

Entrepreneurship and Small Scale Businesses in the Era of Coronavirus Pandemic in Oyo State, Nigeria

JAMES A. ISHOLA, THADDEUS T. ITYONZUGHUL, ASOR GBAMWUAN
KolaDaisi University, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract. This paper focuses on Coronavirus Disease (commonly referred to as COVID-19) and entrepreneurship, and small scale businesses in Oyo State, Nigeria. Due to the grave consequences emanating from the outbreak of COVID-19, a lot of studies were conducted by scholars of different shades of life to find out ways of mitigating the effects of the virus. However, most of these studies were full of generalizations since some of them centre on the entire world, others on the whole of Africa, and Nigeria thereby lacking in-depth analysis of issues. This study thus limits itself to discussing the challenges impeding entrepreneurship and small scale businesses as a result of the pandemic, with a specific focus on Oyo State. To accomplish this task, the paper attempts an analysis of the phenomena under consideration with the use of social distance theory. The study adopts interdisciplinary methodology, in line with the use of primary, secondary and tertiary sources; employing analytical and empirical tools in the course of investigation and analysis of the subject. It espouses the plethora of challenges faced by the entrepreneurs and operators of small scale business in the area under consideration. These challenges range from low patronage, closure of businesses, restrictions of movements, the paucity of funds, and loan default, among others. The paper reveals the roles of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through Oyo State Government in mitigating the challenges associated with this class of businessmen and the COVID-19 victims in the state generally. The study concludes that

the efforts made at resuscitating the businesses under review are marginally felt; since many business owners did not benefit from any palliative. In this wise, the paper recommends amongst others social distancing and strict monitoring of the accurate distribution of COVID-19 palliatives to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on entrepreneurship and small scale businesses.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Small Scale Business, Coronavirus Pandemic, and Oyo State.

1. Introduction

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19 pandemic) currently worsens the global and Africa's huge health (both infectious and non-communicable conditions), economic, humanitarian, psychological and technological challenges. Humankind has become vulnerable to the pandemic worldwide, Nigeria inclusive. The pandemic has affected all sectors of the economy: the religious, educational, entertainment, tourism, and the economic / business sectors. Besides these sectors, the pandemic has covered all sectors of the societies the world over with its diverse challenges. It shook the entire world; the most developed countries of the world like the United State (US), Germany, Italy, and China, among others, are suffers more than Third World Countries (TWCs). There is no scientific evidence to attest to this but some researchers believe that TWCs are less affected because their weather is not

favourable to harbour the virus. However, what is more, fundamental to note is that COVID-19 has shaken and is still shaking the whole world. Commenting on this matter, Obama (2020) clearly states that:

This pandemic has fully finally torn back the curtain on the idea that so many of the folks in charge note what they are doing. This pandemic is shaking the status quo and laid bare a lot of our country's deep-seated problems from massive economic inequality to ongoing racial disparities to lack of basic health cares for people who need it.

The above depicts that COVID-19 has negatively affected the global economy and businesses. To corroborate the dismal impact of COVID-19 pandemic, KPMG Professional Services (2020) discloses that: “ the spread of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing severe disruption to society, businesses in Nigeria and globally”. Similarly, Musa & Aifuwa (2020) allude that, the negative effects of the invisible enemy is ravaging the entire world's population, leading to global economic crises. Businesses across the globe are falling; the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening their status or progress. Entrepreneurship and small scale business in Nigeria have their fair share of these negative effects of the invisible enemy as their survival is at stake.

Extrapolating from the above premise, this study highlights the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on entrepreneurship and small scale businesses in Oyo State, Nigeria. To do this effectively, the paper provides the statement of the research problem, objectives, scope and methodology of the study. It also attempts a review of related literature focusing on the conceptual clarifications of key variables that forms the topic. The study also delves into the history of the COVID, while also adopts the social distance thesis to analyse the effects of the pandemic on entrepreneurship and small scale business in Oyo State. The efforts of the FGN and Oyo State in mitigating the effects of COVID-19 are also highlighted. The paper in the final section provides a recap of the basic ideals encapsulated in the study and also made valuable suggestions.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

