

## Impact of the COVID - 19 pandemic: Lessons from Nigeria

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### Abstract

COVID - 19 is the deadly virus that has nearly locked down the entire universe. It has claimed several millions of lives worldwide. Presently, there is no known cure for the virus. Africa is one of the continents affected and Nigeria is one of the countries affected. The aim of the review is to report the lessons learned through out the pandemic period. To achieve the aim, 3 journals, 19 internet papers, and 23 news reports were used for the write-up. The pandemic has influences on education, economy, religious, sporting, social, banking activities, and others. The federal, state governments, military, NGO, individuals, and religious bodies provided and donated palliatives to cushion the effects of the pandemic on the populace. To curb the spread of the disease, measures were put in place for the people to adhere strictly with. There were violators and adequate penalty were meted by constituted mobile courts on them. The locked down is relaxed a little bit to watch how effective is the efforts of the government to stop or reduce the pandemic.

**Keywords:** COVID - 19, pandemic, global, lockdown, palliative



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## Introduction

COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of coronavirus (Figure 1). The disease known as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' is a member of viruses - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. The signs are fever, flu (influenza) or the common cold, cough and shortness of breath, in severe cases, it may cause pneumonia or difficulties in breathing. For somebody to pronounced COVID - 19 patient, a test is needed. Individuals are infected by direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person who coughs and sneezes), touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face. The most vulnerable to this pandemic are older people and people with chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms). Presently, there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics for COVID-19. To prevent the spread, preventive actions include: staying at home; covering mouth and nose with mask when coughing or sneezing and dispose of used mask immediately; hand washing with soap and water; use of hand sanitizer, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects, and social distancing (IASC, 2020). The pandemic was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 (Huang et al., 2020). On the 11th March, 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a pandemic (WHO 2020a). The impact of the pandemic was serious on education (UNESCO, 2020), politics (Tumilty, 2020), environment and climate (Faust, 2020), economics (McLean et al., 2020), culture (Burke, 2020), xenophobia and racism (ITV News, 2020), and other health issues globally. The first official case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was pronounced on the February 27, 2020. This was traced to an Italian who came into Nigeria and a Nigerian from Ogun State who contacted the virus from the Italian. Since then, the situation became worse. In bid to curtail the spread, The federal government of

Nigeria enforced an initial 2-week lockdown on March 30, 2020, for three of 36 states (Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja) and, on April 13, extended it another 2 weeks (Kalu, 2020). Like other countries of the world, the FGN compelled the citizens to observe hand washing, social distancing, and staying at home. As at 10th June, 2020, WHO recorded over 7 million confirmed cases and 4 thousand deaths worldwide with the following breakdowns: Americas (3, 415, 174), Europe (2, 321, 147), Eastern Mediterranean (677, 338), South-East Asia (392, 674), Western Pacific (193, 178), and Africa (145, 287) by WHO (2020b). While the incidence is reducing in some countries, the trend is increasing in many others. During the peak of the virus in the countries, preventive measures were put in place like, self-isolation, general isolation, conversion of hotels, schools, and other edifices, lockdown, social distancing, use of nose mask, hand washing and sanitizing just to mention just a few. In the light of the above, this review paper takes a critical look on the situation and Nigerians reacted to it. To do a thorough work on this, the internet materials and daily news reports were used for the literature review.

### The Nigeria Experience Services Exempted

The FGN enforced an initial 2-week lockdown on March 30, 2020, for three of 36 states (Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja) and, on April 13, extended it another 2 weeks (Kalu, 2020). Markets, schools, religious and social gatherings, international and national movements and non-essential services were closed down completely (no movements). However, the essential services were exempted for the ban. Examples are:

1. Hospitals and all related medical establishments as well as organizations in healthcare-related manufacturing and distribution.
2. Food processing, distribution, and retail companies;
3. Petroleum distribution and retail entities

4. Power generation, transmission and distribution companies
5. Private security companies
6. Workers in telecommunication companies, broadcasters, print and electronic media staff who can prove they are unable to work from home.
7. All seaports in Lagos

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#### Record of Cases

As at 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2020, the number of cases in Nigeria was on the increase (Figure 2). from the figure, 6344 active cases were only 2697 were discharged, while over 260 death cases were recorded. Although the numbers from Nigeria were low compared to the US figures, while that of the US figures of death cases were decreasing, Nigeria's case is increasing. To curb this the federal and state government put up concerted efforts with regards to the pandemic. Lagos, Kano, and Borno States recorded high number of deaths 47, 41, and 25 respectively. Others were below 15 deaths.

