



# The Nigerian Political Elites and Covid-19 Pandemic's Management Deficits: Implications for Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goals

Nigeryjskie elity polityczne i problemy w zarządzaniu  
pandemią Covid-19:  
implikacje dla celów zrównoważonego rozwoju Nigerii

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## Abstract

The impact of the novel Covid-19, otherwise known as the coronavirus on the entire spectrum of Nigeria's national life, as elsewhere, remains yet indelibly unquantifiable at present. Thanks to the Elite culpability in the management of the corona-virus epidemic that has now rendered the entire Nigeria's national life halted and, on the brinks of spontaneous discontinuity. Con-

## Abstrakt

Wpływ Covid-19 na całe życie społeczne Nigerii, podobnie jak w innych państwach, jest olbrzymi a jego pełne następstwa nie są jeszcze możliwe do określenia. Działania elit politycznych Nigerii w walce z pandemią Covid-19 sprawiły, że całe życie społeczne Nigerii zostało zatrzymane. Przedmiotem badań opisanych w niniejszym artykule jest problem zarządzania

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ceptualized in this study to mean negligence of duty, this study unpacks how the Nigerian political Elites and leadership's inefficiency has contributed inversely to the eventual outbreak, sporadic rise and the negative consequences of Covid-19 on the entire populations' Nigeria's economic and sustainable development goals. Drawing from David Hume's theory of causation, this study discovers that leadership and Nigerian political elites' failure in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic, before and during its eventual outbreak and manifestation in Nigeria triggered the incident Covid-19 case in Nigeria, and its manifold effects on Nigeria's prospects for the actualization of her economic and sustainable development pursuits.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Nigerian Political Elites, Economic Development, Sustainable Developments Goals, Nigeria.

walką z pandemią Covid-19 oraz to, jakie następstwa miały działania władz Nigerii dla wzrostu gospodarczego i możliwości osiągnięcia celów zrównoważonego rozwoju społeczeństwa Nigerii. Wychodząc od teorii związku przyczynowego Davida Hume'a, badanie pokazuje, że nieskuteczność nigeryjskich elit politycznych w walce z pandemią Covid-19 miała znaczący, negatywny wpływ na rozwój gospodarczy oraz na zrównoważony rozwój Nigerii.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Covid-19, elity polityczne Nigerii, rozwój gospodarczy, cele zrównoważonego rozwoju, Nigeria

## Introduction

The outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) has, no doubts, caused more than 17.3 million people to be infected with more than 449,000 death fatalities (Medical News Today, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria is part of the worldwide pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona-virus (SARS-CoV-2). Currently, the number of infections and deaths is still increasing rapidly. Covid-19 seriously threatens human health, production, life, social functioning and international relations, and has caused widespread concern around the globe. The outbreak of 2019 novel coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is a public health emergency of international concern (WHO, 2020) that had spread to more than 100 countries by March 8, with more than 100,000 infections and 3,830 deaths (NHC, 2020; WHO, 2020), seriously affecting economic and social development. On February 28, UN Secretary-General Guterres called on governments to take action to do everything possible to control Covid-19 pneumonia (New.cn, 2020). Whilst the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address social, economic, and environmental issues from 2015 to 2030 and move towards sustainable development (SDG, 2015), the world

was taken by storm with the rude manifestation of the Corona Virus which has grown in bounds and leaps since late 2019.

Whilst it was almost impossible to have prevented its first outbreak since little or nothing has been authoritatively given as the source of emergence by medical practitioners and even the World Health Organization, the fact was a confirmed that there were countries that had yet to record cases of the Covid-19 even when the pandemic had already peaked in a couple of countries such as China – the epicenter of the pandemic, Italy, the United States and others (Turini, Cristofoli and Valotti, 2020: 1). Amongst countries that had no incident cases at the peak of infection rates was Nigeria whom as at early February, 2020 had no incident case of Covid-19 infection. To prevent the incursion of foreign travelers or visitors and perhaps citizens who might have contacted the virus into their respective countries, the leaderships and governments of countries across the globe announced the closure of their borders against visitors in February, 2020. However, it was not until mid-March of the current year the leadership of the Nigerian state decided to close down the airport. This colossal negligence became the whirl that stirred the hornet's nest as far as the rise of Covid-19 is concerned in Nigeria. The first set of Covid-19 cases recorded in Nigeria in March was therefore linked to foreign visitors or passengers that came into Nigeria in March 2020.

