



Problems and Prospects of Social Welfare Administration in Nigeria: A Study of the Covid-19 Response Strategies in Enugu State

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Abstract: *Over the years, social welfare administration has been a major challenge for developing countries especially Nigeria. Successive governments have accordingly made efforts to address social welfare issues in Nigeria. However, despite these laudable measures to address the socio-economic hardship occasioned by COVID-19, the present socio-economic well-being of the citizens is seemingly poor. Regrettably, Nigerians are seen on daily basis lament the hardship they are facing in the light of COVID-19 pandemic. It was against the foregoing that the study examined problems and prospects of social welfare administration in Nigeria with focus on the covid-19 response strategies in Enugu State. The study aimed to ascertain the effects of federal government cash disbursement and food items on reduction of poverty rate occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria; investigate the contributions of Federal Government's intervention funds towards improving the healthcare facilities for people in the face of corona virus pandemic in Nigeria; and determine the effects of politicization of distribution of social welfare administration relief materials on economic revival of the needy and vulnerable following the outbreak of corona virus pandemic in Nigeria. Content analysis design was adopted to review secondary data. Findings revealed that Administration of welfare packages is not transparent and efficient in Nigeria; hence target beneficiaries are often skipped. Welfare administration is politicized in such a way that party affiliation is taken into consideration in the distribution of palliative measures. Another dimension to the problem of social welfare administration in Nigeria is the practice hoarding of relief materials meant for the people by the stakeholders in government circle. These corrupt and criminal acts undermine efforts at improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people. Hence, the study recommended that: Disbursement of cash or cash transfers and distribution of food items as social welfare response measures should be efficiently monitored to make sure that the target beneficiaries are reached; there is urgent need to improve healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria; and in order to achieve result from government's social welfare administration, stakeholders in the business of aid administration must shun all manner of corrupt practices and politicization of welfare programmes.*

Keywords: *Social Welfare, Administration, Covid-19, Response Strategies*

Introduction

In the world at large, government administration of social welfare services is made more visible in the time of emergency, pandemic or outbreak of diseases. In this case, it is apt to argue that the true test of leadership and governance is not only in the performance of routine

tasks, but in prompt response to alleviate or reduce the sufferings of the masses through adequate provision and efficient administration of social welfare packages in times of global crises and pandemic such as EBOLA, Corona virus code named COVID-19 among others. Under the international human rights law, Nigeria's government has an obligation to protect people's right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and nutrition, the highest attainable standard of health, and rights to social security. In times of economic crises, countries must demonstrate that they have made every effort to mobilize all available resources, including international assistance and allocate them in the way that maximizes respect for human rights, including by taking into account the precarious situation of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals or groups (Amnesty International, 2019). Governments are obligated to ensure access to food, water, health care, other basic needs for everyone at all times, and in particular those subject to lockdown and other severe restrictions on movement. The need for efficient administration of social welfare packages especially in this period of COVID-19 pandemic cannot be over emphasized. This was further buttressed in the following words of President Buhari "In Nigeria, we are taking a two-step approach. First, to protect the lives of our fellow Nigerians and residents living here and second, to preserve the livelihood of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult times in dignity and with hope and peace of mind" (Buhari, 2020).

Social welfare as described by Hassan (2017), refers to a wide range of activities and services by volunteers, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies providing help to needy persons unable to care for themselves; activities and resources designed to enhance or promote the well being of individuals, families and the larger society; and to eliminate or reduce the incidence of social problems. In a similar vein, Lander (1974) in Abah, Edeh & Nwakamma (2016), defined social welfare as a system of laws, programmes, benefits and services which strengthen or assure provision for meeting social order. Social welfare encompass a wide range of activities and services which focus on provision of palliatives, education, medical, housing, poverty reduction, recreational and cultural activities, family disorganization, delinquency, criminality, caste, unemployment, orphans, widows, child abuse, lack of self support, physical and mental disabilities as well as sickness. The foregoing also constitutes the socio-economic well-being indicators. Administration of welfare aids cuts across tackling poverty, unemployment, taking care of the elderly and those who cannot fend for themselves and this is made more manifest in the time of global crisis.

Arising from the above, social welfare administration is viewed as the coordination of men and material as well as efficient design and implementation of social welfare policies and programmes set out by the government or other relevant stakeholders in the field of aid administration. It is the administration of service institutions (public/private) bodies and agencies that provide the basic necessities of life to the needy in the society. This includes the provision of help to the families, groups and individuals that are displaced in their social economic environment and health condition to the extent that they no longer function effectively among the larger segment of the society.

Badru (2015: 27) among other things outlines the objectives of social welfare administration in the following words: (1) Social welfare administration is a form of

administration that is meant to fight all categories of social problems, young persons and slum dwellers, destitute and the physically challenged. (2) It is designed to formulate the best policies that can effectively solve social problems in the society. It is the administrative machinery for harnessing the potentials of a state or country, for the benefits of the welfare of the society. (3) Social welfare administration is meant to coordinate the distribution of social services to the various agencies and individuals who are in dire needs of government's assistance. (4) It helps to put in place machineries for check-mating abuse of resources allocated to social services.

Usually, the need for provision of social welfare packages such as relief materials in terms of food, clothing, health care consumables, funds, loans and other palliative measures increases in the face of recession or pandemic such as the COVID-19. The reason for this is not far fetched. The outbreak of every pandemic usually hits the economy badly. The outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria and other places in the world resulted to lockdown of businesses, and both public and private offices were affected. There was also a sit at home measure aimed at curtailing the spread of the virus. These protective measures have also unintended consequences as they affect social life and the income level of the people, thus increasing the rate of poverty. Some bread winners lost their job. Apart from adding to the level of unemployment, it negatively affected their means of livelihood. Employers hardly meet up with their responsibilities to their employees. The school system seems to be the worst hit; and some proprietors who did not have other means of income other than the school fees laid off some of their staff and others placed their staff on half salary while some were forced to forego some percentage of their salaries and entitlements. Also, the health sector was not left out. Access to health care services especially in Nigeria, is largely based on out of pocket expenditure and this is often hampered whenever there is economic crisis occasioned by any pandemic as people can hardly pay for their medical bills. The period of pandemic more than any other time else is usually an opportunity for government to show commitment and its capacity to efficiently administer social welfare services following the consequences of each global crises. However, in Nigeria this appears not to be the case.

