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Disruptions and Governance in a Post-Colonial African State: Analysis of Nigerian Experience in Post-Covid-19 Pandemic Era, 2020-2024

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Abstract

This paper examined disruptions and their effect in post-colonial African states with the interrogation of the Nigerian experience in the post-pandemic era. The paper situated a post-colonial state and highlighted the characteristics while arguing that disruptions in Nigeria had left disastrous and sour traces. The Nigerian experience with various disruptions highlighted the fact that disruptions were part of the country's history and the state had always struggled and insisted on addressing the needs and aspirations of the citizens. The discourse extended to the analysis of remedial measures and their sustainability for the transformation of society. It was within this context that four situations in the post-pandemic era were selected for interrogation, its effect on livelihoods, and varied governance responses. Unfortunately, the character of the Nigerian state permitted a number of crises and disruptions that necessarily occurred. While secondary sources were used to gather data used for analysis, the strands of argument posited as objectives of the paper attracted the development of four research questions for interrogation. The paper concluded that the weakness of the state was responsible for its inability to engender hope and aspiration in the citizens.

Keywords

Crude oil, Disruption, Naira redesign, Pandemic, Protest, Subsidy, Crude

Introduction

Disruptions had taken place in Nigeria severally. They were either man-made, government policy driven or natural occurrence. Disruption, which is the alteration of a smooth or normal cause of event, remarkably, has in all the three situations, left the citizens, economy, livelihoods, national development and the entire society to bear the consequences such as deaths, dislocations, escalated poverty and threats to state survival. For a developing post-colonial state like Nigeria, history is replete with records of disruptions. The contradiction has been its inability to use the instrumentality of the state to engender

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hope and aspiration for the citizens. Rather, the state and its institutions in post-colonial Nigeria were weak in capacity to respond to disruptions when they occur. Corruption is endemic in the system and further limits the ability of the state to develop and resolve the triggering issues that usually crystallized in disruptions. Often times, governance and leadership responses were either to ‘copy and paste’, deploy palliatives to mitigate situation, even when not sustainable or adoption of confrontation, where the regime stability, survival and popularity was threatened.

The problem is that since post-independence, development initiatives of Nigerian governments have been to address the basic needs of citizens including effects of previous historical disruptions in the country. Unfortunately, such efforts have been cosmetic and ornamental, with no lessons learnt, hence repeated occurrences. What is therefore responsible is one of the puzzles set out for interrogation in this paper using identified situations. The argument partly is that the challenges remained part of what political governance and leadership must manage and resolve, using world best practices to attain modernity.

The focus of this paper therefore is on post Covid-19 pandemic disruptions in Nigeria. The forms and dimensions of disruptions though many, but in this paper, four situations in the post Covid-19 pandemic era were selected for analysis. They were the crude oil theft and spills, #EndSARS protest, naira redesign and fuel subsidy removal. These events sparked disruptions that spanned through 2020 – 2024. Whereas in this paper crude oil theft and spills, and #EndSARS were classified as man-made triggered disruptions, Covid-19 pandemic was a natural occurrence, while naira redesign and fuel subsidy removal were classified as government policies driven disruptions.

The specific objectives of this paper are to situate a post-colonial state and analyse the effects of disruptions on state, economy and citizens livelihoods, determine governance response and challenges and determine if disruptions had led to the transformation of the society. The research questions developed for interrogation therefore were: What are the characteristics of a post-colonial state? Using four situational analyses, what were the effects of disruptions on state, economy and citizens livelihoods? What had been governance and leadership responses and challenges to disruption in Nigeria? And finally, has disruptions and governance responses contributed to societal transformation in Nigeria?

Methodology

The descriptive approach was adopted in this paper and the data gathered were generated from secondary sources. These sources included textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines and internet materials. The materials sourced were mostly on issues of disruptions and effects in Nigeria. Specifically, data gathered related to disruptions between 2019 and 2023 in Nigeria. Some of the newspapers and magazines sampled were because of their wide coverage and availability. Nevertheless, personal observation and experience also played a fundamental role in helping to strengthen the analysis.

