

POST COVID-19 AND THE ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE DELIVERY OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The recent (2019 -2022) Corona Virus Disease (technically addressed as COVID-19) presents many developmental dysfunctions across major economies of the world especially among the under developed and developing nations of Africa. Apart from its debilitating effects on the socio-economic life of the citizens which precipitated a “new normal” of social order, governmental efficiency in terms of infrastructural provisions for aiding economic and healthcare delivery, were elastically stretched. This calls to question the public service capacity and delivery mechanisms of most governments in addressing critical emergency cases. Consequently, this study primarily examines the survival measures adopted by Lagos State government in Nigeria to sustain small scale businesses during and post COVID-19 era, and also identifies the sectors with substantial employment

creation opportunities for the stated periods; all geared towards ascertaining the role of public administration in good governance delivery.

The study makes use of the qualitative methodology, adopting the focused-group-discussion (FGD) technique in order to obtain key information (data) on the state of government post COVID-19 administration of good governance in Lagos. Essentially, a panel of 12 member-staff of the Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) was purposively composed and engaged on diverse issues of survival strategies during and post COVID-19 era; the coping mechanisms, and promptness in service rendition.

Finding of the study revealed that three distinct measures were adopted by the Lagos State government to sustain small business owners who were adversely affected by the COVID-19, namely: Lagos Economic Acceleration Programme (LEAP), Lagos COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (Lagos CARES), and Taxpayers Relief. It also identified eight sectors with substantial employment creation opportunities adversely affected by COVID19 as: Education, Technology, Transport & Logistics, Healthcare, Renewable Energy and Agriculture, Hospitality, Tourism, Creative and Entertainment Sectors. Furthermore, the study discovered that eight actionable measures were used to strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance in Lagos State, via: innovation and openness to change, responsiveness, transparency, competency and capacity, accountability, rule of law, ethical conduct and efficiency.

The study strongly recommends the adoption of “USAID Good Governance and Public Administration Strengthening (GGPAS)’s programme” in order to assist key public and private institutions critical to long-term stability and democratic

growth with a view to expanding and improving the quality of service delivery to citizens.

Keywords: *Post COVID-19, Good Governance, Public Administration, Service Delivery, Lagos State Government.*

1. Background to the Study

The respiratory Corona Virus Disease 2019, also known as COVID-19, presented a new global phenomenon in the field of medical discovery and management such that earlier centuries' pandemics were comparatively considered to be in a lesser magnitude. It was named by the World Health Organization (WHO), as the virus Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV2) or COVID-19. The infection was declared a pandemic on the 11th of March 2020. The case was first recorded and pronounced in Nigeria on the 27th February 2020. The COVID-19 created a significant developmental dysfunction around the major economies of the world, resulting in total "lockdown", starting from the first quarter of 2020. From Asia, Europe, North America, South America, to Oceania and Africa, the devastating impacts of the epidemic affected the socioeconomic and political life of the people in varying degrees. For African Nations mostly, the lockdown regulations, policies and laws were relatively relaxed and manageable.

Historically, the World Health Organization (WHO) initially claimed on December 31, 2019, that Wuhan City, in the Hubei region of China, was the source of the Corona virus outbreak (Dong, Hu & Gao 2020; WHO 2020). Some experts claimed it is transmitted by respiratory droplets, which are mostly released when an infected person coughs or sneezes and comes into close contact with another person (less than 1.5 m). Those who are older than 60 years, and people with underlying medical conditions such as HIV, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and cancer are at greater risk of getting sick without the possibility of recovery from the virus (Dong et al. 2020). Public services are under strain as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Switzer et al. 2020), and according to Dunlop et al (2020), it is one of the major policy and public administration issues of this century. Throughout the period, maintaining service continuity during COVID-19 became difficult by the public sector (Raghavan et al, 2021).

Whereas, governance is recognised by many scholars as the offering of concrete solutions to world developmental challenges, including poverty, unemployment, health and inequality (Khalil-Babatunde 2014; Helalo 2015; Munzhedzi & Makwembere 2019), the management of COVID 19 seems to have belied the proposition. Numerous issues with public service delivery in nations where austerity decentralization and changes in governance have been implemented were made worse by the pandemic.

For Nigeria, the Covid-19 manifested on February 27, 2020, when the first verified case was reported. The development revealed the country's governance shortcomings in terms of the management of infrastructural facilities, many of which were in deteriorating conditions. It posed a big challenge to the health facilities of the Country and exposed the fact that barely only two testing facilities were functional nationwide, and few ventilators existed in the public hospitals across the States of the Federation. Nigeria and many African countries were seriously battled with the disease which was amidst lack of enough resources, lack of technical expertise, coupled with population density and the awareness was very in the open for many of its citizens. The major problem was that Nigerians did not take the outbreak as serious and as such many were being stigmatized. This poor knowledge of COVID-19 outbreak resulted in poor use of safety measures in many communities in Nigeria. Due to large population of Lagos State, the non use of safety measures had serious effect and several cases of deaths were recorded in Lagos State. In the midst of this, Lagos state Government was proactive and responsive. Hence, the need to find out how the good governance of the state could wriggle out along the insensitivity reaction of the people of Lagos State.

