

## COVID-19 Lockdown Measures On Zimbabwean Populace

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### ABSTRACT

**This paper examines the impact of COVID-19 lockdown measures on Zimbabwean populace. The objectives of the paper were to understand the influence of lockdown measures on people living in Zimbabwe. The use of virtual qualitative methodology was utilised. The data gathering methods that were used are phone short message services, WhatsApp, telephone conversations with participants, virtual meetings with key informants and informal talks with some participants on shopping queues. The results of the study are that COVID-19 lockdown measures had negative impact on livelihoods of citizens, brought uncertainties on youths' future, confusion to school students and erosion of social movements. The paper concludes that COVID-19 lock down measures impacted the general public negatively more than the disease itself. It is recommended that the Zimbabwean government considers the impact of lock down restrictions on the most affected groups such as women, youths and children. The government should cushion the vulnerable groups with safety net allowances and consult them when developing strategies that can help them to come out of the shocks they are currently experiencing.**

**Key Words:** Covid-19 Lockdown measures, Enforcement, Citizens, Livelihoods, Security force.

### INTRODUCTION

The study was carried out to understand the impact of COVID-19 (Cv 19) on the general populace of Zimbabwe. The study was interested in getting feedback from the populace on how they were being affected by the lockdown measures. The Cv19 lockdown measures were enforced mainly by security force in the country. The first part of the paper covers the background to the problem, statement of the problem, the purpose, objectives and research questions. The second half of the paper covers methodology, literature review, findings, conclusions and recommendations. The background to the problem is briefly given in the next section.

### Background to the problem

COVID-19 is a global pandemic but its progression is different across the world. Over 4 million cases have been confirmed world-wide and Africa cases remain comparatively low (Pilling, D. 2020). In March 2020, 54 out of 55 African countries reported at least one Covid-19 infection (Save the Children, 2020). Africa suffers more than 22% of global disease burden but has access to only 3% of healthcare workers and less than 1% of the world's financial resources (WHO, 2020). Several African countries reacted quickly by imposing travel bans and introduced quarantine measures to stop the virus from getting a hold on the continent (World Bank. 2020).

Early efforts to contain the pandemic was put in place in the form of lockdowns or travel restrictions and market although this had a heavy social and economic toll (Cilliers et al., 2020). The intention of lockdowns was to flatten the rate of COVID-19 infections by buying time for public officials to improve the capacity of health systems and improve their readiness to deal with the anticipated full impact of the pandemic (Cilliers et al., 2020.) The urgent need to contain and mitigate COVID-19 brought unprecedented disruption to the ways that people live and work, with the introduction of some form of social distancing, lockdowns, and quarantines. The African region responded as a block through information sharing, active coordination of state responses and collective action (Medinilla,A. Byiers.B. & Apiko,P., 2020).

Rwanda was the first African country to react by imposing a localised lockdown in the second week of March (Mugabi,I. 2020). Malawi followed by declaring a national emergency, banned public gatherings and closed down schools on 24 March 2020, before any cases were recorded in the country (Kondowe,R. 2020). South Africa imposed a nation-wide lockdown from 26 March 2020 while Botswana imposed similar measures on 2 April, after just three cases of COVID-19 were recorded (Pilling,D. & Cottering, J. 2020).

Zimbabwe imposed the first lock down on 30 March 2020. The Government of Zimbabwe declared COVID-19 a national disaster on the 19th of March 2020. The first case was reported on the 21st of March 2020. The first lock down was for two weeks then extended for two weeks to the 3rd of May 2020. The country was then put on indefinite lockdown at level 2, which was to be reviewed after every two weeks. In April 2020 43 out of 55 African countries closed their borders, and while many countries allow goods to pass (Medinilla et al., 2020). The lockdown measures had severe effect on sectors and communities that rely on cross-border value chains, informal trading and on migrant workers.

### **Statement of the problem**

Before the lockdown measure the country already had problems of high unemployment rate, where almost 80% of Zimbabweans rely on informal sector and 68% of Zimbabwe gross domestic product us from informal sector. Schools were struggling to maintain quality education as the teachers were demotivated by low salaries and were rolling out new curriculum prematurely. There were school dropouts due to food insecurity while there was no school feeding programme at schools and most parents could not afford to pay school fees for their children. The Cv19 lock down measures were imposed on an already struggling nation where ordinary people were not able to make ends meet. Many informal settlements were facing challenges of enforcing physical distancing since people live closely together and share some infrastructure and sanitation. Containment measures led to return movement of migrant workers that accelerated infection rates in the country as at 3 July 2020 the infection rates in Zimbabwe were 625 while 90% of the number were returnees. The Cv19 lockdown measures obviously exacerbated the populace economic and social challenges.

### **Purpose of the study**

Assess the extent at which Cv19 lockdown measures affect the general populace.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. Establish Cv19 lockdown measures.
2. Examine the enforcement of Cv19 lockdown measures on the general populace.

3. Assess the impact of Cv19 lockdown on the general populace.

### **Questions of the study**

1. What are Cv19 lockdown measures?
2. How are the Cv19 lockdown measures enforced?
3. How are the Cv19 lockdown measures affecting the general populace?

### **RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW**

The lockdown measures led to sharp decrease in remittances and tourism, which are vital sources of foreign currency. All of this has left many developing countries in an extremely vulnerable situation, with economic growth expectations slashed, falling revenues, rising unemployment and weakening currencies (Medinilla et al., 2020). The African Union calculations states that the economy is set to contract by 0.8% to 1.1%, with an estimated 20 million jobs at risk (World Bank, 2020). The World Bank (2020) further projected that economic growth will decline to between -2.1 and -5.1% in 2020 from 2.4% in 2019, leading to the first African recession in 25 years.

