

Coronavirus (Covid-19): The Lockdown Strategy in Nigeria

Ekienabor Ehijiele (PhD)¹

¹Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Nigeria,
ehismcman@yahoo.com

Postal Address: Dept of Business Administration, Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State.

Abstract

The spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has already taken on pandemic proportions, affecting over 150 countries in a matter of months. Even though containment measures in China have reduced new cases by more than 90%, this reduction is not the case elsewhere, as the US, Spain and Italy have come off worse-off by the spread of the virus, and there is serious concern regarding the national health systems' capacity around the world and Africa, in particular, to effectively respond to the needs of infected patients who require intensive care for the COVID-19 illness. As a result, authorities around the world have resorted to the lockdown strategy to curb the spread of the virus. Therefore, the study aimed at investigating the effect of the lockdown strategy in curbing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in Nigeria. Consequently, the study found daily relative risk increase in cases, and daily relative risk increase in mortality. Also observed is the growth in cases in areas where active measures were not taken. Further, halt in business activities has rendered many penniless and unable to provide for themselves basic amenities. The study recommends that there is need to implement community-level measures of social distancing which may include closing schools, need for individuals with COVID-19 case or respiratory symptoms be properly taken care of, trace and quarantine those who must have come in contact with affected persons and introducing stay at home palliatives for the general public.

Keywords: coronavirus; COVID-19; SARS-CoV-2; lockdown; social distancing

The Breakout of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

In December 2019, a doctor named Li Wenliang warned his colleagues about a possible outbreak of an illness in the Chinese city of Wuhan, in China's Hubei province, and spread globally, resulting in the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. The illness resembled severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), later recognized as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The COVID-19 virus which belongs to a family of coronavirus is caused by SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2)¹ with various symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, breathing difficulty and lung infection². The World health organization announced the official name of this virus as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and declared it a pandemic.³ Following the confirmation of the outbreak, the world health organization associated the outbreak of this pandemic disease to the Huainan South China seafood market place, although there is no specification as to the type of animal it is to be associated with⁴.

The WHO boss chief Tedros Ghebreyesus said despite its robust health system, China was concerned about the outbreak and found it difficult to detect and control its spread at the time and showed concern over it spreading to other countries with weak system. Ghebreyesus concern became reality as many countries around the world began to record cases of the virus. Also, as time went by, it was discovered that there is human to human transmission through close contact. Within one month of the outbreak of this virus, it spread across the Wuhan city and beyond considering the New Year period and the high level of mobility of the Chinese people as at that time. As at 31st January 2020, about 11791 cases were confirmed and 17,988 cases were suspected in 34 provinces in⁵. The spread of COVID-19 to other countries was rapid and fast this is unavoidable because the world is interconnected and there was no restriction of movement to ensure less human to human contact.

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Nigeria

On 31 January 2020, following the developments of COVID-19 pandemic in mainland China and other countries worldwide, the federal government of Nigeria set up a Coronavirus Preparedness Group to mitigate the impact of the virus if it eventually spreads to the country.^{6,7}

On the same day, the World Health Organization listed Nigeria among other 13 African countries identified as high-risk for the spread of the virus.⁸ on 27 February 2020, Nigeria announced the first confirmed case of coronavirus disease 2019, when an Italian citizen in Lagos state tested positive for the virus. Nigeria subsequently saw an increase in confirmed cases afterwards. As of 11:25 pm 22nd April, Nigeria's case count had hit 873 confirmed cases.⁹

Lockdown Strategy by nations around the World

Coronaviruses may be carried among animals however this type of virus does not spread among humans, although with an exception to the SARS and MERS which usually spread through close contact with infected people. This is evident in the later discovery of cases among medical staffs with no linkage with the seafood market thus an indication that there is a human to human transmission of the virus.^{4,10,11,12,13}

The Chinese authority resorted to the lockdown strategy to prevent the spread of this virus this is because there are three main routes for transmitting the COVID-19 i.e droplet transmission, contact transmission and aerosol transmission. This method of transmission makes the spread of the virus wild and the situation that accompanies it a pandemic. The transmission through droplets occurs when someone infected with the virus coughs or sneezes and a non-infected person in close environment inhales it. Also, the COVID-19 may be contacted when an infected person touches a surface or comes in contact with a non-infected person who ends up touching

their mouth or nose. Thus, it may be contacted when respiratory droplets mix with air and inhaled into the lungs in a closed environment^{14,15}.

