

A Reflection of Community Dilemmas Driven by the Advent of Coronavirus in Eclectic Rural Contexts in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

In the 2020-2021 epoch, South Africa faced the arduous challenge of fighting COVID-19 due to limited resources. This paper reflects how the disease affected communities in eclectic rural contexts in South Africa. This article applied a review of the literature methodology. The researchers drew their literature from journal articles, book chapters, and informal community conversations amid the researchers' experiential intuition. The article reflects that South African rural communities faced coronavirus-driven dilemmas due to the following factors: Society being subjected to conflicting messages, a state of stigma and stigmatisation, misleading information packaging, fear associated with failure to understand the disease's aetiology and epidemiology; and states of poverty associated with loss of several business closures and termination of employment; the phenomenon of myths and misinformation; scepticisms and conspiracies; as well as a manifestation of various forms of love deficit. This article recommends that social service professionals such as psychologists, counsellors, and social workers be on the frontline to conduct psychotherapeutic education to communities to build their resilience to fight the coronavirus. The study provides scientific data on the historical glimpse of the impact of pandemics in rural communities of South Africa. It prepares societies for other pandemics that may come in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

Reflectively, in the 2020-2021 epoch, South Africa, on account of the coronavirus, manifested many dilemmas that inter alia included people's communication modus operandi, immeasurable fear; exacerbated states of poverty; the phenomenon of myths and misinformation, scepticisms, and conspiracies; as well as manifested various forms of love deficit. The dearth of resources amid unpreparedness in the South African context to handle the coronavirus drove communities into a state of dilemma, apathy, and confusion. This article reflects on dilemmas that the coronavirus imposed on rural communities in the eclectic contexts of South Africa in the 2020-2021 epoch, as well as a reflection of what needed to be done by the government and other stakeholders to allay fears associated with the disease.

Indeed, rural communities in South Africa, like in many other global ubiquitous contexts, faced unprecedented dilemmas in the face of COVID-19.¹ These dilemmas inter alia included people's communication messaging deficit, immeasurable fear, exacerbated states of poverty, myths and misinformation, scepticism and conspiracies surrounding the disease, and various forms of love deficit.²

Epidemiologically, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic affected everybody in the world regardless of colour, age, gender, and cultural background.³ It is believed that the virus causes a respiratory syndrome characterised by severe pneumonia and a high fatality rate.⁴ It is predominantly harmful to people in the most vulnerable conditions, such as the aged and those harbouring various health comorbidities, those in poor physical health, those living in squalid environments, the socially isolated, those experiencing poverty, as well as those manifesting poor mental health.⁵ Perhaps the worst consequence of the disease was fear of whether people were going to survive it or not.⁶

Mortazavi, Assari, Alimohamadi, Rafiee, & Shati aver that many people around the world have increasingly been overwhelmed by the loss of their loved ones in the face of coronavirus.⁷ Besides, societies have sacrificed their relationships by imposing restrictive regulations such as lockdowns by governments, which forced people to stay strictly in their domiciles and, therefore, isolate themselves from one another.⁸ This resulted in most people not getting a fair chance to pay their final respects to their loved ones upon their death, either from coronavirus or other forms of ailments. This brought a cultural shock and imposed immense dilemmas on people's well-being.⁹ This was because, in many rural contexts, giving those who have departed a dignified send-off is considered honorable.¹⁰ Painstakingly, involuntary confinement of people in their private domiciles bred toxic relationships that caused gender-based violence.¹¹ Moreover, Mortazavi et al. stated that people were barred from exercising their normal relationships for several months, such as showing love to their elderly by keeping a social distance from them.¹²

The pandemic faced inordinate miscommunications. A study by García et al. in Ecuador established inordinate miscommunication among officials of health information.¹³ Worse, any form of communication was done in Spanish without considering whether *all* and *sundry* were covered. These researchers think that social media has greatly impacted communication and miscommunication in ubiquitous contexts, with people's informal views assuming scientific positions without evidence. Inconveniently, as the pandemic continued to take its toll, there was a rise in mistrust, misinformation, and an upsurge of conspiracy theories concerning COVID-19 information disseminated from social media platforms.¹⁴ This was also identified in a study by Seytre, in which unvetted information was freely available on social media.¹⁵

¹ Lacey J McIntosh et al., "COVID-19 Vaccination-Related Uptake on FDG PET/CT: An Emerging Dilemma and Suggestions for Management," *American Journal of Roentgenology* 217, no. 4 (2021): 975–83.