For instance, the first confirmed case in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. And, on 9th of March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro area of Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had had contacts with the Italian citizen (National Center for Disease Control, 2020). Despite recording these cases, the Nigerian leadership left the Nigerian borders (Airports) opened till 24th of March. The implication of this negligence was the level of spike that was recorded in the aftermath of the eventual closure of the airports on the 24th of March. This brings into the quality of the leadership of the Nigerian state as revealed by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is the point, among others that would be unpacked in sections below, in which the Nigerian leadership has failed. Whilst there are no empirical evidences that suggest that Nigeria would have been free from Covid-19 even if the Nigerian government had closed its borders, airports much earlier before the first case on the 27th of February, 2020, through an Italian that visited the country in February 24th, notwithstanding this, it would have been easier for the Nigerian authorities to manage the pandemic with the local populace. The influx of foreign visitors that had already contacted into Nigeria complicated the efforts and capacity to fully address the outbreak of the pandemic in the country. Rather than focus on citizens and residents with regards to prevention and testing measures, the influx of foreign visitors into Nigeria in the middle of growing spike in the Covid-19 infections across the globe as a result of the negligence of duty of the Nigerian leadership to close down the air-

ports as early as late January or early February of the year, the challenge posed by the transmission of the virus from foreign visitors to the Nigerian populace further inhibited Nigeria's capacity to contain the Covid-19 pandemic across the globe.

## 1. Covid-19 as a Concept, Phenomenon and a Pandemic

### 1.1. Covid-19 as a Concept

Charles Eisenstein (2020) has, specifically, described the Covid-19 as being “like a rehab intervention that, among other things, breaks the addictive hold of normality.” Contrastingly, in one of his regular addresses to the nation during the period of lockdown, the United Kingdom Prime Minister – Boris Johnson, euphemistically, talked of Covid-19 as being “a mugger that we are collectively just beginning to wrestle to the ground.” These metaphors clearer and more evocative ways of characterizing the virus less than it deserved. And, in doing so, these metaphorical descriptions do a lot more than act as simple “poetic embellishments” (Grant & Oswick, 1996).

### 1.2. Covid-19 as a Phenomenon

As a phenomenon, the Covid-19 has become a new normal in the social existence of humanity. A pandemic outbreak that reportedly erupted in Wuhan, China, has now become a new existential reality and phenomenon that humanity must, at least until a cure and not necessarily a vaccine is discovered, live. In fact, it is unlikely that a cure would ever going to mark its end, if ever discovered. Viruses are hardly curable. People have always lived with viruses. And, when they found their way into the human body systems, they have always been neutralized, rendered impotent and bolted out by superior human herd immunities. This is why Covid-19 has become a new social phenomenon, humans must have to live with. Socially, Covid-19 has redefined how humans socialize, interact and coexistence. With perpetual social distancing, self-isolation and lack of face to face communing, education and others, Covid-19 has created a new normal that must be embraced for living. Ideally, we might expect that the lockdowns, self-isolation, and social distancing occasioned by the new phenomenon would result in less social connectedness and less community-based activity (Tannen, 2020; Turrini, Cristofoli and Valotti, 2020: 1), we could, on the long run, be witnessing a more interconnected and community-based world the

phenomenon of Covid-19 might have created. There will, of course, be less direct personal contacts and interactions, the boundless opportunities that accompany a technologized Covid-19 era promises to be amazing. What we are therefore witnessing from this phenomenon is a significant perceptual and philosophical shift and social reordering, which involves a figurative reframing of the new normal, and the metaphorical re-categorization, earlier social phenomena of social connectedness and communitarian life. We are experiencing a phenomenon that moves beyond “literal” physical or social distancing to the more real and normal idea of an explicit, “collective connectedness and global community”. This is thus the new normal and the new sense of social connectedness that can be attributed to the uniqueness and unprecedented character and posture of the Covid-19 phenomenon, making it a worldwide shared experience, reality and a new normal (Turrini, Cristofoli and Valotti, 2020: 1).

