

COVID 19 AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The security architecture of many countries including Nigeria was badly challenged by the Corona virus pandemic in the greater part of 2020. Nigeria's weak security situation provided a safe haven for criminally minded persons to carry out their nefarious activities. Though crimes such as kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, internet fraud and Ponzi schemes, food insecurity and inadequate health facilities have bedeviled the Nigerian state for sometimes now, their occurrences were in the increase following a lockdown orders imposed by government to flatten the curve of COVID-19. The abuse of human rights and killings of innocent citizens are other security concerns that Nigerians had to contend with. The paper identified poverty, unemployment, weak and poorly funded military establishments as the causes of the unabating security concerns. The recommendations are that strong and good governance is needed if Nigeria must provide passable security for her citizens. Creation of employment opportunities and the adequate training and funding of law enforcements agencies is most urgently needed than ever.

Keywords: Covid-19, National Security, insecurity, Pandemic

Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic is indisputably the biggest health crisis the world has ever faced in a century. It was previously known as the novel coronavirus (2019- nCoV). The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus's origins in terms of populations, geography, or animal associations. Towards the end of the year 2019, China Center for Disease Control and Chinese Health Authority traced and reported Novel Corona virus (COVID-19) to the Hunan Seafood Market in Hubai province of Wuhan, a capital and major business city of China (Gralinski & Menachery, 2020). The virus spread speedily to have public health significance and consequently declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020 by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The disease spread across China, and beyond by travelers who went to spend the Chinese New Year. Many not aware or being asymptomatic carriers returned to their respective countries infecting many hundreds to thousands by contact unawares. On February 11, 2020, the Coronavirus Study Group of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses in a statement announced the official designation for the novel virus as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Thus within a short time there was an exponential increase in the number of infected case and mortality rate. The WHO on March 11, 2020, declared COVID-19 (as a pandemic having met the epidemiological criteria of having infected over 100, 000 people in at least 100 countries (WHO, 2020). The first such designations since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2008. The virus soon spread to over 213 countries and territories globally. As at August 28, 2020 Worldometer reported a total confirmed cases of 24, 339,123 and 838, 468 deaths and 17,201,592 recoveries and Nigeria ranks 47 of the most affected countries.

In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH, 2020) reported the first index case of Coronavirus on the 28th February 2020 by an Italian citizen, who works in Nigeria and who was diagnosed upon returning back to Nigeria from a trip to Milan, Italy. This incidentally is the very first reported case in Sub-Saharan African, ever since then there has been a daily rise in the number of cases. As at September 4, 2020 of the 413, 265 samples tested, 54, 588 cases have been confirmed, 42,627 cases have been discharged and 1,048 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (NCDC 2020). These figures are comparatively low when compared to data from United States of American, Italy, Brazil or India.

The Federal Government of Nigeria implemented a strict lockdown of 3 major cities in the country namely Lagos, Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja on 30 March, 2020 aimed at minimizing community transmission of COVID-19. During the imposed lockdown, only food stores and essential service providers were allowed to operate. However, due to the increase in the cumulative COVID-19 cases, the government extended the community lockdown to include the rest of the country in April 17th, 2020. There were restrictions also which included overnight curfew and interstate travel ban. The government announced plans to begin easing restrictions in the country from May 4, 2020 by allowing offices, businesses, markets and stores to resume operations with restricted hours and staff capacity and the compulsory wearing of nose masks and checking of body temperature (NCDC 2020).

A fundamental human right of the people of a given state or country is the right to security and this is provided by the state or country. The security of Nigeria is a situation in which residents are free from any threat to their life and means of livelihood, safe from bodily harm, diseases, unemployment and human right violations wherever they find themselves in Nigeria states (Nnoli, 2016; Adeleke 2013; Campbell, 2010). Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim(2015) assert that security in Nigeria is being socio-political in nature, as without security there would be political instability and chaos and social vices. Thus, there is a connection between the security of Nigerians and their survival of the adverse effects of COVID 19 pandemic. Furthermore, the security of Nigerians during the COVID 19 pandemic is the freedom from present and future danger, harm, fear, doubt, panic, anxiety or consequences of the pandemic. Security has been a long part of human existence and sustenance and can be viewed as freedom and absence of threat or violence which could lead to loss of lives and property. Thus, security in Nigeria is a situation in which residents are free from any form of external threats to their life and means of livelihood, they are safe from bodily harm and disease and from any form of human rights violation wherever they may be found within Nigerian states (Ojata & Udoh, 2012; Anifowose, 2011).