² McIntosh et al., "COVID-19 Vaccination-Related Uptake on FDG PET/CT: An Emerging Dilemma and Suggestions for Management."

³ World Health Organization, "COVID-19 Situation Update for the WHO African Region," *World Health Organization* 20202, no. 7 (2020): 10.

⁴ McIntosh et al., "COVID-19 Vaccination-Related Uptake on FDG PET/CT: An Emerging Dilemma and Suggestions for Management."

⁵ Andreas Schleicher, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Education: Insights from" *Education at a Glance 2020*," *OECD Publishing*, 2020.

⁶ Andrew Sumner, Chris Hoy, and Eduardo Ortiz-Juarez, *Estimates of the Impact of COVID-19 on Global Poverty* (WIDER working paper, 2020).

⁷ Seyedeh Salehe Mortazavi et al., "Fear, Loss, Social Isolation, and Incomplete Grief Due to COVID-19: A Recipe for a Psychiatric Pandemic," *Basic and Clinical Neuroscience* 11, no. 2 (2020): 225.

⁸ Suravi Patra, Binod Kumar Patro, and Swati Priyadarshini Acharya, "COVID-19 Lockdown and School Closure: Boon or Bane for Child Mental Health, Results of a Telephonic Parent Survey," *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 54 (2020): 102395.

⁹ Rijen Shrestha, Kewal Krishan, and Tanuj Kanchan, "Dignity and Rights of the Dead and Their Families: A Compromise in the Time of Coronavirus Disease 2019," *Medicine, Science and the Law* 61, no. 1 (2021): 58–60.

¹⁰ L J Bank, Nelly Sharpley, and Mark Paterson, "Closing the Gate: Death, Dignity & Distress in the Rural Eastern Cape in the Time of Covid," 2021, <https://repository.hsrc.ac.za/handle/20.500.11910/15875>.

¹¹ Simon Murote Kang'ethe, "Unpacking South African Institutions of Higher Learning Efforts and Hurdles to Respond to COVID-19: Social Service Professionals' Lenses," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 21, no. 1 (2022): 84–99.

¹² Mortazavi et al., "Fear, Loss, Social Isolation, and Incomplete Grief Due to COVID-19: A Recipe for a Psychiatric Pandemic."

¹³ Gerardo M García et al., "Miscommunication in the COVID-19 Era," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 39 (2020): 39–46.

¹⁴ Ayesha Anwar et al., "Role of Mass Media and Public Health Communications in the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Cureus* 12, no. 9 (2020).

¹⁵ Bernard Seytre, "Erroneous Communication Messages on COVID-19 in Africa," *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 103, no. 2 (2020): 587.

Some people displayed mistrust in aspects of the science surrounding COVID-19. A study conducted by Jaspal & Nerlich revealed that skeptics were reported as believing that the pandemic is a hoax/joke, scam, con-as-virus, scandemic, or a plandemic, and they mostly used these terms without explanation, but rather projecting their belief that coronavirus does not exist.¹⁶ For example, in South Africa, the former Chief Justice of the constitutional court Judge, Moegeng Moegeng, says that people should not take vaccines.¹⁷ He believed that the mainstream media deliberately ignores the opposing side regarding scientific evidence. He believes that people should not ignore the views of other scientists who presented a contrary view by heralding that there was no coronavirus.¹⁸

METHODOLOGY

This discourse-based reflective paper uses a scoping-based literature review to reflect the community dilemmas on account of coronavirus in eclectic rural contexts in South Africa. The data was gathered through desktop research using search engines such as Google Scholar, Ebscohost, YouTube, Lib-guides, Research Gate, etc. The researcher concentrated on English articles authored between 2020 and 2022. Much data was generated, and when analysed, the themes were developed, which were discussed subsequently. The researchers also relied on secondary data, which gave rise to heterogeneous sources, including empirical monographs, books, theses, and journal articles. In analysing the data, researchers picked themes through coding.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Society is subjected to conflicting messages

