Law Enforcement Capabilities and COVID-19 Safety Precautions: Synergy for Health Emergency Amelioration for Global Peace and Security

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Abstract

Law enforcement is crucial for national peace and security; and it is hereby defined as the various organs of government that are involved in ensuring compliance with the laws of the land. The outbreak of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic in 2019 served as a litmus test for the efficacy of various law enforcement agencies. This manifested in the enforcement of safety protocols such as lockdown of social-economic activities, washing of hands in private and public places, wearing of face masks, maintenance of social distancing, banning of social gatherings and other inherent social safety procedures. Aside the loss of lives, domestic violence and other security challenges, lack of established law enforcement capabilities worsened peoples` conditions during the period. Therefore, this paper assesses a significant relationship between law enforcement capabilities and COVID-19 safety precautions for achieving global peace and security. The paper adopts qualitative research method; data were sourced secondarily through the content analysis of peer-review journals, edited text-books, and credible online resources. The findings showed that effective enforcement of the COVID-19 safety precautions will reduce the spread of COVID-19, and this enhances global peace and security. The paper recommends positive collaborations among law enforcement agencies coupled with good governance to tackle COVID-19 for global peace and order. Ultimately, this paper will be useful to individuals, government at various levels, World Health Organisations and other stakeholders involved in Corona Virus monitoring and mitigation.

Keywords: *COVID-19, law enforcement capabilities, safety precautions, global peace, security, health emergency*

Introduction

T he world has experienced different emergencies, ranging from natural to man-made disasters that have claimed many lives and properties. The most recent is the Corona Virus pandemic also called COVID-19 which started in China in the late 2019 and later spread to other parts of the world. According to the World Health Organisation (2020) over one million lives have been lost to the disaster. In response, different international agencies and countries put in place stringent policies and measures in a bid to curtail the ensuing loss of lives, job losses and distortions in the global economy. These measures are washing hands under running water, use of facemasks, social distancing and other personal hygiene mechanism (Remsberg, 1995). In extreme cases, lockdown was imposed to avert community transmission of the disease. To enhance the enforcement of these safety precautions, capable law enforcement agencies are needed. Law enforcement is defined as the organisation of security resources to carry out the basic functions of maintenance of law and order in the society and, in this regard, could be formal or informal. These synergies are needed to enforce the safety strategies of COVID-19 pandemic (Donald, 2016). Consequently, the Federal Government of Nigeria set up the Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19. This body advises the Federal government on the best safety practices against COVID-19 pandemic. It was headed by the secretary to the federal government, Boss Mustapha.

At the state level, each state of the federal as a matter of emergency set up COVID-19 Taskforce to control the spread on the disease. Aside the taskforce on COVID-19, other law enforcement structures are the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Army, Nigeria Social Security and Civil Defence Corps, Nigeria Peace Corps and Federal Road Safety Corps. Law enforcement capability is the ability of the various law enforcement agencies to muster resources together to achieve national security (Zhu, Zhang, Wang , Lix, Yang, Song , et al. (2020). Before the outbreak of COVID-19 there was no apprehension about compliance with safety measures like hand-washing, use of nose cover, physical distancing and lockdown (Donald, 2016). However, the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a more vigorous enforcement of these safety measures because they imposed restraints on peoples` lives. The capability of law enforcement is measured by the collaborative efforts of the security agencies to implement extant laws on COVID-19 safety protocols (Simon, 1991). The frontline agency

in enforcing compliance with COVID-19 safety protocols in Nigeria is the Nigeria Police Force.

Vries (2020) analyses law enforcement cooperation in child sex tourism cases involving Thailand and Canada. In the same vein, Wu, Chen and Chan (2020) and Huang, Wang and Li and Zhao (2020) investigated the outbreak of COVID-19 in their works. To the best of our knowledge, there is no study on law enforcement in the corona virus pandemic. To fill the knowledge gap, this study examines law enforcement capabilities and COVID-19 safety precautions. The specific objectives are: to examine the various law enforcement agencies in COVID-19 safety precautions; to investigate the COVID-19 safety precautions; and to evaluate the significant relationship between COVID-19 safety precautions and global peace and security.

Methodology

This paper applies qualitative research method; the data were sourced secondarily through the content analysis of peer reviewed journals, edited text books and credible online resources. Law enforcement capabilities refer to various agencies that are engaged in law enforcement operations and their roles in implementing the COVID-19 safety precautions. The relationship between independent variables, law enforcement capability and safety precautions were explored. The data gotten from the official websites of the Nigeria Centre of Disease Control, World Health Organisation and related bodies were analyzed for consistency and rationality, validity and reliability of the data.

Literature

In this section, the work of other scholars on the law enforcement capabilities and COVID-19 safety precautions will be explored.

