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Covid-19 pandemic: implications of lockdown and eased lockdown on Nigerian households

Abstract

This paper analyses the implications of lockdown and eased lockdown on Nigerian households, using the Nigeria Covid-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey (NLPS Baseline), which was released in June 2020 by the National Bureau of Statistics. Also, reviews of research articles, news updates and Covid-19 reports from NCDC website were used. Data were described using frequency counts, percentages and chart. Nigerian households (100%) were aware of the pandemic. To reduce the spread of coronavirus infection, Nigerian Government advised that citizens should stay at home. Majority of households (97.4%) engaged in hand washing and stayed at home (90.6%). The lockdown (mid-March to June) had implications on food availability (less than 50.0% of households had access to food items); 48.1% were able to buy cleaning supplies; 40.9% and 25.3% had access to medicine and medical treatment, respectively; and 48.6% had children who engaged in education activities. Number of confirmed cases increased from an average of 138 in March to 10,857 in August, and the differences in monthly averages increased from 1,699 in April to 7,293 in June, but a difference of -1,699 in July, and further sharp difference of -6,600 in August. There was an increase in the number of deaths from 2 in March to 520 in July, but decreased to 493 in August; the difference increased from 54 in March to 175 in April, but reduced to 164 and 125 in July and August, with a desirable difference of -27 in August. Average number of discharged cases increased from 9 in March to 29,122 in August, However, during the period of eased lockdown (July and August), businesses have started opening up in phases and there was gradual reopening of schools. Continuous awareness on observing safety protocols is necessary to finally flatten the curve of Covid-19 infection.

Keywords: covid-19 pandemic, lockdown, containment measures, nigerian households

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Introduction

Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) was first identified in Wuhan (China) in December 2019, but rapidly spread to almost every region of the world. There was no immediate treatment or vaccine for the infection. According to World Health Organization,[1] it became a worldwide pandemic causing significant morbidity and mortality. There were 1,603,428 confirmed cases, 356,440 recoveries from the illness and 95,714 deaths worldwide as of April 9, 2020. From the onset of the disease outbreak in Nigeria in February 2020, things have not been how it used to be for everyone in the country, as it is the case all over the world.

Review of Lockdown Period in Nigeria; mid-March to June

Nigeria confirmed its first case of coronavirus disease on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. This was reported by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).[2] The Federal Government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Health, tried to ensure that the outbreak of the disease was controlled and contained immediately by activating National Emergency Operations Centre that worked with Lagos State Health Authorities. However, NCDC reported on the 9th of March 2020 that a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State. This was a Nigerian, who had contact with the Italian citizen; he was put on isolation for two weeks and eventually tested positive on the 8th of March, 2020. He later tested negative on the 13th of March 2020.

Another case was reported on the 17th of March, a 30-year-old Nigerian female citizen that returned on 13th of March from the United Kingdom. According to NCDC reports, five new cases were reported on March 18; four from Lagos and one from Ekiti State. The Ministry of Health confirmed that all new cases had a history of travel to the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Four new cases were also reported on March 19, ten new cases on March 21, and the confirmed cases started to increase on daily basis afterwards. This led to various occurrences in the country.

The 20th national sports festival, which was supposed to hold in Benin City, Edo State from 22nd March to 1st April, was postponed as a precautionary move against COVID-19 spread.[3] The Cable reported on the 18th of March that the orientation exercise of National Youth Corps members in Batch A - Stream One, which commenced on the 10th of March 2020 and was supposed to end on the 30th of the same month, was suspended indefinitely after 8 days.[4] On the same day, The Punch reported that Nigeria placed a travel ban on 13 countries with high cases of the virus; United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, China, Spain, Netherlands, Norway, Japan and Iran. Also, The Punch of March 18 reported that Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) suspended all football activities for four weeks.[5-8] The Punch also reported that as part of measures to contain the spread of the Coronavirus outbreak, Lagos State government banned all religious gathering of over 50 worshippers within the state for 30 days.[6] This was later extended to other states as Nigeria announced the closure of international airports from March 21.[9]

NCDC continued to give daily reports of infections, recoveries and deaths as the number of confirmed cases continued to increase in the month of March, and as at 30th, there were 131 confirmed cases with 2 deaths. According to Price Waterhouse Coopers,[10] the Federal Government issued Covid-19 regulations which was signed on March

