

THE POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC AS A METAPHOR FOR DISRUPTIONS IN SOCIETY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE IN ELDORET TOWN, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions in society, challenging our economic, social, and political systems. This study looked explored how the pandemic serves as a metaphor for disruptions in society and how it may lead to social change. The study also analyzed the pandemic as a metaphor and explored on its implications in societal change. The study's main aim was to assess the post covid-19 pandemic as a metaphor for disruptions in society and its implications for social change: a case of Kenya.

The objective of the study was to assess the immediate and long-term societal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential for positive social change in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic in Eldoret, Kenya. The study argue that the pandemic has brought to light the vulnerabilities and inequalities that exist in our society, and has provided an opportunity for individuals and communities to rethink and reimagine our social systems. This study concludes that there is need for a discussion on the potential for social change in the aftermath of the pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has left an indelible mark on societies worldwide, serving as a metaphor for the disruptive forces that can reshape the social fabric.

This study explores the implications of the pandemic on social change in Kenya, analyzing the multifaceted impacts on various aspects of society. Employing a mixed-methods research design, we investigate the transformative potential of the pandemic in fostering societal resilience and adaptation. The study employs a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across diverse demographic groups. Data is collected through a combination of surveys, interviews, and document analysis. Preliminary results reveal both challenges and opportunities, indicating the need for proactive strategies to harness the potential for positive social change.

Key words; post-Covid-19 pandemic, metaphor, disruptions in society, implications, social change

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic, which emerged in late 2019, has transcended its role as a global health crisis to become a metaphor for disruptions in society. Kenya, like many nations, has faced unprecedented challenges, from public health crises to economic downturns and social upheaval.

This study aims to delve into the nuanced impacts of the pandemic on Kenyan society and explore the potential for social change amid adversity (Smith et al., 2020).

WHO, (2021) Covid-19 pandemic, originating in late 2019, has not only been a global health crisis but has also served as a metaphor for societal disruptions, offering profound implications for social change. As the virus spread across the globe, it exposed vulnerabilities and inequities within societies, demanding a comprehensive examination of its impacts on diverse regions.

The pandemic has been a transformative force, challenging the status quo and reshaping societal structures worldwide. In the USA and Europe, according to Abedi et al., (2020) the virus laid bare healthcare disparities, economic inequalities, and social fragilities. According to Emanuel et al., (2020), the pandemic has immense toll on public health systems, coupled with unprecedented economic downturns, has prompted reevaluations of societal priorities and the need for resilience in the face of global threats.

In Africa, according to Nkengasong & Mankoula (2020) the impact of the pandemic has been diverse due to the continent's heterogeneity. While some regions faced acute healthcare challenges, others grappled with economic and food security issues. collaborative efforts were made to address the crisis collectively according to a report by East African Community (2020), which emphasized the interconnectedness of nations in the face of a common threat.

According to Ogunkola et al., (2020), the effects of the pandemic become more nuanced in Kenya, like many African nations. Kenya experienced disruptions in healthcare, education, and economic activities causing disruptions in the societal set up. The vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic according to the study necessitate this exploration in order to uncover the potentialities for social change within the societies in Kenyan.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The immediate challenges posed by the covid 19 pandemic are evident and therefore the understanding the long-term implications for societal structures in Kenya remains crucial. The disruption caused by the pandemic has highlighted existing vulnerabilities and inequities within the country. Ogunkola et al., (2020, Covid 19 pandemic has exposed vulnerabilities within the Kenyan social fabric. Healthcare disparities, economic challenges, and disruptions in education disproportionately affected various segments of the population. According to a report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, (2021), there are broader national challenges that have affected vulnerable populations, including low-income communities and marginalized groups.

The disparities in healthcare access and economic resilience exacerbates the existing inequalities, this explain the specific challenges faced by vulnerable groups in the study area and was imperative for crafting targeted interventions (Etyang et al., 2020).

The closure of schools and the shift to online learning had widened the educational gap, particularly in regions with limited access to digital infrastructure (UNESCO, 2020). Eldoret's educational landscape and the digital divide was explored to assess the strategies that were included in the learning environments then and now. While the pandemic presents numerous challenges, it also serves as a catalyst for social change. The potentiality for resilience and adaptation within the societal context, identifying opportunities for positive transformations in societal structures are among the coping strategies in the post covid period. Understanding these dynamics therefore will be key to these potential changes and an eye opener for policymakers and community leaders in fostering a more robust and equitable society (Manyozo, 2020).

The study was undertaken so as to comprehensively examine the societal disruptions caused by the pandemic in Eldoret and by extension Kenya. The main aim of this study was to examine the Covid-19 Pandemic as a Metaphor for Disruptions in Society. The study delved into this by using two objectives; to assess the immediate and long-term societal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya and to analyze the potential for positive social change in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya.