Invariably, Nigeria and other nations around the world were faced with developmental issues as a result of the Corona Virus Disease of 2019. This is because small and medium-sized businesses (like hair salons, restaurants, and theaters) were forced to close shops on Levels Four and Five of the lockdown, and there were fewer job opportunities.

Equally on the economic level, due to a decline in global oil demand, the price of crude oil dropped significantly, which had major economic repercussions for nations like Nigeria that depend heavily on crude oil for economic survival. The Vice President of Nigeria then, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, underscored the fact that over 39 million Nigerians lost their means of livelihood as a result of the pandemic, citing the skyrocketing unemployment rate. On social level, there was increase in rape cases, robbery, ritual killings and banditry attacks, leading to sharp increase in crime rates generally.

Also, due to the daily increase in infected patients, schools also closed down, with no indication of reopening dates. This also applied to churches, businesses, aviation operations, etc. Every element of the national life was impacted by the pandemic, but more significantly, it brought to light the nation's institutional flaws, deteriorating infrastructure, and poor governance.

While literature review has indicated a number of clinical, epidemiology, health security, healthcare systems and policy, mental health, virology and immunology research works carried out on COVID-19 vis-à-vis public health challenges and management, there seems a dearth of the studies specifically addressed to service delivery, public administration, e-government and digital governance, evaluation and impact assessment on COVID-19 related subjects. Resultantly, this study throws up the need to examine the challenges posed by the management of COVID-19 in terms of public service delivery, using Lagos State Government in Nigeria as a case study. It specifically attempts to appraise the resultant effects of COVID-19 on socio-economic endeavors of the citizens, and the responses offered by public administration in ensuring good governance.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study is aimed at investigating post COVID-19 and the role of public administration in delivery of good governance in Lagos State. The specific objectives are:

- 1) To establish the measures adopted by the Lagos State Government to sustain small business owners affected adversely by the COVID-19.
- 2) To identify the sectors with substantial employment creation opportunities adversely affected by the COVID-19.
- 3) To highlight actionable measures used to strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance during pandemic period.
- 4) To make appropriate recommendations to strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance generally.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were answered as problems of the study:

- 1) What were the measures adopted by the Lagos State Government to sustain small business owners during and post COVID-19 period?
- 2) Which sectors of the economy with substantial employment creation opportunities were adversely affected by COVID-19?
- 3) What were the actionable measures that strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance during and post COVID-19 period?
- 4) What recommendations are desirable in strengthening public administration in delivery of good governance during pandemic period?

2. Review of Literature

- 5) With a view to establishing the conceptual and theoretical basis of the study, relevant concepts, assumptions and propositions (CAPs) are reviewed, and the underlining extant studies are highlighted to draw insights into the knowledge gap of the study – public service delivery and good governance.

2.1 Public Administration

Within the purview of service delivery, Public Administration plays a prominent role and its definition has become contentious among scholars. It is said in some instances that it has no generally accepted definition. This is because the scope of the subject is so wide and relatively

debatable that it is easier to explain than define. Public administration, technically, is a field of study, that is, a discipline and an occupation. Public administration, therefore, by extension, involves the putting together of human and material resources in order to achieve the objectives of public policy. Administrative activities can take place in a variety of settings, provided the crucial elements are present such as the cooperation of human beings to perform tasks that have been mutually accepted as worthy of the joint effort.

Therefore by reference, the COVID-19 management has become series of activities requiring concerted efforts of the public administrators, government officials and the health workers on one hand, and the citizens who must attended to, on the other hand.

2.2 Good Governance

World Bank (1998) sees governance from the perspective of exercising powers in managing the economic and social endowments towards attaining development. This captures principally, the manner of exercising power in the handling of resources for development. More so, (United Nation Development Programme-UNDP, 1997) expands the notion of governance to embrace private sectors, and civil societies; culminating in the existence of corporate governance. But within the scope of the study, governance is directed on the provision of public services by public officers. The system of politics of a nation and its functionality in relation to public administration and law, defines governance (Odo, 2015). A dynamic administrative concept, good governance takes into account the rapidly evolving political, social, and economic landscape. Within the confines of parliamentary democracy, it seeks to alter citizens' political, economic, and social lives.

