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COVID-19 and its Offshoot Lockdown, the Economic Implication in Nigeria

Emmanuel C. Ani, Mamman Andekujwo Baajon, Tswenji Andokari

Abstract— **In December 2019 in Wuhan China, came a virus called Corona-virus, otherwise known as Covid-19. The disease spread all over the world, including Nigeria. It has caused the death of many people in the country as well as damage to the economy. To contain the spread of the virus causing death to people, and damage to the economy, government placed a lot of restrictive measures like lockdown and ban on interstate travels. These measures and similar ones all over the world have caused increase in unemployment as well as other hurts in the economy; and made the demand for the country's major foreign exchange earner, the oil to fall. This paper supports measures by the government to ameliorate the pains of the pandemic on the country's economy but also is of the opinion that it pays more attention to the non-oil revenue components of the country's income generation.**

Index Terms— **Covid-19, Nigeria, Economy, None-oil, Income.**

I. Introduction

A cluster of pneumonia cases from an unknown virus surfaced in Wuhan, China in December, 2019. Based on initial laboratory findings, the disease named corona-virus-19, otherwiseknown as COVID-19, was described as an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome CORONAVIRUS2 (CDC, 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak has spread to about nearly all the countries of the world and territories in every continent and one international conveyance across the globe. While there are ongoing efforts to curtail the spread of the infection which is almost entirely driven by human-to-human transmission, it has accounted for about 4,000,000 confirmed cases with about 280,000 deaths all over the world while in Nigeria there were over 3, 900 cases with about over 110 deaths as at 9th May, 2020(P.M News, 2020). In the month of June, these figures have more than doubled.

Beyond the tragic health hazards and human consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic uncertainties, and disruptions that have resulted come at a significant cost to the global economy and Nigeria in particular. The United Nations Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) put the cost of the outbreak globally at about US$2 trillion in 2020. Most central banks, finance ministries and independent economic experts around the world have taken solace in the prediction that the impacts might be sharp but short-lived, and economic activities would return to normal thereafter. This line of thought mirrors the thinking of the events that shaped the 2007 global financial crisis. However, it is quite instructive to note that the 2007 crisis which emanated from the United States' subprime mortgage crisis was mainly an economic phenomenon, with its fallout spreading across many regions of the world. When compared to COVID-19, the 2007 crisis could be described as minor and manageable. The tumultuous events that COVID-19 had spread across the globe cut across every facet of human existence and the consequences may linger throughout the year, 2020(MSN, 2020).

The slowdown in the global economy consequence upon lockdown in some countries, such as Italy, Spain and most Euro-zone economies and beyond, including Latin American countries as a result of COVID-19 has also taken its toll on the global demand for oil, which is Nigeria's major foreign exchange earner. The decline in oil demand is estimated to surpass the loss of nearly 1 million barrels per day during the 2007-08 recessions. This is also coming at a time when two key players in the global oil industry – Russia and the OPEC cartel – are at loggerheads on the decision to cut output. The unequivocal oil price war between these two global oil market giantsviz-a-viz COVID-19 pandemic may have more dire consequences on the oil price that has started to fall.

Sector-specific implications and impacts on Nigeria's economy could vary. For example, the impacts on the aviation and tourism sectors are as a result of the implications of the pandemic on global and local travels. It is said that so far, private jet operators have lost close to $6 bn to the pandemic. As discretionary spending by consumers continues to decline, cruise companies, hotels, and hospitality are facing declining demand and patronage. Also, the pandemic is placing jobs in the leisure and hospitality sectors at risk, with travel crashes and cancellations expected to continue. About 4 in 10 Nigerians lost their jobs in April as reported by Premium Times Nigeria.

The virus is also taking its toll on health facilities and infrastructures across the country. Most hospitals and health facilities that could not handle the hazards are resulting to operating below their capacity by taking a few regular health-related cases or shutting down.Educationally, schools at all levels are closed down in the country.

