

The Role of International Community in The Management of Covid-19: The Lessons, Impact and Crime analysis

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Abstract

A few weeks into the year 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic radically altered the nature of social interactions and economic activity in all regions across the globe. By the first week of April 2020, 3.9 billion people – more than half the worldwide population – were under some form of lockdown. Since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, the IMF increased admittance to emergency funding amenities and delivered about \$11 billion in emergency funding to a plethora of African countries including Ghana. This was to salvage the economic crisis that these countries were facing. However, this helped only temporarily and thus, people living in poverty, especially in Ghana started becoming apprehensive. In essence, this study looks at the role of the international community in the management of covid-19 in Ghana. It also briefly examines the effect of the pandemic on property crime. The research is supported by various scholarly perspectives and a thorough examination of practical and theoretical knowledge in order to contribute to the existing body of literature. The observational research method was used in this reading, and empirical statistics was gathered from public and private sector authorities. The work was qualitatively infused and relied on rudimentary statistics (frequency and percentages). The data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The study found that more males were involved in the fight against the pandemic, and the lockdown was managed well. It also established that a global central database was used in creating awareness of the pandemic and that despite the support from the international community, deaths from the pandemic prevailed. Increased participation of and collaboration among stakeholders at the local authority was recommended.

Keywords: Covid-19, Crime, International community, Management, Pandemic

Introduction

COVID-19 first surfaced in December 2019 and has since blown out around the world, infecting millions of people and causing thousands of fatalities. COVID-19 is known for its high transmissibility, during the incubation phase, and potential danger to individuals' wellbeing. On the evening of January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) Committee settled that the eruption meets the measures for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) following International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR2005), based on the increasing number of patients and reports of the pandemic in many states around the world Zhang, [1].

In the initial days of the outbreak, many countries both international and regional took drastic changes to try to curb the rapid spread of the virus. Some states dealt with these disordered months better than others had. Lockdowns were compulsory at dissimilar times, numerous policies were considered, and restrictions varied in severity from Government to Government [2]. To keep their citizens safe

and alive, most countries resorted to a complete lockdown of their borders and a halt to regular activities.

Strict lockdowns were implemented in most countries. Public transport and other public activities were suspended until the spread was under control [3]. The use of technology, infrastructure, and the powers of the state to enforce strict monitoring had ensured transmission and deaths remained at a minimum. These strategies had yielded great results for many countries against the pandemic. When it came to how African countries handled the pandemic, there were mixed reviews. In general, the fatality ratio of COVID-19 in Africa was less than the worldwide rate [4]. However, in recent times, there had been a continuous rise in COVID-19 cases, specifically in African countries like Ghana.

This placed a lot of pressure on the central government as it tried to manage the situation. To this end, Ghana like many other developing countries; continually looked to the international community for aid. In light of this, it is significant to find out what

role the international community played in the management of COVID-19 and to what extent local governments managed the pandemic. It is also essential to examine the effects of the pandemic through the lens of the strain and opportunity theories of crime.

Problem Statement

The management of the COVID-19 pandemic and its overall effects varied from country to country. That notwithstanding, it is open knowledge that most countries lent or were lent some form of support. It is imperative therefore, to establish what the roles of the international community were and what impact these roles had on the general aftermath of the pandemic.

In addition, the analysis of prior epidemics sheds light on the potential consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. No two pandemics, however, are alike. The current pandemic (COVID-19) is unlike earlier pandemics such as SARS, Spanish flu, and H5N1 avian influenza [5]. For instance, COVID-19 spread worldwide relatively quickly as a result of increased international integration and trans-mission by carriers who did not show any symptoms. The disease's high rate of contraction was also partly due to mental or behavioral variables (Gourinchas, 2020; Saez and Zucman, 2020; McKibbin and Fernando (2020)). The majority of studies on the pandemic focused on its economic and health implications. Although these are the more obvious indicators, it is necessary to investigate the impact of the pandemic on other metrics like crime rate. It is only by doing so that the real and total impact of COVID-19 can be sufficiently assessed.

Literature Review

The international community played a plethora of roles to contribute to the management of COVID-19. One of the contributions was that international institutions and bilateral donors aided poor countries in their efforts to create the economic conditions necessary for domestic recovery. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) continues to provide practical technical assistance and training to its members, assisting governments in managing debt, raising revenues, and managing public finances so that vital services, such as health, can be delivered effectively. As a result, the Netherlands supported these efforts by contributing to the IMF's network of regional capacity-development centers in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, as well as dedicated IMF thematic funds. The most important goal was to assist low-income developing countries in overcoming the current crisis and building future resilience. Bilateral donors such as the Netherlands augmented IMF financing programs with focused interventions in health, education, and job development, as well as climate change and greening programs [6].