In this study the number of confirmed cases was obtained from the publicly available outbreak situation report of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Health Organization daily situation report. The daily newspapers and internet websites provided the needed data and information.

Statement of problem

The arrival of the COVID-19 virus into Nigeria has seen a rapid spike of criminal activities and insecurity of lives and properties. Especially during the lockdown there were daily reports of petty criminality, as security of lives and property is tied to both the social, political and economic growth and development of the country. The Nation Newspaper on July 30, 2020 reported that “workers fear heightened as killings and insecurity escalates.” Although the problem of insecurity is not new in Nigeria, many residents are at the receiving end of these menaces of insecurity. This range from the series of bombings and killings in the Northern part of the country, kidnapping and armed robbery in the South, political assassinations as well as communal wars or crisis making it appear that security agencies and law enforcement agencies in Nigeria are incapable of handling. During the mandatory lockdown imposition to flatten the curve of the COVID 19 pandemic, there were recorded increase in spikes in crime across the country that range from petty crimes, kidnapping and robberies. For example the rise of the ‘One Million Boys’ in Lagos and Ogun States, who sent out written statements informing residents of their impending loot of lives and property. These boys are said to be regular social miscreants and street rascals who had hitherto derived income from touting, petty

theft and political strong-harming in Lagos on a daily basis, but given that the lockdown affected their sources of income they resorted to forceful extortion from people in their homes.

Insecurity is the antithesis of security and has attracted descriptions such as a want of safety, uncertainty, a state of fear and doubt, instability and others. These descriptions point to a vulnerability to harm, loss to life and property or livelihood. It is therefore the state of not knowing, lack of control and inability to take appropriate defense actions against individuals and forces that pose danger or harm to an individual or a group of people (Tsuwa & Kyenge, 2018; Adegoke 2015; Nnamani & Onuigbo, 2012). Thus, it should be known that physical insecurity is the most visible form seen and it hides other forms of insecurity such as economic insecurity and social insecurity within its claws. However the first serious stage of insecurity in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic was that of various fraudulent schemes ranging from money making websites such as Giftal World or money doubling investments. It was reported that many fell for these fraudulent schemes losing and carting away with huge sums of money. This rendered many in financial debts and anxiety, depression.

The devastating impact of COVID-19 on the Nigerian economy is seen by many Nigerians who lost their jobs or their source of livelihood. The Vice President Prof. Yemi Osibanjo asserts that “Nearly 40 million Nigerians could be unemployed by the end of 2020.” The unemployment observation is obvious. Many organizations had to retrench some of their staff, only requiring essential staff operations. One of such was Access Bank. It was not until the Central Bank of Nigeria quickly waded in, others were already in line to follow suit.

Research Objectives

This study seeks to investigate the extent to which the COVID-19 affected security architecture of Nigeria and the challenges in the management of such. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the causes of insecurity arising from the COVID 19 pandemic in Nigeria.
2. Interrogate the security challenges arising from COVID 19 pandemic in Nigeria.
3. Determine the measures taken by the Federal government and Law enforcement agencies to curb security challenges arising from COVID-19 in Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues

Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19): According to Medscape (2019) is an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The symptoms of COVID 19 disease range from fever, cough, difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath and other respiratory flu like symptoms (CDC 2020). Severe manifestations include lower tract infections such as pneumonia, bronchitis, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and death. These complications are prominently seen in individuals with underlying health conditions such as diabetes mellitus, cardio-pulmonary disease, immune-compromised individuals, extremes of age (children and the elderly), cancer patients and patients undergoing chemotherapy (NCDC 2020).

There has been no successful cure for COVID-19 several months after. However there have been many vaccines undergoing clinical trials. In the absence of a safe and effective vaccine or antiviral for use in humans, control and mitigation efforts against COVID-19 are focused on the safety precautions which include social distancing, community lockdown, the use of face masks, isolation and contact tracing of confirmed cases and quarantine of people suspected of being exposed to the disease (WHO 2020).

