

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN VICTORIA FALLS COMMUNITY IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic is currently in rapid progress and it has threatened the global social network that glues the global together. The study aims to assess the psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, including the loss in productivity and job disruption due to the restrictive measures of COVID-19 lockdown in Victoria Falls. The spillover psychosocial impact of the pandemic has been seen in almost every sector globally. The COVID-19 is a topical issue which has attracted the scholarly lens. Given the massive attention devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper detected that the psychosocial signal is carrying a spectre of increased uncertainty and unknown future. The phenomenological research design was used to study individuals in their natural setting and the population in the study is the adult breadwinners who reside in the town and surrounding area of Victoria Falls. The random and purposive sampling was used to select the participants and data was analyzed using thematic content analysis. Data was collected through an anonymous open-ended interview question on social media platforms. The COVID-19 lockdown has pushed Victoria Falls into mucky-waters. The advent of the coronavirus pandemic has left Victoria Falls in a dire situation with thousands of people losing their jobs and source of livelihoods. COVID-19 has caused panic and fear among the residents resulting in multiple effects such as the uncertainties with their livelihoods, not being able to work during isolation, fear of being dismissed from work, fear of being separated from loved ones, feelings of hopelessness, boredom, fear of death, loneliness and depression due to isolation.*

Keywords: Psychosocial, COVID-19, Impact, Tourism, Zimbabwe

Research Area: Social Science

Paper Type: Research Paper

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a topical pandemic which has threatened the social fabric that glues society together and it has caused panic, shock and caught the World unprepared. The world is under the pressure of how to find a cure and stop the spread of the novel COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of coronavirus has caused great damage to political, socio-economic and livelihood of individuals around the globe. The novel coronavirus has attracted unprecedented measures to curb its spread and severity. Smith, Ostinelli & Cipriani (2020) say that COVID-19 is an on-going pandemic of coronavirus disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome. COVID-19 was first discovered in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 and is causing critical challenges for public health worldwide. The COVID-19 outbreak

has rapidly evolved into a fast-moving global pandemic, with world updates produced on a daily basis. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the outbreak to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). Globally, the number of COVID-19 cases has reached more than 4 million and killed 227, 000 (WHO, 2020b). The stunningly acceleration spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the attention of worldwide audiences with a deluge of contrasting content about the severity of the disease. Most nations had introduced asperity measures of lockdown, social distance, restriction of public transport as a way to fight the transmission mechanisms of the disease.

The first confirmed case of COVID-19 infection in African region was reported in Nigeria on the 28th February 2020. By 1st April 2020, 43 of the 46 Sub-Saharan African countries had reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 (Prince et al, 2020). This shows that the pandemic wave had arrived in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to (WHO), Africa as a region, has the world's greatest concentration of least developed countries, fragile and conflict-affected states, morbidity, inadequate housing, and poor healthcare. This is an indication that most African nationals are living in poverty and are likely to be more susceptible to COVID-19 infection, due to overcrowding, poor sanitation, food insecurity and undernutrition, lack of education and health literacy among others.

Previous studies have shown that pandemics have drastic psychosocial impacts, which eventually become more pervasive than the pandemic itself. Brooks et al. (2020) suggest that the psychological impact of quarantine is wide-ranging, substantial and can be long-lasting. Taking into consideration the current lockdown situation and Zimbabwe's economy stamina, it has disrupted social support networks hence causing more harm than good. The WHO has warned that lockdown restrictive measures have a negative impact on the people's mental health and well-being (Zhang and Ma, 2020).

The virus is chiefly transmitted through coughing or sneezing on people. With the lack of any suitable vaccine, most governments have imposed lockdowns to curb the growth of the virus. COVID-19 mitigation restrictive measures are creating an impact on the poor communities around the world. The spread of COVID-19 is accelerating rapidly in Zimbabwe and the psychological impact of COVID-19 is scant. The Zimbabwe government has responded positively on March 27, 2020 by initially announcing a nationwide total lockdown for 21 days starting on March 30, which was later extended indefinitely as a measure to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. According to the current study conducted by Mazwi et al (2020), the directive restrictive measures by the government of Zimbabwe has caused anger, frustration, sadness, panic, anxiety and high rise of domestic violence in different communities.