Africa is struggling because of limited social safety nets, limited direct cost of COVID-19 containment measures and the global slowdown is worsening macroeconomic situation (IMF, 2020). This agrees with Okonjo-Iweala et al. (2020) who report that African countries have only been able to adopt stimulus packages worth an average of 0.8% of GDP, in comparison to an average of 8% in developed countries. Furthermore, in the absence of a suitable social safety net, it is not feasible for millions of Africans working in low-income jobs and the informal sector to practice social distancing, this is therefore considered as a luxury since few could afford to practice the measures (Noko, K. 2020). Furthermore, women in the informal sector are disproportionately impacted by the economic consequences (Klugma, J.2020).

Lockdowns are violating the principles of rule of law, democracy, and fundamental human rights more broadly. "Lockdowns and emergency orders have exacerbated existing risks for women in abusive relationships, for those working without security and legal protection, for women and girls at risk of harmful practices and discriminatory laws, as well as those in fragile humanitarian settings" (Klugma, J.2020).

It is estimated that over 262.5 million children from pre-primary and secondary school are currently out of school because of COVID-19 closures, which translates to approximately 21.5% of the total population in Africa (Save the Children, 2020). For many poor and vulnerable children in Africa, schools are not only a place for learning but also a safe space from violence and exploitation. It is also where children have a nutritious meal sometimes the only meal for the day (Save the Children, 2020). In addition, Save the Children (2020) pointed that prolonged school closure will result in millions more children being denied their basic right to learn. While, UNESCO, 2020 states, "In Sub-Saharan Africa, 89 per cent of learners do not have access to household computers, 82% lack internet access and around 28 million learners live in locations not served by mobile networks". The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on conflict areas can lead to deeper crisis that can cause longer-term conflicts and inequality in particular gender inequality (Desmidt,S. & Neat,A. 2020). There are reports of rise in gender-based violence, compounded by an economic fallout and increasing stress on public services (Noko, K.2020). These effects risk deepening inequalities and grievances (Desmidt,S. & Neat,A. 2020). This relates to Chergui, S. (2020) who states, Cv 19 lockdown measures

led to increase in gender-based violence across different countries in Africa and more stable economies and loss of jobs and revenue streams for 85.5% of Africans that work in the informal sector. Furthermore, Young, J. & Adib, C. (2020) noticed that there has been a steep increase in reported cases of gender-based violence, showing a monthly increase of 149% in Nigeria. IFRC, (2020) shared same observations that the UK's largest domestic abuse charity reported a 700% increase in calls to its helpline in a single day, while a separate helpline for perpetrators seeking help to change their behaviour received 25% more calls after the start of the COVID-19 lockdown. The Cv 19 restrictions led the closure of some court hearings since the court officials across countries were advised to stay home (Peterman, A.2020). This led to slow down in handling cases of recurring domestic violence, rape, child custody, divorce, right to alimony and property (Peterman, A.2020). In addition, the lockdown measures in about 162 countries around the world suggest that roughly 2.73 billion women around the world were under stay-at-home orders and led to increase in intimate partner violations (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2020). Furthermore, unpaid work and childcare in the home has been substantially amplified with country-wide school closures in 177 countries (UNESCO, 2020).

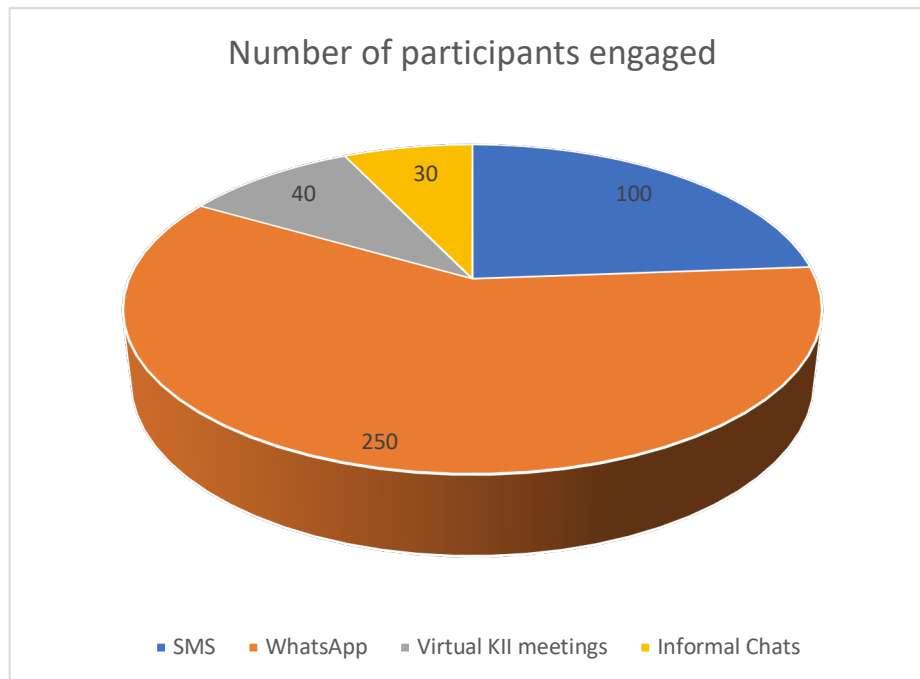
More so, the insecurity and lack of legal entitlements that characterise informal and temporary work put women and their families at extreme risk. Temporary workers were affected more by the lock down restrictions as they lost their jobs. This relates to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) that states an estimate of 461 million women about 36 per cent of the female are in temporary labour force. Therefore, restrictions in movement and closing of borders introduced as part of the governments' response plan had and will continue to have a serious impact on the local economy and household poverty, placing children in vulnerable situations (Save the Children, 2020).