Conceptual Review/Clarification

Disruption: Disruption is interruption or difficulty that prevents an event, system or process from continuing smoothly or operating in a normal way. Disruptions in socio-economic and political environment have been witnessed in Nigeria in the past and its effects were noticeable on the citizens, society and environment. In the Nigeria context, disruptions can be classified into three. They are disruptions that are man-made, those occasioned by government policy, and disruptions that are natural occurrence. Examples of the man-made disruptions are #EndSARS protest, strikes by labour centres such as Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and health workers etc, insecurity such as activities of Boko Haram, bandits, secessionist agitation by Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Eastern Security Network (ESN), ethnic militias, farmers-herders conflict, oil spills and crude oil theft. Government driven policy disruptions can be

categorized into domestic and external. Examples of domestic government policy instigated disruptions are the ones brought about by the implementation of government policies such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), privatization and commercialization, bank consolidation, naira redesign and petroleum subsidy removal. Their implementation presented shocks that disrupts or unbalance the system. Government policy towards external environment and shocks such as the coup in Niger which necessitated border closure by the Nigerian authorities also triggers disruptions. In the case of natural occurrences, they constitute events that man may not immediately have control over such as the Covid-19 global pandemic and flooding/ocean surge.

Governance: Governance on the other hand is a slippery concept because it can be viewed from both narrow and broad perspectives depending on who is involved and the situation he wants to address. Ogundiya (2010, p 202) described governance as the process of allocating resources through the instrumentalities of the state, for the attainment of public good. This includes institutional and structural arrangements, decision making processes, policy formulation and implementation capacity, development of personnel, information flows and the nature and style of leadership within a political system. But for the purpose of this paper, Huther and Shah's definition cited in Jacob (2016, p 31) that defined governance as a multifaceted concept encompassing all aspects of the exercise of authority through formal and informal institutions in the management of the resource endowment of a state is suitable. However, Adejumobi (1995) also cited in Jacob (2016, p 31) further clarified governance as the efficient management of state institutions and steering society and the state towards the realization of collective goals. To this extent governance can be good or bad. While good governance is characterized by democratic process, political participation, equality, accountability, effectiveness and transparency, bad governance on the other hand is when governance is not responsive, responsible to the needs of the people and the resources of the state are not efficiently managed (Jacob, 2016, p 32).

Post Covid-19 Pandemic Era: Covid-19 pandemic struck in late 2019 and took the world by surprise. First noticed in the city of Wuhan, China, it was a highly infectious respiratory disease that ravaged the world and spread across the globe like wild fire, causing massive deaths in addition to socio-economic and political disruptions. The notable symptoms were coughing, sneezing, respiratory tract infections, high temperature, itching, and dry throat as well as a sense of taste and smell. To mitigate the situation, health experts recommended hand washing, social/physical distancing, crowd avoidance, nose/face mask and restriction in local/international travels (Odion, 2022, p 21-22). However, the period after the outbreak of the pandemic remained the focus of this paper, the reason being that a lot of research had been done on the Covid-19 period. This is the period that is classified in this paper as the post Covid-19 pandemic era (2020 - 2024).

Situating a Post-Colonial State

The post-colonial era also referred to as post-independence era in the history of any country is the period that preceded colonialism. It ought to be a time for such country to savour freedom, experience robust nationalism, evolve progressive leadership and policies and embark upon radical reconstruction and rapid development that will have appreciable positive impact on the wellbeing of its citizens (Igbafen, 2012, p 1). Post-colonial states since the end of colonialism has been clearly marked by poverty, conflicts, squalor, overt and covert foreign manipulations and exploitation, agitation amongst others with resultant tragedies of different kinds and magnitude.

The post-colonial state that was inherited in Africa was non-hegemonic and lacked the capacity to create the sort of environment that would have allowed public policy to be rational, sustainable and effective. Consequently, African policy makers and leaders moved from one error to another further complicating the already precarious and distorted African condition (Ihonvbere, 2010, p 5).