How the “new-normal” would peak or transition itself is difficult to accurately predict. One thing is certain, amid the predictions of some scholar such as Iswatuk (2020), the phenomenon is here to stay even should a vaccine be developed in the nearest future. People would characteristically be reluctant to completely revert back to the pre-normal times. This is why Iswatuk (2020) believes we will witness a new kind of patriotism where rather being true to one’s ephemeral ambitions and self, people would begin to take responsibility and work not only for themselves but also for others in their actions.

### 1.3. Covid-19 as a Pandemic

As a pandemic, Covid-19 is predominantly a public health crisis that has severe health, social, political and economic implications. It has accounted and continues to account for scores of health fatalities. In fact, it is severe and deadly enough to have significantly altered and created a new normal in all aspects of human life. It is already threatening the livelihoods of millions of people in Africa, with a disproportionate impact on poor households and informal businesses. It is also redefining the way people interact and engage in the modern world. The World Health Organization (WHO) and national governments have put forward several measures aimed at “flattening the curve” and minimizing the spread of the virus; from simple hygiene practices like washing your hands to behavioral ones like social distancing and more draconian measures like lockdowns of entire cities (Turrini, Cristofoli and Valotti, 2020: 1). While many have found it easy to comply with some of these new normal and phenomenon, global calls to stay-home and maintain social distancing have amplified the stark inequality that exists in most countries across the world. This is even more evident in developing regions in East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa where the population is booming, poverty is rife and the economies are largely defective and informal.

## 2. David Hume's Cause and Effect: Theorizing the Intersection between the Nigerian Political Elites' Culpability in the Management of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Covid-19's Effect on Nigeria's Economic and Sustainable Development

As a British Empiricist of the Early Modern period, David Hume began his thesis on cause and effect by theorizing that all reasoning concerning matters of fact seem to be founded on the relation of Cause and Effect (Norton and Norton, 2007). In his attempt to make sense of the ontological and the epistemological premises of cause and effect of realities, Hume espoused the two definitions to understanding the law of cause and effect of all realities. For Hume, cause and effect can be defined as:

1. That we may define a cause to be "An object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are placed in likerelations of precedency and contiguity to those objects, that resemble the latter"
2. That a cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and is so united with it, that the idea of the one determines the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impressions of the one to form a livelier idea of the other (Norton and Norton, 2007).

Hume shows that experience does not tell us much in the understanding of the realities of cause and effect. Of two definitions, we say that 'A' causes 'B' when the two always occur together, that is, are constantly conjoined. Whenever we find A, we also find B, and we have a certainty that this conjunction will continue to happen. Once we realize that 'A must bring about B', it becomes certain that, due their constant conjunction, we are psychologically certain that B will follow A. Thus, instead of taking the notion of causation for granted, Hume challenges us to consider what experience allows us to know about cause and effect (Norton and Norton, 2007).

Although, Hume was nonetheless skeptical about the perfection of his cause and effect explanation, especially as to why we cannot rationally make absolute connections between two events, and predicts future events based on past experience, the ontological basis of the cause and effect thesis makes it appropriate in trying to understand the intersection between a cause and an effect. Going forward, Hume further admits that, if we observe that one event repeatedly follows another, it is natural that we also assume the two events will always occur together in this same pattern. Thus, for Hume, we must continually make such assumptions to live our lives given the prevailing uncertainty of life. Such assumptions must however be practical and useful but not completely reliable or passable as a proof.

Juxtaposing Hume's thesis to how Covid-19 has impacted adversely on the entire spectrum of Nigeria's economic and sustainable developments makes it imperative to unpack the inherent intersection in the way the Nigerian political elites' management of the Covid-19 pandemic has further impacted Nigeria's quest for economic and sustainable developments. The negligent and deficient handling and management of the Covid-19 pandemic by the Nigerian political elites was exemplified by the preventable but unfortunate outbreak of the coronavirus in the country in February, 2020. The Federal Ministry of Health of Nigeria confirmed the incident coronavirus disease Covid-19 case in Lagos State, Nigeria. The case was confirmed on the 27th of February 2020, and happened to be the first case to be reported in Nigeria since the beginning of the outbreak in China in January 2020 (National Centre for Disease Control, 2020). Despite recording her first case in late February from a foreign Italian visitor who had flown in from Italy, Nigerian leadership decided to not shut all incomings international flights, as some other proactive countries had done, until the latter part of March, 2020 when the contraction of the virus had already peaked. The implication of this negligence is the astronomical spread and rate of contraction of the virus. The preventable failure and negligence of the Nigerian leadership and her political elites to effect the immediate closure of the country's airwave against international flights when some other countries had done so even as early as January, 2020 eventually caused a great deal of adverse effects on all spectrums of the country's national life, most especially, the economic and sustainable developments of the country, among other things.

