Human Security and Socio-Economic Development Challenges amid Covid-19 in Nigeria

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Abstract

The global outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) led to a global public health emergency, which saw many governments introducing coping and mitigating strategies like quarantine, contact tracing, social distancing, physical distancing, isolation, panic buying, emergency flights, evacuation, stock-up, lockdown, community transmission, new normal, and staying safe, among others. While these strategies worked in some countries, they vehemently failed in others due to their unsuitability and prior existing challenges that necessitated adequate response before the measures. Against this backdrop, this paper examined the challenges of human security and socio-economic development during the COVID-19 pandemic period. The paper was based on Relative Deprivation Theory and utilized qualitative methodology with a desk review of literature a methodology. It revealed that bad governance led to poor socio-economic standing of citizens in Nigeria, which further fuelled the various crises (protests, militancy, insurgency, criminality) that were complemented by COVID-19 preventive measures (border closure, lockdown, movement restrictions). It further revealed that business operations were significantly affected by cases of halting, rise in prices, distortion in the supply chain, etc. The study concluded that until bad governance is addressed, and good governance is instituted, the country's daunting insecurity and socioeconomic challenges can never be addressed. It was recommended therefore that governments must be serious with governance and ensure the appropriate and adequate provision of opportunities capable of addressing the basic needs of people despite the global outbreak of COVID-19.

Keywords: Human Security, Governance, Socio-Economic Development, COVID-19, Insecurity

Introduction

The advent of an unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis marked a watershed in twenty-first-century history to the extent that various people experienced the manifestation of clichés like quarantine, contact tracing, social distancing, physical distancing, isolation, panic buying, emergency flights, evacuation, stock up, lockdown, community transmission, new normal, and staying safe, among others. Out of all these clichés, lockdown became more visible as a result of the associated security and socio-economic impacts. While some people panicked for their safety based on health anxiety, survival became a major slogan as people had reasons to worry about the possibility of living a normal life without disruption of livelihoods (Okolie-Osemene, 2021).

The first COVID-19 case in Nigeria was confirmed in Lagos on the morning of February 27, 2020. The signs were ominous as the number of Nigerians infected with the deadly virus that became a

global pandemic continued to rise. By March 30, 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Lagos had risen to eighty-three, and from the initial three cases reported on March 23 in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT, Abuja) to twenty-one. Some other states followed suit and continued to have confirmed cases, even though Lagos and FCT Abuja remained the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. At this point, Nigeria had felt the crippling effects of the pandemic and swiftly responded with a COVID-19 regulation lockdown involving the cessation of movements of different natures in many states and Abuja. Citizens were to stay in their homes and businesses and offices closed, while national and international borders remained closed. This regulation had not gone down well with citizens who incessantly agitated for palliatives to mitigate the effects of the lockdown (Ezeah, 2020).

Across the world, governments designed and implemented rapid response strategies to cushion the effect of COVID-19. The World Bank (2021) notes that governments were faced with extraordinary challenges: a public health emergency to contain the virus including identifying and treating infected populations; widespread food and livelihood insecurity due to mandated stoppage of economic activities and the resulting disruption of food supplies; and adoption of emergency powers to address the crises and maintain public safety (World Bank, 2021).

The world had not experienced the simultaneous and indiscriminate social, health, governance, and economic harm brought on by the COVID-19 virus in more than a hundred years. Amid this visceral crisis, the instruments and interventions to combat the disease were woefully short. Thus, the pandemic exposed not only how far the world was from effective and unified global governance, but also a crisis of confidence in the institutions expected to guide international action and cooperation. Moreover, farsighted and enlightened leadership that emboldens collective action and effective, accountable institutions remained elusive (Turianskyi et al, 2020).

Human Security
Human security is a people-centred concept, which quickly gained adherents, and was based on the same premise as the related concepts of 'human rights' and 'human development', that the individual human being is the principal object of concern, regardless of race, religion, creed, colour, ideology or nationality. Like its sister concepts, human security has the characteristic of universality as it applies to individuals everywhere (Dorn, 2005). Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It integrates three (3) freedoms – freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom from indignity (OCHA, 2010).

1. Freedom from fear refers to protecting individuals from threats directed at their security and physical integrity and includes various forms of violence that may arise from external States, the acts of a State against its citizens, the acts of one group against others and the acts of individuals against other individuals.
2. Freedom from want refers to the protection of individuals so that they might satisfy their basic needs and the economic, social and environmental aspects of life and livelihoods.
3. Freedom from indignity refers to the promotion of an improved quality of life and enhancement of human welfare that permits people to make choices and seek opportunities that empower them.

