

State Response and Resource Allocation in Emergencies: Examining COVID – 19 Pandemic Palliatives in Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56293/IJMSSSR.2024.4830>

IJMSSSR 2024

VOLUME 6

ISSUE 1 JANUARY - FEBRUARY

ISSN: 2582 - 0265

Abstract: The state exists fundamentally to improve its citizens, and their quality of life, deliver social stability, and guarantee security and safety. It is expected that government sets priorities for resource use in emergencies, such as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19, an infectious disease, has killed thousands of people globally leading governments to impose a lockdown to curtail its spread. This study investigated how people fare during the lockdown, the effectiveness of government response to meet the citizenry's needs, and the implications of state response. The study adopted mixed methods to collect data to provide responses to these questions. Questionnaires and structured interviews were used to elicit information purposively from residents of FCT, Abuja, Ekiti State and Lagos State. Secondary data were sourced from newspapers, journals, government publications and the Internet. Data gathered were analyzed statistically and descriptively. The study discovered that many people could not transact their businesses, and were unable to make ends meet. Findings further revealed that ineffective state response led to increased crime and loss of lives, among others. Therefore, the study recommended that the Nigerian state adopt the principles of good governance and proper planning for effective response to emergencies in order to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable citizens.

Keywords: COVID-19, Emergency, Palliatives, Resource Allocation, State Response

1. Introduction

The World Health Organization [WHO], on January 31, 2020, declared the outbreak of a deadly Coronavirus pandemic tagged COVID-19 (Kakodkar, Kaka, and Baig, 2020). According to Kakodkar, Kaka and Baig (2020), the origin was traced to a cluster of 27 cases of pneumonia of unknown etiology reported by the Wuhan Health Commission in the province of the Republic of China to the National Health Commission, China, CDC on 31st December 2019. The clinical features of COVID-19 include fever (not in all), cough, sore throat, headache, fatigue, myalgia and breathlessness, after which the disease can progress to pneumonia, respiratory failure and death (WHO, 2020; Web MD, 2020). According to World Health Organization (2020) Dashboard Report by 8.18 am on July 1, 2020, confirmed cases was 10, 268, 839 while 83, 465 new cases were recorded and 506 064 deaths had been recorded. Africa had 297 290 cases out of the confirmed cases (WHO, 2020). The first case in reported in Nigeria was an Italian man working in Nigeria who returned from Europe on 25th February. By 27th February, he tested positive to COVID-19 (Kalu, 2020). The number of infected people in Nigeria increased to 25, 694, with active cases 15, 358, discharged cases; 9, 746 and death recorded was 590 as at 30th June, 2020 (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020).

The fear of the spread of COVID-19 spurred governments both at the federal and state levels to declare emergencies of various categories since March 2020, such as restriction of movement; closure of major markets; ban on inter-state and international travels; as well as ban on social and religious, sport, and recreational activities. However, the lockdown imposed by the government impacted socio-economic activities and majorly, sources of daily income were hindered for the larger percentage of the citizenry. The state of human security in Nigeria, especially during the lockdown, called for urgent state intervention. According to United Nations Development Programme cited in (Phillips, 2019), human security is “freedom from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression”. Though the timely measures to restrict movement helped limit the spread of the pandemic, how to make ends meet, the threats of hunger and survival became a major challenge for the citizenry. In recognition of

the inconveniences brought upon the people by lockdown imposed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the government promised to provide palliatives in the form of money and foodstuffs to cushion the effects of the lockdown. Okpaga, Chijioke and Eme (2012) opined that the state exists fundamentally to protect life and property and ensure the well-being of the citizens. Human Rights Watch (2020) revealed that under International Human Rights Law, Nigeria's government has an obligation to protect people's right to an adequate standard of living, adequate food and nutrition, the highest standard of health, and the right to social security. It also emphasised the role of countries, in times of economic crisis, to include making every effort to mobilise resources, including international assistance, and allocate them in a way that maximizes respect for human rights, including taking into account the precarious situation of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals or groups. However, questions have been raised on the effectiveness of the palliatives promised by governments. The federal government announced a fiscal stimulus support package, and initially approved N15 billion for the national response for COVID-19. This was later topped by N10 billion to Lagos State and N5 billion to Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) (Aref-Adib, 2020). In addition, to guarantee food security, a cash transfer of N20,000 was designed to cover the period of four months for the identified 11 million people captured in the National Social Register as people living in absolute poverty (Aref-Adib, 2020). Also, there were donations of billions of Naira from individuals, private agencies, corporate bodies, foreign bodies like the European Union (EU) and other donors.

In spite of the above, distribution of the palliatives has been faulted for lack of reliable data to know the poor and vulnerable, lack of parameters for determining the beneficiaries of relief packages, non-availability of specific modalities to alleviate the impact of the lockdown on the poor, distribution of palliatives smirched with irregularities, discriminations, partisanship and lack of transparency (Nwabughio, 2020). Abdullahi (2020) revealed that 90 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty because they lack basic needs. The implication is that the majority of the poor who are daily wage earners were left with nothing to eat due to the lockdown, yet they did not have access to the promised palliatives. Furthermore, the lockdown made people poorer because of their inability to do their daily business due to lockdown rules, increasing the country's poverty level and attendant socio-economic consequences. The main aim of research is to empirically assess the effectiveness of State response to the needs of the citizenry in Nigeria, especially in time of emergencies. The questions raised include:

1. Were people actually affected by the lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Was the government able to respond effectively to the plights of the citizenry during the lockdown?
3. What are the implications of governments' attitude to people's plights during the lockdown?
4. What are the potentials for effective State response during emergencies in Nigeria?

The research objectives are to:

- investigate how citizens were affected by the lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- assess government's response to the plight of the citizenry during the lockdown;
- examine the implications of governments' attitude to people's plight during the lockdown; and
- consider the potentials for effective government response in emergencies in Nigeria.