The following components are presented by Sharma et al. (2013):

- (a) Participation: They consider engagement to be essential to effective governance. Citizens routinely exercise their right to vote and participate in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. Direct participation or participation through the representatives is both possible.
- (b) Accountability: The extent to which the ruling class is able to hold those who hold power accountable to the people who give them that power is a key indicator of a healthy democracy.
- (c) Transparency: The free flow of information to citizens is a fundamental component of effective governance, and a good government must guarantee this. Transparency in government becomes essential in parliamentary democracies, and this is made possible by the fundamental ideas of separation of powers and the interplay between the legislative, executive, and judicial departments. Making choices and enforcing them in a way that complies with laws and regulations is a prerequisite for transparency.
- (d) Rule of law: A necessary condition for good government, the rule of law is a system that is applied impartially to safeguard social justice, preserve human rights, and prevent the abuse of power.
- (e) Consensus-Oriented: After balancing conflicting social interests in the community's best interest, good governance should seek to achieve broad consensus. It seeks to both accomplish the objectives of such development and promote sustainable human development.

- (f) Effectiveness and Efficiency: The ability of institutions and processes to provide outcomes that satisfy societal demands is another essential component of good governance. It also means making appropriate use of the resources available to them and the government.
- (g) Responsiveness: Institutions and procedures must be responsive in order to serve all stakeholders in a timely manner. Only then can good governance be achieved.
- (h) Inclusivity and Equity: Good governance promotes the idea that no one should be kept out of society's mainstream and that those on the margins should have access to opportunities.

2.3 Relevant Extant Studies

Within the realm of public administration, many studies have been conducted, and they varied in contexts, contents, methodologies and outcomes. However, there are seemingly less of the studies that have interconnectivity with the management of COVID 19 on good governance and service delivery which pose substantial knowledge gaps, and allow for further studies. For instance, the “COVID-19 and Good Governance: A Comparative Study of East Asian Countries” (2020); “Assessing the Effectiveness of Government Responses to COVID-19: A Systematic Review” (2020); “The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Service Delivery: A Case Study South Africa” (2020), and “Good Governance and COVID-19: An Analysis of Government Responses in Africa” (2020) are variant of research works outside the Nigerian Clime with varying methodologies used. This current study defers in approach.

3. Methodology

A direct input of qualitative methodology, the study adopted a focused-group-discussion (FGD) approach in order to obtain detailed information on the state of post COVID-19 on public administration in delivery of good governance in Lagos State. A FGD is data collections technique in which a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional as external moderator. This method serves to solicit participants' attitudes and perceptions, knowledge and experiences, and practices, shared in the course of interaction with different people. The technique is based upon the assumption that the group processes activated during a FGD help to identify and clarify shared knowledge among groups and communities, which would otherwise be difficult to obtain with a series of individual interviews.

A focus-group-discussion panel of twelve (12) members of staff of The Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) was purposively composed. The LSETF was established under the Employment Trust Fund Law of 2016 of Lagos State Government to tackle unemployment and promote entrepreneurship in Lagos State by empowering its residents with job and wealth creation opportunities. The Fund, which was launched with an initial capital of N25 billion has,

over the years, empowered Lagos residents across different demographics with innovative programmes.

Against the COVID-19 lockdown which called for increased social services by Government Agencies, the study adopted the Fund for a case-study in order to determine its efficacy in service delivery, and invariably, gaining knowledge into the governance model (good, weak or poor) of Lagos State Government during emergency situations.

4. Result and Data Analysis

Results of the data derived from focus-group-discussion (FGD) with LSETF staff are presented as follows:

1. Research Questions Analysis:

What were the measures adopted by the Lagos State Government to sustain small business owners during and post COVID-19 period?

Figure 4.1: Lagos State Adopted Measures for sustaining Small Business Owners

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

Figure 4.1 above reveals that there are three measures that Lagos State has taken to sustain small business owners who have been affected adversely by the Covid19; namely: Lagos Economic Acceleration Programme (LEAP), The Lagos COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (CARES) and Taxpayers Relief. Findings confirmed a report that the Lagos State government through the Lagos State Measures for Post Covid19.

