



Re-Strategising Government Palliative Support Systems in Tackling the Challenges of COVID-19 Lockdown in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract This research covered the palliative material distribution project in Lagos State, Nigeria, during the lockdown and restriction on movement because of COVID-19 pandemic. The study engaged reports from extant literature and tertiary data sources such as the newspapers, the Internet, and website source. Relevant data gathered from these sources were conceptually analysed and discussed along with extant literature. The research also adopted the use of rich pictures for further presentation of the research. A key finding from the research is the need to redesign the distribution process and consider proper structuring of the project. And further engagement with the affected stakeholders to address crucial issues such as marginalisation that can defeat the purpose, which is to emancipate the affected indigents of the State from the harrowing effects of COVID-19 lockdown and other emergencies-related critical incidences such as starvation and criminalities. The study proposed a model for a resilience approach to effectively address the current palliative distribution process challenges in Lagos State, the epicentre of COVID-19 in Nigeria.

Keywords COVID-19 pandemic · Lagos State · Nigeria · Palliative material distribution · State interventions · Stakeholder involvement

JEL Classifications O17 · O38 · O31 · A20 K2 · K42 · K1

Introduction

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in critical challenges as well as the strive by the government to meet the populace's social welfare needs. Many developing countries' economies have remained with the struggle for survival and advancement, especially in meeting the social welfare needs and overall improvement in the standard of living. However, COVID-19 pandemic, which has compelled certain drastic decisions, such as total lockdown and restriction on movement, tended to have further complicated the challenges of meeting the populace's welfare needs across national boundaries. This has also become a conspicuous challenging incidence faced by the Nigerian government, especially in Lagos State focused in this research, where the population density is highest in the country (Osabuohien et al., 2020; World Population Review, 2020). The Lagos State government strives to provide palliatives; it seems the process constitutes a wicked problem situation that resulted in many interknitted parts and sometimes resulted in other problematic issues that further draw the State government's attention (Grint, 2005; Peters, 2017; Business Day Report, April 19, 2020).

The challenges associated with the outbreak of COVID-19 in Lagos State, Nigeria, are widely recognised as a profane issue of concern to both the State government and other key stakeholders, especially the populace. This left

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the State and, indeed, the entire country in a state of emergency, requiring the government's critical attention and all stakeholder groups to address. For instance, all schools and gatherings are banned, and the citizenry is ordered to confine to their abodes (Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020; Oxford Analytica, 2020).

This study is focused on the palliative material distribution process during the COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State's palliative distribution project is also justified based on the effects on the survival of the indigenes who participate in the wealth generation through taxes and other remissions to the State government (The Nigerian Guardian Newspaper Report, August 8, 2020). The study is hoped to benefit the Lagos State government, the indigents, public health practitioners, policymakers, researchers, and legislatures. Relevant information gathered from these sources was conceptually analysed and discussed along with extant literature. Therefore, the Lagos State palliative distribution project, which is the focus of this study, arguably possesses relevance to the State's operations during the COVID-19 lockdown. For instance, it served as a creative attempt by the Lagos State government to preserve the health status of the recipient during the lockdown and a proactive platform to prevent further challenging outbreak such as malnutrition, criminalities within the State, due to the economic hardship embedded in the COVID-19 lockdown situation (Ikpefan, 2018; Ndimiele, 2020; Sarumi, 2020).

This study aims to explore the depth of the complexity related to palliative material distribution, through a conceptual approach intended to project critical understanding of the current process of palliative material distribution and suggest a model for improvement. While multiple issues emerged from COVID-19, the present study appreciates the requirement for a systemic approach that goes beyond a linear approach that could be expert-driven and unrepresentative of the interest of the affected stakeholders, such as less recipient of the palliative materials during the COVID-19 lockdown (Midgley, 2000; Ojogiwa & Akinola, 2020). Therefore, this study is intended to develop a suitable conceptual model that embraces the key stakeholders' concerted engagement in a process to emancipate the State and the citizens from the complex challenges associated with the palliative distributions during the COVID-19 lockdown. It will attempt to create a flexible measure that can be adopted to minimise the effects of unplanned environmental challenges that may occur, based on the perspectives and interests of affected stakeholders in the future of Lagos State, Nigeria (Sushil, 1997; Ha, 2019; Vaishnavi and Suresh, 2020).

The study is focused on Lagos State, Nigeria, because it is one of the foremost states to record cases of COVID-19 pandemic in the country (Ekienabor, 2020; Kalu, 2020). It

is also the commercial headquarter of Nigeria that hosts several business outfits and records the movement of people, goods, and services, from both within and outside Nigeria. Lagos State is therefore preferred in this study because it is speculated to have more detailed experiences and record about the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria (Olibamoyo et al., 2020; The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), May 21, 2020).

