

Impact of Corona Virus on Community Health Practices

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Abstract

Around the world, more and more countries are engaging in different strategies aimed at protecting populations against the COVID-19 spread. In the wake of these efforts, the pandemic has had far-reaching consequences, stretching from the economic arena to severe health consequences. Also, marginalized and poor communities remain the most at risk and the most affected, especially due to limited access to adequate safety nets. It is also notable that an increasing number of businesses have closed to aid in curbing the transmission of COVID-19, with the secondary effect being job losses and financial concerns. From a socio-economic and health perspective, the mental, physical, and economic well-being of many individuals have been hampered. In this reflection paper, the focus is on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected my community. The paper seeks to give insight into some of the individual and family effects that the pandemic has posed, eventually translating into effects at the community level.

Introduction

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has had notable human consequences in my community. For instance, the last few weeks have witnessed the condition affect our economic operations, especially vulnerable industries, and financial markets. Specific examples of sectors that have been worst hit in my community include hospitality and travel, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. With more companies or players operating in these industries closing down in response to the pandemic, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have, in turn, witnessed tertiary, negative effects. The spread of the negative effects has been felt down the line, whereby part-time workers with zero-hours contracts, those working in informal sectors, the self-employed, and the least well-paid have experienced short-term losses of income, with a dire situation projected to mark the long-term operations of such groups.

Thus, the pandemic has come with different human costs. These costs, especially in my community, have ranged from the fear faced by nearly all individuals to mental trauma, physical effects of infection, and the deaths of family and friends. The resulting scenario is that with the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to play out, my community has experienced mental, physical, and economic well-being, adversities that have come against a backdrop of a geographical setting that, for the majority of the community members, is increasingly lonely, unhappy, and anxious.

Methods

The current situation in my community is that which suggests the fear of the unknown. The effect of this fear has been a pronounced feeling of panic. For instance, there has been panic buying in response to people's feeling that they may run out of necessities. Also, panic buying has arisen from the majority of community members' feeling that with the COVID-19 pandemic, they are being denied treatment or life-saving protection. With the uncertainty, the resultant lack of control

has seen most people experience psychological stress in my community. It is also worth indicating that most of these effects have been amplified by the provision of wrong information (offered maliciously or inadvertently), as well as the lack of it in totality in some cases. From online interactions in our community, some information has proved misleading in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of this information has touched on speculations concerning the responses of governments and medical information. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has made most people in our community to be susceptible to social media posts. This study adopts a secondary analysis approach to discern some of the ways in which the infectious disease has shaped health practices at the community level.

Results

Also, in my community, the cyberspace has not gone without experiencing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Coming as a sad trend, our community has witnessed many hackers and criminals exploit the vulnerable situation in such a way that many COVID-19-themed malicious websites have evolved. Thus, the registration of coronavirus-related domains has increased, with many mobile device owners and online or social media site users reporting problems such as the hackers' selling of hacking tools and malware after COVID-19 discount code exploitation. Indeed, most of these cybersecurity threats have resulted from the motivation by most of the hackers and cybercriminals to access corporate data from the mobile devices of home-workers. Thus, even with home-working adopted by most of our community's working-class groups and students as one of the strategies to combat the spread of the virus, the COVID-19 pandemic has made home-based working environments even less secure, compared to situations where individuals were initially operating from office environments.

With our community leaders also advocating for partial and full lockdowns and social distancing as ways through which we could fight the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, altruistic behaviors have evolved, exacerbating an otherwise already vulnerable situation in the neighborhoods. From my interactions and phone conversations with friends, family, and other relatives, the majorities report concerns regarding putting on weight. In particular, processes of socializing and going out have slowed in pace. Thus, while the positive side of social distancing is that most of us have had more time for family, others have and are struggling with weight issues, as well as other health-related problems accruing from a lack of physical activity.

I have also observed that social lockdowns and self-isolation have come with a downside in such a way that they have contributed to anger, confusion, and traumatic stress. Some of the primary consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that have led to the aforementioned adversities include the experience of stigma or economic loss, inadequate information, limited access to supplies of necessities, and fear of infection. For most of the working parents in our community, the closure of childcare facilities and schools, aimed at combating the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, has created more pressures because grandparents, who have been childcare sources traditionally, are the most vulnerable to the pandemic, implying that there is a change of roles in relation to childcare responsibilities.