LEAP Lagos CARES Taxpayers Relief:

Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF) launched a N5 billion economic recovery support for MSMEs in the state, tagged “Lagos Economic Acceleration Programme (LEAP).” This is in a bid to help businesses in Lagos recover from the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. The programme provides access to affordable finance at a single-digit interest rate; enhance capacity building, foster market linkages and leverage business expansion opportunities for its beneficiaries. The Lagos COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (CARES) programme is a state-level intervention that seeks to mitigate the local effects of the COVID-19 pandemic at the state-level, by protecting the livelihoods of existing and newly poor and vulnerable households and supporting the recovery of local economic activity especially among MSMEs. The program consists of 3 Results Areas (RAs) as defined below: RA1 – Focuses on Social Protection, RA2 – Focuses on Agriculture and; RA3 – Focuses on Micro Small and Medium scale enterprises (MSMEs). KMPG (2020) reported that the Lagos State tax authority issued guidance providing additional tax relief measures in response to the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The relief measures include: Installment payments for resolving the tax liabilities of certain taxpayers, Waiver of late-payment penalties for “pay-as-you-earn” (PAYE)

liabilities for March through May 2020, Waiver of late-filing penalties for 2020 annual tax returns (Form A), Waiver of interest and penalties with respect to additional tax liabilities arising tax audits for the period 2009 to 2015, of taxpayers that commit to a structured payment plan that terminates by 31 December 2020 and Tax credit of 20% of cash and in-kind donations made by resident individuals to Lagos State government for COVID-19 management.

2. Research Questions Analysis:

Which sectors of the economy with substantial employment creation opportunities were adversely affected by COVID-19?

Table 4.1: Sectors affected adversely by Post Covid19

- 1) Education
- 2) Technology
- 3) Transport & Logistics
- 4) Healthcare
- 5) Renewable Energy
- 6) Agriculture
- 7) Hospitality
- 8) Tourism
- 9) Creative and Entertainment

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

Table 4.1 above showed eight sectors with substantial employment creation opportunities that have been affected adversely by the Covid-19, namely: Education, Technology, Transport & Logistics, Healthcare, Renewable Energy and Agriculture, Hospitality, Tourism, Creative and Entertainment Sectors. Findings from this study is in agreement with the Executive Secretary/CEO, Lagos State Employment Trust Fund (LSETF), Mrs. Teju Abisoye's assertion that LSETF-LEAP focuses on some of the identified high-impact sectors with substantial employment creation opportunities (Education, Technology, Transport & Logistics, Healthcare, Renewable Energy and Agriculture, noting, however, that the Hospitality, Tourism, Creative and Entertainment) that have suffered downturn, requiring intervention to protect employment.

3. Research Questions Analysis:

What were the actionable measures that strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance during and post COVID-19 period?

Table 4.2: Actionable measures for strengthening public administration in delivery of good governance

Innovation and Openness to Change, Responsiveness, Openness and Transparency, Competency and Capacity, Accountability, Rule of law, Ethical Conduct, and Effectiveness and Efficiency

Source: (Field Survey, 2022)

Table 4.2 above shows that there are eight actionable measures that is been used to strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance in Lagos State namely innovation & Openness to change, responsiveness, Openness & Transparency, Competency & Capacity, Accountability, Rule of Law, Ethical conduct and effectiveness & Efficiency. Findings above corroborate Council of Europe (2020) recommendation on 12 Principles of Good Governance. These 12 Principles are enshrined in the Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at local level, endorsed by a decision of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2008. They cover issues such as ethical conduct, rule of law, efficiency and effectiveness, transparency, sound financial management and accountability.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study examined post COVID-19 and the role of public administration in delivery of good governance in Lagos State. Findings revealed that there were three (3) measures that Lagos State took to sustain small business owners who were affected adversely by the Covid-19, namely: LEAP, Lagos CARES and Taxpayers Relief. The study also found out that eight (8) sectors with substantial employment creation opportunities were adversely affected by the Covid-19, and these include: Education, Technology, Transport & Logistics, Healthcare, Renewable Energy and Agriculture, Hospitality, Tourism, Creative and Entertainment. The study also affirmed eight (8) actionable measures that were adopted to strengthen public administration in delivery of good governance in Lagos State as: innovation & Openness to change, responsiveness, Openness & Transparency, Competency & Capacity, Accountability, Rule of Law, Ethical conduct and effectiveness and Efficiency.

This paper gives rise to the following recommendations:

- a) There is need to further strengthen public administration role in delivery of good governance in Lagos State by implementing USAID Good Governance and Public Administration Strengthening (GGPAS) programme with a view to strengthening key public and private institutions critical to long-term stability and democratic growth. GGPAS provides targeted assistance for governance reform in order to: Strengthen the abilities of public sector institutions to deliver key services more effectively and

efficiently; help a range of public, private, and civil society partners expand access to and improve the quality of citizen services.

- b) There is a need for Lagos State Government to employ a unique public management model across sectors as opportunities emerge, strengthening existing partnerships, and establishing new relationships with key institutions with major focus areas of reforms centre on Public Administration and Local Governance, e-Governance, Education & Healthcare, Social protection and development, Citizen documentation, Public safety and security, Tax services, Electricity and energy provision and Agriculture and food security.
- c) There is need for further research to be carried out to assess the impact of post Covid-19 intervention programmes on citizen in Lagos State with the intention to determine whether the programmes were successful or a failure.

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