



THE LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCE: NARRATIVES FROM GHANAIAN ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT: *In sub-Saharan Africa, social crises that affect young adolescents are common phenomena; however, crises of worldwide proportions as the COVID-19 pandemic with its attendant lockdown are uncommon. This study is an exploration of Ghanaian adolescents' COVID-19 lockdown experiences through narratives via informal letters from 12 and 13-year-olds. Five overarching themes: education, friendships, family socio-economic life, social functions, and spirituality, were identified to be the major concerns of Ghanaian adolescents. The themes depict adolescents' psychosocial occupations in relation to both the negative and positive effects of the pandemic. This study concludes that, despite the devastating effects on personal and social lives, Ghanaian adolescents identified ways of making new learning exploits. Their narratives also revealed gaps in their lives that need attention.*

KEYWORDS: Crises, Covid-19, Adolescents, Narratives, Impact, Education, Social life.



INTRODUCTION

The world recently experienced the uncommon phenomenon of COVID-19, which the WHO has categorized as a pandemic. According to Harris (2000), a pandemic is an epidemic of a global dimension. This implies that a pandemic is an epidemic that affects a greater proportion of the world's population with far-reaching consequences. No social demography is exempted from its impact, however, whereas some are heavily affected negatively, others against all the odds, are impacted positively. The extent of its impact necessitated contingency measures from governments worldwide. One of the measures put in place by most governments to help curtail the spread of the COVID-19 virus was putting nations under lockdown.

Ghana recorded her first COVID-19 case on 12th March 2020. To help curtail the spread of the virus, a ban on all social gatherings was announced on 16th March. On the 30th of March 2020, the president of Ghana announced a partial lockdown of Accra and Kumasi. Restrictions were placed on international traveling, especially from countries with high infection rates. However, essential services were exempted from the restriction. Wearing face masks, washing hands, and use of hand sanitizers were made mandatory. Those who violated the restrictions faced legal action (Kenu, Frimpong & Koram 2020; Darkwah, 2022). Adolescents were not excluded from this experience.

Adolescence is a transitional stage in human development that, according to Hall (1904), is characterized by stress and storm. At this stage young people go through an identity crisis, and strive for recognition and autonomy (Erikson, 1968; Chen et al., 2007), all of which make them demand both private physical and emotional space (Acquaye, 2022). Thus, they are bound to create new experiences and experimentations during the time that they were “cooped- up” in the lockdown. Although a pandemic's crisis may have little influence on the changes that come with adolescence, adjusting to life in general in pandemic circumstances could be assumed to be hectic, and being the first pandemic in recent history, the current group of adolescents had their first experience of a lockdown from 15th March 2020 until January 2021. It is therefore important and expedient to document this experience, especially via narratives, an authentic primary data source.

A narrative is a linguistic tool, by which adolescents make meaning, tell their life stories (McAdams, 1993; 2001), make connections between past, present, and future aspirations, and work to draw attention to what affects them. Also, via narratives, they can relate how they deal with crises and their desires and projections about life in such difficult times. Narratives, too, make way for long-lasting memories to be established (Pasupathi, 2001; Thorne, 2000; Thorne, McLean & Lawrence, 2004), however, this is enhanced by an examination of the specific circumstances that led to the accounts.

Thus, narrating their lockdown experiences is an opportunity for adolescents to document their lives and share their experiences; beliefs, coping, and empathic strategies (Hosny et al., 2020). This study, therefore, is an exploration of how Ghanaian adolescents experienced the lockdown, what their major concerns were, and how they coped with the situation. We also examined their use of language and its effect on the meaning they created in their narratives. Thus, the study was guided by the research questions:

- (1) What were Ghanaian young adolescents' main concerns during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- (2) How did they cope with the lockdown situation?



(3) What literary language did they employ in their narratives?