Security Management: In this paper by security management we mean strategies put in place by the government to management threats to human lives and property during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. There are divergent approaches to conceptualizing security which is the antithesis of insecurity. Security need was the basis of the social contract between the people and the state, in which people willingly surrendered their rights to an organ (government) who oversees the survival of all. In this light, security embodies the mechanism put in place to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve violent conflicts,

and threats that originate from other states, non-state actors, or structural socio-political and economic conditions (Ahmadu, 2013).

For decades, issues relating to security were on the front burner in the development discourse. Several attempts have been made to redefine the concept of security to a broader view that places premium on individuals, in which human security that embodies elements of national security, human rights and national development remain major barometer for explaining the concept. At the heart of this debate there have been attempts to deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues (Adegoke 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Two theories namely the Chaos Theory and the Resilience theory were employed to underpin the discussion in the paper.

The Chaos Theory: The Chaos Theory states that within the apparent randomness of chaotic complex systems there are underlying patterns, interconnectedness, constant feedback loops, repetition, self-similarity, fractals and self-organization (Seeger, 2002). Thus, a very small change may make the system behave completely differently. COVID-19 pandemic an example of something that was actually unpredictable has caused a series of events and feed loop affecting not only security but every area of human life. Unemployment and poverty situation arose as a result of the pandemic, posing a serious challenge to democratic governance as well as the security integrity of the nation. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic made many unemployed and no source of income for many who were not essential workers. This lead towards the security challenges has confronts the Nigerian today. The increase rate of violence, crimes and terrorism during the pandemic are connected with unemployment and poverty.

The second theory is the **Resilience Theory**. Resilience Theory Walsh(1996) argues that it is not the nature of an adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it. When we face adversity, misfortune or frustration, resilience helps us to bounce back. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a great adversity to the average Nigerian as roots of fear; doubts, anxiety, violence and insecurity tend to be complex(that is the new normal people live with everyday).Thus, sometimes people resort to violence and crime during the pandemic when they are oppressed, depressed, hopeless or economically deprived. For instance, Adekanye (2007) is among scholar who hold that poverty and deprivation trigger violence. Accordingly, Adekanye (2007) postulated using several terms including “pauperization”, “impoverishment”, “immiseration” to refer to the process of being made poor, insufficient or beggared which of course trigger insecurity in his “rising poverty equals rising conflict” thesis.

Security Challenges in Nigeria during the COVID-19 lockdown

Nigeria like many other nations of the world has been grappling with the challenge of insecurity, but the Covid-19 took the world including Nigeria by surprise, dislocating populations, undermining peoples' social stability and calling on governments at all levels to devise various measures to curb the spread. One of the measures put in place by the federal government of Nigeria was to declare total lockdown in Lagos state, Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Other states of the federation were placed on partial lockdown. The government placed ban on international and local flights including inter-state travel. Schools, religious worship centres, markets, banking sector and businesses and indeed all economic activities were not in operation. All most everyone was mandated to ‘stay at home’ in other to ‘stay safe’. The exemption was for those on essential duties. The restrictions were not peculiar to Nigeria alone, but similar approaches were adopted world over. Unfortunately, why other countries fell back to their reserves of cash and material resources to fund the lockdown, Nigerians were left to take their destiny in their own hand. Even when palliatives were said to have given, only few could be identified as to have received such.

Prior to the global pandemic, security concerns in Nigeria have been very challenging. The myriad of challenges include kidnapping, internet fraud and Ponzi schemes, rape, armed robbery, burglary. These were on the increase during the period of the lockdown. We have briefly discussed their prevalence here:

Kidnapping: The spate of kidnapping in Nigeria is becoming more alarming. It is a national security concern as it affects both the rich and the poor. The COVID-19 pandemic increased its incidence, making kidnapping

a big ‘industry’ and lucrative enterprise and a steady means of livelihood, especially for people in the Southeastern part of the country (Ogu and Osah, 2020). Although, some of the kidnapping incidences may be politically motivated, others are driven with the motive of making victims pay huge sum of money, sometimes, in millions of Naira as ransom (Dike 2015). This has affected Nigeria’s image negatively (Adeleke (2013). Many hungry youths engaged in kidnaping activities to raise feeding money for themselves and their families. According to Control Risk (2020) many kidnapping groups abduct people from the street rather than their homes as it is easier for criminals to target victims opportunistically while they are vulnerable.

