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COURSE OF STUDY: MATHEMATICS

**Essay Topic: How covid-19 pandemic deepens socio-economic inequalities In Nigeria:
The politics, the public health and the people**

Introduction

Unlike what we have experienced in the past centuries, the world and our local communities are facing the upsurge of a pandemic. And its attendant ripple effects have had a huge toll on every stratum of the society and sector of every country. Our country, Nigeria, is not spared in that COVID-19 saga, as we have seen the number of cases rise and also the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic. A sad tale and nothing to write home about. While the government launched various rescue packages, food palliatives, direct state social intervention and key health infrastructures as a response to alleviate the unprecedented crisis, the pandemic seems to eat neck-deep into the fabric of our society. Many individuals have lost their jobs and many businesses have been hit harder by the lockdown. The pandemic is also engendering socio-economic inequalities among the Nigerian people and its minorities, particularly those living in underserved and rural communities.

Poverty as the major ripple effect of COVID-19.

One of the socio-economic inequalities worsened by the pandemic is poverty, as it is a multidimensional problem in society. Poverty is so rife that people that are presently not in poverty and those currently in poverty, will be considered vulnerable to poverty due to the socio-economic realities of the present day Nigeria. About 90 million people - roughly half Nigeria's population - live in extreme poverty, according to estimates from

the World Data Lab's Poverty Clock.

However, at the root of poverty lies people's deprivation to access basic necessities such as food, healthcare and sanitation, education and assets. Consequently it is not far fetched to believe that the pandemic must have taken its toll on a large number of Nigerians who live from hand- to -mouth with or without the pandemic.

Women, victims of the socio-economic inequalities of the pandemic.

The most affected people groups are the marginalised women and girls who remain the ones who have received the least aid during the pandemic. And there is a need to put everyone, inclusive of all marginalised groups at the centre of COVID-19 response efforts. Data reveals that the pandemic is having more devastating socio-economic consequences for women and girls. Nearly 60% of women globally, work in the informal economy, earning less, saving less, and at greater risk of falling into poverty. As markets fall and businesses close, millions of women have lost their jobs. The pandemic affects everyone, everywhere, but women happen to have been much more affected due to the pre-existing prejudice in the labor market occasioned by gender imbalance.

At the same time, women's unpaid care work has increased exponentially as a result of school closures and the increased needs of older people. Unpaid labour is a labour that does not receive any direct remuneration. One common form of unpaid work is unpaid domestic work. The burden of unpaid work generally falls on the women in a household. Women are overwhelmed with so much work, yet we earn so little, thus the agonising

effect of the pandemic on them.

The way forward.

To resolve this, we need the government to empower people and rally entrepreneurs to understand the economic gaps. Build simple solutions that are scalable and sustainable. And sell products/solutions targeting the middle to low-income poverty. This will go a long way in combating the poverty problem, boost the economy and unpack the layers of economic inequality in the society.

Moreover, we need to pay attention to women by planning recovery efforts that are gender-inclusive. If we are to combat poverty on a large-scale, then our women must be given equal opportunities. This will make them contribute to household incomes and the growth of the national economy. And this can only be solved when they have access to capital, business knowledge and skills to unpack the layers of economic inequality in society. If we are to combat poverty on a large-scale, then our women must be given equal opportunities.

We need to stop planning recovery efforts that aren't gender-inclusive. And our governments need to put women and girls at the centre of their efforts to recover from COVID-19. This starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power.

Cash transfers, micro-credits and loans, must be targeted at women, especially small-scale business owners. Social safety nets must be expanded. And unpaid care work must be recognized and valued as a vital contribution to the economy.

Governments must also be prepared to think outside the box and rescue packages must be put in place. Regulations that are prudent in normal circumstances must be appropriately relaxed to help the national effort. The army, as well as civil society, should be relied on to help with distribution and supporting public services. Many charities will struggle during this time and need their levels of support to help them stay afloat and provide vital support where governments cannot. Most important in such times is the need for clear, effective and strategic leadership from not only the public sector but also that of the private in stemming the inequalities created by the pandemic.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the pandemic has taken its toll on the world at large in terms of socio-economic development and developing countries like Nigeria have been much more affected. Now that the pandemic is under control, we must ask ourselves some salient questions on long-term implications, What could have been done differently to respond to in terms of political and public health approach? And what should be done to combat the pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities in our country through a laser focus on how to combat poverty and pay attention to minority groups in our society like that of women and girls?