

## Federalism and the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Perspective from Nigeria

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### 1 Introduction

Covid-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020. Since its outbreak, the pandemic has plagued every part of the world disrupting the social, political, and economic conditions of people. Coronavirus continues to be a threat to global health security with every country having its share of the devastation it has unleashed on the world. The pandemic represents a global health risk. Countries around the world have spent significant parts of 2020 and 2021 grappling with the corrosive nature of the disease.

Although there were many negative projections about the possible effects of Covid-19 in Africa, due to the poor health infrastructure and living conditions of the people, the effects of the disease have not been as catastrophic in the continent so far. Nigeria confirmed its first case on 27 February 2020 in Lagos when an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria tested positive for the virus. It would be recalled that Ebola, another infectious disease was also “imported” into Nigeria via Lagos in 2014. Being the former capital of Nigeria, Lagos is the commercial hub of the country and is to Nigeria what London and New York are to the United Kingdom and the United States, respectively. Just as it was the epicenter of Ebola, the state was also the epicenter of Covid-19 in Nigeria, accounting for about half of the infections in the country.

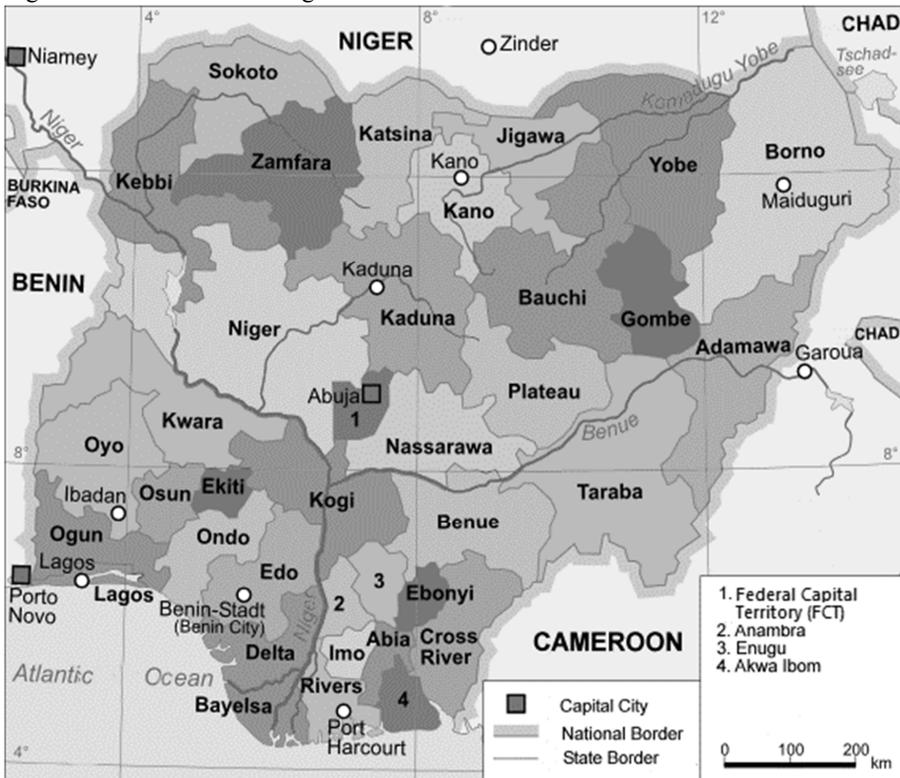
Nigeria, a three-tier federation with 36 states, 774 local government areas (LGA), and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, offers an interesting case of how the instruments of federalism were deployed to manage the pandemic. The pandemic re-ignited the debate about the utility of federalism in Nigeria, a country of about 200 million people. In Nigeria, public health matters fall under the concurrent competences of the federal and state governments.<sup>1</sup> Thus, both levels of government are constitutionally competent to make laws on these matters. This constitutional provision, notwithstanding, the country adopted a top-down approach in its management of the pandemic. At the federal level, the government’s actions were aimed at containing the spread of the disease, ensuring public awareness, providing care for those infected, and putting in place social welfare programs to support low-income earners. At the state level, governors, relying on the relative autonomy enjoyed by the states and the cooperation of the Federal Government also deployed state resources to curb the spread of the virus within their respective jurisdictions. The states adopted different strategies based on available resources but they cooperated with the Federal Government to put in place different degrees of confinement measures. The local governments were, however, less visible during the crisis.