These moved the concept away from a state-centric approach that had prevailed to encompass seven key individual-centric components – economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. At its core, it returned to the two equally open-ended foundational freedoms as outlined in the 1945 adoption of the UN Charter: "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear". Thus, the concept itself was designed with the ideas of inclusiveness and the desire for ambiguity in-built. (Johns, 2014). Like

other fundamental concepts, human security is more easily identified through its absence than its presence, and most people instinctively understand what security means.

Human security addresses sustainable peace by recognising the social, economic, and political grievances that are often the root causes of conflict and societal violence. It challenges us to consider participatory ways of doing and evaluating our work. The human security approach is not only centred on people as objects of intervention but also as providers of security in their own right (Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict [GPPAC], 2022). The concept is people-centred and relates to how people live and conduct themselves in society. It deals with how people make choices, access economic opportunities, the way people contribute to how political decisions are made, and how misunderstandings are settled (Udoms et al, 2015).

Socio-Economic Development
Development is generally defined as a state in which everyone and everything is improving. It is defined in different ways in various contexts – social, political, biological, science, technology, language and literature. In the socio-economic context, development means the improvement of people's lifestyles through improved education, incomes, skills development and employment. It is the process of economic and social transformation based on cultural and environmental factors (Abdullahi, 2017; Manpaa, Adole & Abdullahi, 2017; Verma, 2020).

Socio-economic development is a process that seeks to identify both the social and the economic needs within a community and seek to create strategies that will address those needs in practical ways and the best interests of the community over the long run. The general idea is to find ways to improve the standard of living within the area while also making sure the local economy is healthy and capable of sustaining the population present in the area. Socioeconomic development occurs in neighbourhoods in metropolitan areas, sections of smaller cities and towns, and even in rural settings (Tatum, 2023).

Socioeconomic development incorporates public concerns in developing social policy and economic initiatives. The ultimate objective of social development is to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual, groups, family, community, and society at large. It involves a sustained increase in the economic standard of living of a country's population, normally accomplished by increasing its stocks of physical and human capital and thus improving its technology (Rahman, 2009). Socioeconomic development is the progressive reinforcement of a socioeconomic organization's quantitative and qualitative dimensions towards a higher level of efficiency, well-being, justice, and democracy at all levels (Vlados & Chatzinikolaou, 2022).

Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society that is measured with indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment and even through changes in less-tangible factors such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society.

Theoretical Framework
The paper is based on Relative Deprivation Theory. Relative deprivation is the lack of resources to sustain the diet, lifestyle, activities and amenities that an individual or group are accustomed to or that are widely encouraged or approved in the society to which they belong (Townsend, 1979). Measuring relative deprivation allows an objective comparison between the situation of the individual or group compared to the rest of society. Relative deprivation may also emphasize the individual experience of discontent when being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled, however emphasizing the perspective of the individual makes objective measurement problematic (Walker & Smith, 2001).

The theory is used in social sciences to describe feelings or measures of economic, political, or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute (Bayertz, 1999). The concept of relative deprivation has important consequences for both behaviour and attitudes, including feelings of stress, political attitudes, and participation in collective action. Political scientists and sociologists have cited relative deprivation, especially temporal relative deprivation, as a potential cause of social movements and deviance, leading in extreme situations to political violence such as rioting, terrorism, civil wars and other instances of social deviance such as crime. For example, some scholars of social movements explain their rise by citing the grievances of people who feel deprived of what they perceive as values to which they are entitled. Similarly, individuals engage in deviant behaviours when their means do not match their goals.

This article uses the RD theory to explore how poor governance led to relative deprivation and consequently fuelled protests and criminality, hunger, bad economy, close down of businesses, and inaccessibility to basic services such as food, education and healthcare. The relative deprivation theory illustrates how deprivation of social and economic goods leads to frustration, aggression, and violence. The increase in protests and general crime in Nigeria since COVID-19 is not unconnected to this because the escalation of poverty and unemployment has drastically increased the potential for recruitment by militant groups or conflict entrepreneurs. It is with this backdrop that the paper hypothesizes that poor governance in Nigeria has been equally responsible for the upsurge in protests, criminality and poor socio-economic status of Nigerians despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges Associated with Human Security and Socio-Economic Development amid COVID-19 in Nigeria
Throughout history, the spread of infectious diseases has killed millions, sickened billions, and cost trillions of dollars of global economic output. As the world struggled to combat the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), it faced the grim reality that it was not just the developing countries, but developed ones, that required revitalized and better-coordinated health systems. It was clear that COVID-19 was a deadly contagion that threatened the livelihoods of all, regardless of socioeconomic status. COVID-19 rendered some of the best health systems in the world inoperable (Kapur & Suri, 2020).

