



## **SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HUMAN EXISTENCE AND SOCIETY: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper delves into the socio-political impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human existence and analyses the dynamics of human society during the hey days of the virus attack on global community. Using descriptive research, findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic has posed a great impact on the political and social aspect of human race worldwide. It has succeeded in changing policy formulation process, political meetings, public relations, educational institutions, human relations and community life among others. The paper concludes that, if the COVID-19 is not aggressively fought and conditions adhered to, the unfavorable changes that have occurred due to the pandemic have come to stay and may continue to affect humanity in the long run. The paper recommends alternative research strategies on how to deal with the virus and how to eliminate it permanently for better human society, political development and social interactions among other things.*

**KEYWORDS:** Socio-Political, Impact, Covid-19, Pandemic, Human, Existence

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Corona Virus pandemic is said to have originated from the People's Republic of China in the first quarter of 2020 in Wuhan, a capital city of Hubei, part of Central China. Coronavirus is one out of many viruses of its kind, such as the Spanish flu, H1N1 flu, Ebola, Lassa virus etc. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) according to the World Health Organization (2020) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Prior to 2020 spread of the pandemic, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified in 2019 in Wuhan, China. This is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

It has been argued that people infected with the virus might not easily know that they are carrying the virus, until a fortnight before it begins to manifest. According to the WHO (2020) most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. It is easily transmitted among humans especially through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes around people (WHO, 2020).

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The world has not been able to come up with an exact or specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19, but there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. Many countries are coming up with new discoveries about the antidote and the world is waiting to accept the most universally accepted, tested and trusted vaccines.

One intriguing question that people ask is the original source of this virus and people believe it is a natural occurrence while another set of people hold the belief that it is a man-made virus. Whichever the case, the world is in a period of economic uncertainties, insecurity and competitiveness, where states and nations strive to survive economically even at the detriment of others. This was manifest in imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, where stronger nations have resorted to dominating the weaker ones at the expense of the weaker economies.

The era of cold war was also an epitome of bipolarism, containment and one against one (the United States and the Soviet Union). These two nations emerged victorious in the aftermath of the second world war, better than the European nations whose economies and infrastructure have been severely devastated. The competition between the united states and the Soviet Union was all encompassing touching political, economic and military confrontations. It was a cold war because it was not a physical military combat but a silent war, which saw military build-up, armament and ideological confrontation.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of unipolar order, the united states has virtually enjoyed a significant level of power over the global system in all ramifications, which lured a Japanese America (Francis Fukuyama) to infer that the consolidation of American civilization in the world marked the “end of history.” Having the world being dynamic, the American empire began to decline especially after its engagement with Iraq, Afghanistan and high level of military spending and aid to allies around the world. The era of gradual multilateralism or in the parlance, multipolar order began to surface within the global polity, which saw the re-emergence of Russia, new powers such as China, India, Brazil and the Asian tigers with significant share of the global economy. The rise of China is seen as a great threat by the united states and china is aggressively rising to catch up with the united states after emerging as the second largest economy of the world.

Economic rivalry between the two (United states and china) is glaring from the U.S.-China trade war and Trump’s perpetual blame of China especially on the COVID-19 pandemic. The question is who created the coronavirus? Neither the United states nor China has openly claimed (albeit never), but if the conspiracy theory could be applied, one between the two, must be blamed. Consequently, some nations began to sue China for not giving early warning of the outbreak and the United States continue to blame China for that. The major objective of this paper is to investigate the socio-political impact of the COVID-19 and look for ways to ameliorate such impacts on humanity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to UNDP (2020), the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest challenge we have faced since World War Two. Since its emergence in Asia late last year, the virus has spread to every continent except Antarctica. But the pandemic is much more than a health crisis, it's also an unprecedented



socio-economic crisis. Stressing every one of the countries it touches, it has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political effects that will leave deep and longstanding scars.

In the writings of UNDP (2020), the coronavirus is causing another global crisis which is economical in nature and social in the long-run. It is economical in the sense that the World Bank projects a US\$110 billion decline in remittances this year, which could mean 800 million people will not be able to meet their basic needs. It is social because every day, people are losing jobs and income, with no way of knowing when normality will return. The International Labor Organization estimates that 195 million jobs could be lost.

Every country according to UNDP (2020) needs to act immediately to prepare, respond, and recover. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has launched a US\$2 billion global humanitarian response plan in the most vulnerable. Developing countries could lose at least US\$220 billion in income, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has called for US\$2.5 trillion to support them. Drawing on our experience with other outbreaks such as Ebola, HIV, SARS, TB and malaria, as well as our long history of working with the private and public sector, UNDP will help countries to urgently and effectively respond to COVID-19 as part of its mission to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and build resilience to crises and shocks.

