

## **Social Resilience and Challenges of Covid-19**

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**ABSTRACT.** These days the world has been facing ever seen multi-dimensional crisis due to new deadly disease known as Covid-19. Even though world is not stranger for different catastrophic events recently the outbreak of Covid-19 came up with ever seen difficulties which tested the resilience of different societies. Covid-19 came to social world when the globalization era celebrates its hegemonic inevitabilities. So far different pandemic visited human society and none of them were not mysterious compared to Covid-19. Those pandemic were either partly or completely controlled by the then human knowledge and technologies. However, Covid-19 tested hitherto medical knowledge and health system of all societies regardless of their level of advancement. Yet different societies experienced Covid-19 challenges and pains differently. This trend may provoke the question of covid-19 varying factors and the overall nature of a given Society. Covid-19 deadly affected almost all societies regardless of their technological and medical advancement. So far Covid-19 distracts all elements of social systems such as social life, political life, cultural life, spiritual life, economic life and overall social existence. Different societies used to withstand covid-19 challenges with different affordable and relevant strategies. Different aspects of society have been affected. In this article, it is needed to penetrate into varying intensity secrets complicated the pandemic despite knowledge gap and limitation of medical knowledge in case of exhaustive awareness of etiology of viruses.

**Keywords: Covid-19, Social Resilience, Challenges, Implications and Societal Responses**

### **1. Introduction**

Global problems are not shown optimistic scenario to be managed by existing human technologies. For example, novel corona virus (SARS-CoV-2) or Covid-19 came to question human level of civilization and knowledge. Indeed, contemporary world is experiencing a fundamental crisis like climate change, security issues, and consistent rise of disease outbreaks like (HIV AIDs, Ebola, Zika, Nipah Virus, Cholera, Yellow fever, Lassa fever, SARS, H1N1 influenza) at different time. Currently, global society has been facing an unprecedented crisis that disrupting the overall lives and livelihoods i.e. social and cultural systems.

Currently, the social world is undergoing a great crisis (Debele, 2018) [1]. In fact, if society does not equip itself with coping mechanisms, the future will be more pessimistic.

The emergence of a novel corona virus (SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19) in 2019 can be said the most consequential event of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, upending modern life, globalization, and relations between countries, in perspectives of international relations. Internationalization and globalization trends have contributed its role for the easy expansion of Covid-19 (Daniel, 2020). The outbreak count many millions cases and over million deaths and still counting when this article has been written. It is also an economic crisis, as a stay-at-home and travel restriction imposed to break the chain of transmission has dramatically diminished economic activity, shuttered many firms whether big or small, massive unemployment, disrupted global supply chains, and income losses. It generated political crisis that delays periodic elections of many countries including Ethiopia which lead to power extension for many governments, even questions the responsive capacity of constitution to such crisis i.e. constitutional gap.

Covid-19 undoubtedly frightened health services, tested safety nets, and eroded global solidarity and multilateralism just when they are needed the most. Covid-19 has also been triggering social disorder. Its effects are already wide-ranging, and its longer-term repercussions will be profound.

Even though many diseases have been flared-up at different periods; neither healthcare nor governments had equipped for public protection. Indeed, all societies exhaustively did its best in combating the pandemic. Novel corona virus questions strength of social system. The dwindling of overall system has increased vulnerability to virus outbreaks and pandemics. Rethinking position of the state in society and scrutinizing deep inequalities and deprivations in many societies which reproduce inequality of exposure to risks and impacts should be reconsidered.

## **2. Methodology**

This review article basically used secondary data. Accordingly, different research articles, books, reports, magazines and short communications were major sources. Researcher used to interpret and analyze the issues by employing thematic analysis techniques.

## **3. Major Implications of Covid-19 and Responses**

Recently social world is becoming very complex and puzzling. This complex world and social events may not be managed via individual views, perceptions and religious affiliations rather it requires collective approach. For instance, Daniel (2020) [2]. reported that an epidemics eruption does not affect some section of society but it put impacts on all people's life. Similarly, Covid-19 affects all social groups regardless of their background (Humanitarian Response Plan, 2020). It affects overall life and livelihoods of society and messed up its essence structures (UN Ethiopia, 2020) [3].