#### Enforcement of Safety Measures

To curb the further spread of the virus, the FGN and each state government directed the simple use of face mask, hand-washing and sanitizing, and social distance (Figure 3). It is unfortunate that those (security agents and task force on COVID-19) who supposed to enforce the measures did not because of their highhandedness in the enforcement of lockdown order.

#### The Conversion of Deserted Roads to Sports Ground

During the pandemic period most roads, especially highway was deserted because no or little vehicles plied the roads. The idle youths later turned the roads into football playing fields (Figure 4). The playing periods were between 7 to 9 am and 4 to 6 pm. In some parts of the nation, five aside leagues were planned within these times with duration of twenty minutes each. To one's surprise they have supporters who came to

cheer their favorite teams. Also in some parts of the nation, people have turned the streets into doing workouts (exercise). They claimed that they were bored at home doing nothing, no work, and no food instead of staying at home to get fat, they resulted in doing aerobics and other exercises in a group (Achirga, 2020).

#### Attitude of those in Isolation Centers

The patients tested positive of the virus were admitted into isolation centers for surveillance and treatment. Unfortunately, in some centers, especially one isolation Center in Kwadon, Gombe State the patients complained of neglect - no feeding, no official and medical personnel attended to them, and no drugs were made available to the extent of self-medicating by visiting nearby patent medicine shops to procure tablets for their treatment (Figure 5). The families of the corona virus patients and others who were not happy with the development, took to the streets protesting the non-chalant attitude of the government to the those in the isolation center. In Anambra State, the government declared a motor mechanic wanted because he tested positive to coronavirus and ran away from the isolation center in Aba. Nearly all the newspapers correspondents reported news. All his family members left their house for the fear of being arrested by the police.

#### Effect on Economy

To prevent further spread of the virus, the federal and state governments put up preventive measures by locking down the entire federation. All schools, religious centers, markets, and transporters were barred from their activities, and social gatherings, essential services (banks, hospitals, para military, and others) were allowed easy movements to discharge their duties. To cushion the effects of this lockdown, the federal and state governments distributed foods (Figure 6) and other materials to the lucky ones who were able to be available during distributions. Many people were not happy with the distributions because it did not cut

across the citizens. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), organizations, philanthropists, religious institutions, and private individuals also contributed their quotas. Among the palliatives were hospital equipment, nose masts and sanitizers, food stuffs, vehicles, cash donations, and other useful materials. According to Eludini (2020), Kelechi Anuna a member of Nigeria's national basketball team, donated COVID-19 relief materials to some residents in his home town, Mbieri, in Imo State. Also, John Obi Mikel donated 1800 crates of eggs to residents located near his farm. It is on note that the military hospital, Abuja assisted residents with free hand-sanitizers (Ukwu, 2020).

#### Effect on Education

The effect of COVID - 19 on education sector is devastating because students at all levels have lost almost 4 months of learning activities. No how the IQ of the students will be greatly affected. The solace is that after 2 months of non-educational activities few private institutions have resulted into the use of E-learning. Conferences, workshops, and seminars were affected. Due to the pandemic, most of these were postponed indefinitely. Few institutions saw the need to use virtual methods for their programs. The use of conferencing and webinar were made use of. The disadvantage of these is that many Nigerians are not conversant with the use of these types of virtual learning methods. The pandemic has compelled the academia and researchers to find the solace in presenting their international and national papers in conferences and lectures to the students. By and large, there are many disadvantages with regards to e-learning in Nigeria. For example, the electricity in Nigeria is epileptic and the cost of providing alternatives is high. It is costly to run a petrol and solar powered generators, not many houses can afford it. The cost of data for the internet is high too, not all places will have an access to internet or fast internet services. Over 70% of our students do not have access to laptops and computers.

