**TO TRUST OR DISTRUST; CONSTANT DILEMMA OF NIGERIAN POPULACE DURING PANDEMICS- THE CASE OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE OF 2019 (COVID-19)**

**BY**

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**ABSTRACT**

**BACKGROUND**

The Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally, resulting in an ongoing pandemic. As of 31st May 2020, more than 6.1 million cases have been reported across 187 countries and territories, resulting in more than 371,000 deaths. More than 1.7 million people have recovered. Common symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, and loss of smell and taste. While the majority of cases result in mild symptoms, some progress to viral pneumonia, multi-organ failure, or cytokine storm. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days but may range from two to fourteen days. The virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, often via small droplets not aerosols produced by coughing, sneezing, or talking. The droplets usually fall to the ground or onto surfaces rather than remaining in the air over long distances. People may also become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their face. On surfaces, the amount of virus declines over time until it is insufficient to remain infectious, but it may be detected for hours or days. It is most contagious during the first three days after the onset of symptoms, although spread may be possible before symptoms appear and in later stages of the disease. The standard method of diagnosis is by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab.Chest CT imaging may also be helpful for diagnosis in individuals where there is a high suspicion of infection based on symptoms and risk factors; however, guidelines do not recommend using it for routine screening. The virus has spread to at least 200 countries, and more than 1,700,000 confirmed cases and 111,600 deaths have been recorded, with massive global increases in the number of cases daily. Therefore, the WHO has declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Nigeria is a nation located in the western African region with a population in Excess of 200 Million over an area of about 923,000 Square Kilometers.

Nigeria is Predominantly youthful population with an estimated over 60% less than 24 years old. The nation has battled widespread corruption and lacked honest leadership for many years owning to military leaderships and leadership styles which are due to politicians who play politics of wealth accumulation instead of politics of wealth distribution. In terms of Mineral resources, Nigeria is blessed with abundant mineral resources such as gold, iron ore, diamond coal, copper and has one of the world’s largest deposit of crude. Despite these benefits, many Nigerians are living way below the poverty line of $3 per day. The sociodemographic gap between the poor and the rich of Nigeria is Enormous and can be seen on the streets of Nigeria.

This work has looked at the Perspective of Nigerians on whether to trust or distrust the information, care, reports and measures put in place by the Nigerian Authorities during the covid 19 Pandemic.

There are also recommendations to repose trust in the Nigerian Government’s health directives and policies.

**Keywords: SARS-CoV-2; COVID-19; One Health; genetics; epidemiology; control; outbreak; pneumonia; treatment; diagnosis; public health emergency, Trust, Distrust, Misuse, Corruption.**

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY**

As at the time of this article report, the covid-19 Pandemic is swirling around Africa with Nigeria currently having over 6,800 cases and over 100 deaths.

Our goal was to determine the attitudes of the Nigerian populace as to whether to trust or distrust information, management method, care and reports given by the Nigerian Authorities on covid-19.

The discussion in this paper includes not only people perspectives, relatives of patients of covid-19 and healthcare professionals, but also Nigerians in Diaspora.

**METHODS**

A mixed method of data collection was used in this work. For Nigerians in Diaspora, Sample questionnaire was administered to 14 people in all from all continents except Antarctica. And for Nigerians living in Nigeria, Surveys were conducted using a structured face-to-face interview with the participants Across the Six Geo-political zones of the country. A total of 374 participants participated with 100% research instruments retrieved. The diaspora participants were picked from the following countries because a high number of Nigerian Presence in the countries with the exception of St Helena where there is only one Nigerian.

1. Ukraine
2. United Kingdom
3. Benin republic
4. South Africa
5. United states of America
6. Brazil
7. China (Mainland)
8. Philippines
9. Australia
10. New Zealand
11. United Arab Emirates
12. Saudi Arabia
13. Trinidad and Tobago
14. St Helena

Of the 6 Geo political zones in Nigeria, 60 participants were picked each with 30 from urban settings and 30 for rural settings to ensure balance.

The following Factors were examined in the Surveys and will form the basis of the conclusion and subsequent recommendation.

1. Perceived Sincerity on part of Government on Management of Pandemic
2. Perceived Commitment on part of Government.
3. Correct Diagnostic Information
4. Adequate Management of Supposed cases.
5. Timely and verifiable information.
6. Corruption factors.

 Due to lockdown, the researchers being essential workers had to employ research assistants. The Research instruments upon retrieval were analyzed using EPI info Software version 7.

**RESULTS**

A total of 374 participants were surveyed. All participants (100%) said they sensed a coverup either in number of confirmed cases or Number of death due to Covid 19. The most common reason for believing there is a coverup was: patients relatives not getting a chance to ‘provide support for the patient' and ‘witnessing the last-minute medical interventions in the case of deceased patients’. 324 participants (86.63%) thinks the government is not really concerned and just using the avenue to siphon public funds. The most common reason for believing this was basically because they think all the money generated did not amount to anything tangible like hospital buildings, new isolation centers, no sensitization workshops, not aggressive monitoring of lockdown enforcement etc. 223 Participants (59.62%) thinks the government has the wrong test kit and are probably diagnosing something else. The most common reason for this assumption is the good recovery rate and low death to infection ratio. It is worthy of note that 17(100%) of diaspora Surveys assumed their diagnostic test (Nigerian Government) kit was the wrong one. 290 (77.54%) do not believe there was any case and if there was, management is not done right. The most common reason was prior insincerity on part of Government. Others said they have not met a person who was diagnosed and recovered. Some others Cited Testimonials from Supposed recovered patients who said they only ate in isolation and slept like a holiday without serious management. 3 participants (0.8%) said those they knew were managed with Azithromycin and a chloroquine derivative which has not being approved by the WHO and hence they sense mismanagement. 370 (98.93%) said the information on Number of cases can not be verified. The further explained that the Nigerian center for disease control (the disease management agency in Nigeria) releases Numbers of Diagnosed, discharge and New deaths daily at past Midnight and they are at many times in discrepancy with the Individual state ministries of health’s reports. One Cited the case of Kogi State (A North Central State in Nigeria) where NCDC gave 2 new cases and the state Government says it is untrue as there was no known case. Therefore, saying the information can not be verified with real life scenarios or pictorial evidences as it is in other parts of the world. 374 (100 %) cited corruption concerns and are skeptical about the information they receive coming from the government. The major reason was the composition of the presidential task force which comprised of mainly politicians with no single career research scientist, Virologist or Statistical/mathematical modelers compared to other task forces of other nations.

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

Our data locally revealed that most of the participants in this survey do not trust the effort of Nigerian Governement owning to many corruption- related factors.

**MEANING**

Nigerians both at home and in diaspora do not significantly believe in the management pattern, Care, information and Recommendations of the Nigerian government and its agencies on the Method employed, Management pattern, Financial implications in managing Covid-19.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of this study, the Researchers are recommending the following

1. A review in the constitution of the Presidential task force on Covid-19
2. A harmonization of Results, Diagnosis and Announcement Modalities to the Populace.
3. Presidential Re-assurance to the people of the Nation on sincerity of purpose, management and Care of the Sick.
4. Better management Modalities in line with international best practices.
5. Design Public health message with aggressive dissemination of this message.

This Research provides room for Expansion and Further Study.

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