

Implications of COVID-19 on Motor Transportation in Ebonyi State

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Abstract: *The novel Corona virus popularly known as COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new strain of Corona virus first discovered in Wuhan, the Hubei region of China. 'CO' stands for corona; 'VI' for virus; and 'D' stands for disease. The disease was first referred to as '2019 novel-corona virus' or 2019-nCoV. The paper recognises the effect on transportation in emerging economies, where lockdowns and restrictions on movement may be ineffective, a state with high population density, poor transportation infrastructure and a large informal economy. Adopting the 'avoid-shift-improve' framework, this paper presents practical implications for public and private sector policymakers, as they navigate this precarious time and chart a new path for individuals and Nigeria. In a bid to slow the rate of spread of the virus, the Federal Government of Nigeria, on several occasions, imposed targeted lockdown measures in areas with rapid increase of Covid-19 cases. The states in which the Federal Government imposed the targeted lockdown included Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja. Some States like Ebonyi, Enugu, and Cross River etc in the country imposed partial lockdown and closure of interstate borders. Curfews have also been introduced in all the states nationwide. To alleviate the effects of the lockdown, the Federal Government of Nigeria rolled out palliative measures for targeted groups. However, lamentations have trailed the distribution of government palliatives by the masses. Citizens allege that the process of distribution of palliatives had been politicized.*

Keywords: *Covid-19, lockdown, transport operators, government.*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria is part of the worldwide pandemic of corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The first confirmed case in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. 28 February 2020. Retrieved 10 March 2020) Maclean, Ruth; Dahir, Abdi Latif (28 February 2020) On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported in Ewekoro, Ogun State, a Nigerian citizen who had contact with the Italian citizen. ("Nigeria records second case of Corona virus". P.M. News. 9 March 2020. Retrieved 10 March 2020). The novel Corona virus popularly known as COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by a new strain of Corona virus first discovered in Wuhan, the Hubei region of China. 'CO' stands for corona; 'VI' for virus; and 'D' stand for disease. The disease was first referred to as '2019 novel-corona virus' or 2019-nCoV. The COVID-19 virus is linked to the same family of viruses such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). It is also related to some types of common cold.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, Runny nose, Headache, Cough, Sore throat Fever, shortness of breath, A general feeling of being unwell Human corona viruses can sometimes cause lower-respiratory tract illnesses, such as pneumonia or bronchitis. This is more common in people with cardiopulmonary disease, people with weakened immune systems, infants, and older adults. According to a report by the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF) titled: *UNICEF Key Messages and Prevention and Control in Schools* (March, 2020), "in more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19 (<https://www.unicef.org>).

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated by the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours but simple disinfectant can kill it," says UNICEF.

In a bid to slow the rate of spread of the virus, the Federal Government of Nigeria, on several occasions, imposed targeted lockdown measures in areas with rapid increase of Covid-19 cases. The states in which the Federal Government imposed the targeted lockdown included Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja. Some States in the country imposed partial lockdown and closure of interstate borders. Curfews have also been introduced in all the states nationwide.

Nigeria is an emerging economy with its underlying economic challenges as it copes with the pandemic. The country ranks as Africa's largest producer of oil and the sixth-largest oil-producing country in the world, and almost 90% of its export earnings are tied to oil (^{NNPC, 2020}). Nigeria has 36 states, and Abuja is the Federal Capital Territory.

As public transport brings people into close contact in a confined space, increasing their risk of exposure to the virus (^{Yezli and Khan, 2020}), the Lagos State government-issued public transport guidelines to operators and passengers to curb the spread of the corona virus in buses, cabs, motor parks and garages in March 2020. The directive expects passenger's spacing to be fully observed, such as 2 m of a minimum distance between passengers. Still, a concern arises in how feasible it is to achieve this minimum distance in a bus or on a tricycle, where these modes of transportation are far shorter than 2 m. Taxi drivers, like tricycle and motorcycles riders, have an increased risk of acquiring the virus, given their close contact with their customers (^{Yezli and Khan, 2020}). Moreover, cash payment which is predominant on Lagos transport puts drivers and essential workers at a higher risk of spreading the virus. While social distancing is essential, it will be impractical to practice social distancing in Lagos transport mode.