Although the literature on COVID-19 is still evolving, there is enough evidence to suggest that the lockdown had a profound effect on young adolescents. Loades et al. (2021) revealed that the lockdown had a devastating effect on young adults as they narrated stories of emotional, psychological, and physical abuse. Demkowicz et al. (2020) indicated that the lockdown period for young adults in the UK was a time of modification, forfeiture, and vagueness with a sensitive emotionality and an increasing sense of frustration with the government and the media for not doing enough to support them. Finally, Sajid and Saleem (2020) revealed that it was difficult for young adults to be schooled at home because of the existence of many distractions. Similar to some of the experiences reported by the Ghanaian adolescents in this study, many young people expressed the belief that during the COVID-19 lockdown, they missed social connections with friends, and were apprehensive about their future, (Addae, 2021; Quansah et al., 2023).

The average Ghanaian young adolescent wakes up between 5 and 6 am, does assigned household chores, reports to school by 7 am, spends between 6 and 8 hours in school and usually returns home between 3 and 5 pm. They engage in household chores again and retire to bed between 8:30 pm and 9 pm. Hence, most of their wake-up time is spent in school (Acquaye, 2022). However, due to the ban on school activities during the lockdown, the government and private agencies provided avenues for remote learning via radio and television programmes and the Internet (Kenu, Frimpong & Koram, 2020). These, however, could not have replaced their learning experiences and school activities before the lockdown.

LITERATURE/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Narratives can be explained as a talk which can be verbal or written that is woven around significant events in time (Riessman, 2002). Trabasso and Stein (1997) posit that by age nine, young people can give narratives that are structured to include several events and Acquaye (2022) describes this as children's ability to maintain logic in their narrations. This confirms the assertion that the ability to view oneself and others in their biographical contexts by constructing life stories is said to emerge during adolescence (Cohler, 1982; McAdams, 1985).

This paper explores young Ghanaian adolescents' COVID-19 lockdown experiences within the framework of Rosenthal (2006) who explains that narratives of experienced events (COVID-19 lockdown experience) refer both to the present and past experiences. Just as the past is constituted out of the present and the anticipated future, so the present arises out of the past and the future. In this way, biographical narratives provide information on the narrator's present as well as about his or her past and perspectives for the future. This theory deals with the interrelation between experience, memory, and narration. Rosenthal (2006) was adopted for the study because of the researchers' interest in the narratives of the COVID-19 lockdown which captures a recent past experience (memory) of young adolescents and how they construct their pandemic experiences. The interest of the researchers lies in how adolescents connect their pre-COVID-19 experiences to the COVID-19 lockdown experience to imply a possible post-COVID-19 experience. Finally, our interest is also in adolescents' narratological practices and their use of language.



Identification of the contents of the narratives started with a close reading of the texts. The essays were coded with Narrative (N) with a digit while reading. Hence, the first to be analyzed was coded N1. The identified events, actions, people, and relationships were compared with those we subsequently read. Similar contents that emerged from the various writings were all compiled into what we labelled 'Theme Bank'.

METHODOLOGY

A key prerogative to enhancing the study of young adolescents is to move research with them from focusing on adult views to their perceptions of life experiences. (Christensen & James, 2000; Lewis & Lindsay 2000). Consequently, this requires most explicitly the use of research methods that will give them the needed space to communicate their thoughts and make their constructions of reality, the sole data for analysis (Nind, 2014; Kellett, 2005). Qualitative Content Analysis gives such a space in research with children.

In all numerous definitions of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), a cohesive view of text and their definite background that permits researchers to comprehend social reality in a personal but scientific manner is advanced. Patton (2002, p. 453) defines QCA as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings". Schreier (2012) estimates that qualitative content analysis is mainly used in the analysis and interpretation of data. Content analysis represents a methodical and unbiased channel of describing and quantifying an occurrence or a situation (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Schreier, 2012). Again, content analysis allows researchers to quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). This kind of analysis reduces data to viable concepts that describe the phenomenon under study (Cavanagh, 1997; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hence, QCA is suited for this study because our interest is in the contents of the adolescents' narratives in terms of occurrences or events, actions, people or relationships, and places.