In an environment where corruption is pervasive, progressive, people-centred and holistic public policies were no longer possible. In most post-colonial state, personal considerations are the determinants of public policies from defence, political appointments, through budget allocation and investments in critical sectors such as education, infrastructure, health and agriculture (Ihonvbere, 2010, p 6). In the midst of the struggles and efforts to transform in post-colonial Africa, the reality is that Africa is still dogged or beset with several complex resilient problems, including steady corruption, insecurity, collapsed infrastructure, institutions, debilitating poverty, famine, unequal exchange, huge debt burden and general morale (Prah, 1993 cited in Igbafen, 2012, p 2).

The post-colonial Nigeria is essentially an instrument of domination and exploitation. In highlighting some outstanding negative characteristics of the Nigerian state, polity and economy, particularly those aspects that have implications for unrest, agitations and underdevelopment, Ojo (1995, p 282) argued that the post-independence Nigerian state is characteristically neo-colonial, manifesting far reaching contradictions in the social, economic and political aspects of the society, which to a very large extent, tend to undermine and sometimes completely nullify the legitimate and genuine hopes, aspirations and expectations which political independence was supposed to fulfil. Some of the contradictions are:

Abuse of state power and its use for private motives, e.g. accumulation of wealth through various forms of exploitation;

The perpetuation of an overbearing political rule of a parasitic minority class that has devised the means of remaining in power permanently, by a continued process of “exchange of baton” among its various members in the bureaucracy, military, business and political class;

The political powerlessness of the mass majority of the Nigerian people particularly students, workers, youths, peasant farmers, artisans and petty traders;

Extreme authoritarianism and repressive attitude of political regimes towards critical and alternative viewpoints;

The use of state power towards ends that are largely anti-people, unprogressive and lacking the capacity for development, e.g. neglect of industrial and agricultural development in favour of white elephant projects that usually entails discriminate award of contracts at inflated cost (Ojo, 1995, p 282).

The Nigerian polity, Ojo (1995, p 283) further argued is founded on poverty and very weak economic base, a situation which over the years, had been compounded by a deepening crisis of dependency, metropolitan capitalist exploitation, contemporary exploitations, compromises and inconsistencies. He further argued that the aggregate result of all the above elements of the country’s political economy, particularly their impact on governments under subsequent regimes have been manifested in form of a weakening capacity of the Nigerian state to cater for and meet the democratic, fundamental and legitimate needs and aspirations of the people. Two areas in which the capacity of the Nigerian state to meet the needs of the people have been called to question very seriously are:

Provision of opportunities for gainful employment and the means for other forms of socio-economic security; and

Apparent indifference and/or lack of the necessary political will on the part of government to redress existing dimensions of inequity between members of the minority ruling/business class and the largely majority of the people, who are underprivileged, deprived, exploited and marginalized in different ways (Ojo, 1995, p 283).

Situational Analysis of Disruptions and Effects in Post Pandemic Nigeria

In this paper the causes as well as the effect of the four situations used for analysis were identified. The situations were crude oil theft and spills, the #EndSARS protest of 2020, naira redesign of 2022/2023, as well as the fuel subsidy removal of 2023. Whereas crude oil theft and spills, and #EndSARS protests are examples of man-made disruptions, naira redesign and fuel subsidy removal are examples of government policies instigated disruptions.

Crude oil thefts and spill are mostly prevalent in the Niger Delta region. The theft is of two dimension – siphoning for illegal local refining and gangs tapping into pipelines, pumping crude into smaller vessels which take it to larger ships for international sale (Chatham House, 2013, p 1). The region accommodates mostly the proliferation of illegal oil refineries and worrisome incidences of crude oil theft because of the heavy presence of crude. It is a lucrative business; while combating it amounts to waging war against the elites. Organized rich people mostly commit this very specialized and mechanized crime. Cartel or mafia of highly placed, powerful and influential individuals, local politicians, community chiefs, leaders of militant and youth groups, oil industry staff, oil traders (local and international) and senior military and government officials are those mostly involved (International Crisis Group (ICG) cited in Odion and Agbebaku, 2016, p 130). Among the causes of crude oil theft and spills are the lucrative nature of the business; poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance; vulnerability of facilities; militancy; elite conspiracy; weak political structure; government policy of incessant increase in pump price of petroleum products; sabotage; and security compromise (Odion and Agbebaku, 2016, p 131-132).