The effects of COVID-19 are being felt across the transport sector. The pressure on organizations has shifted from moving citizens to keeping a core transportation system operational with a skeleton workforce to ensure freight and key essential workers can continue to move. A secondary effect of this shift is the sudden change in sources of revenue for transport operators, with many experiencing an unexpected shortfall in their finances. Organizations will need to plan ahead to ensure that the transport network will be ready for a return to normal operations when lockdown measures are lifted. The implications of this, with particular regards to our kind of public transport and shared taxi system, are huge. First, the terminals and bus stops for loading and offloading of most transport companies are crowded, while vehicles, especially those of the informal and semi-formal transport, are overloaded with tight seating arrangements.

Secondly, it is needful that managers of transport companies, terminal operators and company/vehicle owners sanitize and disinfect the terminals and vehicles repeatedly. This currently does not seem to be the case. Thirdly, is the NCDC aware of the implication of this and monitoring the transport sector beyond aviation and maritime? For instance, elsewhere, it is mandatory for passengers and in vehicle operators, to wear nose guards, have tissues/handkerchief and sanitize their hands before entering a public vehicle. Fourth, some cities have banned shared taxis and taxis in the wake of COVID19.

Potential long-term impact on transport organizations

- Transport organizations will need to ensure that transport networks can continue to operate throughout the lockdown measures, striking a balance between reduced operations and providing enough capacity for key workers to be able to practice social distancing.
- Longer term investment programs may need to be re-planned and re-prioritized, in light of decreased revenue.
- Organizations will need to plan for the availability of key personnel to ensure that staff with critical skills and training are available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to keep networks operational.
- Commuting and traveling patterns may not recover to their pre-COVID-19 state once lockdowns are lifted.

During the lockdown, only essential people and commodities are permitted by the authorities. The list of essential people and commodities must be continuously revised to minimize the adverse impact on people's lives and the spread of the pandemic. Considering this lockdown as a large travel demand experiment, organisations have much to gain from optimising transportation of employees in the future, in terms of productivity and costs. Also, during this period, due to no transport modes, people have been exposed to walking in roads with neither pollution nor congestion. Hence authorities may expect better results in future policies aimed at nudging short trips into pedestrianised modes. However, as the transportation sector employs millions, in the long run, it is necessary to understand the pandemic's impact on consumer preference and the subsequent transportation demand for passengers and goods.

After the situation normalizes, the perception of risk associated with crowded areas could lead to shift in preferences towards personal travel modes. That is, people may avoid using public transport modes to avoid crowds. People may also avoid shared mobility modes like auto rickshaws, micro-transit vans, e-rickshaws etc. The drivers employed in app-based taxi services are economically suffering in the short term due to the COVID lockdown. However, it cannot be said if these modes may face long term economic effects in terms of reduced travel demand.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Dr.Naushad Khan, Mahnoor Naushad, Ayasha Akbar, Shah Faisal and Shah Fahad (January to 16th June,2020) reviewed on critical review of covid-2019 in Pakistan and its impact on Pakistan Economy. The major objective of the study was to critical review Covid-2019 in Pakistan and its impact on Pakistan Economy. Secondary data was used and total 21 articles were downloaded from the net and read many times and result was drawn. The result indicates that the first case was appeared on 26th February 2020 in Karachi city Sindh. In the first week of February the number was nil while when the people came from Iran the spreading in Punjab and Sindh were

increased. The government tried for locked down and Prime Minister imposed locked down on 15th March and then it extended to 9th May, 2020 and partial locked down was continued while in partial locked down only milk shop, meat shop and other goods shops were opened from 9.am to 7pm in the country. During this period the security personal advised to people for rule regulation but the people avoid the rule and regulation while people were roaming. The corona was mostly spread in Eid and on 16th June the was reached to one lace figure in Pakistan. In some part of the country, marriage ceremonies were held which have increased the corona sick people trend in the country and now it reached to one laces and fifty thousand above. Now government again thinking of locked down and very soon the locked down will be imposed for corona virus controlling in the country. Locked down policy were not fully applied in the country by government of Pakistan. Culture and religious institution avoid the rule regulation. Mosques were not closed as like Saudi Arabia and other countries of the world. Mask, sanitizer social distance methodologies were not fully exercised in the country due to illiteracy. Facilities in the hospitals were weak. The test kit was found less than the requirement. The ICU beds were found less than the requirement. No proper dress was provided to Doctor Community in the hospital and because of this majority Doctors were found infected by corona virus. Due to staff infection few hospital of the country was closed; similarly required facilities were not provided to the nation and large number of people were died in the country. Mental torture was faced to community in the country while sugar, blood pressures were increased in the country due to social stigma.