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30. The President directed the cessation of movements in Lagos, Ogun and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) for an initial period of 14 days. Citizens were ordered to stay in their homes and all businesses and offices should be fully closed while travel to other states should be postponed. However, this did not include some essential services such as hospitals and related medical establishments; food processing, distribution and retails companies; petroleum distribution and retail entities; power generation, transmission and distributions companies; private security companies; urgent court matters as may be directed by the Chief Justice of Nigeria; financial system and money markets; and workers in telecom companies, broadcasters, print and electronic media staff, with the proof that they are unable to work from home.

The 2020 common entrance examination, which was supposed to hold on the 28th of March, was postponed indefinitely by the National Examination Council; the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board also suspended all their activities for two weeks.[11,12] Following the lockdown of some states by Federal government, there was total lockdown in some other states like Kwara, while some imposed a dusk till dawn curfew like Oyo state. Most states closed their sea and land borders to avoid inter-state movements, allowing only fuel tankers, vehicles conveying food items and other essential commodities, but were subjected to screening and testing at the point of entry.[13] Also, Federal Government suspended the movements of passenger aircraft all over the country, including commercial and private jets.[14] The lockdown however did not affect only the social, religious and political gatherings, but also the educational sector at all levels. Before the end of March, all schools in the country were closed indefinitely.

All these continued in April as states with no case of coronavirus started having confirmed cases and as at 1st of April, NCDC confirmed 151 cases of coronavirus with 2 deaths and 9 recoveries. This made states that were not on lockdown to announce it. The Punch reported on the 1st of April that Taraba State government banned public gatherings of more than 20 persons from that day and ordered that all markets should be closed with immediate effect, except those providing essential services such as pharmacies, food stores and petrol service stations. On the same day,[15] Ondo state government ordered the closure of all borders from the 2nd of April to avoid inter-state passengers from coming into the state. However, some states that have been on total lockdown since late March started to relax it to allow partial movements but with strict regulations. For example, Niger State relaxed their restriction order by restricting movement from 2pm to 10pm and allowing movement from 8am to 2pm every day from 5th April.[16]

By mid-April, Federal Government extended the lockdown of Lagos State, Ogun State and the FCT for another two weeks from 11pm on 13th of April.[17] Other state governments also extended the lockdown since the confirmed cases in the country kept rising. Ekiti, Osun and Delta states extended lockdown at this time. Kano State started having higher confirmed cases after the first record on April 11; by 15th of April, 12 new cases were confirmed. Because of this, Kano State government announced the total lockdown of the state for seven days from 16 April, ordering residents to stay at home, closing all markets, places of worship and public gatherings in state.[18] Following this, the Federal Government later announced total lockdown of Kano State and extended lockdown in Lagos, FCT and Ogun state with another one week.[19] There were also reports of theft and killing of Nigerians in the month of April. Criminal gang stormed Lagos streets to rob residents of their belongings.[20] Also, at least 18 persons in Nigeria got killed by security forces during the enforcement of measures to curb the spread of the virus.[21] As at April 30, number of confirmed cases was 204; the highest new cases found so far, bringing the total confirmed cases to 1,932 with 58 deaths and 319 recoveries.

The lockdown started having negative effects on economy. About 40% experienced job loss, businesses went down and the general economy of the country was affected. Hunger level rose in the country and it affected people working in the informal sector most. As analysed by Human Rights Watch,[22] the Humanitarian Affairs announced that the sum of 20,000 Naira would be paid into the accounts of families registered in the National Social Register of Poor and Vulnerable Households, which was set up by the Buhari administration in 2016 to combat poverty. The government's failure to disclose key details of the cash transfer program cast doubt on how many people it included and who benefited. HRW also reported that Federal Government announced that 77,000 metric tons of food would be distributed to vulnerable households that were affected by the lockdown in Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja, but the modalities for distribution were not clear.