Historically, social welfare administration is traced to the ancient times particularly the ancient civilizations such as the Greek city states, Egyptian, Indian and Chinese States (Badru, 2015). Today, the Greeks, the Indians, the Chinese and the Europeans have very rich literature on how ancient people administered help and assistance to their people. Many historical accounts of ancient people had it that mutual aid had been conceived in many societies as the collective responsibility of every member of the society. However, a major step in creating organized social welfare programmes was the enactment of the Elizabethan poor Law of 1601 by the parliament of England. It authorized a system of obligatory financing outside the Church (Hassan, 2017). There were other important developments, for instance, an examination of social welfare activities in USA revealed that in 1880-1980s, attempts were made to move poor people from work yards to poor house when they were in search of relief funds. This was followed with the "Emergency Relief Act", and social security Act passed on June 17, 1937 (Ogbonna, 2017).

In Nigeria, following the independence in 1960 and the unfortunate civil war that lasted from 1967-1970, a lot of people were killed and many were rendered homeless. There was high rate of poverty and malnutrition. The Nigeria's economy almost grinded to a halt thereby skyrocketed social welfare challenges of the government. In order to tackle the social welfare problems during the period and in the contemporary time government came up with policy measures and programmes. First was the Gowon's administration's three (Rs) strategy- Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction which focused on rebuilding the nation after the civil war. This was followed in 1975 by the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports to ensure continuous improvement and transformation in the quality of life of the citizens' and to coordinate the activities of the various service sectors. Till date, there are other various social welfare interventions by successive governments in Nigeria. These include the National Accelerated Food Production Programme and the Nigerian Agricultural Bank entirely devoted to funding agriculture; there was also the much publicized Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) established in 1976 by then military head of state – Gen Olusegun Obasanjo; the Green Revolution established during Shegu Shagari's administration; the Go Back to land programme introduced by Buhari's government between 1983-1985; the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), for rural development by General Ibrahim Babangida. DFRRI was meant to provide feeder roads, electricity portable water and toilet facilities for the rural dwellers; and Abacha's Family Support Programme and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), introduced in 1993. Others include the National Poverty Eradication Programme established in 2001 by Obasnajo's administration, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the agency was saddled with the authority of managing disaster in Nigeria. The creation of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), in 2000 and the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs in 2008.

Jonathan's administration also came on board with subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) aimed at improving the socio-economic well being of the people; N-Power programme followed suit. N-power is a job creation and empowerment scheme of the National Social investment programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced in 2016. The departmentalization of social welfare administration such that in virtually every government institution there is a department of social welfare; the Nigeria Centre for Disease control (NCDC) established in November, 2018; and the creation of Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and social development in 2019.

The above background is imperative to understanding the Federal Government's social welfare response to the economic hardship occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Record has it that Corona virus, or the disease it causes "COVID-19" originated from Wuhan Province of China in December 2019. It began spreading rapidly in China and to other parts of the world through the movement of people in early 2020. The spread of COVID-19 affected economic activities in China and in February the Chinese economy came to a halt. China is a major exporter of Commodities to African countries, and the economic contraction in China is expected to have spill over consequences for African countries through the negative impact on African business that rely heavily on China for the supply of primary and intermediate raw materials (Peterson, 2020). Ogunode, Abigeal & Lydia (2020) document that as at April 4, more

than 60,000 people worldwide have died of COVID-19, the highly infectious respiratory disease caused by the Corona virus. The number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 has exceeded 1 million, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Following this development on the 27th of February, 2020 Nigeria confirmed its first case in Lagos State, an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria had returned on the 25th February from Milan, Italy through Murtala Mohammed International Airport, fell ill on 26th February and was transferred to Lagos State Bio security facilities for isolation (Ogunode, et al, 2020). As at the time of conducting this research, Nigeria has recorded a total number of 39539 COVID-19 confirmed cases, 16559 had been discharged and 845 deaths (NCDC, 2020). The number of cases increases with more testing on daily basis.

In view of the above, the Federal Government came up with some measures to control the spread of the virus and cushion the effects of hardship occasioned by the pandemic through provision of policy strategies and welfare measures. These include closure of schools at all levels across the federation, worship centres, markets and business premises; sit at home order and inter-state movement ban except for those on essential duties. There was also Covid- 19 protocol which must be observed and they included regular washing of hands with soap and running water, wearing of face mask and social distancing. Other major important moves made by the government to control the spread of the virus include the setting up of the presidential task force on COVID-19 by president Muhammadu Buhari on March 9, 2020, to coordinate and oversee Nigeria's multi-sectoral inter-governmental efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria,etc.

In the light of these interventions including cash donations and relief materials from individuals at both national and state levels, one would expect to see significant improvement on the socio-economic well being of the people. However, this appears not to be the case. The unfortunate socio-economic woes and poor standard of living experienced by Nigerians and the residents before the outbreak of corona virus seem to have been escalated by the effect of the pandemic on the economy. Human development and economic wellbeing indicators seem to have worsened. Nigeria ranked 152 out of 157 countries in the World Bank's 2018 Human Capital Index. More than 82 million Nigerian live on less than \$1 a day and 23.1 percent were unemployed, while 16.6 percent were under employed (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). It was however projected that unemployment rate will hit 35.5 percent in 2020. But this figure must have risen going by the fact that many losses their jobs due to the pandemic. The current life expectancy for males in Nigeria is 53years while their female counterpart is 56 years. On the average, the life expectancy in the country is 54.5 years. This ranking falls below most African countries that are not in the same rating with Nigeria in terms of resourcefulness and National wealth (Ekitan, Ogun Jesa Meliz & Savas, 2019). Therefore, going by the socio-economic realities on ground, it became imperative to investigate COVID-19 Response Strategies and Social Welfare Administration in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 Pandemic, the Federal Government deployed palliative measures which include food items, clothing materials, healthcare consumables, cash