Over half of low-income countries were in debt difficulty or on the edge of it before the epidemic. Many countries had limited, if any, access to new market financing, forcing them to choose between supporting their citizens during the pandemic and paying off their debt. The international community has taken a number of substantial steps to solve this problem. With the support of 13 bilateral donors, including the Netherlands, the IMF gave a year of debt-service relief worth roughly \$500 million to 29 of its poorest members and requested extra resources to extend the relief until April 2022. The expansion of the G20's Debt Service

Suspension Initiative has already offered nearly \$5 billion in debt-service relief to the world's poorest countries. The IMF also backed the formation of an ambitious new Common Framework for Debt Resolution by the G20 and Paris Club, which blended a common approach to creditor decision-making with a case-by-case approach to debt relief [6].

The IMF has increased access to emergency financing facilities and granted \$11 billion in emergency funding to 47 countries in this category since the outbreak of the pandemic (i.e., poorest countries). In the years ahead, the IMF is committed to guaranteeing adequate access to such finance. To accomplish so, the IMF is counting on the backing of its wealthiest members, who will provide new credit resources to fund concessional lending programs. The Fund had acquired an extra \$22 billion since the start of the pandemic and was working on mobilizing donations to ensure zero-interest loans at current levels, to which the Netherlands contributed [6].

Finally, today more than ever, low-income countries require a trade. Global poverty levels have dropped considerably in the last two decades as these countries increased their participation in international markets. The pandemic, however, as well as continued trade conflicts, endangered that progress. A rule-based trade system that is open, stable, and transparent is essential for global economic stability, inclusive and sustainable growth, and long-term prosperity [7].

The African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT) and COVAX are working to make COVID-19 vaccinations more widely available in Africa. They worked together to swiftly increase supply to the continent and give countries the resources they needed to effectively use the doses they received. COVAX and AVAT have supplied over 90 million donated doses to the continent, with millions more delivered through bilateral agreements. UNICEF continues to urge the international community, especially funders and manufacturers, to commit to this effort beginning January 1, 2022 [8].

Theoretical Framework (Opportunity Theory and the Strain Theories of Crime) Covid-19 and Crime Effects

It is vital to distinguish between a short-term and long-term perspective when considering the COVID-19 pandemic's possible impact on crime. When combined with pre-existing challenges like organized crime and gang violence, which vary by country, lockdown limits may have a short-term impact on crime. As a result of the restrictions, criminals are less inclined to break into private residences, reducing the likelihood of street crime. When social-distancing measures, such as restrictions on public meetings or the closure of bars, restaurants, and shops, are in place, physical violence outside the house and family, theft, and robbery are less likely to occur. Business closures, and the resulting unemployment and loss of revenue, may have a long-term impact on crime, particularly expansionist and profit-driven crime if economic and social safety nets are insufficient to ensure livelihoods.

Looting and riots were also a worry in areas where the public was economically impacted and dissatisfied with the government's re-

action. The "opportunity theory" and "strain theory", both criminological theories, can be used to analyse the short period and long period impact of misconduct. These models forecast two dissimilar criminal tendencies. Because of the boundaries placed on movement and socialization, the strain theory contends that lockdown procedures could plausibly decrease the incidence of criminal wrongdoings being dedicated; strain theory, on the other hand, contends that socio-economic strains that affect a large proportion of the population, particularly the most vulnerable to develop an ambiance to commit crime [9]. This results in some of the effects this pandemic has brought.

As a result, lockdown measures could theoretically lead to a wide range of complexities, with the dominant trend likely to be determined by a number of factors, including the nature of the prohibitions, the socio-economic support provided by governments to overcome obstacles and pre-existing constraints in terms of crime and governance. In general, due to the reduction in the opportunity to commit crime, a drop in some types of crime could be expected in conditions of extreme confinement. The impacts of the latter causal mechanism were expected to be more long-lasting once the lockdown measures were withdrawn [9].

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive research design in which empirical data was elicited from both public and private sector officials. The work was qualitatively embedded but also made use of simple statistics (frequency and percentages). Information was derived from both primary and secondary sources. With the primary source of data, an interview guide was designed to aid in getting an in-depth understanding of the issues at hand. The interview guide was used to elicit statistics from both private and public sector officials whereas the secondary source of data was derived from scholarly works including articles, international reviews, and updates, projects among others. Information was also sought from various government memos and internet sources, which were credible and were analyzed accordingly. Twenty-two (22) participants were interviewed and recorded through online questionnaires (google forms) and some phone interviews were also conducted. Participants were purposively selected. Data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. As part of safeguarding procedures, all COVID-19 protocols were strictly observed.