Crude oil theft has serious implication on national development as it has disrupted power generation, operation of companies, and government revenue. The effect of occasional spills from illegal oil refineries and illegal oil bunkering often manifests in the disruption of the environment, killing the flora and fauna, untimely deaths or people with atrophied value. The activities had decimated the already fragile ecosystem through pollution of the rivers in the communities, with direct impact of the spills on livelihoods and health of farming and fishing residents. Further impact of crude oil theft on democracy, sustainable development and insecurity had been documented in Odion and Agbebaku (2016, p 132-133). In terms of its disruptive impact on the revenue flow of government, the estimated losses at various times were put at N570billion (about 3.5billion Euros) in 2006; N7.3billion daily in 2013 (Odion and Agbebaku, 2016, p 131); loss of over 617 barrel of oil valued at \$46.16billion (which translates to N35.51trillion) to various forms of theft between 2007 and 2020 according to Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) (Babatunde, 2023, p 1); loss of \$1billion to oil theft in first quarter of 2022 (Eboh, 2022, p 1). In the same vein, in 2020 and 2021, the Nigeria's National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) recorded 822 combined spills, totalling 28,003 barrels of oil spewed into the environment by oil theft, sabotage, militant attacks on pipelines, vandalism and fire outbreak in oil communities (Saint, 2022).

The #EndSARS protest lasted for a short period between late October and early November, 2020 with severe disruptions. The modus operandi was to mobilize youth online, physically converge and occupy strategic areas in the city centre. Hijacking of public space and several designated protest ground, showed the determination of the youth for a change. The essence of the direct participation was to effectively create awareness and impact. The demands of the protesters were:

End Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and appropriate compensation for their families.

Setting up an independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct (within 10 days).

In line with Police Act, psychological evaluation and retraining (to be confirmed by an independent body) of all disbanded SARS officers before they can be redeployed.

Increase Police salary so they are adequately compensated for protecting lives and properties of citizens.

Immediate release of all arrested protesters (Odion, n.d. forthcoming)

In the context of the protest, the protesters enjoyed financial and logistical support of sympathetic groups locally and abroad, in addition to celebrities who already had large fans among the youths. Though the protest started as #EndSARS, it was amplified with the emergence of other variants, such as #EndCorruption, #EndInsecurity, #EndBadgovernance, #EndHugepayforlegislators etc that trended on social media, which made government uncomfortable. The reality of the protest further revealed the constructive and destructive ability and capacity of the youth. Constructively, through ICT, a mass of the youths was mobilized, and their energies were galvanized towards productive activities, while on the other hand, destructively, hoodlum and miscreants resorted to violence, looting, burning, arson, and killing due to bottled-up anger which was aggravated by longstanding animosity in state-society relations. However, either of the side caused disruptions in the socio-economic and political environment. Aside the above, the protest brought to the fore, the fragile/fractured citizen-state-society relations arising from non-performance of government institutions. Consequently, the fragile/fractured relations between the state and the society, was escalated particularly by failure to fulfil past promises by successive governments, lack of transparency and accountability in government processes, and alienation of the citizenry in decision making. This made the government (at the centre and states), its institutions such as the Nigeria Police, agents and other political actors to become the target of the protesters (Odion, n.d. forthcoming). Until the protest and subsequent proscription of the SARS unit, it was notorious for its excesses, extrajudicial killings, impunity, extortion, intimidation and harassment, unlawful arrests and general brutality against Nigerians.

The former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele, on October 26, 2022 announced that new notes would be introduced to replace the current N200, N500, and N1000 naira notes. The redesign was expected to take effect from Thursday, December 15, 2022. This meant the existing notes would cease to be regarded as legal tender by January 31, 2023. However, four reasons were given by the CBN for the redesign policy. They were:

The naira notes were redesigned to address the issue of individuals who have made currency their main source of income. In other words, stolen monies that were hitherto hidden would be released.