Our interest in adolescents within this crisis period, besides being our area of research interest, is that they are known to be active and adventurous, hence, the need to find out their experiences under legally imposed confinement and QCA provides a means by which their experiences can be analyzed.

Our sample was purposely selected based on the age group, that is young adolescents between ages 12 to 13 in Junior High School (JHS) 1 and 2. The research setting was conveniently selected in Koforidua, the regional capital of the Eastern Region of Ghana. This convenience was based on the availability of research assistants in that area and also the need to explore a different region other than the Central Region where the researchers reside and have already conducted several studies. The data was collected by a research assistant who visited the school on the 21st of June, 2021 (6 months after the lockdown was lifted) to ask permission from the school authority to collect data. He was permitted to meet and explain the study to the JHS 1 and 2 students totaling 63 learners. However, he also explained to them that participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were asked to write letters to their friends narrating their lockdown experiences. The choice of informal letter was to give them room to express themselves in a friendly context, without the restrictions of formality. Actual data was collected



on 25th June 2021, giving the participants 4 days to recall and write about their lockdown experiences. Twenty-four essays were submitted and were all used for the analysis.

RESULTS/FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

The narratives presented six overarching themes which were, the effect of lockdown on education, friendships across space/from a distance, managing family ties, the effect of the lockdown on family socio-economic life, disruption of social functions, and spirituality within the scope of the new normal (legal confinement). It must be noted that each narrative explored to an extent at least four similar themes.

Education

In the history of basic education in Ghana, breaks from school are usually school vacations. Even so, sometimes, children engage in vacation classes. Vacations usually last between two to six weeks, thus, a nine months' absence from school, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is the first of its kind. This deviation is, therefore, too important to be ignored, especially by adolescents who are so used to the excitement of school life and have a reserve of energy. The import of the out-of-school experience is strongly declared in:

First and foremost, my education system has been damaged due to the lockdown. (N18/10)

This situation affected our studies very badly. (N3)

Narrative (N18) began with "first and foremost" which indicates the importance of education in the ranking of adolescents' perspective of the lockdown experience. The choice of diction in "*my education system has been damaged*" shows how strongly they feel about school activities that were abruptly disrupted. Again, the verb 'damaged' clearly depicts the extent and intensity of disruption. There is the element of comparison here as students appear to be comparing the pre-COVID-19 state of education with that of the lockdown. Implied in their comparison of the previous state of education with that of the lockdown (damaged) is the fear that if the system is not revamped, a bleak future as far as education is concerned awaits children in Ghana. The pervading mood here appears to portray a current state of helplessness with a glint of hope as there is the remote possibility that "the damaged" could be repaired. They present these perspectives (of damaged education) from different standpoints.

First of all, in their narratives, their out-of-school lockdown experiences are characterized by the absence of teaching and learning, as they are conversant with, which resulted in the loss of knowledge as indicated in;

We stayed home for about 6 months without going to school. It didn't help me at all because I forgot all about what our teachers were teaching us in school. (N24)

Here the major concern is on the length of time spent away from school and its subsequent effect on their previously acquired knowledge. Obviously, from their point of view, the long absence from school resulted in retrogression which is a cause of concern for them. This also implies that no matter children's attitude towards school, progress at school is very important to them. This is contrary to Acquaye (2022) who posited that young adolescents prefer to spend



less time in school. The contrast is indicative of the fact that the lockdown experience brought to the fore the significance of schooling in their daily activities. This significance, it seems, was not evident to the adolescents prior to the COVID-19 pandemic when Acquaye (2022) conducted her research. Furthermore, the young adolescents' employment of hyperbole serves to heighten the sense of urgency they attach to their studies. In its truest form, it is quite impossible to totally forget everything that has been taught while school was in progress. This highlights the affinity young adolescents often harbor for ventures that hold their interest and confirms Negele and Habermas' (2010) assertion that over a sustained period, adolescents can report more explicit meaning and explanation about how their autobiographical past connects to the present self. In adopting hyperbolic statements, they were only expressing what they really felt passionate about.