The next phase of UNDP's COVID-19 crisis response is designed to help decision-makers look beyond recovery, towards 2030, making choices and managing complexity and uncertainty in four main areas: governance, social protection, green economy, and digital disruption. It encompasses the role in technically leading the UN's socio-economic response.

According to the World Bank (2020) the world economy would be on the brink as many economies would experience recession with contraction in per capita income. Advanced economies are projected to shrink 7 percent. That weakness will spill over to the outlook for emerging market and developing economies, who are forecast to contract by 2.5 percent as they cope with their own domestic outbreaks of the virus. This would represent the weakest showing by this group of economies in at least sixty years.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is the system theory. It explains how the political environment works and responds to the needs of the society. The system theory was developed by David Easton and was originally from pure science, particularly from biology and later used and developed in sociology by Herbert Spencer and Gabriel Almond among others (Verma, 1985). A system is comprised of an environment, input, conversion and output. As observed by Nnoli (1978). A system is an entry in which everything relates to everything else. In the parlance, systems are compressed components that work together for the objectives of whole and the system approach is merely a way of thinking about these components and their relationships. The basic features of the system approach are as a follow:



1. The Environment which consists of various subsystems-social, political, economic subsystems. these subsystems influence the administrative system which in turn influences them.
2. Input: consists of wishes, yearnings and aspirations of the masses which are demand from the administrative system.
3. Conversion: process refers to stage where inputs are processed i.e. the journalists, conveying the wishes and aspirations of the masses to the legislators for deliberations and processing of such yearnings of the masses.
4. Output: this process the administrative decisions, policies constitutions from the National Assembly by our legislators through the conversion process to the masses (environment).

The system theory is referred to as Estonian theory which is made of different component parts working differently but interdependently and interrelated to achieve the desired goal of the masses which will be conveyed to the legislators through the conversion process (Nnoli, 1978). The legislators will deliberate on the demands and aspirations of the masses as presented by the press men. If the deliberation is favorable, the masses will applause it and accept the legislative outcome (policies, constitution), but if the outcome is not favorable it will bring about uprising from the masses as witnessed in present day Nigeria (Samuel, 1978).

The relationship between the system theory and the topic under study is that, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a push and pull syndrome between the government and the governed. the masses are making more demands through the input device such as the provision of palliatives, regular payment of salaries, making available the test kits, easing the lockdown for people to get food stuffs among others. Governments that responded quickly and favorably to the yearnings of the people would get a favorable feedback such as praises and support from the masses. Those governments who did otherwise would have nothing other than criticisms, abuse and withdrawal of support from the masses.

The social aspect of the system theory is that, the masses might begin to loot both public and private stores and properties, increase security threats to the elites and average citizens, venture into theft, kidnapping, armed robbery and banditry among others, due to government failure to provide for the masses.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The political and social environment of every society is being shaped and condition by the economic environment. This is largely because the economic environment allows for the political environment to function effectively with economic supports to deliver to the citizenry and in the area of law making, adjudication and execution. The social environment is also determined by the economic influence where the economy determines social interaction, class and class system, education, sporting activities, respect in human relations, good living and socialization. This section discusses the socio-political impact of the COVID-19, but starts by introducing the economic impacts which determine the other two.