Data Presentation and Analysis

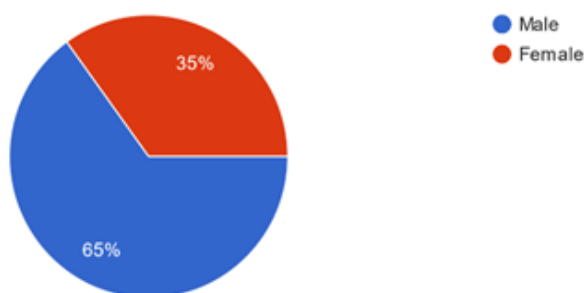


Figure 1: Sex Distribution of Respondents

On the sex distribution of respondents, there were 35% females

and 65% males. Majority of the respondents were male. This implies that males showed more interest in the research work than females.

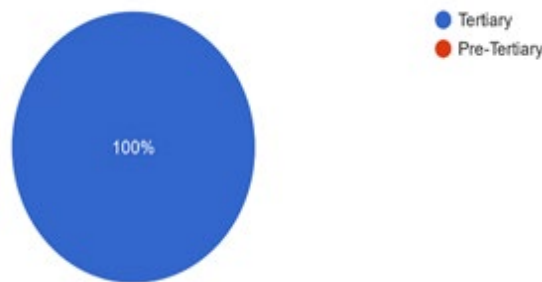


Figure 2: Educational Levels of Respondents

All respondents (100%) had tertiary education and all were Ghanaians. This implies that all respondents had some level of education and for that matter, their opinions were informed.



Figure 3: Type of Work

On the type of work, 30% of the respondents worked with the international community (Development partners 10%; Donor community 10%; and public servants 10%) while 70% worked at the national level as teachers, nurses, civil/public servants and self-employed. This implies that there were mixed and varied views of people from all spheres of life.

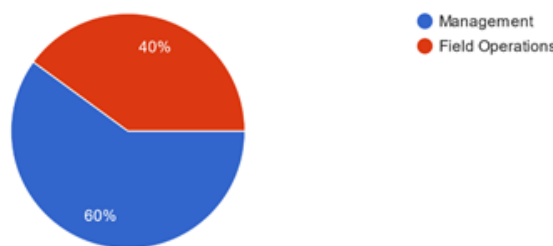


Figure 4: Work Status of Respondents

On the status of work, 40% of these workers were in management while 60% were in field operations.

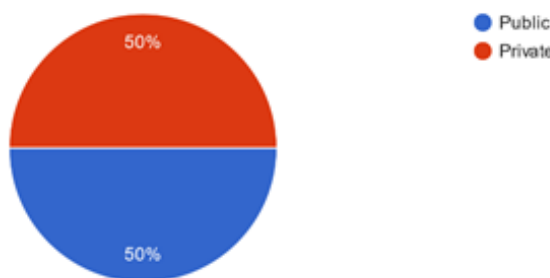


Figure 5: Work Sector

None of the respondents worked with the local authority directly during the lockdown. On whether the central government managed the pandemic better than the local government, 50% were of the view that the central government managed it better because of the availability of resources while 50% also said the local authority could do better since they are closer to the citizens at the grassroots. On effective management of the pandemic, all (100%) of the respondents were of the view that observing the protocols, enforcing the laws, public education and vaccination were well coordinated. On collaboration, all the respondents (100%) said the stakeholders in the fight collaborated well. 95% of the respondents said the lockdown was managed well while 5% said it was poorly managed because of poor planning.

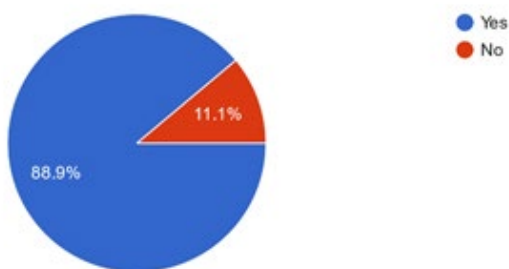


Figure 6: Local Authority's Fight Against Covid-19

The majority (88.9%) of the respondents believed that local authority was involved in the fight against COVID-19 while 11.1% believed that local authority was not involved in the fight. This implies that local government played active role in the management of covid-19 and was responsible for public education and distribution of materials in order to aid in the observing of safety protocols.