The media is the primary source of information and plays an important role in educating the masses. However, when overly eager sources spread information without proper verification, not only can it be harmful, but it can also have perfidious as well as pernicious consequences on the receiving masses.¹⁹ For example, whenever there is a pandemic outbreak, people tend to turn to the media for information. Usually, the public can change its mindset just by significant exposure to extensive news coverage. Additionally, once the news about a certain pandemic spreads, it creates panic. This is also known as 'headline stress disorder.' Evidently, in the epoch of the COVID-19 pandemic, false and misleading information was published using different news platforms without any scientific verification.²⁰ Further, because people were subjected to different and contradictory messages, they used their discretion in dealing with the pandemic or sometimes used or followed what they thought would help them. For example, in some communities, some people strongly believed in using *Umhlonyane* and *body steaming* as a way of dealing with COVID-19. *Umhlonyane* is a herb that has been popular amongst South Africans since the advent of the Coronavirus. This herb treats upper and lower respiratory tract infections to overcome cough, cold, fever, etc. On the other hand, body steaming is known for improving blood circulation, leading to more nutrients and oxygen being delivered to skin cells. Some scientists are of the view that wearing a mask leads to other illnesses because it suffocates people. This perhaps demands some scientific debate, which this paper may not be able to venture into.

Incontrovertibly, previous pandemics, including COVID-19, have demonstrated that conflicting messages and scepticism in accepting information from public health bodies such as WHO are common responses to catastrophes of this nature.²¹ Inopportunistly, the reoccurrence of infections is inevitable because confusion and misinformation are endemic in human nature.²²

¹⁶ Rusi Jaspal and Brigitte Nerlich, "Social Representations of COVID-19 Skeptics: Denigration, Demonization, and Disenfranchisement," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 11, no. 4 (2023): 750–70.

¹⁷ Rantsoa Letšosa, "What Has the Beast's Mark to Do with the COVID-19 Vaccination, and What Is the Role of the Church and Answering to the Christians?," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021).

¹⁸ Noni Mokati, "Mogoeng Mogoeng Not Backing down as He Makes More Controversial Vaccine and Covid-19 Remarks," February 15, 2022, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/mogoeng-mogoeng-not-backing-down-as-he-makes-more-controversial-vaccine-and-covid-19-remarks-1aa23bde-626f-4375-aa1b-845392dd4186>.

¹⁹ Anwar et al., "Role of Mass Media and Public Health Communications in the COVID-19 Pandemic."

²⁰ M. M. Ferreira Caceres, et.al "The impact of misinformation on the COVID-19 pandemic." *AIMS public health*, 9(2), (2022); 262–277. <https://doi.org/10.3934/publichealth.2022018>

²¹ Scott Toney, Jenn Light, and Andrew Urbaczewski, "Fighting Zoom Fatigue: Keeping the Zoombies at Bay," *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* 48, no. 1 (2021): 10.

²² Toney, Light, and Urbaczewski, "Fighting Zoom Fatigue: Keeping the Zoombies at Bay."

Stigma and Stigmatisation

According to WHO, in the context of health, social stigma means a negative association between a person or a group of people who share certain characteristics and specific diseases.²³ The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak provoked worldwide discriminatory behaviours as many people were isolated in their homes to contain the infections.²⁴ Indeed, COVID-19 led to stigma and stigmatisation among communities with COVID-19 patients. However, ubiquitous corners of the globe continued to experience different bouts of stigma and stigmatisation.²⁵ In some communities, people believe that coronavirus infects and affects those living in urban areas, and they spread the virus to rural communities. When the virus started to spread in South Africa, some people were of the view that the virus affected those who flew to and from different countries. Perhaps this was because the first reported case was a 38-year-old man who had visited Italy a week before being diagnosed as infected by a coronavirus. Sitto and Lubinga argued that people in South Africa fallaciously understood that they were free from possible COVID-19 infections if they had not travelled out of the country.²⁶ In some quarters, people believed that the virus came from China.²⁷ Further, coronavirus patients were stereotyped as the active spreaders of coronavirus, with society adopting several negative treatments, such as posting rumors about them on social media and denying them entry into their domiciles even when they recover.²⁸