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Rahman (2016), good governance is the key issue for providing quality services by ensuring quality management. Governance refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented) UNESCAP (2020). Governance deals with the process of decision-making and implementation of such decisions for the benefit of the citizenry. It is the total ability to organize, synthesize and direct the various actions of the working parts of government machinery for such a government to perform meaningfully, creditably and acceptably Adetiba and Rahim (2012). According to this definition, governance focuses on the structures and institutions involved in making and implementing governmental decisions. Good governance is necessary for the government to perform creditably and be meaningful at all times, especially in times of emergency. Good governance originated from the World Bank in 1989 as part of the conditions to give aid to governments [Chigbu, 2010; Rahman, 2016]. Good governance is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources, and guarantee the realization of human rights in a manner that is essentially free of abuse and corruption, with due regard for the rule of law [UNCHR, 2020]. Ekundayo (2017) describes good governance as a governance theory that sets some basic principles according to which a good

government, whatever its form, must be run. The principles of good governance include the following (UNDP cited in Rahman, 2016; Ekundayo, 2017; UNESCAP, 2020):

- i. Participation- Participation by both men and women, either directly or indirectly, is a key cornerstone of good governance.
- ii. Rule of law- good governance should have a fair and impartial legal framework. It should also ensure full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities.
- iii. Transparency- Decisions are taken and their implementation should follow established rules and regulations. Also, information should be freely available and accessible to those affected by such decisions and their enforcement.
- iv. Responsiveness- It requires all stakeholders to serve with a reasonable framework.
- v. Consensus-oriented - good governance requires broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how it can be achieved.
- vi. Equity and inclusiveness- This requires that all men and women should have the opportunity to improve or maintain their well-being.
- vii. Effectiveness and efficiency- good governance requires the processes and institutions to produce results that meet the needs of the society while making the best of the resources at their disposal.
- viii. Accountability- Good governance requires that both government institutions and private sector and civil society organizations be accountable to the public and their institutions stakeholders. Institutions or organizations must be accountable to who will be affected by their decisions or actions.
- ix.

For the government to perform creditably, especially in emergencies times such as the COVID-19, popular participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability must be in place. Participation of men and women were required in the making and implementation of policies to curtail the spread of the coronavirus pandemic and cushion the effects of the lockdown. Operation of the rule of law should allow for impartial dealing in the distribution of palliatives to various regions and people in the country without regard for party affiliations. The minority and vulnerable would be considered in response to people's plight during the period. Besides, the government needed to employ an effective process in implementing life-saving policies for the benefit of all. Also, both public and private sectors were required to account for how they discharge the policies and assignments.

Good governance was criticised by Chandel (2020) on four basic grounds. One was that it lacks parsimony, meaning that it has endless definitions. Secondly, it lacks differentiation in relation to liberal democracies. Thirdly, it lacks coherence, from respect to human rights to efficient banking regulations. Fourthly, it lacks theoretical utility as it does not aid the formulation of the theory and the related project of hypothesis testing. He opined that good governance theory is so fluid that analysts can easily define it the way it best fits their data. However, the principles of good governance, such as participation, the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency and accountability are all necessary for the government to respond effectively and efficiently to citizens' plights during emergencies such as the Coronavirus pandemic and the lockdown that was imposed to curtail its spread.

Good governance is germane for effectiveness, responsiveness, transparency, equity and inclusiveness. Okolo and Agidi (2018) reveal that good governance enhances equitable allocation of resources to every concerned people, geographical area, state, and local government. They opined that good governance allows for standardized and acceptable methods of allocating resources to every sector, section, and segment. Good governance is vital for the government to meet the needs of the citizenry. Ukwandu and Jarbandhan (2016) argue that good governance is the core catalyst for development. The place of good governance cannot be overruled in effective state response and resource allocation, especially during emergencies, as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Methodology

The study employs survey research. Primary and secondary data were generated through the mixed method research design. Primary data were elicited through questionnaires and interviews from the sampled population. The population sample were drawn from Lagos and Ekiti States as well as Abuja, the federal capital territory (FCT). Lagos State and the (FCT) were purposively chosen because the duo were the epicenter of the pandemic. Abuja is

at the center of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory while Lagos State is in South-West, Nigeria and the former capital of Nigeria. Ekiti was chosen for convenience. Ekiti is a state in South-West, Nigeria. Ekiti was one of the states in Nigeria that first imposed lockdown due to the pandemic. Samples were drawn from Ado Ekiti, the headquarters of Ekiti State, because it was majorly affected by the lockdown than other towns and villages. Respondents were chosen by simple random sampling. The targeted respondents included artisans such as welders, vulcanizers, carpenters, cobblers, tailors, etc. and other businessmen and women not categorized as “essential services” and other non-salary earners. Research assistants were used to contact sample respondents using an online questionnaire. Responses included 177 from Lagos, 165 from Abuja and 156 from Ekiti. The respondents were from Abuja (33.13%), Ekiti (31.33%) and Lagos (35.54%). The age of respondents were 18-25(32.3%), 26-45 (51.9%), 46-55 (10.8%) and 56-above (5%). The occupation of respondents includes mechanics (6%), tailors/fashion designers (12.9%), welders (3.63%), hairdressers (5.24%), vulcanizers (2.62%), cobblers 19(3.83%), carpenters (2.21%), private company workers (not categorized essential services) (12.5%), private school teachers (10.5%) and (40.5%) others such as small business owners, street hawkers, etc. Two major religions in Nigeria are reflected in the responses. Most of the respondents (80.9%) were Christians while (18.9%) were of Islamic religion and the remaining (0.2%) belonged to other religions.

Though the sample may not represent the whole country, they represent the major epicenter of the pandemic. The survey was structured to know how people were affected by the lockdown imposed by the government to curtail the pandemic. The government’s response to people’s plight during the period was also rated, and the implication of the response was assessed. Furthermore, samples of various classes of people, especially the vulnerable, were interviewed to rate government response to their plight during the pandemic. Data gathered were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Primary data from the questionnaire were analyzed using simple percentages, pie chart and bar chart while responses from the interviews and secondary sources were descriptively analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents data and discusses the findings on State response and resource allocation in an emergency, considering the case of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Sampled areas include FCT, Abuja, Ekiti State and Lagos State. The choice of these areas was informed by the fact that on the onset, most positive cases were recorded from Lagos, followed by Abuja, while Ekiti was among the state that first declared lockdown to prevent the spread to the state. There are 508 responses in all, but responses to each question vary.

Research Question 1. Were people affected by the lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

4.1.1. Awareness.

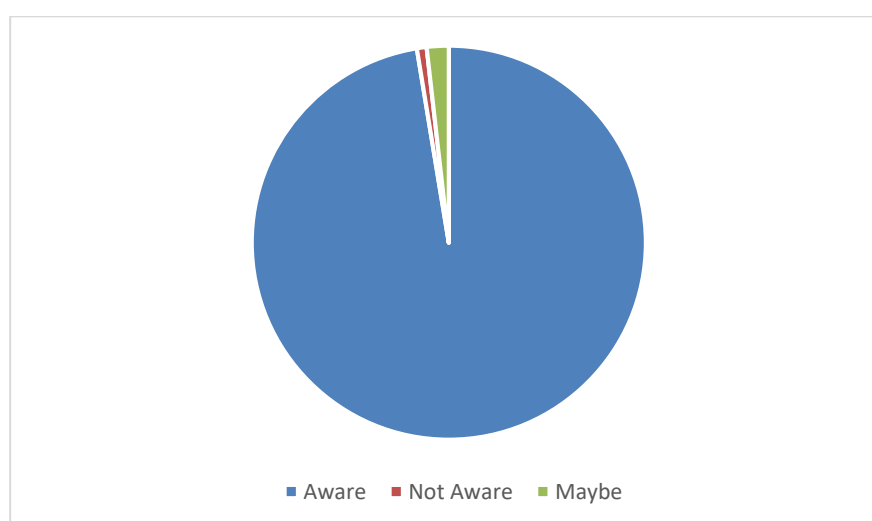


Figure 1. Responses on People’s Awareness of the Pandemic

Source: Field Survey, (2020).