In Nigeria, the domestic impact of the pandemic remains remarkable. Since the index case was reported on 27 February 2020, not many people realised what the country was to face until the Presidential Taskforce began issuing guidelines on COVID-19 prevention. Lockdowns changed the pattern of daily life as the previously established lifestyle of waking up and going out in the early hours of the day became an old normal. Suddenly, this was replaced by the new normal of working from home and observing various protocols in areas of relationships, hygiene, communication, feeding, health, and recreation, among others. Unfortunately, the lockdown in Nigeria took people out of the streets as they were only restricted to their homes and streets having little to do in public spaces. With the impact of the pandemic on socio-economic activities, which also changed lives on the streets across the country, it became clear that people needed to protect themselves (Okolie-Osemene, 2021).

Security
Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the country had witnessed security threats occasioned by the activities of armed robbers, bandits, militants and insurgents. The prevailing peace before the crisis was better than the situation created by the economic instability caused by the pandemic. The nature of security governance before the crisis showed that it did not create tension across the country except in states affected by the insurgency. So, security governance did not lead to restrictions as people enjoyed the freedom of movement unlike during the lockdown (Okolie-Osemene, 2021). According to Odekunle (2020), criminal activities created more tasks for

security forces as they attempted to take advantage of the health crisis and restrictions, to engage in crimes. Some residents even flouted the lockdown in their bid to seek a livelihood and security breaches in border towns led to the establishment of neighbourhood vigilante groups by residents, especially in a state like Lagos.

Some fatalities were recorded in the country as security agencies were enforcing lockdowns. In Abia State, about five persons were reportedly killed by law enforcement officers even when the state was yet to record any index case; and angry youths rioted thereby burning the Ebem Ohafia police station in the process (Ugwu, 2020). Security officers also allegedly shot a youth who was accused of violating the lockdown. This situation meant that security forces became deadlier than the dreaded COVID-19. A notable weakness of security governance during this period, therefore, was the inability of law enforcement agencies to protect human rights. There were cases of burglarising, stealing and a rise in abuses, which the security did no or very little to address.

Food Sufficiency

COVID-19 worsens food insecurity in millions of homes and the economic security of Nigerians who were prevented from moving about making a living. The World Bank projected that five million Nigerians would be pushed into poverty due to COVID-19. The pandemic threatened the safety of the people with such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression and there were hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life due to the measures imposed by the Federal Government of Nigeria to mitigate COVID 19 such as lockdown, isolation and quarantine (Udeh, 2020).

A country like Nigeria being a large food importer was doubly hit by COVID-19. With plunging oil prices, the country's main source of revenue decimated the government's budget and made food and other imports even more expensive. COVID-19 was threatening the already fragile state of hunger in Nigeria. Citizens across the country were going against pandemic regulations to sell items or beg for food on the streets. Across the country, government and humanitarian organizations distributed free food to people whose supply or production had been cut off by pandemic safety measures.

Extreme weather is another factor influencing food production in Nigeria. For example, Adamawa state experienced dry spells at the beginning of the agricultural season, which harm the production of maize in the area. Kano, Nigeria's major seeds producer, was among the areas hit the hardest by the pandemic during the planting season, which affected seed processing and transportation. As a result, many farmers could not obtain seeds or received them too late (ICRC, 2020).

Restriction of movement

The outbreak necessitated the involvement of the police in enforcing the lockdown and contact tracing to contain the spread from any area identified as the epicentre of the virus and possibly flatten the curve by forcing people to remain at home without attending religious programmes, schools and other activities (Ibrahim, Ajide, & Julius 2020). This was the case in many parts of the country. The situation created by the lockdown directives meant that only evacuation flights were permitted though under strict travel COVID-19 protocols. Various sporting competitions and training were suspended and social gatherings were banned (Okolie-Osemene, 2021). The policy decisions made during the lockdown centred on the restriction of movements and closure of various institutions, with a mandate to law enforcement agencies to monitor compliance and enforce physical distancing, a situation that led to a rise in crime and criminal activities across the country.

