

## **MANAGEMENT TRANSPARENCY AND COVID-19 PALLIATIVES MANAGEMENT: THE NIGERIA INSIGHT**

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### **Abstract**

*The outbreak of novel corona virus indeed exposed government management deficiency in all spheres. The transparent management of government resources for the public good though an essential component of public sector integrity as imperative is usually evidently jeopardized during crisis situations. Analysis of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic palliatives management demonstrates that lack of public sector management transparency hampers governments' preparedness, resilience and capacity to provide social security and contain the spread of a virus. Worried by the circumstances surrounding the transparent management of palliatives to cushion the effects of the hardship occasioned by the covid-19 pandemic, this paper takes an insightful look at the Nigerian situation and the challenges surrounding palliatives distribution management. The design is qualitative drawing significantly from documented sources and personal observation. The paper identified a number of factors that hindered effective management transparency in Covid-19 palliatives management as pursuit of the personal political interests and agenda of public authorities, partisan considerations, lack of systematic database on poor and vulnerable Nigerians, systemic corruption, greed and insensitivity on the part of politicians and public office holders. The paper therefore recommends need for the governments both at state and national levels to create a sustainable database of vulnerable Nigerians to ensure a more coordinated and efficient crisis management going forward, relevant laws needs to be put in place to ensure that partisan considerations do not take overriding consideration in situations requiring the well being of Nigerians in time of pandemic, need for more public awareness on the policies, programs and activities of government in line with the freedom of information law already in place, sanctions should be prescribed under the law for public officials who convert palliatives meant for the vulnerable to private use or for profit motives and strengthening oversight functions to ensure effective, efficient and transparent management of all government programs.*

**Keywords: Management, Transparency, Covid-19, Palliative Measures, Nigeria.**

## **Introduction**

With national population currently estimated by the National Population Commission to about 209 million people, Nigeria is one of the most populous black nations in the world. A country branded as the poverty capital of the world with a health system that is comatose, a national political leadership that is marooned and seemingly deficient in ideas and a security architecture that cannot guarantee safety of lives and property and national economy that is perpetually submerged in repression ready for depression. In the midst of these entire quagmires; as with the rest of the world, Nigeria is currently dealing with the (COVID-19) pandemic, but in a somewhat different fashion (complicated by massive hunger and poverty). It is on record that on Feb 27, 2020, the first official case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was announced. The patient was an Italian citizen, who had recently arrived in Lagos from Europe and who, a few days later, tested positive for the disease. In Ogun state, a neighboring state to Lagos, another patient was identified and was discovered to have been in contact with the first patient. Since then, the situation has developed with more cases occurring, regardless of measures initiated by the states and federal government to combat the virus and return to normalcy. As of December 09, 2020 there are over 70, 000 confirmed cases, about 65, 000 recoveries, and a little above 1,000 deaths recorded. In the months to come more cases are still anticipated as more tests are carried out while the vaccines are awaited.

In the prevailing circumstance, WHO on a global scale as well as the NCDC (National Centre for Disease Control) has advised on several methods to help prevent spike in the spread of the virus and to save health systems across the world from a complete collapse. Such measures include: hand washing with soap, use of alcohol based sanitizer, social distancing, wearing of face mask and staying at home. However, Nigeria's health system before the pandemic was nearly non-existent and comatose. In most of the cities', health systems are completely dilapidated as they have not received adequate attention, and some government officials have contributed to health system collapse by encouraging medical tourism.

Furthermore, to ensure compliance with some of the protocols 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 for another 2 weeks. Shortly after the order was announced by President Muhammadu Buhari, there was uproar among the citizens due to a myriad of concerns. Recall Nigeria, in 2018, was announced by the World Poverty Clock to be the poverty capital of the world, with over 40% of its citizens living below the poverty line. Therefore, a large proportion of the population, especially in the commercial city of Lagos and other parts of the country live on daily income with no savings to act as a financial buffer for their households during the lockdown period. There was apprehension among the people that the prospect of staying at home could, therefore, lead to another problem apparently worse than the Covid-19: fear of hunger and starvation induced death. Several people who live and work in the cities, have expressed concern about how, despite being fully informed about COVID-19, they still do not see it as much a threat as the hunger being experienced across the country already talk more of under lockdown regime.