Again, the relaxation of the national lockdown that allowed for gradual reopening of the economy has yielded little or no positive results as many business and organizations remain largely shut down at home, apparently not as a result of the ravaging Covid-19 but as a result of the prevailing precarious situation of insecurity across the length and breadth of the country. This is the sad reality in most parts of the North-Eastern geopolitical zone and other parts of the country. One would of thought and expected the Nigerian political elites and leadership to take advantage of the time and space afforded by the national lockdown to declare a state of emergency in the security of the country and launch "do or die" final military offensives against the BokoHaram insurgents and the deadly bandits that have taken over the entire forests of the Northwestern parts of the country. In this stead, the BokoHaram insurgents, the Bandits and other merchants of insecurity have grown in leaps and bounds in the Covid-19 times. Apparently, should the Nigerian political elites and leadership had acted pragmatically, proactively and quite timely in living up to their statutory responsibilities of effective governance as it concerns the management of the Covid-19 pandemic, the eventual outbreak of the incident case of the Covid-19 and its effects on Nigeria's economic and sustainable developments would certainly had been lessened or prevented.

### 3. Of Covid-19, Nigerian Political Elite, and Nigeria's Economic Development: Wherewithal?

From her independence, Nigeria's economy and population have depended on the informal sector for their survival. This is because as the informal economy accounts for 65% of GDP according to International Monetary Fund's estimates (IMF, 2020). The sector contributes to production, income generation and 80% of total employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the International Labour Organization. Informal workers are not just your roadside sellers, they include the roadside vulcanisers, hairdressers, garbage collectors, low-skilled workers and also all other small and medium sized enterprises that are not registered and do not declare their income or pay taxes.

Like most African economies, the informal economy is the most crucial source of livelihood for many African people. It was not surprising to know therefore the informal strand of most African economies have been contributing to the reduction of unemployment rates and poverty in Africa. The Nigerian economy has not been an exception. Even though not all informal workers are poor and not all working poor are engaged in the informal economy, the sector is undoubtedly pervaded by low economic productivity and low wages. Lack of Labour legislation, lack of social protection to cushion workers and the fact that informal workers earn significantly less than workers in the formal sector means that more informal workers in Nigeria are poorly treated and subjected to more devastating consequences in times of economic uncertainty as this period. Because of scale of operations and limited access to a small group of customers, the nature of income in the informal sector is mainly subsistence. This means that workers are unable to save and during periods of uncertainty their earnings become extremely volatile, increasing their vulnerability to economic hardship. The situation is neither different nor palatable in the formal sector. Many employed workers in the formal sector have been laid off due to the inability of business organization to stay economically afloat because of the harsh realities of Covid-19. This is the reality of most Nigerians in both the informal and formal sectors of the economy. Unarguably, the poor have been hardest-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Without access to social security, employment benefits or insurance, workers and small business traders have become the victims of circumstances. The question is, is the situation beyond control?

The Covid-19 pandemic is now revealing itself to be a phenomenon of two sides, the good and the bad. The job of governments, international governmental organizations and other stakeholders is to maximize the gains and inherent opportunities embedded in Covid-19 as a phenomenon and not necessarily as a pandemic.