#### National and International Travels

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) on March announced the restrictions of entry into the country for travelers from 13 countries tagged 'high-risk Covid-19' countries (China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Japan, France, Germany, United States of America, Norway, United Kingdom, Netherlands and Switzerland. The reason was that each of these countries have over 1000 COVID - 19 cases. This directive was after the ban on foreign travels for public officials in the country (Owoseye, 2020). In bid of curbing the spread of the virus, the FGN suspended the issuance of visas and all persons arriving Nigeria from the 'high-risk Covid-19' countries, were subjected to supervised self-isolation and testing for 14 days on arrival. The Nigerian government on Sunday seized a plane belonging to a UK company for what it said was a violation of regulations aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus. According to the Nigerian Minister for Aviation was given approval for humanitarian operations but was caught conducting commercial flights.

#### Effect on Religious Activities

Throughout the nation, religious activities were affected. Most religious centers turned 'ghost centers' (Figure 7). The government both state and Federal made announcements during the lockdown that no religious activities or gathering above twenty members are allowed and each gathering must comply with the use of nose mask, washing of hands with soap and water, and the use of hand sanitizer. Some churches and mosques complied, but those that went against this rule were sanctioned, arrested, and duly punished by the task force set to monitor religious activities. There was a case in Bornu State while the restriction order was still in force, three Imams of a weekly Friday mosque went ahead and encouraged worshiper to congregate for the Friday service, the consequence was that they were arrested and sanctioned (Haruna 2020a). In

Lagos State, during a church service, the pastor of the church and four others were arrested for violating the COVID - 19 regulation (Alabi, 2020). The noticeable experience was that members refused to attend services for the fear of getting contacted. For example, in Bauchi State, due to COVID-19 the Governor placed major restrictions on markets and places of worship. The residents were banned from conducting the weekly Friday prayers as well as Sunday church services (Haruna, 2020b). In furtherance of religious activities during the COVID - 19 pandemic, many churches resulted into live streaming of the normal church services on the cable TV.

#### Violation of COVID - 19 Guidelines and Laws

In the bid to curtail the spread of coronavirus throughout the Nation, the federal and state governments took proactive steps to curb the spread of COVID-19 by restricting airport and inter-state travel, curfew, open markets closed or allowed to open at specific hours, banning of vehicular movements except those on essential duties, social distancing, no social gathering, just to mention a few. It was clearly stated that any violator will be tried and punished at the special (mobile) courts put in place. It is sad that many violators were apprehended and sanctioned appropriately. For example, a mobile court sitting in Benin City convicted 16 persons for violating the State Dangerous Infectious Diseases Prevention Regulations. Their punishment depending on the offence were payment of fines (N2000 to N5000) or clearing of grasses (The Vanguard, 2020). In Cross River State, violators of the curfew in the state were flogged by the law enforcement agents. In Rivers State, two hotels were demolished for violating government order, the offence was opening for commercial activities. Again in the state especially Port-Harcourt, over 200 violators were arrested on the first day of the lockdown, 170 of them were convicted and fined appropriately (up to 50,000 Naira) (Orjinmo, 2020). Despite the lockdown the commercial activities at the

neighborhood markets in Kaduna persisted. In the bid to enforce the stay-at-home order at one of the markets it resulted into the killing of four youths by law enforcement agents (Sadiq, 2020). In a market in Enugu State, where people were doing normal commercial activity, the government ordered the men of the state fire service to use water to disperse the crowd, while the police man the main gates to the market (Adibe, 2020). The case of Lagos State was not different, it was reported that the police arrested 39 persons in a hotel for clubbing and striptease. Over 95 interstate travelers were arrested and their vehicles impounded. The drivers and passengers were charge to mobile courts and fined accordingly (Adediran, 2020). In Lagos State, over 2000 violators, 200 joggers, and 60 people holding parties were arrested, while over 600 vehicles were impounded.