It is estimated that there is a total of 18 million displaced persons in Africa, with more than 12.5 million who are internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in their own countries (IOM,2020). With lock down measures there is a risk of family separation increase, as caregivers or single parents may be taken into quarantine, or on-going/current repatriation and family reunification procedures are suspended (Save the Children, 2020). Movement restrictions are making it difficult for NGOs to get access to quarantine centres to identify unaccompanied and separated migrant children leaving them vulnerable and risk of being abused (IOM,2020).

### **METHODOLOGIES**

The data were gathered using virtual qualitative methodology because of Cv19 movement restrictions and risk of contracting Cv19. This is in line with Turney & Pocknee (2005) who indicate that virtual methodology generates real time data to the hard to reach population just like in this Cv19 crisis. Significant growth in uptake of digital technologies, online and phone-based individual and group interviews are now utilised to reach even marginalised young populations in some settings (Matachowska et al., 2020). This influenced the researcher to adopt the virtual research methodology. The other reason for adopting virtual qualitative research methodology was that participants may feel more comfortable disclosing sensitive information by not being face-to-face and being able to participate in the interview from a familiar space such as one's home (Chanakira et al., 2014).

The researcher used desk review or secondary study to understand the Cv19 crisis in Zimbabwe. The researcher used google search and ZOU library and got access to more than 100 papers, and the researcher used 20 relevant papers for the study. The researcher used phone short message services (SMS), broadcast WhatsApp to ask questions to respondents in Harare, Manicaland and Masvingo where the researcher had some contacts. Figure below shows the visual of participants that the researcher interacted with and the methodology utilised.



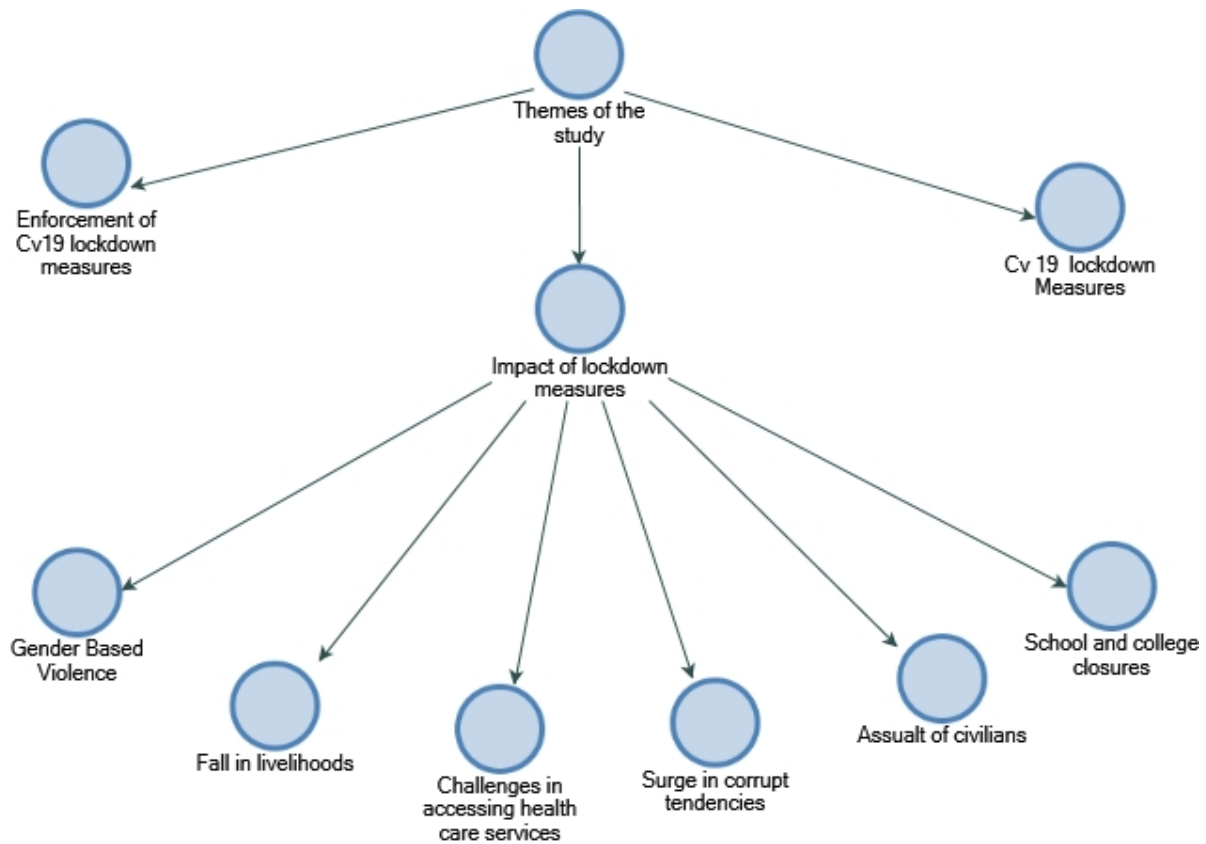
**Figure 1: Number of participants engaged by the researcher**

There were 100 respondents that were reached with SMS and 250 reached with broadcast WhatsApp. The researcher had virtual meetings in the form of ZOOM, WhatsApp video calling and Skype. The virtual meetings were conducted with 40 key informants who were leaders of civil society organisations who were operating in communities, Ministry of Health Officials, Ministry of Social Welfare officials, Members of parliament and headmen in Chiredzi. The researcher also conducted 30 informal conversations with people who were waiting at shopping queues to get their opinions on the subject matter. 70% of the participants were women while 30% were men.