Consequently, president Buhari promised the citizens some Covid-19 palliative measures, which include disbursing of funds and food items to those most affected. But the reality on the ground is a far cry from the promises made; as only a small proportion of the population attest to receiving any support. A large number of citizens have disobeyed the lockdown order in the hope of making sales or trying to earn money through other services, but they were apprehended by the police for violating lockdown orders. The point been made here is that the fear was more of hunger than of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the midst of all these a number of well meaning Nigerians, business organisations and foreign donor agencies contributed both cash and materials to support the government at both states and federal levels in providing palliatives to vulnerable Nigerians at such a critical time.

Credit to the #ENDSARS Protests across the country which led to the discovery of undistributed palliatives hoarded in warehouses in various states of Nigeria, which was indeed an eye opener that calls to question the sincerity, integrity and transparency of the government in the Covid-19 palliatives management. According to news from other countries in Africa, the situation in Nigeria is almost a perfect mirror of the situation across the African continent, with the exception of a few countries (e.g., Rwanda), where governments have been able to enact effective solutions to the pandemic and provide palliative measures transparently to the vulnerable citizens. The above concerns therefore, gave credence to the choice of this topic for this paper, which focuses on management transparency and covid-19 palliatives management: the Nigeria insight.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems associated with the corona virus at its inception was two dimensional; fear of death from the infection and fear of death from hunger and starvation due to lockdown measures. Thus COVID-19 pandemic has brought a tsunami of suffering that is devastating that even developed and well resourced countries are not exempt from the shock but obviously more complicated in underdeveloped countries like Nigeria. The disease has wreaked havoc on health systems on a global scale and generated immense losses for households, communities, and national economies, in addition to the growing death toll. Patients, caregivers, health-care providers, and health systems are today overburdened than ever before. In the above circumstance the government in Nigeria has not sufficiently helped matters especially in handling the management of palliatives for the vulnerable in the society, which is prone to lack of transparency. The problem is that the distribution of palliatives in most states of Nigeria including the FCT, Abuja is to say the least chaotic and uncoordinated. There were clear cases of lack of transparent management. Partisan considerations took the centre stage in the distribution of palliatives, which most political office holders used to further their political interests and ambitions while the most vulnerable were almost denied. This indeed constitutes the main concerns of this paper.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this paper was to appraise management transparency and covid-19 palliatives management relying on the Nigeria insight. To the above extent, the paper shall seek to realize the following specifics;

1. To carry out a conceptual review of transparency and management transparency;
2. To identify the Measures intended to serve as COVID-19 Palliatives in Nigeria;

3. To make an insightful appraisal of issues affecting Covid-19 Palliatives Management in Nigeria;
4. To proffer strategies for ensuring transparent management going forward.

### **Methodology**

Exploratory research design was employed. Exploratory research design fits a situation whereby relatively, little or nothing is known about a situation/process or where the situation has a deviant character or is relatively new. However, the goal of exploratory design is to discover ideas and insights. In addition to the exploratory design, this study employed qualitative method in its data collection and analyses. Qualitative research emphasizes meanings (words) rather than frequencies and distributions (numbers) when collecting and analyzing data. Primarily, qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret the meaning of situations or events from the perspectives of the people involved and as understood by them (in this relying absolutely on documented evidence and personal observation). It is generally inductive rather than deductive in its approach, that is, it generates theory from interpretation of the evidence, albeit against a theoretical background. Thus qualitative measures are often binary in that they are interested in the presence or absence of phenomena. The work adopted the method of content analysis in extracting information from the above enumerated sources of data gathering techniques. This is supported by an analysis of issues through a logical validation process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

But over time, theorists have used different constructs to capture their interest in observation, each construct building on the last. The latest is transparency, which not only has caught fire in management practice and scholarship but seems also to have entered the public dialogue far more forcefully than any previous construct for observation. In fact, it is used in many fields, a number of which are related to management. Sociologists, social psychologists, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, and architects have increasingly drawn on theories of transparency to investigate a broad range of questions. Transparency has informed the study and evaluation of markets and economies, countries, governments, societies, schools and education, public health, and other institutions (Hood & Heald, 2006). The breadth of literatures which find it relevant to study the relationship between transparency—in one construct or another—and performance reflects the degree to which that relationship is a fundamental feature of life: without observing something, we cannot understand, interact with, or improve it. Yet we may ask of transparency whether this “umbrella construct” (Hirsch & Levin, 1999) encompassing so many seemingly different constructs has value in itself.