#### Effect on Social Functions

Due to the lockdown in the states there was a drastic reduction in public and social gatherings. The affected activities were marriage, burial ceremonies, night clubbing, workshops and conferences. According to Peter (2020), the usual watching of live matches on the television suddenly disappeared on the TV screen. The "Aso-ebis", slay mamas and Yoruba demons' outings that are usually slated for every weekend became unattended to. Flamboyant marriages and burial ceremonies were either postponed or celebrated in a low key fashion due to social distancing. The ceremonies were aired on the Facebook and other social media for people who cannot be present physically. There was sharp decrease in the quality of true and real human relationship because there is the likelihood of somebody finding quick solace, hope, trust, and friendship in people over virtual connections. In bid to be bored, someone may use the period as an opportunity to visit some unprofitable relationships they've once left in the past like connecting with a long-time ex to just prevent boredom. The presence of all the

family members (father, mother, children, and others at home could cause increased pressure, especially to the father who is always busy at work or elsewhere. Generally, the home maybe noisy especially where the children are still young. Men who shack their responsibilities at home before the lockdown will have no alternatives than to assist in the house as husband and father. During the pandemic, there is the possibility of people developing mental and physical fatigue due to lesser activities and so if care is not taken to relax or exercise, this may lead to ill health. If care is not taken the mind set may change towards inappropriate sexual conduct (especially husband and wife which may lead to unwanted children) and smoking. The Lagos beach on a normal day is a relaxation ground always full of people who use the place to while away their time. The presence of the pandemic in the nation was felt here too. The beach was scanty with little or no life (Figure 8).

#### **Effect on Banking Activities**

Banking sector is one of the essential service allowed to operate during the COVID-19 problem, but with conditions. No banking hall is allowed to have more than twenty people in the baking hall. The simple rules of cleanliness (washing of hands, use of hand sanitizer, and use of nose mask) must be strictly adhered with. The Social distance were also enforced. To abide by the rules, the bank managements provided canopies and chairs outside the entrance to the gates for the customer's relaxation before been allowed into the banking hall. In addition to the simple rules, the temperature of the customers was taken per chance any person with temperature above 38°C was not permitted to enter. Adequate money was dispensed into the ATM machines and social distancing was applied on the queues.

#### **Effect on Sporting Activities**

The pandemic has its influence on sporting activities too. All competitions were either canceled or postponed. The preparations and hosting of the 20<sup>th</sup>

National Sports Festival (NSF) tagged 'Edo 2020' billed to hold between was postponed in Nigeria due to the fear of the pandemic. All preparations and efforts geared towards the Olympic Games by Nigerian athletes became 'fruitless efforts' because of the postponement of the games. According to IOC (2020), due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Olympic Games tagged 'Tokyo 2020' were postponed till 23 July 2021 at the same venue. This is the first time in the history of modern Olympic Games which were held in Athens, Greece, in 1896. The African Nations Championship, Africa Cup of Nations, 2022 World cup qualifiers in football for men and women, the CAF Champions league and Confederation cup have all been shifted to later dates this year or postponed till next year (Dominic, 2020). The Nigerian Basketball Association (NBA) officially announced that Nigeria Team will not be able to participate in the inaugural Basketball Africa League (BAL) season which was postponed due to the increasing spread of coronavirus (Busybuddies, 2020).

The Champions from national leagues in six countries—Angola, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia were already qualified for the competition.

In Nigeria, there are viewing centers where live matches/sports are watched on the television screens. Viewers pay to watch live matches (Premier, Europa, champion, Bundesliga leagues and others). During the pandemic, the centers are forcefully shut down by the government (Figure 9). According to a frequent visitor to viewing centers, said, he is witnessing one of his more boring weekends, everything is suspended. Also, owners of the centers complained bitterly about closing of the center and the financial loss (Lere, 2020).

