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**THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC AND THE EFFECTS OF THE LOCKDOWN
AND RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT IN NIGERIA.**

The advent of the corona virus pandemic began in Wuhan district, china. Taking the lives of over a hundred thousand people, very little is known about the mutant virus despite its spreading like wildfire. The disease caused by the virus is known worldwide as COVID-19. It is a highly contagious disease which infects the respiratory system of humans and is sometimes fatal. In March 2020, the World Health Organisation labelled the COVID-19 as a worldwide pandemic. Although it has not been confirmed, every country of the world is afflicted with the disease, the number of cases differ in each country. The countries receiving the worst impact of the virus are Italy, the United States of America and China. China, however, is recovering from the virus after being the first country to be plagued with it. There are a number of ways to prevent the spread of the COVID-19. Every day, the media takes time to constantly remind us to; wash our hands regularly, apply alcohol-based hand sanitizers (as the virus can be killed with the use of alcohol), sneeze into our elbows or a tissue reduce physical contact with people such as hugging and shaking, as well as practice social distancing in general.

The idea of social distancing was implemented first in countries which had the worst hits by the pandemic. Orders were passed by the government to prevent people from leaving their homes and attending public gatherings. Seeing as the spread of the virus could not be effectively controlled, the better option would be to control the people themselves until the virus either dies out or a vaccine is found. When Nigeria was hit by its first few cases of COVID-19, the government seeing that our medical facilities are too poor to take care of the virus threat in a foreseeable future, decided to formulate and implement policies on social distancing. This is because the worse possible scenario is not only a large scale spread of the virus, but that the unequipped medical facilities in the country are unable to take care of the number of cases. In order to keep the citizens safe, some states of the federation such as Rivers state are currently undergoing a lockdown. In simple terms, restrictions are being placed on movement in and out of these states in order to reduce the risk of spreading the disease. There are also movement restrictions within the states.

However, despite the fact that the social distancing is being observed for important reasons, it does not change the fact that it will also cause a negative turn for some citizen economically. It is a well-known fact that more than half of Nigeria's population maintains a low standard of living. It is also not new news that there are only a few hospitals capable of handling the weight that is associated with pandemics. Health care from such clinics will also

be ridiculously expensive and will only be available for use by the rich and high profiled in the society. This is as a result of impotence on the part of leaders in carrying out the tasks for which they were voted to perform in the first place. Reliable health care is a primary part of every functioning society. So many Nigerians rely on trade to make money and keep food on the table. Hawkers, for instance, use their daily earnings to provide for themselves and their families. The implication of the movement restriction is that not only can they not move out to sell their wares, but they will also lack customers to sell to in the first place. The question posed then is “how will these people eat?” Furthermore, the salaries of majority of the populace will not be enough to carry them as well as their families through the lockdown period. The implications do not stop there. Soon, the economic cycle in Nigeria will be disrupted and it will lead to chaos. The flow of money will reduce, savings will be emptied and food markets will be dried up. To prevent that, state governments have decided to reduce some restrictions placed on movement. Stores and markets selling foodstuffs are now available on certain days and at certain times.

However, the case may be, the common man will still feel the impact of the lockdown. People are asking to work and learn from their homes, but what becomes of those who cannot afford internet access or who’s education systems are not furnished well enough to create online platforms? What becomes of those whose jobs are performed manually and cannot be performed from home? There are individuals in the society that have no means of making money, so they sell their own foodstuffs and appliances. During this period, how are they expected to survive? More so, one cannot deny that not only is there an inadequate supply of light in the country, but the price of petroleum is quite high. For a person who earns below the minimum wage, even if he eventually obtains foodstuffs to last him for a while, how exactly will he keep them fresh? What is the point of food that eventually becomes stale? Moreover, funds allocated to the government for the feeding of the poor are constantly misused by individuals. This makes the locals protest and refuse to adhere to the laws on social distancing.

For the common man, the lockdown is not serving as a way to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus, but rather a hunger sentence. However, if the movement restrictions are lifted, then Africa as a whole will receive the worst blow from the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are a few downsides to the lockdown, it is agreeable that this is the best course of action to be taken until either a cure or vaccine is produced or the virus dies out completely. The responsible thing for the populace to do now, is to practice patience and refrain from flaunting the law, as sweet as it may seem.