Joblessness associated with the advent of COVID-19

One of the impacts of COVID-19 was that people lost their jobs, particularly in the informal sector category. This agrees with Sitto and Lubinga, who pointed out that the effect was greatly felt among lower-income earning groups who could no longer leave their homes to make a living.²⁹ Notably, in South Africa, many affected people from such lower-income earning groups stay in townships and travel daily to workplaces to search for piecemeal jobs in the city, with no opportunity to work online at home. Paul et al. agree with the above that due to the lockdown, vulnerable populations such as rural people who rely on hand-to-mouth temporary jobs such as rickshaw pullers, day labourers, domestic workers, transport workers, street vendors, construction labourers in ubiquitous corners of the world experienced a very hard time in securing their jobs.³⁰ It became shocking that despite the food being considered an essential service, street traders, including those selling food, were stopped from operating and lost all income.³¹

However, in the formal sector category, people also lost jobs, although the impact was not the same as in the informal sector.³² For example, agriculture, mining, and electricity were the least affected, while the construction, hospitality, and fast-food industries were the most affected.³³ Studies also reveal that the impact was not the same even in age. In a study by Broadbent, Combrink, and Smart, the formal sector younger workers of 15–29-year-olds were the most affected in terms of losing jobs. Still, they were paradoxically the ones who experienced a quicker recovery compared to the older generation of 60 years and above.³⁴

²³ Iorja Vincent Gisaor, Isa Charity Gwandzang, and Aondowase Stephen Nev, "An Economic Analysis of Covid-19 Pandemic and the Rising Global Unemployment," *Ilorin Journal of Economic Policy* 7, no. 3 (2020): 1–11.

²⁴ Debanjan Banerjee and K S Meena, "RETRACTED: COVID-19 as an 'Infodemic' in Public Health: Critical Role of the Social Media," *Frontiers in Public Health* 9 (2021): 610623.

²⁵ Dickson Adom et al., "African Proverbs for Cultural Education: A Step towards Digital Archiving," *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 10, no. 4 (2021): 44–59.

²⁶ Karabo Sitto and Elizabeth Lubinga, "A Disease of Privilege? Social Representations in Online Media about COVID-19 among South Africans during Lockdown," *Papers on Social Representations* 29, no. 2 (2020): 1–6.

²⁷ Divya Bhanot et al., "Stigma and Discrimination during COVID-19 Pandemic," *Frontiers in Public Health* 8 (2021): 577018.

²⁸ Ali Navidian, Saeed Pahlavanzadeh, and Mohsen Yazdani, "The Effectiveness of Family Training on Family Caregivers of Inpatients with Mental Disorders," *Iranian Journal of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology* 16, no. 2 (2010): 99–106.

²⁹ Sitto and Lubinga, "A Disease of Privilege? Social Representations in Online Media about COVID-19 among South Africans during Lockdown."

³⁰ Alak Paul et al., "Psychological and Livelihood Impacts of COVID-19 on Bangladeshi Lower Income People," *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health* 33, no. 1 (2021): 100–108.

³¹ Marc C A Wegerif, "'Informal' Food Traders and Food Security: Experiences from the Covid-19 Response in South Africa," *Food Security* 12, no. 4 (2020): 797–800.

³² Godwell Nhamo et al., "Restaurants and COVID-19: A Focus on Sustainability and Recovery Pathways," *Counting the Cost of COVID-19 on the Global Tourism Industry*, 2020, 205–24.

³³ Godwell Nhamo, Kaitano Dube, and David Chikodzi, *Counting the Cost of COVID-19 on the Global Tourism Industry* (Springer, 2020).