Protests

The continuous lockdown and human rights abuses by the security forces contributed to the

protests against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police Force tagged #EndSARS, which began in Lagos. The protest saw mass action by youths calling for a complete ban on the Force. The protests later rocked other cities across the country with cases of vandalisation and destruction of public properties by angry youths. SARS was set up in the mid-1990s to combat incidences of armed robbery (over the years) metamorphosed into a force associated with harassment of innocent citizens, extortion at gunpoint, and extrajudicial killings of suspects.

Widespread protests over Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) were a sign that the country's massive young population was finding its voice and demanding reforms in Africa's most populous country which had been characterised by poor governance since its independence. Police officers in Nigeria generally had a reputation for corruption, brutality and little regard for human rights, but people developed strong feelings against SARS, which had developed a notoriety for unduly profiling young people. A report by Amnesty International said it documented at least 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment and extra-judicial execution by SARS between January 2017 and May 2020. The Nigerian authorities had failed to prosecute a single officer despite anti-torture legislation passed in 2017 and there was evidence that its members continued to use torture and other ill-treatment to execute, punish and extract information from suspects (Orjinmo, 2020).

Amid the protests in Nigeria over police brutality, mobs of citizens overrun several government-owned warehouses and looted food meant to be distributed during the COVID-19 lockdown. Amid such incidents, a mob looted packages of rice, sugar, salt and noodles from a facility in Abuja, the country's capital. A few days later, many other states (Adamawa, Kaduna, etc.) recorded the same incidents. In Lagos, Kwara and other locations, mobs overrun private ventures and looted both food and non-food items. Security officials kept dispersing mobs in various locations across the country. According to Obiezu (2020), storage facilities holding tons of relief materials had been burglarized and looted in nine states across Nigeria. A private sector coalition against the coronavirus, known as CA-COVID, had collected tens of millions of dollars worth of aid for coronavirus victims and given it to the government. But many state authorities halted the distribution of the aid since the easing of lockdowns. Some Nigerians accused authorities of hoarding items while millions of people experienced hunger. The coronavirus pandemic exacerbated hunger for many of the country's extremely poor, who numbered about 83 million, that is, about 40 per cent of the population, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Poverty, Hunger and Unemployment
The discontent among youth was already simmering given the economic crisis sparked by the fall in global oil demand (compounded by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic), institutionalized corruption and state profligacy that had drawn more Nigerians into poverty. The foregoing coincided with eight months of the closure of educational institutions due to strikes held by university lecturers, leaving many young people alienated and angry (Ojewale, 2020). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, as of the second quarter of 2020, the unemployment rate in Nigeria stood at a staggering 27.1 per cent and the underemployment rate at 28.6 per cent. Of the 21.7 million unemployed, young people (aged 15 to 34) accounted for a whopping 34.9 per cent. They also accounted for 28.2 per cent of the 22.9 million underemployed Nigerians. Nigeria, in 2018, was announced by the World Poverty Clock to be the poverty capital of the world, with over 40% of its citizens living below the poverty line. Therefore, a large proportion of the population, especially in the commercial hub of Lagos, lived on daily income with no savings to act as a financial buffer during the lockdown. The prospect of staying at home could, therefore, lead to another problem such as hunger (Kalu, 2020).

Worsening economic conditions and bleak projections for the future only fanned the flames. The

country had barely recovered from the economic recession that started in 2016, and President Buhari had called on Nigerians to brace for another recession. Youth were already incensed by reports of high-level elites' corruption, galloping inflation, and unprecedented levels of unemployment, and the government announced increases in the price of fuel and an electricity tariff (Ojewale, 2020). All these were directly and indirectly connected to COVID-19 situation, as people granted interviews and complained on various media platforms, especially about the rise in prices of goods, services, foods and tariffs.

Additionally, border closures and lockdowns within the country posed a danger to the economic sector, particularly the agricultural sector. For most Nigerians, agriculture serves as the primary source of livelihood, employing 36.5% of the entire labour force. More than 30 million naira (about $77,500) had been lost as of May 2020 in the yam markets alone because of the pandemic lockdowns. Many people in Nigeria faced hunger and needed help. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Boko Haram insurgency had exacerbated the problem of food insecurity in the country (Bois, 2020). The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic put additional strain on the vulnerable communities in the North-East of Nigeria, where the decade-long armed conflict was severely hampering agricultural production and self-sufficiency of local farmers. Over 2 million people in the North-East were already displaced and without access to agricultural land and production tools. In many areas of the Lake Chad region, movement restrictions (due to COVID-19) and insecurity limited the ability of farmers to plant crops. Millions of people did not have adequate food to eat or access to farmlands.