The current study is structured as follows: The next section provides a literature review on the overall effects of COVID-19 lockdown and government palliative distribution. This is followed by a literature review of the effects of stakeholder management and palliative distribution. Next is the methodology adopted in the research and the conceptual for the improved palliative distribution process. Following these is further discussion on the factors suggested in the conceptual model. The study ends with a conclusion and suggestion for further research.

Overview of the Effects of COVID-19 Lockdown and Government Palliative Distribution

The Nigerian Federal Government's lockdown order and restriction of the movement have been due to the precautionary measure to curtail the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the lockdown decision placed the responsibility of the government to provide reasonable respite for the citizenry, especially the segment of the population that relies on daily earnings for a living (Tacoli, 2020). This made the government agency in Lagos State to engage in distributing palliative materials to the needy population during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The Lagos State government provided the populace with the respite to support their survival during the lockdown and encourage them to maintain law and order in the State. This was because the lockdown period was prolonged beyond the original speculation (Kalu, 2020). Among the palliative support packages distributed include cash, food items, COVID-19 health kits such as face masks, and soft drinks. These were meant to support people, especially the weak and less privileged in the State (CNBC Africa News Report, April 13, 2020; Dubawa News Report, April 15, 2020).

The effectiveness of the process and purpose of palliative distribution during the COVID-19 lockdown tended to have become a critical issue of concern across cadres in the Lagos State. For example, Eranga (2020) observes that in some extreme cases during the COVID-19 lockdown in the State, palliatives were hijacked by politicians and other strong power influence individuals, denying the vulnerable population access to their share during the lockdown. Other reports from tertiary literature sources about the

distribution of palliative in Lagos State show that the process tends to be inadequate in terms of observing fair distribution practices to reach the target recipients (The Guardian Newspaper Report, April 14, 2020). This has resulted in conflicting effects, such as polemic revolt by some segment of the population who could not share from the palliative materials. This challenge with the process has also resulted in violent conduct and outright breaches of the lockdown by certain society members, leaving the government with further challenges to address the situation. A chaotic scene of people struggling and scrambling over food palliation on top of a truck is shown in Fig. 1.

Stakeholder Management and Palliative Distribution During COVID-19 Lockdown in Lagos State, Nigeria

The adoption of stakeholder management approach to address complex issues has become popular among researchers. It entails the recognition of the interest of those who have a stake in an intervention¹ and encourage either the engagement, consideration of their stake, or both, to make relevant decisions to identify and address operational issues. Stakeholders are engaged in developing strategies reconcilable with other competing stakes to address identified problematic challenges (Elias, 2019; Dhakate and Joshi, 2020). The stakeholder management approach forms a departure from ‘expert-dictated’ solutions to create a platform for a non-specialist solution through an interactive engagement process focusing on a joint effort to address identified issues of interest (Ufua et al., 2018).

There are numerous approaches to recognising stakeholders. For instance, Windsor (1992) classifies stakeholder theories into ‘narrow’ and ‘broad’ categories. The broad theories say that a stakeholder is any individual or group who can affect or be affected by the achievement of objectives in an intervention. In contrast, narrow theories see a stakeholder solely as any individual or group on which an organisation relies upon for its survival. Similarly, Mitchell et al. (1997) highlighted three key attributes of stakeholders, including *legitimacy* (whether people believe the stakeholder ought to be listened to), *power* (whether or not the stakeholder has the ability to determine or strongly influence what the organisation does), and *urgency* (whether the stakeholder has a burning desire to have a say on what is done). They further argue that the key stakeholders have a responsibility to classify stakeholders based on their relative importance in the particular context.

¹ An intervention is a purposeful action or decision taken by an agent of concerned stakeholders to address an identified issue of interest and achieve the desired change (see Midgley, 2000).

The whole essence of stakeholders’ management is to meet these stakeholders’ expectations and integrate them with the main operational objectives in an intervention (Harrison & Freeman, 1999; Loosemore, 2010). Donaldson and Preston (1995) note three classifications of stakeholders: *normative stakeholder theory* that sees a stakeholder as any party/parties that has/have a justifiable moral obligation towards a given project; *instrumental theory* that emphasises the importance of empirical evidence of stakeholder contribution in terms of engagement with an operational process; and *descriptive theory* that allows managers accounting for local contexts to create the criteria for considering who can be a stakeholder beyond the dictates of the normative or instrumental theories.

