

## COVID-19 and the Social Protection of Nigerian Child

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### Abstract

Children are important members of Nigeria society. In a bid to offer some fresh ideas on how children are protected during outbreak of infectious disease and government's strategies in saving the life of every Nigerian child, the study examined how far Nigeria government's social protection strategies are able to protect the vulnerable Nigerian Child from the Wuhan (China) COVID 19 with special emphasis on vulnerable children living in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study used secondary data (editorial review of seven newspapers based on their publication from February when Nigeria had its first Index case to October 2020. The secondary data was used because of the national lockdown, protests and riots within the State at the time of study. The editorial documents used were on impact of COVID 19 on children and how government social protection strategies influenced the prevalence of the virus among vulnerable children. The study showed that there are inadequacies in government social protection strategies especially as it relates to the domestication of the Child's Rights Acts as enshrined in the constitution and other gazette of the Nigeria federation by all levels of government. This continuous disregard of Child Rights Acts would not only increase the emergency of highly vulnerable children but could also serve as a feeder team in viruses and infectious disease spread in the society. The study concludes that the relevance of social protection strategies in a state like Lagos and Nigeria nation as a whole cannot be underestimated. This is largely due to the role it plays in reducing disease spread and crimes.

**Key Words:** Children, COVID-19, vulnerable, editorial, social protection



## 1. Introduction

ILO Article 2 (1999) and Nigeria 1999 Constitution see a child as any one below 18 years of age. However, according to Metuh (1995), before the 1999 constitution other laws on child age limit has been in existence and include the Children and Young Person's Law (Cap, 19), Laws of Eastern Nigeria 1963 which capped the age of a child at less than 14 years and that of a young person at 14 years but less than 17 years. The Nigerian State also has the Federal Child Right Act (2003) which prohibits some forms of child work, raises the minimum age of a child to 14 years; provides for protection of the human right of the child, ensures access to health care and makes provision for every sick child to be treated.

Nigeria with a population estimate of over 200 million, has 41% of that population as children (National Population Commission, 2016). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, (2017) 14, 368, 000 of the total national population lives in Lagos State, with over 16% of the children population engaging in economic activities that predisposes them to diseases and infections just to help parents survive economic hardship (Adetoro, 2010; Ibrahim 2012; Universal Basic Education (UBEC), 2012).

Any form of child work irrespective of its consequences on the child is seen as a legal means of raising or training and integrating children into family unit (Adejo, 2017; Rosenzweig, 1981; ILO, 2013 & Ndem et al, 2012, Sule-Kano, 2013). Child work in Nigeria urban cities such as Lagos is much in existence as a result of increase in cost of living. This situation has compelled children to contribute beyond their capacity to family incomes; with injurious physical and educational development as resultant effects (Clark & Yesufu, 2012; Hunte, 2009; Apt, 2005). According to Naidu (1986) and Ewurugwe (1986), child work is promoted by poverty, religion, and the attitude of the society towards children.

Vinolia and Fubara (1986) and Yesufu (2005) opined that child work in Nigeria is the brain child of cultural practice/belief which was worsened by financial economic hardship associated with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of former Military Head of State –General Ibrahim Babangida. Some of the children have taken to begging for their upkeep and is gradually transforming into a form of child abuse (Hoechner, 2015). Researchers such as (Gommen & Esomchi, 2017) opined that the plight of the Nigerian children is made worse by the fact that most offenders of child abuse are their parents and family members. This made other researchers such as James (2013) and Odoemelam et al (2014) to raise some questions of possible danger of these children been transformed into easy recruits for organised crimes thereby making them greater carriers and spreader of diseases.

More so, children regular activities as markets load carriers, vendors etc and activities in street hawking, begging etc as well as working as domestic servants at different homes makes them highly vulnerable to abuse, and defenceless against any epidemic or pandemic. This is evident as seen in the 2020 COVID-19 or Coronavirus disease pandemic in Nigeria. “*COVID-19 is a respiratory viral infection, usually, the disease spreads primarily from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or speaks*” (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020). The novel COVID-19 which was reported to World Health Organisation on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019 started in the Wuhan province of China. The disease which was declared as a pandemic on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March, 2020 by World Health Organisation quickly spread around the world with the first Nigeria index case arriving Lagos on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February 2020. To contain the

spread of the disease (spread from person to person through droplets from nose and mouth), the World Health Organisation recommended the good respiratory etiquette of sneezing into your flexed elbow or tissue paper, wearing face masks and maintaining social distance of two meters among others. These etiquettes would be challenging to get the vulnerable children in Lagos State to comply with, given their levels of education. The noncompliance of the etiquettes by vulnerable children made the society to see them as an easy means of spreading the deadly virus and this raises a lot of questions about the state government provision of social protection towards its vulnerable children.