One would expect trust to have something to do with the balance between transparency and privacy, and so it does, but the relationship is complicated. As observers, the more we see, the more easily we can trust. But as the observed, the more that is seen of us, the less we feel trusted. When others tell us we need to be observed to be trusted, that doesn't feel like trust at all. But if someone tells us they don't want to be observed, we tend not to trust them (John et al., 2016). Nonetheless, while “trust me” and “show me” can function as substitutes—and sometimes even as opposites—both are celebrated in management theory as good practice: trust is an “important lubricant of a social system” (Arrow, quoted in Bradach & Eccles, 1989),

while transparency has become management gospel. Declining levels of either would appear to undermine performance, and yet they clearly struggle with one another.

The introduction of more severe transparency requirements appears to have “coincided with reducing rather than increasing levels of public trust in the very institutions and office-holders subjected to those requirements” (O’Neill, 2006). Increased transparency leads to decreased trust, which conceivably leads to greater hiding behavior and less realized transparency. Conversely, Simon (1991) observes that what is surprising about organizations, in the absence of constant supervision, is not the level of opportunistic shirking but rather the level of voluntary effort.

### **A Conceptual Insight on Transparency and Management Transparency**

Though the label transparency is relatively new in administration and management scholarship, “transparency” is a term both old and new. As far back as the 1400s, it was narrowly defined as “*perviousness* to light; diaphaneity; *pellucidity*” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015)—what we typically refer to as “transparent,” which is derived from the roots *trans* (“through”) and *parere* (“appear”)(Harper, 2016). In the last 25 years, consistent with the evolution of observation in management and organization theory described above, the definition of “transparency” has expanded to include “openness,” “freedom of information,” “clarity,” “accuracy,” the timely release of all relevant information, and even “truth” (Collins, 2008; Hood, 2006; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014), although that transformation in popular usage appears to have taken place organically without any official or critical debate (Heald, 2006).

That definitional expansion has made transparency one of the great themes in management theory today. The term is measurably more prevalent: in 2009, it was deemed the tenth-most-used word in global print and electronic media (GlobalLanguageMonitor.com, 2009). It appeared in over 27,000 academic articles between 2000 and 2009, 15 percent of which were related to management, a six fold increase in the percentage from the previous decade based on searches through ABI/Inform, EBSCOHost, and ISI Web of Knowledge. After a rather steady presence in books for almost a century, its use increased fourfold in the 1990s in books tracked by Google

Webster’s New World College Dictionary named it “Word of the Year” in 2003 (Browning, 2003), defining it tongue-in-cheek as “a policy with a positive spin, promising uncensored exposure of records, moral conduct, and virtue.” As the term has become much more frequent, transparency itself has become “unambiguously a Good Thing, and upheld as one of society’s virtues... it’s become conventional wisdom to seek greater transparency” (Collins, 2008). The last two decades in particular have been marked by a “dogma of transparency” (Collins, 2008), a “cult of transparency” (Böhm, 2005), and a transparency movement with a “quasi-religious character” (Hood & Heald, 2006). In short, transparency is “en vogue” (Keegan, 2003). It even has a democratic ring to it despite its intellectual roots in both learning and control; it is now “deemed inappropriate, if not undemocratic, to argue for the opposite” (Welch & Rotberg, 2006). As one transparency expert stated, “transparency is very much related to freedom, the quality of our relationships, the quality of our lives and the sustainability of our society” (Lazarus & McManus, 2006). Oxford Professor of Government Christopher Hood (2006), in

his chapter providing a historical perspective on transparency in government, concludes: The word “transparency” is nowadays pervasive in the jargon of business governance as well as that of governments and international bodies, and has been used almost to saturation point in all of those domains over the past decade (Hood, 2001). We might almost say that “more-transparent-than-thou” has become the secular equivalent of “holier than thou” in modern debates over matters of organization and governance.... Like many notions of a quasi-religious nature, transparency is more often preached than practiced, more often invoked than defined, and indeed might ironically be said to be mystic in essence, at least to some extent, Hood asserts.