Again, where does the question of leadership deficit creep in here? For instance, the nationwide lockdowns and quarantine measures implemented by many countries on the continent without provision of alternative means of economic sustenance and livelihoods for the people have had a significant impact on not only the economy but also on local production and the lives of most people in Nigeria, as in other African countries. For instance, in the city of Lagos, which is best known for its dense population, chaotic traffic, frenetic commercial activities, bustling streets and nightlife, life is unusually quiet for its twenty-one million residents. On the supply front, lockdown measures have also led to the shutdown of businesses, shops, malls and restaurants and disrupted supply chains that has prevented a lot of informal workers and the economic downtrodden in the society from surviving and living. This is because a human is only able to live, all things being equal, when he has the economic resources to cater for his needs, especially food, water and shelter. On the demand front, people have spent lesser than what they would ordinarily had spent in pre-Covid-19 times, and continues to spend less as they are stuck at home with millions of the poor and workers watching their means of livelihoods vanish in front of their eyes. The basic economic necessity has become an economic hallucination and a limited luxury only for the political upper class who sustain themselves through states' resources. Stockpiling of food has equally become one of the new normal and behavioural responses to the Covid-19 phenomenon. Supermarkets and groceries stores are currently being overwhelmed and crowded with those, especially the few that can afford the luxuries. However, poor households cannot afford to stockpile even if they wanted to because of their limited disposable income, low savings and restricted access to online commerce. This means that they still have to make frequent trips to their local market to feed their households, making them susceptible to being infected. Dishearteningly, the surge in demand due to panic buying has also led to higher prices for basic food items. Apparently, should the people want to stockpile, the fear of being exposed to the virus and the higher costs of food items would discourage them from doing so. Ironically, even for the few who are able to buy food items in bulk, there is the challenge of storage in the face of the persistent power outage in most African countries, like Nigeria.

### 3.1. Covid-19 and Depleting Nigeria's External Reserves

The second quarter of 2019 was the last quarter Nigeria witnessed some growth in external reserves. Subsequently, Nigeria had no external reserves to fall back to ameliorate the shortfalls recorded in her year 2020 national budget as occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. Characteristically of the Nigerian leadership, the Nigerian leadership would rather prioritize securing more inter-

national loans than contributing to the external reserve of the nation. Of course, no country has ever survived economically and developmentally without loans but not as most African countries like Nigeria have permanently and consistently embraced it. More so, the ever-reliable last economic resort cum sales and exportation of fossil fuel the Nigerian government always resort to in cases of dire economic situations as one brought about by Covid-19 has been largely mutilated by the fall in oil prices. No state was willing to take delivery of shipments of fossil fuel from their partners due to corona fears and precautionary measures. And, as such many of Nigerian loaded oil ships readied for delivery got stranded in the middle of the sea. The implication is that against the backdrop of the international oil price upon which the making of the Nigerian 2020 national budget was based before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in mid-2019, the drastic fall in international oil price brought about by Covid-19 meant the initial prognostic economic forecast for the implementation of the Nigerian national budget was no longer feasible. Being a monolithic economy that so much relies on the exploration and international sales of crude oil, the economic manifestation of economic recession in Covid-19 times is only a matter of time. This was expected especially when one considers the lack of leadership foresight and deficit that has culminated into disjointed and disarticulated economic policies over the years. This is the sad reality of leadership culpability in Nigeria's management in the pre-Covid-19 times that has not changed a bit even in the Covid-19 times, and of course, that has also contributed to the harsh consequences of Covid-19 in Nigeria.

### 3.2. Covid-19 and Nigerian Stock Exchange Woes

No doubt, the stock exchange is a yardstick for the financial health of any country because it shows the efficiency of its capital markets. A boisterous stock exchange comprises very well, valued securities with intrinsic values that are directly proportionate or close to their market values. Viewed from this lens, Nigeria has been largely a weak form of security market, with stock prices moving independently of events happening within the market. For instance, following MTN and Airtel Nigeria's listings on the Nigerian Stock Exchange, the average daily volume on Nigerian Stock Exchange in 2019 increased by N72 million, that is, from N3.19 to N3.93Bn (Nairametric, 2020). In the 2nd quarter of 2019, N5.6Bn was traded daily as an immediate effect of MTN's listing. But in the 3rd and 4th quarters, as a result of the general elections, earnings announced fell below investors' expectations. Overall, the market closed the year at a 14.4% drop (Nairametric, 2020), thus, the second year of decline in a row. The revelation here is that the Nigerian Stock Exchange is susceptible to many internal contradictions in Nigeria. This is because the security needed to ensure