What could be more devastating is the fact that the economic pains that accompanied the virus might not go away soon as envisaged. The conventional policy measures currently being taken such as reducing interest rates and costs of borrowing, tax cuts and tax holidays are quite remarkable. However, these conventional policy measures are quite potent when there are demand shocks. There are limitations

Emmanuel C. Ani, Lecturer, Department of Economics, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria
Mamman Andekujwo Baajon, Lecturer, Department of Economics, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.
Tswenji Andokari, Lecturer, Department of Economics, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria.

to the successes that can be recorded when demand shocks are combined with supply shocks. It is already apparent from the emergence of the current crisis that there are implications on the economy from both the demand and supply sides. Some of the demand factors include social distancing with consumers staying at home, limitations in spending and declining consumptions. On the supply side, factories are shutting down or cutting down production and output, while in other instances, staff work from home to limit physical contact. Currently works and markets operate only three times a week across the nation and schools at all levels are closed down.

The purpose of this paper thereforeis to critically examine the likely economic implications of COVID-19 in Nigeria in the face of both national and international Lockdowns to contain the spread of the Virus through physical and social contacts. Policy measures of mitigating the economic impacts are suggested.The rest of the paper is structured thus:

II. COVID-19 IN NIGERIA

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 disease in Nigeria was on 27th February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. A second case of the virus was made public on 9th of March, 2020 in Ewekoro, Ogun State, in the case of a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen. Prior to these two cases, on the 28th January 2020, the Federal government of Nigeria told the citizens of the country of its preparedness to strengthen surveillance at five international airports in the country to prevent the spread of the disease. The Airports are that of Enugu, Lagos, Rivers, Kano and Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Also the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) that same day announced that it has set up CORONAVIRUS group with readiness to activate its incident system if any case is traced in the country. Following the developments of COVID-19 pandemic in China and its spread from that country to other countries of the world, the Federal government of Nigeria on January 31 2020 set up a CORONA VIRUS preparedness group to mitigate the impact of the virus if it eventually spreads to the country; just as the World Health Organisation (WHO) that same day, listed Nigeria among other 13 African countries identified as high-risk for the spread of the virus. The wide spread of the embarrassing disease is unimaginable to the fact that from just one (1) case of it in February 2020; it has spread to an alarming rate of four thousand (4,151) cases, with three thousand, two hundred and seventy eight (3, 278) active cases, seven hundred and forty-five (745) recovered while the deaths jumped to one hundred and twenty-eight (128) (Maclean and Abdi, 2020).

Table 1:The Statistics of COVID-19 in Nigeria

STATES	CASES	ACTIVE	RECOVERED	DEATHS
LAGOS	1,764	1,283	448	33
KANO	576	528	30	18
FCT	343	250	85	8
BAUCHI	161	154	6	1
BORNO	159	144	-	15
KATSINA	156	138	9	9
OGUN	115	83	28	4
GOMBE	110	95	15	-
KADUNA	98	81	14	3
SOKOTO	96	77	10	9
JIGAWA	83	82	-	1
EDO	67	51	12	4
ZAMFARA	65	62	-	3
OYO	64	48	14	2
OSUN	38	4	30	4
KWARA	30	20	9	1
NASARAWA	25	23	-	2
RIVERS	21	15	4	2

KEBBI	20	18	-	2
DELTA	17	11	3	3
AKWAIBOM	17	5	10	2
PLATEAU	17	16	1	-
ADAMAWA	17	17	-	-
TARABA	15	15	-	-
ONDO	15	9	6	-
YOBE	13	12	-	1
EKITI	13	13	4	1
ENUGU	10	8	2	-
EBONYI	7	7	-	-
NIGER	6	4	2	-
BAYELSA	5	5	-	-
IMO	3	2	1	-
ABIA	2	1	1	-
BENUE	2	2	-	-
ANAMBRA	1	-	1	-
TOTAL	4,151	3,278	745	128