Another concern evident in their narratives is the suspension of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which caused anxieties among, especially the final year students as seen in:

This also caused the delayance of the BECE for JHS 3 students and made our education miserable. (N6)

The BECE is the national examination that informs the progression from Junior High School to Senior High School. Due to the lockdown, this examination had to be rescheduled for the academic year. This delayed their progression to the next level and caused a lot of anxiety for them. It is also possible to read not only a note of dejection in their narratives but also a sense of despondency. The use of the word "miserable" personifies education and by personifying this, they succeed in conveying the sense that the state of education during the lockdown was dreary and uneventful

Also, during the lockdown, the adolescents attempted to occupy themselves by doing self-tutorials at home. However, this was hampered by a lack of access to educational resources which include educational materials such as books, personnel as teachers, and technology like school computers and ICT labs. This is expressed in:

It made my studies a bit difficult when I was trying to learn. This is because, when I am studying and I do not understand, I find it difficult to get in contact with someone who will help me because I do not have a phone. (N22) (Also expressed by N19 and N20)

Apart from having direct access and human contact with school personnel, most schools provide learning resources to make learning easier for learners. These were not available to some of the learners during the lockdown. Hence, learning activities became strenuous and boring.

Here, one could draw a connection between their past learning styles and the current ones as dictated by the situation. Thus, a comparison between the memory and the present allows a stance for what is preferred.

Finally, in some narratives, the adolescents bemoaned the loss of school learning resources such as school computers.

It had also caused damage to some of the school computers because of dust. With the lock down nobody had time to clean the computers. (N14)



Their concern is not limited to the long absence from school which affected them adversely, but also for school resources that were damaged because they were not in use and also lacked maintenance. In spite of all these negative effects of the lockdown on school life, some young people here found innovative ways of engaging in learning as narrated in:

I also had the chance to use the internet to do my research work and so on. It also improved my learning skills, shaped my brain and gave me courage to learn to achieve my goal. (N13)

In this extract, the resilient innate capability in humans is exhibited by the adolescents. Although they were confined to a limited space, learning and school activities were so important to them that they found ways and means for life to go on even in such unusual circumstances. If previously they were not using the Internet in their learning activities, they found it useful to make up for the absence of school by utilizing the Internet for such purposes. This is an indication that young adolescents can adjust to situations in which they find themselves. In a study of the effects of COVID-19 confinement, Pizarro-Ruiz and Ordóñez-Cambor (2021) posit that teenagers can adjust to the situation better than others and this quality of adjusting to difficult situations is confirmed in this current study. The young adolescents here were able to adapt to the absence of the usual school activities by acquiring knowledge via the Internet.

Apart from the individual attempts at self-education using technology, others had the opportunity to access online learning platforms provided to them by their schools, the government, and private media houses.

I had the opportunity to learn through the government educational television and radio programming. These stations helped us a lot. We the JHS learners had a big time opportunity to learn and revise. (N21)

During the lockdown, different organizations tried to provide access to teaching and learning to school children. Such provision of remote learning resources was made available for children in both public and private schools, (Aurino et al., 2020; Rohde-Abuba & Konz, 2021).

However, not all of them had the privilege to access these opportunities as complained by N6 in

Our school offered online classes but all my friends couldn't take part in it.

The cause of this inaccessibility may have stemmed from several factors including lack of ICT tools, poor Wi-Fi and even financial constraints in purchasing data. This also gives a clear indication of the effects of parents' socio-economic background on children's access to learning resources (Lareau, 1987).

In addition to becoming aware of alternative ways of learning, the young people in this study gained insights into global issues during the lockdown.

As we all know, COVID-19 is a global disease that originated in China according to some scientists. According to the World Health Organization, this virus was created. It has killed millions of people globally. Some countries such as Mauritania, America, Ghana, etc are looking for a way by hook or crook to curb it. (N18)



They learnt good personal hygiene such as proper washing of hands and general body hygiene. The COVID-19 being a new experience, which was quite terrifying, made them develop interests in what goes on globally and how other people are affected by the pandemic. It is also evident that social media had a positive impact on them. The most lamented negative effect for them was the long absence from school. This implies that Ghanaian children are very particular about their education as it forms a major part of their life experiences (Rohde-Abuba & Konz, 2021).

