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| COURSE | GST 122 |
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**THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECT OF THE LOCKDOWN AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT ON NIGERIANS.**

**Introduction**

The first Corona virus (COVID-19/ SARS-CoV-2) cases were discovered in December 2019 in Wuhan, China but the world was really introduced to the virus in January 2020. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on the 11 March 2020. Coronaviruses occur in both humans and animals and the new strain called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 causes the corona virus disease. People with pre-existing medical conditions are however more susceptible to getting infected. The virus is fast spreading and the infected can be asymptomatic for two-fourteen days, but the disease is most contagious when the symptoms are at their peak which is why the Federal government of Nigeria tried to slow down the spread among its citizens by first limiting movement and later imposing lockdowns in some states.

**Discussion.**

The first confirmed case of Coronavirus in Nigeria was announced on the 27th of February this year in Lagos state when an Italian man arrived in the country and the second case was a man in Ogun state who had had contact with the Italian citizen. When the virus was confirmed in Nigeria, the government assured its citizens of its preparedness to handle the disease with the aid of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control. A travel ban was placed on some high-risk countries such as United Kingdom, United States, Italy, Japan amongst others who had already extreme cases. The closure of all educational institutions started in Kwara and Lagos states followed by almost all other states in the country as from the 23rd of March for at least thirty days. Many organizations and industries in the country also cancelled or postponed indefinitely all their activities almost immediately. Various states in the country also banned gatherings of more than twenty persons including religious activities, weddings, funerals, etc.

The Federal government announced the locking down of Lagos state, Ogun state and the Federal Capital Territory for a period of two weeks from eleven pm on the 30th of March and instructed the citizens to stay in their homes, banning travels to or from other states and announcing the shutdown of businesses and offices exempting only those carrying out essential services such as hospitals, pharmacies, etc. Eight more states such as Kwara state, Niger state, Akwa-Ibom state, etc announced lockdowns in their respective states over a period of about eleven days. On the 13th of April, the Federal government extended the lockdown in Lagos and Ogun states including the FCT for another fourteen days. Delta and Osun states also extended the lockdowns in their states for two weeks. Kano state, the commercial hub of northern Nigeria ordered the total lockdown of its state for seven days ordering its residents to stay home and closed all markets and places of public gatherings from the 16th of April as it quickly became the epicentre of the virus in the north and hopes that the measures put in place will slow the spread. The Nigerian army is being used by the Federal government to enforce the lockdown but this has posed a threat to people’s lives as about sixteen people have lost their lives as a result of brutality.

The number of extremely poor Nigerians had risen to about 91.6 million as at February of this year according to the World Poverty Clock. This is the amount of people who live on less than $1.90 which translates to N693.5 a day. A great percentage of Nigerians depend on their daily income to be able to make ends meet and to be able to afford food at the end of the day. Many educated people go around looking for menial jobs because there are no job opportunities and end up being the gatemen, garbage men, drivers, construction workers, etc in our societies. The lockdown which was declared in certain states brought a stop to all forms of movement and a great number of people are drivers of motorcycles, tricycles, buses, etc and depend on their daily wages to feed themselves and those of them with families, their families as a whole. The government said it would provide its citizens with the food supplies needed but a great many people are still hungry and dying no longer of the pandemic but of hunger. Various markets around the country have been closed and are only allowed to open about two days a week so that people can buy foodstuff. A great percentage of the population struggled daily to make ends meet and things were already difficult without the current restriction on movement.

Economies around the world have been hit as a result of the pandemic and Nigeria is no exemption to this. The price of crude oil has greatly dropped in the world market and as a country that runs a largely mono product (crude oil based) economy, the impact cannot be measured. Most companies have also closed down and require their employees to work from home. Nigeria has a power supply problem and has had one for years and with the lockdown people ask if changes will be made. The people need electricity to work from home, to properly preserve the food stuff which they have bought in bulk as a result of the lockdown. This is however the case for the small percentage of Nigerians who can afford housing and can afford to buy and store food for their families. The pandemic has forced all businesses to halt and to depend majorly on technology for their day-to-day operation. The dependence on electricity and technology has not been easy at all for the working class who make up only about 10% of the Nigerian population.

The lockdown has left many youth without their jobs which kept them occupied during the day and reduced cashflow in the country greatly. This has in turn caused these jobless, hungry and angry youth to commit criminal activities such as robbery whose consequences cannot be overemphasised. Residents in Southern Nigeria have complained about rape, burglary, robbery, etc over the past week and the number of those who have been robbed are ever rising leaving the people with great fear in their respective homes. Nigerians practice many different religions but majorly Christianity and Islam and are used to going to their various places of worship on Sunday and Friday respectively. With the present enforced restriction of movement, religion has been affected as people can no longer go to their churches or mosques and are learning to practice their religions from their homes.

**Conclusion**

It is clear than that the pandemic is not close to coming to an end as the number of the cases in the country is above six hundred currently. The country’s economy also has a long way to go in recovery after the corona virus disease as there has been a significant decrease in the price of crude oil which is our main source of revenue. The scientists around the world are working round the clock to develop a vaccine for the virus but have said that a least a year is needed before one will be ready. It is however certain that masses in Nigeria will die either of the corona virus disease or hunger. The lockdown and restriction to movement is however a necessary measure to slow the spread of the virus as Nigeria is one of the most populous countries in the world.