A REPORT ON THE THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC: CORONA VIRUS AND THE EFFECT OF THE LOCKDOWN ON NIGERIAN CITIZENS

OLUWOLE-OJO OLUWAGBEMI

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Today marks the 54th day since the corona virus hit Nigeria but thanks to the environment, forewarning and quick reactions, it has been spreading slowly. Corona virus (COVID-19) are a group of related viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans, coronaviruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild to lethal. It is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Hence, the symptoms of COVID-19 include: cough, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, sore throat, unexplained loss of taste or smell, diarrhea and headache. In severe cases, COVID-19 can lead to severe respiratory problems, kidney failure or death. Thus, prevention includes: staying at home as much as can, keeping a safe distance, washing of the hands very often with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, covering of cough or sneeze with a bent elbow or tissue and if you’re sick, call ahead. To date, there are no specific vaccines or medicines for COVID-19. Treatments are under investigation and will be tested through clinical trials.

Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. The coronavirus pandemic has led to mass scientific cancellations, travel restrictions, social distancing, and other unprecedented prevention measures. How did we get to this point? A novel outbreak was first documented in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019. It has now been confirmed on six continents and in more than 100 countries. As the world’s health systems funnel resources into learning about it, treating, and preventing infections in humans, new information is released daily. Two other coronavirus outbreaks have been experienced. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) of 2012 was found to transmit from dromedary camels to humans. In 2002, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) was found to transmit from civet cats to humans.

Although COVID-19 has already shown some similarities to recent coronavirus outbreaks, there are differences. SARS cases totaled 8,098 with a fatality rate of 11 percent as reported in 17 countries with the majority of cases occurring in southern mainland China and Hong Kong. The fatality rate was highly dependent on the age of the patient with those under 24 least likely to die (one percent) and those over 65 most likely to die (55 percent). No cases have been reported worldwide since 2004.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 2020, MERS cases total more than 2,500, have been reported in 21 countries, and resulted in about 860 deaths. The fatality rate may be much lower with mild symptoms are most likely undiagnosed. Only two cases have been confirmed in the United States, both in May 2014 and both patients had recently traveled to Saudi Arabia Peninsula. It is still unclear how the virus transmitted from camels to humans. Thus, its risk to the global population is currently deemed to be fairly low.

An international panel of experts undertook a comprehensive assessment and benchmarking of health security and response capabilities across 195 countries. The purpose of the project was to address risks from infectious epidemics and pandemics and measure response capabilities for each nation. The hope was that the GHS (Global Health Security) index would lead to quantifiable changes in national health security and improve international preparedness. Unfortunately, the accuracy of the GHS Index study is being borne out in real time with the COVID-19 outbreak the world is experiencing now. The WHO officially declared it a pandemic on March 11, 2020.

As of today, there are 627 confirmed COVID-19 cases in Nigeria with 170 recovered and 21 deaths. Lagos state has the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases (376) in Nigeria. The first case confirmed in Nigeria was in Lagos state on the 27th February, 2020. The case was an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy to Nigeria on the 25th 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 (NCDC). Since cases have been rising daily, the president of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari announced a lockdown and restriction from movement in three states (Federal Capital Territory, Lagos state and Ogun state) where the cases have been rising. With the aim of reducing the contacts people have with one another in the society but this decision also has a bad effect on the Nigerians. Some of the effects include:

It makes Nigerians spend primarily on essential goods and services.

Low expectations of future income.

The erosion of wealth and expected wealth as a result of the decline in assets such as stocks and home equity.

It will lead to a decline in export of goods.

Investments by firm will be impeded

It has also increased crime rate as the unemployed have no means of feeding and living.

It will also lead to increase in government purchases.

Millions of Nigerians observing this lockdown lack the food and income that their families need to survive. The government needs to combine public health measures with efforts to prevent the pandemic from destroying the lives and livelihoods of society’s poorest and most vulnerable people. Nigeria has the biggest economy in Africa, with gross domestic product per capita of $2,028 in 2018, more than twice of its neighbors Benin, Chad, or Niger. It is also a highly unequal country. In 2010, the Gini coefficient of income per capita that is used to measure inequality was 49, notably above the international alert line of 40 that warns about the negative social, economic and political consequences. Economic data suggests that levels of inequality have not improved since.

The lockdown does not apply to those providing essential services, such as food distributors and retailers, including market stalls selling food and groceries, which the government has said can operate for four hours every 48 hours. The lockdown, however, prevents many Nigerian working in informal sectors from traveling or conducting their business. Local food vendors and traders have expressed fears over their ability to feed their families during the lockdown, with their daily earnings their only source of sustenance. An increase in food prices as a result of the lockdown also means that many cannot stock up on necessities.

The informal sector, in which more than 80 percent of Nigerians work, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen, and artisans to food vendors and hairdressers. In Lagos alone, according to research by non-governmental organizations, 65 percent of the 25 million people work in the informal sector. Informal workers have lower incomes, often do not have savings, health insurance, or pensions that provide a basic social safety net, and 72 percent are poor.