

Security Agencies and Human Rights Violations in Africa in the Implementation of COVID-19 Related Government Policies

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Abstract: This study argues that while many advanced democracies of the global system like the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), France, etc., made concerted efforts to ensure citizens were duly protected from the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic through such preventive policy options as the suspension of public events and the closure of businesses and schools, they recorded no violations of human rights. On the other hand, transitional democracies of the states of Africa were involved in forceful enforcement of such policies through the use of state security agents to enforce similar preventive measures during the period of the lockdown. Unfortunately, the security agents in Africa engaged in all manners of violation of the rights of the citizens in the process of ensuring compliance with the COVID-19 protocols. Following the stated objectives of this study, this paper adopted the historical design of research which is qualitative and explorative. This implied that the study relied extensively on secondary source of data via the survey of textbooks, journal publications, reports from national dailies and periodicals, government official documents and Internet sources. The study found out that a number of national governments in Africa lost focus in the period of the pandemic. Rather than providing adequate healthcare services and palliatives to cushion the effects of spread of the virus in the period of lockdown, many security agents of government became involved in corrupt practices as they introduced brutal modes of enforcing COVID-19 protocols, using security personnel. The research recommended an efficient and effective independent public complaints desk and hotline phone numbers which may be provided for citizens, to immediately report suspected cases of the virus, on the one hand, while, on the other, abuses of human rights and other forms of challenges which relate to COVID-19 situation must be assiduously checked. Again, men from the security agencies must be made to face proper prosecution and, adequate punishment meted out if cases of abuse and violations of human rights are founded among security operatives. Overall, the paper recommended steps which must be taken by governments in Africa to avoid re-occurrences of human rights violations in the continent.

Keywords: African Government Policies, Security Agencies, Coronavirus, COVID-19 Pandemic, Human Rights, Human Rights Violations.

1. Introduction

Following the outbreak of the novel Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic, national governments all over the world have responded in distinct ways. In most cases, attempts to contain the spread of the virus and its effects on the citizens have resulted to the violations of citizens' rights. The emergency responses adopted by governments have, however, benefited the citizens, as well as impacted negatively on their civil rights and liberties, particularly in some states in Africa. In realistic terms, there have been uniformities in policy options in preventing the spread of the virus on the one hand, and the nature of violations of human rights or infractions in African continent on the other hands. Although, in some countries of Africa, there were limited instances and evidences of human rights violations, while in some states there were unfortunate and grievous cases of human rights violations by security personnel directed to enforce COVID-19 government policies. To date, there are instances of human rights violations by the security personnel in this direction especially in Nigeria.

In the face of the outbreak of COVID-19 and in this trying time in the African history of outbreak of epidemics, several cases of human rights violations or abuses have occurred. The abuses range from unlawful invasions of individuals' homes as part of tracing or tracking suspected infected persons through massive restriction of movements for months, as well as closure of businesses, bans on social events and closure of schools, and most

recently, to the forceful implementation of the use of facemask in public places at the fall of the second strain of the COVID pandemic. According to Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2020), over a 100 human rights violations were recorded in the first quarter of the initial outbreak. Despite the fact that a good number of African countries are signatories to international protocols that prohibit all manners of human rights violations such as the UN Universal Declarations on Human Rights (UNDHR) and the African Charters on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), human rights violation were visibly evident during COVID-19 management across Africa. These incidences, inter alia, ranges from cases of police brutality, extrajudicial killings, extortions and collection of bribes from citizens in order to permit unlawful movements by the security agencies, etc. These incidences, particularly police abuses, which were visible in Nigeria, followed the same trend or pattern in some other states of Africa, as was evident in Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, to mention but a few (Odigbo, Eze & Odigbo, 2020; Ajayi, 2020).

In the affirmative, Amnesty International (AI, 2020) opines that during the period of the lockdown, some agencies of national governments, attempting to enforce COVID-19 policies in order to arrest the spread of the virus, recorded several human rights violations including censorship, discrimination, arbitrary detention and xenophobia, all of which posed hindrances in the handling of public health emergencies. Human Rights Watch (2020) opines that COVID-19 pandemic lockdown policy implementation was turned into a killing spree by trigger-happy law enforcement agents. By implication, governments' attempts to arrest the spread of COVID-19 in the continent of Africa through restriction measures which included such policy options and orders such as stay-at-home, shutdown of businesses, ban on social gathering, closure of schools at all levels, markets, churches and mosques, as well as the imposition of social distancing order where necessary, and the enforcement of these directives through military personnel and other law enforcement agents have created new challenges.