NOTE: DATA as of 10/05/ 2020**. Source**: CDC WEEKLY REPORT IN THE MONTH OF MAY

As of 26th of April 2020 the disease has started increasing geometrically. From one (1) in 27th February 2020 to one thousand , one hundred and eighty two(1,182) cases out of which nine hundred and twenty five (925) were active, two hundred and twenty two(222) discharged and thirty five (35) people have died. By then the statistic was for twenty eight (28) states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, out of the thirty six (36) states of the federation.As at of June 6, 2020 the total confirmed cases of the pandemic in Nigeria was twelve thousand, two hundred and thirty three (12,233), the discharged people were three thousand, eight hundred and twenty six (3,826) while the total number of death stood at three hundred and forty-two (342) (CDC, 2020).

III. Measures for Containing COVID-19 in Nigeria

As parts of the efforts to curtail the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal government ordered a lockdown on Lagos, Ogun and the FCT Abuja, for an initial period of two weeks starting 11:59pm, 30 March 2020, now extended by another 2 weeks from 13 April 2020. Many other states are already applying one stay-at-home rule or the other up to state boundaries closure.This is in conjunction with international border closures adopted by various countries of the world. However, locking people down at home in the Nigerian context is like asking people to go hungry for the duration of the lockdown. More than 60 per cent of Nigerians survive on daily pay from menial jobs and petty trading. A lockdown means their means of daily livelihood have been locked down. The plight of private sector employees is no better. Many private employers have maintained a ‘no salary stance’ during lockdown or at best a 50 per cent pay cut. Some have even completely laid the workers off. About 4 in 10 Nigerians lost their jobs in April (NBS)

Pangs of hunger led to widespread anger. Protests in different forms were seen within the communities. People protested against a lockdown without palliatives, against the high-handedness of law enforcement agents, and even rejected all manner of palliatives that smack of insult to their intelligence, such as packs of food that would not be enough to feed a family of six in 2 weeks been distributed to be shared among 60-80 families in a cluster. The protest mood that brewed had the potential to transform into a movement that posed a serious challenge to the lockdown because of the hunger question not resolved. It got worse, as we saw in some places in Lagos and Ogun States where a layer of lumpen youth, pushed to extreme hunger by the lockdown, went on mass looting of shops and houses, carting away ordinary people’s food and belongings.

While the poor masses, a majority of whom are informal workers, are asked to stay off their businesses and sit at home, exceptions are proudly being granted to members of the ruling class and the billionaire class. A number of workers are compelled to go to work at the moment in spite of the lockdown; some, like the health workers on the front line and rear-guards at the hospitals, through a sense of duty and the imperativeness of their job. Also there are some, whose work cannot be allowed to stop because it would hit the profit base of the bosses and the economic preserve of the ruling class. Among the non-health workers that are still working are those in the oil and gas sector, electricity generating and distributing companies, Dangote Cement workers and other factory workers in similar industries.

For these categories of workers to keep working, this paper calls on the labour leaders to demand that all non-essential work must stop. For those on essential duties, appropriate safety measures at the workplaces, including social distancing, protective gear and appropriate hazard enumeration must suffice. The leadership of all unions of health workers must, as a matter of urgency, find a common ground to unite so as to appropriately safeguard the interests of their members, particularly in respect of provision of adequate and quality Personal Protective Equipment to protect them from contracting the dreaded COVID-19.

IV. Economic Implication of COVID-19 and Measures of its Containment in Nigeria

Globally, the world has continued to find solution to the problem of COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the outbreak, the outlook for the world economy, especially developing countries like Nigeria, was fragile, as global GDP growth was estimated to be only 2.5 percent in2020 fiscal year. While many developing countries recorded relatively fewer cases, Nigeria as at the month of May had4,151 cases and 128 deaths and more than double in the month of June. The weak capacity of health care systems in the country is likely to exacerbate the pandemic and its impact on the economy.

