

# Political Economy of Covid-19 and the Global Health Security in Africa: The Experience of Nigeria

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## Abstract

The explosion and outbreak of COVID-19 in the world as well as Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. The frequency of the spread of COVID-19 across the continents of the world was massive and enormous. The study examines the political economy of COVID-19 and the Global Health security in Africa: the experience of Nigeria. This study uses secondary sources of data as its data collection. The study adopted liberal institutionalism as a theoretical framework of analysis. The following findings were discovered as the impacts of the COVID-19 in Nigeria. These are as follows: businesses in Nigeria were affected as the Federal Government of Nigeria announced country's nation-wide lockdown, economic situation of Nigeria was worsened and poverty rate in Nigeria was heightened. The study advanced the following recommendations: Nigeria's health sector should properly be equipped with modern day technology; Nigeria's medical personnel should be totally and holistically trained and retrained.

**Keywords:** Political Economy, Covid-19, Health Security.

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## INTRODUCTION

Corona-virus Disease (Covid-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus. It is an infectious disease that kills people without caution especially the sick, aged and people with so many ailments in the body system. It is a deadly disease that keeps all Countries of the world at standstill. It is also seen as a disease caused by SARS-COV-2 that can trigger what doctors call a respiratory tract infection. The outbreak of Corona-Virus (COVID-19) has affected the global economy in unprecedented and uncontrolled manner. The covid-19 pandemic triggered unparalleled chaos, damage and devastation to both the public and private sectors. The crisis is seen as an existential threat to the global economy, with government and corporations struggling with the consequences. There has been increasing apprehension of the potential impact of the pandemic on the health sector of the country, economy of the state, small and medium sized enterprises (SMES). Although, the health impact of the crisis is significant, the economic impacts are no less devastating particularly for business in Nigeria, (Falokun, 2020).

This school of thought again emphasizes three factors that encouraged more cooperation and less conflict among states:

- i. An international institution like United Nations funds possibly a non-violent way to resolve conflict.
- ii. It maintains inter-dependence of states: it is through this means that trade will be promoted and other benefit of inter-dependence of states and economics.
- iii. Spread of democracy: it produces and builds less-frequent war among nation-states, (Shirayev, 2014).

Furthermore, liberals believe that inter-national institution play a key role in cooperation among states through inter-dependence. There are three main components of inter-dependence. States interact in various ways. Through economic, financial and cultural means, security tends not to be the primary goal in state-to-state interactions; and military forces are not typically used, (Shirayev, 2014)

More than 122 million people worldwide have been infected by the novel Corona virus or Covid-19. Probably for the first time in many decades, the world is experiencing a form of disease that does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender or even ethnicity. The virus originated in the Wuhan Province of China and has since spread to all parts of the world (WHO, 2020). The disease has been described by the health authorities as infectious and contagious. As a result, both the World Health Organization (WHO) and governments have urged their people to practice good hygiene by washing their hands with soap and running water or even alcohol based sanitizers, by keeping their nose and mouth covered with a mask. The covid-19 has seriously dealt with many sectors in Nigeria namely include economic sector and SMES as well as Agriculture products and high poverty rates. Their study makes attempt to explain the impact of COVID-19 in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Health Security**

**Concept of Health Security:** This is a concept that encompasses activities and measures across sovereign boundaries that mitigates public health incidents to ensure the health of population, (World Health Organization, 2022). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health security encompasses the activities required to minimize the danger and impact of acute public health events of populations living across geographical regions and international boundaries, (World Health Organization,2020).

### **Concept of Political Economy**

This is a branch of social science that studies the relationship between individuals and the state, using a diverse set of tools and methods drawn largely from economics, political science and sociology, (Michael, 2022).

The term political economy is derived from the Greek polis, meaning a city or “state” and Oikonomos, meaning “one who manages a household or estate. Political economy thus can be understood as the study of how a country-the public household- is managed or governed, taking into account both political and economic factors, (Michael, 2022).

Michael, (2021) sees political economy as an interdisciplinary branch of the social sciences that focuses on the interrelationships among individuals, governments and public policy.

### **Concept of International Relations**

In Social science, it is difficult to get an acceptable definition of a concept which international relations is part and parcel of.