Based on reports of the palliative material distribution process’s failures focused in this study, a critical question raised in this study is how the engagement with the key stakeholders can provide an innovative and flexible approach (Kumar et al., 2018) to address emerging social–economic effects of COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State? It is hoped that the answer to this research question would also kick start an innovative trend of actions that can set a proactive readiness among key stakeholders (e.g. the government agencies, community representatives), in creating a resilient approach to address unexpected emergencies such as the case of palliative distribution to address the effects COVID-19 in the Lagos State, that hosts a large population of people of various classes in Nigeria.

The situation of COVID-19 lockdown presents a complex problem situation that critically affects the various classes of the affected population. This is because it possesses a multifaceted issue that tends to be interwoven, requiring a more consolidated approach that can address the various perspectives if the issues relating to COVID-19 lockdown in the State, based on the specific context of Lagos State, focused in this study (Grint, 2005; Sydelko et al., 2020).

Methodological Approach

The research applies a conceptual approach to explore the process of palliative distribution during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The study relies on extant literature and reports to source relevant facts about the management of palliative distribution in Lagos State, Nigeria (Ismael et al., 2020). In a similar study, Mai et al. (2019) adopted a conceptual modelling approach to address the water trade system in Australia’s Murray–Darling Basin (MDB or the Basin). They highlighted the key issues, stakeholders, and feedback mechanisms for further improvement on the project. They found that the suggested conceptual model can facilitate effective understanding and communication





Fig. 1 A chaotic scene of people struggling and scrambling over food palliation on top of a truck. Source: King's Global Health Institute, April 23, 2020

among stakeholders concerning market forces, performance assessments, stakeholders' interest, and other environmental issues such as water trade policy through a joint participative process.

The selection of the literature in the current study is restricted to their relevance to the research. For recency, most of the literature was restricted to 2012 and later to enhance the study's validity. This can also enhance the transferability or adaptability of findings from this study to address other problem situations, especially those in this study's contextual background (Smith & Shaw, 2019).

The use of rich pictures sourced from tertiary literature such as newspapers and web reports was also adopted. This will enhance clearer presentation and further discussion on the process and management of the palliative material distribution program in Lagos State, Nigeria, during the COVID-19 lockdown (Ufua & Adebayo, 2019; Walker et al., 2014). While researchers (e.g. Tavella, & Papadopoulos, 2017) have presented drawn rich pictures to participants in their research, the use of sourced rich pictures from tertiary literature was adopted to depict the contextual realities of the effects of COVID-19 lockdown in the focused location and challenges relating to government palliative distribution during the period of COVID-19 lockdown.

The current study provides discussion based on extant literature concerning the specific context of Lagos State,

Nigeria, focused in this study. A model was proposed to address identified issues in the process of palliative material distribution in the focus location, based on findings from the discussion on extant literature, focusing on the critical effects of COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State. The study prides itself on the urgency to open up the awareness and the need for further debate about the modalities for palliative distribution in the future, especially in highly populated environments such as Lagos State, Nigeria. Therefore, it is hoped that this study's findings would provide useful insights for key stakeholders such as government agencies and social/charity organisations on how to address critical emergencies such as the challenges of COVID-19 lockdown.

Discussion

From extant literature, the process of palliative material distribution has its primary purpose of addressing the recipients' challenges during the COVID lockdown. However, the distribution of palliative materials has come with factors that affect both the process and the purpose. The adopted process of palliative distribution in a critical time such as the COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State, therefore, calls for adequate attention of the involved stakeholders, to develop a more innovative and resilient approach that can ensure the palliative distribution measures are directed to achieve its set purpose (Ufua, Salau, Dada, & Adeyeye, 2020). This also raises the question: How can the key stakeholders to an intervention process be trusted to deliver, especially in a critical situation such as COVID-19 lockdown in a highly populated location such as Lagos State, Nigeria? The stake of this research is structuring the problem situation—COVID-19 lockdown, setting relevant boundaries demarcations of the various parts of the problem. Arguably, this will enhance adequate awareness of the problem situation's depth, planning, and commitment to the provision of adequate palliative materials. It will also facilitate the reliability of the involved stakeholders who are fundamental to the success in the broad achievement of the set objectives (Ulrich, 1994; Ufua et al., 2019). This can facilitate a reliable evaluation process that can inform the development of improved approaches to palliative distribution systems and create a learning opportunity for all stakeholders as well as enhance their capabilities to address future emergencies such as the complex effects of COVID-19 lockdown (Daniels et al., 2013).

This challenge creates a further complex issue to the purported emancipation for the recipient population in Lagos State. It is traceable to improper structuring of the process of distribution. Although the Lagos state

government has noted that the earlier phase of the project was aimed to serve the aged population and other less privileged citizens of the State, the structuring of the project coverage tended to have failed to yield the needed proper coordination of the process to meet the target (Daily Trust News, April 8, 2020). Reports showed that while the palliative support programme was initiated, environmental challenges such as civil unrest, lifting of belongings without consent, and other criminalities emerged because of the lockdown and the improper management of the government palliative supply to citizens (Fig. 2). This also contributed to incidences of breach of lockdown ordered by the State government recorded in Lagos State. This leaves the government with more responsibilities to further curtail the challenges (Kwesi-Buor, 2020).

