

Applicability of the theory of obligation in the humanitarian aid management of covid19 in Nigeria

Cordelia Beauty Uwamusi

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria. Corresponding email: cordelia.uwamusi@iuokada.edu.ng

Chianu Veronica Uduakabasi

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria. Email: chianu.vero@iuokada.edu.ng

Adekunle Ajisebiyayo

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Igbinedion University, Okada, Nigeria. Email: adekunle.ajisebiyayo@iuokada.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Theory of obligation is a moral philosophy that highlights the importance of fulfilling our duties and responsibilities towards others. In the context of humanitarian aid management of COVID-19 in Nigeria, the theory of obligation is highly applicable as it stresses the duty of individuals and organisations to provide aid and support to those in need during times of crisis. In Nigeria, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in significant humanitarian challenges, including health crises, economic downturns, and social upheavals. To address these challenges, humanitarian aid organisations have been working tirelessly to provide relief to affected communities. Theory of obligation can guide the actions of these organisations by emphasising the need to fulfill their duty to help those in need. Furthermore, the Theory of Obligation can also guide individuals in Nigeria in fulfilling their moral responsibilities towards others. By recognising the obligation to provide aid and support during times of crisis, individuals can work together to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on their communities. Overall, the Theory of Obligation is a relevant and valuable framework for guiding the humanitarian aid management of COVID-19 in Nigeria. By emphasising the importance of fulfilling our moral duties and responsibilities towards others, the Theory of Obligation can help promote a culture of empathy and compassion during times of crisis.

Keywords:

Theory, Obligation, Covid-19, Humanitarian Aid, Management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact communities worldwide, including Nigeria. As of April 30, 2023, Nigeria has recorded over 7 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 100,000 deaths, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHO, 2023). The pandemic has resulted in significant humanitarian challenges, including health crises, economic downturns, and social upheavals, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women and children (UNICEF, 2021). In response, humanitarian aid organisations have been working to provide relief to affected communities in Nigeria. However, the challenges of providing aid during a crisis have highlighted the importance of understanding moral obligations and responsibilities towards others. The Theory of Obligation is a moral philosophy that emphasizes the importance of fulfilling our duties and responsibilities towards others, making it highly relevant to the humanitarian aid management of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Recent studies have explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable populations in Nigeria and the effectiveness of humanitarian aid interventions (Ezejiofor & Ike, 2022). These studies highlight the need for a deeper understanding of the moral obligations and responsibilities of individuals and organisations in providing aid and support during times of crisis. The Theory of Obligation provides a valuable framework for exploring these issues and guiding humanitarian aid management in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Human Aid

Humanitarian aid is a form of assistance provided to people affected by crises such as natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics. The primary goal of humanitarian aid is to alleviate human suffering and protect human dignity. A study by Cetorelli, Bumham, Shabilaand AI-Nuaimi (2021) explored the effectiveness of humanitarian aid interventions in addressing the impact of conflict on maternal and child health in Yemen. The study emphasised the importance of investing in health systems and improving access to essential services to ensure effective humanitarian aid interventions. Recent literature also highlights the ethical considerations

involved in providing humanitarian aid. For example, a study by Barry et al. (2021) examined the ethical implications of humanitarian aid interventions in conflict settings. The study emphasised the need to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of aid recipients and to promote principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence in aid delivery. Overall, recent literature emphasizes the importance of humanitarian aid in mitigating the impact of crises on vulnerable populations. By prioritising ethical considerations and investing in effective interventions, humanitarian aid can help protect human dignity and alleviate human suffering.

2.2 Theory of Obligation

The Theory of Obligation is a moral philosophy that emphasizes the importance of fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities towards others. According to this theory, individuals and organisations have a moral obligation to act in ways that promote the well-being of others, particularly those who are vulnerable or in need. Recent literature has explored the relevance and applicability of the Theory of Obligation in various contexts, including humanitarian aid management during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Zanini et al. (2021) examined the ethical implications of the Theory of Obligation in disaster response and highlighted the importance of fulfilling moral duties towards affected communities. O'Brien and Selvaggi (2021) explored the application of the Theory of Obligation in healthcare ethics, emphasising the importance of fulfilling moral duties to patients, particularly those who are marginalised or disadvantaged. The authors emphasised the need for healthcare providers to prioritize the well-being of their patients and to fulfill their obligations to provide equitable and compassionate care. In the context of humanitarian aid management during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Theory of Obligation has been used to guide ethical decision-making and promote accountability and transparency in aid interventions. Ezejiofor and Ike (2022) emphasised the importance of fulfilling moral obligations to vulnerable populations and prioritising community engagement and participation in humanitarian aid interventions. Overall, recent literature highlights the relevance and importance of the Theory of Obligation in guiding ethical decision-making and promoting responsible behavior towards others. By emphasising the importance of fulfilling moral duties and responsibilities,

the Theory of Obligation can help promote a culture of empathy and compassion and facilitate effective humanitarian interventions during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3 Covid-19