Nte, Oluka, Uzorka & Baba-Ahmadu (2020) mainstreaming human rights in the COVID-19 pandemic emergency period in Nigeria, argue that the poor citizens who are often vulnerable to all forms of challenges in the country were not only at exponential risks but were also at the receiving end of governments' efforts to contain the spread of the disease. Hunger, starvation, scarcity of food items, and loss of jobs complicated the challenges posed by the outbreak of the disease. As a consequence, the lockdown of businesses and subsequent restriction of movements imposed by national governments of African states, with poor health care facilities, impacted negatively on the citizens across the continent, who were already vulnerable to other forms of domestic challenges such as massive unemployment, little or no health facilities, and general food insecurity. Following governments' partial lifting of the lockdown across the states of Africa, this introduced the compulsory and forceful enforcement of the use of facemasks, social distancing and the use of hand sanitisers in public places, etc., particularly in Nigeria. This became the issue that brought about the rise in human rights violations by government security operatives in Africa, in the course of governments' policy implementation of COVID-19 protocols across the continent.

2. Nature of the Problem

It has become obvious that the challenges associated with the outbreak of the Coronavirus are more evident in transitional democratic countries, especially those of Africa. These challenges, in the form of police brutality, extortions and other forms of bribery from citizens, which gave way to unlawful local movements of citizens in search of food for survival during the lockdown, were recorded by individual state's security agencies in a number of locations in Africa. And the pattern was the same –for reasons of survival –throughout the continent. There were, however, obvious cases of human rights violations followed by dehumanising treatments, orchestrated by men of the security operatives deployed by national governments to enforce strict compliance of the COVID-19 protocols in order to check the spread of the virus.

As an instance, on Sunday, 25th of April 2020, the Governor of the State of Lagos in Nigeria, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, announced the COVID-19 preventive policy of the mandatory use of facemasks in public places across the state, in order to prevent the continued spread of the virus. This order was stipulated under the Lagos State Government Infectious Disease (Emergency Prevention) Regulations 2020 which took effect from the 27th of March of the same year. A similar policy posture was also adopted by other state governments across Nigeria and beyond. However, these orders from the government in Lagos and other regional governments in Nigeria, were followed by the strict charge to arrest and prosecute offenders, while, indeed, human rights were breached by the men in charge of ensuring compliance from the public in the course of carrying out the order. The unanticipated use of facemasks in public places, for instance; the deployment of security personnel in some states

of Africa to enforce compliance, and even the emergence of a new strain of the virus around the world have all posed great challenges that are yet to be resolved by African national governments.

Notably, also, is the fear of the likelihood of a second total shutdown of businesses, schools and public places in the wake of the new strain of the virus. A handful analysts and observers alike have shown the fear that another lockdown will complicate the hardship already imposed on the citizens, many of whom received no palliatives in the instance of the first shutdown. The observers reckon that citizens are yet to recover from the previous closure of businesses and other economic activities and social events of which governments in Africa were unable to ameliorate the sufferings of the people as it were. Essentially also is the fear of a repeat of impunity on the part of governments and security personnel, the aggressive and draconic enforcement of COVID-19 protocols which resulted into human rights violations, extrajudicial incarcerations, and the extortion of money from unsuspecting and vulnerable citizens.

At the moment, the average African citizen is still trying to recover from the menace of the initial global lockdown. As he struggles to eke out a means of sustenance for himself and his dependents in the post COVID-19 lockdown, it is doubtless to say that another lockdown, arising from the new strain of the virus, will not turn into another economic monstrosity, not only to the poor citizen but also to the already despicable and dragging economies of the countries of Africa. Again, the seeming ineptitude of some of the African national governments to identify and punish officers involved in violating the rights of the citizens in the period of the pandemic is in itself a problem. This study, therefore, attempts to examine (or highlight) the incidents of human rights violations in Africa, in the period of the outbreak, and the spread of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown of socioeconomic activities in the continent. Also identified as a problem, is the emergency policy response to the outbreak in Africa, following the fear of outbreak of a new strain of the virus which would equally translate into a new phase of enforcing further COVID protocols. All of these will create a new avenue for extortion of money from the public and road user in some of the countries of Africa, especially in Nigeria where government security operatives will be liable.