Despite continuous increase in the confirmed cases on daily basis, the month of May took a new turn as states started relaxing the lockdown. Anambra State government announced the reopening of 63 major markets from 4th of May. Also, on the 8th of May, Abia State government announced the relaxing of lockdown from 11th of May. From NCDC reports, as at May 15, the number of confirmed cases was 5,445 with 171 deaths and 1,320 recoveries. However, the Federal Government announced the extension of the nationwide curfew of 8pm to 6am which had started since May 4 for another two weeks from May 18th and also extended the lockdown of Kano for another two weeks.[23]

As at June 1, by NCDC reports, the number of confirmed was became 10,162, with 287 deaths and 3,007 recoveries. Later that day, the Federal Government relaxed the lockdown imposed on Kano State, and the ban placed on religious gatherings and banking operations for a period of four weeks, while also announcing the re-opening of domestic airline operations from June 21.[24] Nationwide curfew was also shortened to 10pm to 4am. Federal Government finally lifted the ban placed on interstate travels on June 29 and announced on the same day the re-opening of schools for only graduating students which was to begin on July 1.[25]

Objectives

This paper analyses the implications of lockdown and eased lockdown on Nigerian households. The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the measures by governments and households to reduce Covid-19 during lockdown period in Nigeria
- Assess the implications of lockdown on Nigerian households
- Examine the trend of Covid-19 during the periods of lockdown and eased lockdown
- Review the effects of eased lockdown on socio-economic activities of households in Nigeria

Empirical Review

Etukudoh et al.[26] carried out a study on Coronavirus (Covid-19); review from a Nigerian perspective. The method used was a review of research articles, news and updates on Covid-19, medical laboratory testing, and management of the pandemic in Nigeria. According to them, efforts by different countries in using different drugs for treatment of Covid-19 proved futile. They suggested that Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Covid-19, NCDC and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), in collaboration with Centres

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for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) should look into the use of indigenous products that could help in the management of Covid-19. They concluded that there is urgent need to use the experience of Covid-19 to build health systems for Nigerians. Also, the Federal School of Medical Laboratory Science in Jos is strategically capable of providing the needed solution through research and training.

Clement et al.[27] studied Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing in Nigeria. They aimed to find out adherence to social distancing and to find out if non-adherence was due to ignorance or defiance. They listed the preventive measures given by WHO; frequent hand-washing or using alcohol based hand sanitizer; covering the nose and mouth with disposable tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing, and social distancing. They examined the knowledge and community perception on the impact of social distancing on the spread of Covid-19. They found that Covid-19 spread quickly in most countries because they did not take the social distancing as serious as it should be. Nigeria, not left out, recorded its first case due to negligence of border closure. They also found that after lockdown had been announced by Federal Government, there was partial or zero adherence. Celebrities and politicians were found hosting a house party in the city while under lockdown. They however attached the negligence to the fact that the lockdown affected more than 85% of population who survive economically on a day-to-day basis. They concluded that individuals should find means of staying safe as prevention is better than cure.

Ajisegiri et al.[28] studied Covid-19 outbreak situation in Nigeria and the need for effective engagement of community health workers for epidemic response. They reviewed published articles on Covid-19 and daily epidemiological reports from 27 February 2020 till 3 May 2020 to describe the outbreak. Also, they reviewed ongoing responses by the government and other relevant agencies. Their findings showed possible evidence of ongoing and increasing community transmission of Covid-19 infections, inadequate testing capacity and inadequate health resources. With the increasing Covid-19 cases, they recommended that the government needs to promptly bring community health workers on board, deploy rapid epidemic intelligence and scale up the use of mobile apps for contact tracing. This will result in an effective and coordinated response to the ongoing outbreak, reduce morbidity and mortality, and preserve health indices gains already made in the health system.

Rabiu et al.[29] analysed the impact of Coronavirus outbreak on the Nigerian economy. They used the reports from NCDC and WHO for the period of 11th March to 19th March 2020 on total cases of the virus in Nigeria. They found that coronavirus led to oil price shock which pose a great threat to the 2020 budget. According to them, all of Nigeria's 2020 budget indicators ranging from oil production volume of 2.18 million barrels per day, oil benchmark of $57 per barrel, ₦305 exchange rate of naira per US dollar, GDP growth rate of 2.93 percent, and inflation rate of 10.81 percent presently seem to be out of reach, and will most likely lead to downsizing of expenditure plans in 2020. They also found that as at March 19, Nigeria had 12 confirmed cases and thereby recommended precautionary measures that include regular and thorough washing of hands with soap and water and use of hand sanitizers, among others.