#### **Innovations During the Pandemic**

The COVID - 19 pandemic is a blessing in disguise to Nigerians because this has brought out or showcase the talents in the citizens. In not because this pandemic, many of the precaution methods employed now would have been ordinarily imported into the country. The

hand sanitizers were produced by common people with the mixture of glycerol and methylated spirit or alcohol. Since the production was common, the price dropped drastically when the pandemic just appeared in Nigeria. In addition, the nose mask was produced too by local tailors who could afford just few yards of Ankara fabrics and rubber bands. In a related event, some of the state governors contracted the production of nose mask to the National Tailors' Association. They were given the mandate to sew the nose masks running to millions of Naira. The produced masks were distributed to the citizens of each state. Several institutions, research centers, engineering construction companies, NYSC members, and others developed and fabricated disinfection chambers and hand sanitizers with local materials (Figure 10). This is kudos to local indigenous engineers. The NYSC members in Akwa Ibom State constructed disinfection chamber which was donated to Akwa Ibom State Government (Akpan-Nsoh, 2020), The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD), Abuja produced hand sanitizer (The Vanguard 2020), The Federal Polytechnic, Oko manufactured solar-powered hand washing machine (Onyeukwu, 2020), Kano University of Science and Technology (KUST), Wudil constructed a solar powered infrared temperature monitor and automated sanitizer (Adewale, 2020), A Nigerian Engineer Fabricates Foot Controlled Hand Washing system (Solohtolz (2020), and a team of engineers from the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, Kaduna State, also fabricated an Automatic 4-in-1 Sanitizing Machine and an intensive care ventilator (PRNigeria, 2020).

#### Effect on the Prices of Food Items

The increase in prices of food stuffs, beverages, vegetable and palm oil were noticeable. The simple fact was that there were limited transportation of food from the farm and the closing of markets really affected the prices. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that the average price of some selected food items in

the country increased in April. In the survey conducted by The NBS conducted a survey with over 10,000 respondents from the 774 local governments across all states and the FCT. The results revealed that average price of one dozen of 'agric' medium sized eggs increased by 3.38 per cent to N476.72 monthly, from N461.15 in March. The average price of one kilogram of rice (imported high quality) increased by 7.56 per cent to N471.84 in April from N438.66 in March. The price of 1kg of tomato also increased by 8.49 per cent to N277.00 in the same month as against N255.33 in March. In a similar manner, the average price of 1kg of yam tubers increased by 11.63 per cent to N230.09 in April from N206.12 in March (Mojeed, 2020). NBS made it clear that increase in food prices had an incremental rise in inflation.

#### Isolation Centers

According to BBC Sport (2020), worldwide isolated stadia were turned into emergency hospitals because of the rise of the coronavirus pandemic (Figure 11). On this note, Onikan stadium, Lagos, Nigeria has been converted into an emergency isolation center. The center has 110 beds which was constructed by the Lagos state Government in partnership with a commercial bank so as to ease the pressure on the infectious disease centre at Yaba, Lagos.

As at April, 2020, the minister of Health - Dr. Osagie Ehanire made it clear that the federal government has 12 functional COVID- 19 testing laboratories, with a capacity to test 1,500 samples daily. He said, to ensure maximum utilization of increased testing capacity, the case definition and testing criteria had been expanded to include not only contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases with fever and respiratory tract symptoms, but also persons with fever and respiratory tract symptoms of unknown cause (APO Group, 2020). To complement this, the state governments have created isolation centers in the State Specialist and Teaching Hospitals. All these hospitals were well

equipped with facilities and drugs for testing and treatments.

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) converted the Karu and Asokoro General Hospitals into isolation centres for COVID-19 patients. The hospitals were upgraded and well furnished (Abdulaziz, 2020). Nigeria currently has over 112 treatment and isolation centers in the 35 states and FCT with over 5,000 beds, however, not all states have up to the 300 beds prescribed for isolation and treatment. In event of overflow, the hotels and school dormitories will be prepared for level 1 (Quarantine) and level 2 Isolation (of COVID-19 positive with zero or mild symptoms). It is also being considered home-care treatment for COVID-19 patients (Adebawale, 2020).