This study is not only timely but also essential for understanding the long-term consequences of the pandemic and identifying pathways for positive social change. This study sought to address the gap in knowledge regarding the transformative potential of the Covid-19 pandemic on the society and its implications for future social change initiatives. The Covid-19 pandemic has unearthed an array of challenges globally, prompting a critical examination of its multifaceted impact on societies. The study also aimed at identifying vulnerabilities and inequities within the societal fabric that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Literature Review

This section presents the literature on the dual study objectives as follows;

The Societal Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered a global crisis with far-reaching consequences, impacting various facets of society. The pandemic effected changes in healthcare access, economic structures, and educational systems. The pandemic also underscores the existing healthcare disparities and vulnerabilities in many regions globally (Emanuel et al., 2020).

In Kenya, challenges in healthcare infrastructure, including limited testing capacity, shortage of medical supplies, and strain on healthcare personnel were experienced (Ogunkola et al., 2020; The Lancet Public Health, 2020). These challenges had immediate and long-term implications for healthcare access in Eldoret.

The economic ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic are profound, affecting livelihoods, employment, and overall economic stability. Many developing nations, including Kenya, where the informal sector is a significant contributor to the economy was greatly affected by the government measures in mitigating the effects of the pandemic (World Bank, 2020).

Lockdowns, restrictions, and economic downturns had disproportionately impacted this sector, potentially leading to a restructuring of economic activities in the study area and beyond and its effects are still being felt as those affected are yet to fully recover from the effects (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020).

Educational disruptions caused by the closure of schools and the shift to online learning was widely reported. However, the extent of these disruptions and the potential long-term effects on educational systems in Eldoret remains unknown. The digital divide and access to technology posed challenges to the continuity of education, with implications for learning outcomes and educational inequalities are still being felt (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2020).

According to Manyozo (2020) understanding how communities responded and adapted to the challenges posed by the pandemic is essential for assessing societal impacts. Community resilience in the face of health crises also highlights

the importance of social capital, community networks, and local initiatives. Exploring such responses provides insights into the potential for positive societal change.

The role of government in interventions and policy responses in mitigating the societal impacts of the pandemic cannot be overstated. The effective policy measures, such as social distancing and economic stimulus packages, played a crucial role in shaping the immediate and long-term outcomes of a crisis (Fernandes, 2020; Hale et al., 2021).

The Positive Social Change in the Aftermath of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has not only posed challenges but has also prompted adaptive strategies, community resilience, and transformative initiatives globally. The role of community resilience and adaptive strategies in overcoming challenges has often been overlooked by many scholars. Communities all over the world including Kenya often mobilize resources, both formal and informal, to address immediate needs and adapt to the changing circumstances. Positive social change often emerges from local initiatives and grassroots movements. Manyozo (2020), examined the responses of community-based organizations, non-profits organizations and local leaders can shed light on transformative initiatives that aim to address social, economic, and health challenges. Understanding these initiatives contributes to a broader understanding of the potential for bottom-up change.

The pandemic accelerated digital transformation globally, impacting various sectors, including education, healthcare, and business (Maitland et al., 2021). The digital innovation and technology provided insights into transformative initiatives that have a lasting impact on social structures.

Positive social change is often facilitated by effective government responses and policy interventions. Piot (2020), analyzed how the Kenyan government had responded to the pandemic and the policies it implemented to address societal challenges. The study found that the insights from such policies have potential for transformative change. These changes include examining initiatives that prioritize equity, inclusivity, and sustainable development.

Crises can lead to shifts in social attitudes and values, fostering a sense of solidarity and community. Investigating changes in social attitudes in Eldoret on post-pandemic can provide a nuanced understanding of the potential for positive social change. Shifting in social attitudes and values include increased community cohesion, empathy, and a renewed focus on social justice (Drury et al., 2009).

Transformative initiatives in education and skills development are essential for societal progress. UNESCO (2020) examined how educational institutions and community organizations in Kenya adapted to the challenges, including innovations in online learning and skills training, can highlight opportunities for positive social change. The report indicated that there is great transformative initiative in education and skills development which is essential for societal change and progress

3. METHODOLOGY

The site for this study was Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County. The study site was chosen as it is the business hub for North rift region and the headquarters of the county. Several activities were being organized.

These activities as highlighted in the County's Integrated Development Plan 2018 - 2022, made the researcher to choose Eldoret as the study area. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Kothari (2009), asserted that descriptive research is a description of the state of affairs as it exists at present and the researcher has no control over the variables.

This Descriptive research design was used in this study because there is a possibility of observing the phenomenon in a completely natural and unchanged natural environment. The study adopted a qualitative approach. The target population for this study were all the house hold heads in Uasin Gishu county.

