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The Role of Informal Sector in the Management of Post Covid- 19 Pandemic in Nigeria

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Abstract
The emergence of the novel Coronavirus has taken a toll on all sectors of the global economy, and has continued to threaten thesocio-economic, health and educational sectors' arguably the worst in modern time. Besides being a public health emergency, the pandemic has fundamentally shifted educational, social and economic engagement globally. Top economists have a general consensus that the pandemic would plunge the world into a global recession. However, development practitioners have begun to brainstorm on the management of post Covid-19 in Nigeria. It is evidence that the post Covid-19 may constitute a great threat to the country's fragile socio-economic activities and insecurity in the country if not well managed. However, the informal sector has however been identified as the major sector that could help to reduce the effect of the pandemic because the sector according to the Bank of Industry and International Labour Organisation accounted for the 65% of Nigeria's GDP and 93% employment capacity in Nigeria. Based on the above, the study concludes that Nigeria must invest heavily in the informal sectorto mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the country's economy. Therefore, policies should be introduced to identify and address the challenges in the informal sector for optimal productivity

Keyword: Informal Sector, Economy, Covid-19, Corona virus

Introduction
One of the issues that has continued to dominate the debate on the Covide-19 pandemic across the world and beyond is the tragic health hazards and human consequences of the pandemic are the economic uncertainties and disruptions that have resulted at a significant cost to the global economy. The United Nations Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) put the cost of the outbreak at US$2 trillion in 2020. However, Central banks, and finance ministries of most countries and independent economic experts worldwide have taken solace in the prediction that the impacts might be sharp but short-lived, and economic activities would return to normal thereafter. These experts line of thought mirrors the events that shaped the 2007 global financial crisis. It is however, quite instructive to note that the 2007 crisis which emanated from the United State subprime mortgage crisis was mainly an economic phenomenon, with its fallout spreading across many regions of the world. Compared to the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic, the 2007 crisis could be described as minor and manageable. This is because the tumultuous events that covid-19 had spread across the globe cut across every facet of human existence and the consequences may linger beyond 2020 (Akanni & Gabriel, 2020). However, it is right to say that countries will face the post covid-19 socio-economic effects; researchers have continued to develop studies that could help countries mitigate these challenges.

Corona virus disease 2019 codenamed COVID-19 by the World Health Organisation was first discovered in Wuhan the capital of Hubei province, in China in December 2019. While the outbreak in China is almost over, this highly contagious disease has spread across the world and throughout EU/EEA/AU Member States, with a daily increase in the number of affected countries, confirmed cases and infection-related deaths. Updated data are published on a daily by agencies in charge of diseases control of most of the countries and even continent on their websites. World Health Organisation on 30 January 2020 declared that the outbreak of COVID-19 constituted a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (WHO, 2020). Based on the high levels of its global spread and the severity of the pandemic on 11 March 2020, the Director-General of the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic (WHO, 2020).

COVID-19 has been described as an acute respiratory disease caused by a newly emerged zoonotic corona virus. Millions of people have tested positive for the virus and have claimed many lives across the globe. The corona virus entered Nigeria through an infected Italian citizen who came in contact with a Nigerian citizen who was subsequently infected with the corona virus. The virus then spread to other citizens in Lagos and to other parts of the country (Ozili, 2020). It has also claimed many lives in Nigeria including the Chief of Staff to the President, Mallam Abba Kyari, former Governor of Oyo State, Senator Abiola Ajimobi, and other prominent Nigerians. As of 18thSeptember, Nigeria has recorded 264,933 confirmed cases, 257,954 discharged and 3,155 deaths (NCDC, 2022).