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1 The constitution, however, provides that in the event of a conflict on the concurrent list, the federal law prevails. See *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria* 1999: Lagos: Federal Government Press.

Given the above discussion, this paper, therefore, seeks to ask: of what use is Nigeria’s federal architecture in the management of the Covid-19 pandemic? How has each level of government responded to the pandemic considering the provision of the federal constitution? In other words, the crux of the paper is to explore the value of Nigeria’s federal system in the management of the pandemic. Therefore, the paper starts with the examination of the role of the Federal Government, the federal parliament, and a few federal institutions. In addition, the paper also discusses the cooperation and the tension that characterized vertical and horizontal intergovernmental relations during the pandemic. Nigeria’s management of the crisis also brought to the fore the dysfunctional aspects of the country’s federal system and these are also discussed in the paper.

Fig. 1: Subdivisions of Nigeria



Source: Wikipedia.

## 2 The Federal Government's response: leading from the top

Following the identification of the index case in Nigeria, and in an attempt to manage the pandemic, the president, Muhammadu Buhari inaugurated a 12-member multi-sectoral Presidential Task Force (PTF) on 9 March 2020. Led by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, the PTF was mandated 'to coordinate and oversee Nigeria's multi-sectoral inter-governmental efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.'<sup>2</sup> The Director-General of the country's national public health institute, Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) was also a member.<sup>3</sup> On 29 March 2020, the President announced the shutdown of schools and universities across the country, followed by a lockdown of Lagos and the neighboring Ogun State, and the FCT Abuja, initially for 14 days, then extended for further 14 days. Non-essential businesses, including religious centers, were closed and residents in these jurisdictions were required to stay at home except for essential travel. The Federal Government encouraged state governments to do likewise. In addition, the federal government banned international travel from high-risk countries. Local flights were also prohibited. As of the time the President was declaring the partial lockdown, there were only a few cases of confirmed infections in the country.

The NCDC was particularly visible during the crisis, overseeing treatment and isolation centers across the country as well as providing regular updates and scientific expertise on the pandemic through its press briefings. The Center worked closely with the Presidency, the PTF and the federal Ministry of Health. Before the pandemic, the country had only two centers for testing for infectious diseases, but the Federal Government provided funds to upgrade existing facilities, procure equipment and also established more testing centers.<sup>4</sup> Items such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and ventilators were scarce at the peak of the pandemic, particularly in less developed countries, but the Federal Government managed to equip a few designated treatment centers with these items. It must be mentioned, however, that these facilities were largely a product of government efforts and external donations from private individuals, corporate entities, and international organizations.

The Federal Government's response appears to be an encroachment in the states but in Nigeria, the federal government has the power to act on behalf of the states in times of emergency.<sup>5</sup> Covid-19, no doubt, constitutes a health security threat to the country as a whole and the Federal Government is constitutionally allowed to act on behalf of the states and the entire country. Regarding the legality of the President's actions during the crisis, it is instructive to note that the President relied on the powers conferred on him by the Quarantine Act (CAP Q2 LFN 2004) to sign the 'Covid-19 Regulations 2020'. This

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2 *Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC): Presidential Task Force (PTF) on Covid-19.* <https://statehouse.gov.ng/covid19/objectives/> (01.04.2021).

3 Other members include the federal Minister of Health, Ministers of Interior, Aviation, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Services, Education, and WHO's Country Representative.