Researchers (e.g. Midgley et al., 2013; Paul & Chowdhury, 2020; Paramita et al., 2021) suggest stakeholder consultation in the process of structuring identified problem. The absence of foundational structuring of the critical factors such as the target population, the level of needs, and other demographic spread of the target population created the emergence of the challenge of inability to establish a fair distribution process that can address the purpose of the project. This is due to the surge in the recipient's population, coupled with the overwhelmed planned process, resulting in poor coordination and the emergence of an unfair process characterised by an uncontrollable struggle for the limited supply of palliative materials (News Agency of Nigeria report April 10, 2020).

Another issue is speculated distrust in the appointed administrators of the palliative distribution project during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Business Day Newspaper report (April 12, 2020), many recipients did not get their share of the Palliative packages due to flawed processes embedded in the administrators' sentiment and preferences. Observers note that many indigenes of the State are not getting their share. According to the Independent Newspaper report (April 14, 2020), this constitutes a significant challenge to the palliative distribution process in Lagos State, Nigeria. The original intention of addressing fundamental issues as a result of COVID-19 pandemic has become a near defeat as records have begun to show other critical issues. These include hunger and violence among certain indigents of the State due to lockdown and the inappropriate design of the government palliative distribution in the State. When the set boundaries of coverage are not given due consideration in an intervention (such as the current distribution of palliative materials in Lagos State), there are tendencies for a greater conflict to erupt, which might take more effort to address (Ufua, 2019).

There were also incidences of embezzlement by some administrators, falsification of records, which tend to add to the frustration of the government and the recipient

indigents, especially those who never got their share from the relief materials (This Day Newspaper report, April 13, 2020). According to Midgley (2000), if the adopted approach in an intervention is not made to suit the stakeholders' core interest (i.e. recipient indigents of the palliative distribution process), the process can become expert-driven that does not align with the value system of the targeted stakeholders. This can lead to breaches and the ultimate defeat of the purpose of the intervention. The argument here is the need to project critical intervention efforts, such as the distribution of palliative materials from the perspective of the recipients' needs. Apart from the possibility of creative advancement of improvement in the process, engaging these stakeholders would also facilitate an ownership mentality and commitment to supporting the process to deliver on its set objectives, such as the Lagos State intention to address the emergency needs of indigents during COVID-19 lockdown (Ikpesu, 2014).

However, it is arguable to note that the enabling platform for engagement with these affected stakeholders in an identified situation, such as the case of COVID-19 lockdown situation, can pose a critical challenge due to the limited possibility of physical contacts and meetings among the stakeholders during the period. This was because of critical factors such as restriction on movement and the complex nature of COVID-19 lockdown (Agusi et al., 2020). Therefore, it presents the need for stakeholder relationship building that can facilitate trust and commitment that yield the reliability of the recipient and fairness that meets the expectation of the affected stakeholders. The skills and capabilities of the appointed administrators can equally be useful in the pursuit of success. Yet this has to be predicated on the depth of the issues at stake.

Further Discussion on the Identified Issues in the Palliative Distribution Process During COVID-19 Lockdown in Lagos State Nigeria

The process of distribution of palliative materials is viewed as an important part of the project. This is because the process determines the scope, pace, delivery timing, and other distribution project parts. Consequently, the structuring of the process is also vital to the delivery of the palliative distribution project's objectives in Lagos State. Researchers pay a due premium to the design of the process adopted in an intervention, such as the current palliative material distribution in Lagos State, Nigeria. This also aligns with the thought of system thinkers who note that the structuring and connectivity between different parts of a given system's function influence the performances of the





Fig. 2 Frustrated recipients who could not be reached with palliative materials. Source: Dubawa News Report, April 2, 2020