³⁴ Alex Broadbent, Herkulaas Combrink, and Benjamin Smart, "COVID-19 in South Africa," *Global Epidemiology* 2 (2020): 100034.

Emergence of Entrepreneurial Culture

Researchers have noticed that because of joblessness, people challenged themselves to start their informal sector activities, thereby creating employment. Opportunely, some of them used the money they got via unemployment insurance funds to start their businesses. The government of South Africa needs to be commended because in trying to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus, it came up with the R 350 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) to cushion the economic effects presented by coronavirus.³⁵ Amazingly, some people took advantage of the R350 to start their businesses. The success of those few people motivated President Cyril Ramaphosa to praise the new entrepreneurial spirit displayed by a few people in his 2022 State of the Nation Address.³⁶ He stated that the grant supports over 10 million unemployed beneficiaries. Still, it is the two citizens who used the money prudently to begin a business that captured the country's interest through the many Twitter users.³⁷ The following verbatim sentiments herald a few people's entrepreneurial emergent cultures at this epoch of coronavirus.

"Mr. Thando Makhubu from Soweto received the R350 grant for seven months last year and saved it to open an ice cream store that employs four people."³⁸

"Mr. Lindokuhle Msomi, an unemployed Television producer from KwaMashu Hostel, saved the R350 grant for nine months to start a fast-food stall and support his family."³⁹

These are just two examples of the positive social relief grant (SRG) use that motivated an entrepreneurial culture.⁴⁰

Myths surrounding Corona Virus

Like all global pandemics, myths emerge where there is no sufficient information about the disease's etiology and epidemiology, and coronavirus is no exception.⁴¹ For Example, the study by Okunlola et al. identified, amongst other myths, the following four main ones: coronavirus is deadly, hand sanitizers do kill the virus, face masks offer protection against the virus, and drying the hands with a hand dryer helps to prevent the virus.⁴² Alwan, Bhopal, Burgess, et al. agreed and added that the following myths were identified at the onset of coronavirus: Coronavirus affects only the elderly persons; mosquito bites can spread the virus; antibiotics are effective for treatment, and homemade remedies can cure the coronavirus.⁴³ Further, one of the challenges the researchers realised was the entrenchment of vaccine apathy. Vaccine hesitancy incrementally took a huge toll in the 2020-2021 epoch. People advanced that vaccine hesitancy happened for a lot of different reasons. Some argue that vaccines have side effects. Others believed that vaccines could cause death, while others did not want to take vaccines for religious reasons.⁴⁴ The sad part of vaccine apathy and hesitancy in South Africa was that the government had paid millions of Rands to secure the vaccine. This, therefore, implied that if people did not take or were hesitant to take the vaccines timeously, the drugs could expire, leading to millions and millions of Rands going

³⁵ Adrino Mazenda, Tyanai Masiya, and David Mandiyani, "The Effectiveness of the COVID-19 Economic and Social Relief Package as a Poverty Alleviation Strategy in South Africa," in *Socioeconomic Dynamics of the COVID-19 Crisis. Contributions to Economics.*, ed. N. Faghiih and A. Forouharfar (Cham: Springer, 2022), 215–30, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-89996-7_10.

³⁶ Staff Writer, "Ramaphosa on Large vs Small Companies in South Africa, and How Entrepreneurs Are Finding Success in Covid-19," *Business Tech*, July 20, 2020, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/417795/ramaphosa-on-large-vs-small-companies-in-south-africa-and-how-entrepreneurs-are-finding-success-in-covid-19/>.

³⁷ Belinda Pheto, "'My Phone Rang Non-Stop': Thando Makhubu Used R350 Grant to Start Gourmet Ice Cream Business in Soweto Makhubu Was Mentioned by the President during the State of the Nation Address," *Sunday Times*, February 11, 2022, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2022-02-11-my-phone-rang-non-stop-thando-makhubu-used-r350-grant-to-start-gourmet-ice-cream-business-in-soweto/>.

³⁸ Crispin Adriaanse, "Using R350 Grant to Start a Business? SA Weighs In," *IOL*, 2022, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/western-cape/using-r350-grant-to-start-a-business-sa-weighs-in-93b6bc7f-dbac-42b8-a3b4-ab624c823348>.