3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of the desperate responses given by African national governments as policy options while enforcing COVID-19 preventive policies. The specific objectives are to:

- a. Examine the extent to which governments of African states and their security agents violated citizens' rights while enforcing COVID-19 preventive policies, and
- b. Proffer solutions likely to preserve citizens' rights while enforcing COVID-19 preventive policies in Africa.

4. Research Questions

The following research questions are provided to guide this study:

- a. To what extent has the governments of the states of Africa and their security personnel violated the rights of the citizens while enforcing COVID-19 preventive policies?
- b. What is the best solution to ameliorate the challenges of human rights violations by governments and security personnel in enforcing COVID-19 prevention policies in Africa?

5. Method of the Study

This study adopted historical design. It is a qualitative and explorative research which the researchers are using to examine the terms or concepts of security agency, public policy, human rights and its violations, as well as the concept of COVID-19 pandemic. Again, it is used to examine the extent to which African governments and their security agencies violated citizens' rights while enforcing COVID-19 preventive policies. This design was adopted because of its reliability and consistency in measuring all of the above. It is, therefore, relevant because the method helps researchers in gathering important data from extant literature in the areas of interest. It is such that our secondary sources of data were reliably adopted via survey of textbooks, journal publications, documents, reports from dailies and periodicals, government official documents and Internet sources.

6. Review of Related Literature

a. Security Agents:

The term “security agents” also known as security officers or security guards are persons or group of persons employed by a national government to protect the lives and properties of its citizens and to maintain peace and order in a state. Not only government employed agents but also private organisations are sometimes engaged in the business of securing of lives and properties, especially the lives and properties of those of their employers. As private individuals, security agents are expected to protect public and private assets or the properties of government and individuals. Generally, security agencies are networks of security operatives constitutionally established by a state to protect lives, properties, maintain peace and order, and enforce the law of the state, as well as to provide the defence and protection of territories of a state. The bodies that get permission to carry out these functions vary in their modes of operation from place to place or from country to country. The more commonly known state security apparatuses include the Police Force, the Armed Forces, and State Secret Services. To the country and its citizens, all of these agencies perform distinct roles as assigned by the constitution of the State.

b. The Concept of Public Policy:

Public policy has a recent origin. As a field of study, it was believed to have started in the early 1950s. Despite its importance to national development, it has no definite or a commonly accepted definition. Nonetheless, it remains an important part of government’s programme of action since it regulates what the government intends to achieve and how it tends to achieve it. Again, public policy also refers to important activities of government (Egonmwan, 1991). Accordingly, public policy effects or fulfils a course of action which is followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern (Anderson (1975). For Dye 1972, he defines it simply as that which governments choose to do or not to do. It is also defined as a system of laws or regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic upon which a government or its representative makes a law (Kilpatrick, 2000).

On a general note, public policy can be defined as a process adopted by a national or sub-national government in which they translate their respective political visions into state programmes and actions in order to achieve their stated objectives. Similarly, public policy can be defined as actions which a national government intends to take or which it takes when responding to a public problem or national challenges. This definition is apt to the recent actions of the various national governments across the world towards the prevention and spread of COVID-19 around the world. The reason government addresses public challenges or problem through policy option is because the government wants to ensure that the citizens are provided with their needs and these needs are in turn protected. In essence, government must ensure that the socio-economic needs of citizens such as food, shelter, education, health care, employment, among others, are met. National interests are, thus, protected through public policies of governments. This is the essence of public policy formulation and implementation.

c. The Concept of Human Rights and Human Rights Violation:

Human rights, also known as “fundamental rights” is, by all standards, referred to as natural rights. They are rights which relate to certain freedom or privileges that one enjoys as humans. It is held to be the innate part of a person as human being which cannot be denied by the society unnecessarily (Tunde, 2006). Human rights, thus, are natural, rational, inviolable and unalterable deprivation of which the opposite would constitute violation of one’s sense of justice (UN-UDHR, 1948). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) under the proclamation of the General Assembly, Resolution 217, Paris, in 1948, specifically declared and requires state parties to: assume obligations and duties under international law, to respect, protect and fulfil human rights; refrain from interfering with or curtailing the enjoyment of human rights; protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses; and take positive actions to facilitate the enjoyment of the basic human rights. States or governments are, thus, comparably required to ratify these international human right treaties. Articles 1 to 30 of the Charter specifically spelt out these requirements (see UN-UDHR, 1948).