The currency change also aimed to deal a fatal blow on counterfeiting, the growing kidnapping and ransom industry.

The change in the note was also aimed at aiding in lowering the rate of inflation.

The change was also intended to control the amount of money in circulation (CBN, 2022 p 1; Osadebe, 2022).

Other reasons that scholars had adduced for naira redesign were that currency redesign increases a country's security by helping nations keep counterfeiting to a minimum and stay one step ahead of threats. In addition, it was anticipated to boost the economy, lower cash management cost, and advance financial inclusion and improve the government's ability to monitor the money supply. It was further argued that redesign will strengthen financial institutions, lessen corruption, improve banks performance due to sharp increase in electronic mobile banking channels, more transactions, more agents in the tax net will increase government revenue generation. In addition, with the implementation close to 2023

general election, it may have lessened the inclination towards vote buying (Onimisi, 2023, p 1). This was in addition to the monetization and commercialization of the entire electoral process.

Individuals were expected to visit banks and deposit old notes with no assurance of exchanging new notes for old ones. Other platforms that customers were encouraged to utilize such as e-Naira, POS, electronic transfer, mobile money operators and automated teller machines (ATM) created more problems and hardship for customers as they were inefficient. Despite repeated appeals from stakeholders, the CBN Governor repeatedly paid deaf ears, insisting that there was going to be no extension, even with glaring and excruciating difficulty encountered by customers/Nigerians, as well as the inefficiency of the CBN.

A major implication of the naira redesign policy was the scarcity of cash. The implementation greatly disrupted socio-political and economic activities/engagements of Nigerians. It also revealed Nigeria's economic vulnerability. Due to limited access to physical cash, many Nigerians could not pay for basic needs, services, and engage in trading activities. Some bank customers closed their bank accounts in protest of the cash crunch. Some who could not access funds died in the process while others were left at the mercy of Point of Sale (POS) operators who charged people exorbitantly. This disruption affected livelihoods and escalated poverty. Even those doing business had to eat into their capital to survive. The policy negatively impacted several informal sector businesses such as local retail shops, artisans and commercial bus drivers, trading activities for small scale manufacturers (Mohammed, 2023; Onimisi, 2023). The rejection of old notes by banks and motorist and other traders caused significant challenge for the nation and Nigerians, informal economy and in particular livelihoods. Also, high percentage of unbanked individuals created conversations around financial inclusiveness. However, lives were lost, properties especially belonging to commercial banks worth billions of naira, were also destroyed during the protest.

On May 29, 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu announced the final removal of petrol subsidy in the country. Subsidy was introduced as a reaction to the 1973 oil price shock which caused a global spike in oil prices. The Nigerian federal government has been subsidizing the downstream oil sector in areas of production cost, demurrage costs and landing costs, and this kept the prices of the commodities from the industry low and within the reach of the public (Omemma, 2015, p 100). Though subsidy had kept fuel prices cheap for decades but it became increasingly expensive, costing the government \$10 billion in 2022. Unfortunately, due to the amount spent on subsidy, Nigeria government had argued that it was not sustainable.

The Federal Government of Nigeria and the advocates of fuel subsidy removal had argued severally that the best value is delivered to society and its members when government regulate rather than allow the market to regulate itself in the form of free market. The protagonists further argued that the action of government in removing fuel subsidy was meant to remove corruption from the transaction costs in petroleum products, and the need to deploy the accruing revenue to finance education, health, road rehabilitation/infrastructure, develop a network of rural roads to facilitate and increase food and agricultural self-sufficiency in the shortest possible period. In addition to the above was the argument that fuel subsidy removal will offer more benefits to Nigerians in the form of lower product prices, better quality of service and ease as well as constant availability of the product (Omemma, 2015, p 98). The irony is that even with several and successive removals of fuel subsidy by past administrations, socio-economic lives of the people had not improved because experience has shown that each subsidy removal exercise often resulted in increased pump price of petroleum products with the attendant consequence on the prices of goods and services. Besides, there still abound persistent cases of social malaise, economic crisis, health, education and road infrastructural decay.

