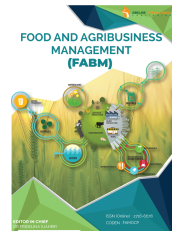


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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# COVID-19, LOCKDOWN AND TRANSITORY FOOD INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

How did a health crisis camouflage to food crisis? Why did the spread of Covid-19 bring transitory food insecurity? Is lockdown order effective for us? The answer lied in two paradigms by which coronavirus stifled economic activities. First, the spread of the virus encouraged social distancing which led to the shutdown of food markets, restaurants, businesses, events centres and countries borders. Secondly, the pandemic nature of how the virus was spreading and the heightened uncertainty about how bad the situation could get to be. This research empirically focus on the implication of Covid-19 and lockdown on food security in Nigeria, as being food secure is one of the fundamental indices for development in a stable and growing economy and the nation at large. The finding reveals that the more stressful number of lockdown days and inter-states-countries movement restrictions the more it severely affect the level of economic (food prices skyrocket, increase in transport cost, hoardings by marketers, increase in postharvest lost at both farm and market levels, low purchasing power by household etc.) with adverse effect on food security. However, Palliatives measures such as food assistance and cash transfer measures should be adopted by government and other donors so as to reduce such momentum effect. If not are you expecting people that are living below 2 dollar per day to embrace the mandatory lockdown for good? Don't you think Covid-19 could have long-term implications on us?

### KEYWORDS

Covid-19, Coronavirus pandemic, lockdown, social distance, food insecurity, Palliatives.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak (previously Corona virus) was caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. COVID-19 pandemic presents the greatest test the world has faced since the Second World War and the formation of the United Nations (UN, 2020). It is believed to have triggered in December 2019 in Wuhan city in Hubei province of China. COVID-19 continues to spread across the world. Initially the epicentre of the outbreak was China with reported cases either in China or being travellers from China. The first confirmed case of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Nigeria was announced on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus (NCDC, 2020). The emergency is clearly of a medical or epidemiological nature. However, this outbreak is likely to have direct and indirect impacts on household food security, livelihoods and economic activities of Nigeria and the global world at large.

The extent, magnitude and severity of the food security impact of the Corona virus outbreak are likely to increase as the epidemic continues. Furthermore, the outbreak is occurring in countries that already had significant food insecurity problems. In order to avoid adding a food crisis to the existing health crisis, urgent adaptation of standard physical distancing and lockdown strategies was imposed by the government, especially in urban centres, rural settlements and places affected by the active pandemics, which will otherwise exacerbate the negative impacts of the pandemic. There are three main channels through which Nigerians are being affected by this pandemic: infection with the virus itself; the immediate socioeconomic impacts of measures to stop transmission of the virus and end the pandemic; and the potential short-term and temporary

effects on food security term as "Transitory food insecurity".

### 1.1 The objective of the study

The primary objective was aimed at providing evidence on how the coronavirus outbreak led to transitory food insecurity in Nigeria and the impact resultant of covid-19 outbreak and lockdown policies on household livelihoods. The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the current epidemiological status in the country, Nigeria.
2. Is the outbreak of COVID-19 and lockdown having adverse effects on food security?
3. To suggest the remedial option to reduce such stress and circumstances.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Many studies have now been conducted on the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, including the risk to food supply chains. The different methodologies used, the specific angles addressed, the rapid evolution of data (a characteristic of any crisis) and their occasional contradictions make it difficult to have a clear overview of COVID-19-related impacts. The study involves the utilization of various tools for information assimilation, major data were collected through secondary sources and literature view.