Before the pandemic, the Nigerian government had been grappling with weak recovery from the 2014 oil price shock, with GDP growth tapering around 2.3 percent in 2019. In February, the IMF revised the 2020 GDP growth rate from 2.5 percent to 2 percent, as a result of relatively low oil prices and limited fiscal space. Similarly, the country's debt profile has been a source of concern for policymakers and development practitioners as the most recent estimate puts the debt service-to-revenue ratio at 60 percent, which is likely to worsen amid the steep decline in revenue associated with falling oil prices. These constraining factors will aggravate the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and make it more difficult for the government to weather the crisis.

In Nigeria during this period of COVID-19, efforts are being made to bolster aggregate demand through increased government spending and tax cuts for businesses. The public budget increased from 8.83 trillion naira ($24.53 billion) in 2019 to 10.59 trillion naira ($29.42 billion) in 2020, representing 11 percent of the national GDP, while small businesses have been exempted from company income tax, and the tax rate for medium-sized businesses has been revised downwards from 30 to 20 percent. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis is causing all components of aggregate demand, except for government purchases, to fall.

V. How COVID-19 Pandemic Affects the Components of Aggregate Demand in Nigeria

The fall in household consumption in Nigeria will stem from 1) partial (or full) restrictions on movement, thus causing consumers to spend primarily on essential goods and services; 2) low expectations of future income, particularly by workers in the big economy that are engaged on a short-term/contract basis, as well as the working poor in the informal economy; and 3) the erosion of wealth and expected wealth as a result of the decline in assets such as stocks and home equity 4) as well as reduction or total elimination of remittances from abroad that aid household consumption in Nigeria.

The federal government has imposed a lockdown in Lagos and Ogun states as well as Abuja (which have the highest number of corona virus cases combined). States governments have quickly followed suit by imposing lockdowns in their areas. Nigeria has a burgeoning big economy as well as a large informal sector, which contributes 65 percent of its economic output. Movement restrictions have not only reduced the consumption of nonessential commodities in general, but have affected the income-generating capacity of these groups, thus reducing their consumption expenditure.

Investments by firms will be impeded largely due to the uncertainties that come with the pandemic-limited knowledge about the duration of the outbreak, the effectiveness of policy measures, and the reaction of economic agents to these measures—as well as negative investor sentiments, which are causing turbulence in capital markets around the world. Indeed, the crisis has led to a massive decline in stock prices, as the Nigerian Stock Exchange records its worst performance since the 2008 financial crisis, which has eroded the wealth of investors. Taking into consideration the uncertainty that is associated with the pandemic and the negative profit outlook on possible investment projects, firms are likely to hold off on long-term investment decisions.

On the other hand, **government purchases will increase** as governments, which typically can afford to run budget deficits, utilize fiscal stimulus measures to counteract the fall in consumer spending. However, for governments that are commodity dependent, **the fall in the global demand for commodities** stemming from the pandemic will significantly increase their fiscal deficits. In Nigeria's case, the price of Brent crude was just over $26 a barrel on April 2, 2020 whereas Nigeria's budget assumes a price of $57 per barrel and would still have run on a 2.18 trillion naira ($6.05 billion) deficit. Similarly, with oil accounting for 90 percent of Nigeria's exports, the decline in the demand for oil and oil prices will adversely affect the volume and value of net exports. Indeed, the steep decline in oil prices associated with the pandemic has necessitated that the Nigerian government cut planned expenditure. In fact, on March 18, the minister of finance announced a 1.5 trillion naira ($4.17 billion) cut in nonessential capital spending.

The restrictions on movement of people and border closures foreshadow a **decline in exports.** Already, countries around the world have closed their borders to nonessential traffic, and global supply chains for exports have been disrupted. Although the exports of countries that devalue their currency due to the fall in the price of commodities (like Nigeria), will become more affordable, the limited markets for nonessential goods and services nullifies the envisaged positive effect on net exports.