All the questions sent to respondents were open ended, this enabled the participants to give their responses openly basing on their experiences. The key informant interviews were based on semi-structured guided template that enabled the researcher to direct the conversations while giving the informants the leeway to answer the questions without restrictions. The information generated the study's findings that are elaborated in the next section.

## FINDINGS

The data generated came up with 4 themes that were classified as findings of the study. These are: Cv19 lockdown measures, Enforcement of Cv19 measures and Impact of Cv 19 lockdown measures. A figure below visualises the findings.



**Figure 2: Themes of the study**

### **Cv19 lockdown measures**

Zimbabwe Cv 19 lockdown measures were guided by statutory instrument (SI 83 of 2020). The measures were announced by the President of Zimbabwe on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. The President imposed movement restrictions for people, every individual was confined to his or her home. People were only allowed to go out of their houses for essential services. Essential services included buying basic necessities at a supermarket or food retail store, or fuel or gas at a fuel or gas retail outlet and buying medicine at the establishment of a pharmaceutical chemist within a radius not exceeding five (5) kilometres from his or her home. An individual could go beyond five (5) km radius when there is no such shop or outlet within that radius. For buying groceries only one person from a household was permitted to go out to buy. People going out were supposed to wear face masks, maintain social distance of one (1) metre apart, sanitise their hands or wash their hands with soap and running water constantly. Every shop was taking body temperature of people, provide sanitisers for people to sanitise their hands before getting into a shop. No person was allowed in a shop without wearing a face mask. Essential businesses operated from 9 am to 3pm every day in the first phase of the lockdown and the operating hours were reviewed to 8 am to 4:30pm every day from May.

Other essential services included any hospital service, any transport service such as public bus passenger called ZUPCO, terrestrial, aerial or waterborne and some aeroplanes, any service relating to the generation, supply or distribution of electricity, any service relating to the supply and distribution of water, any sewerage or sanitary service, any service relating to the production, supply and the work of the Parliament of Zimbabwe (but not including public hearings by its portfolio or other committees conducted outside its precincts. The workers offering essential services were supposed to have a letter from their employers to be allowed to move around or to get public transport. All private transporters were barred from operating. All public gatherings were banned this included church services, funerals and political rallies. All borders were closed they were only open to trucks carrying goods and for returning residences. The court operations were suspended, and only urgent matters were being heard in courts.

After first two weeks the operations of courts was specified as an essential service, permitting the courts to operate despite the lock down. However, the specifications prohibited all evictions or judicial sales in execution from taking place. On 26 June 2020 SI 153 of 2020 was put in place that allowed evictions and sales in execution to take place, except for evictions of tenants and mortgagees who were protected by the Presidential Powers. SI 110/2020 and amended s. 2 of SI 115/2020 allowed individuals who had a duty of care to visit homes where they were rendering assistance. This allowed a member of the staff of a foreign mission or agency, a citizen or resident to move from such mission or agency for purpose of obtaining services or assistance at such mission. All the Government establishments or institutions were closed except those responsible head of the Ministry or head of that establishment operated as normal. Every school and other educational institution (whether primary, secondary, tertiary or technical and vocational, except for institutions providing medical training or research useful for combating COVID-19) were closed. All intercity transport was prohibited except the operation of intercity transport services engaged in the carriage of staff for essential services, the carriage of sick persons to hospitals and other health care providers.

There were penalties that were imposed for every individual found outside his or her home. The individuals had a burden of proving, to the satisfaction of an enforcement officer, that he or she is covered by any of the exceptions listed in the statutory instruments. Informal traders were not allowed to operate since the imposition of the lockdown however, there was an announcement that they could start their operations in phases as from 16 June 2020. Informal trader means an individual who carries on a trade for his or her own account from which he or she makes a turnover of less than the amount that would require him or her to be registered operator for the purposes of the Value Added Tax Act. The categories include a hawker or street vendor and a person who sells articles at a place commonly known as a "people's market" or a "flea market".

### **Enforcement of Cv19 lockdown measures**

The Cv19 lockdown measures were enforced by the security agents. The statutory instrument 83 of 2020 stated the penalties of people who did not adhere to lockdown measures. The person found to be in breach of the lockdown was charged and notified that he or she will be summoned before a court to answer that charge and ordered to return immediately to his or her home. If the person refuses to return immediately to his or her home, or has no home, or is unable to immediately return to his or her home by reason of being outside of a radius of 5 kilometres from his or her home was treated as having escaped from any place of detention, isolation or quarantine, and accordingly may

be arrested without warrant and put in any place of detention, isolation or quarantine. The re-entry of citizens and returning residents were to be detained, isolated or quarantined at places specified by government officials at port of entry.

All passenger or cargo aircraft engaged in an essential service were required to depart within ten (10) hours of arrival, failure to do so the officers were quarantined for twenty-one days. The vehicles in transit or cross-border goods vehicle were allowed to move since they are being engaged in essential services. The drivers of trucks when arriving at the border were supposed to be in possession of a functional thermometer for measuring body temperature, face masks and adequate hand sanitizing fluid or disinfectant, and at least one receptacle for dispensing such fluid or disinfectant. If not in possession, the driver was able to obtain them at the border post. Failure to have the requirements the driver was not allowed to enter or depart port of entry.