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### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

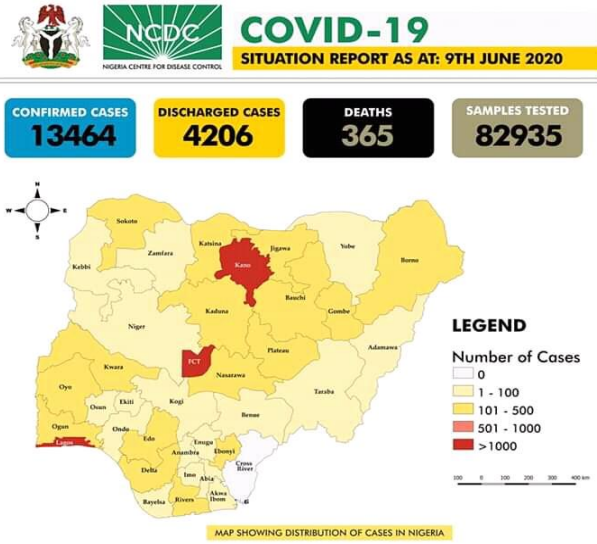
#### 3.1 Current epidemiological status (as of 9 June 2020)

To date, real-time data on the spread of the coronavirus as reported by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) across the states in Nigeria has registered a total of 13,464 confirmed cases of COVID-19. While 365 victims have died, 4206 patients have been discharging as they fully recovered from the disease. Currently the disease is spreading exponentially, posing a great risk to the livelihoods of millions of people in Nigeria, African and the global world at large. In response to high infection rates, all states were subjected to lockdown measures.

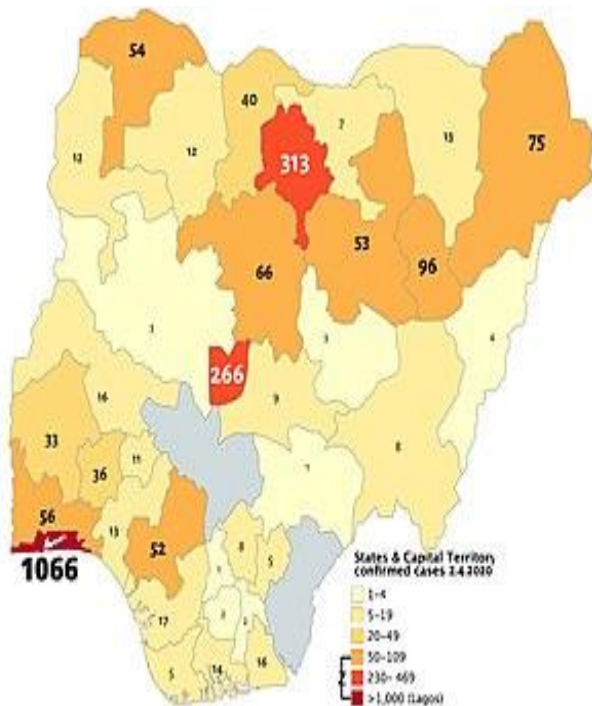
**Table 1:** Number of cases from each state of Nigeria (Source: NCDC Report as from 9th June, 2020)

S/N	STATE	Number of Cases
1	Lagos	6065
2	Kano	1020
3	FCT	1012
4	Ogun	471
5	Edo	462
6	Katsina	399
7	Oyo	398
8	Rivers	394
9	Kaduna	369
10	Borno	367
11	Bauchi	364
12	Jigawa	309
13	Gombe	246
14	Delta	175
15	Ebonyi	152
16	Kwara	143
17	Sokoto	129
18	Plateau	128
19	Nasarawa	113
20	Abia	97
21	Imo	83
22	Zamfara	76
23	Yobe	52
24	Osun	50
25	Anambra	46
26	Niger	46
27	Ondo	46
28	Akwa Ibom	45
29	Adamawa	42
30	Kebbi	41
31	Bayelsa	30
32	Ekiti	30
33	Enugu	30
34	Taraba	18
35	Benue	13
36	Kogi	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13464</b>

COVID19.NCDC.GOV.NG



**Figure 1:** Geographical spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria (Source: NCDC, Situation Report as at 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2020)



**Figure 2:** Geographical spread of COVID-19 in Nigeria (Source: NCDC, Situation Report as at 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2020)

#### 3.2 Lockdown Measures Implemented due to COVID-19 in Nigeria

The COVID-19 pandemic is potentially catastrophic and destroying, in order minimize it effect, as no current vaccine or drugs to the cure of the crises, as at the time of compiling this paper, the government at both federal and state level introduced a lockdowns strategically plan which present an opportunity to slow the spread of the pandemic. However, such stay-at-home policies planted the seeds of recession in developed countries, and there was a general consensus among economists that the coronavirus pandemic would plunged the world into a global recession which in turn affect the global food security (Financial Times, 2020).

