can be seen economically and medically. The estimated growth rate for 2020 has, however, now been shattered by the ongoing meltdown in the world economy which is presently in recession, a development accelerated by the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

Even long before the announcement of lockdowns across countries, immediate job and income loss was on the order of the day for Nigerian small business owners occasioned by the pandemic in the earliest days, showing the inter-dependence of the world economy at all levels even in backwater town and villages. A typical example here is the effect of the pandemic on the sporting world and the spiraling effect on the owners of the ubiquitous soccer leagues viewing centres across Nigerian cities, towns and even villages where sport fans pay to watch these matches. With the suspension of the various leagues, it has been zero income for this sector. The economic state of the country is at more risk during the period of lockdown in Nigeria. Locking people down at home in the Nigerian context is like asking people to go hungry for the duration of the lockdown. More than 60 per cent of Nigerians survive on daily pay from menial jobs and petty trading. A lockdown means their means of daily livelihood have been locked down. The plight of private sector employees is no better, many private employers have maintained a ‘no salary during lockdown’ stance, or at best a 50 per cent pay cut and some have even completely laid off. Pangs of hunger will lead to widespread anger. Protests in different forms are already being seen within the communities. People are protesting against a lockdown without palliatives, against the high-handedness of law enforcement agents, and even rejecting all manner of palliatives that smack of insult to their intelligence, such as packs of food that are not enough to feed a family of six in 2 weeks being distributed to be shared among 60-80 families in a cluster.

Medically the dire state of the healthcare system is alarming the other hand, Nigeria which is the most populous country on the continent with an estimated population of 200 million (15% of Africa’s 1.3billion people) has 627 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (2.5% of Africa’s) and 21 deaths as of 19th April 2020. These numbers are, however, far from the true reflection of the situation in Nigeria, based on the fact that testing is not being carried out on a large scale. The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) stated earlier in the month that the present testing volume is 500 tests per day and hoped to increase this capacity to 1000 or more tests per day in the coming weeks. Thus far, less than 5000 tests have been carried out in a population of 200million.

This shows how the lockdown required medically but economically it causes more harm than good to citizens of the country.

In conclusion, it is advised that people stay indoors to reduce the spread and the health facilities are not enough to take care of a large number of sick people. But to facilitate this the government must distribute foodstuff and domestic essentials to the poor masses to cushion the effect of the lockdown. And provide adequate support and facilities to those helping to finger the virus.