donations, loans set out for businesses and farmers to boost agriculture and food production, etc, in order to ameliorate the sufferings of the people. However, despite these laudable measures to address the socio-economic hardship occasioned by COVID-19, the present socio-economic well-being of the citizens is seemingly poor. Regrettably, Nigerians are seen on daily basis lament the hardship they are facing in the light of COVID-19 pandemic. The presidential interventions as highlighted at the background of the study are no doubt commendable, but administration of welfare packages in Nigeria seems to be hampered by politicization of beneficiaries. Who gets what, when and how of the available palliative measures appears to be determined by party affiliations. Political office holders and those in the helm of affairs adopted what seems to be a divisive strategy to distribute and share the palliative ward by ward and thereby sort out perceived political opponents. This ugly and sharp practice seemingly skipped the needy and vulnerable who are the real targets of the welfare interventions. Maku, Amaghionyeodiwe, Adesoye & Alimi (2015) observe that despite the large government spending, the several fiscal measures, and a variety of economic programmes that the Nigerian government had introduced and implemented over the years, it is a dismay that growth has not accelerated and poverty remains widespread and pervasive. Unfortunately, relief materials such as food, clothing, water, healthcare consumables, set aside for welfare of the people were hoarded by key stakeholders in government circle thereby increasing the sufferings of the people. This singular act resulted to crisis and untimely deaths, including destruction of properties mostly by youths who broke the warehouses where the palliatives were hoarded.

Coupled with the above is poverty and hunger which continue at an alarming rate. This seems to undermine the goals of the lockdown and sit at home order by the Federal and state governments. The fight to and control the spread of the corona virus did not yield the desired result. Unfortunately, people were seen going about their normal businesses despite the lock down, as they preferred to die of corona virus than hunger since the expected palliatives were diverted. The masses appear not to have felt the impact of the huge amount of funds government claimed to have disbursed to reduce the economic hardship of the pandemic. It is also worrisome the increasing health challenges without a commensurate medical treatment. The tendency to patronize quacks with its attendant consequences seems to be high. Unfortunately, those with pressing health challenges hardly go to the hospital at will rather they have resorted to self medication as any slight increase in the body temperature may be tagged COVID-19 case. On the side of the medical practitioners and other health care givers they are suspicious of every patient to avoid contracting the deadly virus.

Alluding to the above, Peterson (2020) notes that some private hospitals refused to admit infected patients, while public hospitals exceed their capacity. This pressured the government of some countries to build isolation centres in large open fields around the country; notably, football stadiums were converted to isolation centres in countries such as Cameroon and Nigeria. As a corollary of the above, very many are now without job in Nigeria and means of livelihood. This has the tendency to predispose them to various kinds of crimes with its consequences on the individual and the society at large. Administration of social welfare in this regard is hardly monitored. This seemingly results to corruption at the planning, disbursement and distribution of resources to needy especially in times of emergency.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the Covid-19 response strategies adopted by the federal government of Nigeria and its effect on social welfare administration. The specific objectives are:

1. To ascertain the effects of federal government cash disbursement and food items on reduction of poverty rate occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the contributions of Federal Government's intervention funds towards improving the healthcare facilities for people in the face of corona virus pandemic in Nigeria.
3. To determine the effects of politicization of distribution of social welfare administration relief materials on economic revival of the needy and vulnerable following the outbreak of corona virus pandemic in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Social Welfare Administration

Social welfare is the philosophy guiding government's decision on how to take care of the welfare of its people, which is usually to mitigate the adverse effects of poverty or protect the rights of the vulnerable people in society to decent employment, secured work in the factories, secured employment in complex organizations, secured pensions and safe future for young people and the elderly. It is usually regarded as the programmes of action for bringing government closer to the helpless in the society (Badru, 2015). This is the approach that Morris (1986) in Badru (2015) adopted in his discussion of the rudiments of social welfare. According to him; a social welfare is the sum of those efforts by governments and other organizations to relieve the poverty or distress of a people who are helpless, that is unable to meet their basic needs by their own labour or by their families. Roland (1990), however, argued that the scope and size of social welfare may vary across countries, societies and generations. He noted that "naturally" there are considerable variations among societies in the definition of who is helpless and what are basic needs? Because social welfare may be affected by class mobility and class differences in access to resources of a country. It is based on this that scholars preferred to see it as a set of programmes designed by the government or other organizations to address the problems of poverty and other socio-economic challenges that may arise at any time or affect any member of the society. Social welfare according to Hassan & Ahmed (2015) is an institution comprising policies and laws and/government (public) agencies by which a defined minimum of social services, money and other consumption rights are distributed to individuals, families and groups by criteria other than those of the market or those prevailing in the family system, for the purpose of preventing, alleviating or contributing to solution of recognized social problems so as to improve the well-being of the individual, group and communities directly.

Social welfare administration is therefore the provision and implementation of social services with a view to delivering public goods and protecting public interests. It also entails the administration of service institutions (public/private) bodies and agencies that provide the basic necessities of life to the needy in the society (Badru, 2015; Nwoba, 2011). This includes the provision of help to the needy, families, groups and individual that are displaced in their socio-

economic environment and health conditions to the extent that they no longer function effectively among the larger segment of the society. It requires the activities of and the use of trained personnel called social workers to help, guide and to connect these categories of people to government and non-government agencies for the provision of the basic needs required to reconcile them to normal life. The essence of social welfare administration is to improve the socio-economic well-being of the people.