There are ample studies that treat issues relating to Coronavirus pandemic and businesses generally. Some of these studies discuss the effects of the pandemic on tourism while others explain how it affects the education industry. Other studies analyses how Coronavirus affect the transport sector (whether by air, water or land). But these studies did not focus directly on two variables of entrepreneurship and small scale businesses. It is this connection that this study serves as an intervention to treat how COVID-19 pandemic negatively affects entrepreneurship activities and small scale business enterprise in Oyo State in Western Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to empirically examine the effects of COVID-19 on entrepreneurship and small scale business in Oyo State of Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To fill the gap that exists in extant literature by analysing the effects of COVID-19 on entrepreneurship and small scale business in the area under consideration.
- Highlights the challenges facing the businesses under consideration in the State.
- To assess the role of the Oyo State Government in ameliorating the challenges of entrepreneurship and small scale businesses in the era of COVID-19.

1.3 Scope of the Study

This study centres on entrepreneurship and small scale businesses in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic with a specific focus on Oyo State. The choice of this location was informed by three basic considerations. First, is the fact that Oyo State has a substantial number of COVID-19 as well as a good number of entrepreneurs and small scall businessmen and women. Secondly, there is no much of research works on the effects of Corona Virus (COVID-19) on the

phenomena under review in Oyo State. There are also other areas in the Country that practice entrepreneurship and small scale businesses but this study limits itself to Oyo State for manageability leading to in-depth analysis of issues regarding the phenomenon under investigation,

1.4 Methodology

This paper employs the interdisciplinary approach to analyse the effects of COVID-19 on entrepreneurship and small scale businesses in Oyo State. The fieldwork consists essentially of identifying printed materials in form of books, journals articles, internet materials that treat the issue of the pandemic in Ibadan, Nigeria and elsewhere in the world. Besides, oral interviews were also conducted with those in business industries (both women and men), traders in the study area as well as members of the general public. The information gathered from these sources is carefully analysed and marched with written sources to enhance a better understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on phenomena under consideration in Oyo State.

Oyo State is located in the South-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria with her capital in Ibadan. Oyo State consists of 33 Local Governments Areas (LGAs) and 29 Local Council Development Areas and has a projected population of 8,929,410 with an annual growth rate of 3.2 (15). The landmass of the state is about 28,454 square kilometres and it is bounded in the South by Ogun State, Kwara State in the North, partly bounded by Ogun State and the Republic of Benin in the West, while in the East by Osun State. Ibadan is the capital of Oyo State and Nigeria largest city by geographical area. It has a population of over 3 million, with 11 Local government Areas in its metropolis (Usman *et al*, 2020).

2. Literature Review / Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur is a person who set up a business and takes on financial risks with the hope that he/she will make profit. In line with

this view, Francis Nwokike the founder of The Total Entrepreneurs observed that: ‘an entrepreneur is an individual who sets up business or businesses, identifies and solves problems, creative, innovative, opportunist, risk-taker, self-starter, and open-minded with the hope of making a profit from the enterprise’ (hetotalentrepreneuers.com, 05-10-2020). The implication of this argument to this work is that, an entrepreneur is quick to identify opportunities within a given market or region and devices ways of curbing all potential and existing obstacles within the market environment to his advantage.

Entrepreneurship on the other hand pertains to the action of a risk taker, a creative venture into a business. It is on this note that David Gumpert (1986:32) putting the case of America into study noted that: ‘is the stuff of which American heroes are made’. Entrepreneurship is therefore the activity that involves the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to reduce new goods and services, ways of organizing markets, processes and raw materials through organizing efforts that previously had not existed (Thokozani, 2012:94). To be enterprising is to keep your eyes open and your mind active. It is to be skilled enough, confident enough, creative enough, and disciplined enough to seize opportunities that present themselves regardless of the economy’ (Nwanfor, 2007:37). In this study, entrepreneurship is a process of utilizing business opportunities by individuals so as to make profit.

2.2 Small Scale Businesses

Conceptualizing small scale business is highly problematic arising from the fact that its definitions varies from country to country, from industry to industry and from one financial institution to another. Compounding this challenge as observed by J.N. Obi (2015:4) is the fact that:

If project cost is used as the criteria for measuring the size of a business, price inflation may render the definition meaningless over time. If the number of employees engaged in a business forms the yardstick for measurement, it may not be realistic bearing in mind that some

firms are capital intensive needing only very few employees.