4 *Ihonybere, Julius* 2020: Federalism and the Covid-19 crisis: Nigerian federalism, in: Forum of Federations, p. 1. <http://www.forumfed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NigeriaCOVID.pdf> (21.12.2020)

5 *Babalola, Dele* 2019: The Political Economy of Federalism in Nigeria, London.

Act allowed the Federal Government to act in the national interest. Besides, the federal legislature was carried along in the fight against the dreaded disease. The National Assembly (as the country's bicameral legislature, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, is called) deliberated upon such issues as the expansion of health facilities, training for healthcare workers, compensation for frontline workers, and deepening of the emergency response.<sup>6</sup> On 24 March 2020, the House of Representatives passed the Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill 2020 to provide support to businesses and individual citizens in the country.<sup>7</sup> The cooperation between federal lawmakers and the executive was further epitomized as the Senators donated 50 percent of their one month's salaries to the National Covid-19 Relief Fund, while members of the House of Representatives donated 100 percent of their salaries for March and April 2020.<sup>8</sup>

The Nigerian government was not left out in adhering to the preventive measures enunciated by WHO. The President maintained that the Federal Government's actions were guided by scientific advice from the NCDC which worked closely with WHO. Despite the aggressive public education campaign mounted by the Federal Government and some states, the population treated social distancing measures with disdain. The lack of compliance enforcement, ignorance, poverty, lack of trust for the government and many other factors made many citizens disrespect the restriction orders. There were all sorts of conspiracy theories pointing to the direction that Covid-19 was a hoax and only "catches" the rich and powerful that travel globally, and not poor people.<sup>9</sup> For some, the pandemic was a scam,<sup>10</sup> orchestrated by the country's political elite to create an emergency that would provide them with the opportunity to siphon public money. There was also the myth that Nigeria's weather is too hot for the virus to survive.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the virus had claimed the lives of notable Nigerians, including the Chief of Staff to the President, a Senator, a former state governor, and several medical practitioners.

Like other countries around the world, Nigeria was also faced with the dilemma of how to strike a balance between saving lives and protecting livelihood. Due to the restriction of movement during the lockdowns, many low-income households were unable to sustain themselves, explaining why the need for a social intervention became imperative. One of the steps the Federal Government took was to expand its social development program to support the 'poorest of the poor', particularly through cash transfers.<sup>12</sup> In April 2020, the Federal Government announced a scheme to provide vulnerable families on the National Social Register (which had about 11 million people on its platform) with 20,000

6 *Ihonybere* 2020 (fn. 4), p. 3.

7 *Dixit, Siddharth/Ogundej, Yewande/Onwujekwe, Obinna* 2020: How well has Nigeria responded to Covid-19? in: Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2020/07/02/how-well-has-nigeria-responded-to-covid-19/> (27.03.2021).

8 *Ihonybere* 2020 (fn. 4), p. 3.

9 *Ihonybere* 2020 (fn. 4), p. 2.

10 *Onapajo, Hakeem/Adebisi, Jelili* 2020: COVID-19 is a Big Scam': Citizens' Distrust and the Challenge of Combating Coronavirus in Nigeria. <https://republic.com.ng/february-march-2020/distrust-nigeria-coronavirus/> (28.03.2021).

11 *Onapajo/Adebisi* 2020 (fn. 10).