Figure 1 above shows that the majority of the respondents are aware of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Almost all the respondents, 97.4% affirmed the awareness of the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic, while 0.8% of the respondents indicated that they were unaware, while 1.8% responded maybe. This shows that there is wide awareness about the pandemic. It is not a hidden phenomenon. The government and its agencies did excellently well in creating awareness about the Coronavirus outbreak to take necessary precautions to prevent the spread. Various efforts were put in place by the governments, international bodies such WHO, UNICEF, etc., concerned corporate bodies and individuals to create awareness about the disease, its symptoms, precautions to take to prevent being infected and steps to take if affected. For instance, UNICEF supported an awareness campaign by health educators in all local government areas of Lagos State (UNICEF, 2020). Similarly, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), with \$6.7 million, supported a national awareness-raising campaign to deploy both Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and short message service (SMS) platforms to deliver key messages around social distancing, safe hygiene practices, and other preventive measures to contain the spread of the disease (USAID, 2020). Besides, awareness through different methods such as songs, playlets/drama, news, and daily updates on radio and televisions are also employed to spread awareness even to remote areas. Lagos state bought ten buses with COVID-19 inscription and emergency numbers to increase awareness about the pandemic (Folorunso-Francis, 2020).

4.1.2. How People were Affected by the Lockdown

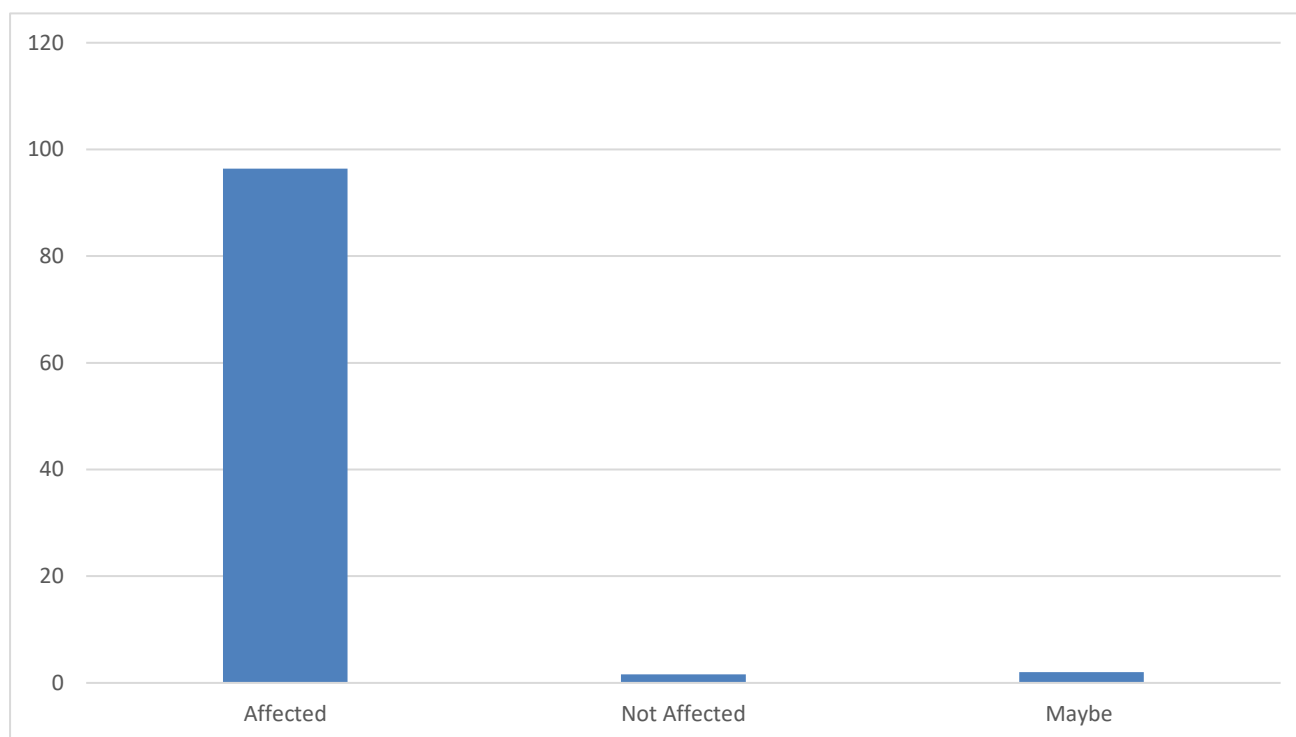


Figure 2: Responses on Whether People were Affected by the Lockdown

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Responses from the survey showed that most respondents were affected by the lockdown, as revealed by as many as 96.4% respondents who said they were affected by the lockdown imposed by the government. 1.6% of the respondents opined that they were not affected, while 2% opined 'maybe' This was due to the government's instruction that only people in essential services, those who deal in food, drugs, health workers, security operatives, were allowed to transact their business and move about. The implication is that most of the citizenry were affected by the lockdown imposed by governments due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Obadofin (2020). in a similar finding, narrated the experiences of hardship faced by the people as a result of the lockdown. The lockdown affected agriculture and food production to mining, trade, transportation, accommodation, and recreation (Adeniji, 2020). This is due to an increase in prices of goods and transport fares, etc.