### Conclusion

No doubt COVID - 19 pandemic is real in Nigeria due to the fact of the daily increase in the record of cases and death. The FGN and the state governments have been trying to curb the spread of the virus with enacting enabling laws like the total lockdown, curfew,

closure of schools, ban on religious, social gatherings. Also, the citizens were enforced to use face mask, washing and sanitizing and the rest. From the information gathered, there were violators of the laws, they were charged to mobile courts, and those found guilty were sanctioned appropriately. It is on note that researchers and engineers in Nigeria proved their worth by the designs, constructions, and production of hand sanitizer, solar-powered hand washing machine, solar powered infrared temperature monitor and automated sanitizer, foot controlled hand washing system, an automatic 4-in-1 sanitizing machine and an intensive care ventilator. The prices of food items increased the effects were cushioned by palliatives (foods, monies, sanitizers, face masks) donated by the FGN, state governments, companies, individuals, military, religious and non-governmental organizations. Finally, number of isolation centers increase due to the conversion and upgrading of existing structures and hospitals.



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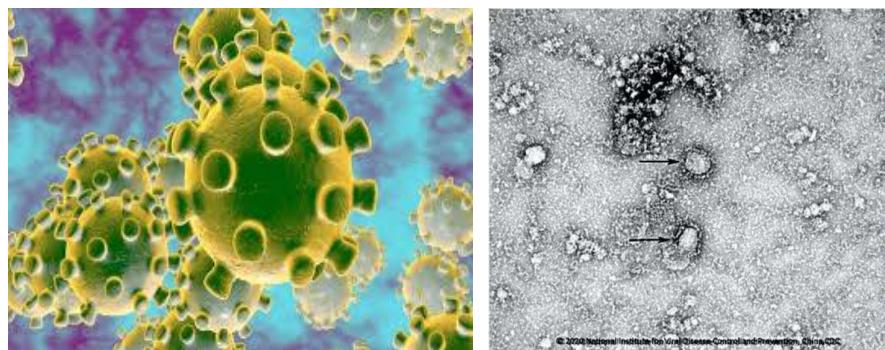
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a) COVID - 19 image

Source: [New Scientist \(2020\)](#)b) Picture of 1<sup>st</sup> Microscopic COVID-19(Source: [Middleton, 2020](#))