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the global economy in two ways. One, the spread of the virus encouraged social distancing which led to the shutdown of financial markets, corporate offices, businesses and events. Two, the rate at which the virus is spreading, and the heightened uncertainty about how bad the situation could get, led to a flight to safety in consumption and investment among consumers and investors (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Top economists agreed that the corona virus pandemic would plunge the world into a global recession. Top IMF economists such as Gita Gopinath and Kristalina Georgieva stated that the Covid-19 pandemic would trigger a global recession. Also at the level of financial markets, global stock markets erased about US$6 trillion in wealth in one week from 24th to 28th of February 2020. The S&P 500 index also lost over $5 trillion in value in the same week in the US while the S&P 500's largest 10 companies experienced a combined loss of over $1.4 trillion4 due to fear and uncertainty among investors about how the pandemic would affect firms' profit. The travel restriction imposed on the movement of people in many countries led to massive losses for businesses in the events industry, aviation industry, entertainment industry, hospitality industry and the sports industry. For example hotel reservations in Hungary alone were cancelled. Also the pandemic place up to 8 million jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector art risk, with travel crashes and cancellations expected to continue (Akanni and Gabriel, 2020). The combined loss globally was estimated to be over $4 trillion. Several governments in developed countries, such as the U.S. and U.K. responded by offering fiscal stimulus packages, including social welfare payments to citizens, while the monetary authorities offered loan relief to help businesses during the pandemic. There were also spillovers to poor and developing countries that had a weak public health infrastructure and non-existing social welfare programs.

However, in other to nip the spread of the virus in the bud, World Health Organisation (WHO) and other health- related agencies such as Nigeria Center for Diseases and Control (NCDC) put in place several measures aiming at curtailing the spread of the virus among which are using of face mask, regular hand washing or the use of alcohol based sanitizer, social and physical distancing among others. These measures have negatively impacted the countries socio-economic activities as people could not go to work to earn a daily living, especially during the lockdown. Aside the measures put in place by the health related organisations, government of various countries also embark on other measures such as restriction of movement, curfew and total lockdown. On the 30th of Marrch 2020, the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, President Mohammadu Buhari announced a 2 weeks lockdown of the nation's socio-economic hubs which are the epicenter of the Pandemic, Lagos, Ogun and the nation capital, Federal Capital territory so as to stop the spread of the virus. These measures affected both formal and informal sectors of the economy as people could not go about their daily lives. Also, various state government embarked on total lockdown such as Kaduna, Ekiti, Osun and other states. While some embarked on total lockdown, some adopted partial lockdown. Religious activities and educational institutions were also not left out as there were ban on religious gathering and closing down of schools across the country. These trends exposed the country to economic recession, which may triggered economic hardship, leading to lose of jobs.

As reported by the Guardians newspaper on 30th April 2020, 3.8 million American loses their jobs as unemployment continues to grow. Also in April 2020, BBC News reported that Canada lost a record one million jobs in March. Also the Uber Technologies Incorporation commonly known as Uber, a multinational ride-hailing company offering services in May 2020 laid off 3,700 employees and permanently closed about 180 driver centres across the world after the stay home caused by the pandemic significantly dwindled ride-hailing businesses across the globe. Also in Nigeria, there was a wide spread reports that the access bank plc wanted to lay off about 75 percent of its workforce comprises, cleaners, tellers, security, tea girls to save the organization from the dwindling economy occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. In an instagram broadcast by the GMD of the bank Herbert Wigwe said the decision was inevitable and necessary in order to protect the franchise and make it stronger as they go into the future, aside laying some off, there will definitely be pay cut across board. However, the prompt intervention of the Central Bank of Nigeria and Bankers committee saved the workers from losing their jobs as they placed hold on the retrenchment and pay cut policy by the bank. There were undocumented and unconfirmed reports that many private organisations have also asked many of their staff to go on compulsory leave without pay as a result of their inability to cope with the financial obligations to their staff due to the lack of income occasioned by the pandemic.

Furthermore, apart from private individuals and cooperate organisations, government across borders have begun to cut the cost of governance as the economic hardship take toll on their economy. Although in Nigeria before the pandemic, the government had been grappling with weak recovery from the 2014 oil price shock, with GDP growth tapering around 2.3 percent in 2019. In February, the International Monetary Fund revised the 2020 GDP growth rate from 2.5 percent to 2 percent due to relatively low oil prices and limited fiscal space. Relatively, the country's debt profile has been a source of concern for policy makers and development practitioners as most recent estimate puts the debt service to revenue ratio at 60 percent, which is likely to worsen and the steep decline, in revenue associated with falling oil prices. These constraining factors will aggravate the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and make it more difficult for the government to weather the crisis (Onyekwena & Ekeruche 2020).