Tobacco was sold between March to June 2020. The farmers were not allowed to bring the precious leaf to main capitals as they used to do previously. The tobacco auction floors were decentralised, so the farmers were able to sell tobacco close to their areas of residents. All sports activities were banned during the first two months of lockdown and were allowed after the Sports Minister released the classification of sports either as low-risk, medium risk or high-risk. The low risks sports were allowed to resume training although gyms remained closed.

The security officers and health officials were monitoring all businesses classified as essential services on whether they were adhering to lock down measures. The businesses found not complying with the measures were given some penalties. All the private transport operators were not allowed to operate and there were many roadblocks on all roads leading to towns and industries. Only people in possession of the travel documents were allowed to proceed with their journeys. This opened the rent seeking behaviours to some security agents who had the ultimate decision to either let a person to proceed or return them home.

There was an outcry of lack of clarity on what security agents were looking for at roadblocks, unfortunately the security officials did not produce and publicise the conditions for the public to be clear of what was required. Some people were being returned home despite producing letters that they were providing essential services. One responded said

*"I was returned home despite having police clearance that I was supposed to offer essential services, the police seemed to be ignorant of these letters".*

Some security officers used this as an opportunity to extort bribes from people for them to get entry at roadblocks.

Journalists were not spared from being victims of lockdown enforcement. The journalists had expired cards of 2019 because the board that was supposed to accredit them with new accreditation cards was not functional. Some security officers did not have that knowledge therefore, they denied journalists from carrying out their duties although they were classified under essential services. An official from Media organisation stated that,

*"at least 15 journalists were charged of violating lockdown measures and we have taken the issues to the courts for the police officers to stop harassing journalists".*



The court case enabled the journalists to operate freely and their accreditation cards were renewed from May 2020.

### **Impact of Cv19 lockdown measures**

The lockdown measures to a greater extent had a negative impact on the general public. The enforcement led to increase in number of gender-based violence (GBV), fall in livelihoods, challenge in accessing health care services, surge in corrupt tendencies, assault of civilians and schools and colleges closures. The next to be discussed is the rise in GBV.

### ***Gender Based Violence***

There was an elevation in the number of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) reported in the country since victims and perpetrators were forced to live together under the same roof all the time (24/7). There was also increased prevalence of violence in the home or family, including intimate partner violence (IPV) and child or elder sexual abuse owing to forced coexistence and isolation with abusers. Women based organisations had radio and television sessions where they indicated that the number of GBV cases increased by almost 75% in the first six weeks of the lockdown. In an interview with one women-based organisation the researcher found out that the organisation could not cope with the number of victims who wanted to access safe shelter services. The official states that,

*“we are not in a position to accommodate all the women who are calling on our hotline numbers who want shelter”.*

This was the case for both rural and urban women.

Some women indicated that they live in areas where they do not have access to electricity and where electricity is there, it was sparingly used because of high charges. This meant that there was no access to radio or television and any form of entertainment for their husbands who were at home most of the time. Constant presence of husbands without entertainment meant more hours of sexual abuse for women and unwanted pregnancies. One interviewee said,

*“lock down yakureva kuvananababa kwenguva huru vasingakwanise kubuda pamba, isu takutonza nekurara navo chero nguva nekubata pamuviri paunenge usingade nekuti kuramba kunotokurovesa”*

literal translation,

*“lockdown has increased our time with our husbands who cannot go outside the house, it means we are now forced to have sex with them most of the time, getting unplanned pregnancies and if you refuse to have sex with him you can be beaten up”.*

The lockdown measures increased the risk of human trafficking to sexual services, engagement in transactional and survival sex, engaging in unsafe sex work, and forced marriage. The commercial sex workers who lived in high-density areas who used to engage in transactional sex with working men for few hours reported to be worn out by high demand of transactional sex. In the high-density areas social distance measure were hardly observed because of the set up. In informal settlements people were continuously walking around their areas without restrictions. This led to high number of men demanding more sexual favours from known commercial sex workers. One commercial sex worker said,

*“the lockdown has increased my job, I have run out of condoms and I am now engaging in unsafe sex and sometimes my clients are paying me less because they are not going to work.”*

Furthermore, sexual harassment has been reported by many women who were harassed by the security agents. The lock down measures meant that women who used to vend on the streets were no longer able to do so forcing themselves to improvise for them to be able to fend for their families. In the process of improvising, women suffered sexual harassment from security agents who either fined them or engaged them in sexual activities as a form of payment. A woman said,

*“I was caught by the police head plaiting my client while sitting on a bridge, I was told that I breached lockdown measures and I was supposed to pay for that, instead of paying the police officer started fondling my breasts and I was later released”.*

Confinement at home led many women to performed unpaid work most of the time. Since people were not allowed to go out of their houses, women dedicated most of the time to unpaid household chores. This increased levels of GBV as some men were viewing women as slaves who were supposed to perform the chores accordingly. Some husbands started micromanaging their wives and beat them if they delay serving them hot meals. This led to both physical and emotional abuse to women, men knew that women could not report their cases because of movement restrictions.

### ***Fall in livelihoods***

Many women worked in informal sector that closed due to CV19 lockdown measures. According to informal sector based organisations about 80% of women in Zimbabwe work in informal sector through street vending, selling at flea markets, doing cross boarder trading, conducting piece jobs at people’s houses and working in small to medium enterprises. The closedown led to fall in people’s livelihoods in a country that was already struggling with poverty before CV19 crisis. The country was food insecure, there was high unemployment rate and economic meltdown. The lockdown exacerbated the situation for struggling informal sector people. The fall in livelihoods meant most families were eating one meal per day since the parents could not do their “*kiya kiya*” meaning piece jobs to fend for their families.