This transmission method has warranted the restriction of gatherings and close contact, these gatherings which usually occur in places of worship, banks, parties, beach, malls, offices, schools, and airport e.t.c. These activities contribute to the economic activities of countries therefore, their restrictions are an automatic lockdown in affected countries. The lockdown is necessitated due to how fast the virus spreads and because there is no specific antiviral treatment effective against the COVID-19 virus. Apart from the preventive measures such as the use of face mask, avoid contact with infected individuals, using disinfectants, coughing or sneezing into a tissue or a flexed elbow, avoid touching the face or nose. The best way of preventing the virus is to avoid coming in contact with it and this can only be achieved when people are restricted from coming in contact, thus, the lock down¹⁶.

The lockdown strategy can be said to be as a result of the need to ensure that people do not come in close contact with each other. Social distancing is efforts made towards reducing the level of transmission of COVID-19 in a country by minimizing the number of contacts between infected and healthy individuals. The unavoidable effect of such social distancing measures is a lockdown of all activities in the country to ensure the COVID-19 transmission is reduced drastically.

According to data from Johns Hopkins University, the global cases had risen to more than 1,026,000 cases and global deaths of at least 53,975 as of April 14, 2020¹³. United States (842,629), Spain (208,389), Italy (187,327), France (157,135), Germany (150,648), and United Kingdom (134,638) are the countries that are most hit by the virus¹⁷, where more than 80,000 persons had been infected in each of the countries, and also have enforced a lockdown closing

restaurant, schools, bars, clubs, gyms, with citizens forced to stay at home irrespective of their status to avoid coming in contact with the virus. Figure 1 shows countries with the highest cases in the world.

Fig 1: countries with the most reported coronavirus cases (as of April 23, 2020)



Africa is not left out, according to the latest data by the John Hopkins University and Africa Center for Disease Control on COVID-19 in Africa, the breakdown remained fluid as countries kept confirming cases as and when. In the whole of Africa, only two countries were holding out as of April 18, 2020. According to WHO reports on COVID-19 as of May 6, 2020, The 5 highest hit countries of the COVID-19 in Africa included South Africa (7,572 cases and 148 deaths), Egypt (7,201 cases and 452 deaths), Morocco (5,153 cases and 180 deaths), Algeria (4,838 cases and 470 deaths), Nigeria (2,950 cases and 98 deaths)¹⁸. Over 49,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases on the African continent, with more than 16,000 associated recoveries & 1,900 deaths¹⁸. The number of COVID-19 increased in many African countries as can be seen in the table below as observed by WHO:

Fig 2: African countries coronavirus cases (as of May 6, 2020)

| Country | Total cases | Total deaths | Country | Total cases | Total deaths | Country | Total cases | Total Deaths |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|---|---------------|--------------|
| WHO Africa Region | | | Rwanda | 261 | 0 | Angola | 36 | 2 |
| South Africa | 7,572 | 148 | Congo | 236 | 10 | Zimbabwe | 34 | 4 |
| Algeria | 4,838 | 470 | Sierra Leone | 199 | 11 | Botswana | 23 | 1 |
| Nigeria | 2,950 | 98 | Liberia | 170 | 20 | Burundi | 19 | 1 |
| Ghana | 2,719 | 18 | Cabo Verde | 186 | 2 | Gambia | 17 | 1 |
| Cameroon | 2,265 | 108 | Sao Tome & Principe | 171 | 3 | Namibia | 16 | 0 |
| Guinea | 1,811 | 10 | Madagascar | 158 | 0 | Seychelles | 11 | 0 |
| Cote d'Ivoire | 1,464 | 18 | Ethiopia | 145 | 4 | Mauritania | 8 | 1 |
| Senegal | 1,329 | 11 | Zambia | 139 | 4 | Comoros | 4 | 1 |
| Niger | 763 | 38 | Togo | 128 | 9 | WHOAFRO Total | 32,953 | 1,193 |
| DRC | 705 | 34 | Chad | 170 | 17 | WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region | | |
| Burkina Faso | 689 | 48 | eSwatini | 119 | 1 | Egypt | 7,201 | 452 |
| Mali | 612 | 32 | Benin | 102 | 2 | Morocco | 5,153 | 180 |
| Kenya | 535 | 23 | CAR | 94 | 0 | Djibouti | 1,120 | 2 |
| Tanzania | 480 | 18 | Uganda | 97 | 0 | Tunisia | 1,018 | 43 |
| Gabon | 397 | 6 | Mozambique | 80 | 0 | Somalia | 835 | 38 |
| Mauritius | 332 | 10 | South Sudan | 58 | 0 | Sudan | 778 | 45 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 439 | 4 | Malawi | 41 | 3 | Libya | 63 | 3 |
| Guinea Bissau | 292 | 2 | Eritrea | 39 | 0 | Africa Total | 49,121 | 1,956 |

Source: World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa (WHOAFRO); WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (WHOEMRO)

Lockdown Strategy in Nigeria

On the 19 of March 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced a restriction of entry into Nigeria for travellers from the following high incidence countries: China, United States of America, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Japan, France, Germany, Iran, Norway, South Korea, Netherlands, and Switzerland which was effective from 21st of March 2020 for an initial period of four weeks. These were countries with over 1,000 cases domestically at the time.