Take for example, the World Bank definition of small scale enterprise which established that any project whose total cost is not more than N30,000.00 has lost its relevance, at least in Nigeria, due to the effect of inflation. Similarly, the Federal Ministry of Industry's definition in 2001 which emphasizes that: 'a small scale business is an enterprise whose total cost including working capital but excluding cost of land, does not fall below One Million Naira and does not exceed Forty Million Naira and having number of employees between 11 to 35 workers' does not project the reality of such industries in Nigeria hence they are managed by one or two persons with little capital below 500, 000 naira.

That notwithstanding all these challenges, it is generally agreed by scholars that a small scale business is the one that is not large in terms of its size, scope of operation, financial involvement and the workforce. Most small scale businesses are owned by one entrepreneur. Sometimes a small scale enterprise is said to be a firm that is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation (Nicholas, 1997). Reinforcing this argument, the Committee for Economic Development in the United States of America considered a business to be small when, at least, two of the following features prevail:

The person managing the business is the owner. Capital is provided by the individual owner(s) of the business. The area of operation is local. The size of the business within the industry is small when compared with the bigger units in its field (Obi, 2015:4).

This definition captures what small scale business in context of this study means. This is because most small scale businesses in Oyo State belong to one or two of the mentioned features. Considering the rate of high unemployment in Nigeria, small scale businesses have crucial role to play by providing massive employment and also contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and economic growth of the nation generally (Oshagbemi, 1983).

2.3 Coronavirus

Coronavirus also known as COVID-19 is derived from Latin word *corona* which means a 'crown'. This taxonomy was based on the microscopic attributes and appearance of the virus with a fringe of large, bulbous surface projections creating an image similar to solar corona or halo (Almeida, 1968). Coronaviruses therefore, are cluster of Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans and birds, they cause respiratory tract infections that can vary from mild to fatal one. Mild illnesses in humans include some cases of the common cold (which is also caused by other viruses, predominantly rhinoviruses), while more deadly types can cause SARS, MERS, and COVID-19 (Feigin & Cherry, 2017). The World Health Organization (WHO) (<https://www.who.int/emergencies>, 05-10-2020) streamlined some of the major and minor symptoms of COVID-19, thus:

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms.

WHO (<https://www.who.int/emergencies>, 05-10-2020) also pointed out clearly how the viruses spread from one person to another. They asserted that:

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease spreads primarily from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or speaks. These droplets are relatively heavy, do not travel far and quickly sink to the ground. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in these droplets from a person infected with the virus. This is why it is important to stay at least 1 meter) away from others. These droplets can land on objects and surfaces around the person

such as tables, doorknobs and handrails. People can become infected-by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Arising from these findings, coronavirus in the Context of this study is a novel disease that affects respiratory system of the victims (both men and animals) especially the aged and sometimes leading to their deaths. It is the worst enemy of humanity in the 21st century as it has caused the worst global health crises and death toll compelling state to embark on total shutdown of the economy as a preventive measure.

2.4 Pandemic

The word “Pandemic” is gotten from the Greek word pan which means “all” and demos “the people ”(Qiu, Rutherford, Mao, & Chu, 2017:3). Therefore, pandemic as a concept is taken to mean a widespread epidemic of infectious disease throughout the whole of a country or one or more continents at the same time (Honigsbaum, 2009). In modern usage, the term pandemic encompasses an: “epidemic ...over a very wide area and usually affecting a large proportion of the population”, and “distributed or occurring widely throughout a region, country, continent or globally”, among others (Morens et al., 2009). Supporting this position WHO (2011a) was more forthcoming when they observed that a pandemic influenza is:

A situation in which a new and highly pathogenic viral subtype, one to which no one (or few) in the human population has immunological resistance and which is easily transmissible between humans, establishes a foothold in the human population, at which point it rapidly spreads worldwide.

Extrapolating from the above definition, a disease is acknowledged as being pandemic when it undergone the following scope, namely:

- Affects a wider geographical area, often global;
- Infects a very large number of people;

- Often caused by a new virus or a new strain of a virus that has been dormant for many years.
- Spreads quickly in humans as there is little to no existing immunity;
- Can cause a high number of deaths;
- And because of the need to control the spread of the disease, there is often social disruption, unrest and economic loss.