Materials and Methods

The report in this paper is based on Nigeria, using the Nigeria Covid-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey (NLPS Baseline), which was conducted in 2020 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Nigeria has 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT, Abuja). The baseline data was the first round of the Covid-19 NLPS, and was released in June 2020. The data were collected using the households who were involved in the Wave 4 of the General Household survey (GHS) Panel in 2018/2019, who were interviewed a year before the Covid-19 pandemic. There were 4,976 households in the GHS-Panel sample; they are representative nationally as they covered all the 6 geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The NLPS survey used 3,000 households who were selected from the GHS sample frame, having a final successful sample of 1,950 households.

The period under this report (mid-March to August) were divided into two; lockdown period spanning between mid-March and June, and the eased lockdown period between July and August. Reports are presented to shed light into the events within the two periods. The NPLS baseline data covered the period of the lockdown. Therefore, the NLPS data were described (using frequency counts and percentages, and frequency distribution tables) to identify the measures by governments and households to reduce Covid-19 during lockdown period in Nigeria and empirically assess the implications of lockdown on Nigerian households. Also, there were reviews of research articles and news updates to assess the implications of lockdown on households, and the effects of eased lockdown on socio-economic activities of households. Updates and reports on Covid-19 from NCDC website were used to obtain monthly averages of numbers of confirmed cases, recoveries and deaths to examine the trend of Covid-19 during the periods of lockdown and eased lockdown. The trend was also presented in frequency distribution table and chart.

Results and Discussions

Measures by Governments and Households to reduce Covid-19 during Lockdown Period in Nigeria

Following the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, it became expedient that all the citizens of every country should have awareness of the outbreak of Coronavirus disease. Results from Table 1 show that all the households in Nigeria (100%) were aware of the pandemic. This might be due to stringent measures that were put in place by Nigerian Governments to contain the spread of the disease. In order to address this global health crisis, the World Health Organization (WHO) advised on the measures to put in place to contain the spread of the Virus. Also, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) emphasized the measures. These measures were enforced by the Federal Government of Nigeria. From the NLPS data, different measures were put in place by governments at the Federal and State levels. These measures are presented in Table 1. The most recognized of these measures among households (70.7%) was the advice by governments that citizens should stay at home. This was actually enforced by security agents, who manned many important places within and outside towns and cities to ensure that citizens abide. The households where members did not fully stay at home were those that performed essential services in relation to food and health. The next important measure to households (61.6%) was the advice that citizens should avoid gatherings. Such gatherings include worship centres, social clubs, occasions and ceremonies, and etcetera. Also, there was curfew to ensure that households stayed within their living areas. There were restrictions on travels within the country (ban on inter-state travels) as well as ban on international travels. To achieve these, all schools including tertiary institutions were closed, all non-essential businesses were closed, and there was increased sensitization of the public on these measures.

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Table 1 Measures by governments and households to reduce Covid-19 in Nigeria

Awareness and measures against Covid-19	Frequency (N=1950)	Percentage
Awareness	1950	100
Measures by governments		
Advised citizens to stay at home	1379	70.7
Advised to avoid gatherings	1201	61.6
Restricted travel within country/area	567	29.1
Restricted international travel	191	9.8
Closure of schools and universities	593	30.4
Curfew	860	44.1
Closure of non-essential businesses	583	29.9
Sensitization/public awareness	741	38.0
Establishment of isolation centres	137	7.0
Disinfection of public places	117	6.0
Others (arresting erring individuals, water and soap provided in public places, sharing sanitisers)	156	8.0
Measures by households		
Hand-washing	1899	97.4
Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers	1363	69.9
No handshake/physical greeting	1615	82.8
Use of mask	1505	77.2
Use of gloves	1102	56.5
Avoid travel	1589	81.5
Staying at home and avoid going out	1767	90.6
Avoid crowded places or gatherings with many people	1757	90.1
Maintain enough distance of at least 1 meter	1609	82.5
Avoid touching your face	1287	66.0

Source: Computed from Nigeria COVID-19 NLPS Data, 2020

The other measures put in place include establishment of isolation centres by Federal and State governments to accommodate confirmed cases; caring and treating them, and ensuring that they are isolated from other people in order to curb the spread. Also, public places were disinfected to maintain public hygiene. Meanwhile, to enforce the measures, security officers were on patrol to arrest erring individuals; water and soaps were provided in public places to maintain personal hygiene in public places. Government also shared hand sanitizers in some cases. All these measures were identified and felt by different proportions of households. However, the identification of these measures by households show that Nigerian governments actually put these measures in place.