On March 29, President Buhari announced a cessation of movement in the Federal Capital Territory and in Lagos and Ogun States to reduce the spread of COVID-19.¹⁹ The lockdown went into effect at 11:00 pm on March 30 and remained in place for an initial period of fourteen days, but was however extended for another fourteen days due to increasing cases. Just before the end of the federal government extended lockdown, Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) which held on Wednesday decided to ban inter-state movement for two weeks as part of efforts to

control the spread of COVID-19 which was necessitated by the increasing evidence of community transmission of the virus. During this time, businesses and offices remained closed and people were expected to stay at home. The lockdown has some exemptions, including hospitals and healthcare facilities and some commercial establishments in the food, energy, petroleum, and security sectors.

Effect of the lockdown strategy in an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19

The lockdown strategy adopted is a necessary step taken to drastically reduce the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, its effect on the economic, social, political, developmental aspects of the world cannot be overemphasized. No doubt, when the breakout became known to the world and that it originated from a city in China, countries around the world began to take preventive measures by closing all borders that lead to China. This means there is no economic relation with China, no imports were allowed and no tourism activities were also allowed.

The effect in the United States can be seen in the rise of the unemployment rate. The unemployment insurance claims recorded in the United States rose to its highest level ever recorded as well as a drastic reduction in regional manufacturing. This is because individuals are asked to stay at home as a result of the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, thereby halting manufacturing activities and other activities, thus the unemployment increase. The general activity index in the United States shows that about 30% of firms in the United States reported a decrease in activities. This shows that the lockdown led to the reduction in economic activities and this means a slowdown in economic growth.

Furthermore, China the country which the COVID-19 is said to have originated from and the first to go into lockdown is not left out in the economic downturn. This is because China is known to be a great manufacturing country and export-dependent country. With the lockdown

and lockdown in other countries, it means a complete pause in its economic activities with investment in fixed assets to have reduced by -24.5%, Retail sales by -20.5%, Value of exports by -15.9%, Industrial Production by -13.5% and Service production by -13.0%²⁰. Therefore, considering the shutdown in many economies, the international monetary fund is forecasting a global recession this year 2020. Also, the United Nations estimates that the COVID-19 could lead to about \$2 Trillion drops in the global income.²⁰

Africa is not left out and Africa nations took to enforcing the lockdown strategy in other to curb the spread of the virus and its impact on the economy is telling, especially in the fall of oil prices, mostly affecting the oil dependant countries. COVID-19 cases in Africa reach over 11,000 – with 1,354 recoveries & 558 deaths reported as of 9 April 2020.

The rising cases of infected persons and the increase in death rate prompted governments in the continent to implement the lockdown strategy by closing down schools, places of worship event centres, bars, restaurants e.t.c. In Nigeria for instance, about 10 states enforced a lockdown including the Federal Capital Territory as the rate of infected COVID-19 persons increased, and death rate increased to 2 with the federal government enforcing a total lockdown of two states (Lagos and Ogun) and Abuja.

The fact that African countries are not equipped to cope with COVID-19 economically, with respect to medical facilities, cushion facilities for citizens during crisis e.t.c. bring a lot to be concerned about, as many people living in Africa are living below the average standard of living and in slums where daily bread is gotten from daily struggles the lockdown means an increase in poverty and hunger.

No doubt the lockdown strategy enforced meant that businesses and markets were shut, and economic activities remained halted and economic growth stagnated. The Nigerian Minister for finance on 28 March 2020 announced that after the COVID-19 lockdown, the country is likely to fall into yet another economic recession. Also, the Nigerian president H.E. Muhammadu Buhari declared on March 28, 2020, through a nationwide broadcast that there will be lockdown in the FCT, Lagos state and Ogun states for an initial period of 14 days i.e states where the highest number of cases have been detected as at the time of the announcement as well as a restriction on interstate and intercity movements. It should be noted that as at this date 97 cases have been confirmed in Nigeria thereby a necessity for a lockdown. However, in an attempt to cushion this economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the nation's economy, the president also announced that relief materials will be sent to commuter town and communities in these states. Also, a three-month moratorium on all federal loans, market loans, farmer loans e.t.c. as well as cash transfers to the vulnerable.

Interestingly, with a drop in the spread of the disease in China as of March 2020, China began to reopen its businesses and resumed its normal activities. In a study conducted by the Beijing firm almost 65% respondents stated that they plan to restrain their spending after the virus, this results in possible demand shock and oversupply of goods as much overseas demand drops as a result of inactivity of markets and businesses around the world.