The sample size for this study was 50 respondents falling in the inclusion criteria from among individuals residing in Eldoret, Specifically, those in Kimumu, Peris, Sinai and Munyaka estates as a focus is on assessing the immediate and long-term societal effects. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection, with sample size determined through saturation. Secondary data was not readily available due to the lack of literature on the effects of the pandemic in relation to social change. The data collection methods thus included;

In-depth Interviews

Interviews in qualitative researches are one of the most important sources of data (Jwan & Ongondo, 2011). The interview method was used in collecting data from the respondents until saturation. An interview guide was used to elicit information necessary to achieve the intended purpose of the study.

This method was picked because of its ability to allow the respondent to engage in a conversational manner which ensures that in-depth information is retrieved especially on the changes that have been experienced by the families during and after the pandemic.

4. OBSERVATION METHOD

This is one of the key methods in qualitative research. It is usually emphasized by various scholars and authors that every qualitative research must involve some element of observation (Kothari, 2008; Ongondo, 2011). Observation means getting information or data by seeing the respondents in their natural setting as they carry out their day-to-day duties with a view of getting the insight about their duties (Cohen, 2007;305). Further it is said that the researcher collects the data in real life situations by looking at what takes place. Visiting the homes, schools and business places so see how the respondents are conducting themselves aided in achieving this purpose.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

This method combined both elements of interviews and observation methods and involves a homogeneous group with a common interest (Jwan & Ongondo 2011). This method of data collection was used to collect data as facilitated a discussion with a small group of respondents who included the social workers, women groups and some members of the public, and elicited findings through consensus. The focus group interview was mainly used to inquire about people's perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards the studied a phenomenon.

Results and Discussion

The main purpose of the study was to assess the effects of post Covid 19 pandemics as a metaphor for disruptions in society and its implications for social change. Preliminary results highlight the complex interplay of challenges and opportunities stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic which include; economic disparities, healthcare vulnerabilities, and educational disruptions emerge as key challenges, while community resilience, digital innovation, and adaptability present opportunities for positive social change.

In this study majority of the respondents representing 70% of were of similar view that the pandemic had serious effects. One of the respondents had this to say;

the immediate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic had profound effects particularly in healthcare access. We could not access hospital for far of contracting the disease.

He went on to say;

Most of the health facilities including, district and even at referral were overwhelmed with the number of people seeking medical aid. There was a lot shortages of medical supplies, and also strains on healthcare personnel.

Another respondent had this to say;

We were affected economically especially those that were trading in different agricultural produce. We could not transport the produce; we could not access the markets due to the lock down.

She went on to say;

The money we had invested went to loss. We could no recover and we are still servicing the loans. Some of us lost the jobs especially those of us in the informal sector. This job losses resulted in financial instability among us as the vulnerable populations

She went on to say;

When my husband lost his job, it meant he had to sit in the house doing nothing and if I go out to the market, he had to cook his own meals. A thing he had never done and this a clear social change for us

Another respondent had this to say;

Despite the challenges, there is positive social change among the men in Eldoret. They could come back home early and they have gotten used to that even after the pandemic

She went on to say;

There are initiatives that have emerged in Eldoret, including community resilience through local initiatives and grassroots movements. Digital innovation and technological advancements have spurred positive changes in education, healthcare delivery, and business practices, contributing to shaping a path towards recovery and resilience

One of the key informants had this to say;

There is immediate impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Healthcare access had faced challenges with overwhelmed medical facilities, shortages of medical supplies, and strains on healthcare personnel. Economic structures experienced disruptions, particularly in the informal sector, leading to job losses and financial instability among vulnerable populations. Educational systems were significantly affected, with school closures exacerbating existing educational inequalities, especially in regions with limited access to digital infrastructure.

On observation; the government's interventions and policy responses, although facing initial challenges, have contributed to shaping a path towards recovery and resilience. This finding underscores the importance of transformative initiatives driven by community leaders, local organizations, and innovative individuals.

Adaptation to the new normal has led to the emergence of creative solutions, such as local economic development projects, community-driven healthcare initiatives, and educational programs tailored to bridge the digital divide. This can be evidenced throughout the study area where traders are now using their private cars as makeshift business places and selling their produce at the road side especially at peris area and junction where such could be seen as viable.

5. CONCLUSION

Pandemics are widespread occurrences of infectious diseases that can have severe consequences on society. The Covid-19 pandemic is one of the most significant pandemics in recent history, with a severe impact on society globally, including Africa and Kenya. Metaphors can be powerful tools in communication, influencing how people perceive and respond to a particular situation. The Covid-19 pandemic has presented an opportunity for social change, highlighting the importance of investing in public health infrastructure and promoting technology in education.

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