Besides, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has already arranged a fiscal stimulus package, including a 50 billion naira ($138.89 million) credit facility to households and small and medium enterprises most affected by the pandemic, a 100 billion naira ($277.78 million) loan to the health sector, and a 1 trillion naira ($2.78 billion) to the manufacturing sector. In addition, the interest rates on all CBN interventions have been revised downwards from 9 to 5 percent, and a one-year moratorium on CBN intervention facilities has been introduced, effective March 1, 2020.

With oil being Nigeria's major source of foreign exchange, amid the steep decline in oil prices, the official exchange rate has been adjusted from 306 to 360 naira. The exchange rate under the investors and exporters (I&E) window has also been adjusted from 360 to 380 naira in order to unify the exchange rates across theI&E window, Bureau de Change, and retail and wholesale windows. Furthermore, the government has introduced import duty waivers for pharmaceutical companies and increased efforts toward ensuring that they receive foreign exchange.

VI. Other Policy Measures That Can Be Implemented

Given the size and scope of the economic impact of the pandemic, there is the need to implement other recovery strategies to stimulate demand. Thus, the paper recommends the following fiscal and monetary policy measures:

- Although there is a cash transfer program in place, the federal government should improve efforts towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the distributive mechanisms to reach households that are worst-hit by the pandemic.
- The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) as well as State Inland Revenue Services (SIRS) should waive payments on personal and corporate income tax for the second quarter of 2020, considering that the shock has affected the income and profits of households and businesses.
- The CBN's decision to increase the cash reserve ratio (CRR) from 22.5 percent to 27.5 percent in January 2020 should be revisited to provide liquidity for banks so that banks can, in turn, create credit to the private sector.
- FIRS and SIRS should delay tax collection for the worse-hit sectors including tourism, the airline industry, and hoteliers in order to enable them recover from the steep decline in demand.
- To provide additional liquidity in the foreign exchange market, the CBN should establish a swap facility with the U.S. Federal Reserve and/or the People's Bank of China, as was done in 2018, to provide dollar and yen liquidity to financial institutions, investors, and exporters. This move would ease up foreign exchange shortage in the financial market and economy.
- While the naira has been adjusted as a result of the foreign exchange shortage, it is important that the CBN maintains exchange rate stability by deploying external reserves in order to avoid investors selling off naira-denominated assets.

It is the view of the paper that the COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call to policymakers as the unusual and unprecedented nature of the crisis has made it impossible for citizens to rely on foreign health care services and more difficult to solicit for international support given the competing demand for medical supplies and equipment. A more integrated response spanning several sectors—including the health, finance, and trade sectors—is required to address structural issues that make the country less resilient to shocks and limit its range of policy responses. In the long term, tougher decisions need to be made, including but not limited to diversifying the country's revenue base away from oil exports and improving investments in the health care sector in ensuring that the economy is able to recover quickly from difficult conditions in the future.

The virus is also taking its toll on health facilities and infrastructures across the globe. Italy is currentlyamong the largest affected country with a number of deaths surpassing China, since the outbreak of coronavirus. Across northern Italy, the virus has pushed the country's National Health Service to a breaking point, emphasizing the test that other countries, especially developing and low-income countries, might face in their approach to contain the virus spread. Most hospitals and health facilities in Nigeria that could not handle the hazards are resulting to operating below their capacity by taking a few regular health-related cases or shutting down. What could be more devastating is the fact that the economic pains that accompanied the virus might not go away soon as envisaged.

VII. Bracing up for COVID-19 Consequences on the Nigerian Economy

For most developing economies, the odds of sliding into a downturn are gradually expected as the global coronavirus outbreak puts severe pressure on the economy. For Nigeria, the country is still sluggishly grappling with recovery from the 2016 economic recession which was a fall out of global oil price crash and insufficient foreign exchange earnings to meet imports. In the spirit of economic recovery and growth sustainability, the Nigerian federal budget for the 2020 fiscal year was prepared with significant revenue expectations but with contestable realizations. The approved budget had projected revenue collections at N8.24 Trillion, an increase of about 20% from 2019 figure. The revenue assumptions are premised on increased global oil demand and stable market with oil price benchmark and oil output respectively at $57 per barrel and 2.18 Million Barrels Per Day.