Another study Prime Minister Imran Khan(May 4, 2020 9:19 PM IST) said that the nationwide lockdown will be lifted gradually, asserting that Pakistan cannot afford an indefinite closure, hours after 1,083 new infections were diagnosed, taking the country's total confirmed COVID-19 cases past 20,000. Also Read -India Rejects Pakistan's Attempts to 'Bring Material Changes' in PoK in J & K Khan addressed a ceremony to launch the Corona Relief Tiger Force, a controversial youth organization he set up to help the government in identifying the poor to provide help to them. Also Read –Corona virus: Pakistan PM Imran Khan Changes Media Team Amid Growing Criticism. He said, adding that Pakistan cannot afford an indefinite closure. The current lockdown period will end on May 9. Khan said that the Corona Relief Tiger Force was not a political group but a volunteer force to help strike a balance between saving people from the virus and saving them from hunger and unemployment. “Volunteers will have to register. All those who have lost their jobs due to the lockdown at their respective union councils. Special Assistant on Health Dr Zafar Mirza said that 17,000 of the people who had volunteered for the Corona Relief Tiger Force belonged to the medical community. “No one really knows how long this disease will last and everyone needs to play their role,” he said at the ceremony addressed by Khan. He added that the medical professionals will be given specific roles for the tele health initiative so that they can help the government in fighting the pandemic.

Noreen et al (21 May, 2020) reported that the initial economic losses in different sectors have been estimated at 5 billion rupees, as assessed by the Asian development Bank (ADB). Drops in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is observed because of the reduction in services sectors like airline businesses, revenue losses, sharp decline in imports and exports, reduction in remittances, and disruption in food supplies. The country's GDP expected loss is 10 %, which is around 1.1 trillion rupees due to disruptions caused by corona. Karachi, a major financial hub with a population of around 20 million people, is expected to face a major revenue loss due to the lock down of up to 380 billion rupees .At present, the Federal government is not in favour of a complete lock down because of the social impacts of the Pakistani population, 24.3% live

below poverty line. The most vulnerable populations, with regard to enforcement of lockdown, are the daily wage vendors and the labour class. However, there are mechanisms in place for supporting vulnerable people in society. Homes need to be utilized for supporting the vulnerable class. Poverty is rampant in the country, with poor people unable to make both ends meet, considering corona virus as the least of their issues. Other countries that imposed complete lockdowns had higher income per capita than Pakistan. It is important to keep the economy afloat with the priority of keeping people safe from the pandemic. In order to dilute the economic impact of the current outbreak, the government has decided to announce a comprehensive economic plan offering protection and incentives to industries and relief packages for the vulnerable and poor. The Sindh government has given a relaxation of three months in submission of utility bills below 5000 Rupees. <https://jglobalbiosecurity.com/articles/10.31646/gbio.63/>.

Holland and Knight (April, 20, 2020) reviewed on The Impact of COVID-19 on Your Advertising and Marketing Campaigns. The researchers said that “The corona virus (COVID-19) global pandemic has resulted in changes to advertising, marketing, promotional and media spends, forcing businesses and brands to reevaluate their thinking about current and future advertising and marketing campaigns to maintain a steady stream of income. While brands currently seek to strike the right tone during a global health emergency, the future portends market alteration, increased competition and a demand for creative and aggressive marketing practices”.

As brands adapt and figure out how to promote products and services in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, governmental agencies are closely monitoring potential unfair and deceptive business practices to protect vulnerable consumers, monitor aggressive marketing campaigns and terminate COVID-19 scams. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and state attorneys general have sent subpoenas, warning letters and cease and desist notices to businesses that are attempting to capitalize on vulnerable consumers through deceptive marketing, scams and price gouging of "essential" supplies. The 2019 novel corona virus known around the world as COVID-19 has led to unprecedented economic and public health concerns, which will likely transform how businesses operate going forward. This transformation will be limited not only to how businesses operate but also to how they sustain and grow their brand and customer base. Central to this concern is how businesses attract consumers and promote their products and services. A business' advertising, marketing campaigns and promotional practices will be a core focus of its ability to thrive in the future.