Lockdown Measures (common prevention tips) to Covid-19 in Nigeria are as follows:

- I. Listen for instructions from your local government about staying home.
- II. Keep a safe distance from others
- III. Clean hands often and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home.
- IV. Don't touch eyes, nose or mouth.
- V. Cover coughs and sneezes with your elbow or tissue

Source: (WHO, 2020; NCDC, 2020)

#### 3.3 Basis Concepts of Food Security and Food Insecurity

Today, one of the main global challenges is how to ensure food security for a world growing population whilst ensuring long-term sustainable development. Food security is defined as the situation when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life (FAO 2020). According to the FAO, food production will need to grow by 70% to feed world population which will reach 9 billion by 2050. Further trends like increasing urban population, shift of lifestyle and diet patterns of the rising middle class in emerging economies along with climate change put considerable pressure strain on the planets resources: declining freshwater resources and biodiversity, loss of fertile land, etc.

Consequently, there is a need for an integrated and innovative approach

to the global effort of ensuring sustainable food production and consumption (FAO, 2011). Currently food security issues become one of the serious concerns and top priority area for developing countries. As for the situation in Nigeria, food security is highly precarious and pernicious as a significant percentage of the Nigerian population is left with only the bilious taste of poverty (Attah, 2012). Meanwhile, Nigeria is one of the food-deficit countries in sub-Saharan Africa although it is arguably better in terms of production than the others. Having clear picture on food security status and its major determinants helps policy makers and planners to devise new policies that enhance food security.

*On the order hand*, Food insecurity has emerged as one of the key problems for development which poses challenge to the society. Food insecurity exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food as defined above the food security situation must be urgently assessed to address any potential need for assistance. There are two kinds of food insecurity: chronic and transitory. Chronic food insecurity is characterized by a continuously inadequate diet, caused by the incapacity to produce, purchase, or otherwise obtain sufficient food (Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017). Transitory food insecurity is a temporary decline in a household's access to sufficient food, stemming from fluctuations in production or incomes. The most common causes of food insecurity in African and other third world countries were; drought and other extreme weather events, pests, livestock diseases and other agricultural problems, climate change, military conflicts, lack of emergency plans, corruption and political instability, cash crops dependence, aids and rapid population growth (AFI, 2012).

Food insecurity does not only describe situations where current food intake is inadequate, it also covers the potential for future food intake to be inadequate. This is apparent from the phrase "at all times" in most standard definitions of food security (Sphere Project 2004). Therefore, this study aimed at providing further evidence on transitory food insecurity and the impact of covid-19 outbreak and lockdown on household food security. The study also divulge on the remedial option to reduce such circumstance. Transitory food insecurity as mention earlier exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to food as defined above the food security situation.

"A sudden (and often precipitous) drop in the ability to purchase or grow enough food to meet physiological requirements for good health and activity".

"The sudden reduction of a household's access to food to below the nutritionally adequate level" (IFAD, 1997).

"Transitory food insecurity concerns shocks that briefly push the level of food consumption below the requirements" (IFAD, 1997).

"Transitory vulnerability to food insecurity involves a temporary inability to meet food needs or smooth consumption levels" (WFP, 2005).

"Transitory food insecurity affects households that are able to meet their minimum food needs at normal times, but are unable to do so after a shock" (WFP 2005).

"Transitory food insecurity occurs when there is a temporary inability to meet food needs, usually associated with a specific shock or stress such as drought, floods or civil unrest" (DFID 2002).