Building State-Society Relation: Governance and Leadership Response to Disruptions in Nigeria

Governance and leadership response to crude oil theft and spills had been tremendous. In most cases, it had been confrontational. Engaging in the destruction of several illegal refineries, arrests and seizure of vessels by security operatives were part of measures adopted by government to combat the illicit business. Joint Task Force (JTF) had also been set up by the federal government to combat the scourge in the region. To boost the effort of the security operatives, successive administrations had supported and equipped the country's security forces in addition to renewal of contractual agreement with private security firm such as Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited (TSSNL) to secure the crude oil pipelines and combat illegal oil theft and refining in the Niger Delta. In addition, the federal government had also taken the campaign against oil theft to the international community with the hope of seeking international cooperation and collaboration.

Government response to the #EndSARS protest raised governance issues such as responsiveness, responsibility, rule of law and accountability. Government past response to such complaints of human right violations, prior to the #EndSARS protest had been denial and disbandment in the extreme case. Four times prior to the protest, SARS had been disbanded, but repeatedly resurfaced. In this particular case of #EndSARS protest, though the federal government responded to the demands of the protesters, the response was delayed. Consequently, the delay gave room for the protest to be hijacked by hoodlums and miscreants who engaged in violence, looting, arson and killings. In addition, while the Federal government, through the Police authorities immediately disbanded/dismantled the SARS as demanded by the protesters, it went ahead to set up the Special Weapons and Terrorism (SWAT) Unit as a replacement. Furthermore, as a way of dousing tension, town hall meetings that served as interactive sessions between government and youth groups/civil societies were hurriedly packaged and held across the country to calm down frayed nerves with no concrete result. Also, mindful of the fact that an idle mind is the devil's workshop, the Federal government had to accelerate discussions with ASUU (who were on strike at the time), to enable public tertiary institution students (majority of whom were part of the protesting youth) return to school. Unfortunately too, and characteristic of developing country like Nigeria, with bad record of handling civil protest, government agents were alleged to have decided to apply brute force as evidenced in the October 20, 2020 controversial Lekki Toll Gate shooting, where innocent #EndSARS protesters were shot at and killed by security operatives (though government denied). The use of resistance also extended to alleged recruitment of hoodlums by government agents to (en)counter legitimate protest(ers), with a view to creating chaos, and further attempt at censoring social media (Odion, n.d. forthcoming).

Apparently wary of the efficacy of social media as a tool for mass mobilization, the federal government proposed censorship or regulation of the space in Nigeria. A further confirmation of the slide to authoritarianism in the handling of the protest was that in the wake of the protest, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) (an agency of the federal government), hurriedly sanctioned three electronic media outfits – Channels TV, African Independent Television (AIT) and Arise News TV, on grounds of acting irresponsibly, unprofessional coverage, and use of unverifiable footages, that stimulated anger and heightened violence during the protest. An accompanying threat was to shut the stations, if the N2million-N3million fine imposed was not paid within the mandated two weeks period (Eboh, 2020; Onyedika-Uguezue, 2020; Ukpe, 2020 cited in Odion, n.d. forthcoming).

The combative and confrontational attitude of the federal government under the guise of government's responsibility to protect lives and properties of the citizens manifested in the arrest, prosecution, imposition of travel restrictions, and freezing of accounts of campaigners/supporters and alleged sponsors. In the process the use of twitter in the country was banned. While threatening to use all legal means available, the government demanded from an international reputable broadcast station – the Cable News Network (CNN), a retraction of their story on the Lekki Toll Gate shooting (which they stood by),

and which the government considered indicting. The same attitude was displayed in her response to the international community who felt concerned about the disruptive developments in the country and beyond. For the international community, world best standards and practices should be the guiding principle adopted in dealing with civil protest and unrest (Odion, n.d. forthcoming) which was obviously lacking in governance response in this case.