Nigeria and other developing countries' economies are beginning to prepare for the possibility of sliding into downturn as global coronavirus outbreak puts severe pressure on their economy. For Nigeria that is still sluggishly grappling with recovery from the 2016 economic recession which was a fall out of global oil price crash and insufficient foreign exchange earnings to meet imports. The country in the spirit of economic recovery and growth sustainability, the Nigerian Federal budget for 2020 fiscal year was prepared with significant revenue increase though with contestable organisations. The approved budget had projected revenue collections at N 8.24 Trillion, about 20% from the 2019 figure. The revenue assumptions are basedon increased global oil demand and stable market with oil price benchmark and oil output respectively at $ 57 per barrel and 2.18 million barrels per day.

However, the emergence of Covid -19 and its increasing incidence in Nigeria called for drastic review and changes in the earlier revenue expectations and fiscal projections. Compared to events that led to recession in 2016, the current state of the global economy possess more difficulties ahead as the oil price is currently below the country benchmark with projections that it will dip further going by the price war among key players in the industry. For the country to address the current economic challenges occasioned by the Covid-19, several measures were put in place to measure up with the current economic reality. In May 2020, the Minister of finance announce the downward review of the 2020 budget as approved by the Federal Executive Council. Furthermore, there is also efforts to reduce the cost of governance through merging and scraping of parastatals, commissions and agencies of the federal agencies. This is sequel to the presidential approval of the Stephen Oransaye Presidential Committee on Restructuring and Rationalization of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan. The 800-page report had recommended the abolition and merger of 102 government agencies and parastatals, among others to drastically reduce the cost of governance in the country (Vanguard. 2020). Other fiscal stimulus measures by the government to cushion the effect of covid-19 includes the establishment of a N500 billion Covids-19 crisis intervention fund to upgrade healthcare facilities and fund special public works programme to generate employment, withdrawal of US4150 million from the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority NSIA Stabilization Fund to support the June 2020 FAAC disbursements, granting of moratorium for states on the federal government and CBN funded loans in order to create fiscal space for the state, granting of tax exemptions to all small businesses while the tax rate for medium –sized companies has been reduced from 30% to 20% among others. Also in order to come to term with economic reality some states also reviewed downward the 2020 fiscal year budget in their various states and also reduced the salaries of the political appointees in their various states.

However, scholars and development practitioners have begun to brainstorm on the management of post Covid-19 in Nigeria. It is evidence that the post Covid-19 may constitute a great threat to the fragile socio-economic activities and insecurity in the country if not well managed. However, strengthening the informal sector has been identified as the major escape route for the country. The reason for this is not far-fetched as the informal sector accounted for the 65% of Nigeria's GDP in 2017 (Bank of Industry, 2018). Also the (ILO, 2018) reported that over 60% of world's employed population are in informal economy. The above position implies that, any country yearning for genuine post Covid-19 economy rejuvenation must invest heavily in the informal sector.

Nigeria Informal Sector

In spite of the gross neglect of the informal sector by the decision and policy makers in Nigeria, the sector has continued to show resilience and strong dynamism in absorbing the low level qualification holders and rural-urban drift population which the country has started to experience as far back as 1970. Since the IMF-World Bank Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) led to inability of the formal sector to sustain employment generation in the late 80's it is not an overstatement to say the informal sector plays a vital role in employment generation and economy development in Nigeria (Aremu,2014). The reason for the neglect of the informal sector by the policy makers and economist has been attributed to the predictions of the pioneer economists such as Arthur Lewis, as noted by Becker (2004). In the mid-1950s, Arthur, W. Lewis developed a theoretical model of economic development based on the assumption that there was an unlimited supply of labour in most developing countries and that this vast pool of surplus labour would be absorbed as the modern industrial sector in these countries grew. It was then, assumed that the traditional sector, comprised of petty traders, small-scale producers and a range of casual jobs would eventually be absorbed into the formal economy and subsequently disappeared (Onwe, 2013)