"Transitory food insecurity: being unable to meet the food intake needs when specific fluctuations or shocks affect income or means to access food, without sacrificing productive assets or undermining the human capital" (Dhur, 2005).

The experience from previous disease outbreaks such as Ebola, Lassa fever etc. as provides valuable information on how to think about the implications of COVID-19 to transitory food insecurity.

### 3.4 The causes of transitory food insecurity in Nigeria

Transitory Food insecurity has been observed to be rampant in less developed countries with Nigeria as no exception. The causes of transitory food insecurity includes but not limited to:

- 1) Disease and infection: The current Covid-19 Pandemic continues to plague in Nigeria. First, the spread of the virus encouraged social distancing which led to the shutdown of food markets, restaurants, financial institutions, Agri-businesses & business units, events centres and even borders. COVID-19 and other infectious diseases

such as Lassa fever not only reduce the man-hours available to agriculture and household food acquisition but also increase the burden of household in acquiring food.

- 2) Increase in food prices: Ensuring food security is currently one of the greatest challenges facing Nigerian community because food prices continue to soar in many states thereby causing low purchasing power on the part of household. A rising price indicator may reflect supply deficits due to lower production (labour shortage, shortage of inputs in affected and production areas), lower food imports and increasing demand. Civil insecurity: The rise in food prices is also related to the persistent and widespread conflict between farmers and herdsmen.
- 3) Movement and trade restrictions: The movement and trade restrictions that have been imposed by the government in order to limit the transmission of the disease have seriously disrupted the economic activities. This economic slowdown has hit all areas in Nigeria as well as neighbouring countries, irrespective of the magnitude of the COVID-19 outbreak. Certain groups have been disproportionately affected by loss of income, namely informal and agricultural workers. Also the border closures endorse since have also led to reduced income for cash crop producers due to missed export opportunities. In a similar vein on the study of Ebola outbreak, FEWS NET.2017., Stress that weekly or monthly market closures can compromise household capacity to both purchase food and to sell other goods to earn money to buy food, with some implications for overall food security.
- 4) Handicapping policies: The current lockdown policies have greatly affected the food security in Nigeria. The problem arises because the focus of the policy structures is put above that of the people expectation as majority of the household earn their living through hand to mouth i.e what they earn on daily basis is what they spent to carter for their family, which lockdown policy as disrupted.
- 5) Low technology for processing and storage: The use of modern technologies in the production and distribution of agricultural products is very low in Nigeria, these along with other factors made the sector to be more depended on manual labour for farming activities. Also, lack of processing facilities to preserved food items of classes of fruits and vegetables, cereals, legumes, etc. which also result in wastage thereby further deepening the insecurity level of food.
- 6) Others causes of food insecurity as stressed includes; insufficient production, Gender inequalities, Conflict and civil insecurity and climate change & Natural disasters (Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017).

### 3.5 Impact of COVID-19 and Lockdown

The full impacts of COVID-19 on food security are difficult to predict and will be context-specific. However, lessons can be learned from past crises which are important to bear in mind today. The 2014 West Africa EVD outbreak had important implications for food security in that region. The measures to contain the outbreak – in particular the quarantines and restrictions to public gatherings and movements of goods and persons – disrupted agricultural market supply chains, and many farmers were unable to grow or sell crops due to lack of inputs and labour. These factors considerably impacted food production. For example in Liberia, 47 percent of farmers reported they were unable to cultivate farmland due to the outbreak. Furthermore, travel restrictions and suspension of operations of periodic markets disrupted trade flows of food commodities and other necessities. Due to the disruption of markets, in particular international flows due to border controls, there were shortages of goods on the market and this led to an increase in prices of key commodities (FAO, 2020). Some of the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown to transitory food insecurity in Nigeria include but not limited to:

1. Significant Post-harvest losses: The difficulty for producers and traders to sell surpluses to neighbouring states has led to significant spoilage and post-harvest losses. Situational report from Yankaba and Yanlemo market in Kano state in Nigeria, were large amount of fruits and vegetable such as watermelon, orange, pear, tomato, fresh onion, pepper etc. get spoiled every day until the recent ease on lockdown by the state government.