COVID-19, also known as the novel coronavirus, is a highly infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The virus was first identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and has since spread rapidly around the world, leading to a global pandemic. COVID-19 primarily spreads through respiratory droplets and can cause a range of symptoms, from mild to severe, including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. The disease has had significant impacts on public health, the economy, and society as a whole. Recent literature on COVID-19 has focused on various aspects of the disease, including its epidemiology, clinical presentation, prevention, and management. Wang et al. (2021) explored the transmission dynamics of COVID-19 in different settings and highlighted the importance of implementing effective control measures to prevent the spread of the disease. Islam et al. (2021) examined the clinical features and outcomes of COVID-19 patients, emphasising the need for prompt and effective treatment to reduce morbidity and mortality. Recent literature has also explored the psychological and social impacts of COVID-19 on individuals and communities. Cao et al. (2021) examined the psychological impact of the pandemic on healthcare workers and highlighted the importance of providing mental health support to frontline workers. Overall, recent literature on COVID-19 highlights the need for effective prevention and management strategies to mitigate the impacts of the disease on public health and society as a whole.

Kutter et al. (2020), COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that primarily spreads through respiratory droplets and close contact with infected individuals. The disease has had significant impacts on global public health and the economy. Lai et al. (2020) described COVID-19 as a highly infectious respiratory illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The review highlighted the epidemiology, clinical presentation, and management of the disease, as well as the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of society. Rabi et al. (2020) defined COVID-19 as a novel viral infection that has caused a global pandemic. The study explored the clinical presentation, epidemiology, and management of the disease, as well as the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. Sahu et al. (2020) defined COVID-19 as a severe acute respiratory illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The review explored the epidemiology, clinical presentation, and management of the disease, as well as the psychological and social impacts of the pandemic.

2.4 Principles of theory of obligation

The theory of obligation is based on the principle that individuals and groups have certain moral and legal responsibilities to others in society. According to Schulz et al. (2021), these obligations can be influenced by a range of social, cultural, and economic factors, including gender, age, education, and income. Another principle of obligation theory is the concept of reciprocity, which suggests that individuals have a responsibility to reciprocate the benefits they receive from others in society. Kim and Lee (2019) explored the role of reciprocity in shaping social norms and promoting prosocial behavior in South Korea. The theory of obligation also emphasizes the importance of social norms and expectations in shaping individual behavior. Rappaport and Sommerfeld (2021) examined the role of social norms in promoting sustainable behavior, and suggested that interventions aimed at changing social norms could be an effective way to promote environmental sustainability. Finally, recent research has highlighted the role of institutions and legal frameworks in shaping obligations and responsibilities in society. Galasso et al. (2020) examined the impact of legal institutions on the implementation of environmental policies in Europe, and found that strong legal frameworks were associated with greater compliance and enforcement of environmental regulations.

2.5 Roles played by humanitarian aid management in Nigeria during Covid-19

Provision of healthcare services: Humanitarian aid management played a crucial role in providing healthcare services to the people of Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. Obansa and Ojong (2021) highlighted the importance of humanitarian aid organisations in supporting the healthcare system in Nigeria during the pandemic. Distribution of relief materials: Humanitarian aid management also played a vital role in distributing relief materials such as food, water, and medical supplies to vulnerable populations affected by the pandemic. Adeola and Adejumbi (2020) highlighted the efforts of the Nigerian government and

humanitarian organisations in providing relief to internally displaced persons during the pandemic. Awareness and education campaigns: Humanitarian aid management also played a key role in raising awareness and educating the public about the COVID-19 virus and how to prevent its spread. Akande and Oladipo (2020) highlighted the importance of community-based education campaigns in increasing awareness and reducing misinformation about the pandemic in Nigeria. Psychosocial support: Humanitarian aid management also provided psychosocial support to individuals and communities affected by the pandemic. Oyewumi et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of psychosocial support in promoting mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic in Nigeria.

2.6 Effects of application of the principles of the theory of obligation in humanitarian aid management of Covid-19 in Nigeria

There are several potential effects of applying the principles of the theory of obligation in humanitarian aid management of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Some of these effects are:

- Improved accountability and transparency: By adhering to the principles of obligation theory, humanitarian aid organisations can ensure that they are accountable and transparent in their actions and decisions.
- Increased trust and cooperation: When aid organisations act in a way that is consistent with the principles of obligation theory, they are more likely to gain the trust and cooperation of the communities they serve, which can lead to more effective and efficient aid delivery, Islam et al. (2021).
- Better allocation of resources: By prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society, aid organisations can ensure that their resources are being used in the most effective and efficient way possible, Zanini et al (2021).
- Enhanced community participation and empowerment: By involving communities in the planning and implementation of aid programs, aid organisations can empower them to take ownership of their own development and build their capacity to respond to future crises.
- Reduced corruption and unethical practices: By adhering to the principles of obligation theory, aid organisations can reduce the likelihood of corruption and unethical practices that can undermine the effectiveness and impact of their aid programs.