Education
UNICEF gathered that 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years were not in school and that only 61% of 6 to 11-year-olds regularly attended primary school yet, schools were temporarily closed down to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Considering the state of the country's education sector, pertinent questions arose – did schools in Nigeria have the technology to cater for the 46 million students affected? Did households have the facilities to engage their children in remote learning? Did teachers have the resources to deliver live lessons or record massive open online course (MOOC) styled lessons? The answers were obviously "no". Unlike other countries, the Nigerian school closure directive did not come with any clear-cut policy measures on how to mitigate learning disruptions for children or how to address the digital divide. As emphasized by UNESCO, temporary school closures came with high social and economic costs, with severe impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children on the higher end of the socio-economic spectrum may have experienced less disruption to their learning because their private schools were well equipped with ICT infrastructure and they could afford remote learning resources at home. The majority left struggling were the students from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds, who do not have access to computers and other devices outside school. In many cases, these children lived in communities with poor or non-existent internet connectivity and unreliable power supply. Inevitably, this digital divide exacerbated the learning disparities among these children.

Business
Abiodun (2021) gathered that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) were facing significant challenges as a result of the measures put in place by the government following the COVID-19 outbreak in the country. Using Kano State as a case study, SMEs' operations were significantly halted with very few cases of operations by food and beverage producers. Most business enterprises halted operations with majority of them unable to return to service after the lockdown because the capital was lost to other needs. This means that without financial support for the dying SMEs, they couldn't restart operations after the crises. Other impacts that business ventures faced included the laying off of workers, reduction in production, reduction in sales, inability to market

products online, and disruption in the supply chain.

COVID-19 containment efforts employed in the country caused most businesses to close shop or temporarily closed down. However, some informal enterprises continued to operate throughout the pandemic, perhaps indicating resistance to regulation by the government due to a lack of alternative means of subsistence for those engaged in informal work, while for formal businesses, approximately a quarter never closed. Since formal businesses are directly regulated by the federal and local governments, those that remained open were likely designated as essential businesses that were allowed to continue operating through lockdowns, such as grocery stores and food vendors, pharmacies, etc. (UNDP, 2021). As businesses tried to adapt and react to the shocks brought about by the pandemic and accompanying public health measures, they experienced great changes in overall operational costs. These were due to some major confounding factors, including a rise in the cost of raw materials likely due to disruptions in supply chains, an increase in transportation costs due to the different lockdown measures and restrictions on movement, and running costs that had to be adapted to ensure the survival of enterprises in the face of reduced demand.

Conclusion and Recommendation
From the foregoing, it was obvious that COVID-19 had a huge impact on security governance and socioeconomic services in Nigeria. It revealed how poorly the country's policies and institutions could establish order during the crises. Instead of alleviating pain during the lockdown, the structures in place ended up adding to the pain of the citizens. Massive corrupt practices ate up the entire governance structure and continuously proved the reasons for the incessant failure in delivering the necessary services. Until bad governance is addressed, and good governance is instituted, the country's daunting challenges can never be addressed. Governments must therefore be serious with governance and ensure appropriate and adequate provision of opportunities capable of addressing the basic needs of people.

Specifically, the agencies responsible for the fight against corruption such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) must investigate how resources meant for the welfare of citizens were distributed and utilised. Governments should be able to come to terms with the citizens on the limitations of police because complaints over police brutality before a court hearing is too high. Some of the investigations carried out by the police could be handled by the Department of State Services (DSS), rather than the public use of force which only worsens the aggression in the minds of youths.

More job opportunities are required to cushion the effect of the pandemic. This can be achieved by reviving the industries that stopped operating as a result of the crises, encouraging state and local governments to establish more markets and facilitating more ways through which idle youths can find jobs. Other strategies to curb the impact would include the institutionalization of disease early warning systems in all the 774 local government areas in Nigeria. It is also important for the government to ensure that the citizens of Nigeria buy into whatever effort is being made and the urgent need to alleviate poverty through social safety nets and sound economic policy.

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