According to Alfred (1935) defines international relations as the study of international relations extends from the natural sciences at one end to moral philosophy.

Frankel (1973) conceives international relations not as a single subject but as bundle of subject ... viewed from a common angle.

Taylor (1978) contended that the definition of the subject as a discipline which tries to explain activities across state boundaries and to date. It has been chiefly concerned with the political relations between governments, the official representatives of states, (Taylor, 1978). Quincy (1955) argues that international relations included relations between many entities of uncertain sovereignty.

In the absence of acceptable definition of international relations – the study adopts definition of international relations given by Hoffman (n.d). He defines it as the discipline that concerns with the factors and activities which affect the external policies and powers of the basic units into which the world is divided.

## **COVID-19 IN NIGERIA**

The COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria is part of the global Corona-virus Disease pandemic 2019, (COVID-19) caused by extreme acute Corona-virus to respiratory syndrome (SRS-COV-2). The first confirmed case in Nigeria was revealed on 7th February, 2020 when Italian people tested positive for SARS-COV-2 virus in Lagos (Maclean and Dahir, 2020). A second case of the virus was registered on 9 March 2020 in Ekwokoro, Ogun State a Nigerian Citizen who had contact with an Italian citizen.

On 28<sup>th</sup> January, Nigeria Federal Government told people of the country that it was prepared to improve surveillance at first international airports in the country in order to prevent corona-virus spread. The government has confirmed airports such as Enugu, Lagos, Rivers, Kano and FCT. The Nigeria center for Disease Control (NCDC) also announced on the same day that it had already set up a Corona-virus Community and it was ready to trigger its program if any event occurred in Nigeria, (Odurisi, 2020); On 31<sup>st</sup> January, following the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in mainland China and other countries around the World, the Federal Government of Nigeria set up a Corona-virus Preparedness Committed to minimize the effect of the virus if it inevitably spread to the nation (Ifijeh, 2020). On the same day, Nigeria was among the 13 other African Nations, was listed as a high risk of transmission of the virus by the World Health Organization, (Ezigbo and Ifijeh, 2020). On 26<sup>th</sup> February, a Chinese citizen introduced himself to the state government of Lagos on suspicion of Corona-virus infection. He was admitted in Reddington Hospital and was released the next day after negative tests (Ezigbo and ifijeh 2020).

## **CAUSES OF COVID-19**

Corona-viruses are family of viruses that can cause illness such as the common cold, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). In 2019, a new corona-virus was identified as the cause of a disease outbreak that originated in China,( Mayo,2019).

The virus is known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2). The disease it causes is called coronavirus disease 2019(COVID-19). In March 2020, the world Health Organization (WHO) declares the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic.

The recent outbreak began in Wuhan, a city in the Hubei Province of China. Reports of the first COVID-19 cases started in December 2019.

Corona-viruses are common in certain species of animals, such as cattle and camels. Although the transformation of corona-viruses from animals to humans is rare, this new strain likely came from bats, (Medical News Today, 2020).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts theory of liberal institutionalism as the theory for analysis of this study.

Liberal institutionalism is a theory of international relations which holds that international cooperation between states is feasible and sustainable, and that such cooperation can reduce conflict and cooperation, (Powell, 1994).

The emergence of liberal institutionalism and as an alternative to realism in international relations (IR) theory has led to heated debate since the 1970s about the validity of liberal institutionalism as a real alternative to realism, (Rebecca, 2011).

Liberal institutionalism argues that emphasis should be placed on global governance and international organizations as a way of explaining international relations and systems.

Institutionalism places emphasis on the role that common goals play in the international system and the ability of international organizations to get states to cooperate, (Rebecca, 2011).

This school of thought again emphasizes three factors that encourage more cooperation and less-conflict among states:

- i. International institutions like United Nations find possibly a non-violent way to resolve conflict.
- ii. It maintains interdependence of states- it is through this means that trade will be promoted and other benefits of interdependence of states and economies;
- iii. Spread of democracy – it produces and builds less-frequent war among nation-states, (Shiraer, 2014: 86).