### **3.1. Social and Cultural Implications and Responses**

#### **3.1.1. Reconsideration of health structure**

Covid-19 tested the resilience of health care services and indicated the significance of new health policy. Existing health system needs to be revised since so far its strength has been proved fragile. The health status of the community can be promoted and facilitated by living in a healthy environment and consuming health promoting services (Debele, 2017) [4].. In view of that internal vulnerabilities and external vulnerabilities of health system should be critically examined. Too much reliance on others for medical equipment, personnel and protective materials has been seen that its problems outweigh its merits. Internally, structural factors such as existing gender inequalities resulting in women having even more limited access to critical health services, systems and information exacerbate the pandemic (UN, 2020) [5]..

Awareness gap and societal resistance as well as shortage of essential protective equipments are key challenges whereas health system per se contributes to ineffectiveness of recommended tools in combating the pandemic. Lack of adequate water supply also affects effectiveness of hand wash as protective mechanism. Thus, all stakeholders should reconsider their performance in provision of water and other amenities at local and international level. Even though water supply considered as typical problem, there are many untold structural and individual constraints that need collective and orchestrated effort. This lead to systemic thinking while addressing local and global problems. Therefore, the paper recommends that existing world needs to have the cooperative and coordination policies that promote mutual advantages and strengths.

#### **3.1.2. Social Capital and Co-existence**

Reciprocal interactions of economies created mutual vulnerabilities. Unfortunately, existing society is in an undesirable position to cooperate in fighting global challenges. This asserts that mutual cooperation against common problems undoubtedly determine existence. Individual, state and structural interconnectedness towards coordinated and effective pandemic management has been found very profound. On the other hand, Nath (2020) [6] noticed that trends of global cooperation are not promising and societies tend to fall apart. So far covid-19 shows Africa's overall vulnerability that lead to destabilizing effects (UN, 2020) [7].

Economic dynamism and current status of financial structure magnifies Africa's vulnerabilities (UN, 2020) [8].. In addition, anarchism tendencies and political cultures worsen Africa's internal vulnerabilities. Existing structures and institutions need to be re-examined to strengthen their resilience and responsive capacity.

Furthermore, at the time of covid-19 developed economies preferred collision rather than cooperation. Cooperation among international political actors can make a difference on combating the pandemic. Obviously, absence of cooperation and mutual understating among political actors generated countless

costs. The political atmosphere of existing society can reflect on other aspects of society. For example, political power elites at global level capitalize on their own comparative advantage that probably generated from crisis during the pandemic.

However, global crisis can be more managed if great powers preferred cooperation each other rather than jealously quarreling. Therefore, practicing collective policy and developing cooperation culture can help the campaign against Covid-19. For example, Chinese government at the eruption of Covid-19 attempted to abuse transparency of its state which intensify impacts of the pandemic. USA also followed its own principle which creates diverse reactions from different political actors. Despite its political nature and leadership style, different states show reluctances in cooperation which worsens challenges of covid-19.

Different governments utilize Covid-19 as opportunity to develop national political dialogue, collective decision making culture, intimacy and transparency between society and political actors, enhance institutional response capacity and facilitate national consensus. Some countries enhance their resource utilization and implement equitable resource distribution. This leads to better resilience, protection and inclusiveness. In view of that, all social categories can be incorporated in development projects (UN, 2020) [9]. In addition, UNICEF (2020) [10] mentioned that Unemployment will be reduced since production sector shows declining.

### **3.1.3. Living Styles and uncertainty of social world**

Even though societies has been facing several challenges in the past that was not enforced them to look for novel tools to fight against similar challenge. Uncertainties of the world aggravate the less predictability of social phenomenon. Furthermore, so far existing society more concern about past than what may will happen in coming times. In fact, covid-19 questions the strength of education system, technological advancement, business trends, and ideological sophistication, conventional strategies as well as local and international structural dynamism.

Behavioral change because of covid-19 challenges enhances innovations and confrontational resilience. In view of that, increasing hand washing culture, limiting shaking hands during salutations, physical distancing, better emotional intelligence and working place cultures have been showing changes (Cleland, 2020) [11]. Therefore, existing living style and social system need to be re-evaluated from its resilience, responsive capacity, compatibility and credibility in terms of crisis management.