4.1.3 Effect of Lockdown on Individual's Economy

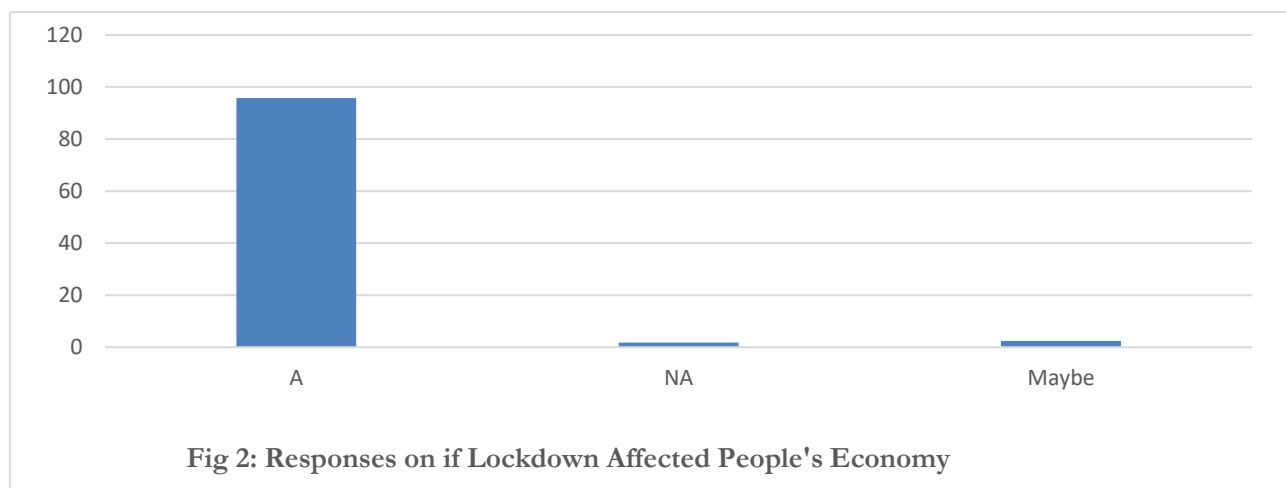


Figure 3: Whether People's Economy were Affected during the Lockdown

Source: Field Survey, 2020

On whether people's economy was affected by the lockdown, most respondents have their economy affected by the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. As many as 95.8% respondents indicated that their economy was affected by the lockdown while 1.8% opined that they were not affected and 2.4% were not sure, noted 'maybe'. Most medium- and low-income workers had their economy affected by the lockdown, such as tailors, carpenters, welders, vulcanizers, hairdressers, commercial motorcyclists, drivers, businessmen, businesswomen not in categories of "essential services". In line with the above finding, Calvin-Smith (2020) revealed that millions of people working in the informal sector had been particularly affected. This is further corroborated by Onyekwena and Ekeruche (2020), who posited that restrictions on movement reduced the consumption of non-essential commodities in general and have affected the income generation of people in those groups, thereby reducing their consumption expenditure. In the same vein, Adeniji (2020), while assessing the effects of Coronavirus on Nigeria's informal economy, submitted that all micro-businesses were affected. Millions of employees working with private and corporate bodies lost their jobs while many remained partially employed. A respondent at Lagos narrated how the company, instead of laying off workers, re-arranged them to work two weeks and two weeks off.

4.1.4 Ability of Individuals to Feed their Families during the Lockdown

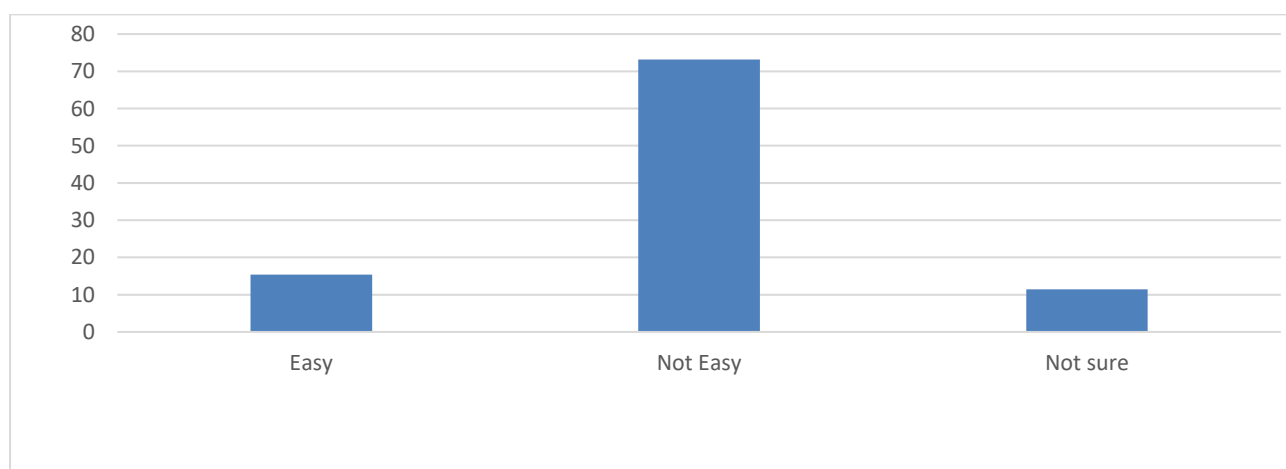


Figure 4: Ability to Feed One's Family during the Lockdown

Source: Field Survey, 2020

On whether people find it easy to feed themselves and their families during the lockdown, responses from people show that it was not easy for people to make ends meet during the lockdown. Just 15.4% of the respondents indicated that it was easy to feed themselves and their family members, while 73.2% of the respondents said it was not easy for them and 11.4% were not sure (Field Survey, 2020). A Human Rights Watch researcher, Anietie Ewang (Human Rights Watch, 2020), revealed that millions of Nigerians who observed the lockdown lacked the food and income that their families needed to survive.