COVID-19 has undergone these attributes to be considered as a pandemic disease. It has claimed millions of lives in both advanced and underdeveloped countries of the globe thereby posing serious threat to peaceful co-existence of the man, and hampering socio-economic development.

3. Historical Perspective of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic in Oyo State, Nigeria

All studies conducted thus far, have shown that Coronavirus which emanated from Wuhan Province in China, have exerted outside Asian continent and covered almost every part of the globe, with very grave consequences in all spheres of life. In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Health has confirmed a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) case in Lagos State, Nigeria. The case, which was confirmed on the 27th of February 2020, is the first case to be reported in Nigeria since the beginning of the outbreak in China in January 2020. The case is an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy to Lagos, Nigeria on the 25th of February 2020. He was confirmed by the Virology Laboratory of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, part of the Laboratory Network of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. The patient is clinically stable, with no serious symptoms, and is being managed at the Infectious Disease Hospital in Yaba, Lagos(*National Disease Control Centre*, 2020).

In the study area, Oyo State, the pandemic began when a 42-year-old male UK returnee on board with the Virgin airline through Muritala Muhammed International Airport on 12th March 2020. He was picked up by his driver and

drove straight home to Bodija Ibadan. He immediately went on self-isolation but developed symptoms of fever with two temperature readings of 37.9 and 38.2 on 13th March 2020. Laboratory sample of his nasopharyngeal swab was collected on 16th March 2020 and the result came back positive for COVID-19 on 21st March 2020. The Federal Ministry of Health was notified of the outbreak (Usman *et al*, 2020).

4. Theoretical Framework

The study explores Social Distance Theory which argues that effective distance between and amongst groups is paramount in reducing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Social distance as a theoretical construct originates in the works of Georg Simmel (1908): *The Sociology of Space* in which he outlined the ‘geometry of social life’. He saw social distance as a complex interpretation of sociality as forms of ‘distance’ in both a geometric and a metaphoric sense. In his another work titled: *The Stranger*, Simmel sheds light on the root and his conception of social distance theory. The theory was later on modified by Simmel’s American student Robert Park and his associate at the Chicago school of sociology, Emory Bogardus (1933). For Bogardus, social distance is a function of affective distance between the members of two groups: social distance studies the center of attention which is on the feeling reactions of persons toward other persons and toward groups of people. Thus, for him, social distance is essentially a measure of how much or little sympathy the members of a group feel for another group.

Putting into consideration how social distance can mitigate transmittable epidemics, Reluga (2010) notes that social distancing practices are changes in behavior that prevent disease transmission by reducing contact rates between susceptible individuals and infected individuals who may transmit the disease. This theory can be applicable in reducing the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. However, the major drawback of the theory arises from the fact that the benefits of social distancing depend on the extent to which it is used by individuals. This is because, individuals are sometimes reluctant to

pay the costs inherent in social distancing, and this can limit its effectiveness as a control measure. Although, the importance of social distancing stemming moderate transmittable diseases cannot be overemphasized. This is because of its strategic usefulness in delaying the spread of epidemic until a vaccine becomes widely available. But in highly transmittable epidemics with no available vaccine, the social distancing rather becomes meaningless. Putting into consideration the mode of transmission of COVID-19 (hand shake, body contact, cough, *et cetera*), social distancing could be an effective measure to reduce its spread hence the utilitarian value of this theory to our study.

5. Effects of COVID-19 on Entrepreneurship and Small Scale Businesses in Oyo State, Nigeria

The effects of COVID-19 on entrepreneurship and small scale businesses in Oyo State are legion. For this study, these effects are discussed particularly on pure-water business, Point of Sale (POS), cyclists activities, foodstuff vendors, mattresses depot, back soap industry and pharmaceuticals, among others. To enhance a better understanding of the phenomena under review, these effects are discussed one after the other as seem in the succeeding paragraphs.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had scaled down the level of pure water production in Oyo State. According to an informant, who is also the owner of a pure-water factory, Mr Adeyemi (2020) recounted his experience that, “ when COVID-19 was on its peak it was very difficult to get materials that are used in the production of sachet and table water and as such there was a reduction in the production ”. To corroborate the above information, Egbesola (2020) who is the National President, Association of Small Business Owners of Nigeria (ASBON) clearly stated that:

Coronavirus was already harming the operations of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in the country (Oyo State inclusive) as some were cutting down production, I have had several calls from members that are into manufacturing of pure-water. They can no longer get enough supply of

polythene for making sachet water and bottles because they are imported from China. No ship is leaving China currently because their factories have stopped production.