Such popularity has, perhaps inevitably, spawned a backlash. While some treat transparency as a basic “human right” (Birkinshaw, 2006), regardless of its consequences, objections have been raised and it has been suggested that this right be replaced by a functional rationale; that is, that instances of transparency be judged for their instrumental value—particularly with respect to performance—rather than for some intrinsic value (Best, 2005; Heald, 2006). Judging transparency based on instrumental rather than intrinsic value implies returning to transparency’s functional roots: its impact on learning, control, and productivity. Those functional roots are most obvious in the adoption of the word transparency in government and public sector administration, where use of the term incubated. The Oxford Dictionary of Economics, for example, defines “transparent policy measures” as “making it clear who is taking the decisions, what the measures are, who is gaining from them, and who is paying for them,” adding that “economists believe that policies are more likely to be rational if they are transparent than if they are opaque” (Black, 2003). In a similar vein, the Asian Development Bank defines transparency as “the availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules, regulations and decisions” (Asian Development Bank, 1995). Those public sector definitions tie back to Rousseau’s the eyes of the public (Rousseau, 1772), Foucault’s belief that “other things equal, that sort of man whose conduct is likely to be most narrowly watched, is therefore the most proper man to choose” (Bentham, 2001), and Bentham’s proposition that “I really do take it for an indisputable truth, and a truth that is one of the corner-stones of political science—the more strictly we are watched, the better we behave” (Bentham, 2001).

The concept of transparency refers to the possibility of accessing information, intentions or behaviours that are revealed through a process of disclosure. It is usually linked to accountability, openness, and efficiency. Transparency depends on the accessibility and availability of information and how this can support users in the making process of decision. Having understood in some details what transparency entails, it is also tangential to appreciate management transparency as a concept and as well as its key factors. Management transparency is a key factor to earning trust in an organization or state. This is important currency for the times when decisions must be made absent of a full explanation of the reasons behind them. Understanding from the masses for instance sustains morale so they are willing to appreciate the programs and policy of the government and lend their support to achieve set goals. With respect to management transparency, the preoccupation in this context is on Covid-19 palliatives.

### **Measures intended to serve as COVID-19 Palliatives in Nigeria**

Covid-19 pandemic struck with so much threat. The lockdown, however, prevented many Nigerians working in informal sectors from traveling to work or conducting their business. Local food vendors and traders have expressed fears over their ability to feed their families during the lockdown, with their daily earnings their only source of sustenance. An increase in food prices as a result of the lockdown also means that many cannot stock up on necessities. "The vast majority of people outside of the formal system are hit devastatingly by the lockdown," said Felix Moroka, executive director of the Social Economic Rights Action Center, a Lagos-based nongovernmental organization. "Any disruption to their daily livelihood has a huge and significant impact on their ability to meet their most basic needs."

The informal sector, in which more than 80 percent of Nigerians work, includes a wide range of occupations, from street traders, taxi drivers, tradesmen, and artisans to food vendors and hairdressers. In Lagos alone, according to research by nongovernmental organizations, 65 percent of the estimated 25 million people work in the informal sector. Informal workers have lower incomes, often do not have savings, health insurance, or pensions that provide a basic social safety net, and 72 percent are poor (Alamba, 2020).

When announcing the lockdown, President Buhari said the government would put in place measures to "preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult time in dignity." He said that "the most vulnerable in our society" would receive conditional cash transfers for the next two months, while Sadiya Umar Farouq, minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development said that food rations would be distributed to vulnerable households. On April 1, the Humanitarian Affairs Ministry began paying 20,000 Naira to families registered in the National Social Register of Poor and Vulnerable Households set up by the Buhari administration in 2016 to combat poverty. The government said that each family on the register will receive monthly cash payments for four months. These payments are likely to reach only a fraction of Nigerians who will need economic assistance (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Farouq said on March 31 that the National Social Register included 11,045,537 people from 2,644,493 households, far fewer than the over 90 million Nigerians estimated to live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.90 a day. Buhari said on April 13 that the National Social Register would be expanded from 2.6 million households to 3.6 million in the next two weeks.