4.1.5 How Individuals Coped during the Lockdown

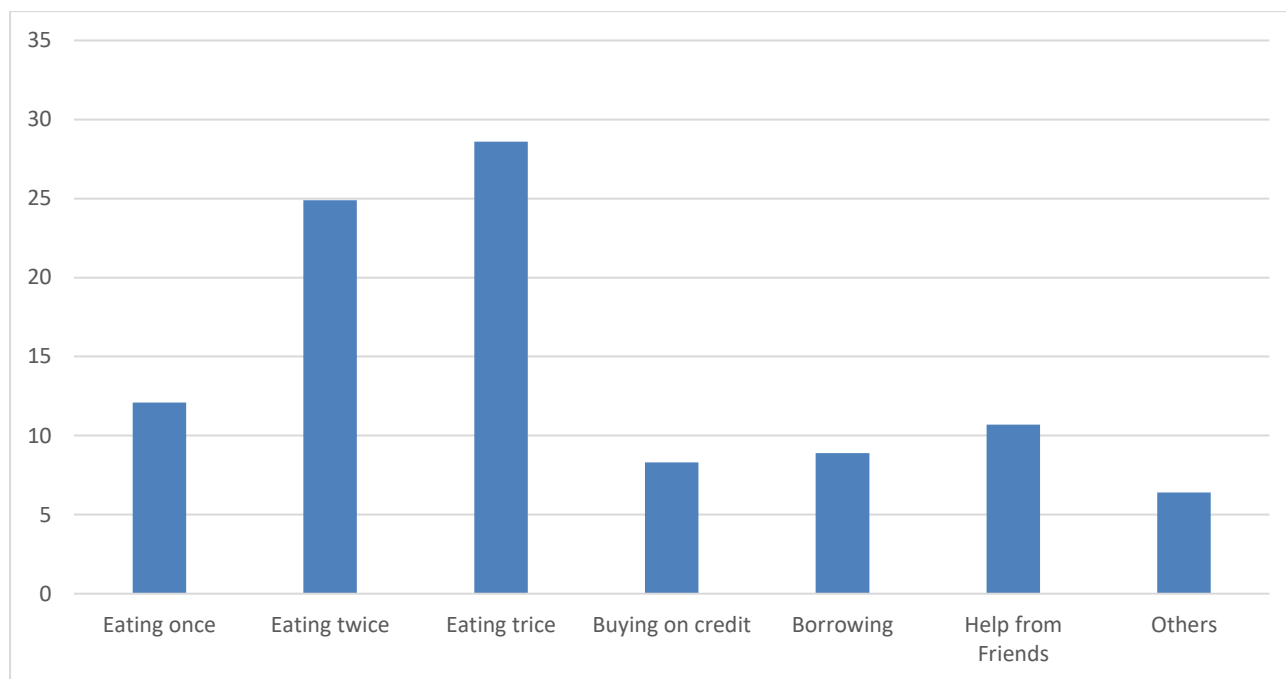


Figure 5: How People Coped during Lockdown

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Responses to how people tried to cope during the lockdown revealed the following: most responses show that it was not easy for people to make ends meet during the lockdown. 12.1% respondents indicated that they could eat just once daily. Other 24.9% of the respondents revealed they were able to eat twice daily and 28.6% said they manage to eat three times daily, while 8.3% noted they have been buying food on credit. Also, 8.9% said they have been living on borrowing and 10.7% have been soliciting help from friends and relatives, while 6.4% kept on living through other means. To corroborate the above, Onyekakeyah (2020) reported how “pockets of youths” from Lekki Phase One swarmed around flagging down cars and demanding money, food, and screaming that they were hungry and had no job at the time. Also, BBC (2020) reported millions of Nigerians, such as food vendors, hairdressers, cleaners, and others who earn their wages daily and make up the informal job market, said they were faced with choices.

4.2. Research Question 2. Was the government able to respond effectively to the plight of the citizenry during the lockdown?

People’s Assessment of Government response

The following are the people’s responses to the survey on how the government responds to people’s plight during the lockdown.

Are you aware that the government distributed palliatives to support people’s welfare during the lockdown?

4.2.1 Awareness on Government Distribution of Palliatives

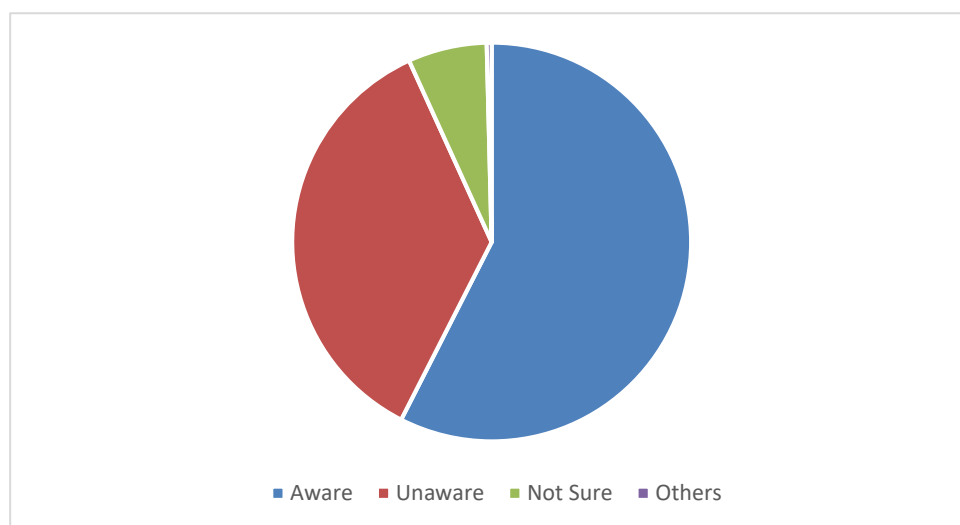


Figure 6: Awareness of Government Palliatives

Figure 6 above shows that the majority of the respondents, 57.5% were aware of government palliatives to cushion the effects of the lockdown imposed to curtail the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. Another 35.7% said they were not aware and 6.4% were not sure. The responses of the remaining 0.4% respondents are those that believe that ‘we only hear about it, but we have nothing to show for it’ and “The government itself is a scam” (Field Survey, 2020). Many who claimed they were aware that palliatives were provided complained about the process of distribution, that they did not receive any from it. A respondent rated the method of distribution as very poor. According to him, “COVID-19 has exposed the weakness of our government. The country is about 200 million, less than 4 million were given palliatives. Self-employed people and those working with private organizations were not paid for three months. Does anyone ask how they are coping? The response is, “We need re-organization in this country” (Field Survey, 2020).

Since the lockdown, have you received any palliatives in the form of money (transfer or cash) from the government?