Households also put measures in place to check the community spread of coronavirus from person to person, especially when someone could be an asymptomatic patient. Majority (97.4%) of the households engaged in hand washing, stayed at home (90.6%), and avoided going out, especially to crowded places or gatherings with many people (90.1%). In addition to these, 82.8% of the households avoided handshake or physical greetings, and 81.5% avoided travels. On other measures for maintaining personal hygiene, 77.2% used nose masks, 69.9% engaged in the use of alcohol based hand sanitizers, 66.0% avoided touching their faces, and 56.5% used hand gloves.

Satisfaction of Citizens with Governments' Response to Covid-19 Pandemic

During the lockdown period, citizens expressed their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the response of the governments to Covid-19 pandemic. Responses of Nigerian households, as shown in Table 2, indicate that only 62.3% of the households were satisfied. However, households highlighted the reasons why they were not satisfied with governments' response to the pandemic. The most important issue was that more than one-quarter (29.0%) of the households expected to receive food from the government and about one-quarter (24.3%) expected to receive money from government, but were disappointed because they did not receive assistance from government. Some other households (2.5%) believed that the Federal Government was too late in taking decisive actions to contain the spread of the virus infection. Some others (1.2%) said there was limited testing points which did not give the citizens confidence in the numbers of announced confirmed cases. Some households (1.6%) were concerned about shortage of medical materials, and some (1.6%) were concerned about lack of electricity because they were forced to stay at home. Other reasons given by households (2.2%) were that the lockdown was too strict; they experienced loss of income, arrest and maltreatment of innocent citizens who had genuine reasons to go out, refusal of some government officials to obey Covid-19 containment rules, among other socio-economic effects which are highlighted in Table 3.

Implications of Lockdown on Nigerian Households

To emphasize the implications of lockdown on Nigerian households, the effect on their socio-economic activities are presented in Table 3. These include the implications on food availability during lockdown, access to health facilities and banking facilities, access to necessities for basic hygiene, and access to educational facilities. Results show that less than half of the households had access to food items during lockdown; the highest being 37.3% (beans) and the lowest being 24.2% (guinea corn/sorghum). Other food items include rice, cassava and yam which are household staple in Nigeria. With the nature of coronavirus infection, personal hygiene becomes very important to be able to carry out containment measures such as hand washing. Higher proportion (68.0%) of households were able to buy soap, while less than half (48.1%) were able to buy cleaning supplies. The reason for not being able to access food and necessities for personal hygiene, according to Table 4, were because commodities were out of stock due to restricted movement and closure of local markets. Limited supply of commodities led to very high prices, making them unaffordable to households who had lost income sources during the period.

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Less than half of the households had access to health facilities. The health facilities include medicine and medical treatment which were accessed by 40.9% and 25.3% of households respectively (Table 3). As shown in Table 4, households complained of lack of money to buy drugs. In terms of medical treatment, there were no available medical personnel to attend to them since the services of most medical personnel were diverted to Covid-19 activities and hospital facilities were full. Asides movement restriction, some households were afraid to visit the hospital because of Covid-19 infection; they bought drugs from pharmacy and resorted to self-medication for minor ailments. In the same vein, only 39.0% of the households had access to banking facilities (Table 3). There was closure of banks and businesses of money agents, and banks could not load enough money in ATM machines during the period (Table 4). Due to movement restrictions, people could not reach banks or ATM machines that were distant from their homes, and when banks opened at times, there were great crowds of customers, which persisted to the time of eased lockdown (June – August).