Most of the workers in industries were on temporal contract because of unpredictable business environment in the country. The closure of companies led these people to lose their jobs and income. Those in informal sector lost their day to day income because they could not sell or trade anything. One woman said, “*takutofa nenzara nayo lockdown iyi, tinoivanepi mari tisingatengesi muroad?*” literal meaning “we are now dying of hunger because of lockdown, where can we get the money if we can’t sell along the streets?”. People used to survive on day to day income where they sell their produce and buy food stuffs to eat for the day. The few food stuffs enough for one day for the day are called “*tsaona*” meaning “emergency”, it is enough for one meal. Therefore, losing a day’s income had catastrophic repercussions for affected people. This might lead to malnutrition to families, stunting on children and engaging in negative coping mechanisms such as stealing.

People who survived by conducting piece jobs at people’s houses were no longer able to do them. Most people who does piece jobs are from high density areas who are supposed to perform them at low density areas. There was no public transport for them to be mobile and people in low density areas were not allowing outsiders to their houses for fear of contracting Cv19. It meant most mobile

house maids and gardeners lost their jobs. Those who survived on getting recycled materials from people's bins couldn't collect the materials. Loss in livelihoods also led to increased GBV because of frustrations at household levels especially towards the preparation of meals time when parents realise that they do not have anything to prepare.

There were high incidences of robbery and theft that were reported. There were reports of people stealing maize combs from people's fields both in rural and urban areas. In 2019 the rainfall was below average hence less people managed to get good harvest. Loss in livelihoods led people to steal from people as a negative coping strategy. An interviewee said,

*"ndakamuka munda vangu vakohweva vese nembavha, ndakarwadziva zvisingaite"*

literal meaning

*"I woke up my field harvested by thieves, it pained me a lot".*

Other people were reporting that there were thieves at shopping centres who were snatching groceries from younger children and women. Some women indicated that they were afraid to go to the shops on their own because of high rates of snatching thieves at the shops or on the road.

In addition, farmers' markets were closed during the first month of the lock down. Most farmers were stuck with their horticulture produce which led to huge loses. There were reports of some security agents who burnt farmers' produce while enforcing lockdown measures. Restrictions on movement led farmers to lose out in their business. Farmers who managed to go to farmers' markets did not get many buyers since people were not allowed to go to farmers' markets that were beyond 5km radius from their households. Most farmers' markets in Zimbabwe are at central places where it is difficult for people to access them. Farmers' markets are not yet decentralised although the city council is trying to do so. On the other hand, the city council and security forces demolished all informal stalls in a bid to contain Cv19, rendering many informal sector people destitute.

### ***Access to health care services***

The Cv19 lockdown measures seriously impacted on pregnant women and girls in accessing critical health services, making access expensive and risky due to lack of safe means of transportation during restricted hours. Some women who were supposed to travel more than 5km radius from their household's faced challenges in obtaining travel clearances. During the first weeks of lockdown people were not aware of where to get the traveling documents. So most pregnant women gave birth at homes or used unlicensed midwives in their neighbourhood. This was putting women at risk of child birth complications and contracting HIV and AIDS during delivery. One woman said,

*"I gave birth at my house because I couldn't travel to the hospital as I did not have the clearance, I did not know where to get the letter".*

Some women gave birth without enough baby preparation products because of the closure of baby shops. Baby shops were not classified as essential services for the first six weeks of the lockdown. A certain woman said,

*"I remember being asked by a friend to give her hand me downs because she gave birth during lockdown when the shops were closed and she did not have clothes for the baby".*

Some elderly and chronically ill patients had challenges in accessing their drugs due to movement restrictions, they also did not know where to get the letters for them to go to pharmacies beyond 5km radius from their households. The other big challenge on travelling was lack of public transport since all private transporters were banned. ZUPCO bus was giving preference to civil servants not ordinary people. An elderly person said,

*"I couldn't get transport to go to the pharmacy, I was told that ZUPCO buses were giving first preference to civil servants who were going to serve lives, so I had to go back home"*

Not taking daily medication would have side effects to chronic patients.

In addition, there was a risk of potential outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like cholera and measles. In informal settlements people relied on water bowsers from city council to get clean water. During the first three weeks of lockdown measure the city council vehicles were not able to move around to offer water. Private water vehicles stopped operating during first few days of lockdown while sorting out their exemption letters to operate. Most people in Zimbabwe do not have access to water because city council does not offer the service to some areas and it rations the water in areas the service is available. Unavailability of water made it difficult for the populace to practice hand washing measures that were recommended by health experts to reduce the spread of Cv19. There was diarrhoea outbreak in Bulawayo which killed dozens of children due to lack of clean water.

Restrictions in movement contributed to lack of access for family planning contraceptives to women and girls. It was difficult for women and girls to get clearance to go to health centres. Some health centres closed their routine services, they were only attending to emergencies making it difficult for women and girls to get their contraceptive supplies. Unavailability of family planning contraceptives led to unwanted pregnancies, increase in sexually transmitted diseases and posed a risk of contracting HIV and AIDS. Women who were raped also faced challenges of travelling to health centres within 72 hours to get help.