The study, therefore, seeks to find an answer to how COVID-19 and government social protection strategy programs have affected the vulnerable Nigerian children living in Lagos State and therefore, raised the research question:

What is the extent of the COVID-19 impact on the vulnerable children in Lagos and the social protection strategies state government towards the vulnerable children?

## **2. Literature review**

### **COVID-19 impact on vulnerable children**

The COVID-19 is transmitted through droplets of the virus from patients that are spread within one metre distance from coughs, speaks or sneezes. According to Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) (2020) advised for social distancing (physical distancing) especially since contact is accessed on “*one metre face-to-face contact with suspected or confirmed case for more than 15 minutes; also direct physical contact or direct care of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 individual without appropriate protection*”. The social distancing is difficult to comply with especially with vulnerable children who are hawking on the street and markets, labourers at work sites, bus conductors, beggars, vendors, domestic servants etc (United Nations, 2020, Ekwoaba, 2018). Nutrition status of such children are further impaired as millions of them (368.5millions) that depend on state sponsored school meals have to go hungry. Impaired nutrition will further decrease their immunity and could worsen the disease outcome (Ekwoaba, 2020). The poor state of the public health institutions in Nigeria (are heavily under-funded and the state of infrastructure and facilities in these institutions are very poor) and the relative poverty living status of three quarters of Nigerian population Dodo (2012) and Obansa and Akinnagbe (2013). This is likely to worsen the nutritional state of the vulnerable children who barely depend on daily income from jobs, sales or begging to survive. The lock down in Lagos that lasted till May 2020 before markets were reopened made it even difficult for the vulnerable children to go to market to work, hawk on the street or even beg as people where off the streets. The vulnerable children, therefore, endured serious deprivation especially in the course of this COVID-19 pandemic and the riots and protests that followed (Abdullahi, 2011, Mba, 2020), this was made worse with the riots and protests that subsequently followed.

### **Government social protection strategies towards the Nigerian Children**

According to UNICEF (2011) child protection is a seed at building a safe environment for all children because it prevents and attends to issues that brings about the exploitation, abuse and inappropriate separation of children from the family. This protection is mostly built around vulnerable children and other individuals (homeless/destitute, sick, disabled etc) (Scott,

2012). The child protection strategy of basic education is a protective gear that saves any society or environment. Provision of basic education as enshrined in the Child Rights Acts are to provide protective environment for Nigerian, however, Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children in the world (Abdulrahman, 2013) with close to 10.5 millions and this has risen to 13.2 million (UNICEF, 2018). This could be attributed to Nigerian low investment on social protection (National Budget for education and health for the year 2020 is 6.75 and 4.14 (Budget Office and National Bureau of Statistics 2020). This is not keeping up with other countries in the Sub-saharan (Advancing Social Protection in a Dynamic Nigeria, 2019).

The incidence of child labour and out-of-school children is worse in the northern part of Nigeria with the Almajiris (children from poor homes who migrate to different cities on the account of religious apprenticeship, separated from their parents and deprived of any formal education). Though Lagos State is recorded as the second State with the highest school enrollment, it still has out of school children and children who work after school and this runs contrary to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 Article 28 which states that “*State Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all*”). Nigeria is one of the States parties to this convention. In the same vein, the “Child Right Act” of Nigeria 2003, which also captured most of these child protection strategies, is yet to be domesticated by most state governors. The Nigerian Child Right Act gives 23 states which have adopted it the power to enact extra provisions to protect children from working. Based on the Nigerian Child Right Act, some states like Abia State have enacted the Abia State Child Right Act (2006) which criminalises child work outside family homes and environment. The law further shows that child work in the state should cover only those activities that will train and build a child’s skill and character.