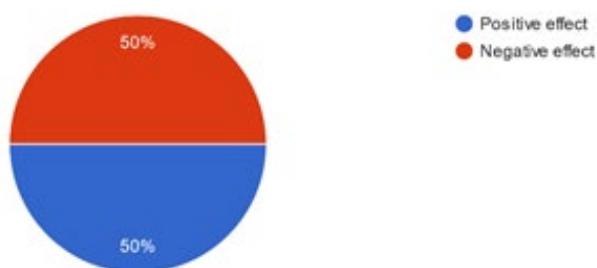


Figure 7: Effects of Covid-19 on the Population

50% of participants believed the participation of the local authority had a positive impact while the other 50% believed that their participation affected the population negatively.

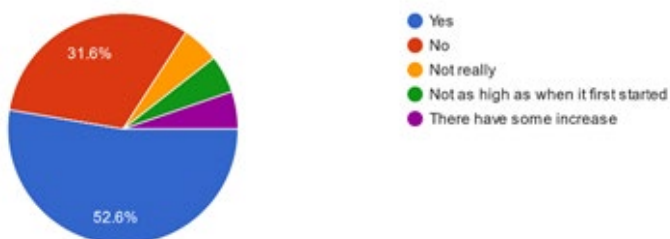


Figure 8: Death Rate

Despite these interventions, 52.6% of the participants were of the view that there were more deaths from the pandemic while 31.6% thought there was a reduction in deaths because of the interventions and the observation of the safety protocols. In general, this confirms that more lives were lost in West Africa and on the global front.

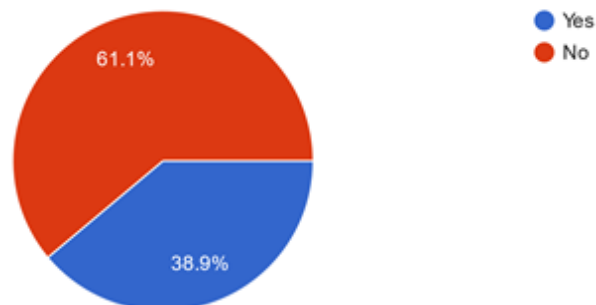


Figure 9: Primary Role of Local Authority

Figure 9 depicts that with regards to the involvement of the local authority in managing COVID-19, 61.1% of participants did not believe the local authority had reclaimed the performance of their primary roles whilst 38.9% held the view that they had. In the practical view, the local government played a major role(s) in the management of covid-19 in Ghana and is still playing some roles to ensure it is kicked out.

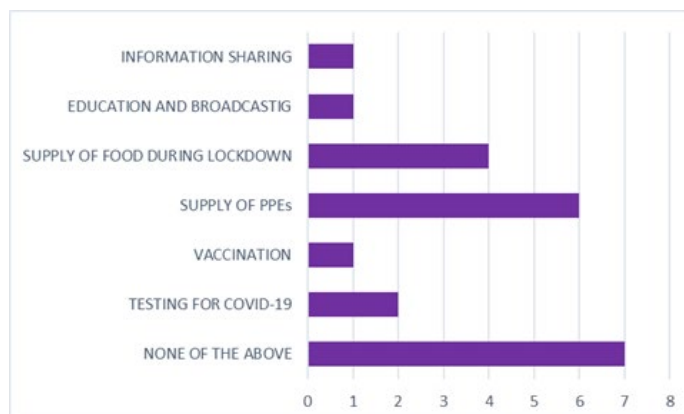


Figure 10: Role of Sub-National Actors in The Distribution of Covid-19 Stimulus Packages

Concerning sub-national actors' involvement in the disbursement of COVID-19 stimulus packages, two (2) sub-national actors, representing 9% were involved in the disbursement of packages for testing for COVID-19 while one (1) sub-national actor, representing 5% was involved in the vaccination program. Concerning the supply of PPEs, six (6) sub-national actors representing (27%) respondents were involved in the disbursement, and four (4) sub-national actors representing (18%) were involved in the supply of food during the lockdown. 2 (9%) were involved in educating the public through broadcasting and information sharing on the pandemic, while the rest 7 (32%) were not involved in the disbursement of any packages.