The implementation of the naira redesign policy suffered serious challenges. For example, as a result of the defiance of the CBN Governor, Godwin Emefiele, to appeals from stakeholders, many Governors joined in the objection and proceeded to court. Kaduna, Kogi, Zamfara and Ogun States took the lead. Other states (Cross Rivers, Sokoto, Lagos, Katsina, Ondo, Ekiti, Nassarawa, Niger, Kano, Jigawa, Rivers and Abia States) later joined. The case successfully challenged the implementation of the currency redesign policy. The Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF) also criticized and accused the apex bank of conducting “currency confiscation” programme that brought hardship and immeasurable sufferings to Nigerians. The Supreme Court eventually resolved that the unconstitutional use of power by President Buhari on the naira redesigning breached the fundamental rights of the citizens in various ways, adding that such use of power by the President was not permitted under democracy and was an affront on the constitution (Ojo, 2023, p 1). The Supreme Court in its decision finally pronounced the postponement of implementation to December 31, 2023 as deadline. It became a welcome relief and soothing balm to a suffering country where impunity had been made the new normal, even though the damage had been done.

In the case of the 2023 petrol subsidy removal, the federal government responded to the sufferings brought by the removal in various ways. Among them was the provision of palliatives to the vulnerable groups and workers to mitigate the hardship; cash transfer to the poor, reduction in work days; provision of funds and support for states; purchase of 3,000 units of 20-seater buses and intensification of the use of Compressed Natural Gas (CNG); and proposed salary increase for workers. Ironically, months after the announcement, citizens are yet to experience any boost in their livelihoods. Contrary to expectation in a post-colonial state like Nigeria, public reaction to the response of government to the petrol subsidy removal indicated clearly that there was a wide gap between the line of action favoured by government and that which met the public expectations, interests and demands. In the course of government intervention, several development and governance issues were noticeable. Among the challenges were insufficiency of the consumable/palliatives; lack of data to identify the poor; diversion of palliatives; politicization of palliative distribution; delay in responses, resulting in escalated poverty; and continuous purchase of buses after each removal raised issues of transparency and accountability in the face of dilapidated road infrastructures meant to be used by the buses.

It is obvious from the analysis above that government’s response to disruptions in Nigeria had been to adopt confrontation, mitigating measure, provide palliative or attempt desperately to secure regime or power depending on the issues at stake. Unfortunately, it has been argued for example, that by controlling information in a post colonial state like Nigeria, rulers may secure their power in the short run but they also reduce the quality of governance, potentially threatening their own survival over the long term (Hague and Harrop, 2010, p 155).

Disruptions and Transformation of the Society

Though this paper argued that disruption mostly altered smooth transition of programme and events but the governance and political leadership response at different times arguably have not significantly contributed to the transformation of the society.

In the case of palliatives, where they were available, the target groups were underserved. Nigeria lacked adequate and reliable demographic data to identify and target the most vulnerable. In many other cases,

the provision of palliatives only served for “photo charity”, just to be seen as doing something (Soludo, 2020 cited in Odion, 2021, p 277). The poor status of Nigeria, it has been argued also made sustainability of cash transfer for transformation of the status of individual and society and payment for lockdowns practically difficult. Often times many of the palliatives and stimulus packages as characteristic of Nigerian government are politicized and ended at announcements.

Corruption is endemic in the system. It has been argued that corruption is no doubt the most spectacular single factor that has retarded development process and prospects in Nigeria. Looting and non-adherence to the norms of integrity, good governance and political accountability have also reduced the capacity of the state to deliver public good, meet the existential needs of the people and transform the society. The implication is that government and political leaders that emerged as the contrived outcome of a corruption-driven process inevitably bears corruption as their birth mark (Ojo, 2018, p 23-24). Political leadership who are involved in public policy making, implementation and governance are itself engulfed in corruption with many of them under investigation by the ICPC and EFCC, thus impeding development and transformation of the society.