This depicts that COVID-19 have seriously entrepreneurship and small scale business in Oyo State and Nigeria on a broader perspective. Commenting on the negative impact of COVID-19 on the phenomena under study, Degun Agboade, the President and Chairman of Council, Nigerian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME), poignantly stipulates that:

The pandemic is affecting us as we can no longer get a supply of our raw materials. Even micro-businesses that they buy and sell cannot get suppl of the goods they buy because most of them are majorly imported from China. Some are already shutting down since there are no materials for production. A lot of our containers are waiting on seaports in China for shipping but nothing is happening because of COVID-19 (Agboade, 2020).

With the effects of the pandemic on production and transportation from China to Nigeria, entrepreneurship and small scale businesses in Oyo State also bear the brunt. China being the major supply of industrial raw materials to Nigeria has a very positive impact on the Country. Whatever affects the Chinese industry affect Nigeria whether in large or small scale businesses as demonstrated above.

Relatedly, COVID-19 pandemic the Point of Sales (POS) services. One of the operators of this business in Ojo, close to Oyo Roundabout, Justice Akaa explained that before the pandemic his business was thriving very much better. This is an implication that his profit was higher compared to what he was able to get during peak COVID-19 pandemic (Oral interview with Akaa, 2020). He disclosed that before the pandemic under review his daily profit was between N2,000- N2,500 respectively but during the apogee of the COVID his daily profit was between the range of N1,500 to N 2, 000. However, as at the time of this study number of COVID-19 cases in the State and his business earnings are normal (Oral interview with, Akaa, 2020).

Furthermore, Coronavirus had affected the activities and earnings of the cyclists in the study area. There was a serious shortfall in their earnings since the State government declared a curfew to compel people to stay indoors for some hours for some time. In Oyo State, the curfew was very strict in the biggest towns in the State such as Ibadan, Ogbomoso, Oyo, Iseyin, Shaki, Eruwa and Moniya to be precisely (Oral interview with Busari, 2020). In these towns especially, many law defaulters were arrested and punished accordingly; some were taken to detention centres while others were compelled to pay a fine of N 7,000. Lamenting on the daunting effects of the pandemic, a cyclist (*Okada rider*) in Ibadan metropolis, Basil Kwaghaaondo alluded that:

I and my business suffered the effect of Coronavirus pandemic severely since I was usually indoors. I was afraid of coming out to look for passengers to carry with the fear of being arrested by the security operatives and contacting the virus. Even when I gathered some courage to come out to work; it was very difficult to get passengers to carry since the curfew was ongoing. As a result of these, my earnings declined drastically from the range of N 7,000 – N 700 respectively (Oral interview with Kwaghaaondo, 2020).

Besides, Coronavirus had negatively affected the indigenous soap industry; when the pandemic became heightened in the State a lot of our customers stop coming and it became difficult to sale. A little production that used to be exhausted in three to four days started talking a period one month. Even when the buyers came to approach us, they seek to be given by loan rather than to pay cash. When the issue of buying on loan became too prominent some producers of the soap temporary suspended their production (Oral interview with Ashola, 2020). Similarly, food vendor also experienced the consequences of the pandemic. Since the State prevented so gatherings of more than 30 persons and subsequently embarked on the total shutdown of the economy it difficult for them sale.

Despite all these, Coronavirus has added profit to those who are into pharmacy businesses. This

is because COVID-19 killed a lot of Chinese, Americans, Italians, Germans, who are considered to be citizens of developed countries of the globe and created has created terror on the Africans, Nigerians, and the people of Oyo State on particular. To deal with this fear, they started buying speedily some medications to boost the immune their system and as such those who are into pharmaceuticals made a lot of gains. Agreeing on the preceding, a saleswoman with Goodwill Pharmacy, Yemisi Adesina revealed that:

During the peak of COVID-19, their pharmacy made attractive profits. Many people came and obtained drugs to boost their immune system to prevent been contacted with the virus. Some of these drugs were drugs include Chloroquine (QC), Vitamin C. In addition to the drugs were hand sanitizer and face masks.

