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A REPORT ON THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF LOCKDOWN ON NIGERIANS

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), coronaviruses also known as (COVID-19) are a family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). It was unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. These viruses were originally transmitted from animals to people. The coronavirus, identified by Chinese authorities on January 7 and since named SARS-CoV-2, is a new strain that had not been previously identified in humans. In March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

According to the WHO, signs of the infection include fever, cough and shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death. Current estimates of the incubation period – the time between infection and the onset of symptoms – range from 1 to 14 days. Most infected people show symptoms within five to six days. Reports have shown that the disease is mild in 80 percent of patients, severe in 13 percent and critical in 6 percent. The disease can be caught from those who have the disease. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplet from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVD-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick.

In order to curb the coronavirus pandemic, the Nigerian government enforced a 14-day lockdown on three major states, Lagos, Ogun and Abuja which began on March 30, but due to the increase in spread of the disease and death, the lockdown has been extended to another 14 days. But the economic impact on the millions of Nigerians who rely on daily wages, particularly in Lagos, has hit residents hard. The shutdown exempts only critical workers, including those selling food, water and medicine, but has left many without money to buy food and other essentials. Also according to research, 80 percent of Nigerians fall under the informal working sector such as street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen and artisans. They have low incomes and often don’t have savings, health insurance or pensions that provide a basic social safety net and 72 percent are poor.

Due to the COVID-19, we’ve experienced oil price crash, as demand plummeted. On March 9, 2020, Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, were down 22 percent, last trading at $35.45 per barrel. Also the oil war between Saudi Arabia and Russia and the Coronavirus has attributed to this. Now oil price hovered around $27 per barrel, way below Nigeria’s 2020 budget benchmark of $57 per barrel.

All of Nigeria’s 2020 budget indicators: an oil production volume of 2.18 million barrel per day, oil benchmark of $57, n305 exchange rate to the US dollar, GDP growth rate of 2.93 per cent, and inflation rate of 10.81 percent now are out of reach.

Also, the lockdown could lead to unintended pregnancies due to lack of contraceptives and sexual and reproductive tract infections.

The lockdown has brought about some negative impact on schools. Going to school is the best policy tool available to raise skills. It raises social skills and social awareness. If missing school for a short time have consequences for skill growth, how much more the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic? The closure of schools, colleges and universities not only interrupts the teaching for students; the closure also coincides with a key assessment period and many exams have been postponed or cancelled. The loss of information of the child’s progress delays the recognition of both high potential and learning difficulties and can have harmful long-term consequences for the child. Home schooling has some negative effect on the child due to the fact that most parents don’t understand their children’s school work and therefore can’t put the child through and not all students have access to online services in order to improve online learning.

Many university graduates maybe affected by the COVID-19 pandemic severely. They have experienced major teaching interruptions in their final part of their studies; they are experiencing major interruptions in their assessments, and finally are likely to graduate at the beginning of a major global recession.