Furthermore, liberals believe that international institutions play a key role in cooperation among states through interdependence. There are three main components of interdependence. States interact in various ways, through economic, financial and cultural means; security tends to not be the primary goal in state-to-state interactions; and military forces are not typically used (Shiraev, 2014).

This theory highlights the role of international institutions and regimes in facilitating cooperation between states, (Axelrod, Robert, Keohane, 1985).

Keohane summarized by showing that international cooperation could be sustained through repeated interactions, transparency and monitoring, (Keohane, Robert, Martin and Lisa, 1995).

The importance of liberal institutionalism includes:

- i. It promotes cooperation between and among nations;
- ii. It minimizes transaction cost: the cost of transaction of goods and services from one state to another will be minimized at lowest ebb. Since this transaction promotes good channel of communication and transportation links ;
- iii. Conflicts of different kinds such as territorial disputes among nations that usually take place within a global system will totally or nearly be absent;
- iv. Promotion of spread of democracy across continents of the world; and
- v. It is against power politics as the only option or possible outcome of international relations; it is believe is that international relations/politics is peaceful and total absence of realism or anarchy.

### **Criticisms of Liberal Institutionalism Theory**

These include:

- i. It does not overcome power politics that so pronounced in the international politics ;
- ii. It is utopian in nature and not realistic in approach;
- iii. It promotes and propagates Western ideas like democratic principles;
- iv. It carries a suspicion of US neo-imperialism connotation, (Sam, 2009).
- v. International organizations as proposed by the theory does not promote interests of militarily weak nations like Iraq

### **The Relevance of Liberal institutionalism to the study**

The relevance of this theory liberal institutionalism cannot be overemphasized. The relevance is enormous and broad. The theory states that for individuals and states co-exist and live in peace and harmony or cooperation there must be institutions that gears towards promotion of peace, democracy, development, relations or interactions across globe. During the time of explosion and origination of COVID-19 World Health Organization (WHO) as one of the specialized agencies of United Nations Organization and other regional bodies like European Union worked tirelessly in order to put a stop to the spread of COVID-19 to all the states of the world and also production of vaccines that will use to put COVID-19 to its end.

## **Preventive Measures of COVID-19**

Protecting yourself and those around you:

- Get vaccinated as soon as it's your turn and follow local guidance on vaccination.
- Keep physical distance of at least 1 metre from others, even if they don't appear to be sick. Avoid crowds and close contact.
- Wear a properly fitted mask when physical distancing is not possible and in poorly ventilated settings.
- Clean your hands frequently with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of used tissues immediately and clean hands regularly.
- If you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19, self-isolate until you recover.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on Nigeria**

The impact of COVID-19 on Nigeria was examined holistically and totally in order to get the damages and destruction the COVID-19 left Nigerian state with. The of impact COVID-19 here in Nigeria are enormous. These will be discussed under the headings:

- i. Nigerian economic growth
- ii. Increase in poverty rate
- iii. Disruption of academic calendar and activities
- iv. Small and medium Businesses

### **Economic growth aspect**

As Nigeria and other nations of the world grapple with the Corona-virus, the economic impact is alarming and mounting. There are now more than 122 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally and 161 thousand causes in Nigeria as at 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the new corona-virus that emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 has spread around the world and crippling economy of both developed and developing countries across the continents of the world. Businesses are dealing with the loss of fortunes and investment returns and disruption of supply chains due to factories shutting down, tens of millions of people remaining in lockdown in dozens of cities and other countries extending travel restrictions. Corona-virus is also taking a toll on the air line industry, with the international Air Transport Association (IATA) predicting the outbreak could cost airlines \$113 billion in lost revenue as fewer people take flights.

Hutt, (2020) said that:

“The industry remains very fragile, brain Pearce, the IATA’s chief economist told the associated press. There are a lots of airlines that have got relatively narrow profit margins and lots of debt and this could send some into a very difficult situation. China’s non-financial investment in Nigeria stood at \$ 3 billion as of April 2019, while China-Nigeria’s bilateral trade volume soared to \$15.3 billion in 2011.

Again, following the lockdown of much of the Chinese mainland (up to 150 million Chinese nations are under mandatory movement restrictions) the production of goods and services will continue to slow and in some cases, shut down completely, affecting exports to Nigeria. It affected Nigeria’s oil supply to non-producing countries especially the price of the product. And other sectors of the Nigeria’s economy such as manufacturing and production, thereby causing inflation to go up (Hutt, 2020).

