NAME:AYODELE GRACE OLUWASEYITAN

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QUESTION: Write a report of not more than two pages, on the  Corona virus pandemic and the effects of the lockdown and restriction of movement on Nigerians.

Coronavirus also known as COVID-19 which stands for Coronavirus disease 2019, a name designated by the W.H.O, started out as an epidemic in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and ended up as a pandemic which has thrown the whole world into a war-like situation. Thousands of deaths have been recorded for various countries around the world including USA, Italy, Spain, etc.

When Coronavirus hit Chinese port city of Wuhan in December 2019, many never saw a virus with the power to disrupt the global economy. The 11 million residents of Wuhan, in the central Hubei province neither envisaged that the town would be on lockdown. The US, UK, Germany, Italy, including the World Health Organisation saw it as local Chinese problem which the country, with its robust healthcare system and advanced technology could control.

But fast forward three months after, 181 countries and territories have been affected, more than 13,000 people killed and more than 311,000 have been infected, according to Johns Hopkins University. Of the 181 countries, Nigeria is one. Though not the worst hit in Africa, the devastating effects on the country’s economy leave many in fears.

As a result of the pandemic, schools had to close in the middle of the curriculum and students were immediately sent home. Apart from that, the country as a whole had to go on a lockdown because one of the ways to avoiding contacting the disease is to maintain social distancing. This lockdown caused a major reduction in oil cash price; it threatened workers’ salaries while increasing the hunger of the poor. Expert says the effects could push Nigeria back to recession, which it experienced in 2016.

It is very evident that there was really no preparation to arrest the earliest cases of importation of the disease into the country which would have been done at the points of entry into the country, especially at the international airports. Rather, it was not until much later by 18th March 2020, that Nigeria eventually placed a travel ban on 13 countries with high incidence of the disease and a following implementation of a sweeping quarantine and lockdown in a bid to slow the spread of the new virus .In most developed countries, the stay-at-home order has been a cornerstone of the disease response and has largely worked though at a terrible price. But the results have not been the same in developing countries like Nigeria as its unintended effects have been a big hit on Nigerians.

It is likely that the current crisis will hit states and their workers harder than it happened in 2016 because the lowest price then was $29 per barrel and it quickly moved up to $35 per barrel and continued climbing. But now experts say that oil price could fall to as low as $10 per barrel with the coronavirus and oil war between Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Also, then the national minimum wage was N18000 but it’s now N30000. The question on many lips is, many states could not pay the former minimum wage even when oil price was above $30 per barrel, will they be able to pay the later now that oil price is about $27 and projected to slump further to $10 per barrel?

Before the coronavirus hit the world, Nigeria had been designated as the poverty headquarters of the world, with some 87 million Nigerians, or around half of the country’s population, thought to be living on less than $1.90 a day. With current measures put in place by the federal government to curb the pandemic, the figure is set to spike and poor conditions set to exacerbate.

For example, international flights are restricted into Nigeria, except emergencies, according to Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. This will, in no small measure, affect the businesses of airport taxi operators. Social gatherings and religious gatherings of more than 20 and 50 have been banned in Lagos and Abuja, respectively.

Small businesses, which rely heavily on foreign imports to augment their value chains, are suffering from supply shortages while looming job cuts will intensify. The transportation sector is already suffering, as businesses will cut down on travel plans. The struggling service sector will feel most of the heat, as the manufacturers will cut back budget to survive.

Nigerian manufacturers are also feeling the heat as access to critical raw materials needed to sustain their operations has been impacted. The global supply chain has been deeply disrupted as China, which is the second largest economy in the world, is a major supplier of inputs for manufacturing companies around the world, Nigeria inclusive.

There are more to the effects of the lockdown and movement restriction on Nigerians clearly showing that it isn’t favouring Nigerians as it has caused a lot of havoc though it is the price Nigeria has to pay to combat the deadly coronavirus in the country aside the treatment of the infected. However, the government should see that lockdown must come with adequate provision of food and essential household requirements for all if the lockdown policy must be effectively and successfully implemented. Also, all possible effects on its citizens should as well be considered and adequate provisions made to combat them by the government.