### ***Surge of Corruption***

The enforcement of Cv 19 measures catalysed the appetite of security agents to demand bribes from the public. The bribes were reported when passengers wanted to get access to ZUPCO buses. A person was supposed to pay the driver to get access to the bus without a valid letter and that same person paid \$5 to police force at roadblocks. An informal trader who went into town everyday to trade united states dollars with Zimbabwe dollar in the form of bank transfers or mobile money said,

*"I pay \$5 everyday to police officers at road blocks for me to proceed with my journey, I do not have an option because trading forex in town is my only source of income".*

Even private drivers who were not having valid letters to pass through roadblocks were paying bribes to proceed with their operations.

During the first five weeks of the lockdown, the security agents were used to control queues at shopping centres. The security agents were favoured by the shop workers/ owners and were given first preference to buy basic commodities that were in short supply. Millie meal was the main commodity that was hoarded by the security agents, they bought Millie meal bags using subsidised

price and sell the commodities using black market rates that was translating to double the normal price. The basic commodities were mainly accessed in towns and security agents had a comparative advantage of accessing them over the general populace because they did not need travelling clearances. However, as time progressed security forces were no longer allowed to buy commodities while wearing their uniforms.

Cv19 restrictions prohibited the informal traders from operating. Most informal traders opened illegal markets at their households. These included tuckshops for selling basic commodities at exorbitant prices and opening of shabeens (house bars). The security officers who were enforcing lock down measures identified the illegal businesses in households and were given some bribes everyday to let the activities continue operating. The owner of a shabeen said,

*"I pay \$3 and few bottles of my homemade beer to police and soldiers for me to operate, I have been operating for two months now".*

People paid survival bribes to security agents for them to operate. This was also reported by small scale miners who were paying bribes to security officers to get protection from evictions during the lock down.

### ***Assault of civilians***

There were regular reports of civilians being beaten up, threatened, put in detentions and arrests. The security agents were beating up civilians they found at beer halls or walking in the streets. The police were detaining shop keepers who were extending hours of operation. CSO officials who interacted with the researcher indicated that,

*"we recorded 20% increase in number of assaults during the lockdown where civilians were beaten up by security agents"*

An incident that was reported in national media was for two sisters in Cowdry park Bulawayo who were assaulted by police while they were coming from shops. This was publicised and it received attention of the police commissioner and the police officers who assaulted the sisters were charged of assault. However, in most instances the police were not charged for beating or harassing civilians.

Before the lock down measures were enforced the security agents in Zimbabwe were known for assaulting civilians especially during public demonstrations. There were some civilians who died at the hands of security agents although the perpetrators were not brought to book. Enforcement of Cv19 measures led to some alleged torture and abductions of opposition political party activists and CSO activists who breached the lockdown measures. The activists were charged of breaking lock down measures and their charges of being assaulted were ignored. Journalists were also victims of such assault while carrying out their duties.

### ***School and college closures***

The lock down measures led to schools and college closures. This led to prolonged confinement at homes that bred negative coping mechanisms for teenagers and youths. There were reports of substance abuse among the youths. The youths were becoming addictive to marijuana, dangerous whisks and homemade beers. The substance abuses by youths led to many crimes, formation of rowdy gangs and bad behaviour to parents and guardians. Some girls reported that they were gang raped by drunk boys and they did not report the cases to their parents for fear of being victimised

on why they were raped. A Social Welfare Officer highlighted that there was an increase in the number of abuse cases that were reported on their hotline by youths. The youths were idle and resorted to substance abuse. Some parents were also having difficulties in handling their youths since they were always high with dangerous substances. One parent said,

*"I wish if schools could open for my son to have work to do, he is spending most of his time smoking and drinking with his friends".*

Some children resorted to spending most of their time online where they ended up being addicted to pornography. With online learning parents assumed that their children were doing school work while they were on pornography and dating channels. One parent reported that his son had sexual relationship with his two sisters and impregnated both. The lock down enhanced moral decay in youths and gave them opportunities to experiment with bad strategies. Unwanted pregnancies among adolescents and unprotected sex were reported to have increased by children-based organisations. This could result in an increase in illegal abortions without being noticed or recorded since abortion is illegal in Zimbabwe.

The Cv19 measures further increased the gap between the rich and poor students. Students at private institutions never stopped learning as they were engaged on online learning with their institutions while students at public institutions stayed for more than three months without learning. Most students at public institutions do not have access to internet because of high data charges so doing online learning was not feasible. The government introduced radio lessons to public students in June, these were only for early childhood development, grade three and grade seven classes. The lessons were only accessed on radios and this meant the poorest were left behind. Inequalities between the rich and poor students is a big challenge in the Zimbabwe.

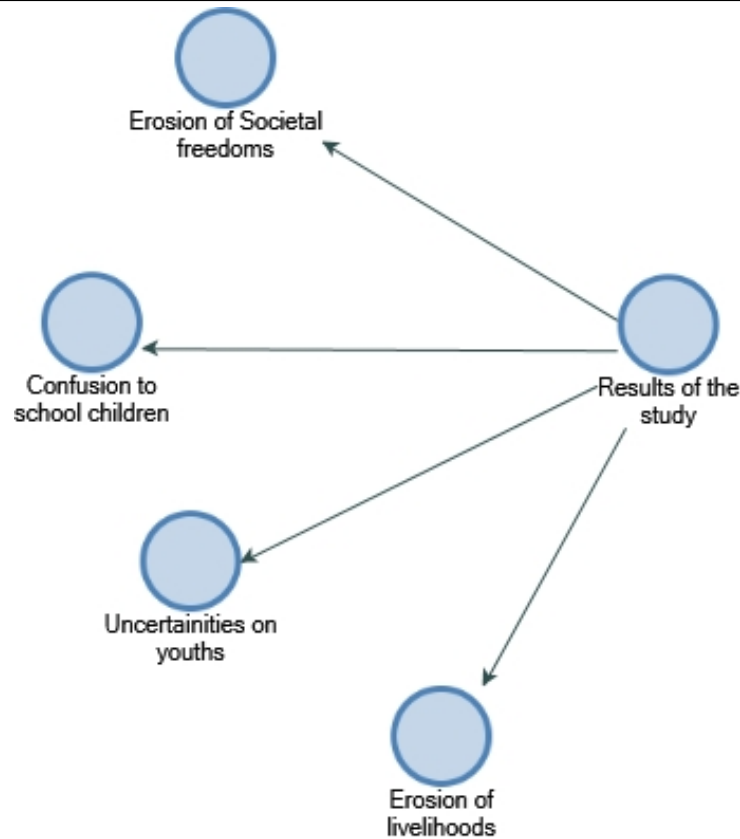
Some children were exploited and forced to work without getting pay by their parents and guardians. Girls complained of overwork at household level since, they could not give an excuse of reading. A girl said,