Views on The Role of The International Community

Concerning the role of the Global Community in the management of COVID-19, an astounding 88.9% of respondents agreed that working in synergy with other countries is the way to go in the battle against COVID-19. They stated their reasons as; sharing of resources among countries i.e., aid, data, vaccines, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), and enhanced border control and monitoring through collaboration. The remaining 11.1% of respondents however thought that Ghana handled the pandemic successfully. When asked whether the international community should have dealt directly with the central government or local government, a 55.6% majority responded that it was good that the international community dealt directly with the central government. For stated reasons of accountability and diplomatic relations, the central government has the required structures and resources for the implementation, control, and enforcement of protocols. According to a participant;

The central government helped formulate policy direction for effective implementation at the local level. The central government made resource allocation to local government by creating a unit in charge of COVID-19 with personnel who have health and accounting backgrounds. (Online interview, January 2022).

17.6% asserted that it would have been a healthier knowledge for the international community to work directly with the local government because the local authority is closer to the citizens and because the bureaucracies of the central government it delays decision-making and action-taking. The interview guide also explored how the global community responded to the crisis. Participants posit that the International Community responded fairly well and effectively through the provision of resources to fight the pandemic that is; offering financial aid to the central and local governments as well as to small-scale businesses, sharing of vaccines and PPEs, and embarking on a generally agreed policy of lockdowns.

Concerning the issue of which organizations were involved in the management of the pandemic, 68.8% of participants recognized the World Health Organization as being at the forefront in the fight against the pandemic. The World Bank, Ghana Health Service, and Ministry of Health were also noted to be front liners in the management of COVID-19.

From the data collected, these organizations managed the pandemic through the enforcement of protocols, funding, public sensitization, provision of vaccines and COVID-19 safety tools and equipment, data collection and adoption of scientific methods, information sharing, and testing and isolation, and formerly, contact tracing.

Participants presupposed that the international community but not any other organization needed to be involved because;

- I. It was a global crisis
- II. The international community had the requisite knowledge, experience, and resources to handle the pandemic
- III. They have a wider outreach.

Regarding the involvement of the local authority in the fight against the pandemic, 88.9% of participants believe that the lo-

cal authority has been involved in the fight against the pandemic while 11.1% believed they have not.

On the role of academia, the respondents recommended that academia should do more research and provide solutions to fight COVID-19. The international community should support financially and also through the provision of techniques to help fight the pandemic. The respondents mentioned that the international community should continuously collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO) by paying their dues for the organization to function effectively and work in sync to stop the virus from spreading.

On the lessons/experiences that were learned/gathered during the fight against the pandemic, one participant stated observance of personal hygiene, extending aid to others, vigilance, collaboration, and bearing individual responsibilities.

Summary of Key Findings

These were as follows:

- On demography of participants, they were mostly West African males with tertiary education, working in both public and private sectors, majorly as field operators.
- The majority of the respondents did not work directly with the local authority during the lockdown.
- Both central and local authorities managed the pandemic well due to the availability of resources and closeness to the grassroots. The lockdown during the crisis was effectively managed through effective collaborations with other countries and stakeholders. There was synergy among the international community in the fight against the pandemic more than fighting it in isolation. The international community collaborated with the central government more than the local authority due to the structure and resources at their disposal despite the bureaucracies. The local authorities made use of the central global database in educating the public.
- Despite the support received by the central government from the international community, there were more deaths.
- The local authorities had not reclaimed their primary roles even though they contributed immensely to the fight against the pandemic.

Conclusions

Both the central and local authorities were involved in the fight against the pandemic and the lockdown was managed well.

There was synergy and collaboration among stakeholders in the fight against the pandemic. The global central database was used in creating awareness of the pandemic. Despite the support from the international community, there were more deaths.

Citizens were involved in the disbursement of stimulus packages during the lockdown. There was the creation of awareness about the pandemic and the protocols were observed. Academia was involved in quality research towards the development of the vaccine. There was a collaboration among stakeholders to fight the pandemic. Citizens picked up a range of lessons from the pandemic including the practicing of personal hygiene [10-12].

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings of this work, we, therefore, make the following feasible recommendations:

- There should be more synergy and collaboration among stakeholders at the local authority level to create awareness of the pandemic with support from the international community
- Academia should conduct more research work on the pandemic

Implications for Further Research

This paper looked at the role of the international community in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic taking mixed reactions from the international front and the local front and looking at the effects on property crime by specifically applying the strain theory and the opportunity theory of crime. Therefore, the same or similar studies can be done in this area by looking at other theories of crime like the behavioural theory of crime, the economic theory of crime, and its applicability to the subject among others. Furthermore, the local authority was given much consideration in this paper, we, therefore, suggest that other sectors of the economy be also looked at on the same subject.

Acknowledgement

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