12 *Ihonybere* 2020 (fn. 4), p. 1.

naira each (52 US-Dollar).<sup>13</sup> It is, however, doubtful if this database was a comprehensive record of low-income households in a country of about 200 million people, with high unemployment. Moreover, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Management and Social Development provided food rations to vulnerable households. In addition, the President also directed Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) to distribute confiscated bags of rice to the needy across the country. The food rations, commonly referred to as “Covid palliatives” were distributed through the states. Some states used the local governments as distribution outlets. As with many things in Nigeria, the palliatives, in many cases, did not get to the intended targets, having been diverted by state officials. In October 2020 amid the EndSars protest,<sup>14</sup> warehouses containing food items marked as relief materials mostly provided by the Federal Government and the Coalition Against Covid (CACOVID) were discovered and raided by angry mobs in about nine states including the FCT, Abuja.<sup>15</sup>

In early March 2021, the Federal Government confirmed the procurement of 3.94 million doses of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine through the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access, COVAX.<sup>16</sup> These vaccines were approved by the country’s National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Meanwhile, the government had earlier announced that the country was expecting another 41 million doses of vaccines from the African Union.<sup>17</sup> The responsibility to distribute the vaccines to the 36 states of the federation and the FCT fell on another federal agency, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA). The distribution was determined by the number of cases recorded in each state, and expectedly, Lagos State got about half a million doses.

### 3 Intergovernmental relations in the time of pandemic

At the subnational level, the response to the crisis varied from state to state but the collaboration between the Federal Government and the state governments helped in no small measure to curb the spread of the virus. Intergovernmental relations during the period were characterized largely by cooperative federalism as the two main tiers of government – the federal and the state governments – cooperated in many ways to curb the spread of the virus. As Rufus S. Davis pointed out, cooperative federalism involves the cooperation of governments at all levels, ‘together with all group and individual interests of society,

13 *Dixit/Ogundeji/Onwujekwe* 2020 (fn. 7).

14 In mid-October, Nigerian youth engaged in a mass protest, which was a reproduction of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, to express their ill-feeling with Nigeria’s dreaded police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) following harassments and killings that particularly target the youth constituency. The protesters also showed their anger towards massive unemployment (worsened by the pandemic), systemic corruption and increasing lack of opportunities.

15 *BBC News* 2020: Why Nigerian looters are targeting Covid-19 aid. 26.10.2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54695568> (20.03.2021).

16 COVAX is a global initiative that aims to ensure the fair distribution of vaccines across the world. *World Health Organization (Nigeria)* 2021: COVID-19 vaccines shipped by COVAX arrive in Nigeria. 02.03.2021. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/covid-19-vaccines-shipped-covax-arrive-nigeria> (01.04.2021).

17 *Reuters* 2021: Nigeria expects 41 million COVID-19 vaccine doses from African Union. 21.02.2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-nigeria-vaccine-idUSKBN2A13FS> (01.04.2021).

in a complex pluralistic relationship of sharing, reciprocity, mutuality, and coordination.<sup>18</sup> This is what was experienced in Nigeria, especially at the peak of the crisis. Contrary to the argument that cooperative federalism erodes state autonomy, state governors took advantage of their autonomy to do what was best for their states. Besides cooperating with the center, many state governors implemented confinement measures suitable to their environments. In Nigeria, states do not have separate constitutions, but there are state laws which the governors relied upon to contain the virus. It is also useful to mention that every state had its response team which was inaugurated by the governor.

Lagos State's strategic importance to the economy of the country was enough reason for the Federal Government to deploy resources in support of the state government. In a bid to assist the state to increase its capacity to respond to the outbreak, the Federal Government released 10 billion Naira (26.3 million US-Dollar) grant to the state.<sup>19</sup> In Nigeria, the central government is required by law to make both statutory and non-statutory allocations to states. Statutory allocations include the unconditional grants available to the states on an annual basis to enable them to discharge their constitutional responsibilities while non-statutory grants are usually given to a state facing an emergency such as natural disasters, terrorist acts, conflicts, infectious diseases, and similar problems.<sup>20</sup> Lagos is highly populated because of the economic opportunities it offers, and this explains why it became the epicenter of Covid-19 in the country. The state's response was also science-driven with the state's Commissioner of Health coordinating the activities of the various state agencies. The governor's announcement restricting people's movement was also backed by relevant state legislation. Lagos State's level of preparedness was not surprising given its experience of handling outbreaks of infectious diseases such as Ebola and Lassa fever.