The virus is affecting a broad swath of economic activities, from tourism, medical supplies and other global value chains, consumer electronics, and financial markets to energy, food, and a range of social activities, to name a few. Victoria Falls is a tourist town, and tourism is a great patient of coronavirus. This entails that the tourism industry has been significantly affected by COVID-19. WHO, ESCAP (2020) indicates that pandemic such as

the COVID-19 can reduce the quality of life, economic productivity and paralyze social network. In Zimbabwe, the first case number was recorded in Victoria Falls, tourist hub and cash cow for government revenue. The Victoria Falls region has for the longest time also struggled with one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the country. This did not come as a surprise to record the first case in the country with thousands of international arrivals each day. Victoria Falls remains one of the most vulnerable towns to be highly impacted by the pandemic with a population of over 40 000 people who all converge for shopping from two major supermarkets and one bus terminus. With an increasing shortage of basic food supplies, supermarkets are flooded with people queuing for basic commodities which expose them to the danger of infection. Victoria Falls used to be a hive of activities ranging from craftwork, cultural dance groups, village tours, township tours and vending among others.

The COVID-19 lockdown and slowdown have pushed Victoria Falls into mucky-waters. Tourism is the engine that runs the town from service delivery, economic development, education and social welfare. The advent of the coronavirus pandemic has left Victoria Falls in a dire situation with thousands of people losing their jobs and source of livelihoods. COVID-19 has caused panic and fear among the residents resulting in multiple effects such as the uncertainties with their livelihoods, not being able to work during isolation, fear of being dismissed from work, fear of being separated from loved ones, feelings of hopelessness, boredom, fear of death, loneliness and depression due to isolation. As suggested in (WHO), (2020b) the effect of COVID-19 differs according to nations, culture, and political stability and support structures among others. In Victoria Falls, COVID-19 has barred hope to the whole community which before the pandemic was entirely dependent on tourism.

The implementation of the lockdown, slowdown and physical public distance is popularly known as “social distance” measure to mitigate the transmission of the coronavirus pandemic. In line with the above Mazwi et al (2020) insist that these restrictive measures have significant psychological impacts on the lives of people. COVID-19 leaves immediate and long term traces of psychological trauma in the community like Victoria Falls. The sudden cut of sources of surviving to the indigenous people in Victoria Falls will lead to the ramification of psychological disorders which can vary from depression, anxiety, panic attacks, somatic symptoms, and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, to delirium, psychosis and even suicidal. To curb these problems psychologists should play a herculean role in responding to COVID-19 to areas such as Victoria Falls where the first was discovered in Zimbabwe.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Generic Overview of Covid-19

Worldwide, COVID-19 is spreading at an alarming speed and has caused unexpected damage with a record of more than 4 million casualties. The epidemic has affected all traces of human survival ranging from economic, politically, socially, psychobiological. The coronavirus is gender blind. The world is working hard to flatten the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is spread mainly through discharge from the nose or droplets of saliva when an

infected person sneezes or coughs. It is associated with fever, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, aches and pains, and shortness of breath and has no specific vaccine or treatment although clinical trials examining possible treatments are underway (WHO, 2020a, 2020b). To mitigate its spread, sanitizing hands or washing them regularly using soap and water, social distancing, staying home, and covering one's mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing are some of the recommended remedies (Prem et al., 2020; Rosenthal, Ucci, Heys, Hayward, and Lakhanpaul, 2020; WHO, 2020c).