The term informal sector was first coined in Ghana in the study of income and employment opportunities of Ghana by Hart (1971). The study of urban poor in Calcutta, India also adopted the concept by Dasgputa (1973). This concept is rooted in the dualistic economy structure as propounded by Arthur Lewis (1959) and others. Michael & Stephen (2006) documented that the sector is unorganised, unregulated and mostly legal but unregistered. It is further described as the large number of small scale production and service activities that are individually, family-owned and use simple labour intensive technology which tends to operate like monopolistically competitive firms with ease of entry, excess capacity and competition driven-profits or income. The players in this sector have little or no informal education, hence are generally unskilled and there is dearth of access to financial capacity. Though, this definition by characterisation of unskilled and financial capacity has been refuted on certain grounds (Aremu, 2014).

Nigeria has the largest informal sector in Africa, a predominance that stems from its massive population of 153,9 million and decades of poor economic performance denoted by a high unemployment rate of 12.9% and soaring poverty incidence of up to 54% (CBN, 2009). An estimate in the year 2000 by Schneider (2002) put the size of Nigeria’s informal sector at 57.9% of its gross national product (GNP) or an equivalent of US$212, 6 billion. Judging by proportion, Nigeria is only exceeded by Zimbabwe (59.4% or $42,4 billion) and Tanzania (58.3% or $52,4 billion) but factoring in both the market size and population inexorably turns the table in favour of Africa’s most populous country and third largest economy – Nigeria. It is observe that the net worth of the Nigerian informal sector as a proportion of the GNP exceeds those of Zimbabwe and Tanzania combined! A national survey in 2000 put the number of urban and rural informal (sector)enterprises in the country at 8,604,048 comprising a total employment generation of 12,407,3484 (CBN/ FOS/NISER, 2001). The official concept of the informal sector in Nigeria is based on enterprise relationship to regulations by the state. In this instance, an informal enterprise is “that which operates without binding official regulations (but it may or may not regulate itself internally) as well as one which operates under official regulations that do not compel rendition of official returns on its or productive process” (CBN/FOS/NISER, 2001). In developing countries, the impact of the informal economy is great, because of poor economic performance, high population growth, civil strife, big financial debts and the HIV/Aids pandemic (Mofokeng, 2005). According to Becker (2004), the informal sector is the unregulated, non-formal portion of the market economy that produced goods and services for sale or other remuneration form. In effect, the term informal economy as, it is often used to denote informal sector, refers to all economic activities by workers and economic units that are not covered or are insufficiently covered by formal arrangements. It also refers to those enterprises that are not registered and legally outside the tax net. It is often identified as lacking structure and as being unorganised (Guha-Khasnobis, Kanbur & Ostrom, 2007). The informal economy is largely characterised by: low entry requirements in terms of capital and professional qualifications; small scale of operations; skills often acquired outside of formal education; and, labour-intensive methods of production and adapted technology. Generally speaking, the contributions of the informal sector to the development of the Nigerian economy cannot be over emphasized in terms of employment generation, capital savings and mobilization, efficiency, strong linkages with other sectors, utilization of local technology training ground for entrepreneurs and self-reliance. Since the beginning of 1980s, the economic position of Nigeria has worsened seriously. The per-capita income falls considerably and wage employment has declined (NISER report, 1993). Informal sector constitutes a significant segment of the Nigerian economy. The sector thereby contributes to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment and contributes significantly to economic development of Nigeria in general (Omisakin, 1999).

According to Bank of Industry (2018) street traders, subsistence farmers, small scale manufacturers, service providers (e.g. hairdressers, private taxi drivers, and carpenters) are the key examples of informal sector. The sector currently accounts for over half of global employment and as much as 90% of employment in some of the poorer developing countries. Fapohunda (1991) opined that the informal sectors are heterogeneous mix, encompassing a wide variety of economic activities that tend to be ignored in normal economic statistical analysis. These economic activities among others include manufacturing activities, construction trade and commerce and other services such as preparing all types of vehicles, radio and television sets, refrigeration, hair dressing and carpentry. It is assumed that all these activities are often carried out in small unit establishment, owned and operated by one or a few individuals with minimal capital.