Conclusion

Findings and Recommendation

It has been observed that there is daily relative risk increase in cases and daily relative risk increase in mortality. Also observed is the growth in cases in areas where active measures were not taken. Concurrently, the number of confirmed cases nationwide would continue to increase if drastic and active

measures are not taken. Further, the halt in business activities in the country has rendered many penniless and unable to provide for themselves the basic amenities needed for the duration of the lockdown brought about has a result of COVID-19.

Therefore, to ensure the reduction of the spread of the virus there is need to implement community-level measures of social distancing which may include closing schools, need for individuals with COVID-19 case or respiratory symptoms be properly taken care of, trace and quarantine those who must have come in contact with affected persons, and introducing stay at home policies for the general public. Also, there should be limited contact between residents, cancellation of large gatherings, and internal and external border closures. Finally, as nations look at reducing the spread of the virus through lockdown, adequate relief programs should be put in place to cater for the people in the form of palliatives needed.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the assistance of research assistant Miss Jimoh K.Z. for her timely gathering of the materials used for the study and the medical staff nationwide who stick to their post during this pandemic.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Orcid

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7559-6580>

References

1. World Health Organization (WHO). Naming the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the virus that causes it". [https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-2019\)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it). Retrieved 30 March 2020.
2. WMHC. Wuhan Municipal Health and Health Commission's Briefing on the Current Pneumonia Epidemic Situation in Our City. 2020. <http://wjw.wuhan.gov.cn/front/web/showDetail/2019123108989>.
3. WHO. Novel Coronavirus–China. 2020. <https://www.who.int/csr/don/12-january-2020-novel-coronavirus-china/en/>. Accessed 1 Feb 2020.
4. WHO. Novel Coronavirus-Japan (ex-China). 2020. <https://www.who.int/csr/don/17-january-2020-novel-coronavirus-japan-ex-china/en/>.
5. National Health Commission of People's Republic of China. An update on the incidence of pneumonia with novel coronavirus infection as at 24:00 on 31 January 2020. <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/yqfkdt/202002/84faf71e096446fdb1ae44939ba5c528.shtml>. Accessed 1 Feb 2020.
6. Ifijeh, Martins (31 January 2020). "FG Sets up Coronavirus Preparedness Group". This Day Newspaper. Retrieved 10 March 2020.
7. "Steps Nigeria is taking to prepare for coronavirus". MSN. 29 January 2020. Retrieved 10 March 2020.
8. Ezigbo, Onyebuchi; Ifijeh, Martins (1 February 2020). "Coronavirus Spread: WHO Lists Nigeria Among High Risk Countries". This Day Newspaper. Retrieved 10 March 2020.
9. Gesinde, Seyi (27 February 2020). "BREAKING: Coronavirus scare in Lagos, govt announces test result on Chinese citizen". Nigerian Tribune. Retrieved 10 March 2020.
10. Li Q, Guan X, Wu P, Wang X, Zhou L, Tong Y, et al. Early transmission dynamics in Wuhan, China, of novel coronavirus-infected pneumonia. *N Engl J Med*. 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2001316>

11. World Health Organisation. Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation Report–11. 2020. https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200131-sitrep-11-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=de7c0f7_4. Accessed 1 Feb 2020
12. Liu T, Hu J, Kang M, Lin L, Zhong H, Xiao J, et al. Transmission dynamics of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). 2020; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.01.25.919787>.
13. Liu T, Hu J, Kang M, Lin L, Zhong H, Xiao J, et al. Transmission dynamics of 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). 2020; doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.01.25.919787>.
14. National Health Commission of People's Republic of China. Prevent guideline of 2019-nCoV. 2020. <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/yqfkdt/202001/bc661e49b5bc487dba182f5c49ac445b.shtml>.
15. National Health Commission of People's Republic of China. Pneumonia diagnosis and treatment of 2019-nCoV infection from Chinese NHC and CDC 2020. 2020. <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/zhengcwj/202001/4294563ed35b43209b31739bd0785e67/files/7a9309111267475a99d4306962c8bf78.pdf>
16. CDC. 2019 Novel coronavirus, Wuhan, China. 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/summary.html>
17. CNBC. Coronavirus latest updates more than 1 million cases. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/03/coronavirus-latest-updates-more-than-1-million-cases.html>
18. WHO. Coronavirus - Africa: COVID-19 update (1 April 2020). <https://who.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/0c9b3a8b68d0437a8cf28581e9c063a9>
19. US embassy. <https://ng.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/covid-19-information/>
20. The Economic Impact of COVID-19 www.visualcapitalist.com/covid-19-economic-impact/