Assessing socio-economic well-being requires a comprehensive framework that includes a large number of components and that, ideally allows gauging how interrelations shape people's lives. OECD (2013) further identifies three pillars for understanding and measuring people's socio-economic well-being to include:

1. Material conditions: Income and wealth, jobs and earnings and housing.
2. Quality of life: Health status, work and life balance, education and skills, social connections, civic engagement and governance, environmental quality, personal security and subjective well-being.
3. Sustainability of the socio-economic and natural systems where people live and work, which is important for well-being to last over time. Sustainability depends on how current human activities impact on the stocks of different types of capital (natural, economic, human and social) that underpin well-being. Moreover, increases in income have been associated with improvements in the other dimensions of well-being, such as life expectancy, education attainments, etc.

The Concept of Poverty

Nwachukwu and Onwubiko (2008) categorized poverty into two: absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a situation whereby an individual lacks resources necessary to sustain him or herself. Such an individual lacks the basic human needs of food, shelter, and clothing. This definition of poverty in terms of subsistence is predominantly used by scholars to analyze poverty in Africa and in developing countries in general. On the other hand, relative poverty refers to a situation where an individual lacks the necessary resources when compared with other members of the society such that it limits or prevents him from partaking in the normal or desirable activities of life that exists in such a society. The present study aligns with absolute poverty conception because people who suffer from absolute poverty are mostly need of government social welfare packages.

COVID-19 Response Strategies and its Socio-Economic Implications in Nigeria

Since COVID-19 is still an on-going pandemic, an expansive body of literature is yet to be developed on its implications on socio-economic well-being of the people, especially in Nigeria. That notwithstanding, the increasing demand made by the public on governments social welfare function is the context upon which the economic hardship brought about by the unfortunate outbreak of the corona virus disease may be understood. Available record reveals that Corona virus or the diseases it causes "COVID-19", originated from the Wuhan Province of China in December, 2019. It began spreading rapidly in china and to other parts of the world in early 2020. Africa recorded its first COVID-19 case in Egypt on the 14th February, 2020. Since then, 52 countries have reported cases initially confined to capital cities, cases are now

reported in a significant number of countries, and in multiple provinces (Peterson, 2020; OECD, 2020). Ogunode, et al, (2020) document that in 27 February 2020, Nigeria confirmed its first case in Lagos State, an Italian who works in Nigeria had returned from Milan, Italy through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, fell ill on 26 February and was transferred to Lagos State Biosecurity Facilities for isolation and testing. Since then the virus has spread across the states in the federation. The spread of COVID-19 affected economic activities in China, and in February, the Chinese economy came to a halt. China is a major exporter of commodities to African countries, and the contraction in China has a spillover consequence for African countries through the negative impact on African businesses that rely heavily on China for the supply of primary and intermediate raw materials. This is also case in Nigeria.

Most African governments including Nigeria, have implemented measures to encourage social distancing, focusing on border and travel restrictions, school closures and bans on large gatherings. Across the world, governments are employing two fundamental non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. These include Suppression and Mitigation. In the case of suppression, the objective is to reduce the transmission rate or R_0 to less than 1 whereas in the case of mitigation, the objective is to get the numbers to decline or slow its speed. Population wide social distancing combined with home isolation of cases and closure of schools and universities are minimum policy requirements for effective suppression. A part from the above, the Nigerian governments at both national and state levels have responded with the provision of palliatives. During the announcement of the lockdown:

...President Buhari said the government would put in place measures to preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult time in dignity". The most vulnerable in our society" would receive conditional cash transfers for the next two months.

This was followed with implementation of social welfare packages which include 20,000 Naira (US 52) to families that registered in the National social Register of poor and vulnerable households set up by the Buhari's administration in 2016 to combat poverty; distribution of 77,000 metric tons of grain, 50 billion naira (US \$28.5 million) earmarked as credit facility to support households and micro, small and medium enterprises affected by the COVID-19 pandemic etc. Other major important moves made by the government to control the spread of the virus include the following: (i) The setting up of the presidential task force on COVID-19 by president Muhammadu Buhari on March 9, 2020, to coordinate and oversee Nigeria's multi-sectoral inter-governmental efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The PTF provides overall policy direction, guidance and continuous support to the National Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) of the NCDC, and other Ministries and Government Agencies involved in response activities and ensure their coordination towards a single set of national strategic objectives. (ii) Economic Sustainability committee inaugurated by the President on 30th of March, 2020 chaired by the Vice President Yemi Osinbajo, to develop a comprehensive economic plan to respond to the disruption and dislocations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. (iii) The President also set up a committee made up of the Minister and

Minister of State of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Minister of State Petroleum Resources, Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria and Group managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the 2020 budget and to recommend appropriate and immediate response strategies. (iv) The development of the Nigeria Economic Plan by the Economic sustainability committee (ESC). The NESP has been developed as a 12-month, 2.3 trillion Naira “transit” plan. (v) The 500 billion Naira component of the NESP COVID-19 crisis intervention Fund, for the upgrading of health facilities nationwide, and also to finance a National Special Public works programmes as well as any other interventions that may appear in the future. (vi) Release of 70,000 metric Tonnes of grain for distribution to poor and vulnerable households across the country. (vii) Commencement of a three-month repayment moratorium for all trader moni, Market moni and farmer moni Loans, with immediate effect. (viii) Commencement of a three-month moratorium for all Federal Government funded loans issued by Bank of Industry, bank of Agriculture and Nigeria export import bank. (ix) Establishment of a joint Technical Task Team to facilitate the movement of food and agricultural inputs across Nigeria, during the corona virus lockdown, etc (PTF, 2020). However, these measures were not only targeted at controlling the spread of the virus but also resulted to a closure of productive sectors of the economy. One major effect was the falling of oil prices. UNDP (2020) revealed that:

The decline in oil prices by 55 percent between the end of 2019 to March 2020, is one of the most serious economic shocks that Nigeria has faced in its memory, especially as the oil sector contributes 65 percent and 90 percent to government and total export revenues, respectively. As at 18th March, 2020, the price of crude oil dropped to US\$29.621 barrel. Given that Federal budget estimates for 2020 have pegged oil prices at US\$57/barrel and production at 2.18million barrels per day, if prices continue to remain at this level, it would translate to a decline in 48 percent of expected revenue by close to \$10B and export earnings by \$ 19B. The decline in export revenue is projected to have a combined effect of 0.55 percentage points drop in GDP.