The evidence indicates that these activities are generally growing fast as they have an increasing capacity to absorb large number of workers who may not be able to secure or hold a wage-earning job in the formal sector. It is a known fact that Nigeria is endowed with a lot of potential resources that could be harnessed through effective planning to achieve social and economic development. Since independent, these potential have been expressed in various development plan documents, but these proved difficult to achieve (Fakoya & Onakoya, 2012).

Past studies have shown the modern formal sector is unable to cope with the increasing numbers of the poor, unskilled, illiterate and hungry. However, it has been demonstrated that the informal sector can absorba large proportion of the new entrants into the labour force (Fakoya&Onakoya, 2012). The informal sector thus, constitutes the final destination of an ever increasing number of job seekers. Between 1990 and 1994, Africa’s urban employment was put at ten (10) percent but employment in the sub-Saharan informal sector was 6.7 percent. In 1995, employment in sub-Saharan informal industries was 60 percent of the urban labour force. The informal sectors continuously attract new entrants because in all of its sub-sector, it offers ample scope for the entrepreneurship and buildup of technological capacity (Akerele, 1997). According to (Fakoya & Onakoya, 2012), Nigeria is ailing economically not because she is not richly endowed with natural resources, but presently, there is low industrial capacity utilization and dependence on the imported input for the existing manufacturing industries. The external value of naira suffered a severe decline and the rate of inflation is remarkably high. Therefore, the promotion of small scale industries in the informal sector is expected to produce a process of indigenization of the industrial sector, generate higher employment per unit of investment, make use of local raw materials and lead to the development of local technology and manpower. However, little success has recorded its development in Nigeria. This is due to some perennial problems that have beset the development of the sector over the years and as a result of one-time strategies that were ephemeral. The problems impeding the development of this sector in Nigeria range from financial, managerial, marketing technology, shortage of basic physical infrastructural facilities, raw material and other related problems.

There are two main categories in the informal economy: the self-employed who work in small unregistered enterprises and wage workers who work in insecure and unprotected jobs (Chen, Vanek& Carr, 2004. Despite the diversity in the informal sector, there are common factors among those engaged in it. The informal economy is characterised by difficult working conditions that are risky and insecure and the employees are not protected by any labour regulations (Chen et al., 2004; Mofokeng, 2005). Despite the huge negligence, the informal sector is suffering in Nigeria and other developing countries, the sector has been noted as accounting for about 21 percent of total employment in Sub-Saharan African countries (ECA, 2005), and about 38 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in Nigeria (FOS, 1999). The traditional or in formal sector is continuously expanding in developing countries, and has been serving as a 'safetybelt' inproviding employment and income to the teaming poor; it activities, often described as unrecognised, unrecorded, unprotected, and unregulated by the public sector are no longer confined to marginal activities but also included profitable enterprises in manufacturing activities (Onwe,2013).

Characteristics of the Informal Sector in Nigeria

Like the small and medium scale enterprises in most developing economies, the infor,al sector related activities are seen as the bedrock of entrepreneurial activities and the backbone of economic development in most economies. They play vital roles in the provision of job opportunities as well serve as a source of livelihood to a large percentage of the population and are also a significant source of total product (Aryeetey, 2001). The informal sector, just like the SMEs in Nigeria have some common characteristics as postulated by (Yewande, 1991; Basil, 2005; Onyebueke& Geyer, 2011; Andrew, Darko, Lemma and Rud, 2014) to include: Low entry requirements in terms of capital and professional qualifications; Small scale of operations; Skills often acquired outside of formal education; Labour-intensive production processes; Jobs in the informal sector are not included in the tax base; High mortality rate especially within their first two years; Absence of research and development; Limited access to long term funds; Poor inter and intra-sectoral linkages; High production costs due to inadequate infrastructure and wastages; Over-dependence on imported raw materials and spare parts; The apparent lack of intention to managerial functions of planning, organizing, directing coordinating and controlling is also one embracing characteristics cover all spheres or that they all must be present in the same form in a business for such a business to be referred to as an informal sector.