Of great importance was the education of children during lockdown. From Table 3, majority (76.2%) of households had children that attended school before lockdown, while less than half (48.6%) had children who engaged in education activities within 7 days during lockdown. There were 2 prominent types of education activities; children studied on their own (32.2%) and children were taught by parent or other household member (28.0%). Households where children had contact with their teachers were 15.2%. It can be seen that there were very few households where online learning were possible. Less than one-tenth of households were able to use mobile learning apps (3.6%), watched educational television programmes (8.8%) or listened to educational programmes on radio (9.5%). Some children were able to work on assignments provided by teachers (8.3%) while others (1.5%) learnt religious knowledge. The results underscores the importance of promoting online learning through provision of infrastructural facilities. Many parents could not afford facilities that will help their wards to learn online. Also, there was erratic supply of electricity to power televisions so that children can watch educational programmes on television.

Table 2 Satisfaction of citizens with government response to Covid-19 pandemic

Satisfaction with government response	Frequency (N= 1950)	Percentage
Are you satisfied with Government response? (Yes)	1215	62.3
Why are you not satisfied with Government response?		
Limited testing points	23	1.2
No food assistance from the government	566	29.0
No money from government	473	24.3
Late response by government	49	2.5
No electricity	31	1.6
Shortage of medical materials	31	1.6
Others (lockdown was too strict; arrest and maltreatment of innocent citizens who had genuine reasons to go out, etcetera)	42	2.2

Source: Computed from Nigeria COVID-19 NLPS Data, 2020

Table 3 Implications of lockdown on Nigerian households

Socio-economic variable	Frequency (N=1950)	Percentage
Food availability		
Was the household able to buy rice?	698	35.8
Was the household able to buy beans?	727	37.3
Was the household able to buy cassava?	595	30.5
Was the household able to buy yam?	404	20.7
Was the household able to buy guinea corn/sorghum?	472	24.2
Access to necessities for household hygiene		
Was the household able to buy soap?	1326	68.0
Was the household able to buy cleaning supplies?	938	48.1
Access to health facilities		
Was the household able to buy medicine?	797	40.9
Was the household able to access medical treatment?	493	25.3
Access to banking facilities		
Was the household able to successfully access the bank, money agent or ATM?	760	39.0
Access to Education		
Were children attending school before school closed?	1485	76.2
Were children engaged in any education activities in the past 7 days?	947	48.6
Type of education activities		
Completed assignments provided by the teacher	162	8.3
Used mobile learning apps	70	3.6
Watched educational TV programs	172	8.8
Listened to educational programs on radio	185	9.5
Studying/reading on their own	628	32.2
Taught by parent or other household member	546	28.0
Session/meeting with lesson teacher(tutor)	148	7.6
Others (Islamic lessons, bible lessons)	30	1.5
Are the children or anyone else in the household in contact with their teachers	296	15.2

Source: Computed from Nigeria COVID-19 NLPS Data, 2020

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Table 4 Reasons for not accessing Food and Services

Food/necessities for personal hygiene
Out of stock
Local markets closed
Limited/no transportation
Movement restrictions
Too high price
No money to buy
Health Services
No money to buy drugs
No medical personnel available
Turned away because facility was full
Movement restrictions
Others (afraid to go to the hospital because of Covid-19, had to buy drugs in the pharmacy, self-medicated for minor ailments, etcetera)
Banking facilities
Bank/money agent was closed
No money in ATM
Movement restrictions
Afraid to go out because of corona virus
Others (distance of the bank, the crowd at the bank was much)

Source: Computed from Nigeria COVID-19 NLPS Data, 2020

Trend of Covid-19 during the Periods of Lockdown and Eased Lockdown

Based on daily reports of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control on numbers of confirmed cases, numbers of discharged cases and deaths, the monthly averages were computed to cover lockdown period (mid-March to June) and eased lockdown (July and August). Figure 1 shows the increasing trend of confirmed cases and deaths during the lockdown period of mid-March to June, and reached the peak after partial ease of lockdown in July. However, there was substantial decrease, showing a sharp drop in the number of confirmed cases in August and a moderate drop in the number of deaths, which are desirable in flattening the Covid-19 curve. The number of discharged cases also increased during the lockdown period, and over the eased lockdown period, especially in August. This is also desirable.