In Nigeria nation the child right acts and other child right laws are made in the best interest of the Nigerian child. These Acts includes; Nigeria Labour Act 1974, Federal Child Right Act (2003), Nigeria Constitution (1999), Trafficking in Person (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act (2003), Criminal Law and Penal Law (1990) CAP 26 (Section 301). The Acts which are adoptions from ILO Article 2 (1999), UN Right of Child Convention (CRC) 1989 and African Union Charter on the Right and Welfare of Child (CRWC) 1990; prohibit any form of worst child work for Nigerian children and charges the “Heads” of families of underage children to provide the necessities of life for children and holds such “Heads” responsible for the life and health of such children, whether the children are helpless or not. The Acts which is summarised in the 1999 Constitution Section 2(1) states that “*every child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for the wellbeing of the child by persons responsible for that child*”. The failure to protect a child according to the Constitution attracts sanctions and punishments. Despite all the Acts enacted to protect the Nigerian Child, Bassy, Baghebo and Otu (2012) and Omokhodion, Omokhodion and Odusote (2006) note that Nigerian children of school age are seen in cities and villages trading and hawking on streets, washing dishes at restaurants, serving as house maids, working as bus conductors and hair dressers, working as labourer in construction sites and farms, working as mechanics in mechanics workshops, and other forms of work. According to them, this trend has remained because of the lack of political will by both the federal and state governments to ratify and implement these Child Right Acts. These are also indications that government needs to scale

up the child protection strategies and reduce significantly the out-of-school children. This inadequate social protection for the vulnerable children has provided a weak link in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. Theoretical Orientation

#### The Youth Bulge Theory

The study is guided Youth Bulge Theory which view developing countries of the world as usually having the challenge of Youth Bulge. The theory was coined by Gunnar Heinsohn a German social scientist and made popular by Gary Fuller and Jack Goldstone (Hoffman & Jamal, 2012; LaGraffe, 2012). In youth bulge, there is a proposition that the combination of rapidly growing youth population and limited resources within the society makes it difficult for “surplus” young people born into the families ( especially poor) on positions of third, fourth, and fifth child to have a promising platform to actualize their goals. This is can be seen in countries with weak political institutions and such children become vulnerable to crimes, sickness and diseases.

For this study, Youth Bulge Theory is explained from the perspective that parents are overwhelmed with poverty, illiteracy and large family size (numerous children) in the midst of limited society’s resources which stresses them. These stressed parents could, therefore, give out some of their children to serve as domestic workers, engage them in street hawking, market load carriers and other economic activities that could be injurious to the total well being of the child. On the government side the social protection available within the society are overstretched and even collapses, therefore, making it difficult for numerous vulnerable children to realize their dreams and potentials. Some of the children in the bid to survive could take to crimes and other illegitimate ways of survival.

### 4. Methodology

The study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and protest peak periods. At this time, there was a national lock down and movement restrictions in Nigeria with Lagos state being the epicentre in the country. The vulnerable children were seen as the “router” for spreading the virus because they were used for economic activities during the period in different parts of the state. The media houses because they had government permission to move around and cover events stood out as only instrument that can be consulted by Lagosians and Nigerians at large to confirm, condemn or praise the governors’ and his teams actions concerning the vulnerable children.

The study examined the editorials of selected Nigerian newspapers with head-office in Lagos State and spread within the period of active conversations and governor’s actions as it relates to vulnerable children amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the protests. The active narratives happened between the 27<sup>th</sup> of February and (when Nigeria had the first index case) to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020 when the unrest on END SARS movement started). The seven newspapers and in their ranking order include: The Punch, The Vanguard, The Nation, The Guardian, The ThisDay, The Nation and The Tribune (4<sup>th</sup> International and Media and Newspaper, 2019, [www.4imn.com/ng](http://www.4imn.com/ng) ). The editorials/opinions of the newspapers were analyzed and interpreted

in context with dates to the research questions. All extractions were made with minimal alteration from the editorial areas. The citations were arranged in an order that makes for easy flow and understanding.