The above definitely has some ripple effects on other sectors since oil is the main stay of the Nigeria’s economy. The increase in hunger and poverty justifies the clamour for social welfare packages in the face of ravaging effects of COVID-19. The UN estimates that nearly 30 million more people could fall into poverty and the number of acutely food- insecure people could significantly increased. World Bank (2020) revealed that about 40-60 million people will be moved into extreme poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. World population living a less than \$1.90 per day is projected to increase from 8.2% in 2019 to 8.6% in 2020, or from 632 million people to 665 million people. At the country level, the three countries with the largest change in the number of poor are estimated to be India (12 million), Nigeria (5 million) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (2 million). Onehi (2020) citing Olubiyi (2020) observed that Nigeria currently have deficits in housing, water, sanitation, food, healthcare and education, among others and that COVID-19 outbreak will more than likely spike up these shortfalls. Adesoji (2020) added that out of 1, 9540 households surveyed on a nationally representative sample, between 35-59% of households could not afford to buy staple foods like

yam, rice and bean during the 7 days prior to the interview when they needed them. It is also important to note that as of 2019 before the outbreak of COVID-19, 40.1% of Nigerians representing over 82.9 million Nigerians live in poverty and inequality. The report defines national poverty as annual expenditure below N137, 430 (N376.5 per day or roughly \$1 on 360/\$). This no doubt has increased following the outbreak of corona virus.

Job loses seems to have been added to the economic hardship facing the people. In 2019, the National Bureau of Statistics documented that unemployment rate in Nigeria was 23.1% while underemployment stood at 16%. In May 2019 however, the Minister of Labour and Employment Chris Ngige, revealed that the Federal Government forecast an unemployment rate of 33.5% by 2020. This may have increased going by a number of job losses. This is further buttressed by the fact that out of 1,950 households surveyed on nationally representative sample, 42% of the respondents who were working before the outbreak were no longer working the week preceding the interview for reasons related to COVID-19 (Adesoji, 2020). A further breakdown according to him showed that the poorest households (from the lowest consumption quintile) reported the highest share of Nigeria who stopped working (45%) while 35% of the wealthiest household also affected. Also, the study reported a high rate of households income loss since mid-march 2020, as 79% of households reported that their total income decreased. Basically, while the income from all sectors were affected, the rate was highest for income from non-farm family business (85%) compared to household farming, livestock or fishing (73%) and wage employment (58%). Despite the fact that the pandemic affects virtually all the sectors, the informal sector appears to be worst hit in terms of unemployment. Lending support to the foregoing, Morka (2020), the Executive Director of the Social Economic Rights Action Centre, a Lagos-based non-governmental organization, reported that the vast majority of people outside the formal system are hit devastatingly by the lockdown, any disruption to their daily livelihood has a huge and significant impact on their ability to meet their most basic needs". The informal sector, in which more than 80 percent of Nigerians work he submitted, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen, and artisans to food vendors and hair dressers. In Lagos alone, 65 percent of the estimated 25 million people work in the informal sector.

The health sector is not left out. Currently, in Africa, including Nigeria, 65% of healthcare expenses are made from out-of pocket expenditures compared to Europe where the national and regional authorities are responsible for the health policies and expenditure of citizens, (Peterson, 2020). The on-going pandemic has health implications in Nigeria. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, Nigeria is placed 187th among 200 countries on global healthcare delivery system ranking (Ephraim-Emmanuel, Adigwe, Oyeghe & Ogaji, 2018). Nigeria runs a National Health Insurance Scheme that cater for only federal public servants. This category of workers constitutes less than 1% of the total population and resides mostly in urban centers. The scheme does not provide cover for people employed in the informal sector despite the fact that it is from the sector that the bulk of the population makes a living, especially the rural population (Urama, Adewoyin, Ezebuilo, Ukimueze & Ene, 2019). The situation in the rural areas is regrettable. Not only do these areas house about two thirds of the country's poor who engage in informal employments, they also lack most basic social

amenities, including quality healthcare facilities. OECD (2020) in their study revealed that informal workers are most exposed to the consequences of the health and economic crises. It added that the growing number of COVID-19 patients' risks overcrowding health facilities, and patients with high burden diseases like AIDs, tuberculosis and malaria could lack access and/or adequate care. Patients with other active diseases such as Lassa fever in Nigeria and Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo may also be affected. COVID-19 pandemic will still remain a major challenge to healthcare service delivery in Nigeria due to its impact on the healthcare budgetary allocations.

Also, the impact of COVID-19 on the education, especially the Higher Institution Development is quite enormous. Ogunode, et al, (2020) found that the outbreak of COVID-19 has resulted to reduction in international education. They argued that many students studying abroad will be discouraged to continue their studies and many planning to study abroad cannot achieve their plans because many countries have placed ban on travels. This was followed by disruption in Academic calendar of Higher Institutions and other levels of education. They observed that the closure of all educational institutions from primary schools to the higher institutions would affect the student's academic plans and programme. Others include cancellation of local and international conferences. According to Wikipedia (2020) the 2019-2020 corona virus pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools and universities. This also was the case in Nigeria. As at 3rd April 2020, over 421 million learners were out of school due to the fact that hundred Countries have implemented national closures, impacting about 98% of the world's student's population. There is also the problem of loss of workforce in the education institutions. World meters (2020) also reported that COVID-19 is responsible for the death of over 74,431 persons across the world including Nigeria and still counting. These people are from different professions including the teaching profession. In addition to the foregoing, is the issue of cut in budget of higher education (Seafrica, 2020) observed that the Nigeria 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 ₦8.24 Trillion, an increase of about 20% from 2019 figure. The revenue assumptions were premised on increasing global oil demand and stable market with oil price bench mark and oil output respectively at 57 per barrel and 2.18 million Barrels per day. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 and its increasing incidence in Nigeria has called for a drastic review and the changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projections to the extent that it resulted to Nigeria going for a budget that is over ₦10 Trillion. This has a far reaching effect in all sectors of the economy including education. Contributing to the discourse, Simon & Hans (2020) note that the closure of schools, colleges and universities not only interrupted the teaching for students around the world, the closure also coincides with a key assessment period and many exams have been postponed or cancelled. Internal assessments are perhaps thought to be less important and many have been cancelled. But their point is to give information about the child's progress for families and teachers.