2.7 Constraints in the applicability of the principles of the theory of obligation in humanitarian aid management Covid-19 in Nigeria

These are some of the constraints in applying the principles of theory of obligation in the humanitarian aid management in Nigeria below:

- Limited resources: Humanitarian aid organisations often face constraints in terms of limited resources, including financial, human, and logistical resources. These constraints can limit their ability to fulfill their obligations in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Political instability: The political instability in Nigeria can pose a significant constraint to the application of the theory of obligation in humanitarian aid management during the COVID-19 pandemic. Political instability can create obstacles to the delivery of aid and can limit the ability of humanitarian organisations to fulfill their obligations.
- Security risks: Nigeria is a country with a high level of insecurity, including conflicts and violence. These security risks can limit the access of humanitarian aid organisations to affected communities and can hinder the delivery of aid.
- Limited access to healthcare facilities: Nigeria has a limited number of healthcare facilities, and many of them are underfunded and understaffed. This limitation can pose a challenge to the delivery of healthcare services by humanitarian aid organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Cultural barriers: Cultural barriers can limit the effectiveness of humanitarian aid organisations in delivering aid and fulfilling their obligations. These barriers can include language barriers, differences in cultural beliefs and practices, and the lack of understanding of local customs and traditions.
- Limited access to information: Limited access to information can hinder the effectiveness of humanitarian aid interventions. For

example, in the case of COVID-19, limited access to information about the virus and its transmission can hinder efforts to prevent the spread of the disease.

Corruption: Corruption is a significant challenge in Nigeria, and it can hinder the effectiveness of humanitarian aid interventions. Corruption can lead to the diversion of aid resources, the mismanagement of aid funds, and the misallocation of aid resources.

3. FINDINGS

The findings of this study suggest that the principles of the theory of obligation can have positive effects on the management of humanitarian aid during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. By adhering to these principles, aid organisations can promote accountability, transparency, community participation, and empowerment, while reducing corruption and unethical practices. However, the study also identified ten constraints that can impede the applicability of these principles in the context of humanitarian aid management in Nigeria. These constraints include limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, cultural and linguistic barriers, security challenges, political instability, and lack of coordination among aid organisations, corruption and unethical practices, lack of community participation, inadequate funding, and inadequate human resource capacity (Kumm, 2021). It is important to note that these constraints are not unique to Nigeria and have been identified in other humanitarian contexts as well. The findings of this study underscore the need for aid organisations to address these constraints in order to effectively apply the principles of obligation theory in their humanitarian aid management efforts. The recent literature review supports the findings of this study by highlighting the potential benefits of applying obligation theory in humanitarian aid management, as well as the challenges and constraints that can impede its implementation. The literature also emphasizes the importance of considering the local context and engaging with communities to ensure that aid programs are culturally appropriate, effective, and sustainable. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that the principles of obligation theory can be valuable tools for aid organisations in their efforts to provide effective and accountable humanitarian assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. However, addressing the identified constraints will be critical to their successful implementation.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, we recommend the following actions to aid organisations, governments, and other stakeholders involved in humanitarian aid management during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria:

Incorporate the principles of obligation theory into humanitarian aid management strategies to promote accountability, transparency, community participation, and empowerment. Address the identified constraints that can impede the applicability of obligation theory, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, cultural and linguistic barriers, security challenges, political instability, lack of coordination among aid organisations, corruption and unethical practices, lack of community participation, inadequate funding, and inadequate human resource capacity. Engage with local communities to ensure that aid programs are culturally appropriate, effective, and sustainable. Increase funding for humanitarian aid efforts in Nigeria to ensure that adequate resources are available to support effective and sustainable programs. Strengthen coordination among aid organisations and with government agencies to promote more effective and efficient aid delivery. Prioritize capacity building for local communities and aid organisations to enable them to participate more effectively in the management of humanitarian aid programs. Foster partnerships and collaborations among aid organisations and with other stakeholders to leverage expertise, resources, and best practices. Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian aid programs to assess their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. By taking these actions, aid organisations, governments, and other stakeholders can promote more effective, accountable, and sustainable humanitarian aid management during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges for the management of humanitarian aid in Nigeria. The

application of the principles of obligation theory can help aid organisations to navigate these challenges and deliver effective and accountable assistance to affected communities. Our study identified ten constraints that can impede the applicability of these principles in the context of humanitarian aid management in Nigeria. Addressing these constraints will be critical to the successful implementation of obligation theory in aid programs. The recent literature review supports the potential benefits of applying obligation theory in humanitarian aid management and emphasizes the importance of considering local context and community engagement. In light of these findings, we recommend that aid organisations in Nigeria and other contexts consider incorporating the principles of obligation theory into their humanitarian aid management strategies. Addressing the identified constraints will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including aid organisations, governments, and local communities. Ultimately, the effective application of obligation theory can help to ensure that humanitarian aid efforts are accountable, transparent, and sustainable, and that affected communities are empowered to participate in their own recovery and resilience-building efforts.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data is not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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