4.2.2 Reception of Palliatives in Form of Money/Cash

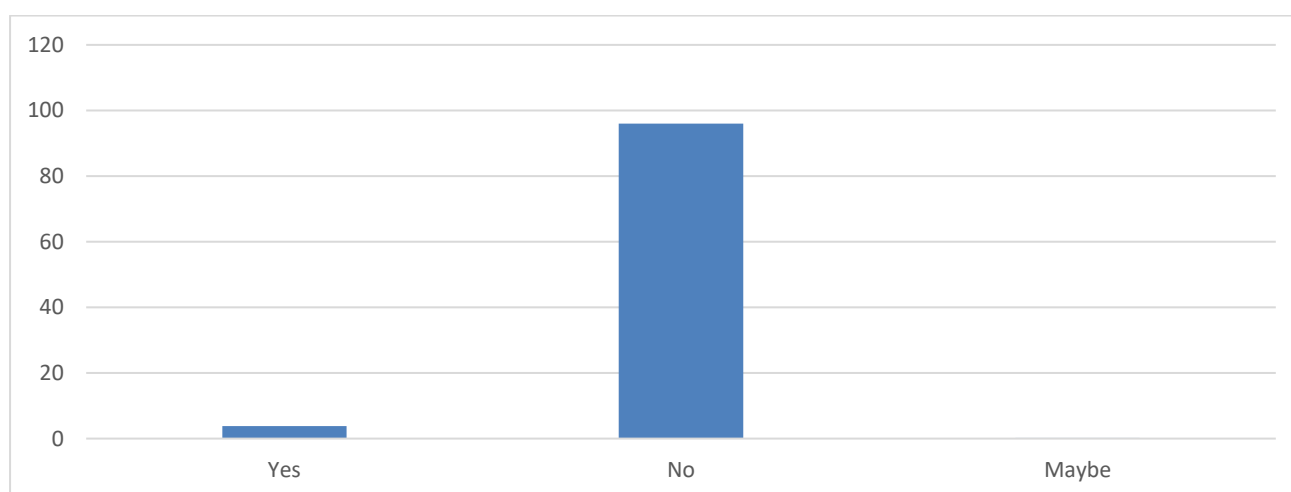


Figure 7: Responses to Whether Respondents Received Palliative in Form of Money

Source: Field Survey, 2020

On whether they received palliative in the form of money (transfer or cash), only 3.8% indicated “Yes” while the majority of the respondents, 96% responded “No” and 0.2% indicated “maybe” (Field Survey, 2020). The palliative distributed did not get to 96% of the respondents. This is corroborated by the findings of Okon (2020) who reported that people who spoke with Business Day in Lagos said that they only heard on TV that the federal government would be giving money to people but were yet to receive anything. In the same vein, Donnelly and Hassan (2020) submitted that the government’s effort in distributing cash and food had been hampered by poor communication, inefficiency and lack of transparency.

4.2.3 Reception of Palliatives in Form of Foodstuffs

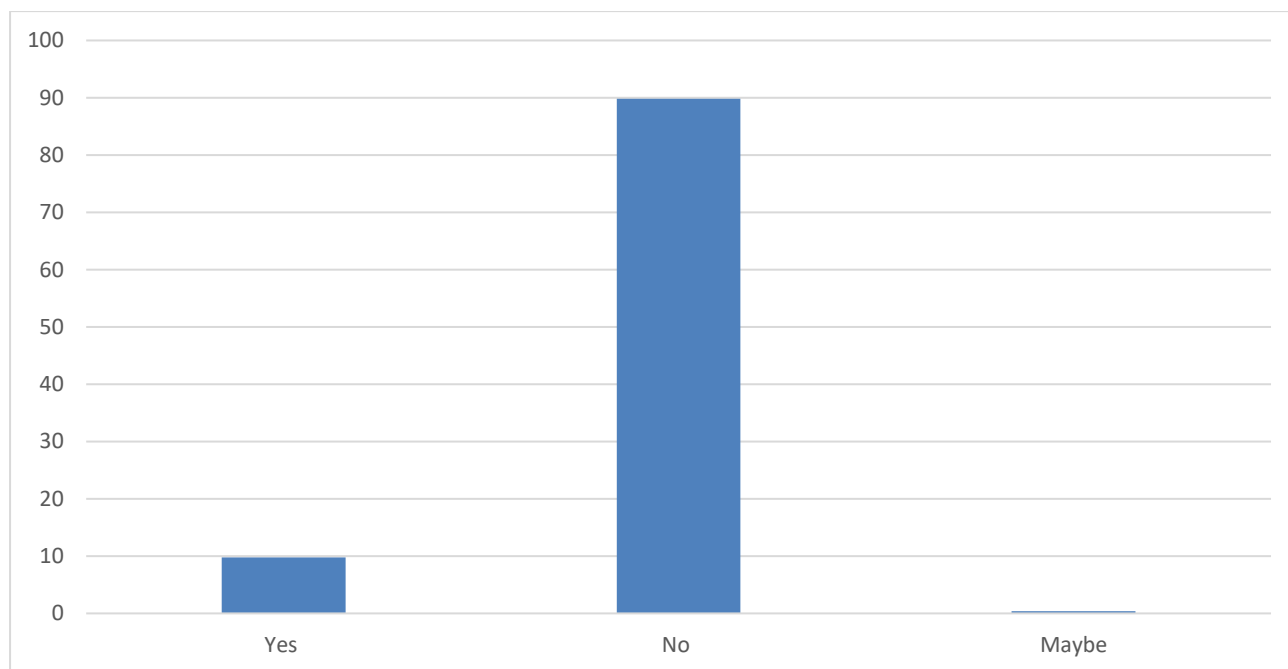


Figure 8: Responses on Whether Respondents Received Palliative in form of Foodstuffs

Source: Field Survey, 2020

On distribution of palliative in form of food, 89.8% did not receive any palliative in the form of foodstuffs while 9.8% revealed that they received and 0.4% opined “maybe”. This is corroborated by a similar finding by the Lagos Neighborhood Safety Corps (LNSC) officers cited in Toromade (2020) who recorded some of the respondents. According to them, a resident threatened an imminent protest if the government did not provide palliative measures soon:

The indoors you’re asking us to stay, do you know that there’s no food for us? Nothing that they [government] have provided for us. If they don’t send any money or food for us, we’ll protest. We’re giving two days. We’ll protest in two days.

Similarly, Olajide (2020) revealed that despite the Lagos state government introducing a food relief package to cushion the effects of lockdown, the distribution had been hampered by governance challenges. He noted that a disconnect between urban development policies, housing, slums and the livelihood realities of the majority.

Can you say that the government has responded well in meeting the people’s needs during the lockdown?