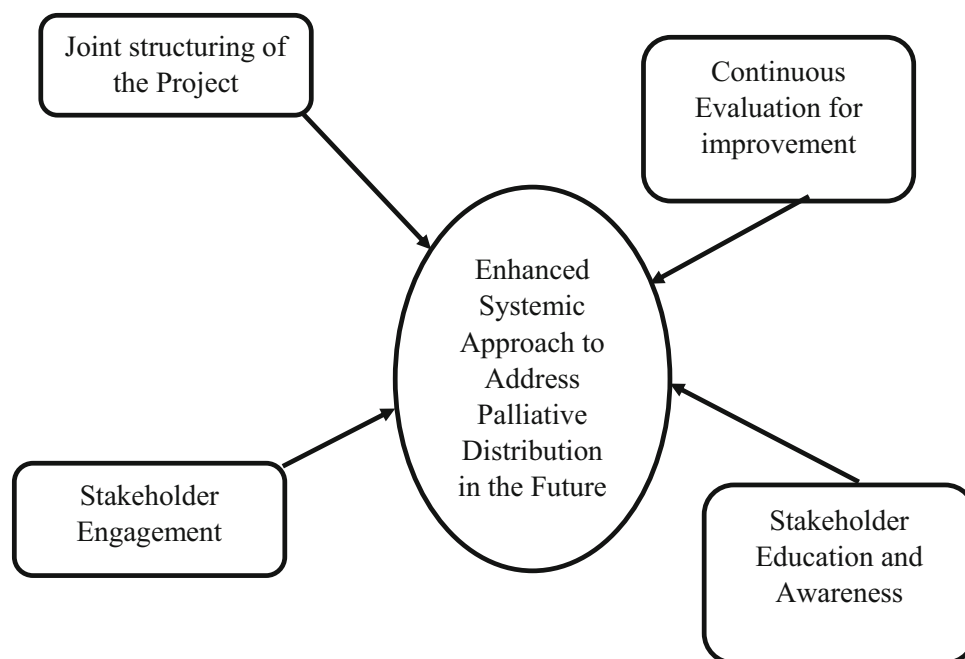
system (Jackson, 2003; Midgley et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2019).

The current process adopted in the distribution of palliative materials during the total lockdown and restriction of movement in Lagos State seems inadequate in addressing the identified purpose, which is to provide for the indigents, especially the less privileged during the lockdown (Figs. 1, 3). Reports show that many indigents targeted for reach with the relief materials could not have access due to incidences of breaches in the process such as outright omissions, lack of records, and insufficient materials to support the purported effectiveness in the distribution process (Lagosstate.gov.ng Report, April 4, 2020). The Lagos State government agency in charge of the project had made some significant effort to map out the scope of the palliative distribution project. They stated the modalities for distribution, noting the programme's

geographical spread and providing the palliative materials in batches to support the indigent through the COVID-19 lockdown. Nevertheless, the emerging situation proved that the process had experienced the realities beyond their plans for the project (Bloomberg Report, April 10, 2020; NNN News metro Report, April 20, 2020; The Conversation News Report, May 19, 2020).

The current situation tended to have resulted in a chaos in the State, especially during a pandemic (France24.com News Report, May 5, 2020). This draws the attention of this research to develop a resilient approach that can absorb emerging shocks from the distribution process in the future. Therefore, it is arguable to note that the process involved in the distribution of palliative materials in Lagos State could be challenged with the aforementioned issues and other obvious factors such as high population density and lack of reliable statistical records for making critical decisions such as the current palliative material distribution (Dubawa News Report, April 15, 2020). It also suffices to note that these effects constitute relevant experiences that can create a productive re-awakening to the Lagos State government and other key stakeholders on the need to constitute a resilient and agile platform to reasonably address emerging events such as the case of COVID-19 in the future. Therefore, this research projects a new model approach adapted to address such critical issues in the future. Model propositions are provided to help policymakers and other relevant stakeholders in addressing such complexities due to uncontrollable environmental challenges such as the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in Lagos State.

Fig. 3 Suggested model for an effective palliative distribution process. Source: Authors



The Need for Proper Process Structuring

The government and other concerned bodies' attention have been drawn to providing reliefs to support the populace in times of unexpected emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This is primarily to offer the needed essential support and sustenance of the lives of the affected populace and support the development of an emancipatory course to address the identified issues in focus (Haleem et al., 2017).

Process structuring creates a bridge that will inform practical actions to identify and address issues of interest. It also facilitates a system of inquiry through understanding among stakeholders about the context, function, and structure of the issues, as well as enhance the development of relevant research questions on how to improve the adopted process (Edson & Klein, 2017). The issues identified possess pluralistic or multilayer characteristics that require various approaches to effectively address in an intervention (Smith & Shaw, 2019). Therefore, the joint structuring process entails an in-depth analysis via a collaborative process to identify issues to be addressed and the choice of implementation approaches in the palliative provision project (Jackson, 2003; White et al., 2016). This calls for the engagement and consideration of the interest of the affected stakeholders. They are trapped by the restriction of movement and the social–economic effects on COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State. A joint approach to addressing identified complexity-related challenge identified can provide an innovative approach that stems from the affected stakeholders' perspectives and create a platform for further awareness about the critical of the COVID-19 lockdown. It is important to note that a collaborative process can enhance the avoidance of marginalisation of affected stakeholders, such as the weak and less influential indigents whose interests and opinions are not easily considered. These stakeholders also need to benefit from the palliative distribution process (Dowd & Drury, 2017; Ufua, Salau, Dada, & Adeyeye, 2020; Fig. 1). Therefore, it is only by a joint participative process that collaboration and inclusion of community voice support the development of more effective co-design solutions (Harding et al., 2020).