## **5. The results from the editorials of the selected newspapers**

### **Editorials relating to COVID-19 impact on the vulnerable children**

In this paper, the vulnerable children situation is a rewarding for everyone concerned. Here the governor opens the markets and directed that people seller/ customers (including younger persons) should be allowed to transact business. This has allowed parents to wilfully hands over goods to children to sell with little or no parental supervision especially in the over 100 slumps. Children were seen engaged on economic activities on the easy of the lockdown. The increase in economic and other activities within the state has been giving as the reason for the rise in COVID 19 cases in Lagos State by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) (The Tribune Editorial, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020, Punch, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020).

Also the governor's decision to lock down the state climaxed into children turning the street to play fields for football and other games. The visible logic of locking down activities in the state was to contain the spread of COVID-19, which might spread by the nature of communal living but the instruction was not obeyed by children who needed to run around and play (The Punch Editorial, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2020' The Guardian Editorial, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2020).

The governor's decision to ensure all schools remain locked down could not have come at a better time than now. The lock down is being carried out to battle and contain the corona virus pandemic; we think that everything should be done to ensure that the virus spread does not escalate. It is commendable that the COVID-19 pandemic has also provided the governor the opportunity to rise to the challenges facing education system in the state. The recent radio schooling has kept some children away from street though many are still playing in the street because of lack of electricity or money to get battery to listen to the radio school programs. It is likely that some of the children playing around may be infected by the lethal disease. (The Sun Editorial, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020)

The interception of no fewer than 20 Lorries carrying children have been stopped before Ojodu Berger Bus-stop is no longer a news. The interception came at a time when governors of the northern states were busy exchanging vulnerable children among and between themselves. These are hundreds of children who have for years been left on the streets to fend for themselves. Now that northern governors have validated that many of vulnerable children have fallen victims to Covid-19, we hope their authorities would nurture them back to recovery while Lagos state should man its boarder well to avoid influx of COVID 19 cases. Lagos government should be at alert because the unsanitary lifestyles of these children running (who are coming down to the south) have not only exposed them to the pandemic but would in turn engendered a spike in community transmissions of the virus (ThisDay Editorial, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020, Guardian Editorial, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2020).

There was no strict adherence to the restrictions laid down by government during the lockdown as many citizens both old and young flouted the guidelines. Street shops and markets stalls were open. At different parts of Lagos, people went for outdoors exercises at the traffic free streets. In some areas of the city people who live in close quarters including

children could not attempt social distancing as advised by the government. This nonadherence to government restriction is likely to increase the spread of the virus in the state (Punch Editorial, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2020; The Nation, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2020)

Lagos the commercial nerve center of the nation has had to bear the abject indiscretion and leadership failure of other states. There is continuous influx of people to Lagos on daily basis. Among other worries, are children from all parts of the nation who have nowhere to stay upon arrival into Lagos State. This encourages destitution, which is not desirable at this COVID 19 time, when World Health Organisation requires everyone to stay safe and maintain social distance (meaning that children should stay safe at home with their parents). Therefore, these destitute who invade the Lagos State daily will aggravate the spread of the COVID-19 disease in the state. In addition, these children who are without any skills trade or formal education would have not only participated in the ENDSARS protest but on the riots that lead to massive properties destructions in the state (ThisDay Editorial, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2020; The Punch Editorial, 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2020).

### **Editorials relating to Government social protection to Nigerian children**

The prevalence of poverty, hunger, diseases, malnutrition, maternal and child mortality, all have grave consequences on the nation's human capital development. They also have a strong interconnection with the incidence of destitution, out of school and crimes. This explains why the statistics of 13.2 million out of school children in Nigeria by UNICEF (2018) is worrisome. Critical stakeholders from Ministries of Education, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, office of the presidency, governors, senate representatives etc, should come together and address the child labour practices inhibiting the healthy growth of the Nigerian child. The Issues to tackle should also cover child marriage because available reports show that 45 per cent of Nigerian girls are married off against their will from ages 13 to 18 in many parts of the country. Though the constitution does make available acceptable marriage age, but Section 23 of the Child Rights Act states that it is a criminal offence to marry a girl under 18 years and gave the penalty as five years' imprisonment. May be this is the reason many states with the exception of ABIA STATE" have not enacted the State Child Right Act despite all the benefits and protections it bestows on every child. (ThisDay Editorial, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020).