### **3.1.4. Social bonding and Humanitarian services**

Societal existence and continuity get its secured protection through its pillar actors. Influential and key personnel such as leaders, older people and professionals are expected to safeguard society from any catastrophic event including Covid-19. During campaign against spread of Covid-19 those people showed their solidarity and reinforce necessary care for both their families and other social groups. Covid-19 affects low income group who lost their usual income due to several business activities were locked down during

such situation supportive organization such as Banks should show empathy (Alemeyehu, 2020) [12]. Social consequences of covid-19 have been reflected in different forms including social disorganization and lead to social crisis including kinship and family disturbance (Semir, 2020) [13]. This implies that the more members of society cooperate each other the less will be the impact of the pandemic. Therefore, the social resilience of any society depends on cooperation and bonding exists among them. The more their social bonding is the more their social resilience at any undesirable condition.

### **3.1.5. Environmental aspects of social interaction**

Social life requires multidimensional functions of all social aspects. The appropriate operation of the system need to well entertain political and professional issues. Our environment and social interaction need to interact positively so as to promote healthy life. Covid-19 introduced the new approach to our environment which requires our adequate responsibility and compassion. The protection and necessary care that we give to our nearby environs promote our health. If we develop healthy interaction with environment we will receive better health rewards. Thus, when we care for environments and invest on environmental hygiene the result is the more our resilience and minimizes the repercussions (UN, 2020) [14]. The measures that have been taken to tackle the pandemic caused unintended consequences on lives of poor households who depend on daily wages that disabled to afford living costs for basic needs such as safe water (UNICEF, 2020) [15]. Furthermore, healthy society can be promoted and facilitated by living in a healthy environment and consuming health promoting services (Debele, 2017) [16].

### **3.1.6. Health beyond physical well being**

Health state implies not only physical well being but also well being of life of each individual, quality of lifestyles and betterment of livelihoods. Whenever pandemic erupts it affects well being of society and its members. Pandemic has potential to disrupt social security and stability as well as protection of each and every individual. Covid-19 affects social equalities, social order, health care services and treatments which further affect the well being of society. Furthermore, Covid-19 reinforces prevalence of challenges that question the degree of social resilience. Even states are challenged to preserve their stronghold security (Williams (ed.), 2008:279) [17].

In addition, risks that come up with pandemic impacts affect the security of the state. Some states and politicians preferred their own way rather than accepting experts' advices and reasons based on the empirical facts. Political crisis get its worse during Covid-19 which may predict potential political crisis are inevitable in the coming times. In past times Covid-19 proved that the world is very vulnerable in all aspects such as economic, social, political and cultural elements which are fundamental pillars for the existence, security and progressive evolution of any society. The politicization of Covid-19 leads to rampant corruptions, social crisis, elevates grievances, instabilities and health care services are undermined. In fact, some societies turned situations during Covid-19 into opportunities. For example, some societies bring their

political problems to table. Yet a number of societies have a lot of assignments to do in controlling the pandemic. Thus, all political actors need to come together to enhance their responsive capacity. Of course, the effort to build peace in sustainable manner requires cooperation. Covid-19 creates opportunities for some groups that seek to capitalize on fragile society (UN, 2020) [18]. UNICEF (2020) [19] declared that crisis in urban area associated with food shortage due to covid-19.

### **3.1.7. Social norms and individual behaviors**

Challenges of Covid-19 partly associated with characteristics of political actors and their commitment to protect their societies. Even the degree of crisis and its controlling depends on quality and commitment of leadership. Some societies proved their quality of leadership by applying relevant and practical measures in combating the spreads. On the other hand, some societies witnessed deadly impacts of Covid-19 because of reluctances and inept leadership of their politicians and leaders. Therefore, social morality and personalities of leaders are very important to manage crisis of the pandemic.

Furthermore, social morality and ethics are challenged via social media platforms which propagate misinformation and conspiracies. Most of those social media aggravate stereotypes and discrimination which further intensify crisis of Covid-19. Thus, clear and evidence-based information and awareness raising campaigns are most effective tools to fight against discrimination, stigmatization and xenophobia. Thus, rather than propagate negative emotions and antisocial behaviors it is important and effective means to manage crisis of Covid-19 that requires cooperation among stakeholders (UN, 2020) [20].