Armed robbery: Armed robbery has been identified as one of the prevalent crimes in contemporary Nigeria (Ahmadu 2015). It has manifested in various forms and dimensions over the years. Prominent forms of armed robbery experienced in Nigeria include car snatching, high-way robbery, and house and office robberies. During the lockdown vehicles carrying valuables and food items plying the highways were attacked and items stolen.

Rape: During the lockdown particularly in the month of the months of April and May, there was over 3,600 rape cases recorded across Nigeria. This was announced publicly by Nigeria’s Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development. Though, Premium Times (2020) reported that the Nigeria Police recorded 717 rape cases between January and May, 2020. This was corroborated by the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Adamu Mohammed, when he stated that:

It has come to the public knowledge now that because of the COVID-19 restrictions, we have a surge in cases of rape and gender-based violence. These are cases that are now coming up but we want to let members of the public know that, rape and gender-based violence has been there. The law enforcement agents have been dealing with these cases, in most cases, members of the public are not aware of the actions that the law enforcement agents have been taking.

Food insecurity: A hungry nation is a weak nation. A state cannot survive without food and if the state is hungry, it cannot survive. In the 1990s the United Nations had in its conception of human security stated that security was about “freedom from want” but “freedom from fear” (UNDP, 1994). The lockdown situation heat Nigerians by surprise with little or no stockpile of food. The situation sharply led to food scarcity. Traders found it difficult to replace their stock due to the lockdown. Those who had perishable goods had most of them destroyed while they were at home. Of course the National Emergency Management Agency and other government agencies saddled with humanitarian responsibility could not sufficiently reach out to so many Nigerians who were dying of hunger. In so many quarters, Nigerians were saying ‘Corona no de kill us, na hunger be our problem’. On the other hand, even when farmers were allowed to go their farms, the restrictions of movement prevented them from moving food items easily from the rural communities to the urban centres. When the food items got to the market, the prices were hiked. It was for this that President Muhammadu Buhari blamed corrupt middlemen as behind the rising food prices (The Nation, 2020)

Internet fraud and Ponzi schemes

The COVID -19 pandemic ushered in various ponzi schemes and internet fraud, ranging from Giftal world where naive and gullible Nigerians were promised huge sums of money for posting articles or adverts on social media or commenting on people's post on social media. This resulted in many unsuspected Nigerians in which many tertiary institutions students lost their money and savings. The lockdown and stay at home order by the Federal government resulted in many devising ways to swindle people of money. As the saying goes ‘an idle man is the devils workshop’. Many money doubling schemes emerged during the lockdown as such individuals promised their unsuspected prey a double of the amount they invested after 24 or 48hours. The Cyber Risk Services, Deloitte West Africa noted that the spike in phishing attack, Mail spam and ransomware attacks was on the increase. The cyber criminals used the COVID-19 to impersonate brands, thus misleading employers and customers. They invested several computers and phones.

Abuse of human rights: Some security personnel in other to implement the lockdown orders of government abused the rights of people. There were reports of arrests and sometimes killings of innocent citizens. There were reports of military personnel harassing and brutalizing people in Lagos, Abuja, Warri and other parts of Nigeria (Daniel, 2020). The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in April 2020 had reported that security forces enforcing the lockdown in parts of Nigeria have killed more people than the virus itself. At that time over 18 people had been killed (BBC News, April 2020). This was the reason why several women protected naked in August 2020.

Killings of innocent persons: Within the period of the lockdown there was spree of killing in Southern Kaduna. Though, prior to the pandemic there were already reports of armed herdsmen in that area. The killings and dispatching of communities have resulted to over 8,000 internally displaced persons. Other security challenges that were on the increase include domestic violence against women and children, loss of jobs and daily source of livelihood and increase in begging and unsolicited visitations.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

The state of insecurity in the country is at a worrisome situation in which tackle the monster and menace of insecurity requires an understanding of the root causes. In this discourse, some of the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria include unemployment, poverty, corruption and leadership failure, weak and poorly funded military establishments.