*"I wish if schools can open soon because I am always working at home and I am tired, but no one seems to care".*

Some girls were forced into early marriages because of unplanned pregnancies. The scenarios might decrease the number of girls at schools when schools open.

## **RESULTS**

The results of the study that came from the findings are erosion of social freedoms, confusion to school children, uncertainties on youths', and erosion of livelihoods. Figure below shows the visual of the study's results.



**Figure 3: Results of the study**

### **Erosion of livelihoods**

The Cv 19 lock down measures resulted in fall in livelihoods and incomes for people since more than 80% of Zimbabweans were surviving on informal trading. The lock down restrictions led to lack of freedom in movements impacting negatively on horticulture and livestock farmers and other groups under informal sector. Erosion in livelihoods led to theft and reducing of food consumption as a standard coping strategy for the poor. The frustrations of loss of income led to increased gender-based violations since spouses were confined to their households 24/7. This was worse in informal settlements and high-density areas where families live in one roomed houses.

### **Uncertainties to youths**

Most of the youths relied on informal work such as vending and boarder jumping. Closing of the boarders and movement restrictions limited the youths from getting any source of income. Those of school going age could not afford high data charges for them to access online reading. Some youths resorted to substance abuse and some attempted to commit suicide as they did not see a reason to live with all the uncertainties. Those who had planned to go out of the country to further their studies or who were supposed to go out of the country to start jobs were left stranded wallowing in poverty. Some were forced to marry each other as the lock down was announced while cohabiting.

### **Confusion to school students**

School children were not spared from confusion as the government was quiet about opening of schools during the first two months. Most schools were used as quarantine centres that send mixed messages to school children. Some students were wondering whether they would open schools while their schools were used to quarantine returnees. The most affected were exam class students who were supposed to write June exams. Those who were supposed to write Cambridge June exams were cancelled while Zimbabwe school exams were postponed. Confusion also arose by different teaching methods that were introduced by private schools while the public schools were not conducting lessons.

### **Erosion to societal freedoms**

The restrictions led to erosion of societal freedoms and social capital approach that is dominant in the country. People were used to visit each other for chats, church services and during funerals, coming together is considered a sign of oneness and opportunity to provide psychological support to distressed people. The movement restrictions and limited of number of people allowed to gather caused anxiety to people who are used to be among their family members or community people. Some people felt burying their beloved ones with few people was an insult to the dead which might anger ancestors and bring misfortunes to them. The traditional leaders were not meeting with their community members leading some members to be omitted on food assistance lists. This brought conflicts in communities while at the same time movement restrictions made people to fail to address their complaints.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This paper concluded that Cv 19 restrictions were imposed as a way of containing Cv 19 from spreading in the country. Cv 19 lockdown measures had negative impacts on the populace. The measures were enforced differently by different security forces since there was no reference document that was produced by the police commissioner or army commander to guide the enforcement. The enforcement of the lockdown measurements contributed to confusion among the public and created an opportunity for security forces to extort bribes from civilians. With high numbers of people working in informal sector the lockdown measures further deepened the economic crisis that was there before Covid 19 crisis.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper recommends the government of Zimbabwe to produce a guiding document that the security agents use to enforce the lockdown measures. The document will make everyone aware of what the security forces would be looking for at roadblocks and the penalties expected for those who breach the measurements. In addition, the government must involve the citizens in coming up with some strategies of combatting Cv19 that will not further erode their livelihoods. Economic downturn caused by lock down measures might necessitate challenges that will have long term effects to the country's economic recovery. Furthermore, erosion in societal fabric might lead to mistrust between citizens and government, it is imperative for the government to start engaging citizens on the management of lock down and the measures used to combat Cv19. Lastly, this paper recommends all the actors to involve youth, women and children in their plans as they are the ones badly affected by the lock down measures. Involving them in coming up with strategies will help them to come up with resilient coping mechanisms. The safety nets should build on community resilient coping strategies.



### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study used virtual qualitative methodology due to movement restrictions. The researcher could not hold face to face meetings with interviewees, she only managed to interact with them on the phone. Some deserving interviewees who did not have phones were not included in the study. Some respondents did not manage to respond to researcher's questions because of high data charges. Availability of constant network was also a challenge to both the researcher and the interviewees. However informal chats managed to close the limitation to a lesser extent. The study was confined to the Cv19 lockdown measures and did not cover the impact of Cv19 crisis in general. Another study might cover the broader issues of Cv19 crisis and how the government of Zimbabwe managed to contain the virus.

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