Uduak (2020) in his contribution argued that COVID-19 pandemic has led to major disruptions in social and economic activities in virtually all the sectors in the world. To him, the

impact has been in terms of increased level of mortality and morbidity, as well as in terms of different types of social and economic problems such as increase in mental health, loss of jobs and income. He was particularly concerned and worried over gender dimension of COVID-19 impact in Nigeria. This is why he submitted that women are usually responsible for childcare within families in Nigeria. With the closing of schools due to COVID-19 pandemic, he argued, children of school age are at home and have to be looked after mainly by mothers. The opportunity cost here is that while men may be able to resume work whenever restrictions are lifted, women will only be able to resume work when schools can resume. This will certainly lead to loss of income and entrench gender inequality. Similarly, the amount of domestic work done by women in terms of cooking and general housekeeping will remarkably increase thereby putting additional mental and physical stress on women.

As a corollary of the above, the increased risks of unplanned pregnancies due to COVID-19 lockdown measures have been highlighted in reports. This scenario is also applicable to Nigeria. The implication of being trapped by an unplanned pregnancy could be more debilitating for women from poorer households considering the fact that they may be forced to bear the burden of child bearing and nurturing alone. Children who have the ambition of returning back to school may be consumed by fear of being stigmatized by their peers. Early pregnancies in younger females also has severe consequences aside from being psychologically affected, they also face risk of exposure to birth and health related complications such as maternal or mortality, premature births, vesico-vaginal fistulas (VVF) etc., which may have long term devastating effects on their lives. Furthermore, the restrictions due to COVID-19 will widely increase the incidence of child marriage and poverty in the northern part of the country and by extension the whole Nigeria (Uduak, 2020).

It has also been argued by scholars and international organizations that health related pandemics have implications on peace and social cohesion. For instance, UNDP (2020) documents that evidence suggest that health related pandemics have potential to increase the risk of: domestic violence – with police reports in China showing that domestic violence tripled during the epidemic, violence against health workers due to serious stress levels that the pandemic placed on patients, and abuse and exploitation of women and girls – especially care givers. Furthermore, frustrations resulting from economic loss could also play into existing regional fact lines within Nigeria. Furthermore, implementing isolation measures without regard to the local context can further exacerbate the situation leading to stress disorders, mental health and in some cases protracted violence.

Empirical Review

Obi-Ani, Ezeaku, Ikem, Isiani, Obi-Ani and Onu (2021) studied “Covid-19 Pandemic and the Nigerian Primary Health Care System”: The leadership Question”. The paper examined the nexus between leadership failure and neglect in the healthcare system in Nigeria. Historical methodology was adopted in order to interrogate the various health care policies adopted by the various administrations since independence in 1960. The research surveyed the attitudes and feelings of the citizens towards the health institutions and poor working conditions in Nigeria health care system. Data for the study were collected through the use of primary and

secondary sources. The primary sources for this research include interviews, telephone conversations and online messages. The secondary sources include newspapers, magazines, etc. The data generated for the study. The study revealed that the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria and its local dispersion was occasioned by the paucity of medical personnel and supplies due decades of neglect of the healthcare system. The researchers recommended for an overhaul of the healthcare system with the aim of achieving a robust health care system for the Nigerian Citizens.

In a similar study, Ozili (2020) investigated “Covid-19 pandemic and Economic Crisis: The Nigerian Experience and Structural Causes”. The sample period was from January 2020 to June 2020. Economic and structural data were collected from multiple sources, namely: the Central Bank of Nigeria and World Bank. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the economic crisis and its structural causes. Findings revealed that the economic downturn in Nigeria was triggered by a combination of declining oil price and spillovers from the Covid-19 outbreak, which not only led to a fall in the demand for oil products but also stopped economic activities from taking place when social distancing policies were enforced. Among other things, it was recommended that policy makers should introduce economic reforms to diversify the economy and reduce Nigeria’s dependence on revenue from crude oil export; policy makers in Nigeria should invest in health infrastructure to improve the ability of the national health system to withstand the outbreak of contagious diseases.

Olu and Irabor (2020) also examined “Socio-economic Challenges of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria”. Relying on secondary sources, the study sought to establish the bearings between Covid-19 pandemic and low socio-economic livelihood in Nigeria. It was revealed that palliative measures introduced to minimize the effect of Covid-19 pandemic are ineffective owing to poor coordination, human right violations as well as inadequate fiscal policy. Recommendation from the study draws on the need for the government to diversify the economy by promoting the informal and agricultural sectors, facilitate infrastructural development and improve health facilities to avoid economic recession of post Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

In a related study, Peterson, (2020) investigated “COVID-19 in Africa: Socio-Economic Impact; Policy Response and opportunities”. Data and information were obtained from several reputable sources such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNESCO and information obtained from media and other public sources. Data generated for the study were presented in tables and analyzed using descriptive statistical tools such as percentages and charts. Findings among other things revealed that African countries have been affected by the corona virus pandemic, and the effect was not severe for Africa regions compared to other regions. The rising pandemic affected social interaction and economic activities through the imposed social distancing policies that have different levels of strictness in several African Countries. It was therefore recommended that policy makers should enforce social policies that unite communities in bad times, to reduce social anxiety.