Figure 1: The ultrastructure and the microscopic picture of the Covid-19 virus

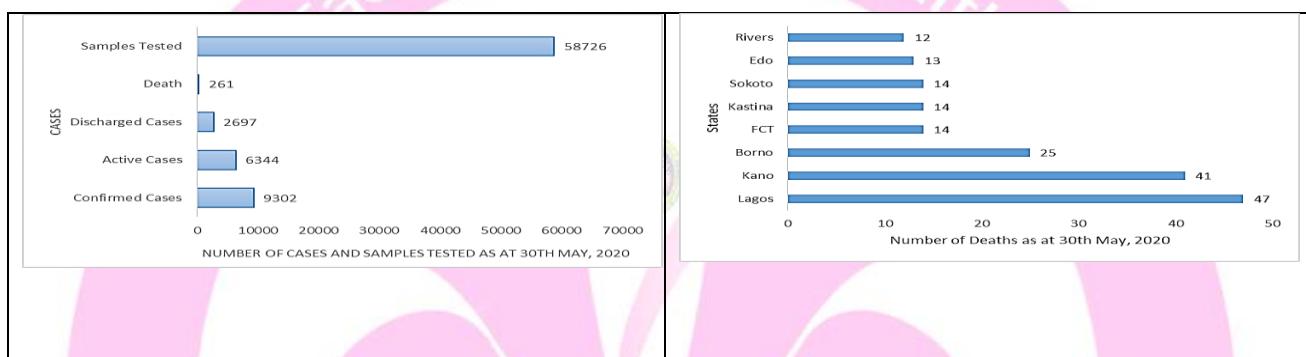


Figure 2: Cases of Deaths above 10 from 8 States of Federation

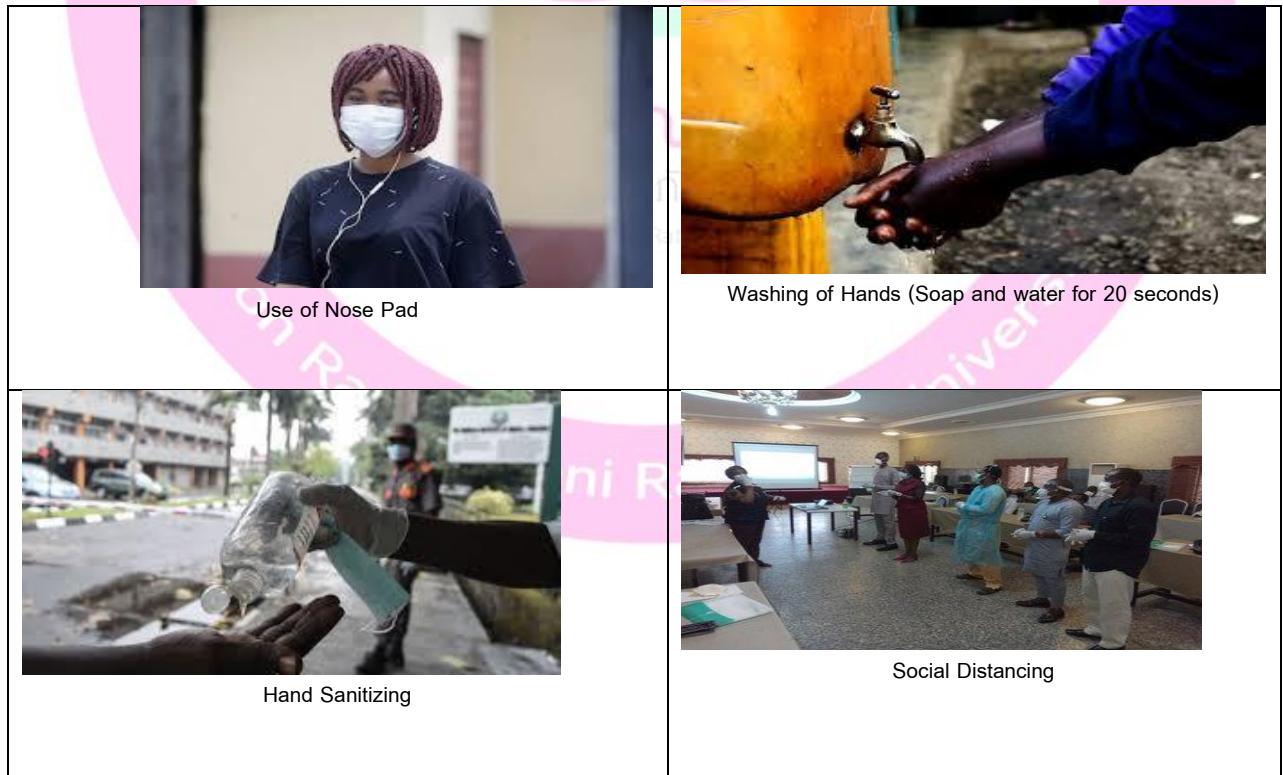


Figure 3: COVID - 19 Pandemic Watch in Nigeria



Figure 4: Deserted roads converted to workout and playing ground (Source: Achirga, 2020)



Figure 5: One of the patients in Gombe Isolation Center on protest (Source: Toromade, 2020).



Figure 6: Distribution of Palatives



Figure 7: Typical deserted church auditorium during COVID - 19 period (Source: Wong, 2020).



Figure 8: Lagos beach with the absence of people (Source: BBC News, 2020)



Figure 9: Empty viewing center



Automatic-Hand-Sanitizer-Temperature-Monitor  
Kano State University



Sanitizer-Ventilator  
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria



Disinfection Chamber - NYSC, Akwa Ibom Hand Washer/Sanitizer - Federal Polytechnic, OkoState



Hand Washer/Sanitizer  
Federal Polytechnic, Nekede

Hand Washer/Sanitizer  
Timifex Constructions, Ogun State

Figure 10: Innovations during the pandemic



Figure 11: Onikan stadium converted into an emergency hospital (Source: BBC Sport, 2020)