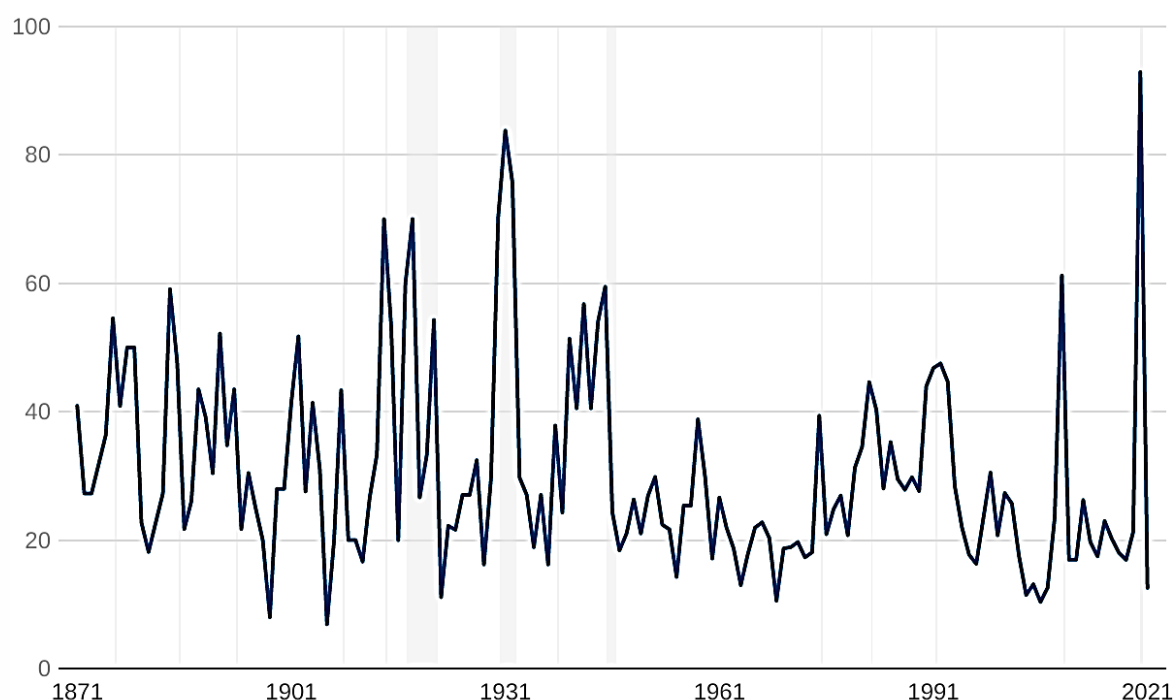


## Economic Impact

The COVID-19 pandemic has affects employment, productivity, supply chains, imports, exports and other trading activities at domestic and international levels. This means that massive unemployment imminent, rise in the prices of commodities would be experienced, poverty and malnutrition would be on the rise and economies would flinch and global recession becomes inevitable. From the foregoing, it should also be understood that it is this economic suffering that will spill-over to other areas of human existence, to have political, social, cultural and religious impacts. Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) would decrease, inflation will affect many countries in the world and in the long-run create other social problems.

## Most countries are expected to face recessions in 2020

Share of economies in recession, 1871-2021



*The proportion of economies with an annual contraction in per capita GDP. Shaded areas refer to global recessions. Data for 2020-21 are forecasts.*

Source: World Bank

It can be seen from the above illustration that the share of countries to experience recession in the year 2021 is the highest ever since 1871. It shows how the world experienced a greater recession in 1931, but significantly illustrate that the 2021 recession would be more severe. It is also in line with the above that the World Bank (2020) made



the forecast that every region is subject to substantial growth downgrades. East Asia and the Pacific will grow by a scant 0.5%. South Asia will contract by 2.7%, Sub-Saharan Africa by 2.8%, Middle East and North Africa by 4.2%, Europe and Central Asia by 4.7%, and Latin America by 7.2%. These downturns are expected to reverse years of progress toward development goals and tip tens of millions of people back into extreme poverty.

Emerging markets and developing economies as discovered by the World Bank (2020) will be buffeted by economic headwinds from multiple quarters: pressure on weak health care systems, loss of trade and tourism, dwindling remittances, subdued capital flows, and tight financial conditions amid mounting debt. Exporters of energy or industrial commodities will be particularly hard hit. Another important feature of the current landscape is the historic collapse in oil demand and oil prices. Low oil prices are likely to provide, at best, temporary initial support to growth once restrictions to economic activity are lifted. However, even after demand recovers, adverse impacts on energy exporters may outweigh any benefits to activity in energy importers.

In another related literature, the Congressional Research Service (2020) also admitted that Since the COVID-19 outbreak was first diagnosed, it has spread to over 200 countries and all U.S. states. The pandemic is negatively affecting global economic growth beyond anything experienced in nearly a century. Estimates so far indicate the virus could trim global economic growth by 3.0% to 6.0% in 2020. The human costs in terms of lives lost will permanently affect global economic growth in addition to the cost of rising levels of poverty, lives upended, careers derailed, and increased social unrest. Global trade could also fall by 13% to 32%, depending on the depth and extent of the global economic downturn, exacting an especially heavy economic toll on trade-dependent developing and emerging economies. The full impact will not be known until the effects of the pandemic peak.

According to the Congressional Research Service (2020), the World Health Organization (WHO) first declared COVID-19 a world health emergency in January 2020. Since then, the emergency has evolved into a global public health and economic crisis that has affected the \$90 trillion global economy beyond anything experienced in nearly a century. Governments are attempting to balance often-competing policy objectives between addressing the public health crisis and economic considerations that include, but are not limited to these (Congressional Research Service, 2020):

- i. Confronting ballooning budget deficits weighed against increasing spending to support unemployed workers and social safety nets.
- ii. Providing financial support for national health systems that are under pressure to develop vaccines while also funding efforts to care for and safeguard citizens.
- iii. Implementing monetary and fiscal policies that support credit markets and sustain economic activity, while also assisting businesses under financial distress.
- iv. Implementing fiscal policies to stimulate economic activity, while consumers in developed economies sharply increase their savings as households face limited spending opportunities, or a form of involuntary saving, and concerns over their jobs, incomes, and the course of their economies, or precautionary saving.