## **3.2. Economic Implications and Response**

### **3.2.1. Coping capacity**

Even if Covid-19 implies the importance of social cooperation and necessitate social support of each other some groups yet tend to continue rivalry. Distribution and fair market of vaccines per se explicitly remarking the theory of social Darwinism which promotes the survival of the fittest. Particularly, great powers have been showing severe confrontation and competition not only in finding vaccines but also on issues of distribution as well as related technology and knowledge. This provokes political tension among developed and developing economies which can be reflected through diplomatic interactions. In view of that accessing vaccine for third world countries may be challenging. This further questions the system of global society in living together cooperatively. In short, covid-19 period also creates opportune for fittest to encroach the lockdown times opportunities. Accordingly, some billionaires became very rich with globalization which is also associated with the rapid spread of the virus largely because of travelling and the lower costs of transportation (Daniel, 2020) [21]. Indeed, Covid-19 brought up fortunes and misfortunes. Lifestyle and economic ability inevitably impacted as the community come across challenges (Debele, 2017) [22].

### **3.2.2. Internal endurance and resisting power beyond local level**

The overall resilience of social system of each society has been tested by Covid-19 (Hynes et al., 2020) [23]. Of course, some societies have been actively engaged in curbing the pandemic with effective manner. This result varies because of framework of appropriate and effective policy designing. Internal social resilience is very important to overcome any difficulties. In view of that, European Commission (2020) [24] stated that transformative resilience that prepares the society and to develop the general capacities for coping with the current and the future crisis.

This review paper confirmed that material capacity is not more important than coordination of society to combat the pandemic in terms of respecting and accepting advices of government and experts. Some governments preferred locking down some non essential sectors whereas other essential sectors remained actively operating with necessary precautionary measures. For example, Ethiopia government chose to capitalize on awareness creation and massive mobilization of human and material resources in order to strengthen effective responsiveness of state (Arkebe Oqubay, 2020) [25]. Identifying and mobilizing existing resources with existing situation help better achievement on fighting the pandemic. In addition, working with others cooperatively enhances response capacity. This implies that identifying one's capacity in fighting Covid-19 spreads can be considered as best strategy (ILO, 2020) [26]. In fact, already existing structural factors perpetuate the impacts of the pandemic. This requires reconsideration of structural patterns and existing structural factors need to be scrutinized. Thus, designing and implementing home-grown socio-economic policy is very important in the short-to medium-term (UN Ethiopia, 2020) [27].

### **3.2.3. Contemporary global problems and Covid-19**

Researches indicated that one of the contemporary global problems is scarcity of water resources. UN (2020) [28] confirmed that availability of an integrated Wash, health, ES/NFI, nutrition and protection intervention enhance prevention and mitigation of Covid-19 impacts. In fact, developing societies are facing problems of water that they are forced to travel long distances and fetch unsafe and unreliable water from polluted rivers and other undeveloped sources. Urban centers are also characterized by shortage of water supply compared to existing demand. Therefore, fighting spread of covid-19 necessitates continuous pattern of water and sanitary equipment provision. Initiatives to offer sanitary equipments at different places particularly at services areas need to be promoted and expanded.

Even if there are suggested policies and measures to combat the pandemic the existing structural factors such as bureaucracy and limitations in the decisions political actors hindered the efforts to achieve better results. Therefore, with ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the challenge of the availability of water needs to be met by working on changes in attitudes to water and the management of water resources are necessary. The current Covid-19 crisis is challenging the delivery of essential services to the most affected segments of the

population. Thus, children and families need special treatment in serious situation like pandemic (UNICEF, 2020) [29].