The government's failure to disclose key details of the cash transfer program has also cast doubt on how many people it includes and who will benefit (Human Rights Watch, 2020). On April 4, 2020, the Social and Economic Rights Accountability Project (SERAP), a nongovernmental organization, filed a freedom of information request seeking details on the government's relief funds. "We are seriously concerned that millions of the country's poorest and most vulnerable people have not benefited from the announced palliatives, donations, reported cash payments, cash transfers and other benefits," the group said. Under Nigeria's freedom of information law, the government must provide the information within seven days.

On April 8, the government announced that 77,000 metric tons of food will be distributed to vulnerable households affected by the lockdown in Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja, but the modalities for distribution was not clear. Buhari directed the Humanitarian Affairs Ministry

to develop a strategy to maintain the school feeding program that, before schools began closing on March 19, the government said it fed 9 million pupils across the country. Lagos state government also said on March 27 that it would provide food packages to 200,000 households during the lockdown.

Nigeria's other major economic responses to COVID-19 may not adequately protect the rights of the people most likely to lack adequate food, shelter, and other essentials (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Nigeria's Central Bank has announced a 50 billion Naira (US\$ 128.5 million) targeted credit facility "to support households and micro, small and medium enterprises affected by the COVID-19 pandemic." The credit facility, through which households can potentially get up to 3 million Naira loans (US\$7,700), requires proof of collateral, such as personal property, which many poor families are unlikely to have. The loans also come with five percent interest initially and nine percent after March 2021. Only 40 million Nigerians, 25 percent of the population, have a bank account.

The House of Representatives on March 24 passed the Emergency Economic Stimulus bill, 2020 to provide a 50 percent tax rebate for employers and business owners who agree to not make staff cuts in 2020. While the bill, if it goes into effect, may prevent job losses in the formal sector, it contains no provisions for informal workers. Furthermore, under international human rights law, Nigeria's government has an obligation to protect people's right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and nutrition, the highest attainable standard of health, and the right to social security. In times of economic crisis, countries must demonstrate that they have made every effort to mobilize all available resources, including international assistance, and allocate them in the way that maximizes respect for human rights, including by taking into account the precarious situation of disadvantaged and marginalized individuals or groups. Governments are obligated to ensure access to food, water, health care, and other basic needs for everyone at all times, and in particular those subject to lockdown and other severe restrictions on movement.

Unfortunately, Nigeria's federal government could not develop a plan to deliver social and economic assistance to the tens of millions of people who lost income due to COVID-19, particularly informal workers who lack an adequate social safety net (Human Rights Watch, 2020) said. Their exclusion from social protections violates their right to social security enshrined in international human rights law. This plan should be developed in consultation with community-based organizations with experience serving people living in poverty.

The government should also clearly communicate its economic relief plans to the public and clarify eligibility, timelines, and procedures. According to Ewang (2020) "Nigeria's federal and state governments have acknowledged the devastating impact that COVID-19 on the food and livelihood sources of the most vulnerable Nigerians"... "Now, they need to deploy more resources, creativity, and transparency to ensure the basic necessities of life for everyone."

There are, therefore, lamentations trailing the distribution of government palliatives by the masses. For instance, a national newspaper, Business Day on April 19, 2020, reported thus: "It is lamentation and bitter wailing in Lagos and parts of the country as Nigerians complain that the stimulus packages announced by the Federal and Lagos State governments to cushion the



effects of the lockdown imposed on some States and the Federal Capital Territory to contain the further spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have not been sincerely deployed. According to the newspaper, the citizens alleged that the process of distribution of whatever that may have been made available for that purpose had been politicized.

It could be recalled that the Federal government had earlier said the palliatives were for the most vulnerable in the society, though there were no laid down parameters for determining the most vulnerable. For example, in Enugu, Imo, Abia and Edo States, most of the residents claimed they were not aware if there was any distribution of palliatives in their localities. They alleged the palliatives were hijacked by politicians who now turned themselves to be vulnerable. The state leaderships borrowed a leaf from the federal government by saying that the palliative packages were for the most vulnerable.