The images created by their choice of words such as **damaged education** and **miserable** show that education is a priority for them. Even in the face of the pandemic and the imminent possibility of death, education was rather their major concern resulting in alternative learning. (Save the Children, 2015; Bonal & González, 2020).

Social life

The young adolescents here are very keen on their social lives and social functions. Thus, they regretted the loss of the opportunities to engage or participate in social activities such as weddings, parties, funerals and outdoor leisure activities. This resulted in boredom as they are used to outdoor activities.

To begin with, parties, weddings etc were banned. Due to this, I stayed indoors without any parties, weddings etc which made staying home really boring. (N1)

Adolescents are known to be socially very robust, especially when it comes to entertainment, and they prefer diverse ways of engaging in interesting activities. Such activities are their means of socialization and expanding their circle of friends and associates. However, for the majority, the only leisure activity was watching television. As much as this made them bored and discomfited, they had access to and paid attention to information. This contributed to broadening their worldview and critical thinking abilities as they were able to extract the positive from an obviously bad situation.

In their experience, one COVID-19 protocol that they showed concern about is the wearing of a face mask. This issue is related to their health as in the inability to breath and communicate properly. It was also connected to acknowledgement and recognition. Here they narrated their inability to recognize others or be recognized.

Everyone had to start wearing nose-masks making it harder to recognize the people I knew when I was in public. (N9).

The inability to recognize familiar faces because of the wearing of nose masks further deepened the already rising levels of anxiety. As loved ones became unrecognizable behind facemasks, that familial feeling often communicated by visible facial expressions was lost. This placed the young adolescents experiencing lockdown for the first time, in a position where they felt a biting sense of loneliness. However, in all these, they came to terms with the fact that these ways of life had become the new normal and thus, adjusted accordingly. This confirms the resilient nature of young adolescents and their ability to adapt to situations. It also brought to the fore adolescents' ability to accurately capture their innate experiences. Even though they displayed deep concern for and lamented the loss of social life and social functions, they took it all in stride and went on with their daily lives (Asmundson et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020).



Family life

This theme was treated with ambivalence as the narratives talked about both the positive and negative effects of the pandemic on family life. On the positive, they saw the pandemic as an opportunity for them to slow down, relax and enjoy activities they engage in at home. They also saw it as a time for family members to spend quality time together.

I even saw it as a positive experience. A welcome opportunity to slow down, go for walks and relax with a loving partner or enjoy quality time with the children. (N24)

During the lockdown, my life became so simple and good. It became simple because whenever I am doing something in the house, I can relax and spend much time doing well. (N7)

The young adolescents are aware of how relationships are constrained because of the lack of family time together. Most of such limitations are because of family members working far away from home or working long hours and not coming home early. Hence, the lockdown was a welcomed opportunity for families to be together (Rohde-Abuba & Konz, 2021). In situations where the problem of distance prevailed, they resorted to the use of technology to keep in touch. This, however, did not make up for the intimacy obtained from physical contact. Also, as they were supposed to stay at home all day long, they realized that they did not have to rush in performing some activities or even chores at home. The implication is that prior to the lockdown, life was very fast but the lockdown provided opportunities to slow down and actually savor whatever they engage in.

The negative effects of the pandemic on family social life include misery, loss of assets, estrangement, fear and death.