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all population segments in our community. The condition has proved detrimental to groups such as indigenous peoples, youths, persons with disabilities, older persons, and those living in poverty situations. In particular, poor people continue to bear the economic and health impacts of the virus disproportionately. Given that homeless persons living in our community are unable to shelter safely, they continue to be exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic's dangers, with quarantines, self-isolations, lockdowns, and curfews exacerbating the situation. For displaced persons and migrants (the majority of whom are unable to access running water), they have suffered the consequences of the community's response to the pandemic disproportionately, arising from fewer employment opportunities and limited movement.

In our community, most of the older persons also have chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension. For these individuals, the majority have been unable to support themselves during isolation. Also, with the pandemic themed as a disease of older persons, our community has witnessed exacerbations of negative stereotypes regarding older people, with many individuals perceiving them as a burden on society, unimportant, and weak. Thus, trends in age-based discrimination have arisen due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, with additional negative effects arising in our community, whereby the age-based discrimination has manifested in service provision, with the treatment of younger people perceived to be more important, compared to the treatment of older community members. The eventuality is that at the community level, we have witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic compromise the initially enjoyed solidarity between generations.

It can also be seen that whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has seen children's health impacted less, there have been interruptions to their education. Also, many children in our community have experienced psychological distress, with the dangers of neglect also looming. Furthermore, anxieties over finances and health, isolation, and job losses have heightened the risk of violence in most homes in our community, both by caregivers against children and between partners. In most cases, child abuse has gone undetected because the majority of child protection agencies, due to the need to avoid spreading the virus, have reduced monitoring. With schools closed, teachers are also not able to detect ill-treatment. It is also evident that even as many schools have resorted to the use of online learning platforms, most public schools do not have the equipment and technology to offer online teaching, a trend that has seen schools closure as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic cause disparities in our community's provision of learning materials, as well as children's internet access.

Thus, in our community, the COVID-19 pandemic has not had direct effects on children because, rather than being the face of the virus, they are the hidden victims. However, the actions taken by local and national authorities to contain the disease have upended the lives of the children. For families, many have experienced financial insecurity, coming in the wake of heightened stress under lockdown. Many children have also missed otherwise life-saving vaccines, as well as free meals that are much-needed, as such services have been suspended in the community. Also, many authorities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), due to the need to comply with government directives of social distancing, have suspended services aimed at preventing and responding to neglect, abuse, and violence. As such, some children have experienced increased

threats to their wellbeing and safety. With access to healthcare also disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the risk of losing life to preventable diseases in our community has increased dramatically, with the most vulnerable such as the elderly and children being worst-hit.

In summary, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected different community members differently, ranging from social to economic impacts. In most cases, the effects have been indirect and accrued from the steps that different authorities have enforced to minimize the spread of the virus. Some of the specific effects that coronavirus has had on our community include school closures, job losses, heightened anxiety, increased cyber insecurity, reduced income among families, and a compromise to the initially enjoyed solidarity between generations.

Conclusion

Therefore, a resultant lesson learned from this reflection paper is that the extent to which pandemics affect communities depend on previously instituted disaster preparation mechanisms, an interplay that manifests in the levels of severities that community members face. Another lesson is that if poorly handled, pandemics could cause far-reaching direct and indirect consequences on populations. Furthermore, some pandemic mitigation measures can lead to significant economic and social disruption. Similarly, if weak institutions are in place, pandemics are likely to see the response measures such as lockdowns and quarantines spark tension and violence between citizens and states. It can also be seen that a pandemic such as Coronavirus can lead to economic damage via multiple channels, including long-term negative shocks and short-term fiscal shocks. For community leaders, the implication is that to mitigate the pandemic, the need to implement a coordinated response could not be overstated. This response needs to target the treatment of and care for the ill, the reduction of transmission, public health messaging, and the maintenance of situational awareness.