2. There was an overall loss of household income and purchasing power: This is related to the difficulties in trading produces but also to a broader decline in economic activity.
3. Changes in Household Spending Patterns: The restrictions on movements and market closures led to temporary price spikes and slumps as goods became unavailable. Some reported price peaks were large; for example, price of 50kg bag of sugar rise from N15,000 to N22,000, a Mudu of local rice increase in cost from N840 to N1,400, price of Garri per Mudu skyrocketed to N1,000 as for its early price of N400. These and other conditions have made household families to shift their demands to a cheaper package for livelihood. (e.g. Rice substituted with Garri, and to other low key foods of cereals and leguminous classes).
4. Disruption of food supply chains: COVID-19 has the potential to severely disrupt critical food supply chains, including between rural and urban areas. Movement or import/ export restrictions has result challenges to transport key food items and access processing units and markets, affecting both producers and consumers. This has led to reduced farmers' incomes and instability of food prices deviating from geographical and seasonal patterns, thus creating uncertainty for both producers and consumers. This is likely to have significant adverse effects in particular on the most vulnerable actors, such as informal labourers, vulnerable urban populations, displaced populations and others that rely heavily on the market to meet their food needs. Reduced or lost wages, unstable prices, and haphazard availability of essential food items would have serious implications for acute food security and malnutrition levels in these populations.
5. Other impacts includes: Families lost their love ones, some police harass, road closed linking communities, man-labour work reduce, social tension, problems in accessing financial services and difficulties in transportation.

#### 4. APPROACH: LONGER-TERM EFFECTS

Potential risk for global food availability and food prices will depend on the duration of the outbreak and the severity of containment measures needed (Fewes Net, 2017). Isolated country-level policies are likely to amplify the effects of the crisis on food security and nutrition at the global level, especially for developing and food-insecure countries. Further, the potential impact of the pandemic on food production in major food producing countries (e.g. China, EU, USA) could have serious implications for global food availability and food prices (CFS, 2020). For instance, the longer economies are on shutdown, the less likely they are to "snap back". At the household level, struggling families will increasingly see breadwinners lose their jobs or be forced to sell productive assets in order to survive (Egwuma and Ojeleye, 2018). The same holds true for other impacts of the pandemic.

#### 5. POLICY RESPONSES TO REDUCE THE STRESSES OF FOOD INSECURITY

Different causal factors imply differentiated policy responses. If food insecurity is a result of disrupted food systems, then restoring access to food is the most appropriate response. There is a range of policy instruments for achieving this imperative:

- I. Food-based (food transfers, food for work) - food transfer such as palliatives food for vulnerable people introduce by Nigerian government at both state and federal levels. Others include Food donations from stakeholders, private individuals, corporates, donor agencies etc.
- II. Cash-based (cash transfers, cash for work), such as cash transfer measures taken by Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster management and Social Development. Palliatives stipend from others aids bodies such as foundation, women organisation, youth development agencies etc.
- III. Market-based (open market operations, food price subsidies).
- IV. Market mechanism (Price flow and price ceiling)

Others are mechanisms by which households or community members

meet their relief and recovery needs and adjust to future disaster-related risks termed as 'Coping strategies'.

- a. Change in consumption patterns.
- b. Sale of assets such as livestock to food grain purchase from the local markets.
- c. Borrowing grains from other farmers.
- d. Support from relatives and friends.

#### 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Food security and insecurity are terms used to describe whether or not households have access to sufficient quality and quantity of food. This study provides a broad and descriptive account on how COVID-19 and lockdown measures affect food security in the short term; long term effect if not address may translate to chronic food insecurity Nigeria. Generally, to ensure food security the collective action should be done by individual, government and private sectors.

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