

## Research Article

# Lockdown As a Preventive Strategy Against COVID-19: Socioeconomic Implications on Nigerians

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**Disclaimer Statement:** Views expressed in the article are authors' opinions and not necessarily the official position of Sudan journal of medical Sciences.

**Authors' contribution:** Both authors contributed to concept, design, write up and final approval of the final version of the manuscript before submission for publication. Both authors agreed to be accountable for accuracy and integrity of the work

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Received 22 May 2020

Accepted 27 July 2020

Published 1 October 2020

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Editor-in-Chief:

Prof. Mohammad A. M. Ibnouf

## Abstract

**Background:** Lockdown is a strategy employed worldwide to limit the spread of COVID-19. Social and economic activities were markedly affected in Nigeria and other parts of the world. The piece is a short communication to spotlight the social and economic implications of lockdown on Africans and other low- and middle-income countries, using Nigeria as a case study.

**Method:** To analyze the documented evidence of social and economic events arising from lockdown strategy to combat spreading cases of COVID-19.

**Result:** Creative potentials of so many Nigerians were brought to the limelight as a positive effect. Worsening security problems, corruption, poverty, and hunger were highlighted as negative socioeconomic effects of lockdown strategy on Nigerians.

**Conclusion:** Lockdown impacts significantly on social and economic activities of Nigerians. Moderation and appropriate control of the strategy are suggested as "total lockdown" is not feasible in Nigeria.

## 1. Introduction

The current COVID-19 outbreak which started in Wuhan, China around December 2019 has resulted in unprecedented morbidity and mortality all over the world, killing people in hundreds of thousands. As at mid-May 2020, more than four million cases had been reported worldwide with over 250,000 deaths. Africa has not been spared either, with over 40,000 cases and 1,500 deaths, we are still counting [1].

Although the mortality figures in Nigeria are not as terrifying as in some other affected African countries, 164 deaths recorded so far [2] can rise if current measures being implemented are not accorded required seriousness by those at the helm of affairs and the populace.

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As death toll continue to surge exponentially, hunger and restiveness occasioned by lockdown imposed by governments across the world have also increased arithmetically. This is worse in some African countries affected by COVID-19, notably Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe [3]. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), lockdown is one of several physical distancing measures aimed at slowing down the spread of the coronavirus, but not to completely eradicate it. If well implemented, it can buy time and allow governments of the affected countries to develop effective strategies to attack the virus and to subsequently eradicate it [4].

## 2. Social and Economic Consequences

Apart from the loss of lives and illness associated with the pandemic, people's lifestyle has been affected in one way or the other, some positive while others negative. Positively, some businesses, especially those rendering essential services (food, medications, and other consumables such as face masks, sanitizers, and hand gloves) have recorded a huge increase in sales, many African countries have been "forced" naturally to manufacture improvised healthcare equipment such as ventilators and other consumables including protective gowns, face masks, sanitizers, and hand gloves which are relevant in prevention and treatment of COVID-19, using locally sourced materials [5].

On the other hand, a major negative aspect of the pandemic is the current lockdown in some parts of the country, notably Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Ogun, and Lagos State which are the current epicenter of the pandemic in Nigeria. Lockdown is one of the tools employed by the Nigerian government to curtail the spread of COVID-19. This tool has, to a large extent, locked down economic activities [6] in affected areas and has probably led to increased hunger among the populace, as well as unrest, hooliganism, armed robberies, and other social vices perpetrated by street urchins. These street urchins, referred to as "area boys" in local parlance, survive on daily extortion from commercial vehicle operators, commercial motorcyclist and tricyclists, food vendors, market women, and street hawkers. With lockdown in place, it is no longer business as usual. It has become pretty difficult for street urchins to survive, hence the majority of them have resorted to armed robbery attacks on hungry residents [7]. Enforcement of "stay at home" order by security agents is another cog in the wheel of progress. In Nigeria alone, more people were reportedly killed by security men than coronavirus between March 30, 2020 and April 13, 2020 [8]. Despite the excellent motive behind

lockdown in some states in Nigeria, people are still sneaking in and out of these high-burden areas (mainly for economic activities) aided by unscrupulous and corrupt security agents who collect bribes from motorists in exchange for illegal entry and exit.

Refusal to abide by restriction order is probably a subtle way by which the Nigerian populace are saying "NO" to the lockdown because it is an infringement on peoples' right to freedom of movement and social gathering. Even in advanced countries such as the United States of America, protest against lockdown have been demonstrated in some parts of that country [9].

In the long run, how effective will lockdown be if the Nigerian factor –corruption, is not eliminated from our strategic planning against coronavirus; if the security of lives and properties are not guaranteed; if the populace refuses to abide by rules and regulations guiding restrictions?

### 3. Suggestions and Recommendations

Since the detection of Nigeria's first case of coronavirus infection early this year and till date, government's efforts at halting the spread of the virus are applaudable [10], however, a lot more needs to be done. In low- and middle-income countries such as Nigeria, a total lockdown may not be feasible and may even become counter-productive vis-a-vis the peculiar situation of this country: high level of ignorance, poverty, and corruption. A partial lockdown may be advisable in our setting, with subtle enforcement (devoid of extrajudicial killing) of social distancing and public hygiene rules. Hand-washing basin should be placed at strategic points in the community like grocery stores, hospitals, etc. Compulsory face mask use can be introduced if the government can engage in mass production and distribution of quality face masks to the citizens.

Nosocomial transmission can be minimized by screening all patients at the entrance gate of the health facilities with a brief questionnaire. Patients with a high index of suspicion for the disease should be attended to and reviewed in a special setting, before the laboratory investigation. This will prevent disease transmission between patients and reduce infection rate amidst healthcare workers. Ongoing research works on preventive vaccines, palliative care measures, and therapeutic products should be pursued with vigor.

Security of lives and properties should be stepped up and the security agents should be charged to shelve their corrupt tendencies and do the needful. Palliative measures put in place by government to cushion the harsh effects of the current lockdown should be monitored to ensure that they reach desired targets in the country. Much more

importantly, public education on the need to abide by the rules and regulations of restrictions and to make necessary reasonable adjustments in their lifestyle is desired now, more than ever before .

## Acknowledgement

None

## Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed to the concept, design, write-up, and approval of the final version of the manuscript before submission for publication

## Conflict of Interests

None

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