2.2 The Victoria Falls Tourism

Tourism plays an important role in enhancing a nation's business activity, income, foreign currency earnings and the creation of jobs. According to Hung et al, (2007) in Ulak (2020) postulates that the tourism industry tends to be highly sensitive to negative environmental factors such as natural disasters, epidemics, serious social conflicts, war, economic crises and terrorism acts. The first case in Victoria Falls meant the closure of the tourism industry in Zimbabwe. Victoria Falls is one of the Seven Wonders of the World, is the epicentre of Zimbabwean tourism and is the most visited area (Zhou, 2018). The town hosts the Victoria Falls Rainforest that is managed by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA). The Zimbabwean tourism industry is customer-driven (Zhou, 2018), therefore effective tourist destination or attraction site branding and management is important for all tourism sources and age groups including family tourists and school tours. The Annual Tourism Trends and Statistics Report (2015) indicated that the Victoria Falls Rainforest tourism site as the most popular tourist attraction site for all tourism sources and age groups. In their pioneering work, Wall and Mathieson (2006) synthesised much of the research on the impact of tourism. Their literature review revealed that the impact of tourism can be analysed from different perspectives: economic, social, cultural, and environmental. An epidemic can become the ultimate driver of the national tourism industry to the collapse, as it affects all human activities, like social, religious, athletic, artistic and cultural.

2.3 Psychological Impact

Psychological distress is largely used as an indicator of mental health (Drapeau *et al.*, 2011; Hamouche, 2020). It refers to a state of individual's emotional suffering, accompanied by symptoms of depression (e.g. sadness and loss of interest) and anxiety (e.g. restlessness) (Drapeau *et al.*, 2011; Mirowsky and Ross, 2003; Payton, 2009) and somatic symptoms like insomnia (Drapeau *et al.*, 2011; Marchand, 2004). Psychological distress is related to a set of psychophysiological and behavioural symptoms that are distributed over a continuum of time (Marchand, 2004). While depression is a psychiatric mood disorder, characterized by persistent reduced mood and interest (Bonde, 2008), persistent feelings of sadness, negative emotions and difficulty to cope with everyday responsibilities (Cummins *et al.*, 2015). If not identified psychological distress may lead to major depression (Marchand, 2004). While depression may lead to severe consequences like suicide (Beck & Alford, 2009; Cummins *et al.*, 2015).

Psychological distress and depression are the results of an intense or continuous stress which has not been managed, mainly due to the individual’s difficulty to cope with stressful life events (Cummins *et al.*, 2015; Drapeau *et al.*, 2011; Marchand, 2004). The current pandemic is a source of intense stress for the whole world population. The COVID-19 pandemic can be related to many stressors that may drain employees’ mental health, during and after this pandemic. In this section, we have made the distinction between the stressors during the coronavirus pandemic and those that can evolve after this pandemic. The distress that an individual feels is not the problem. It is rather the consequence of the problem (Mirowsky and Ross, 2003).

During pandemic, fear and panic set in. In fact, individuals’ anxiety may increase following the first death and increased media reporting related to the number of new cases (Rubin & Wessely, 2020). In this case, individuals are afraid about their own health and the health of the members of their family (Bai *et al.*, 2004; Brooks *et al.*, 2020; Xiang *et al.*, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 itself and the control measures taken may lead to widespread fear and panic (Zhang *et al.*, 2020a). Fear behaviours can propel the virus transmission and spread in pandemic areas (Chan, 2014)