4.2.4 Rating of Government's Response to People's Needs During the Lockdown

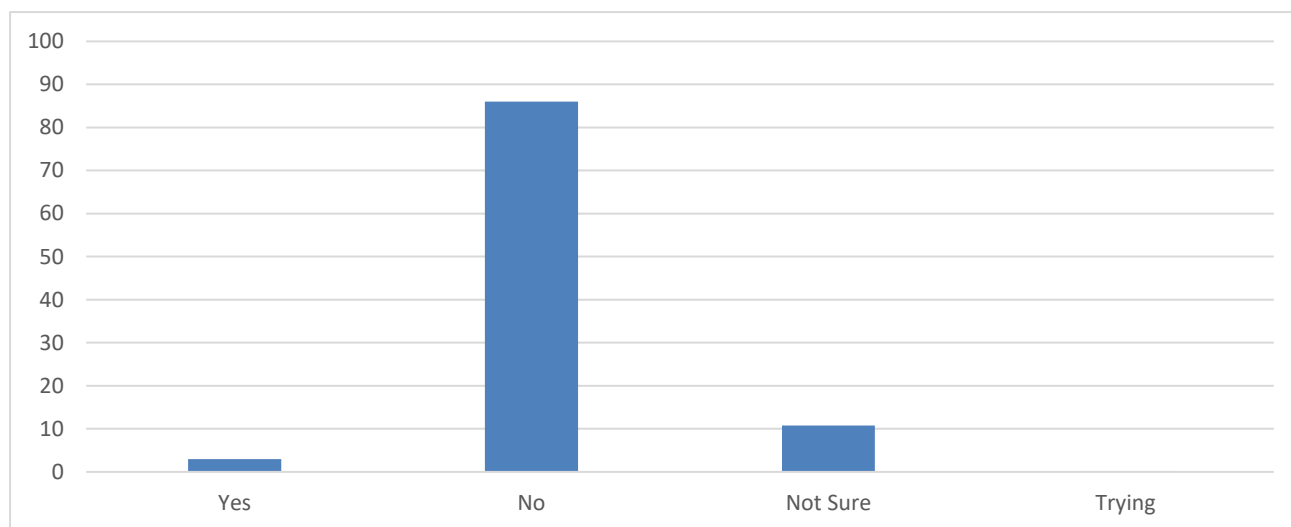


Figure 9: People's Rating of Government Response to People's Needs During the Lockdown

Source: Field Survey, 2020

While assessing government response to people's need during the lockdown, the majority of the respondents, 86% opined that governments had not responded well to people's plight during the lockdown. Only 3% responded in the affirmative and 10.8% were not sure, while just 0.2% opined that they were trying. Most people opined that Government was not sincere in catering for people's welfare. Okon (2020) in a similar report, revealed that there was "lamentation and bitter wailing" in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria that the palliatives announced by federal and state governments to cushion the effects of lockdown have not been sincerely deployed but instead been politicized, given to party members. Ibrahima (2020) attributed the weaknesses in government's response to Nigerians' need during the lockdown to the use of Social Investment Programme (SIP), which is not a new programme, that failed to seriously impact people's lives whose economy were affected by the forced stay at home. He further noted the health system's collapse as a result of the elites' muse of foreign health system.

4.2.5 Failure of Government's Response and Corruption

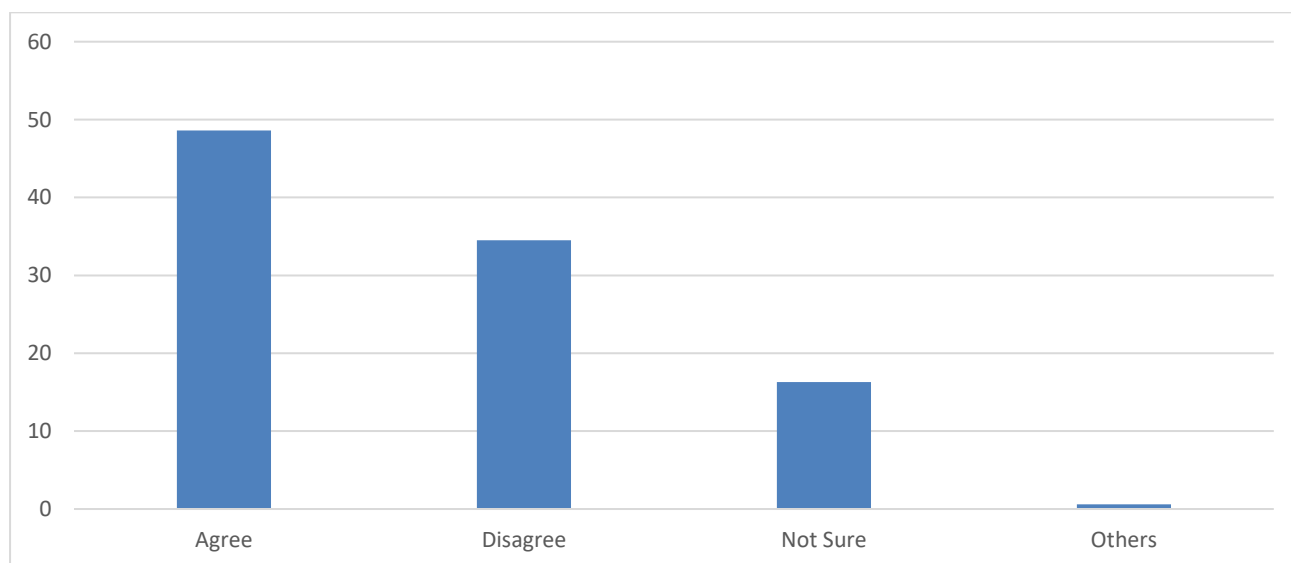


Figure 10: Failure of Government Response Due to Corruption

Source: Field Survey, 2020

On whether to attribute the failure in government's response to people's needs during the lockdown to corruption of the officials in charge, many of the respondents, 48.6% respondents were of the opinion that corruption of the officials in charge is a major factor for the government's failure to people's needs during the lockdown, while 34.5% had a contrary opinion and 16.3% were not sure while 0.6% were of other opinions such as lack of proper planning and lack of effective means of reaching the affected people. For instance, the police and the military have been accused of profiteering from the lockdown by taking bribes from motorists in exchange for free passage at checkpoints (Asimi, 2020). The acts of turning checkpoints to cash scows by the security agents allowed for crime to thrive in spite of the lockdown (Asimi, 2020).

The expectation of the citizens from the government, besides the medical care for those infected with Coronavirus, was the provision of palliatives to cater for their needs in the form of monetary aids and foodstuffs to cushion the effects of the lockdown. In spite of the state of the Nigerian economy before the COVID-19 pandemic, the government's rapid response to garner and appropriate International Governmental and Non-Government support and Public Private Partnership helped to stem the spread and morbidity of the pandemic. For instance, there were donations of billions of Naira from private individuals, private agencies, corporate bodies, foreign bodies like EU, UN, WHO and other donors. Benson (2020) reported that "the sum of N25.8 billion donations by 107 Nigerian Companies and notable individuals as a relief to combat Coronavirus in the country". Besides, European Union (EU) boosted the Nigerian response to the pandemic with a sum of EUR50 Million (N21 billion) (Delegation of the European Union to Nigeria and ECOWAS, 2020). The establishment of isolation centers, provision of equipment, beds, palliatives in the form of foodstuffs and cash transfer are other responses to curtail the spread of the virus and cushion the effects on the people (Unah, 2020). Governments at various levels adopted various measures to contain the spread of the virus through different measures, such as quarantining individuals and communities, control of crowds, restrictions of cross border movements and social distancing (Trenkov-Wermuth, 2020). For instance, community members in the diaspora, alumni associations (for example, Christ's School alumni Association), and well-to-do societies sent relief packages to their communities to cushion the lockdown effects (Field Survey, 2020). However, the effectiveness of government response was mitigated by abuse of human rights by the law enforcement agents (BBC, 2020, Ibrahima, 2020), inadequate data for effective distribution of palliatives (Field Survey, 2020) and the absence of effective social security programme to cater for the poor and vulnerable.