Following the provisions of the UN-UDHR (1948) and the directive of the UN General Assembly, the 18th Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U), now African Union

(AU) inaugurated the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on 27 June 1981 in Nairobi, Kenya, to promote human rights as basic freedom in the Continent of Africa. Entered into force on 21 October 1986, after due consideration and ratification of the Charter by 25 States of Africa with its headquarters in Banjul, the Gambia, the Charter specifically recognises the following civil and political rights: Freedom from Discrimination [Article 2 & 18]; Equality [Article 3]; Life and Personal Integrity [Article 4]; Dignity and Freedom from Slavery [Article 5] and Freedom from Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment [Article 5]. There are also the provisions for the Rights to Due Process Concerning Arrest and Detention [Article 6]; The Right to Fair Trial [Article 7 & 25]; Freedom of Religion [Article 8]; Freedom of Information and Expression [Article 9]; Freedom of Association [Article 10]; Freedom of Assembly [Article 11]; Freedom of Movement [Article 12]; Freedom of Political Participation [Article 13]; and the Right to Properties [Article 14]. The Charter also recognises certain economic, social and cultural rights, such as right to work [Article 15]; right to health [Article 16]; and the right to education [Article 17] (see African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1986).

Like other states of Africa, the post-independence Nigerian constitutions, from 1960 through 1963 and 1979, which preceded the 1999 constitution as amended, specifically, have always given priorities to issues of human rights. Chapter Four, Sections 33 to 46 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), specifically, spelt out the fundamental rights to be enjoyed by Nigerian citizens irrespective of their social status, tribe, religion, sex or age. Section 33 (1) specifically states that "every person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been guilty in Nigeria". And Section 33 (2) says that "a person shall not be regarded as having been deprived of his life, in contravention of this section, if he dies as a result of the use, to such extent and in such circumstances as are permitted by law, or such force as is reasonably necessary – (a) for a defence of any person from unlawful violence or for the defence of property; (b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained; or (c) for the purpose of suppressing a riot, insurrection or mutiny, respectively". This also applies virtually in all the emerging democracies of the world, including those of Africa.

In Ghana, a similar provision is contained in Chapter Five, Section 12 to 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana 1996 (as amended). Again, a similar provision is found in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, in which Chapter Two specifically contains the Bill of Rights – a human rights charter that protects the civil, political and socio-economic rights of all people in the country, and which applies to all laws, including common law (Cockrell, 1997).

To this end, scholars and experts have provided several definitions of human rights in the context of the law of the land. Agwunobi and Oyedolapo (2012) citing Eso (1985), are of the opinion that "human rights mean the rights which stand above the ordinary laws of the land which are antecedent to the political society, and they constitute the primacy condition to any civilised existence. For Saqib (2015), human rights are those rights which a person possesses by his simple characteristics of being a human, and such rights must be available to him, and must protect his personal interest, freedom, dignity and other fundamental rights, and they must be against unnecessary interference by the agents of the government. For Nwachukwu, Aghamelo and Stanley (2014), cited in Onimisi (2018: 72), "human rights are rights that nature bestowed on man, as well as norms and moral principles that describe certain behavioural standards expected of man as social being and that which falls under the protection of legal frameworks found in the constitution of a state and international law provisions".

According to the Icelandic Human Rights Centre (2016) cited in Ekpo (2016: 6), human rights "are rights inherent in all human beings by virtue of their humanity alone (i.e., not to be purchased or be granted); inalienable (i.e. within qualified legal boundaries); and applicable to all". Again, Naankiel (2013), cited in Oromareghake, Oluka and Adishi (2018: 27) defined human rights as, "phenomenon that everyone in a civilised society, irrespective of their levels of development or status, is expected to achieve so as to guarantee the rights of all". In the same manner, Eze (2004: 5) posits that human rights, "are those rights protected by law of the state, in order to guarantee the dignity of man as human beings in a socio-political environment, and which constitute a body of unique virtue which are highly chosen and valued, and are fundamental to the existence of man to us by God Almighty". Essentially, abusing or violating these rights contravenes the provisions of UDHR and ACHPR, as well as the constitution of any civilised and democratic state of the world. In this paper, we, therefore, see human rights as those rights recognised in municipal and international laws, or rights that are described under the fundamental human rights provisions and which are universally accepted as such. We also conceive it as the basic rights and freedoms to which everyone is entitled on the basis of their common humanity in any civilised state.