2. 4 Pathways of the Socio-Economic Impact of the COVID -19 Pandemic

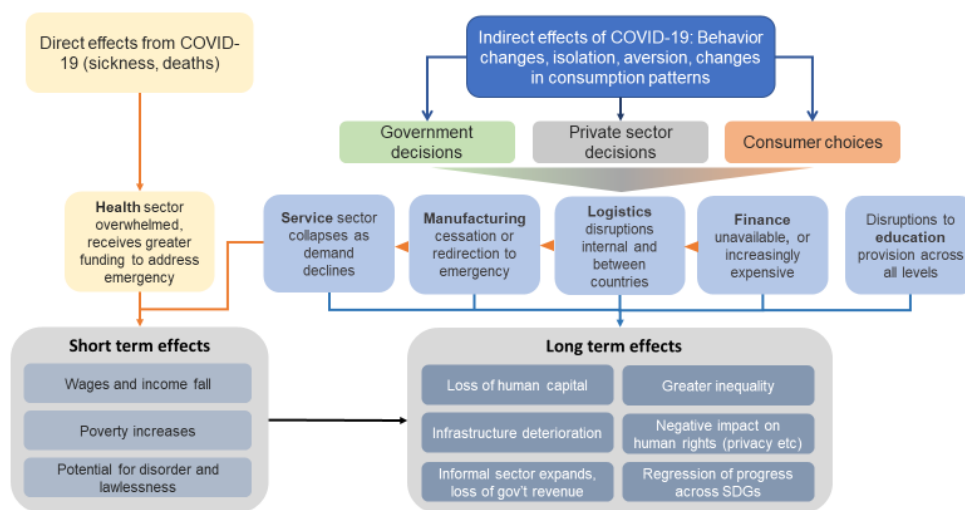


Fig 1.1 Adapted from Evans, D., and Over, M., (2020). The economic impact of COVID-19 in low and middle-income countries.

The diagram illustrates that the novel coronavirus has indirect effects which are behaviour change, isolation, aversion and change in consumption patterns. These would influence government decisions, private sector decisions and thereby changing consumer choices. Ulak (2020) posits that the decisions will make a significant impact on the service sector, manufacturing, education and financial stability. The long and short term effects will then be noted. The imminent short term effects are a reduction in wages and income fall, poverty and can lead to potential disorders. The long term effects will be loss of human capital, greater inequality, infrastructure deteriorating, and ruin of human rights and lastly, the informal sector will expand leading to government losing revenues (Hamouche, 2020).

The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 epidemic has direct and indirect effects. The direct effects are getting sick as a result of coronavirus, fear of being quarantined, and loss of financial income that sustain the family. This means that the coronavirus will be another source of impoverishment and reinforce existing factors, in turn limiting the ability of vulnerable households to escape from – and stay out of – poverty. Peterman et al (2020) in Hamouche (2020) argues that second is aversion behaviour effects resulting from the fear of catching the virus, which in turn leads to a fear of association with others and reduces labour force participation, closes places of employment, disrupts transportation, motivates some governments to close borders and restrict the entry of citizens from afflicted countries, and motivates private decision-makers to disrupt trade, travel, and commerce by cancelling scheduled commercial flights and reducing shipping and cargo services.

Pandemics and wide-spread outbreaks of infectious diseases exert comprehensive impacts on all aspects of social and economic life and often affect all members of society. Ulak (2020) narrates that individuals in communities who hold less power or marginalized pre-pandemic are likely to feel the negative primary and secondary consequences more acutely. The most vulnerable groups are women and girls who overwhelmingly stand on the wrong side of structural inequities, and they consequently bear the greater burden. Major pandemics have the potential for profound economic consequences across whole economies. The outbreaks of an epidemic such as the coronavirus and the measures put in place to control the infection's spread cause short to medium-term unemployment, particularly impacting persons working in low-wage, hourly, or informal work (Hamouche, 2020). In most global contexts, women are more likely to be self-employed or employed in informal roles such as vending and food preparation and are consequently among the first impacted, especially to tourism areas like Victoria Falls.

2.5 Socioeconomic Impact of Covid-19

According to the report by UN (2014) which was on Ebola, it points out that the outbreak of the pandemic can threaten the social glues that unity the society. The pandemic such as the novel coronavirus is associated with hardships that changed people's consumption habits. For example, many have had to eat less than before the COVID-19 outbreak. There is evidence that such an epidemic is eroding the age-long communal behaviours of the people including attendance at ceremonies, an adjustment in burial rights and less caregiving to family and community members. Most people in the epicentre environment like Victoria Falls where the first case was recorded in Zimbabwe expressed fear for the future of their family, community and the whole country.

The COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core. The pandemic is exacerbating and deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political, economic, and biodiversity systems, which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic. The most pervasive of these inequalities is gender inequality (UN framework, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic is still uncertain, it is clear that households in affected areas will feel some economic shock. These shocks could be large, for instance, households may face increased unemployment or reduced

level of earned income. Even without direct shocks to earning levels, pandemics may incite temporary food insecurity and increased stress due to uncertainty about future economic security or general wellbeing.

2.6 Financial Loss and Job Insecurity.

Pandemics lead to business disruption. The outbreak of a pandemic causes the closure of schools and workplaces (Ferguson *et al.*, 2006), as well as the shortening of working hours (Tyko, 2020) as measures to mitigate the severity and spread of the disease. As businesses cannot operate at their previous capacity, most of them close, which will lead to a widespread of staff lay-offs and redundancies that will substantially decrease the level of employment (Page *et al.*, 2006). This situation will have a negative impact on the individuals' financial capacity due to the loss of income (Zhou *et al.*, 2020). Financial loss can also be an issue for individuals who are quarantined, since they are not able to work or to maintain their professional activities, often without the prior ability to plan for this eventuality long-term, with potentially long-lasting effects (Brooks *et al.*, 2020). The study of Zhang *et al.* (2020b) showed that individuals who stopped working due to Covid-19 outbreak reported worse health and distress. Likewise, the study of Mihashi *et al.* (2009) showed, in the case of SARS infection, that income reduction highly predicts psychological disorder with odds of 25.0. In addition, some authors identify inadequate insurance and compensation as one of the risk factors for poor mental health (Tam *et al.*, 2004).

2.7 Infodemic and Infobesity of Covid-19

According to Khan et al (2020), the term *infodemia* was coined during the SARS outbreak and has become more serious during the outbreak of COVID-19 infection. The spreading of tailored misconceptions and misinformation regarding the epidemic through social media platforms is called *infodemia*. This is a dangerous system which can cause panic, fear, depression, and worries to the population since almost 85% of the population in areas like Victoria Falls have access to social media platforms. Winning the race of the sharing novel details for COVID-19 and gaining fame over social media have accelerated the rate of spreading forged news during the current outbreak of COVID-19. This situation is leading to cause, distrust towards other individuals in terms of disease spread, which may increase the risk of severe public health consequences. The *infodemia* is leading to feelings of helplessness and anxiety can motivate people to use unproven methods and remedies that may be detrimental putting their life more susceptible to danger. Khan et al (2020) indicated that this has caused World Health Organisation (WHO)'s risk communication team to launch a new information platform known as WHO Information Network for Epidemics as counterfeit. This platform actively reported the details related to COVID-19 after COVID-19 was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Therefore, people who use social networks excessively are prone to adverse effects related to infodemic. The major concerns associated with infodemic can further add to the psychological stress and anxiety. To mitigate the risks associated with infodemic the public health community should provide help to social and conventional media to better understand the actual concerns associated with the outbreak and positively portray the efforts from health care services providers,

medical associations and scientific communities (Khan et al, 2020). Therefore, infodemic can increase the burden of psychological stress and anxiety on a large scale. Social media, electronic media and print media should avoid spreading hateful and stressful news.

COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, infobesity which is information overload pertaining the novel coronavirus become a threat than the coronavirus itself. They become overwhelmed by the known lethality of the infection as well as the intensity of media coverage of this pandemic outbreak, which exacerbates their perception of danger (Bai *et al.*, 2004; Garfin *et al.*, 2020; Shigemura *et al.*, 2020), increases their anxiety (Shigemura *et al.*, 2020) and undermines their mental health. In this case, misinformation spreads faster than COVID-19. Social media is one of the main channels providing updated information regarding COVID-19 (Bao *et al.*, 2020; Gao *et al.*, 2020). Although it could play an important role in facilitating the communication of individuals who are quarantined with their relatives who are far away (Brooks *et al.*, 2020), social media is not always a trusted source of information for updates about the pandemic (Gao *et al.*, 2020). In fact, it may spread rumors or false information leading to misinformation overload (Bontcheva *et al.*, 2013; Roth & Brönnimann, 2013), which stokes unfounded fears among many individuals. The study of Gao *et al.* (2020) showed that there was a high prevalence of mental health problems (depression and anxiety or a combination of both) which was positively associated with frequent social media exposure during the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China. Furthermore, news coverage of a pandemic outbreak may contain an amount of conflicting information which can shake an individual's trust (McCauley *et al.*, 2013), creates confusion, uncertainty and increases the level of stress felt by the individual and his incapacity to cope with the intensity of the current situation. Moreover, the lack of clear information about the different levels of risks may lead individuals to imagine the worst, which exacerbates their anxiety (Desclaux *et al.*, 2017).

3. AIM OF STUDY

To assess the psychosocial impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, including loss in productivity and job disruption due to the restrictive measures of COVID-19 lockdown in Victoria Falls and surrounding areas.

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology section includes research design, participants and setting, instruments, data collection and analysis procedures. The research shall employ qualitative methods to understand the impact of COVID-19 on people who resides in Victoria Falls and surrounding area during the implementation of restrictive measures of lockdown.

3.1 Research Design

This research employed the phenomenological research design which qualitative in nature. According to Kovach (2019) the phenomenological method is significance in this study because it is a method of gathering knowledge from participants' natural settings. According to Cohen et.al. (2007) as cited in Sloan, Bowe and Brian (2014), phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocates for the study of individual experiences as human behaviour is determined by the phenomena of experience instead of objective, physically

described reality that is external to the individual. Therefore this study focuses on the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 on people living in Victoria Falls where the first case was recorded in Zimbabwe.

3.2 Participants and Setting

This study involves adult breadwinners who stay in the town of Victoria Falls and surrounding areas. An equal representation of gender was employed. The random and purposive sampling was used in the study to select the breadwinners who live in the town of Victoria Falls.

3.3 Data Collection

The researchers gathered data through an anonymous open-ended interview questions in which participant answered social media platforms of WhatsApp and Facebook. The research also employed the use of interactions with participants via text and audios. Responses were recorded in a document form. The ethical consideration of informed consent, protection from harm, confidentiality and competency was respected during the study.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data. The researcher grouped all the response transcripts into interesting phrases and themes. Data familiarization is a key to thematic analysis as it is used for qualitative methods. Howitt and Cramer (2010) describe that the process vary according to circumstances including the researcher's expectations about the direction in which the analysis proceed.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged from the participants' responses:

- Health threats of lockdown of COVID-19 lockdown
- Disruption of Psychological wellbeing
- Shortage of basic goods and services
- Economic and social disruption
- Tourism closure of informal trading
- Cultural and religious effects
- Disintegration of education sector

5.1 Theme one: The Health threats of COVID-19 lockdown

The respondents revealed that they are living in fear: fear of the disease, fear of dying, fear of being arrested, fear of losing their loved once and fear of hunger. They are being confused of the information which they get from the social media. Every day they receive threats in social media about the severity of coronavirus. The resonates with Khan et al (2020) who points that *infodemia* is leading to feelings of helplessness and anxiety can motivate people to use unproven methods and remedies that may be detrimental putting their life more susceptible to danger. One respondent fumes that:

The information we get from whatsapp is now causing more harm than the coronavirus itself.

This simply shows that *infodemia* and *infobesity* is greatly causing misconception towards the severity of the diseases. Another participant eludes that: *we are being victimized by the police for failing to wear a mask and to maintain the social distance. Police pretend to arrest in a way in initiate corruption behavior.* This indicates that the health of people living in Victoria Falls community is in danger. The COVID-19 has confined every at home, none is allowed to move. The confinement has negative impact to individuals who need to go for fitness training hence compromising the health of people. There restriction of travelling and the demand of pass-letters at roadblocks had affected individuals who had emergence such as pregnancy delivery or accidents. Therefore lack of transport will affect the health of people indirectly or directly.