³⁹ Adriaanse, "Using R350 Grant to Start a Business? SA Weighs In."

⁴⁰ Adriaanse, "Using R350 Grant to Start a Business? SA Weighs In."

⁴¹ Simon Murote Kang'ethe, "Unpacking Pertinent States of Stigma and Stigmatization Associated with COVID-19 in Eclectic Contexts: A Review of the Literature," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 22, no. 5–6 (2024): 429–44.

⁴² Michael Abiola Okunlola et al., "Perceived Myths and Misconceptions about the Novel COVID-19 Outbreak," *SciMedicine Journal* 2, no. 3 (2020): 108–17.

⁴³ Nisreen A Alwan et al., "Evidence Informing the UK's COVID-19 Public Health Response Must Be Transparent," *Lancet* 395, no. 10229 (2020): 1036–37.

⁴⁴ Tafadzwa Dzinamarira et al., "COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-out in South Africa and Zimbabwe: Urgent Need to Address Community Preparedness, Fears and Hesitancy," *Vaccines* 9, no. 3 (2021): 250.

down the drain.⁴⁵ To take care of these myths, the government needed to ensure there was clear and correct communication that could disseminate important and accurate information. This could reduce opportunities for the emergence of these myths.

Relationship Deficit

Unequivocally, family support is very important during an epoch of crisis. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, such support was not there or was minimal. The care for each was heavily compromised because of stringent lockdown rules.⁴⁶ In agreement with the above statement, an article by Knight revealed the following conversation between him and his client during their online therapeutic session: A 24-year-old man was suffering from anxiety when he started therapy six months before lockdown.⁴⁷ He had also experienced a painful breakup with a long-term partner. They were in their second month of changing to online therapy because of the lockdown. The client was asked how he coped with the lockdown and retorted, "My life is interrupted. All I did before lockdown, my meetings with family and friends, and how I lived and socialized no longer exist. I feel anxious about losing real contact with my friends and family because online contact feels unreal. It is like watching a Television screen; they are there on a screen, but I feel they are not really with me. I feel alone."⁴⁸

On the other hand, even in cases where the family was together when one of the family members was diagnosed with coronavirus, they needed to be isolated. This denied them the mutual and reciprocal interaction that brought peace, love, and opportunities for caregiving from one's kin.⁴⁹ In agreement, Knight, amongst other things, revealed that, for many people, COVID-19-driven lockdown precipitated negative thoughts about their lives.⁵⁰ In his paper, he demonstrated that during one of his sessions with his client, a client noted that lockdown and isolation made the client evoke sour memories of his early childhood experiences when left alone by his mother. Living under lockdown, the impossibility of visiting his family and kin heightened his sense of isolation. One of the consequences of coronavirus and lockdown is that relationships in many forms were affected. Religious institutions such as churches were also closed, thereby denying people the spiritual help that they needed during this difficult time. Most people felt that they were being denied a closer relationship with God.⁵¹ Further, the lockdown affected people's attendance at funeral rituals and practices. This is because the number of people attending them was restricted. This impacted the family members' process of psychological and social healing. This was dire as some rituals were considered critical in assisting coping with death and bereavement, as well as in managing associated grief. Inopportunistically, Shrestha, Krishan, & Kanchan aver that at the pandemic's peak, cleaning (bathing) and dressing the deceased's body was severely restricted to prevent the spread of disease.⁵² These may have severely reduced the psychological process of healing and support for the bereaved and could severely impact the mourning process for families.⁵³ Further, older adults were also more vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness as they were functionally dependent on family members or support from community services. Research revealed that for older adults, social isolation can be a motivating factor for earlier mortality and aggravation of their mental health.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ Dzinamarira et al., "COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-out in South Africa and Zimbabwe: Urgent Need to Address Community Preparedness, Fears and Hesitancy."

⁴⁶ Konstantinos Farsalinos et al., "Improved Strategies to Counter the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lockdowns vs. Primary and Community Healthcare," *Toxicology Reports* 8 (2021): 1–9.