The adoption of a joint approach is suggested to facilitate understanding of the different parts' connectivity, batches that constitute the critical issue identified in the palliative provision process. Ackermann and Eden (2011) observe the importance of managing stakeholders effectively for robust strategy development. This requires a joint problem structuring that can inform the development of strategies based on the context of the issues at hand, such as striving for a more practical approach to palliative material distribution focused in this study (Elias, 2019). It

can also inject acceptable flexibility (Evans and Bahrami, 2020) in the process, in reflection of the affected stakeholders' interest through the continuous engagement that can result in productive development of useful ideas support effective delivery to meet the project's objectives. Our argument is that the setting of objectives and evaluation of the implementation process—the distribution of palliatives, should be duly crafted. It can be achieved through engagement with the affected stakeholders. It agrees with Elias (2019) on the use of a participative approach to build relevant models for strategic interventions in a transport infrastructure project in the Wellington region of New Zealand. He found that such a participative process can provide an acceptable solution to problematic situations regarding the participants' competing interests.

Process restructuring is required for effective implementation and evaluation of the process for palliative materials distribution, to unravel areas of inadequacies, ineffectiveness, and the development of improved approaches that can sustain reasonable resilience to address unplanned emerging environmental complexities such as the effects of COVID-19 (Midgley, 2000; Pathak et al., 2007; The Lagos State Government Report, April 14, 2020). Effective process structuring can enhance a fair distribution of relief materials in an intervention during an unplanned emergency. This can result in the recipients' sustained trust if the palliative distribution process is spelled out to implement developed approaches from interactive processes (Kwesi-Buor et al., 2019). The ineffectiveness of the delivery process can be misleading and cumbersome to evaluate. The records may not reflect the realities in terms of the reach. All such incidences can lead to chaotic experiences such as the criminalities and other vices, such as the incidences of death due to starvation, recorded during the COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State, Nigeria (BBC News, March 31, 2020; D.W.com, April 22, 2020; BBC News, May 6, 2020). Therefore, it is suggested in the current research for all stakeholders involved with the process of palliative response to consider the fundamental necessity of critical structuring of the process that can enhance better implementation of the project (Ufua, Olujobi, Ogbari, & Dada, 2020).

The Need for Stakeholder Involvement in the Process

Another proposition from this research is the need for stakeholder engagement in an emergent intervention process (Fig. 3). The engagement of the relevant stakeholders and partners can enhance an ownership participation process that can ensure the commitment of the key stakeholders in palliative material distribution. Engagement with the affected stakeholders in the development of



palliative distribution programmes can result in transparency and trust of the project's key stakeholders (Oyewunmi & Olujobi, 2016). This is in tandem with Mai et al. (2019). They fault the traditional approaches such as the reductionist approach, which adopt a narrow approach to examine system components in isolation, neglecting their interconnected nature, which could have been more useful had they been considered for involvement in an intervention. Stakeholder involvement will recognise the heterogeneity of stakeholders involved and the diversity of ways by which the stakeholders can engage in an interactive process that can underpin their involvement in the process of participation in the creative development of improvement that reflects the context (Barreteau et al., 2013).

According to a palliative material recipient in Lagos State, during the COVID-19 lockdown, 'good governance is about relationships and interactions between citizens and government based on the principles of equity, efficient service delivery and sustainability' (The Conversation Report, May 19, 2020). Participation provides the opportunity to consider depth and problem boundaries which would be plurally defined, increasing the developed approach's potential coherence from the interactions. That can result to an acceptable model to affected stakeholders (Rouwette et al., 2002; Barreteau et al, 2013, Kwesi-Buor, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for the government agencies in charge of relief material distribution to consider the necessity for stakeholder engagement. Ufua et al. (2018) had observed that the engagement of the affected stakeholders can breed slow-paced decisions. They note the effectual agreement reached would support cordial embrace and commitment of the affected stakeholders in an intervention, such as the current palliative material distribution in Lagos State, Nigeria (Fig. 3). This aligns with Elias and Davis (2018) findings, who reckon that the partnership of the affected stakeholder can result in an unbroken trend of continuous improvement in an intervention. Zwikael and Smyrk (2012) suggest a new approach to measuring performance among stakeholders covering project management, project ownership, and project investment to ensure a project management process that reflects but the current situation and the stakeholders' interest.