The questions that loomed large and which both the federal and state governments are unable to answer is: who are the vulnerable? Why is it that the federal and state governments were unable to evolve a transparent process to ensuring fair distribution of the palliatives? Is the idea of undefined vulnerability a ploy by the governments to hijack the palliatives for their party faithful? What about those people that lost their jobs or income (such as some private sector employees like teachers), are they to be regarded among the vulnerable? These questions and the reactions they are capable of raising no doubt exposes government lack of transparent management in the Palliatives distribution process and thus justifying the lack of trust by the citizens and the sporadic looting of allegedly discovered Covid-19 palliatives hoarded in warehouses across the country at the end of #ENDSARS protests (Obiezu, 2020).

Obiezu (2020) vividly captured the scenario thus; amid the ongoing protests in Nigeria over police brutality, mobs of citizens have overrun several government-owned warehouses and looted food meant to be distributed during this year's coronavirus lockdowns. In the latest incident, a mob looted packages of rice, sugar, salt and noodles from a facility in the Nigerian capital. On Saturday, he continued, security officials dispersed mobs at another storage facility under attack in Abuja. But many, like David Ojo, remained adamant and said they wouldn't leave until they got some food. "We need our palliatives. It is our right. My neighbor almost died of hunger because of COVID-19," said Ojo. "He used to work as security guard at a government institution, but he was sacked. What do you want him to do? I gave him beans and rice, he almost died of hunger." This statement paints an ugly picture of the true situation of government management of Covid-19 palliatives in Nigeria.

Indeed the COVID-19 pandemic caught the vast majority of countries unprepared, Nigeria inclusive. We have seen government battling for resources and issuing contradictory advice – and more than anything we have seen panic. Governments have taken abrupt and unprecedented measures, diverging from open governance principles in search of illusory, life-saving short-cuts. Decisions on procurement and relief packages have been made overnight with limited or no consultations, and their reasoning remains obscure for the general public. Transparency was the first principle sacrificed in early reactions to the pandemic, as sharing information with the public was deemed nonessential in the short term. The people were expected to simply trust their respective governments as they maneuvered

to respond to a public health crisis. All was justified by reference to serving the greater good and by the overwhelming goal of keeping nations safe, or at least limiting damage.

In the shadows, new corruption threats emerged. In some contexts, crooked procurement of COVID-19 related products took place to benefit government officials. Unreliable or unfit products were bought from well-connected companies, or lucrative, non-pandemic related purchases were pushed through under emergency measures – taking advantage of accelerated processes and loss of transparency. In other situations we have seen elected public officials posing as national saviours during the ongoing pandemic to cement their political careers. These issues are unfolding during a time of limited or absent judicial oversight, as COVID-related lockdowns have severely reduced the capacity of judges and prosecutors. In the early days of the pandemic, few had adequate information on emerging corruption vulnerabilities and government operations or dared to challenge state reactions to the pandemic. Those who did speak out were rapidly silenced as irrelevant or inappropriate given the extraordinary circumstances. As time passed and cracks in the system became more and more visible, concern grew among citizens. People started to question their governments and to demand information on public spending – making the case that state accountability measures should be heightened and not loosened during periods when citizens' and media oversight are severely limited by lockdowns and other restrictive measures.

Transparency, accountability and the solid belief that no governmental action should be above public scrutiny is sacrosanct. We do not all yet have antibodies for the new coronavirus, but our societies have antibodies against bad governance – all we have to do is let them do their job even during the pandemic.

With respect to Nigeria, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced or exacerbated corruption vulnerabilities in the public sector in several key areas including:

1. Public Procurement where the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated immediate purchase and delivery of medical supplies and personal protective equipments that are in high demand and short supply with far more price instability and less competition and oversight.
2. Government Relief Programs where the scope and urgency of relief programs and weakened transparency and accountability mechanisms have increased opportunities for abuse by public officials.
3. Public Finance and Use of State Resources where the COVID-19 pandemic has created opportunities for violations of public finance laws and regulations and misuse of public resources and makes them harder to detect.