### **3.3. Political Implications and Response**

#### **3.3.1. Leadership style**

In fighting the impacts of the pandemic the existing leadership can have either facilitating or hindering role. In view of that accountable and responsible government can minimize impacts of the pandemic by way of showing genuine leadership. On the other hand, some governments tend to exacerbate the problem via following wrong and fatal direction. Countries have played their role either positively or negatively to the severity of the pandemic based on the degree of their transparency to their people (Atun *et al.*, 2020) [30]. Of course, political leaders need to have transparency which otherwise undermined trust between the leaders and citizens. The politically abusing the pandemic as a political instrument in many states including Ethiopia enforced citizens even to suspect the real presence of the pandemic, and promoted game of politics, not the health issue. Accordingly, such type of needless politicization of the pandemic and political ego plays pivotal role in widespread of the virus.

At the beginning, it was expected that Africa become the most affected area in the world (UN, 2020) [31]. Here, lack of communication among sovereign states, mostly between leading economies, takes an important part in the spread of the pandemic and difficulty in responding to the crisis by denying collaborative approach to respond to Covid-19. Thus, the transparency in our economics, politics or health system is very important for crisis management at national or global level. In this regard, Daniel (2020) [32] reported that elites and political actors should play critical role in protecting society from any pandemic.

#### **3.3.2. Political Culture**

The political culture has been proved to have determining role to fight against covid-19 with effective manner. In view of that some societies have good political culture that helps efforts of combating the pandemic whereas others more likely expose to the worst degree. Thus, dynamic and inclusive political culture can invite all stakeholders whereas rigid and exclusive political leadership does not create good atmosphere in fighting the pandemic. Accordingly, the more open and participatory the political sphere of a society the more effective that society in mitigating the adverse effects of the pandemic.

In nutshell, cooperation among actors and mutual understanding as well as collective action against the pandemic is very essential. Experts' advices such as physical distancing and using protective equipments at public places can make a difference in overcoming huge challenges of the pandemic. Despite common sufferings, different states did not show equal and similar commitment in fighting against the pandemic. In this regard, UN (2020) [33] asserted that Covid-19 response and recovery closely associated with implementation of cooperation and collective action.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In concluding, the paper highlights the implications associated with ongoing corona virus pandemic and different responses that help crisis management. It was found that Covid-19 has tested the resilience of social systems. The nature of overall social system decides the degree of response to the covid-19. In view of that so far the paper revealed that efforts towards combating pandemic require seriously and critically observing importance of overall systemic organization.

Accordingly, systemic thinking is very important approach to comprehend the overall scenario. Covid-19 explicitly showed us that political and ideological elements influence the reaction to the pandemic. Despite of their level of affluence, politics has been manipulated as essential market place where politicians engage in exchange of lives of people as if it is currency of exchange. It has been witnessed that politicization of events become contemporary political principle in achieving international political influence.

It was observed that several governments have manipulated Covid-19 as political opportunity when provoking fear and uncertainty help in extending range of powers. Some countries including Ethiopia have engaged in extraordinary constitutional practices by which they exercise constitutional interpretation in order to extend and legitimize their power. In some societies such practices are found to ignite grievances, discrimination, mistrust and a sense of injustice which potentially challenge social progress, social harmony and social solidarity.

Furthermore, Covid-19 strongly asserted that economic interactions in either formal or informal aspect determine the essence of any society. This implied that interconnected and globalised economic activities have been highly challenged by the pandemic. In this regard, lockdown heavily disrupt local and global markets, tourism sectors are jammed, domestic and foreign direct investments are restricted and food productions are challenged.

In education, Covid-19 has been proved to be fatal challenge. In this regard, educational interactions such as international scholarships, international academic workshops and research projects have been highly affected. Similarly, essence of social institutions and religious institutions has been explicitly recognized during the pandemic than ever before. Religious helps in strengthening moral stand, easing challenges and enhances meaningful life whereas it avoids anxiety, fear, and feelings of isolation that has been experienced during shutdowns of churches and mosques. Covid-19 has helped people to recognize the social value of staying in touch with each other. Social life and social networks are very important elements. However, the pandemic has imposed impacts on basic social values that provoked isolation and depression by being away from family, friends, classmates, and teachers. For example, sexual behavior was limited and marriage ceremonies were either extended or cancelled. On the other hand, there were rampant sexual abuse and harassment during lockdown which has been frequently reported. Generally, Covid-19 confirmed that

existing social structures and institutions are very essential in promoting social well being which its lockdowns questions the well being of societal existence and its elements.

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