This virus killed 2 people who stayed near my house which made me frightened but yet still in my prayers, I prayed to God for protection for me, my family and the world. (N11)

I stay home alone with my invalid Dad. I can't even go out to buy medicine for my Dad. This made me lose him. (N20)

It is obvious that although they are young, the negative effects of the pandemic on the family were not lost on them. They shared in the responsibilities and grief of the adult world. This is depicted in the accurate way they captured these sentiments in clear unambiguous language creating images of fear and death. Thus, even if the virus affected older people more than the younger generation, the effect of the pandemic was keenly felt by them too. Additionally, the findings reveal diverse familial relationships between parents and their children

My parents were not allowing me to go visit my friends because they were afraid I might get in contact with the disease which led to the death of their son which they could not bear so I stayed indoors. (N1)

As a result (of) that, it made me the outgoing type. I used to stay indoors but the lockdown made me start going out to my friends house talking about unimportant stuff even though the government told us not to go out. (N21)

In one scenario, the child succumbed to parental anxiety and fear and thus chose to obey them. On the other hand, another just flouted even national directives, probably just for the fun of



doing so or as a resort to unbearable confinement. This gives evidence of different ways in which children react to parents and authority, especially, in crisis situations (Bonal & González, 2020).

Socioeconomic Impact on Families

Family socio-economic life was a major issue during the lockdown. These concerns arose out of several factors. The first and foremost was the parents' loss of livelihood.

COVID-19 has caused my family and I so much in terms of finance or economic hardship and also it has made the provision of the needs of everyone so difficult because all banks are closed, all workers have stopped working. (N5)

We had a little famine because we depended on my father's farm to eat and during the lockdown, my father was not able to go to the farm. (N11).

The use of the word 'famine' in Narrative 11 aptly captures the measure of the food crisis they experienced during the lockdown. Although they are dependent on their parents, the reality of the hardship brought on by the lockdown was not lost on them. In this, they shared and probably shouldered with their parents, the current economic privation. Thus, in situations where they would have insisted on their demands, the lockdown situation made them less persistent.

Another cause of adverse socioeconomic impact on families during the lockdown was curtailed commercial activities. In some situations, although the means of purchasing goods were available, stores were closed, and market centres were non-functional.

Lastly food has been scarce because we do not frequently go out to purchase food stuff. (N10) (N17, 23)

This theme gives the indication that, although adolescents do not have financial responsibilities nor occupy the position of breadwinner, they equally felt the financial constraint and the desperation brought about by COVID-19 in not getting access to food items. It also implies that they are representative of their society and share in the "destinies" of their people. In addition, the pandemic revealed inequalities in family socioeconomic life (Bonal & González, 2020) as some could afford basic needs and ICT tools for online learning while others could not.

Friendships

It has been established that adolescence is a stage where young people are adventurous and experiment at every little opportunity. Adolescents develop friendships of different types and with different people for diverse reasons. In early adolescence, friends or peers become more important, and close relationships provide both emotional and physical support (Ragelienė, 2016; Deater-Deckard, 2001). Friends are also known to have a significant contribution to each other's well-being and adjustments to, especially, difficult situations (Obiunu 2015: Knickmeyer et al., 2002; Daley & Hamen 2002). Friendship as a theme drew interesting images as it was treated from a dichotomizing viewpoint: that of open defiance on one hand and deliberate choice of humility and obedience to parents on the other. Thus, the stifling nature of the lockdown (having to stay indoors for long hours) instigated defiance of, even, national directives.



As a result (of) that, it made me the outgoing type. I used to stay indoors but the lockdown made me start going out to my friends house talking about unimportant stuff though the government told us not to go out. (N21)

My parents were not allowing me to go visit my friends because they were afraid I might get in contact with the disease which led to the death of their son which they could not bear so I stayed indoors. (N1)

The above gives evidence of how adolescents react differently to similar situations. The looming danger in contracting the virus made some adolescents to be considerate and obedient to their parents. On the other hand, the same situation made others defy and disobey adults and even did what they were not doing previously. This reaction might have been instigated by open defiance associated with the developmental stage in adolescence (Evans et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2017). It can be inferred that the Ghanaian adolescent possesses innate abilities to make choices for action, irrespective of the supposed danger.