The governors should use this opportunity to break up every terrible system that has not in any way helped the healthy physical and mental development of the Nigerian child as well as the society. Apart from stopping interstate travels, the governors must ensure that there is a well functioning formal school system that gives all children the opportunity to acquire basic education, which ought to be the right of every Nigerian child. Available records indicate that about 13.2 million Nigerian children are outside the school system; 69 percent in the northern part and 31 percent shared by the west, east and southern part of the country. There are also children in Ebony, Imo, Kaduna, Katsina and other states who are in systems that make them vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation (e.g. in September and October, 2019, 100 young girls were rescued from baby factory homes and 600 boys and men rescued from Islamic schools). (The Sun Editorial, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2020).

In 2004 the government enacted The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act (2004) to address anomalies in Nigeria educational system. The high point of the Act is with its provision of a compulsory and free basic education for six years and minimum three years of junior secondary schooling as states in Section 2 (Subsection 1). This is in alignment with the Child

Rights Act which stipulates the right of Nigerian children to be in school up to the secondary level. The UBE Act stipulates under the UBE scheme a commission shall receive block grants from federal government and allocate to states. According to Part II Section 1, federal government shall commit 2 percent of its Consolidated Revenue Fund as funds to states to improve their basic education, Section 2 *specified that for any state to qualify to receive from the federation account it must such a state shall contribute not less than 50% of the total cost of projects as its commitment in the execution of the project.* But many of the governors since 1999, whose states are the worst educationally, loot the UBE funds when they access them. Others have not bothered to satisfy the requirements to leverage this critical support.

In 2016 UNICEF ranked Nigeria as the 6<sup>th</sup> country with the highest number of out of school children with Liberia as number 1 followed by South Sudan, Afghanistan, Sudan and Niger. Presently, Nigeria has taken unenviable highest position globally with 13.5 million out-of-school children. Whether with 13.2 million in 2020 or 10.5 million in 2016, UNICEF said the North still account for 69 per cent of this burden while the balance are shared by the other regions. This out of school problem is a hindrance to literacy growth in the country. As reported by World Bank this problem is a signal that the country needs social development and poverty reduction policies that would improve parents' economic situation and prevent more vulnerable children from been marginalised, used as child labour and exposed to diseases. Preventive interventions are essential; to help give those children already facing the hardships of street life the immediate opportunities for human development via special protection programme (Punch Editorial Board, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020).

These children are victims of a failed system, recklessly promoted and stubbornly defended by successive governors and the self-serving elite in the Nigeria society. The education deprivation in Nigeria is driven by various factors, including economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls. Poverty remains one of the most obstinate barriers, with children from the poorest households almost five times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the richest, says UNICEF. It adds that one in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria.

In terms of the legal framework, the Federal Government had enacted the Universal Basic Education Law in 2000, in which the centre helps the states with funding for the first nine years of a child's education. This is in line with UNICEF's Convention on the Rights of the Child that was adopted in 1989 and has been signed by 196 countries, including Nigeria, as of 2015. In 2017, the Federal Government allocated N35.2 billion for this, but as many as 17 of the 36 states failed to draw down N16.2 billion on the excuse that the conditions attached to it were stringent. As of 2019, at least 11 of the 19 Northern states have refused to domesticate the Child Rights Act, an offshoot of UNICEF's CRC. Essentially, the law recognises the need for governments to educate every child, train it in a family setting and ensure that a child is free from forced labour and trafficking. ((Punch Editorial Board, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020).

The federal government and state governments must work hard to ensure that the our children are off the streets and not used for child labour; and one of the ways is to ensure a full compliance with the provisions of the Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 which made formal education compulsory for school age children from primary school to basic nine. This



can be achieved as long as the governors have the political will (ThisDay Editorial, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020).

Furthermore, some people have underscored the counterproductive nature of any kind of informal education whether on the basis of religion or politics; as it allows our young children to grow in ways contrary to the CRC concept. Thus, without mincing words, the practices that will not allow children have the kind of education that is health for their physical and mental development is the same as child abuse (The Guardian Editorial, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2020).