Unemployment

Unemployment is one of the monsters confronting the Nigeria (Atere, Osah, Ayim and Chioma (2013). Nigeria, like other countries in Africa faces the challenge of unemployment. This has become a big threat to the survival of the political space of the country(Dike, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemics worsened the situation of unemployment in Nigeria, as many from the onset of the pandemic had either lost their jobs either or shut down of certain business enterprise. This may be due to compliance to government regulations on staff capacity or the state of the Nigerian economy. Unemployment breeds poverty and hunger. One age long reality is that ‘a hungry man is an angry man’. This explains the increasing occurrence of all forms of security breach and other criminalities, including kidnapping, armed robbery and advanced fee fraud during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Poverty

Poverty is a form of economic deprivation averred that both economic deprivation and disease which result from poverty bring physical discomfort and prevent children from reaching their physical and mental potential. Ironically, Nigeria is one of the most resource-endowed nations in the world, but its citizens are among the poorest in the world. There is a persisting paradox of a rich country inhabited by poor people. Unfortunately, as poverty deepens as a result of the pandemic it gears towards a large poverty stricken youth populations without any sustainable source of living have continued to dabble into organized kidnapping, armed robbery. Thus, as unemployment rises the level of poverty rises as well.

Leadership Failure

Nigeria for sometimes has not had the benefit of being administered by good and quality leaders as most of the political leaders are in office for their pecuniary gains (Campbell, 2010; Olukoshi, Agbaje, Abdullah and Obi, 2005; Maier, 2000). So sadly at the course of the pandemic palliatives were distributed by the government from the COVID-19 palliative fund. For instance, while the citizens were languishing in hunger, there are claims and counterclaims about members of the National Assembly getting up to N20 million each as palliatives from the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Even when funds and palliatives were to be given, they were not made available to the masses. If at all anything was given, they were so ridiculous. For example in certain areas of Lagos State and Ogun State a household comprising of over 15 individuals were given a ‘Kongo’ of garri, five sachet of Indomienoodles, a pack of salt and a loaf of bread. It is worthy of note that Nigeria has the resources to provide for the needs of its people but the culture of corruption in public service has resulted in the death of basic necessities.

In spite of the huge number of law enforcements agents and the yearly budget allocation to law enforcements agencies, there are still greater insecurities in many states. For example the ‘One Million Boys’ scenario in which they wrote to those communities of their intending violence and harm to lives and property. Thus residents of Lagos and Ogun environs resulted in being vigilante due to the unresponsiveness of the law enforcements agencies. The response of the law enforcement agencies were mere rhetoric.

The management of the security challenges arising from COVID-19

Strong and Good Governance

Ibrahim (2015) notes that governance is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights. This ensures that a country is free from corruption and abuse with respect to public office and funds. The government has a role to play in the adequate and prompt response to the needs of the people to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the nation. Thus, the government has a responsibility to the people in terms of their welfare and safety of lives and properties.

Creation of Employment Opportunities

An enabling environment for job opportunities should be made. This can only be achieved through policies and provision of infrastructure which would facilitate investments and the creation of jobs by private organization. For example, the Nigeria government reviewed the 2019 budget, which resulted in the Central Bank of Nigeria COVID-19 fund for small and medium enterprises.

Adequate training and funding of law enforcements agencies

Security agencies in Nigeria should undergo capacity building in advanced training, intelligence sharing, advanced technology, logistics, motivation and change of orientation. This will enhance the operational capabilities of the security agencies by identifying avenues that would enable them respond appropriately to internal security challenges and any threat to lives and properties. This should be supported by provision of modern equipment and facilities by the government to aid intelligence gathering and surveillance so that law enforcement agents could become proactive and reasonably predict potential crime with near accuracy rather than being reactive.

Conclusion

Insecurity has posed a challenge for the Nigerian government and appears intractable. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigerian government has wobbled in its security responsibility of lives and properties. To assist the government in ensuring security in Nigeria, this paper has engaged itself in identifying the security challenges and the way out.

Recommendations

The recommendations are as follows:

1. The government should ensure that the preventive measures against COVID-19 and should be strictly adhered to.
2. Entrepreneurship education should be incorporated into the curricular of secondary school and tertiary institutions. This will help shift the youth from being job seekers to job creator and from social dependence to self-sufficient people.
3. Government at all levels should put in place and sustain programmes and policies geared towards reduction of poverty and unemployment levels.
4. Facilities such as the Central Bank of Nigeria COVID-19 fund which aimed at giving loans to small and medium enterprise should be made to get to those it is meant for.

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