Travel restrictions, infection control measures, fear, or a decrease in trust can stop people from accessing health care facilities. The response can also put the future of existing health systems under strain. It takes time for the system to recover and return to normal once the outbreak has ended. On the other end, in context to the COVID-19 lockdown some participants indicated there is now high rise of domestic violence and sexual exploitation of a girl child. The travel restrictions put a girl child at risk since some of them spent a lot of time closed door with would be perpetrators. The sexual violence causes women and adolescent girls to be at risk of increasing HIV infections among adolescent girls, unintended pregnancy, mental health disorders, sexual transmission infections and more. Therefore the COVID-19 lockdown had exacerbate pre-existing gender inequities and power hierarchies, violence in the home worsen as prolonged quarantine and economic stressors increase tension in the household.

5.2 Theme Two: Shortage of Basic Goods and Services

Lack of basic food and services is the other factor which affected the people in Victoria Falls. All the participants highlighted the need and access to basic goods such as food. *Yes COVID-19 is a threat to our lives.*

“Imagine a population of over 40 000 people are serviced by only two supermarkets and one bus terminus. With the increase of basic commodities such as cooking oil and sugar, supermarkets are flooded with people queuing for basic goods hence exposed to the deadly virus.”

Responses to COVID-19 epidemic has disrupted the livelihoods and food supplies, leading to malnutrition. This is lead to unhealthy eating habits.

5.3 Food Security in Victoria Falls

In view that all the people in Victoria Falls are dependent on the tourism industry which has been brought to a halt by the COVID-19 pandemic, more people are currently in a desperate situation and are in need of food aid. Thousands of people have been laid off their jobs and have been incapacitated to provide for the families. There are almost no alternatives for the residents of Victoria Falls despite the fact that they reside a few kilometres from a

once billion-dollar revenue region of the country. This new reality is stressful for the residents knowing that the country has been facing political and economic challenges even before the pandemic. This means that there is very little the national government can do to rescue the people of this region following a further poor harvest in the just ended agricultural season.

5.4 Theme Three: Disruption of Psychological Wellbeing

COVID-19 has caused panic and fear among the residents resulting in multiple effects such as the uncertainties with their livelihoods, not being able to work during isolation, fear of being dismissed from work, fear of being separated from loved ones, feelings of hopelessness, boredom, fear of death, loneliness and depression due to isolation. This resonates with Zhang *et al.*, (2020a) who points out that the outbreak of COVID-19 itself and the control measures taken may lead to widespread fear and panic. The sudden cut of sources of surviving to the indigenous people in Victoria Falls led to the ramification of psychological disorders which can vary from depression, anxiety, panic attacks, somatic symptoms, and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, to delirium, psychosis. The findings noted that most of that respondents are having traces of psychological effects. Fear of tomorrow and the uncertainty is the worry of most respondents. The restrictive measures of the national lockdown as a result of coronavirus is causing anxiety, stress and depression. These psychological problems are precipitated by a variety of things such as the control of children during lockdown is stressful, where to find enough food and only being seated without doing anything is stressful.

“The information we get from social media platform are causing us to panic and to feel hopeless”

“I’m unable to control my child and I’m worried that he will get coronavirus outside from his friends”

5.5 Theme Four: Economic and Social Disruption

Economic immune of people in Victoria Falls is now compromised due to the novel coronavirus. The sudden cut of the tourism industry had significantly affected their source of income. Informal trading has been hit hard by the restrictive measures of travelling and trading. The livelihoods are negatively affected by the lockdown, in both the short term and in the longer term. The lockdown response has an impact on the local economy, raising prices and causing loss of jobs and wages being cut off. This caused resentment among those who miss out. Their coping strategies can reduce future income opportunities and increase vulnerability to future shocks. Poorer households are especially affected as they have limited means to cope.