However, as expressed in Fig. 3, only a proper platform for engagement with the affected stakeholders can guarantee a fair intervention process. Researchers have raised stakeholder involvement issues in addressing the identified issue of interest (Chase et al., 2000). This could be due to critical issues such as diversity of issues and context, heterogeneity of stakeholders' status, interest, and other environmental factors such as the legal regulations (Ufua, Olujobi, Ogbari, Dada, & Edefe, 2020). The argument of this study is that the key stakeholders' skills and

capabilities are relevant to the development of a suitable and fair platform for the involvement of stakeholders to address identified issues productively.

The Need for Education of all stakeholders

As outlined in Fig. 3, there is the need for mass orientation or sensitisation of the residents on the need to adhere to public health directives to avoid the spread of COVID 19 pandemic. This can be done via radio, television jingles, billboards, fliers, and all social media platforms to draw Lagos State residents' attention to the danger of the pandemic. This practice of education and awareness can enhance the development of beneficial values from impart, process and possibly trigger the enactment of an effective relief programme in times of emergencies, such as COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State (Asaju & Adagba, 2014; Barreteau, et al, 2013; Joseph, 2015; Olujobi, 2017). Lagos State government's success in combating COVID-19 depends on its residents' health education practices (Olujuwon, 2015).

This study's stake is that stakeholders' participation would permit concurrent learning and alignment of multiple sets of stakeholder values, needed to support joint effort among stakeholders that seem to address identified issues (Elias, Cavana & Jackson, 2002). It can facilitate rationality through justified reasoning among stakeholders based on their awareness about the issues of interest and inform the commitment from participants (Eden, & Ackermann, 2013), for instance, the publicity about strict adherence to all preventive measures such as hand washing, social distancing, and other guidelines set out by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), May 21, 2020. These practices can help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus as part of a joint effort involving all stakeholders to address the effects of COVID-19 (Amoo, Adekeye, Olawole-Isaac, Fasina, Adekola, Samuel, Akanbi, Oladsun & Azuh, 2020). Similarly, Chen et al. (2020) found in their study that the choice of the right medium for stakeholder engagement can define the success level in addressing critical issues of concern in an intervention. Therefore, education can facilitate productive dialogue among stakeholders for resilience to adapt to environmental changes through joint actions predicated on the interests and established common goals to address identified issues (Ufua, Osabohien, Imhonopi, & Ogbari, 2020).

Lack of education and awareness can deprive affected stakeholders of the flow of knowledge required to take the right actions in an intervention. For instance, due to inadequate knowledge among Lagos State indigenes, records show that some citizens ignored social distancing

guidelines (Fig. 3). For incongruous counsel, penury and anxiety of being detained in the hospitals or isolation centres due to lack of health education or awareness were factors responsible for non-compliance of some COVID-19 patients to cooperate with treatment guidelines (National Centre for Complementary and Integrative Health, 2020). This aligns with the finding of Gupta, Nguyen, Rojas, Raman, Lee, Bento, Simon, and Wing (2020). They appreciate the importance of crucial stakeholder actions to promote awareness among relevant stakeholders to facilitate compliance to precautionary rules in a joint effort to address identified issues of interest, such as the effects of COVID-19 pandemic in Lagos State.

The emphasis, therefore, is that as great as stakeholder involvement seems in an intervention, their possession of the right knowledge can result in the right decision and compliance with the rules of engagement through the circulation of the right knowledge and the right time among stakeholders (Chisita & Fombad, 2020). Available records from tertiary sources revealed that some residents only attend the hospital when the virus is already at an advanced stage with severe symptoms. The knowledge and health awareness among the populace about COVID-19 in the State seemed inadequate. Therefore, there is a need for the government to increase sensitisation and residents to adhere to public health care practices and guidelines (World Health Organisation, 2018). The stake of this research is that all these critical issues should be duly embedded in the programme designed to address emerging situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the distribution of palliatives. The adoption of learning tradition among stakeholders' groups can enhance continuous improvement drive that can yield better results in the long run (Yurtseven & Buchanan, 2016).

The Need for Process Evaluation

According to Reynolds, Forss, Hummelbrunner, Marra, and Perrin (2012), evaluation explores the worth and the value of stakeholders' input in acknowledging the change and the levels of achievement of set objectives during the intervention. The strategies adopted in the Lagos State government for the distribution of palliative support to the vulnerable, aged 60 and above residents require total overhauling. The beneficiaries were claimed to have been identified based on the verified Lagos State Residents Registration Agency's (LASRRA) register (Amrevurayire & Ojeh, 2016; Business Day Report, April 19, 2020). Evaluation of the process will create the medium for further innovation and creativity that reflect changes that in perspectives of the stakeholders and retain the pursuit of set objectives in an intervention, especially in an emergency such as the need to address the effects of COVID-19 in

Lagos State, focused in this study (Cavaleri & Sterman, 1997).