Law Enforcement: As noted by Vries (2020) and supported by Woods and Soderberg (2020), this is defined as organization of security sources to ensure the implementation of the laws of the land. Law enforcement is crucial for peace, stability and harmony of the state. In the modern states, the police are at the forefront of law enforcement. The Police institution performs the following roles in a bid to carry out the laws of the land. Some of the roles of the police which may overlap the roles of other law enforcement agencies are:

Crime Prevention: Crime is defined as acts that contravene the law. (Police and other law enforcement, Vitale, 2017). This is the function of the police and other law enforcement agencies. Various law enforcement agencies embark on periodic patrols in strategic places to prevent criminal activities. Seeing law enforcement agents or their symbol deters criminals from their nefarious activities (Forman, 2017).

Crime Detection: In a situation where crime prevention is not fruitful, it is the responsibility of law enforcement agencies to detect criminals that committed a particular crime. This is done through intelligence gathering, processing and taking decisive action. In a society, the responsibility of detecting crimes is not restricted to a particular person (Bongino, 2020).

Crime Investigation: This is an act of establishing the innocence or guilt of a suspect in a particular criminal case. In every crime, it is the responsibility of law enforcement agents to determine who actually committed a particular crime (Green, 2021).

Prosecution: Upon investigation of a crime, if an investigator has substantial evidence against the suspects he will proceed to the next level in the criminal justice system which is prosecution. At the court stage, the actual culpability or innocence of the suspects will be determined. In a conventional criminal justice system, there is a direct relationship between the jail term and the gravity of the offence (Balko, 2013).

Law Enforcement Agents

The Police: In a social structure, the police is a group of people that is charged with the statutory role of maintenance of law and order. These functions are discharged through the various roles of law enforcement agents as explained above (David, 2016; Wood, 2013).

Federal Road Safety Commission: The Federal Road Safety Commission ensures the enforcement of road transport safety rules and regulations. It ensures proper load and unloading by motorists, observing statutory speed-limits and other road transport regulations (Wang, Tang and Wei ,2020).

Nigeria Social Security and Civil Defence Corps: This body complements other security agencies in ensuring peace and harmony in society. It engages in periodic patrol to ensure peace and harmony. It may arrest suspects and hand them over to the police for prosecution (Langan, 2014; Perlman , 2020)

Nigerian Military: The major role of the Nigerian military is the defence of the country's territorial integrity. The Nigerian military comprises the Nigeria Army, Nigeria Navy and Nigeria Air Force. The armed forces provide reinforcement for other law enforcement agencies in critical security situations. (Alexander, 2020).

COVID-19 Safety Precautions

Social Distance: This is an act of keeping space between one person and another. The essence of this is to avert contracting the virus that causes coronal disease. According to Huang, Wang, Li, Ren, Zhao, Hu et al. (2020), the recommended distance is six feet between one person and another.

Face Mask: In addition to physical distancing, another COVID-19 safety precaution is using of nose covers. This prevents the uninfected persons from contracting COVID-19 disease (Li , Guan , Wu , Wang , Zhou , Tong , et al., 2020).

Avoidance of Physical Contact: Instead of hand shaking, touching of knuckles or elbows or bowing is recommended.

According to the World Health Organization (2020), the following are the safety measures to guide against COVID-19 pandemic. This prevents contracting COVID-19 infections (Wu, Chen and Chan, 2020): Washing of Hands Under running water consistently as a personal hygiene against COVID-19 pandemic.

Legal Framework for COVID-19 Preventions

To give legal backing for enforcement of COVID-19 safety precautions, an Executive Bill was introduced by President Muhammed Buhari. The law made it compulsory for everybody to wear face mask in the public places. It also compels public places to set up hand-washing spots in strategic places. Also, the Lagos State Government promulgated a law for the Prevention of COVID-19 Pandemic. This view was supported by (Chen, Zhou, Dong , Qu , Gong , Han , et al. , 2020).

Law Enforcement Capabilities

This refers to the ability of various law enforcement agencies to discharge their duties in line with crime prevention, investigations and prosecution within the shortest timeframe

Law Enforcement Capabilities

(Ron , Fouchier, Thijs Kuiken, Martin Schutten, Geert van Amerongen1, Gerard J, et al. Koch's, 2020)

Theoretical Framework

In a bid to broaden the understanding of law enforcement capabilities and COVID-19 safety protocols Broken Window Theory by George Kelly and Routine Activity Theory by Marcus Felson will be adopted. In the first instance, broken window theory by Georg Kelly states that in a social structure when minor deviances are condoned like hooliganism, truancy, open smoking, drug abuse and other unsavory attitudes, these acts could eventually lead to high profile criminal acts that may consume the whole society. In relations to law enforcement capabilities and the COVID-19 pandemic, when COVID-19 safety precautions are not effectively enforced at an appropriate time the consequences escalate in forms of loss of lives, disruption of economic activities, increased government budgets on treatment of COVID-19 patients (Pgab, Nguyen , Luong , Nguyen , Nguyen, Le , et al. (2020). This informed the robust enforcement of COVID-19 safety precautions during the pandemic period. In order to buttress broken window theory, another theory employed is the routine activity theory by Marcus Felson, which asserts that place and opportunity play vital roles in deviance. For deviance activity to occur, there are three factors that must be in place. These are the motivated offenders, possible target and possible guidance. In the COVID-19 safety precautions, the Nigerian populace is the motivated offenders. The safety precautions are alien to people, and in the beginning there was mild resistance to them. The targets are the security loopholes in the enforcement of COVID-19 safety precautions. The enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocols under enabling laws compels people to abide by the safety precautions to remain healthy. Out of the two theories, routine activity theory explains the subject matter with depth because it stresses enforcement (Taiwan Centers for Disease Control ,2020; Zaki , van Boheemen , Bestebroer , Osterhaus , Fouchier 2020).