As a result of the high demand of the aforementioned items, their prices were

astronomically increased. For example, before the COVID small sizes of hand sanitizer was sold at N 200 while the big size was between the range of N500 -600 as the case may be. However, during an outbreak of Coronavirus the small size was sold for N700 while the big one goes for N2,800. Interestingly, before COVID-19 pandemic, our pharmacy was generated between N 70,000-N 8,0000. When there was an increase in the number of the cases of the pandemic our business started generating from N 160, 000 and above per day (Oral interview with Adesina, 2020).

Indications are that, even though many people suffered the effects of Coronavirus pandemic in Oyo State some people took advantage of the situation and made a lot of money out of it. Whatever we may say, it should be noted that COVID-19 pandemic has done more harm than good to entrepreneurship and small scales businesses.

Table 1: Daily Income from Entrepreneurship and Small Scale Businesses before and during the Peak of COVID-19

S/N	Business Name	Location of the Business	Amount Generated Before COVID 19 Per Day (₦)	Amount Generated During COVID 19 Per Day (₦)
1	Goodwill Pharmacy	Ojo, Ibadan	70,000 - 80,000	160,000 - 200,000
2	Theresa Chukwuemeka Foods	Ojo, Ibadan	100,000- 120,000	300,000 - 500,000
3	Cyclists (Basil Kwaghaaondo)	Itinerant, Ibadan	4,000 -7,000	500- 700
4	Instance POS	Ojo, Ibadan	2,000- 2,500	1,500-2,000
5	Indigenous Soap Industry	Awe	2,500- 5,000	6,00- 1,000
6	Prince Investments (Mattreses)	Ojo, Ibadan	460,000- 1000,000	100,000-300,000
7	Newspaper Vendor	Shaki	500,000-7,000	1,500- 2,000
8	Read Meat Seller	Eruwa	300,000- 700,000	100,000- 200,000
9	Nkechi Chima(Food Vendor)	Ogbomoshu	10,000- 15,000	3,000- 5,000

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

The above table shows that there was astronomical inflation in the Oyo State during COVID-19. However, some businesses were not thriving well and some have shut down. However, those who were into pharmaceuticals made more profit than ever before. Those who were selling foodstuffs also made a lot of profit since people buy in larger quantities because of the curfew and uncertainties. However, food vending (selling of cooked food) business was not viable since people were not always allowed

to go out of their house and the fear of eaten contaminated food. This called for the intervention of the State government curtail challenges emanated as a result of the pandemic in question.

Efforts by the Oyo State Government in Mitigating COVID-19 Pandemic for a Conducive Business Environment

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic drew the attention of the Federal Government of

Nigeria and its different agencies to initiate several health, economic, security, and social responses to contain the disease and its impact on the society. The Nigerian Presidency provides leadership for policy direction and activities of the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The president first banned flights from countries with high rates ongoing transmission of COVID-19 on March 18, 2020, and after 5 days, announced a total closure of the nation's airspace and land borders (Alagboso & Abubakar, 2020). This was followed by provision of 500 billion naira for COVID-19 crisis intervention fund to enhance states for critical healthcare expenses. Federal government agencies and parastatals like Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Federal ministries of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Information, Humanitarian Affairs, among others created a synergy with the federal and states governments to fight the pandemic.

On March 9th, 2020 the president constituted the Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19 headed by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha, with membership from various ministries, departments and parastatals. Since then, the PTF has coordinated a multi-stakeholder response to the pandemic, while providing technical and material support to states to manage the outbreak. The PTF also serves as an advisory body to the president on specific decisions such as imposing and lifting lockdowns and provides daily feedback to Nigerians on the work being done to reduce the spread of the virus through daily media briefings with journalists. (Alagboso & Abubakar, 2020).