Thus, human rights abuse, from the foregoing, means any conscious or unconscious act or action which is taken

by an individual or group of individuals against another individual or group of individuals, to cause hindrance to right to life or the socio-economic or political well being of another or group of individuals (Breslin, Gilmour & Weber, 2011). This implies that human rights violation simply occurs when an individual is denied his fundamental or moral rights. To treat an individual or group of individuals as if they are not human and undeserving of respect and dignity means the violation of their rights as human beings (Michelle, 2003). Yet, it is no longer strange to state that a number of the citizens of the nations of Africa are consistently facing all forms of human rights abuses by security personnel who are supposed to protect them.

d. Description of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

The novel Coronavirus pandemic is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered Corona virus. This newly identified Corona virus or SARS-CoV-2 called COVID-19 causes respiratory illness. Thousands of deaths have occurred all over the world since the outbreak of the epidemic in late 2019, in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei Province, in the Peoples' Republic of China. The symptoms of COVID-19 are numerous including dry cough without runny nose, fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, muscle or body aches, sore throat, loss of taste and smell, diarrhea, headache, fatigue, nausea or vomiting and congestion or runny nose (Lauren & Sauer, 2020; Scott, 2020).

Lauren and Sauer (2020) are of the opinion that since the outbreak of the virus in Wuhan in December 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and health officials have not been able to trace the exact source of the new Coronavirus apart from the fact that it was linked to the Huanan seafood market in Wuhan, China, where there were found early clusters of cases of the virus. The novel virus, it was found out, could spread from person to person, and vaccines are now being tested by international agencies and national governments, not without some conspiratorial hypotheses though. By and large, several vaccines are being tested for use by established medical laboratories and pharmaceutical companies for some national governments globally in recent times. The preventive measures that can be taken against COVID-19 include regular washing of hands, staying at home when one is sick, wearing of face covering in public places, maintaining of social distance while in public places and coughing into one's elbow. At the moment, scientists and medical experts discover that the new Coronavirus has the capacity to spread easily through droplets released into the air unconsciously by infected persons through the involuntary actions of coughing or sneezing or both.

According to experts, these droplets do not travel more than a few feet from the position of the affected person, and when they drop on a surface, a contact with the droplets might lead to infection. The incubation period is within fourteen days after contact or exposure to the virus. Contracting the COVID virus could cause a severe case as respiratory problems, kidney failure and, most consequentially, it could cause the death of the host or infected person(s). Studies so far revealed that a diagnosis is difficult with a mere physical investigation because early cases of COVID-19 appear to present similar symptoms as the ordinary flu or a bad cold. There is, therefore, the need for a laboratory test to confirm the diagnosis. As at now, there is no specific treatment but the recovering rate of patients have increased remarkably all over the world (Scott, 2020).

Based on preliminary data showing faster recovery period of hospitalised patients with severe disease, the use of chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine, lopinavir/ritonavir, or lopinavir/ritonavir plus interferon beta-1a and a significant others have been encouraged (Scott, 2020). The use of facemask was re-emphasised and made compulsory by a number of the states of Africa towards the end of 2020. This situation has its shells of problems caused by the security operatives who display so much haughtiness in their effort to enforce the use of face coverings in public places, in order to prevent the spread of what is today rumoured as the new strain of the novel COVID-19 virus all over the world.

e. Empirical Review:

Human Rights Violations and COVID-19 Pandemic Preventive Policy Implementation in Africa

In the face of the current global health debacle known as the COVID-19 pandemic, national governments all over the world have responded in distinct manners, in their attempts to contain the spread and effects of the pandemic on their citizens. The emergency responses, undeniably, in some states of Africa, impacted negatively on the civil rights and liberties of the citizens. As well, it has created rising unemployment rates and food insecurity in these

regions. In real terms, there have been uniformities in policy alternatives and human rights violations in the attempt to contain the spread of the virus, its effects and the enforcement of the use of face coverings in public places, on the one hand; and the nature of human rights infractions or violations in Africa, on the other.