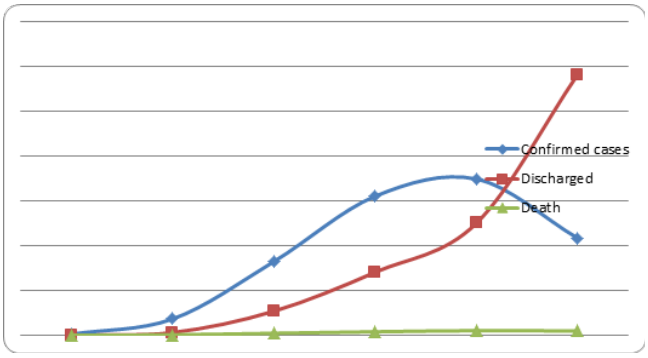

Figure 1 Trend of Covid-19 during the periods of lockdown and eased lockdown

Source: Computed from NCDC COVID-19 Data, 2020

Table 5 shows the magnitude of change in monthly averages over the lockdown and eased lockdown period. The number of confirmed cases increased from an average of 138 in March to 10,857 in August. The differences in monthly average increased from 1,699 in April to 7,293 in June, but there was a sharp difference of (-1,699) in July and further sharp difference of -6,600 in August. For number of deaths, there was an increase from 2 in March to 520 in July, but decreased to 493 in August. The difference in the average number of deaths over the months shows that it increased from 54 in March to 175 in April, but reduced to 164 and 125 in July and August, with a desirable difference of -27 in August. The average number of discharged cases increased from 9 in March to 29,122 in August, with the difference increasing over the lockdown and eased lockdown periods. Although citizens complained of inadequate testing, it is expected that the numbers of infections and deaths will reduce, but the number of discharged cases will continue to increase in proportion to the number of confirmed cases. This is necessary to flatten the curve of Covid-19 infection.

Table 5 Trend of Covid-19 during the periods of lockdown and eased lockdown

Period	Month	Average number of cases					
		Confirmed cases	Difference	Discharged cases	Difference	Deaths	Difference
Lockdown	March	138	-	9	-	2	-
	April	1,837	1,699	310	301	56	54
	May	8,239	6,402	2,697	2,387	231	175
	June	15,532	7,293	7,049	4,352	395	164
Eased lockdown	July	17,457	1,925	12,516	5,467	520	125
	August	10,857	-6,600	29,122	16,606	493	-27

Source: Computed from NCDC COVID-19 Data, 2020

Effects of Eased Lockdown on Socio-economic Activities of Households in Nigeria: July to August

Despite the efforts made by the Nigerian government to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the country, the number of confirmed cases continued to rise. By NCDC reports, Nigeria recorded the highest daily cases of Covid-19 on June 28, 2020 which was 778. The story changed on July 1 when a new highest figure of 790 confirmed cases was recorded, and this made the total number of infected people to rise to 26,484 with 603 deaths and 10,152 recoveries. As of the time of reporting, 35 states and the FCT had recorded at least a case of the disease. Only one state, Cross River, was yet to officially report any case of the virus. Grada World[30] however reported on the same day that Covid-19 restrictions have been eased nationwide by authorities. Travel between states was permitted and airports reopened for domestic flights, bus transportation also resumed, but railways remain closed. Students in terminal classes were also allowed to resume in preparation for examinations. However, despite the ease, nationwide curfew was still in place, gathering of over 20 people remained banned, the use of facemasks was mandated and all sporting events were also still on hold.

Various guidelines were given by each state government to prevent students from Covid-19 infection after resumption. Oyo state government, for example, put various measures in place against resumption. There was training of teachers and school heads on how to monitor and report illness with Covid-19 symptoms. Incident Managers were appointed for each school; they would report any emergency directly to Emergency Operation Centres (EOCs) that had been set up in the state capital and at zonal levels. There was

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compulsory hand-washing points at the school entrances and at the entrance of each classroom, as well as alcohol-based hand sanitizers for the use of students and teachers. In view of this, students were to come to school with facemasks.[31] Lagos State Government also announced resumption date for public and private schools as August 3, 2020, after over 3 months of being shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic. In the same vein, the Federal Government announced resumption of secondary school exit classes to be August 4, 2020.[32] Based on this, the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) commenced two weeks later, that is, August 17, 2020. Meanwhile, tertiary institutions still remained shut nationwide.