- v. Intervention by central banks and monetary authorities generally in sovereign debt and corporate bond markets to stabilize markets and ensure liquidity are raising concerns among some analysts that this activity is compromising the ability of the markets to perform their traditional functions of pricing risk and allocating capital.
- vi. Fiscal and monetary policies that have been adopted to date to address the immediate impact of the health crisis compared with the mix of such policies between assisting households, firms, or state and local governments that may be needed going forward should the health and economic crises persist.

### **Political Impacts**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of political crises around the world especially as it relates to intra and inter-party debacles. For example, as written by Yu (2020), the COVID-19 has a great impact on the political landscape of China especially with the dismissal of some provincial political leaders in handling the spread of the virus. In Nigeria, petitions are being written against the officials assigned to deal with the distribution of palliatives among the divergent citizens who are in need. The pandemic has caused political leaders to lie and mislead their governed especially when they failed to protect the citizenry. Burns (2020) believed that the way and manner President Trump kept misleading people and blaming other people and governments about the virus has caused him low rating in the American political opinion polls. This may also affect his re-election comes November 2020. According to agencies (2020), in Iran, the virus has caused the death of many political office holders and difficult political decisions for the leadership in 2020.

Other political impacts of the COVID-19 may include, but not limited to the following:

- a. Governments could not attend regular international summits and conferences;
- b. Governments do not hold meetings with cabinet as usual;
- c. Governments face challenges of feeding the masses through palliatives under the lockdown;
- d. The virus has remained an avenue for testing the responsiveness and responsibilities of government at different levels;
- e. Some governments have received supports while some have been condemned by the masses;
- f. Low national income, which also affects political and governmental programs and functions;
- g. It has increased the level of corruption with political office holders and government officials.

### **Social Impacts**

The pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools and universities. According to data released by UNESCO on 25 March, school and university closures due to COVID-19 were implemented nationwide in 165



countries. Including localized closures, this affects over 1.5 billion students worldwide, accounting for 87% of enrolled learners (UNESCO, 2020).

According to Godbole (2020) and Johnson (2020) on domestic violence as a social problem created by the pandemic, many countries have reported an increase in domestic violence and intimate partner violence attributed to lockdowns amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial insecurity, stress, and uncertainty have led to increased aggression at home, with abusers able to control large amounts of their victims' daily life. Consequently, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called for a domestic violence "ceasefire."

In the analysis of Baker (2020), Hassan (2020) and Ryan (2020), social gatherings have been severely affected, which affect the normal social life people lived prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus. Social clubs, sporting activities, village squares, and many other social meetings and get together have been inhibited by the pandemic.

Baker (2020) argues that, apart from social gatherings, one dangerous trend that continued to be experienced by people worldwide is the rate at which suicide is being committed on daily basis. The level of suicide has been increased by the pandemic, when people become despondent and extremely poor without income without certainty on achieving what they have planned to achieve and their expectations met by a sheer fiasco, they discovered suicide as the last resort.

Sheya (2020) and Solovy (2020) have argued that, the pandemic has affected religious activities around the world. People no longer enjoy spiritual affiliations as mosques, churches and other prayer houses have been closed. Religious gatherings have been suspended. One implication is that despite the restrictions on religious gathering, some people did not see the pandemic as something to deprive them of such spiritual engagement. People in many places around the world have defied such orders. Apart from the impacts identifies above, the COVID-19 has created more impacts as listed, but not limited to them below:

- a. Familial distancing
- b. School closure
- c. Suspension of sporting activities
- d. Religious activities stopped
- e. Divorce
- f. Theft
- g. Armed robbery
- h. Prostitution
- i. delinquency





## CONCLUSION

It is apparent that prepared or unprepared, the COVID-19 has emerged as one of the deadliest viruses that affect the entire humanity and all ramifications of human existence. It is unequivocal that if the COVID-19 is not aggressively fought and conditions of dealing with it adhered to, the unfavorable changes that have occurred due to the pandemic have come to stay and may continue to affect humanity in the long run.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends the following as part of the strategies to curb the menace and spread of the COVID-19:

There should be a drastic alternative research strategy on how to deal with the virus and how to eliminate it permanently for the betterment of the human society, political development and social interactions among other things.

Government must continue to provide supports to the governed in the difficult time in which they deal with the virus. Such support should include food stuff, medicine, and perpetual orientation of the people.

Governments must tighten security system to deal with the social consequences of the pandemic such as social vices, including armed robbery, kidnapping, theft and banditry.

Governments should also try to open schools, as school closure may not serve as panacea to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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