Spirituality

Spirituality has been proven to be a vital resource in the development of positive behavior in adolescence, (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Donahue & Benson, 1995; Scales & Leffert, 1999) and Youniss, McLellan and Yates (1999) posit that religion is very important to adolescents. This current study confirms previous ones (Rohde-Abuba & Konz, 2021), as young adolescents lament their inability to attend church services or hold religious meetings at home.

We did not go to church at all. We stayed home, not listening to God's word. (N24).

I couldn't go to church and some elders and the pastor called our father on his mobile phone and we all praised the Lord for protecting our lives but the network was not good and we couldn't hear what they were saying. (N16)

To show the importance of spiritual activities to the adolescents, they not only bemoaned their inability to go to church, but also lauded the attempt to have improvised church service via mobile phone albeit not wholly successfully. Their attitude to church service, which Acquaye (2022) described as a public spiritual ritual, is contrary to the assertion that young adolescents prefer personal or private spiritual activities to the public ones (Acquaye, 2022).

Another observation is that, from the perspective of the adolescent, the word of God could only be listened to in a church. The home was obviously not a place where the presence of God and his word could be audibly felt and heard. This might prove the assertion that adolescents tend to conceptualize 'places and spaces' as either 'sacred or secular' (Lyons, 1977). It was therefore not possible for the word of God to permeate a 'secular' place like their homes. This is because some roles and incidents lose their significance when they are performed outside of the accepted setting. Perhaps this may indicate how they felt during the lockdown as they had no access to either God or his word. The lockdown then becomes, in their estimation, more awful as the very access to God was blocked. Thus, the adolescents, through their narratives, attach specific ceremonies to specific places. Most of the adolescents could not imagine any form of religious activity taking place in their homes because it was not a space for such an activity. As a coping strategy, they held onto the hope that life would eventually return to normalcy.



Some, however, turned to God in prayer for deliverance from the virus.

I hope by God's grace we will be able to conquer this dangerous disease. (N16)

I pray that the almighty God will help us and save us from this dangerous disease that has spread across the whole world. (N3)

This virus killed two people who stayed near my house which made me frightened but yet still on my prayers I prayed to God for protection for me my family and the world (N11)

It is a general knowledge that Africans, and for this study, Ghanaians, are intrinsically religious. The adolescents in this study exhibited this tendency. The loss of communal church services was of deep concern for them. However, they resorted to personal or individual acts of worship such as praying for themselves, family, and friends as indicated by Rohde-Abuba and Konz (2021).

CONCLUSION

This research sought to explore Ghanaian adolescents' narratives of their lockdown experience. Using qualitative content analysis, this study identified six thematic areas of concern to adolescents during the COVID-19 lockdown: education, friendships, managing family ties, family socio-economic life, social functions, and spirituality. We conclude that although studies (Yankyerah et al., 2023; Acquaye, 2022; Dembo, 2014; Revell, 2003; Francis, 1992) indicate that adolescents rate schooling and related activities lower than other activities, our findings show that it was their major concern during the lockdown. Their choice of words to express how they felt about the curtailed school activities gives evidence that school activities occupy a prime position in the activities they are interested in and they attempted learning using technology. However, the impact was not the same as the face-to-face learning they were used to. Also, the lockdown had negative effects on the adolescents' social lives, however, the findings indicate that they were able to manage the situation significantly and this confirms resilience tendencies in adolescents.

The adolescents' family life was narrated from divergent angles in that whereas the lockdown devastated and separated some families, it provided opportunities for other families to bond and spend time together. Also, findings on friendships show similar attitudes in Ghanaian adolescents' reaction to danger and relationship to authority; some conformed to strict directives from people in authority i.e. government and parents, in the face of danger, others blatantly defied them.

Furthermore, the study unearths the fact that adolescents, despite their dependency and absence of financial burden, were equally distraught by the families' financial constraints during the lockdown. Finally, the findings reveal adolescents' tendency to categorize spaces into secular and sacred with the secular being too mundane for sacred activities to take place. However, their spirituality may have been enhanced as they hoped in and prayed more to God for deliverance from the COVID-19 virus.



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