In the course of the Covid trying period in the history of the world, several cases were recorded of human rights infractions. Specifically, the infractions occurred in the time of the closure of businesses, schools and the ban on social activities such as sports and social gatherings, ranging from unlawful invasions of individuals' privacies, and most importantly, in the time when there was massive restriction of movements of returnees from over sea trips, and the renewed enforcement of the mandatory use of facemasks in public places by the authorising government agencies of states in Africa, including Nigeria. According to Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2020), over 100 human rights violations were recorded in Nigeria at the early stages of the closure of businesses, schools, religious and worship places, and the ban on social gatherings. Human rights infractions during the period of the lockdown included police brutality, extrajudicial killings, extortions and bribery, with the poor citizens as victims who were at the receiving end (NHRC, 2020). This trend followed the same pattern in some countries of Africa like Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa and Morocco, to mention but a few (Odigbo, Eze & Odigbo, 2020).

In the affirmative, Amnesty International (AI, 2020) and UN COVID-19 Human Rights Reports (2020) argued that "between 2019 and 2020, African national governments, in their attempt to stop the spread of COVID-19, recorded several cases of human rights violations, including censorship, discrimination, arbitrary detention and xenophobia". Human Rights watch (2020), while assessing the COVID-19 lockdown implementation progress across the world, was of the opinion that implantation of the preventive policies, in the period of the outbreak, particularly in Africa, were turned into killing sprees by trigger-happy enforcement agents, especially the police and the army. The Table below showcases similarities in the occurrences of COVID-19 related incidences of human rights violations which took place in some African countries. These abuses, inter alia, ranged from unlawful and extrajudicial killings through torture, dehumanisation of individuals and degrading treatments, up to sexual molestations or sexual gender-based violations (SGBV). Others included police brutality, bribery and the extortion of money for blocked road accesses/passages on emergency related cases, etc.

S/N.	Country	Forms of Human Rights Violation/Abuse	Sources of Report
1.	Nigeria	18 persons unlawfully killed; 33 tortured, dehumanized and degraded; unlawful arrests and detention; sexual molestations; brutalization of individuals and bribery incidents. There was also a case of sexual and gender-based violation (SGBV) in which a man beat up his wife and posted it on Facebook, and dared the police to arrest him.	Odigbo, Eze & Odigbo (2020); Ajayi (2020).
2.	Kenya	6 deaths linked to Kenyan Police; general police violence, brutalities, extortions, unlawful arrests and detentions; police tear gassing of people, and the excessive use of force. There were also reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls.	Odigbo et al. (2020); Ajayi, (2020).
3.	South Africa	Infractions include shootings, manhandling of individuals, tear gassing, and water bombing of people; sexual abuse, exploitation and reported gender-based violence during lockdown. A man was also arrested in April for raping a young woman at a temporary shelter for homeless people during the lockdown in Strandfontein.	Human Rights Commission of South Africa, Local media; Odigbo et al. (2020); Ajayi (2020).
4.	Morocco	Infractions include police brutality and unlawful arrest and detention of citizens. Morocco was said to have recorded over 50,000 cases of arrests.	Morocco world News, Maghreb Arab Press, UN High Commission for Human Rights, BBC, and

			New York Time, cited in Odigbo et. al (2020).
5.	Egypt	Egypt recorded censures of western reporters for covering the spread of the disease in the country, thereby, using the crisis to limit media access.	International Crisis Group (2020).
6.	Benin Republic	Besides other reported infractions of human rights abuses, a Beninese trader was assaulted by her husband and beaten up more often since he lost his job after his workplace was shut down because of Covid-19.	Ajayi (2020).
7.	Uganda	In March 2020, the Police flogged women who were hawking goods, and other traders for displaying their wares in search of a meal in the period of “national” lockdown. Other forms of human rights violations were also recorded in the country.	Ajayi (2020).
8.	Rwanda	There was the case of the arrest of five soldiers who were alleged to have raped women in a Kigali slum while enforcing the lockdown in their country.	Ajayi (2020).
9.	Ghana	The Ghanaian government was accused of exercising democratic dictatorships following its Imposition of Restrictions Act (IRA) which was enacted under Article 21 of Ghana’s constitution in the face of the outbreak of Covid-19 in the country. This provision was criticised for prescribing severe punishment such as imprisonment from a period of 4 to 10 years for anyone who exercises any of the suspended rights.	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Menu (2020).