stability of transactions, exchanges and of course, keep the Market running has been largely elusive over time. This is now being worsened by the coronavirus pandemic. The relaxation of the national lockdown that allowed phased reopening of the economy has really yielded no positive results as many business and organizations remain largely quarantined at home, not necessarily as a result of the ravaging Covid-19 but as a result of insecurity. This is the sad reality in Nigeria, especially most parts of the North-Eastern geopolitical zone in the country. Terrorist group such as the BokoHaram sect has relentlessly upped the sequence of their terrors in the country. One would have expected the Nigerian leadership to have used the opportunity presented by the Covid-19 phenomenon to finally nail such an aberration into the coffin, unsurprisingly the reverse is the case. The BokoHaram terrorist sect grew in their terroristic activities and killings in the Covid-19 times. This is apparently a failure of leadership. This is of course coupled with the peaked activities of bandits across the country, and most especially states within Nigeria such as Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Yobe, Maiduguri, Nasarawa and others. The banditry continues till date even in these times of Covid-19 despite the countless numbers of security meetings between the Nigerian service chiefs and the president over time and of recent.

### **3.3. Covid-19 and Nigerian Foreign Exchange Pressures**

Nigeria is predominantly an import-dependent economy that imports virtually everything; clothing, cars, canned fruits and foods, electronics and others. Relying on other countries to manufacture most products needed for the country's consumption is the entrenched characteristic of the Nigerian economy. Capital inflows into the country between January and February 2020 only were N42.7Bn, against an outflow of N98.8bn (International Center for Investigating Reporting, 2020). This apparently the consequences of excessive reliance on importation and one of the various pressures on the external reserves which is equally reducing investors' confidence while increasing pressure on the foreign exchange rates.

### **3.4. Covid-19 and Nigeria's National Inflation and Liquidity**

Inflation is a problem for every economy in different forms, from hyperinflation to disinflation, deflation and stagflation. All governments usually seek to reduce inflation to as low as possible while also avoiding negative inflation metrics. That is, inflation is the change in purchasing power of the consumers attributed to holding a specific currency over a period of time. It is comparing the volume of goods that can be bought with a specific amount of money in one

period with the volume that can be purchased with the same amount of money in another period. Inflation has been one of Nigeria's concerns, fluctuating between the tens and twenties, closing in December 2020 with headline inflation of 11.98%, as a result of combined efforts of monetary and fiscal policies, such as the border closure, Trade-bills restrictions, and of course, the Covid-19 pandemic (International Center for Investigating Reporting, 2020). As a result of the national lockdown imposed across the entire country in a bid to flatten the curves of Covid-19 that started in February 2020, most residents and citizens have not been able to expend the purchasing power cum resources as the entire economy was also placed on temporary quarantine with ball banks and financial institutions.

### 3.5. Covid-19 and the Fall in Oil Price

The Nigerian economy, as a petrocurrency, is tied to the global oil prices. This means Nigeria's revenue projections, external reserves, gross domestic product, and the exchange rates are chiefly contingent upon the international oil price. On the 8th of March 2020, the fallout of the OPEC meeting saw an ultimatum issued to Russia for a cut in production of the world supply by 1.5%. Russia rejected the demand, ending the three-year partnership between OPEC and major non-OPEC providers. This prevented the renewal of the production cut agreements as Saudi Arabia, who had suffered a huge effect of the cuts, notified her buyers of her plans to increase supply and discounts, flooding the global market with excess supply of crude. Global oil prices dipped, with the bonny light, Nigeria's oil, dropping to a low point of \$17/barrel (International Center for Investigating Reporting, 2020). A price not recorded since the 2008 global recession. This was coupled with the attendant effects of the Covid-19 pandemic that has halted the supply and sales of crude oil from oil-producing countries such as Nigeria, to consumers. The inability of the Nigerian leadership to have diversified in pre-Covid-19 times and also considered alternative sources of national economic income in the wake of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the failings of the current Nigerian political leadership and elite in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### 3.6. Covid-19 and Nigeria's Depleting Industrial Productivity

China accounts for a great deal of Nigeria's import bill. This is excluding her bilateral concessionaire agreements and construction projects with Chinese companies. As soon as Chinese factories stopped production due to the national lockdown in the wake of Covid-19, most of the Nigeria-China construction

projects were immediately halted, leading to the temporary loss of jobs for Nigerian site workers in the construction sites. This was the case with the entire industrial base of the country with all renowned companies such as Dangote Construction, Cement and others halting their operations. Similarly, China is also the world's largest importer of crude oil. Alongside India, China remains one of Nigeria's destinations for oil exports. The shutdown of their factories during this Covid-19 pandemic has contributed to under-demand of oil by Nigeria's oil customers including China. This under-demand has meant, amongst many, that the industrial capacity, productivity, demands and supplies have drastically been affected.