4.3. Research Question 3. What are the implications of governments' attitude to people's plight during the lockdown?

Implications of State Response

The failure of the government to cushion the effects of the lockdown has resulted in an increase in crimes such as armed robbery, burglary, kidnapping, abduction, and ritual killings. Most of the respondents. Onyekakeyah (2020) revealed that suspected hoodlums armed with different weapons came with about 30 motorbikes and scores of buses and invaded Mangoro, Ogba, Agege, Iyana Ipaja and Dopemu areas of Lagos, during the easter period (April, 2020). They were reported to break into shops and houses to cart away people's valuables (Onyekakeyah, 2020).

The failure of the government to distribute palliatives to the affected people led to ineffective observance of lockdown rules. People could not afford to stay at home and starve when they had little or nothing to take care of themselves and their family members. This position was corroborated by the findings of Busari and Salawudeen (2020)] of a local food seller in Abuja. She was reportedly told CNN,

I cannot afford to stay at home and not feed my children. I know it is risky to be out here, but if I don't come out to look for what to feed my family; we will die of hunger faster than being killed by the virus

In a similar vein, the Nigerian Voice (2020) reported that some citizens in Katsina State, in rebellion to the lockdown, burnt down the police station at Kusada Division and the DPO's Quarters. They also burnt down seven motor vehicles and ten motorcycles in custody of the police for arresting the man who was conducting the Friday prayer (The Nigerian Voice, 2020).

Ineffective government response to people's plight resulted in mistrust of people in government. The attitude of government to people's flight during the lockdown was believed to have led to mistrust of government by the citizenry. Donnelly and Hassan (2020) revealed that the absence of reliable social safety net has made it difficult for people to trust in government. They noted that "many Nigerians considered the pandemic a hoax, some described it as 'rich man disease' while others see it as another conspiracy by the politicians to loot the treasury".

Furthermore, the inability of the government to cater for people's needs during the lockdown further compounded the challenge of poverty in the country. Adeniji (2020) opined that as the informal sectors were incapacitated, the ripple effect is regression to abject poverty. Similarly, Benson (2020) revealed that some people lost their jobs with no immediate hope of getting another. Many workers in private companies and schools lost their source of income and were unable to make ends meet.

The failure of the government and its officials to respond well have resulted into more deaths than those killed by COVID-19. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) revealed that law enforcers had killed 18 people since the time of lockdown, till the April 16 while those who died of Coronavirus (at the same period) were 12 people, according to the Ministry of Health (BBC, 2020; Ibrahima, 2020).

Good governance is pertinent in order for the government to respond effectively in emergencies. World Health Organisation (2020) highlighted certain ethical values necessary for fair process of allocating scarce resources. These are: i. transparency, which involves making decisions and their justifications known to the public; ii. Inclusiveness would allow the individuals, communities or countries affected by the decision to exert some influence over the decision-making process as well as the decision; iii. Consistency should be maintained to enable people in the same categories to be treated the same way. This is to avoid "favoritism toward one's own family, religion or political compatriots"; iv. Accountability should be upheld to enable decision-makers to justify their decision and be held responsible for them. Participation of people in decision-making and implementation would enhance consensus, equity and inclusion of the minority and the vulnerable. Lack of people's participation in decision-making and implementation of policies put in place to cushion the effects of the lockdown deprived most of those affected by the lockdown from getting their share of the palliatives. Lack of transparency and accountability in the distribution of palliatives during the lockdown hindered the effectiveness and efficiency of government response to people's plight.

5. Conclusion/Recommendations

The study assesses government's response to people's needs during the lockdown imposed by the government to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Findings reveal that citizens were affected by the lockdown imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Majority of the respondents (88%) could not transact their businesses and make ends meet. On government response to the people's plight during the lockdown, it was discovered that the palliatives promised by the government were not effectively delivered due to poor planning, corruption, insincerity and lack of transparency in the implementation. Majority of the respondents claimed that they did not receive palliatives, either in the form of cash transfers or foodstuffs, from the government. However, the contributions of NGOs, IGOs, other bodies and individuals complement government efforts. Some people received relief in the form of foodstuffs from Non-Governmental Organisations, citizens in the diaspora and well-to-do people in the communities. The study further revealed that ineffective government response to people's needs during the lockdown resulted in a spike in crime, the ineffectiveness of lockdown rules, and a lack of trust in government. It also compounded the problem of poverty and caused more death than those killed by COVID-19. The study concludes that good governance should be put in place to sincerely implement good programmes to meet citizens' needs in emergencies. Hence the following policy recommendations:

One, the government should prioritise human security at all times, especially in the allocation of resources during emergencies. A regular welfare programme on social security should be put in place to cater to society's poor and the vulnerable. For instance, monthly stipends should be given to the aged, handicapped and the poor. Also, the government should partner with relevant bodies, NGOs, IGOs, and encourage public-private partnerships to implement programmes that will cater for the welfare of the citizenry.

Two, government and officials should employ proper planning and transparency void of partisan politics at all governance levels to cater effectively for the citizenry in periods of emergency. Sectionalism and politicisation of public goods and services will jeopardize the interests of the minority and the vulnerable in the society.

Third, the government should collaborate with others such as traditional leaders, community associations – youth, women, religious bodies, and non-governmental charitable organisations to effectively distribute reliefs to people. Four, the distribution of palliative in emergencies like the Coronavirus pandemic should be continuous, most especially during case of emergencies. There should be evaluation after every implementation stage of the intervention to know the areas to improve on.

Five, accountability should be ensured in welfare packages. The government should devise means of assessing the efficiency of implementation of its programmes to ensure that the objectives are achieved. This is to prevent selfish and corrupt officials from diverting what is meant for the welfare of the masses to private purses.

Six, the culture of politicizing the welfare of the citizenry should be discouraged. People privileged to make and implement policies should be orientated about the essence of government, the primary purpose of which is to provide for the welfare of the citizenry.

Seven, government at all levels should be sincere in responding to citizens' needs. Appropriate bodies should keep adequate data and such should be made available in times of need to assist the citizenry.

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