

The intersection of COVID-19, poverty and food insecurity: A challenge to the health and well-being of urban households in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates the intersection of COVID-19, poverty and food insecurity. COVID-19 affected many households in Plumtree town of Zimbabwe following the government-imposed lockdown restrictions. The study answers the following questions: a) What is the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the poverty of urban households? b) How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the food security of urban households? c) What challenges to the health and well-being of urban households emanate from the COVID-19 pandemic? d) What responses were adopted to improve the welfare and food security of urban households? This qualitative study investigated 70 households. Results were that COVID-19 exacerbated the dimensions of household poverty. Besides, the pandemic worsened food insecurity of many households. Hence, COVID-19, poverty and food insecurity complicated the lives of urban residents. The pandemic is a threat to development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The responses to the pandemic were not effective, as they worsened food insecurity. Ways should also be found, to improve household food security following the outbreak of deadly pandemics. Also, responses towards pandemics should look beyond just addressing the pandemics. This study attempts to inform policy and practice. Government, practitioners and academia can benefit from the study.

Keywords: COVID-19; Food security; Poverty; Health and well-being; SDGs

1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19), is a global disaster that surprised the world with its widespread and devastating impact. In December 2019, the virus initially detected in Wuhan city, in China (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020; Lai *et al.*, 2020), where it had caused illnesses and deaths to the citizens. Since then the pandemic spread with a tremendous rate, that the entire world was soon affected (Huang *et al.*, 2020). A World Health Organisation (WHO) report indicated that by the second week of September 2020, more than 28 million confirmed cases with more than 20.5 million recoveries and more than 900 thousand deaths had been recorded globally, with the United States of America recording the largest number, followed by India, Brazil and Russia (WHO, 2020). This indicates that the disaster was not just a disruption to the development and health endeavours of nations, but it caused devastation beyond imagination. Disasters in the form of pandemics are reported to have caused more deaths in the past century, far more than the major armed conflicts occurring around the world (Adda, 2016). However, some have argued that the pandemic disaster in the form of COVID-19 was not a major surprise, since the world had previously experienced outbreaks of

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