In line with COVID-19 guidelines implemented by the federal government, the NCDC in alliance with Oyo state government imposed the follow steps. First, was implementation of dusk-to-dawn curfew from (7p.m. to 6a.m.) with effect on 29th March, 2020. This means, all movements were prohibited during this period except for essential services like medical attention, security, food suppliers amongst others. In his words, Governor Seyi Makinde

wrote on his Twitter handle @seyiamakinde, thus:

I have directed that the following additional measures be put in place: a dusk to dawn curfew (7 PM to 6 AM); no gatherings of more than ten people...from Sunday night, March 29, 2020, all markets will be closed except those selling perishable food items... also, inter-state transportation into and out of the state will be suspended except vehicles carrying food items, medical, pharmaceutical and petroleum products. This takes effect from Sunday night, March 29, 2020. All measures will be reviewed on a weekly basis.

Other majors apart from dusk-to-dawn curfew were social distancing, suspension of religious activities, disbandment of gathering with more than 30 people and so and so forth. The executors of these directives were inter-agency team comprising of Oyo State Road Transport Management Authority, Nigerian Police Force, Federal Road Safety Corps, military among others. However, security agents became rather oppressive by extorting and humiliating the masses. For example, numerous videos emerged online showing how security agents humiliate civilians by physical assault including slapping, whipping, and subjecting lockdown violators to diverse abuses (Ojewale, 2020). It was in this regard that human rights activists, Human Rights Commission, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) like ActionAid, CLEEN Foundation, *et cetera* agitated against these brutalities.

Another vital role the Oyo State government played in stemming the spread of COVID-19 was series of free COVID-19 test cross the various communities in the state. For example, community based centres for free test of COVID-19 were located at State Hospital Oyo, General Hospital Saki, General Hospital Iseyin, General Hospital Igboora, General Hospital Akpata-Ibadan, Lekan salami Stadium Adamasingba Ibadan, Health is Wealth Secretariat Road Ibadan, and Ladoke Akintola University of Technology (LAUTECH) Teaching Hospital, Ogbomosho (Oral Interview with O. Olajire, 05-10-2020). A lot of successes were made in this respect hence cases were discovered from communities like: Oluyole (6

cases), Lagelu (4 cases), Ibadan South-East (3 cases), Ido (2 cases), Ibadan South-West (2 cases), Ibadan North-West (2 cases), Ibadan-North (1 case), Egbeda (1 case), and Akinyele (1 case), Local Government Areas of the State which might have spread and infected thousands of citizens within a short possible time (*This Day Newspaper*, 15th June, 2020).

To facilitate the treatment of COVID-19 patients, the Oyo state government also established isolation and treatment centres. For instance, there was isolation centre at Agbami, Jericho, Ibadan, infectious Disease Centre at Olodo, isolation unit of University College Hospital *et cetera*. These facilities were in operation for 24 hours of the day with adequate doctors and nurses as well as people trained to handle COVID-19 pandemic. The facilities were explored to work with laboratory support from Lagos State University Teaching Hospital, the Virology Laboratory of Redeemer's University in Ede Osun State, and the University College Hospital Virology laboratory Ibadan (Usman, Ayinde, Akinyode, Gbolahan & Bello, 2020). While the Oyo State Government also established and equipped an ultra-modern infectious disease hospital at Korondo-Ibadan. All these efforts were geared towards the fight against deadly Coronavirus.

Another important role Oyo State government played to reduce the spread of coronavirus was in area of sensitization. Here COVID-19 sensitization programmes were held on radios and television stations in Ibadan. As part of the COVID-19 sensitization programme, over 30,000 handbills in English, Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa were produced and distributed. While, the media sub-committee of Oyo State COVID-19 Task Force led by the Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Wasiu Olatubosun and Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Taiwo Adisa, Special Assistant to the Governor on Community Relations (Arewa Community), Ahmad Murtala, as well as members of the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) of the state visited different communities to educate the people on the essence of COVID-19 guidelines. Among the communities visited were Hausa settlements where the Seriki

Hausawa of Ibadanland, Dahiru Ahmed Zungeru and Seriki Sasha, Haruna Maiyasin Katsina (CON) where employ to enlighten their various communities on COVID-19 guidelines (Feyisipo, 2020). Also, villages across the state were visited with the strategy of house – to – house approach. The campaign language follows such words:

I know that we the Yoruba people love our children who return from overseas, but do not rub bodies with overseas returnees now or hide them. If you see anyone who returns from abroad, tell him or her to isolate for 14 days or inform your local government chairman who will in turn inform us in Ibadan. Coronavirus does not respect wealth, religion or countries; the best way to prevent it is run from people who return from abroad or even Lagos or Abuja. Also, if you see anyone coughing, sneezing or having high temperature, quickly inform us. Coronavirus does not show on the face, that is why you must prevent it (Twitter handle of Oyo State Governor @seyiamakinde).