This Holland & Knight alert provides an overview of the impact of COVID-19 on the advertising, marketing and promotional practices of businesses. This alert also includes practical best practice tips that can help companies understand their responsibilities and enhance their regulatory compliance programs to minimize the risks associated with advertising, marketing and other promotional activities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Holland & Knight (2020), Practical Tips for Advertising and Marketing Initiatives During the COVID-19 Pandemic. When a defining cultural event occurs such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical for brands to be tactful, employ mindful marketing and be empathetic to consumers' plight. Brands must acknowledge the crisis while continuously reflecting positive values that will keep consumers coming back for more. This can be accomplished through adjusting marketing campaign and scheduled content timelines, evaluating the language and imagery used in advertisements and marketing materials and awareness of consumers' increased anxiety at this time. Brands must also evaluate prior to release new

slogans, logos or other intellectual property for compliance with the appropriate regulatory framework.

The Belmont Report refers to five basic categories of harm: social, economic, legal, psychological, and physical. For example, psychological harms may range from mild embarrassment to a psychotic relapse with significance resultant harms across all other categories: economic (lost employment), legal (e.g., being declared incompetent by a court, social (e.g., through stigma), (DuBois, Elizabeth, Bankert, and Robert, 2006).

The above definition helps in buttressing the fact that persons that have been asked to remain indoors as a result of Covid-19-induced-lockdown are vulnerable; persons that lost their jobs are vulnerable; those that are locked behind bars are vulnerable; those that are facing one illness or the other are vulnerable; etc. The above groups ought to partake in the palliative measures of the government. Thus, the governments are supposed to implement schemes that will help cushion the effects of the lockdown for the broader groups of the vulnerable.

While acknowledging the economic challenges, it is essential to optimise the transport infrastructure and make sure that they are sustainable to meet the growing demands of the commuters. Musselwhite et al.(2020)noted that this pandemic highlights the importance of rethinking the essential design of social and economic resilience.

METHODOLOGY

To gauge the impact of COVID-19 on transportation in Ebonyi state, this study has relied on the surveys that were distributed via email, social media and professional networks between March 26 and July, 2020 and administered to the residents of Ebonyi State. A summary of the questionnaire has been provided in. To ensure that the respondents were residents of Ebonyi state and were in Ebonyi state at the time of response, a section of the questionnaire inquired about their residence and location at the time of response. The questionnaire also addressed the demographic characteristics of the respondent and the core objective of the study, which is the impact of COVID-19 on transportation in Ebonyi state. The researchers extended examination of the contemporaneous influence of COVID-19 to the economic, social and religious activities because researchers believe that these are key factors as to why transportation in Ebonyi state has become disruptive and consequential. The influence of COVID-19 on transportation can be assessed based on the dynamic changes to the commuters' transport demands and relative fare prices during the pandemic, the operators' expected revenue or income structures and the loss in government revenues, which is loss emanating from taxes, tickets and other related government transport income generations sources.

CONCLUSION

People's lives and livelihoods are being affected as a result of restrictions on movement, and it is not surprising to see people find ways to circumvent these restrictions. This, how-ever, presents a challenge that must be dealt with to curb the spread of the disease and the financial consequences (Mogaji, 2000).While acknowledging that humans will come out of this pandemic strong, it is essential to support each other throughout this period.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers suggested the following points to the readers:

1. The government, transport operating companies, regulators and public transport owners should be aware of the exposure of the transport workers. This responsibility also falls on

the operators and individual operators within the informal economy to protect themselves and reduce the risk of exposure.

2. As often as possible, the transport workers must be reminded and educated about the need to protect themselves.
3. The transport operators must ensure that the handrails and door handles are always kept clean. This cleanliness also includes the life jackets on commuters' board ferries. If possible, hand sanitizer, water, soap and paper towels should be provided.
4. Monitor compliance by operators accordingly.
5. Publish basic dos and don'ts for passengers and in-vehicle operators (drivers and conductors)
6. The Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC), in tandem with the Presidential Committee on COVID19, should set up a transport sub-committee to examine, monitor and report on transport related management of COVID19
7. In addition, where possible, protective screens should be installed on buses to provide a physical barrier and additional protection for the drivers and to ensure social distance. Individuals need to explore the possibilities of working from home and changing their travel behaviour. This will reduce their exposure to the disease, reduce the congestion on the road and enhance their wellbeing. As social distancing may negatively affect the subjective wellbeing and health status (De Vos, 2020), those who are not involved in essential travelling should be encouraged to walk and cycle to enhance their health and wellbeing. However, the accessibility, physical activity options and safety should be considered (Farinloye et al., 2019).

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