7. Findings:

This study finds out that in an attempt to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, African national governments adopted policy options that further complicated the already socially volatile environment which had been occasioned by the global economic meltdown. This came about as a consequence of the previous drastic drop of crude oil price in the international market and the previous excessive increase in the price of import and export commodities across national borders. The urgency required in the pressure of the pandemic made the world national governments, including those in Africa, to deploy the services of national security agencies, to enforce their orders. Unfortunately, some of these security operatives working with the agencies were involved in unwholesome activities which translated into unlawful acts that undermined the fundamental rights of the citizens whom they were supposed to protect. Indeed, evidence showed that many of the citizens’ rights were violated, and in some cases, some citizens were killed as pointed out in the Table above.

The study finds out that there were similarities in the trend, form and action of governments in Africa in the period of the COVID-19 outbreak. Apparently, the emerging trend which follows as outcome of the new phase of the global epidemic has raised a lot of questions by conspiracy theorists as to whether or not there is a second wave of the virus. And, if the answer were in the affirmative, would it justify the authenticity of the rise in the number of new cases and deaths in spite of the huge amounts of money invested in the provision of COVID vaccine development and its administration? There is also a conspiratorial hypothesis that COVID-19 vaccines have been developed along the lines of stratifications of the differences of a high quality type which is developed for the big economies of the world, like countries in North America and Europe; and China itself which, to the best of our knowledge, remains the ground zero of the outbreak of the pandemic; while, unimaginably, a different

vaccine of questionable lower quality is developed for the Third Worlds, especially Africa! This has impacted on the demand and importation of the vaccines in some parts of Africa, and has had the tendency to acerbate the citizens and a handful national government in Africa.

8. Summary

The urgency attached to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the prompt actions embarked upon by the governments in Africa to contain the spread, no doubt, contributed to the control of the spread of the virus in the continent. Compared with the rate of spread of the infection in some states of Asia, Europe and North America, the spread of the pandemic was estimated to be minimal in proportion across Africa. The Nigerian central government and the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), and some African countries, at a stage, were applauded, owing to the high degree of successes which they achieved in containing the spread of the virus in spite of the infractions of violations of human rights caused by security agents who were deployed to enforce the preventive policies of governments around the continent. The study, thus, observed that much as governments of the states of Africa recorded applaudable results in their efforts to manage the spread of the virus, they were also faced with some perturbing challenges. These challenges, indisputably, impacted negatively on the citizens' socio-economic security in various national fronts. Recently, the level of spread and the infection rate has reduced drastically in many parts of the world, especially in Africa, because of the urgency attached to the containment of the virus by national governments. With early diagnosis of infection and the voluntary submission of oneself for Covid test, infection rate is reduced, and so is death rate. This is reinforced by the discovery of the use of certain known drugs such as hydroxychloroquine, aspirin, and others for the treatment of infected persons who exhibit the symptoms of Covid. Although, the new wave of the virus has posed new challenges to African national governments, nonetheless, the Covid question has dominated global discourse, and it has resurrected the suspicions of conspiracy theories in recent times. However, within the purview of the African continent, there could well be seen the similarities in preventive policies which are formulated by national governments and similar trends in analysis, in the implementation of the policies of governments. Peradventure, this engendered similar trends in human rights violations in Africa, as recorded, especially in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Benin Republic, Uganda and Rwanda, to mention a few countries.

9. Conclusion

There is no doubt that much has been done by the national governments in Africa to contain the spread of the old and the new strain of COVID-19 virus. In spite of this, so much is expected to be carried out in the areas of prevention and treatment. Regardless of the efforts made by African governments to curb the virus, especially during the first phase of the spread, much yet is expected from the national governments in Africa in the area of curtailment of human rights violations and abuses of the citizenry. From the start of the lockdown through to the period of re-opening of national institutions, businesses and schools, up to the period of the appearance of the new strain of COVID-19 virus, very little or nothing at all has been said about the arrest and prosecution of individuals and security operatives involved in the violations of human rights during and after the lockdown across Africa. Indeed, the lack of prosecution of actors involved human rights abuses in the period of the lockdown, especially the security personnel, as evident in Nigeria, now further emboldens the security agents to commit crimes. Indeed, many amongst the operatives have fashioned out methods of exploiting and extorting money from unsuspecting citizens under the pretext of enforcing government directives of the use of hand sanitizers, facemasks and maintaining social distancing in public places.