#### **4. Covid-19 and Its Implications for Nigeria's Sustainable Development**

Paraphrasing Iswatuk's Shakespearean words, "SDGs, SDGs, Wherefore Art Thou, SDGs?" (Iswatuk, 2020: 1). The Sustainable Development Goals were meant to act as a global roadmap to sustainable, equitable, efficient, and just forms of development by the year 2030. What the coronavirus pandemic shows us is that we are more likely to end up solving a problem (Covid-19) by creating a bigger problem (Failed Sustainable Development Goals) through neglect and negligence (Iswatuk, 2020).

In various attempts to flatten the curve, countries around the world adopted different measures such as enforcing full lockdowns, imposing travel restrictions and completely sealing their borders. As a result of these measures, public and private businesses have gone out of operations whilst stock exchanges have been grounded with millions of people went out of jobs. Ultimately, recession is looming. Covid-19 has disrupted a lot of world's policies and arrangements; chief among them is the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015, the United Nations followed up the Millennium Development Goals with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and initiated a 17-goal agenda; a fresh global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. These goals are interwoven so much that an action or inaction in one will affect the outcome of the others. Since inception, efforts have been made such as: series of collaborations among different local and international NGOs, governments, businesses and individuals to ensure the timely success of SDGs. The advent of the present global pandemic has made the prospect of achieving the SDGs by the said time an uncertainty. The possibility of actualizing the SDGs is getting overwhelmed by the persistent spike in the number of cases of the novel coronavirus. Perhaps

the most telling failure aside from unemployment is the failure of the global food system.

SDG 2 speaks to achieving no hunger, yet, globally, there is no enough food produced around the world to feed everyone. Some 40 million Americans, arguably the richest economy in the world, are forced to use food stamps to stave off household hunger. Elsewhere around the world, people are playing a sort of roulette: starve and stay at home, eat and risk contracting Covid-19.

Following on from SDG 2, is SDG 3 which deals with health. On global health, corona-virus has exposed with shocking clarity the complex array of social factors that lead to some being relatively secure (with the U.S. President being tested daily and requiring anyone who comes in contact with him to wear a mask) to those who are compounding acute health problems (Covid-19) with chronic problems (most related to inadequate nutrition and poor diet in fact). The prospect of famine looms across the Global South while European and American farmers slaughter their animals unable to get to market in the millions. No doubt, the sustainable global health and wellbeing goal is another casualty of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, as elsewhere across the globe. Although, maternal and child mortality rates have been witnessing reduction in pre-Covid-19 periods whilst life expectancy improved globally and also in Nigeria, the sudden manifestation of Covid-19 has negatively impacted the quest for the actualization of this SDG goal. The global community is thus becoming overwhelmed whilst the pandemic is now undoing a few of the gains made in this SDG goal.

Furthermore, on Sustainable Development Goal-1 – zero poverty and Sustainable Development 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), the United Nations has hinted that over 195 million jobs will be lost across the globe with Nigeria not being an exception (United Nations News, 2020). In similar manner, the African Union also reported that about 20 million jobs are at risk of being obliterated in Africa with the continent's economy projected to shrink this year as a result of the impact of the pandemic (Reuters, 2020). With these projections, the rate of unemployment, poverty and hunger in sub-Saharan Africa will become more devastating. This would undoubtedly hamper the quest for the actualization of SDG-1 (Zero Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger and Food Security) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Whilst more than one third of working people in Sub-Saharan Africa had lived in extreme poverty with an earning below \$1.90 in the pre-Covid-19 times, the unfortunate emergence of the Covid-19 global health pandemic has worsened the precarious economic situation in Nigeria. Nigeria in particular has more than 96 million people of her population living in extreme poverty (International Center for Investigating Reporting, 2020). Corroborating this sad reality, the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nation (FAO) in 2019 informs that Nigeria is one of the 34 African countries depending on external food aid which has now been worsened

by the precarity of the Covid-19 global pandemic (Global Network Against Food Crisis & Food Security Information Network, 2020: 144).

On Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which also inheres in SDG 5 (Gender Equality), the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic has stalled the pursuits of the Sustainable Development Goal on education. Formal education and learning process are yet restart having been stopped since the inception of the pandemic earlier in the year. In Nigeria, all schools at all levels have been closed since March, 2020. The statutory promotional examinations for many Nigerian students, such as the West African Senior School Certificate Examination, Common Entrance Examinations and others that students usually take in most schools which should have been conducted earlier in the year are yet to be organized nor taken by the students. The situation was worsened because in Nigeria formal education mostly requires physical contact with little or no adaptational efforts towards the use of educational technology like the use of Information and communications technology. Whilst countries like China, Italy and some other developed countries are beginning to fully transit into the realm of full online distance learning in recent times, Nigeria's precarious educational conjecture occasioned by poor internet connectivity, high costs and frequent power interruptions now pose serious to the actualization of educational sustainability in Nigeria.

Similarly, the outbreak of Covid-19 has negatively impacted the quest to build resilient and sustainable infrastructures, promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialization as well as innovation that underscores the Sustainable Development Goal-9. Aside the fact that production was nearly grounded at the twilight of the outbreak of the Covid-19, many infrastructural projects such as the Lagos-Ibadan Railway construction and others have been pended since March, 2020 in Nigeria.

On Sustainable Development Goal-6, Water and sanitation for all, is seen a lofty goal, but when protection from the virus requires you to wash your hands frequently with warm or running water, it is clear that more than one billion people would be affected (Iswatuk, 2020). This would even be more worsened in Nigeria where most people in rural areas and peri-urban areas do not have access to pipe-borne or running water. On sanitation, most states like Nigeria have long ignored the sanitation side of water provision, and farmed out water provision to private sector and NGO actors in urban and rural areas. This abdication of the responsibility by the government to provide for citizens with equitable access to quality water, has heightened the pre-existing gross inequalities and other insecurities among citizens due to class, race, gender, caste, age and other cross-cutting variables in the pre-Covid-19 times (SDG 10). Matter-of-factly, the quests to actualize other Sustainable Development Goals aimed at achieving sustainable climate condition and healthy ecosystem such as Sustainable Development Goal-6 (Clean Water Sanitation), Sustainable Development

Goal-12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), Sustainable Development Goal-13 (Climate change), Sustainable Development Goal-14 (Life below Water), and Sustainable Development Goal-15 (Life on Land), have considerably been stalled by the Covid-19 pandemic (Iswatuk, 2020). Some resources that could have been used in the pursuits of the Sustainable Development Goals were circumstantially forced to be directed into emergency health care delivery and fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the real cost and alternative forgone for concentrating more resources and efforts in the fights against the Covid-19 pandemic in lieu of pursuing the prospects of Sustainable Development Goals.

## Conclusion

Amidst other adverse effects occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic across the globe, and very precisely, Nigeria, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected, very considerably, the economic and sustainable development objectives of the country the most. More than ever, the pandemic has impacted Nigeria's prospects for economic and sustainable development. Poverty, hunger, unemployment, lack of water provision, depleting ecosystem, insecurity and many more that constitute the core of the Sustainable Development Goals have all been exacerbated by the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. As demonstrated in the preceding parts of this study, unemployment and poverty that had already been having excruciating bites on most of the people, especially the socially vulnerable people, became much more pronounced and felt as a result of several job losses and business liquidations. This is therefore not different with the security situation of the country. Insurgency and terrorism in the North-eastern parts of the country with banditry in the North-western parts of the country coupled with kidnapping, cultism and other forms of security threats across the whole country, have assumed greater dimensions and spate of manifestations during the current Covid-19 pandemic times. This is evident in the increased and sustained number and frequency of attacks the BokoHaram network has carried since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic till date. This is in addition to the increased frequency and spate of banditry activities along the North-western parts of the country, most especially, Katsina, Kaduna, and Zamfara. Apparently, there exists a well-established intersection between the current Covid-19 pandemic and the level of retrogressions witnessed in Nigeria's quest towards achieving sustainable and economic developments since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out. The Nigerian political elites and leadership must therefore start rethinking their strategy to fighting the current Covid-19 pandemic by being pragmatic, and taking policy steps that would address the Covid-19 pandemic without neglecting their responsibilities in the pur-

suits of sustainable, economic developments and other critical areas of national development and citizens' welfare.

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