During the 2020 world MSMEs (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises) Day that was virtually held on June 30, the Federal Government reiterated that the lingering Covid-19 pandemic affected the MSMEs most adversely.[33] MSMEs employs 76% of the nation's labour force and the sector contributes about 50% to the GDP. This revealed that the pandemic had greatly affected the country's economy at the time. The infected people were still increasing and as at July 6, the only state without case, Cross River State, also recorded 5 cases. As of 9th of July, a total of 30,249 cases and 684 fatalities have been registered in Nigeria. Federal Government also helped Nigerians that were stranded overseas due to Covid-19 to get back to their father's land. Two hundred and forty-seven Nigerians who were stranded in Malaysia and Thailand were safely evacuated and returned home on July 11.[34]

Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) announced that four hundred Nigerian health workers on the frontline of the battle against the Coronavirus pandemic have tested positive for the virus.[35] JOHESU claimed that although health workers have been advised to use full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before attending to patients, many did not have access to this equipment and as a result, they requested for health hazard allowance. Federal Government paid health hazard allowance to eligible federal health workers after the union had embark on one week strike and imposed it on governors to start paying to state health workers but they rejected the imposition.[36] By 26th of July, Nigeria has surpassed 40,000 cases of infected people; 40,532 confirmed case, 17,374 recoveries and 858 deaths. The second phase of eased lockdown was extended by the Federal Government for another one week from 27th of July 2020.

As at August 7, there was 45,687 confirmed cases, 32,637 recoveries and 936 deaths. It was also reported on the same day that World Bank had approved the sum of $114 million to assist Nigeria in its fight against the coronavirus pandemic. The fund was to help Nigeria prevent, identify and respond to the dangers associated with the coronavirus disease with special focus on the various states and the FCT. Also, in August, United States' President fulfilled the promise he made to Nigeria's president in April, 200 ventilators were handed over to the Federal Government in this regard.[37]

The daily confirmed cases found in the country started to decrease in August. On August 4, Nigeria reported 288 Covid-19 new cases and 290 one week later, while another low figure of 252 was recorded on August 25. The Director General of the NCDC, Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, attributed this to the reduction in Covid-19 infection rates across the country.[38] The Federal Government announced the resumption of International Flight operations from August 29, 2020.[39]

On the 1st of September 2020, 239 new confirmed cases and 10 deaths were recorded in Nigeria; 54,247 cases have been confirmed, 42,010 cases have been discharged and 1,023 deaths have been recorded in 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. However, with the increasing cases, schools will resume in September. September 21st was set tentatively for school resumption by Osun State Government.[40] Kogi State Government approved September 14 for the resumption of primary, secondary and tertiary schools. However, the Federal Government advised state governments to reopen schools in phases.

Conclusion

Measures were put in place and enforced by the Federal Government of Nigeria to reduce the spread of coronavirus infection. Households also put measures in place to check the community spread of coronavirus from person to person, especially when someone could be an asymptomatic patient. The lockdown imposed by government (mid-March to June) had implications on food availability, access to health facilities and banking facilities, access to necessities for basic hygiene, and access to educational facilities. Households expected to receive food and money from government, but were disappointed because they did not receive assistance from government. However, during the period of eased lockdown (July and August), businesses have stated opening up in phases, banking facilities were improved though there were still crowds at the banks. There was better access to health facilities and gradual reopening of schools. There was increasing trend of confirmed cases and deaths during the lockdown period of mid-March to June, and reached the peak after partial ease of lockdown in July, with a sharp drop in the number of confirmed cases in August and a moderate drop in the number of deaths. The number of discharged cases also increased during the lockdown period, and over the eased lockdown period, especially in August. Although citizens complained of inadequate testing, it is expected that the numbers of infections and deaths will reduce, but the number of discharged cases will continue to increase in proportion to the number of confirmed cases. This is necessary to flatten the curve of Covid-19 infection.

The period of eased lockdown might lead to negligence on the part of households in observing safety protocols. Continuous awareness on observing the safety guidelines are necessary to finally flatten the curve. Also, government needs a more effective update of National Social Register of Poor and Vulnerable Households in order to help the target group with palliatives. This will ease the negative effects of the lockdown on households. Since education is very important in human capital development of any country, the path of infrastructural development should be followed by governments and parents to enhance online learning so that this will reduce the vulnerability of young people to shocks in their education.

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Declaration of competing interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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