This study established the link between the outbreak of COVID-19 in Africa, the policy options of governments of the states of Africa, security agencies and violations of human rights. It is apparent that there was an apprehensive relationship, firstly, at the outbreak of the virus, and how to prevent its spread in Africa; secondly, the enforcement of the preventive policies against the spread of the virus in Africa; and thirdly, in the deployment of security agencies to enforce compliance.

The masses are hunted by the virus, on the one hand, and by governments' security agents, who are supposed to protect the poor, on the other hand. There is no doubt, however, that governments' security agents and the citizens became mortal enemies in the period of the pandemic following the mode of execution of the policies of its prevention. This reality, to an extent, did imperil the regional efforts in preventing the spread of the virus. It opened up a series of emboldened non-state actors within the sub-region, for individuals scrambled to fill up the

vast ungoverned spaces created by the inability of governments to bring about a balance between public policies on Covid management and the protection of human rights. This was seen in specific instances in Nigeria, specifically in government's inability to distribute palliatives which were meant to cushion the effects of the lockdown. The desperate policy responses to the outbreak of the virus in Africa, coupled with the fear of the new wave of the outbreak, and, most importantly, the renewed enforcement of the wearing of facemasks in public places became the real challenges to the people. All of the above created avenues for human rights violations ranging from extortion of money from the public road user; the censure and unlawful incarceration of news reporters who covered the spread of the virus; sexual harassment of young girls and women; etc., in some countries of Africa. These unfortunate incidences of human rights abuses or violations, though unexpected from government security agents, do not in any way undermine the fact that African national governments, in their unilateral and collective actions against curtailing the pandemic, should be commended in their efforts to control the spread of the virus through their preventive policy options.

10. Recommendations

Following the rate of human rights violations in the period of the outbreak of Coronavirus in the continent, particularly in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Morocco, Egypt, Benin Republic, Uganda and Rwanda, etc., the following recommendations are made:

- a. National governments and policy-makers in Africa should learn from the experiences of the novel COVID-19 pandemic, and establish effective and efficient independent public complaints desk and hotline phone numbers for citizens to immediately report new or suspected cases of the virus, as well as report further abuses of human rights in times of emergencies. When this is done, there shall be limited number of deaths of infected persons, and human right infraction cases will be minimised during or after any further outbreaks.
- b. African governments should also learn from the experiences of the pandemic and re-focus their efforts on preventing any new strain of the virus from coming into the continent while bringing any such spread of virus to an immediate end when it occurs. Again, they should ensure that attention is given to other forms of health challenges within their immediate environments by improving on the epileptic health care facilities in their regions. Rather than enacting further COVID-19 related laws which may heighten the fears of the citizens and impoverish them, to bring about economic and food insecurity in the land, governments should endeavour to formulate preventive policies through acceptable unilateral and multi-lateral efforts to bring about development in the region.
- c. In the instance of the challenges before the continent, individual governments in Africa should take it up as a challenge, to thoroughly overhaul its security operatives across the nations and across board. The need has arisen for these operatives to be trained and re-trained on a continuous basis, and be instructed especially in matters of human rights violations and what it portends to all countries of the world. Indeed, they should learn that it is reprehensible to see that security operatives act in ways which are inimical to man and his nature essence.
- d. In the light of (c) above, individual governments in Africa, like the Nigerian government, should stem the tide on the security anomaly in which Nigeria's security personnel, especially men of the Nigeria Police, are found to be in the habit of harassing Nigerian road users for not wearing facemasks while they cash in on the opportunity to extort money from victims in public. On its own part, the government seems to be unaware of such happenings, and this further encourages harassment and extortions of the citizens by its police. The government should, as a matter of urgency, fish out officers of the Nigeria Police who were involved in the act of human rights abuses and in other forms of human rights violations for trial in the courts of law, and adequate punishment meted out to them accordingly.

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