Just like Lagos, Kaduna State in the country's north-west geopolitical region also had its share of the pandemic but the state was almost ready for the outbreak. The state government had put in place quarantine and treatment centers even before a single case of infection was confirmed in the state. These facilities were in addition to the test center provided by the Federal Government. On 25 March 2020, the state announced a partial lockdown, making it the first state to announce a lockdown. This was even before the Federal Government's lockdown. Three days following the declaration of the lockdown, the governor, Nasir El-Rufai reportedly tested positive for the virus and immediately self-isolated himself. The pandemic had little impact on the north-central geopolitical region. However, Plateau and other states in the region tried to stem the spread of the virus by implementing partial lockdown and fumigating public places. In Borno State, situated in the north-eastern region, which is the epicenter of the infamous Boko Haram insurgency, the state government was proactive in announcing a partial lockdown.

18 *Davis, Rufus S.* 1978: *The Federal Principle: A Journey Through Time in Quest of Meaning*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, p. 183.

19 *Africa News* 2020: Coronavirus – Nigeria: Federal Government Releases 10 Billion Naira Grant to Lagos State. 27.03.2020. <https://www.africanews.com/2020/03/27/coronavirus-nigeria-federal-government-releases-10-billion-naira-grant-to-lagos-state//> (06.01.2021).

20 *Babalola* 2019 (fn. 5), p. 85.

Relying on their relative independence, some states also counteracted federal policies considered inimical to their interests. Rivers State Governor, for example, arrested and detained two pilots who had flown some expatriates into the state capital, Port Harcourt, to perform some essential presidential assignments. The governor claimed he had shut the airports to stem the spread of the virus. Similarly, the Oyo State governor was involved in conflicts with the Federal Government. First, despite repeated advice from the federal medical community, the governor held a political rally in Ibadan, the state capital on 19 March 2020. The governor, who later tested positive for the virus apologized for his blunder. Second, he was involved in the accusations and counter-accusations about the quality of the distributed materials as he rejected the state's share of "Covid-19 Palliative" rice on the ground that the rice had expired and was not suitable for consumption. Also, the governor of Kogi State in the north-central region did not take the pandemic seriously and even threatened to arrest officials of the NCDC that were on a working visit to his state, accusing them of bringing the virus to Kogi.

There were also inter-state tensions, particularly in the northern part of the country. For example, the Kano State government was the first to evacuate over 1,000 *almajiri* pupils in the state to their respective states of origin in Jigawa, Katsina, and Kaduna. The *almajiris* are school-age children, mostly boys aged between 8 and 15 years who have left their homes to live with Islamic teachers (*malam*) where they study Islamic religion.<sup>21</sup> These children are not enrolled in formal school and are left to fend for themselves, roaming the streets begging for alms. The Plateau State government retaliated when it sent about 601 *almajiris* back to their various states. Conversely, the Borno State government put all the *almajiris* in the state in shelters built by the state government and provided for them. There is no gainsaying that these children's continuous roaming about posed a significant threat to the surge in coronavirus but moving them to their state of origin is antithetical to the spirit of federalism. These actions represent a lack of respect for the principle of 'dual citizenship' inherent in a federal constitution. Like in other federations, each citizen in Nigeria, is subject to both the federal and their state governments, so, no citizen of Nigeria should be removed from any part of the federation.

#### 4 Federalism and Nigeria's management of the pandemic: matters arising

Nigeria's response to the pandemic reveals the complexities around the country's federal system. What was conspicuously obvious during the period was the overcentralized character of the system. The Federal Government's enormous control of affairs during the period was felt across the country. This experience buttresses the argument usually advanced by scholars of Nigerian federalism that the country's federal system is excessively

21 *Babalola, Dele/Ayuba, Caleb* 2015: Youth Unemployment and Armed Insurrection in Post-Military Nigeria: The Contending Issues, in: *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 263–288 (275).

centralized.<sup>22</sup> The over-centralization of the system is constitutionally entrenched, explaining ‘why all eyes are on the centre.’<sup>23</sup> Federations ‘are characteristically non-centralized’, argued Daniel Elazar<sup>24</sup> but this is not the case with Nigeria’s federal system where the center is politically and economically more powerful than other tiers. The pandemic deepened the centralization of Nigeria’s federal system with the central government calling the shot at every stage of the fight.