Management of Post Covid-19

Covid-19 pandemic has come as a shock to the global society, health systems, economies and governments. In the midst of extraordinary challenges and uncertainty, and countless personal tragedies, leaders are under pressure to make decisions on managing the immediate and aftermath impact of the pandemic and its consequences and decisions that will shape the state of the world for years to come. The impacts of Covid-19 pandemic are felt in all aspects of our national life such as in education, health, transportation, economy, security among others. In Nigeria, the country's lockdowns as part of the containment measures froze the country economic activities causing job losses and disruption in supply chains (Olarewaju, 2020). The country's dependent on oil for revenue and foreign exchange has made it vulnerable to the oil price crash triggered by a collapse in demand. This development portends serious economic consequences for oil dependent economies like Nigeria. Unemployment rate has skyrocketed and according to the Vice President, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, over 39 million Nigerians will lose their jobs as a result of the pandemic. Crime rate has increased, also with increases in rape, robbery, ritual killings and banditry attacks. Apart from it health and economic impacts, the pandemic has also exposed the institutional weaknesses, infrastructural decay and governance failure of the country (Madueke, Iheonu & Emmanuel (2020).

To avert a drastic decline in economic growth, the government across the world announced a stimulus package as part of its present and post Covid-19 economic management and sustainability plans to cushion the effect of the pandemic on the economies and other sectors and bring relief to citizens and businesses more affected by the pandemic. The covid-19 pandemic has given rise to what may be the most challenging global health and economic crisis of our lives. In response, government around the world have committed at least $12 trillion in stimulus to covid-19 management and recovery plans. For instance, The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) provided a fiscal stimulus package that includes a credit facility of #50 billion naira ($138.89 million) for households and small and medium-sized businesses most affected by the pandemic, a #100 billion naira loan ($277.78 million) for the health sector and one trillion naira ($2.78 billion) to the manufacturing sector. In addition, interest rates on all CBN interventions were reviewed downward from 9% to 5%, and a one-year moratorium on CBN intervention facilities implemented as of March 1, 2020 (Nnabuife, Okoli, & Anugwu, 2020).

Also in support for micro, small and medium enterprises, an 80% reduction in the registration fees for food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices and chemicals by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control as well as waiver of administrative charges for product license renewals. By prioritizing covid-19 stimulus that tackles multiple challenges, countries are building back in a way that is more inclusive, sustainable and resilient for post covid-19 economy (Nyong, Bapna, Jaeger and Clarke, 2021). Madueke, Iheonu and Emmanuel (2020) asserts that, apart from the stimulus packages by the government, a more proactive and integrated response across the various sectors of the country such as: healthcare, agriculture, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing and solid minerals are needed. Nigeria must broaden her revenue base, create sufficient buffers and resilience against exogenous shocks. The country should address infrastructural decay, institutional weaknesses and endemic corruption in preparation for the post covid-19 economy.

Finally, the successful management of post Covid-19 and economic recovery plan shall depend significantly on the kind of policies and experts engaged during the pandemic. If these policies can ensure the reduction in the spread of the disease, and that employees do not lose their jobs, house lords do not lose their rents, and tenants are not evicted, companies do not go bankrupt, and micro, small and medium enterprises are preserved, the political-economic recovery will happen more steadily, smoothly and sooner (Albert-Makyur, Enwere, Okorie & Bukar, 2020).