Furthermore, Ogunode, et al, (2020) studied “Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Institutions Development in Nigeria”. Secondary sources of data were used. The study among others disclosed that Covid-19 has resulted to reduction of international education, disruption of academic calendar of higher institutions, cancellation of local and international conferences,

creating of teaching and learning gap, loss of manpower in the educational institutions, and cut in budget of higher education. The paper therefore, recommended that the government should take the following measures; increase the funding of higher institutions to enable the institutions through the damages caused by the closures of schools as a result of Covid-19.

Theoretical Framework

Among the social theories that exist social contract theory stands out as one of the best theories that explain the justification behind government's provision of social welfare packages to the citizens. The researcher therefore adopted social contract theory propounded by Hobbes (1651) and later elaborated by scholars such as Nnoli (2003) as the theoretical framework of analysis. Hobbes theory is based on the fact that there exists a contract between man and the state (the government). According to Hobbes man's life in the state of nature was one of fear and selfishness. Man lived in more or less chaotic condition of constant fear. Hobbes assumed that life in the state of nature was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. He argued that in the bid to ensure personal security and self protection and to avoid wretchedness and pain man went into contract with the state. Out of their freedom they relinquished their rights to constituted authorities. Consequent to this contract, the most powerful authority (the state) is to guard, ensure safety including social security, and preserve all lives and property. The subjects were to pay taxes, give up all their rights, privileges and rest all freedom in the sovereign for perception of peace.

Scholars have elaborated social contract theory in the face of increasing yearnings for government's intervention to salvage the sufferings of the people. For instance, Nnoli, (2003) opined that Hobbes postulation that life in the state of nature was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short means that in such conditions, there could neither be wrong nor right, justice nor injustice. He further submitted that in order to improve the existed condition, a form of contract was instituted between the individuals and the government on the other hand.

Abah, et al (2016) argued that when individuals relinquished their rights to state in fulfillment of their own part of the contract, the state then assumed the position of a father who must provide for the children. Government provision of social welfare services they argued is therefore a logical consequence of state's effort at fulfilling its own part of the contract with the people. In the words of Hassan & Ahmed (2015) the universal consensus on the need for good governance is essentially linked to the growing thirst for an improved and qualitative living standard and a secured environment.

Although welfare is widely seen to be non-profit motivated services but that which is aimed at satisfying basic needs of the less privileged provided by individuals, group or government (Dolgoff, 2012), it is social when the services are articulated for group and community interests for the sole purpose of improving the living conditions of the citizenry. This correlates with the opinion of Richard (2012), who saw social welfare to involve those non-profit functions of the society, public or voluntary, that are clearly aimed at alleviating distress and poverty or ameliorate the conditions of causalities of the society.

Social contract theory provides the basis upon which we can really understand and evaluate government's social welfare response programmes and various interventions to

improve the quality of life of the people. Since independence till date, successive governments in Nigeria have introduced one programme or the other in the quest to better the living conditions of the. The most recent effort was the creation of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development in 2019. Since the outbreak of corona virus globally and in Nigeria in particular, government has made effort to fulfill its social security function through the provision of funds, food items and other relief materials. These provisions were expended from the taxes paid by the citizens as part of their obligations to the state. It is based on the above discourse that social contract theory is considered suitable to explain the effects of social welfare administration on socio-economic well-being of the people with a particular focus on the COVID-19 response strategies in Nigeria.

Issues in Covid-19 Response Strategies in Enugu State

A number of measures were introduced in a bid to curtail the spread of corona virus in Nigeria. Some of these measures include a total lockdown of businesses in both public and private sectors; sit at home order and social distancing to mention just few. Even though these ideas are novel and laudable, they failed to fully achieve their intended goal and objectives because of certain reasons. One is the fact that man is a social being and will always like to interact with fellow man visibly despite the advancement in information and communication technology. Not all communications can be carried out through wireless medium. The sit at home order and social distancing did not augur well with the people especially where government did not respond adequately to the pressing needs of the people as a result of the pandemic. Inadequate provision of basic necessities of life such as food, water, shelter etc, made adherence to the Covid-19 protocol difficult. People undermined the strategies deployed by to curtail the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in search of basic necessities of life.

Coupled with the above is the issue of poverty which has been ravaging the society before the outbreak of the virus. The lockdown declared on businesses only aggravated the level of poverty, hunger and hardship generally. The economic assistance that the government announced following the pandemic exposed the inadequacies in Nigeria's social protection systems.

In a country where the informal sector makes up 65 percent of its GDP with a significant proportion of its population relying on the sector for day-to-day economic survival, individuals will be confronted with a choice between survival today and observance to social distancing measures put in place for their survival beyond today (UNDP Report, 2020). The report also added that social distancing also assumes a certain level of spatial freedom. In densely populated Nigeria's urban centers, this assumption may not hold. Similarly, it will be difficult to enforce social distancing in congested Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps in Nigeria. There is also a risk of further fragmenting the social values and the very safety nets required for healing and recovery. Compounded by governance deficiency in the country, abrupt cuts in means of livelihood could result to social unrest.

The issue of corruption is a pathetic one that has become a big challenge to social welfare administration. From the suspended EFCC boss, Ibrahim Magu to the former managing Director of Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Mrs Nunieh and the current

Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Godswill Akpabio. These high profile cases of corruption among others are dents in the image of the nation. The unfortunate thing is that funds set out for improving socio-economic well-being of the people are often diverted. Onah (2017) documents that political corruption involving the use of public institutions (state) as instrument for personal accumulation of wealth is one of the greatest immediate causes of Africa's under development including Nigeria. Despite its repudiation by both government and the governed, corruption remains endemic and intractable social menace in Africa. Nay, the negative consequences of this menace is far-reaching. Ake (2006) in Onah (2017) observes that corruption makes it impossible for positive economic and political development to occur. According to him, one of the symptoms of corruption is deep institutional weakness which leads to inefficient economic, social and political outcomes. It reduces economic growth, retards long-term foreign and domestic investments, enhances inflation, depreciates national currency, reduces expenditures for education and health, increases military expenditures, misallocates talent to rent-seeking activities, pushes firms underground, distorts markets and allocation of resources, increases income inequality and poverty, reduces tax revenue, increases child and infant mortality rates, distorts the fundamental role of government. Corruption manifested visibly during the inter-state ban on movement where security personnel collected bribe and compromise the inter-state ban on movement. The present secretary to the government of the federation, Boss Mustapha, during one of his updates on COVID-19, once regretted that the ban on inter-state movement was not effective as it succeed in enriching some people.