Federalism involves ‘the constitutional diffusion of power’ between the central and the constituent governments to achieve ‘self-rule and shared rule.’<sup>25</sup> These two key doctrines of federalism were epitomized in Nigeria during the pandemic as the two main tiers of government cooperated, in varying degrees, to fight Covid-19. It must, however, be stressed that although, the self-rule principle was brought to bear as state governments played some role during the crisis but one thing that was observed was the weak nature of the states, which operated largely like appendages of the Federal Government. As Arthur Macmahon argued, in a federation, the constitutional division of powers between the general and constituent governments should be done in a manner that the powers assigned to the constituent units ‘must be substantial and not merely trivial.’<sup>26</sup> In other words, powers should not be excessively concentrated in either the federal or the constituent governments.

In their present form, the states are so economically weak that, other than Lagos, none can survive without federal handouts.<sup>27</sup> This helplessness was due to their low internally generated revenue and the domineering role of the center. The states had inadequate resources to manage the outbreak and had to rely on the central government which is the sole distributor of national wealth. This calls for a review of the current revenue-sharing formula where the center gets the lion share of national revenue. Nigeria’s Constitution provides for a vertical sharing of 48.50 percent, 24 percent, 20 percent, and 7.50 percent to the federal, states, local governments, and centrally controlled special funds, respectively.<sup>28</sup> So, ‘if the states are to be self-financing, if they are to enjoy some measure of fiscal autonomy, the fiscal system has to be decentralized in such a way that the states have relative control over their resources.’<sup>29</sup>

Nigeria’s management of the pandemic also exposed the weaknesses of the so-called grassroots government – the local government. During the pandemic, Nigeria operated like a 2-tier federation as the Local Government Areas were hardly involved in the response to the outbreak. Their lack of ability to contribute to the management of the crisis was due to lack of finance, and poor infrastructure. Not only that, but they have also been

22 See Babalola 2019 (fn. 5); Elaigwu, Isawa J. 2007: *The Politics of Federalism in Nigeria*, London; Suberu, Rotimi 2001: *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*, Washington, DC.

23 Babalola 2019 (fn. 5), p. 159.

24 Elazar, Daniel J. 1987: *Exploring Federalism*, Tuscaloosa, p. 34.

25 Elazar 1987 (fn. 24), pp. 5–6.

26 Macmahon, Arthur W 1962: *The Problems of Federalism: A Survey*, in: Macmahon, Arthur W. (ed.): *Federalism: Mature and Emergent*, New York, pp. 3–27 (4).

27 Babalola 2019 (fn. 5), p. 148.

28 Babalola 2019 (fn. 5), p. 104.

29 Babalola, Dele/Okafor, Chukwuemeka 2019: Resource abundance and the dilemma of fiscal federalism in Nigeria, in: *Journal of African Political Economy and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 3–21 (18).

rendered less functional by the state governments. Although local governments in Nigeria keep their internally generated revenues, together with the federal transfers, these are not adequate to match their constitutional responsibilities,<sup>30</sup> let alone respond to emergencies. Theoretically, local governments in Nigeria constitute the third independent tier of government, but in practice, an elected local government chairperson takes instructions from the state governor. The supposed grassroots governments exist at the mercy of the state governments that created them. So, if the local governments are to be responsive and for-purpose, there needs to be a reform of the system in a way that they are autonomous.