The emergence of COVID-19 and its increasing incidence in Nigeria has called for drastic review and changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projections. Compared to events that led to recession in 2016, the current state of the global economy poses more difficulties ahead as the oil price is currently below US$30 with projections that it will dip further going by the price war among key players in the industry. Unfortunately, the nation has grossly underachieved in setting aside sufficient buffers for rainy days such as it faces in the coming days. In addressing these daunting economic challenges, the current consideration to revise the budget downward is inevitable. However, certain considerations that are expected in the review must not be left out. The assumptions and benchmarks must be based on realizable thresholds and estimates to ensure optimum budget performance, especially on the non-oil revenue components.

Furthermore, cutting expenditures must be done such that the already excluded group and vulnerable are not left to bear the brunt of the economic contraction. The economic and growth recovery program which has the aim of increasing social inclusion by creating jobs and providing support for the poorest and most vulnerable members of society through investments in social programs and providing social amenities will no doubt suffers some setbacks. Besides, the downward review of the budget and contractions in public spending could be devastating on poverty and unemployment. The last unemployment report that was released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) ranks Nigeria 21st among 181 countries with an unemployment rate of about 23.1%. The country has also been rated as the poverty capital of the world with an estimated 87 million people living on less than $2 a day threshold.

The decision to cut the retail price of gasoline under a price modulation arrangement is a welcome development. The cut is expected to curb rising inflation, especially food price inflation which will mainly benefit the poor. However, rather than the price capping regime introduced, by which it is expected of the Petroleum Products Price Regulation Agency (PPPRA) to constantly issues monthly guide on appropriate pricing regime, it is expected that the government will use this opportunity to completely deregulate the petroleum industry in line with existing suggestions and reports. In the event that the global economy becomes healthier and crude oil prices increases, the government might return to the under-recovery of the oil price shortfall by the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). A policy which has annually costs the government huge revenue and recurring losses to the NNPC.

Basically, the Nigerian government essentially must lead economic diversification drive. It is one practicable way to saddle through the current economic uncertainties and instabilities. What the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic should further offer the Nigerian economic managers and policymakers, is that the one-tracked, monolithic reliance on oil is failing. Diversification priorities to alternative sectors such as agriculture, solid minerals, ICT and tourism will spur for speedy economic recovery, growth and development.

Before the pandemic, the Nigerian government had been grappling with weak recovery from the 2014 oil price shock, with GDP growth tapering around 2.3 percent in 2019. In February, the IMF revised the 2020 GDP growth rate from 2.5 percent to 2 percent, as a result of relatively low oil prices and limited fiscal space. Similarly, the country's debt profile has been a source of concern for policymakers and development practitioners as the most recent estimate puts the debt service-to-revenue ratio at 60 percent, which is likely to worsen amid the steep decline in revenue associated with falling oil prices. These constraining factors will aggravate the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and make it more difficult for the government to weather the crisis.

VIII. Conclusion

The emergence of COVID-19 and its increasing incidence in Nigeria has called for drastic review and changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projections. Compared to events that led to recession in 2016, the current state of the global economy poses more difficulties ahead as the oil price is currently below US$30 with projections that it will dip further going by the price war among key players in the industry. Unfortunately, the nation has grossly underachieved in setting aside sufficient buffers for rainy days such as it faces in the coming days. In addressing these daunting economic challenges, the current consideration to revise the budget downward is inevitable. However, certain considerations that are expected in the review must not be left out. The assumptions and benchmarks must be based on realizable thresholds and estimates to ensure optimum budget performance, especially on the non-oil revenue components of the country's income generation.

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