All this strategies improved the awareness of the novel COVID-19 pandemic in the state. In certain parts of the state the decontamination and fumigation exercise was done. For example, the Oyo state government secretariat, Agodi-Ibadan was one of such places (<https://oyostate.gov.ng/covid-19-oyo-govt-begins-decontamination-fumigation>, 07-10-2020). The government also urge corporate entities, owners of business spaces and other identified organisations to carry out such exercise in their respective premises. Although not much was achieved in this respect hence only few places were decontaminated and fumigated.

Finally, was in area of relief materials given to people as COVID-19 palliative. The relief materials were majorly foodstuffs meant for the 'poorest of the poor' targeted for at least 90,000 households, and 30, 000 vulnerable persons in the society. Some of the communities benefited from these materials were: Igboora, Ibarapa North LGA. The general perception of people was that such palliatives were given to government officials and their cohorts rather than the general public. It was discovered from

field survey that only few people were given such relief materials. As part of hastening the post-COVID-19 economic recovery, the Oyo state government inaugurated a 1 billion naira Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Development Scheme. According to News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the scheme already started disbursement of the finance with beneficiary like Olarinde Olakunle who received the sum of 2.5 million naira, Ruth Adeniji and Taofeeq Oladimeji received 3 million naira each. Although the researcher from field survey confirmed that most of the small scale business entrepreneurs in Ibadan declined knowledge or receipt of such aid. Furthermore, Oyo state government also created room for Tax relief packages including tax extension of deadline for filling of annual returns for individual taxpayers and self-employed persons for five months (April 1st to August 31st, 2020). There was also an extension of the deadline for filling annual returns of employees by their employers for six months (March 1st to August 31st, 2020), among waivers of penalties and interest for employers in primary and secondary sectors of the economy (Olaitan, 2020). All these measures were taken so as to enhanced the economic recovery of the state after the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. Conclusion

COVID-19 is a 21st century shock to the global economy and its effects have cut across all sectors in both advanced and less developed countries. In Nigeria and Oyo State in particular, entrepreneurs and small scale businesses tested this venom. The pandemic broke in Oyo on the 12th of March, 2020 and since then, created fear in most people and calls for urgent government intervention to curtail its spread. The federal and Oyo state governments intervention policies were in form of lock-down of business activities, social distancing culture, closure of inter-state movement among others, which in the final analysis truncates the viability of entrepreneurship and small scale business in the state.

The study avers that although, the Oyo state government made tireless effort to stem the

spread of this novel disease so as to recuscitate entrepreneurship and small scale business operations. Apart from this, the government made special provision for business owners in terms of tax relaxation and relief, and also inaugurated a one billion naira MSMEs Development Scheme for this category of business owners. From our fieldwork survey, most of our informants declined accessing the money. The implication is that, the scheme was not effective to render its obligations perhaps as a result of the corrupt nature of our country Nigeria. Furthermore, the study observe that, the tax palliatives were not long enough to warrant business recuscitation having ravaged by COVID-19 pandemic for over five months.

Arising from the above, the study made the following suggestions. Firstly, Oyo state government should put in place a monitoring unit to checkmate the disbursement of COVID-19 palliative funds to entrepreneurs and small scale business owners. The group should be assigned to track those beneficiaries following their documented addresses. Information gotten from beneficiaries should be cross check with those of the scheme to ensure transparency. In this way, those saddle with the responsibility of distributing the COVID funds would do the right thing instead of using the money for their personal aggrandisements.

Secondly, the Oyo State government should liaise with NGOs, and other financial institutions that are willing to support entrepreneurs and small scale business owners in the state to secure soft loans to reinforce their businesses having battered by COVID-19 pandemic hence the state government alone lack the capacity to effectively achieve this feat.

Finally, the Oyo State government should grant at least two years of tax relaxation package especially for entrepreneurs and small scale business owners in the state. The five-six months tax relief is not good enough to warrant business revival. This will go along way helping most of the small scale business owners to stand back on their feet having lost much capital during the period of necessary lockdown.

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