Another observation made during the pandemic is that the FCT, Abuja was treated like an extension of the Federal Government. Constitutionally, the FCT is neither a state nor a local government. However, it is administered by a federal minister appointed by the president. During the pandemic, the FCT Administration established the FCT Expert Advisory Committee which coordinated the management of the crisis in the jurisdiction. The activities of the Committee were supervised by the FCT Minister. Likewise, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Management and Social Development directly supervised the distribution of Covid relief materials in Abuja. This lack of autonomy reignited the call for the capital city to have an independent mayoral status.

The lack of accountability in government is another issue that was observed during the crisis. Without a doubt, the response of the governments at all levels had as much a toll on the people as did the pandemic itself as the sit at home policies impaired the ability of people to move about and strive to survive. Nigeria's economy is made up of peasant workers and laborers who depend on daily earnings for sustenance. It must be mentioned that the government's restrictive measures were in a bid to adhere to the precautionary measures as advised by the WHO. The Federal Government particularly responded to the socio-economic needs of the low-income earners by providing social support, but these efforts were mired by corruption on the part of state officials who either hoarded or diverted items meant for the poor. Besides, dysfunctional distribution channels caused the failure of the scheme to achieve desired results. So, these moves, though impactful in some parts of the country, was largely ineffective in others. Put differently, it is difficult to contend that Nigeria was able to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic.

## 5 Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic had a toll on the lives and livelihoods of Nigerians. Within the federal structure, the government introduced measures that mitigated the effects of the health crisis, but these measures were ineffective in mitigating the economic effects of the pandemic. The Federal Government led the fight against the pandemic as such federal institutions as the NCDC, the National Assembly, Customs, federal ministries, and others were deployed to play one role or another. However, neither the central government nor the states could do it all alone as the fight required multi-sectoral, inter-agency, and inter-

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30 Babalola/Okafor 2019 (fn. 29).

governmental actions. This attests to Dele Babalola's argument that in a federation, 'inter-dependence and cooperation in areas that touch on the lives of the citizens are crucial' if governments at all levels are to fulfil their constitutional roles.<sup>31</sup> Both the federal and state governments understood that what was required to manage the pandemic was the spirit of cooperation and inter-dependence, which was instrumental to the relative success the country recorded. The culture of antagonistic federalism was replaced with that of cooperative federalism.

At the horizontal level, except for the minor tension that was experienced because of the *almajiri* issue, the states largely cooperated among themselves. Besides, they used their limited resources to fight the virus within their jurisdictions. However, the financial impotence of the state and local governments, limited their role, explaining the intensification of the clamor for a reform of the federal system, or what is famously called 'restructuring' in the Nigerian parlance.<sup>32</sup> Nigeria's revenue sharing formula assigns the greater share of national revenue to the central government, ensuring federal fiscal dominance, and financially weak states. So, the agitation for restructuring is partly about reversing this dominance.

The pandemic put Nigeria's federal structure and the healthcare system to the test but taking everything into account, it is fair to contend that despite its deplorable healthcare system, the country was able to mitigate the health effects of the pandemic. However, due to lack of accountability and many other factors, it failed significantly to cushion the economic impact. Nigeria's centralized federal system helped the country to fight the virus. It is worth reiterating that Nigeria could not have achieved the success it did without the different federal instrumentalities that were deployed in the management of the pandemic and without the cooperation of the state governments who worked with the Federal Government as partners in progress. One lesson that can be learned from the management of the pandemic is that accountability in government is key if a country is to perform at an optimum level. Another lesson that the pandemic has taught Nigerians is that the utility of federalism in the oldest federation in Africa is not in doubt.

31 Babalola 2019 (fn. 5), p. 10.

32 Onapajo, Hakeem/Babalola, Dele 2021: Restructuring, Political Gimmicks and Elite Manipulation in Nigeria, in: Tella, Oluwaseun (ed.): A Sleeping Giant? Nigeria's Domestic and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century, Wiesbaden (forthcoming).