Another dimension to the corrupt acts that hinder access to government social welfare provision especially following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic was the practice of hoarding of palliatives such as food items and other valuable materials provided to cushion the effects of corona virus on the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people by highly placed government officials. This unfortunate development across some states in Nigeria resulted to conflicts and crisis which resulted to destruction of the warehouses where the palliatives were hoarded. The hoarded materials were massively looted. However, arrests were made and some of the looted items were recovered in some quarters, but this further exposed the height of insensitivity of some political leaders to the plight of the common man in Nigeria.

Added to the discourse is politicization of beneficiaries of welfare programmes. The major challenge in this critical period is to make sure that welfare packages get to the most vulnerable in the society. This has never been the case in Nigeria and it hampers genuine efforts to control the spread of Covid-19.

Discussion of Findings

This study from the onset sought to ascertain the effects of government cash transfers and donation of food items on reduction of increased poverty occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria; Investigate the contributions of health care consumables provided by the government towards improving the health care needs of people in the face of COVID19 outbreak; and determine the implications of politicization of social welfare administration relief materials on economic revival of the needy and vulnerable in

government's efforts to cushion the effects of corona virus pandemic. Government at all levels in Nigeria provided some palliative measures which had earlier been discussed in the work.

The interventions no doubt provided relieve to a number of persons who could access them but not really the vulnerable group. Most of those that suffer from abject poverty are illiterates and possibly could not access most of the palliatives. Therefore, the palliatives did little to tackle the scourge of poverty and hunger that are ravaging the land since the outbreak of corona virus in Nigeria. This is coupled with the fact that the pandemic resulted to loss of jobs and even death of some bread winners in some countries including Nigeria. This is further buttressed by the report of World Bank (2020) which revealed that at country level, the three countries with the largest change in the number of poor are estimated to be India (12 million), Nigeria (5million) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (2 million). This is a clear indication that social welfare administration has not contributed significantly to poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Health care service delivery on the hand has not been significantly improved through social welfare administration. Life expectancy in Nigeria is still low coupled with the impact of COVID-19 on the already comatose health care sector. As at 2018, Nigeria was placed 187th among 200 countries on global health care delivery system ranking (Ephraim-Emmanuel, et al, 2018). With the alleged increasing cases of COVID-19 in Nigeria, access to quality healthcare services has been hindered not only by the inadequate provision of healthcare facilities, but also by the attitude of healthcare practitioners who argued that they have not been well "protected" in their efforts to treat COVID-19 patients.

The fight against the pandemic in Nigeria seemed politicized and people nowadays hardly present themselves to receive better medical treatment rather they patronize quacks. This is because at some point any slight rise in the body temperature was tagged COVID-19 case in order to attract cash transfers and relief materials from the federal government by the lower levels of government in Nigeria.

Another dimension of the foregoing is politicization of welfare administration. This has remained one of the greatest challenges of improving socio-economic well-being through social welfare packages in Nigeria. In this case, target beneficiaries were left out, party affiliation was considered primary in disbursing cash transfers and other palliative measures. The case of COVID-19 palliatives is not an exception. Relief materials in some places were distributed ward by ward such that Councilors of the party in power and other major political stakeholders of the government of the day determine who gets what, when and how of the available welfare packages.

Moreso, the credit facility, through which households can potentially get up to 3 million naira loans, (US\$ 7,700), requires proof of collateral, such as personal property, which many poor families do not have.

Conclusion

Corona virus will remain one of the deadliest pandemics in the world's history. Social welfare administration is critical to curtailing the spread of the virus in Nigeria where social economic indicators show that the nation is lagging behind. We have seen pockets of palliative

measures provided by the Nigerian government to administer social welfare packages and cushion the effects of Covid-19 which is ravaging the world. These aids interventions are commendable as they have provided relieve to families, but are not adequate. Administration of welfare packages is not transparent and efficient in Nigeria; hence target beneficiaries are often skipped. Welfare administration is politicized in such a way that party affiliation is taken into consideration in the distribution of palliative measures. Another dimension to the problem of social welfare administration in Nigeria is the practice hoarding of relief materials meant for the people by the stakeholders in government circle. These corrupt and criminal acts undermine efforts at improving the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people. The issue of corruption continues unabated as one of the factors that impede all efforts at improving the socio-economic well-being of the people in Nigeria. It is based on the above that the researcher concludes that no meaningful development will take place in the area of improving the socio-economic well-being of the citizens in Nigeria where poverty persists and increases on daily basis; where healthcare system is in comatose and dilapidated condition; and where loss of jobs and unemployment rate is soaring unless critical measures are deployed to provide and effectively implement social welfare packages.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome and conclusion made on the study, the researcher recommends as follows:

1. Disbursement of cash or cash transfers and distribution of food items as social welfare response measures should be efficiently monitored to make sure that the target beneficiaries are reached. Over the years, this has not been the case with welfare administration in Nigeria. In order to achieve this, there should be in place a data bank to give accurate record of the number of people the government is providing for.
2. There is urgent need to improve healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria. The outbreak of Covid-19 has exposed the ugly nature of the Nigeria healthcare system. Hazard allowance and other relevant allowances should be provided for healthcare practitioners and other relevant bodies and stakeholders to serve as a motivation to improve their performance especially during emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic. This will by extension improve the quality of health care of the citizenry.
3. In order to achieve result from government's social welfare administration, stakeholders in the business of aid administration must shun all manner of corrupt practices and politicization of welfare programmes. This will go a long way to making sure that the target beneficiaries are reached. This will only take place if those who diverted relief materials and other palliatives were severely punished to serve as deterrence to others.

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