Furthermore, the absurdities that characterized post-colonial Nigeria made it largely irrelevant to the daily lives of the citizens. Igbafen (2012, p 4) had argued that the gloomy reality or condition readily supports and provide legitimacy for the argument of cynics and pessimist that there was no end to the existential struggles, the weakening human conditions and the problem of development in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The condition foisted on Nigerians by the naira redesign policy and petrol subsidy removal were such that made Nigerians to now buy her own currency through POS at exorbitant rate, furthered the pauperization of the citizenry respectively, while the political elites were insensitive and swam in affluence. Moreover, the style of political governance in post-colonial Nigeria that relied on personal rather than democratic and collective rule created room for a situation where progressive, people-centred and holistic polices were no longer possible (Ihonvbere, 2010, p 7).

Rather than build hope in the people, confidence in the state and encourage productivity and progressive endeavours, the post-colonial leaders in Nigeria did the exact opposite. The state has been privatized and used only as an instrument for rapid primitive accumulation and coercion (Ihonvbere, 2010, p 8). Various dimensions of Nigeria’s development crisis have persisted and traceable to primitive accumulation. Thus, scholars including Ibeh (2011) cited in Ojo (2018, p 23-24) alluded to government’s continued failure to provide Nigerians with good, transformative policies and basic existential needs, as funds meant for socio-economic development programmes corruptly end up in private pockets and bank accounts of top government functionaries.

The Police Force is one of the colonial legacy or inheritance. In the colonial era, the police was a state institution, an instrument that was frequently deployed to settle private disagreements, control of power by political despots, used to dominate, oppress, repress, exploit, and terrorize the people. The inability of the governing elite to purge the institution of these colonial relics manifested in its behaviour in post-colonial Nigeria. The result was the #EndSARS protest that challenged history of endless domination, extortion, oppression, exploitation and terror perpetuated by the police force. Despite the protest, evidence on ground in Nigeria suggests that there has not been significant departure from the events that initially led to the nationwide protest as the personnel have even become more daring while the institutions grappled with efforts to redeem its image.

The whole gamut of argument is that with the stress and strains visited on the citizenry by the series of disruptions, leading to the disillusionment and disempowerment, mobilizing the citizenry for transformation and development of the society is practically impossible as there is trust deficit. The overall reality and argument therefore, is that at independence and in post-independence era, Nigeria, like many African states had been burdened with a state structure, economy and leadership that are designed

to extract resources and lord it over the citizenry (Igbafen, 2012, p 9), hence the required transformation has been elusive. In addition, in governance the political leadership had not been able to use policies and institution of government to engender or drive the transformation of the society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, effort was made to examine varieties of disruptions, its effects and challenges in their management in post pandemic Nigeria. The post-colonial state was situated, within which the Nigerian experience was discussed. The deductions from the analysis were that disruptions were diverse in nature, hence elicited varied governance response. In any case, in a post-colonial state, such as Nigeria, disruptions are always imminent particularly when sincerity, transparency and accountability were lacking in governance. The effects of disruptions were enormous particularly on agriculture, infrastructure, economy and livelihoods of citizens in all the situations identified. The analysis further revealed that there was governance deficit and demonstrable lack of capacity in the management of the effects of all the disruptions. In both cases of man-made and government policies driven disruptions, evidence clearly suggested that the citizens were always at the receiving end and worst hit. Most importantly was that redesign of the naira for example, may not have been a bad idea, but the poor handling and management of the situation created room for suspicion. The consequence has been escalated poverty and deprivations. Further evidence suggests that governance and political leadership response at different times arguably have not significantly contributed to the transformation of the society.

It is recommended however that government should be transparent and accountable if the issues of trust deficit must be addressed. This can only rekindle interest of the citizenry in government business and make them participatory, a requirement for democratic governance. In addition, with transparency and accountability in the implementation of government policy responses, transformation of the society can be engendered. Finally, effort must be made by policy makers in government to harness benefits from whatever disruptions that might occur. This entails the conduct of due diligence to ascertain hiccups, challenges and benefits in the implementation process that results in gains, severe pains and deprivations for the citizens. Gains of video and teleconferencing for example were derivatives of covid-19 disruptions, yet these have not been sustained by government due to the corrupt nature of Nigeria political leadership that thrives on primitive accumulation, hence impeding societal transformation.

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