4.6 Theme Five: Tourism Closure of Informal Trading

The advent of the coronavirus pandemic has left Victoria Falls in a dire situation with thousands of people losing their jobs and source of livelihoods. This sector has been particularly hard hit. Tourism is vulnerable to downturns during major infectious disease outbreaks, due to fears of contagion. Although the number of Covid-19 infections in

Zimbabwe remains significantly low, the impacts of the pandemic have already started overwhelming the country and its citizens. The country is heavily dependent on international backing to keep its wings off the economy functional. Travel restrictions, bans, and the closure of markets and borders can disrupt trade and livelihoods. Tourism players' create a money-spinning basket of activities in Victoria Falls. The villagers in surrounding communal survive from exhibiting their African culture through traditional food and dance among other things during village tours. In-between activities are traditional dance groups waiting to entertain tourists with their well-choreographed dances and music. With the worsening economic situation in Zimbabwe, illegal vendors are not left out as they claim their portion of the value chain by masquerading as local agents and chasing tourists to sell curios and other souvenirs. Local vegetable vendors and other non-tourism businesses are dependent on the more than 30 000 tourism workforce to buy their wares. COVID-19 has simply cut off the entire value chain from the source of the tourists in Europe and the United States of America where the majority of them come from. This has completely crippled the resort town of Victoria Falls' economy.

4.7 Theme Six: Cultural and Religious Effects

Culturally, Zimbabwe is a collective community in which the “being-ness” of individuals is defined by interaction. Therefore the public social distance has affected the norms and values of Ubuntu. Respondents pointed out that their religious beliefs are now at the halt. The restrictive measure of suspending the church gathering is destroying the moral fibre.

“I cannot survive without going to church”

“Attending a funeral with a limited number of people is a taboo”

4.8 Theme Seven: Disintegration of Education Sector.

COVID-19 had threatened the education system. Participants showed great concern over the closure of schools. The schools were suddenly closed prematurely due to the outbreak of coronavirus. The learning activities have been put on hold. Although many first world countries are hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, their education sectors continue to thrive with robust e-learning platforms that allow students to learn from home respecting measures instituted by their governments to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Zimbabwe is a third world country, has suffered a great setback in its education sector as children had to stop learning from the day schools was closed due to the lack of electronic learning (e-learning) and information and technology systems. Insteady institutions of higher learning was now resorting to tele-learning which have its own short comings. Respondents are worried of the future of children since millions of children's social, physical, emotional and mental development will likely be highly impacted as their development is not on pause mode as is with the education sector in the country. There are growing concerns over when the national lockdowns will be lifted and schools allowed to reopen while there has to be a balance between keeping people safe from the disease and education. Furthermore, the

education infrastructure in Zimbabwe is nowhere close to allowing basic measures of social distancing as outlined by the World Health Organization to allow schools to open.

6. CONCLUSION

It emerged from the present study that the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 lockdown threatened the social fabric that glues society together. It has been noted that the psychosocial impact has put the residents of Victoria Falls' live into a halt. The lockdown has paralyzed the livelihoods of individuals in Victoria Falls. The sources of income in Victoria Falls is tourism has been quarantined. The fact that the first case in Zimbabwe was recorded in Victoria Falls, majority of people are living in poverty, are hopeless, are isolated and are as well living in fear of the novel coronavirus. The psychosocial impact noted are food insecurity, economic factors, and psychological factors, religious and the erosion of cultural values. The future study should focus on the challenges faced by vulnerable population such as women and disabled adolescents girls. The current crisis is the first global crisis in the age of mass internet supported communication, therefore the psychosocial challenges can be addressed using a corpus of technological knowledge. The psychosocial impact of COVID-19 lockdown has surely locked the channels of livelihoods in Victoria Falls.

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