⁴⁷ Zeldia Gillian Knight, "Living under Lockdown in the Shadow of the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa: Anxious Voices from the Unplanned Shift to Online Therapy," *Research in Psychotherapy: Psychopathology, Process, and Outcome* 23, no. 3 (2020), 206.

⁴⁸ Knight, "Living under Lockdown in the Shadow of the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa: Anxious Voices from the Unplanned Shift to Online Therapy," 206.

⁴⁹ J. L. Hart, et al., "Family-Centered Care During the COVID-19 Era." *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 60(2), (2020); e93-e97. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2020.04.017>

⁵⁰ J. Knight, "Higher Education Crossing Borders: A Guide to the Implications of the General Agreement on Trade in Services for Cross-Border Education," 2006.

⁵¹ T.D. Gurung, "A Death In The Family," *Himal Southasian*, 2020, <https://www.himalmag.com/a-death-in-the-family-2020/>.

⁵² Shrestha, Krishan, and Kanchan, "Dignity and Rights of the Dead and Their Families: A Compromise in the Time of Coronavirus Disease 2019."

⁵³ Diogo Cardoso and Luís Ferreira, "Application of Predictive Maintenance Concepts Using Artificial Intelligence Tools," *Applied Sciences* 11, no. 1 (2020): 18.

⁵⁴ Tzung-Jeng Hwang et al., "Loneliness and Social Isolation during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *International Psychogeriatrics* 32, no. 10 (2020): 1217–20.

Discussion Summary

The researchers have reflected on several issues they believe are important for public consumption, such as the dilemmas of coronavirus in ubiquitous corners of South African rural areas. One of the opportune consequences of coronavirus is the emergence of entrepreneurial culture emanating from some budding entrepreneurs taking advantage of the South African government's R350 of Social Relief Distress (SRD) grant meant to cushion the economic effect presented by coronavirus. While this is commendable, diverse reports abound that most youths spend this money on various kinds of revelry, with buying alcohol topping the agenda.

The emergence of inordinate myths has compounded the war against coronavirus. These are believed to take a huge toll due to inadequate community education on the disease's aetiology and its epidemiological terrain. These myths and stereotypes need to be demystified so that fear associated with the disease can be stemmed. A myth that especially needs to be tackled is that alcohol reduces coronavirus. This is important so that we do not create a society of drunkards.

The advent of coronavirus has also highlighted the importance of eating healthily. This is because most of the things suggested for people to eat when they are positive are healthy foods believed to boost people's immune systems. Such includes the consumption of garlic, honey, and other concoctions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the reflections, the government, and other relevant stakeholders must make it clear that the myths that exist in communities about this pandemic are succinctly dealt with by providing scientific facts to counter them. Furthermore, the campaign to curb vaccine apathy and hesitancy must be strengthened through research. *All* and *sundry* need to be encouraged to take vaccines, even those with various comorbidities. Currently, scientific evidence states that vaccine is the only effective way of dealing with this virus, and the government has spent a lot of money on acquiring these vaccines. These researchers are fully aware of the fact that there are dissenting voices who are anti-vaccination. However, it is the duty of those with dissenting voices to come up with scientific evidence supporting their view.

Also, further research needs to be done on how to deal with challenges and dilemmas to anticipate and deal with other pandemics, not only COVID-19. More research on community dilemmas about the advent of coronavirus is encouraged to make society more responsive to the disease.

LIMITATIONS

A lack of South African Literature on coronavirus posed a huge challenge. Most literature was from the Western world.

CONCLUSION

This reflective paper has highlighted the government's unpreparedness to handle coronavirus. It has raised awareness of the need to use this experience to handle any future epidemic. It has also challenged the government and other pandemic-friendly bodies to consider the centralization of information to avoid the development of myths and misinformation. It is also important for societies to comply with public health demands if the dire impact of the pandemic is to be reduced or mitigated. The government must implement mechanisms for raising people's socio-economic standards to heighten their resilience to pandemics. This is because pandemics spread faster in poverty-stricken and squalor conditions.

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