Implication of Neglecting the Informal Sector in the Post Covid-19 Strategic Plans

The importance of informal sector to economic advancement in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised the sector has continued to provide employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed youth in Nigeria. The Nigerian informal sector is a major contributor to the Nigeria economy, accounting for employment and national GDP. According to the IMF, the Nigerian informal sector accounted for 65% of Nigeria’s 2017 GDP (BOI, 2018). The informal sector plays a key role in the economic structure of many developing countries, especially Nigeria. The informal sector refers to the part of the economy that does not fall within the scope of organised economic activities. Given that this sector is made up of many unorganised economic activities, like trade, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, transport and services, businesses in this sector are an important form of production organisation and a key provider of employment opportunities and income to populace. Ogunde (2019) claims that more than 61% of the world's active population works in the informal sector, with 85.8% of employment in Africa. World Bank (2021) reports that 80.4% of Nigeria's employment are in the informal sector, this is an indication that informal activities in the economy sector are important in many developing countries. In general, the contributions of the informal sector to the development of the Nigeria economy in terms of job creation, capital saving and mobilization, efficiency, strong links with other sectors, use of local technology training for entrepreneurs and self cannot be overemphasised.

Since the early 1980s, Nigeria's economic situation has deteriorated seriously leading to fall in per capita income and diminished wage employment (Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research/NISER, 2007). Farinmade & Anyankora (2012) citing Peberdy commented that the horrific environmental conditions associated with informal sector activities were unfortunate. This is due to some perennial problems that have affected the development of the sector over the years. These problems range from financial, managerial, marketing, technological, lack of basic physical infrastructure, raw materials and other related problems (Nnabuife, Okoli & Anugwu, 2020), thus leading to economic crises in the sector. The emergence of the Covid-19 has also posed a great threat to the informal sector as many of the actors have been rendered incapacitated by the pandemic. Though government across the globe, Nigeria inclusive are taking action to boost their crippling economies and bring some relief to citizens and businesses more affected by the pandemic. In Nigeria, the informal sector should not be left out in different strategies being planned by policymakers to ensure business sustainability. Giving the employability capacity of the sector any attempt to neglect the sector in the post Covid-19 policy framework might have a negative impact for the country. Some of the implications could include; high crime rate, increase level of unemployment, high poverty rate, increase level of unemployment, high poverty rate and other social vices. The above position implies that, any country yearning for genuine post Covid-19 economy rejuvenation must invest heavily in the informal sector.

Conclusion

With the significant contributions of informal sector to the Nigerian economy over the years, the undeniable v truth is that any notion of economic development in the country is one that hugely depends on the state of affairs of the informal sector. Sustainable and inclusive economic development and job creation are unlikely to be achieved unless the potentials and needs of the informal sector are adequately considered (BIO, 2019). The sector can absorb the unemployed which will help reduce unemployment and insecurity in the country. Therefore, for the country to come out of Covid-19 pandemic economic quagmire, the massive investment in the informal sector is the way to go.

Suggestions

It is a known fact that the Covid-19 pandemic is taking toll on Nigeria economy affecting every facets of life. The indication that the country is diving into recession has been ascertained by the Minister of Finance and Nigeria Bureaus of Statistics in their May 2020 reports. The implication is that tough times are ahead for Nigeria. However, the rejuvenation of the already battered economy lies on the investment in the critical sectors of the economy, especially the informal sector. It serves as the hub for the unemployed youths and its critical contribution to the country's GDP. In order for the sector to make it contributions to the Nigeria economy rejuvenation, the following should be taking into considerations;

- Economic policies should be introduced to identify and address challenges in the informal sector towards improving productivity and income of informal sector players.
- The small and medium enterprises should be strengthened by providing soft loans to improve their productivity that will yield taxes for the government.
- Genuine diversification of the economy should be prioritize at this critical time rather than paying the usual lip service by the government. Apart from Agriculture, the government should also focus on entertainment, mining and tourism where the informal actors can be actively involved.
- Government should also grant tax incentives to SMEs and those in the informal sector to keep them in business in order not to lay off workers, which has the potential of worsening bthe fragile security situation in the country
- Improvement in the power sector so that the SMEs will spend less on the purchase of petroleum to keep them in service
- The government should also invest in the digital economy as it has the capacity of absorbing unemployed youth in the informal sector to reduce the number of unemployed youth in the country
- The government should also support local content and reduce importation of goods that can be produced locally
- The government should also invest massively in the agricultural sector where majority of the informal sector actors domicile
- Efforts must also be made to create more formal jobs to draw workers out of the informal sector.

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