#### **i. Small and Medium Businesses**

COVID-19 affected a lot of businesses in Nigeria. Report had that detail the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Disruption in operations was evident across enterprises or businesses currently. Operation in the country haven had to close down during the pandemic. The results also shed light on resistance to lockdown directives and regulations by the government, particularly among informal enterprises where a third continued to operate throughout the pandemic, (United Nations Development Programme, 2021).

### **Increase in Poverty Rates**

The economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic has worsened the plight of families living in poverty in Lagos State, Nigeria and left many people struggling to afford food and meet other basic needs, (relief web, 2021). It was captured by Human Rights Watch “the numbers of Nigerians experiencing Hunger doubled during the pandemic”. Again, the report release by Human Rights Watch stated that:

Document how a five week lockdown, rising food prices and a prolonged economic downturn have had a devastating impact of informal workers, sham dwellers and other urban poor families in Lagos. The absence of a functioning social system meant that government assistance, including cash transfer and food handouts, reached only a fraction of people going hungry, (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The World Bank forecasted in January 2021 that COVID-19 crisis will result in an additional 10.9 million Nigerians

Poverty by 2022, defined as people living below the national poverty line of around \$1 a day. In Lagos State high levels of urban poverty-most of the state's more than 20 million residents live shams or informal settlements left people vulnerable to the economic impact of the pandemic, (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Cash transfer, food and other government assistance, however have fallen far short of need. NBS data from April and May 2020 showed that just 2percent of households had received cash transfers since the start of the pandemic and 12 percent had received food assistance, whereas more than half had run out of food in the previous 30 days. By November 2000, just 0.6 percent of households had received cash transfer in the last month and 3.5 percent had received food assistance, while almost half had recently run out of food, (Human rights Watch, 2021).

### **Disruption of School Academic Calendar**

COVID-19 disrupted academic calendar in Nigeria. Most schools including universities students and lecturers alike were at home for months. And that made the students to be at home doing nothing relating to academics and looming on the streets in search for what to do because they were kept busy in the school. Majority of them did many bad acts at this period ranging from rape, prostitution and stealing.

### **Conclusion**

This study looks at the Nigeria's experience on the outbreak and spread of COVID-19 to its environment holistically. The study began by looking at the introduction, definition of related concepts, theoretical framework of analysis, causes of COVID-19 in Nigeria, preventive measures prescribed by world Health Organization and other regional health related agencies. The study used liberal institutionalism in its theoretical framework of analysis and finally, examined the impacts of COVID-19 on the Nigerian state and concluded that it was total, massive and enormous.

It was further concluded that as Nigeria and other nations of the world grapple with the Corona-virus, the economic impact is alarming and destructive. Thus, the Nigerian economic growth was retarded, there was high increase in poverty rate, academic calendar was disrupted and activities of Small and Medium scale Enterprises were badly affected.

Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, the Nigeria economy was unstable as the Country was already battling with non-COVID-19 related issues such as insecurity, falling oil prices, trade restrictions, and public deficit issues, on top of long-standing development challenges like inadequate fiscal economic policies, unemployment, and inflation. The government's regulatory attempts to prevent the spread of the virus exacerbated the country's already unstable economic situation. The impact of Covi-19 on Nigeria has shown that there is high need for the diversification of the Nigerian economy away from oil in order to achieve sustainable economic development. It is evident that the government must be more intentional about implementing policies rather than just formulating them, as this is a very important step in revitalizing the economy and rescuing it from imminent collapse as a result of the impact of Covi-19.

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends the following based on its findings:

- i. Nigeria's health sector should properly be equipped with modern day technological equipment that will dictate as fast as possible deadly diseases and bacteria;
- ii. Nigeria's medical doctors, nurses and other personnel like laboratory officers should be totally and holistically trained and retrained;
- iii. Nigerian state should take it as a serious task to develop the nation's health sector which is today nothing to write home about.
- iv. Immigration and Custom officers at the Nigerian borders should be strict in the checking and searching of people that enter into the country.

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