### **Ensuring Transparent Management and Going Forward**

Corruption in the public sector has long been understood to undermine the efficiency and efficacy of government. It also drives distrust in democratic institutions, including legislatures, executive agencies and courts. Corruption risks are likely to be magnified during a large-scale crisis that requires an immediate government response to protect health and livelihoods. Corruption by public officials in this context, whether for personal or political gain – has the potential to leave a lasting legacy on the credibility of democratic institutions and governance across the globe, even after the immediate crisis has passed. Hence, while

attention must be given to immediate corruption risks during the crisis, the long-term ill effects of certain types of political corruption must not be ignored, given the potential for state capture and the entrenchment of incumbent regimes.

In the light of the above therefore, to ensure transparent management of Covid-19 palliatives and going forward institutionalizing transparency in public governance and administration, major stakeholders must rise up to the occasion. For instance, policymakers and legislators need to ensure that COVID-19 and other crisis response and recovery programs require clear and transparent public reporting. Emergency processes and procedures should be clear and available to the public; where possible, proactive disclosure should be pursued rather than relying on access to information requests. There will be need also to reduce the amount of discretion available to individual political officeholders by establishing clear and transparent criteria for decision-making. Also effective oversight should be built into emergency responses. Proactively communicating with the public regarding the sources of funds used for emergency response efforts and relief programs is apt, as well as ensuring that emergency procedures that bypass or simplify oversight measures are temporary and that standard procedures are reintroduced as soon as appropriate.

On the part of agencies/officers responsible for implementing COVID-19 response efforts the realization of management transparency will no doubt require effective maintenance of clear and accurate documentation and disclosure requirements; clearly and promptly identifying individuals responsible for key decisions and essential emergency response and recovery processes. Engaging with oversight institutions and law enforcement to identify and mitigate corruption risks and investigate potential instances of corrupt conduct. Other considerations are continually responding to public requests for information and monitoring emergency programs against pre-established indicators and report regularly.

In the quest for transparent management the role of civil society organizations and investigative Journalists cannot be neglected, consequently, it behooves on them to leverage available, verifiable information to monitor and report on the government's emergency response. Collaborate and share information across civil society organizations and networks. Engage in public awareness campaigns and surveys to sensitize the public to existing corruption risks and to monitor whether emergency spending and palliatives has reached intended beneficiaries or been used for clear political purposes. They also have the duty to identifying gaps in available information and advocate for improved transparency or data collection processes or procedures. And investigate suspected corrupt conduct by public officials and seek criminal, civil or administrative penalties where appropriate.

The above measure if effectively actuated by the relevant stakeholders will no doubt go a long way in ensuring the efficacy and efficiency of government in upholding transparency in management not only with respect to Covid-19 pandemic palliatives but also in every other aspect of the governance process.

## **Recommendations**

The following are measures recommended:

1. There is need for the governments both at state and national levels to create a sustainable database of vulnerable Nigerians to ensure a more coordinated and efficient crisis management going forward.
2. As much as possible relevant laws needs to be put in place to ensure that partisan considerations do not take overriding consideration in situations requiring the well being of Nigerians in time of pandemic.
3. There is need for more public awareness on the policies, programs and activities of government in line with the freedom of information law already in place.
4. Adequate sanctions should be prescribed under the law for public officials who convert palliatives meant for the vulnerable to private use or for profit motives.
5. There is need to strengthen oversight functions to ensure effective, efficient and transparent management of all government programs.

## **Conclusion**

This paper explored management transparency of Covid-19 palliatives: an insight on Nigeria. The study has indeed exposed the chaotic and uncoordinated pattern of the distribution of Covid-19 palliatives in most states of Nigeria including the FCT, Abuja. It has revealed that there were clear cases of lack of transparent management and that partisan considerations took the centre stage in the distribution of palliatives, which most political office holders used to further their political interests and ambitions while the most vulnerable for whom the palliatives were meant were almost denied. The transparent management of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown palliatives cannot objectively be ascertained to have been actually distributed using any data base and the distribution itself was shrouded in secrecy. This is not unexpected because there is no verifiable digital data base in Nigeria which captures poor and vulnerable persons. Nigeria's lack of good and systematic database has in no small measure affected effective COVID-19 palliatives management. Majority of Nigerians were disappointed and frustrated over the distribution of palliatives. Thereby raising doubts on the transparent management of Covid-19 palliative in Nigeria, which is an indictment on the part of government at all levels. This has led to the allegation that the process is being politicized. It is no news that many people out of frustration of the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown openly complained against the government insensitivity.

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