The use of evaluation on the process of palliative distribution can help the stakeholders, the State government, and the indigents with a productive reflection on the features of the palliative distribution process such as the perceived values to the beneficiaries, the conduct of the distribution as well as unravel issues such as marginalisation. It will project a joint dialogue process among stakeholders, focusing on what could be done better for future improvement (Midgley, 2006). There were allegations of diversion by government officials who were saddled with the distribution process. The absence of an accurate and credible database of Lagos State residents hinders the inclusive and equitable distribution of the palliatives from cushioning the effects of the lockdown on these targeted groups. And this has affected the distribution process; therefore, there is the need for proper record keeping of those residents in Lagos State for health, welfare, and other emergency purposes (Andersen et al., 2007).

Some critics also alleged that relief materials were also allegedly distributed in line with their political party affiliations of top government officials instead of the general populace. These emerging issues from the palliative distribution process in the State resulted in violence and criminality by stakeholders, especially the youth, in breach of critical COVID-19 precautionary guidelines such as social distancing due to crowding of people jostling for their shares (Ibekwe, 2020; Fig. 1). Evaluation embraces a chain of connections between various parts of an intervention, such as the palliative distribution project (Cabrera et al., 2008). The measures adopted to determine the vulnerable people in the State were not appropriate. The relief materials should have been tailored towards COVID-19 pandemic vulnerable who need the palliatives (Fig. 3).

Evaluation can set critical benchmarks for distribution of palliative materials in time of emergencies such as COVID-19 lockdown, based on factors such as poverty levels, consumption patterns, lack of access to basic healthcare, sanitation and lack of access to safe drinking water including shelter, clothing, and health should have been considered poor or vulnerable (Osabohien et al., 2020). Evaluation focuses on the key findings from an intervention, aimed to identify the source of strength in intervention and work out ways to address identified weaknesses. It is not necessarily a matter of drawing an entirely new skill or approach; it is rather a unique perspective that transforms an existing approach to embrace further improvement in an intervention.

Hummelbrunner (2011) observes that evaluation can open new possibilities and refocus the interest of stakeholders to aspects needing stimulated solutions. It would require a repeated effort by the stakeholders to have a



creative process that embraces successive reflection and flexibility in implementation. The palliative distribution process in Lagos State should also focus on critical modalities such as the people in the informal sector who were deprived of their earnings and their daily livelihood, who have been directed to stop working, and who were unable to take care of their families and other responsibilities. However, the lack of clarity on how the Lagos State government arrived at the criteria for distributing the palliatives calls for concern (The Guardian Newspaper Report, April 26, 2020). Therefore, the adopted evaluation process should remain sufficiently open to respond to changes and new issues requiring further attention to address (Gates, 2016). There is also a need for proper documentation of the beneficiaries of the palliative for transparency and accountability, and the record must be made accessible to the public for scrutiny. This process can help the relief project administrators and stakeholders to have foreknowledge on what improvement will be necessary in the handling such emergency situation in the future (Midgley, 2007).

Conclusions

This research focused on the need to re-strategising government palliative support systems in tackling the challenges of COVID-19 lockdown in Lagos State, Nigeria. The research relied primarily on extant literature, reports from tertiary data sources such as the newspapers, the internet, and website sources. The study underscores the need to include public health directives or guidelines and a palliative distribution support system in the State. The research recognised the challenges embedded in the palliative material distribution process in the State during the COVID-19 lockdown. A model approach was suggested and discussed in the study, emphasising effective stakeholder engagement, restructuring the relief material distribution process, and the need for a more intermittent evaluation of all key stakeholders' distribution process and education.

The research projects this as a critical factor required to create the needed resilience in addressing similar emerging challenges in the future in Lagos State, Nigeria. The key argument of the research is to facilitate a platform to develop coherent strategies in collaboration with relevant stakeholders' in a process to address emerging issues of concern, such as COVID-19 pandemic in the State, among others.

Suggestion for Further Research

Further research is suggested to focus on an empirical view of the topic and possibly embark on comparative and analytical research in stakeholder engagement and strive to address emerging environmental issues. This will facilitate further learning and enhance a broad resilience among stakeholders to address other similar emerging issues of interest.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Key Questions

- (1) A key question relating to evaluating the process of palliative distribution in Lagos state is how can a suitable evaluation approach be developed that can be implemented to create room for improvement?
- (2) How can the involvement of stakeholders in the Lagos State palliative distribution process be improved for future incidences of emergency in the state?





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