Educational and health programs for the Nigeria children such as Right of Child Convention (1989), Child Right Act (2003) and Universal Basic Education Law (2000) ensures the physical and mental well being children as well as take care of their education (ThisDay 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2020). As at this year 23 states in the federation including Federal Capital Territory Abuja have adopted Child Right Act of (2003) of which only 8 states out of 19 states in the northern region in 2019 domesticate the Act. The states in the southern region have not fared better; states are also afraid of drawing from the UBE project fund because of stringent measures (Punch Editorial, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2020).

## 6. Analysis of results

In looking at the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable children in Nigeria with Lagos State as the study area; the stacking of children in lorries (the northern region) that may have tested positive on or before 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020 and transporting them to Lagos State. (The Sun Editorial, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2020; ThisDay Editorial, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2020), is in keeping with United Nations (2020) statement that vulnerable children like those displaced from internal conflicts, street trading children and children in other institutions may have a challenge maintaining social distancing and could be at high risk of being infected with COVID-19.

The vulnerable children in their high numbers in different states of the nation could be a reflection of the states of lack of political will to enforce universal basic education in states. Parents with high numbers of children uses children for economic gains and even let go of some children to care for themselves, this is at least tentatively a relief in caring for the children (The Tribune Editorial, 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2020). The Punch, ThisDay and The Sun editorials are all in agreement that having so many children without commensurate economic power contributed immensely to the emergence of child work; which could increase the spread of COVID-19 in the society. This corroborated with findings of (Abiyo, 2013, Adejo, 2017, Owoo, Upton, & Bageant, 2017) who stated that many of household fathers in Nigeria are not only out of job but in polygynous unions (Adebowale, Bidemi, & Palamuleni, 2014; Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 2016) and they could be overwhelmed by number of children.

The adoption and domestication of some National and international instrument would have helped the educational needs of the vulnerable children if in implementation. These instruments include: The Convention on the Right of the Child (1989), Universal basic Education Law (2000), and the Child Rights Act of Nigeria (2003). This instruments Nigeria is already a stated party to. These instrument among other things captured compulsory education for the child for the first nine years (Punch Editorial Board, 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020; ThisDay Editorial, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020). However, as at 2019, 11 out of the 19 northern states are yet to domesticate the Child Rights Act of 2003. In 2017, close to half of 35.2 billion naira

from Federal to state government for UBE projects were not drawn by 17 out of 36 states on account of stringent measures (Punch Editorial Board, 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020). This stringent measure could be purposely constructed to discourage their access and withhold the funds. This is in keeping with research findings that stated that Nigerian has low investment on social protection. This investment is also below the budget of peer countries in the Sub-Saharan region (Advancing Social Protection in a Dynamic Nigeria, 2019).

## 6. Conclusion

The mirroring of vulnerable Nigerian children at this COVID-19 era by this study is rewarding in that it showed the effect of COVID 19 on the vulnerable Nigerian children and government child protection strategies that could cushion the effects. The study also shows the relevant role played by media houses editorials in exploring government child protection policies and makes appropriate recommendations on how to effectively apply them in protecting the Nigerian child. However, the study also indicated that non implementation of government social protection policies ensue from lack of political will by government to domesticate the Child Rights Acts which would reduced all forms of children abuse and neglect that could increase the spread of diseases or COVID 19 virus and crimes. Finally the adoption, domestication or implementation of the social protection strategies by governments at all levels as enshrined on the Nigeria Labour Act 1974, Federal Child Right Act (2003), Nigeria Constitution (1999), Trafficking in Person (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act (2003), Criminal Law and Penal Law (1990) CAP 26 (Section 301), ILO Article 2 (1999), UN Right of Child Convention (CRC) 1989 and African Union Charter on the Right and Welfare of Child (CRWC) 1990 would improve the situation of the vulnerable Nigeria children.

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations can be very rewarding:

The following recommendations can be very rewarding:

1. Government should reduce out-of-school children, spread of communicable diseases and crime by adopting social protection strategies that will benefit children and their parents e.g. Universal Basic Education programs
2. Government should put up favourable economic policies that will allow parents to stop using children for economic activities and gains. 1
3. Non state actors should get involved and lobby government at all levels to domesticate m and implement the Child Rights Act 2003 and other Child Right Acts enshrined in the 1999 constitution.
4. Post COVID-19 era should be a time that government at all levels must ensure that vulnerable children on the streets are appropriately enrolled into formal education.

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