Findings and Discussion

From the findings law enforcement agents perform various roles in enforcing COVID-19 safety precautions. The police have constitutional responsibility to carry out the law. In the process of giving legal backing to COVID-19 safety precautions, Federal and state governments made laws to punish offenders. There are a number of states in Nigeria with mobile courts for speedy trial of COVID-19 safety precautions. In every function of the

police, the ability to enforce COVID-19 safety protocol is enshrined at every stage. The major function of the law enforcement agents is crime prevention. The enactment of laws, by the Federal and state governments made it criminal for anybody to violate the COVID-19 safety protocols. The periodic patrols discourage people from violating COVID-19 safety precautions. Detection of COVID-19 safety precautions promotes arrest and prosecution of defaulters for further legal proceedings. To maintain and sustain global peace and security, mitigation of COVID-19 pandemic is necessary. The havoc caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 to global peace and harmony is enormous. Many companies have closed business, jobs have been lost and other cases of instability were induced by the pandemic.

Table 1: Global Statistics on COVID-19 as of March 29, 2021

S/N	Global Confirmed Cases	Confirmed death	Countries Affected
	126,359,540	2,769,473	223
	Percentage of Global Confirmed cases	2.19%	

Source: World Health Organisation (2021), www.worldhealthorganisation.covid19 update

From Table 1, the total number of COVID-19 confirmed cases on March, 29, 2021 was 126,359,540 people and the casualties recorded was 2, 769,473 people. This warranted the need for collaborative efforts through law enforcement to combat COVID-19 pandemic across the 223 countries who suffer from the health emergency. The percentage of the people affected was 2.19% of the global confirmed cases.

Law Enforcement Capabilities

Table 2: Nigeria Figures on COVID-19 as on March 29, 2021

S/N	Nigeria Confirmed Case	Percentage of Global Confirmed Cases	Active	Discharged	Death	Percentage of Global Death
	162,593	0.03%	10,237	150,308	2,048	0.07%

Source: Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2021

From Table 2, the total number of COVID-19 confirmed cases in Nigeria as at 29 March 2021 was 162,593 which was 0.03% of the global cases. The percentage of Covid-19-related deaths was 0.07% of the global record. This warrants collaborative efforts to mitigate COVID-19 mortality through synergy among law enforcement agents.

Table 3: The Ten States with highest COVID-19 Cases rate in Nigeria

States	Number of Cases	Percentage of National Cases (%)	Active Cases	Percentage of National Active Cases (%)	Discharged	Death	Percentage of National Deaths (%)
Lagos	57,321	35.25%	152	1.48	56,990	439	21.39
FCT	79,617	48.97	2,397	2.34	17,664	156	7.62
Plateau	9, 024	5.55	51	0.50	8,916	57	2.79
Kaduna	8,914	5.48	59	0.58	8,750	65	3.17

Rivers	6,909	4.25	42	0.41	6,767	103	5.03
Oyo	6,836	4.20	494	0.03	6,221	123	0.06
Edo	4,875	3.0	36	0.04	4,654	185	9.03
Ogun	4,617	2.84	107	1.05	4,446	49	2.39
Kano	3.902	2.40	25	0.24	3,767	110	5.37
Ondo	3,168	1.95	1,026	10.00	2,060	62	3.00

Source: Nigeria Center for Disease Control, official website, retrieved, 30 March 2021

From Table 3, the Federal Capital Territory has the highest number of cases which is 48.9% of the national cases. Lagos has 35.25% of the national cases. Ondo State has 1.95%, which is the lowest. In terms of the COVID-19-related deaths, Lagos has 21.39% which is the highest rate in the country. The least in terms of COVID-19 death rate was Oyo which accounted for 0.06%.

Conclusion

The paper deals with law enforcement capability and COVID-19 safety precautions. It explores functions of law enforcement, safety protocols for COVID-19. From findings enforcement of COVID-19 laws is necessary for peace and security in a social structure. This is necessary for protection of lives and maintenance of peace and stability in a social structure. This study will be useful to individuals, agencies responsible for control of COVID-19, government at various levels, non-government agencies, international organisations and researchers in the field of humanities, social and health sciences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends effective implementation of COVID-19 safety protocols. There should be synergy among various law enforcement agencies on COVID-19 safety protocols. The emergency preparation is necessary to checkmate the effects of the health emergency.

Law Enforcement Capabilities

And lastly, Community participation and inclusion are necessary for the prevention of COVID-19 pandemic.

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