

Identifying Covid-19 coping strategies among the parishioners of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, Adams, Nairobi County, Kenya.

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Abstract: This research paper assessed the coping strategies employed by the members of the Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Adams, Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was supported with logotherapy theory of Viktor Frankl. The main objective of this study was to identify the strategies that are used in coping with Covid-19 among the members of the Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Adams, Nairobi County. The study adopted embedded mixed method design. The target population was 1075 members of this parish. The sample size was 292 got through simple random sampling method techniques. The data collection was done through open and closed ended questionnaire and semi structured interview guide. The quantitative data was analysed by employing descriptive statistics analysis using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0. Qualitative data was analyzed effectively in a narrative form using objective themes. The findings of this work, with the data collected from February 6-27, 2022, revealed that Covid-19 had both negative and positive influences on this community. Thus, the members of the Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Adams, Nairobi County, Kenya used different strategies to survive the Covid-19 attack.

Key words: Psycho-spiritual wellbeing, mental wellbeing, 'psycho-spirituo-somatic,' and biopsychosociotechno.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Since the reality of corona virus disease was established, its coping strategies became as urgently inevitable as the rate of its spread was considered. Covid-19, a name later given to the disease by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV, 2020) (Shereen et al., 2020) became monstrous both by name, by appearance, and by action. Its overwhelming effects cut across all occupations. Various studies (Bureau, 2020; Feyisa, 2020; Tadesse & Muluye, 2020; Douglas, M., Katikireddi et al., 2020; Wildman et al, 2020) have shown that the world economy, education sector, health sector, social interaction, religious activities, and so on have been dangerously injured. Before delving into the coping strategies employed by the religious community of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, it is expedient to take a cursory look at the historical realities of pandemics in the past.

The effects of this pandemic also include the infection of multiple people with the disease followed by a huge number of casualties. Recent statics released by

Worldometer indicates that since its inception to date (April 19, 2022) 505,267,733 number of people have been infected; the number of survivals stood at 457,055,934; and the number of fatalities came to 6,224,942. The pandemic came as a surprise to a good number of world population especially those with little knowledge of history.

However, it has been discovered that before the advent of Covid-19, there have been several pandemics that equally claimed large numbers of lives and led to closure of numerous means of livelihood. Samad (2020) discloses that pandemics have killed thousands of people, from the Black Plague to the most recent Ebola outbreak. He states that infectious diseases have killed more people than any other cause in history. Studies reveal that history is replete with pandemics that have ravaged the world and changed historical plans at various times (History.com Editors, (2019)).

Other notable pandemics in the annals include the Antonine Plague of 165 A.D., an early manifestation of smallpox; the Cyprian plague in 250 A.D. Similarly, Balita-Centeno (2020) recalls the Justinian Plague of 541AD in Egypt, and the leprosy and the Black Death strikes in 1350 AD in Europe during the Middle Ages as affirmed by Jarus (2020), Mardon and Tang (2020), and Gullot and Serpa (2020). Moreover, the Great Plague of London and the bubonic plague; the Cholera pandemic of 1817; the plague pandemic of 1855 in China; and measles pandemic in Fiji in 1875 took adverse their toll on human kind. The final list includes the Russian flu in 1889; the Spanish flu in 1918; the Asian flu in 1957; the HIV/AIDS in 1981; and SARS and Ebola in 2003 and 2004 were all dangerous to humanity (History.com Editors, (2019)).

Numerous as these pandemics were, and which were the chief cause of mental issues such as sleep disturbances, depression, mental distraction, dizziness, and difficulties coping at work, and high influenza death rates, little was done to address the psychological concerns of the people (Ehighian, 2020). In a similar fashion, the prevailing experiences of Covid-19 generated several mental issues. For example, a study done in Europe revealed a number of mental issues caused by Covid-19 which include but are not limited to

depression, anxiety disorders, stress, panic attack, irrational anger, impulsivity, somatization disorder, sleep disorders, emotional disturbance, posttraumatic stress symptoms, and suicidal behavior (Hossain et al., 2020).

According to Samad (2020), what is more disturbing about the present pandemic is that nobody knows how the world will look in the aftermath of Covid-19; when it will end, what the final death toll will be, and how countries will recover are all unknowns at this point. That is part of the reasons why this study is undertaken to consider the psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the Christians of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, Adams, Nairobi County, and the coping strategies they adopted during the Covid-19.

Coping with Covid-19 required a number of essential measures. Nurunnabi et al. (2020) researched on the strategies adapted by Pakistani students to overcome implications of Covid-19 using 510 participants. Their goal was to investigate how students in Pakistan dealt with the Covid-19 epidemic and the subsequent lockdown measures that impacted the educational institution as well. Their findings showed that anxiety affected approximately 41 percent of students, with 16 percent experiencing severe to extreme anxiety. The coping strategies adopted by these students included 1) Acceptance, 2) humanitarian, 3) mental disengagement, and 4). These strategies seem to be wide-ranged as well as time-tested coping strategies that are used during pandemics as many studies have alluded to. Earlier studies agreed with most of these measures and more as the best coping strategies during Covid-19.

Falasifah et al. (2020) in an online study involving 12,535 participants around the world among college students at the heat of Covid-19 surge submitted that two main coping strategies were identified. These include (1) problem-focused coping which main focus was on seeking social support (friends, family, school); and (2) emotional-focused coping which concentrated on (a) positive reappraisal (praying to God, do hobby), (b) accepting responsibility (understanding students' roles, self-talk), and (c) distancing (Avoid going to public).

The determination to live is a great force for survival. Those who have a positive look at life are usually likely to overcome the challenges of life than those with negative outlook. Meaning-centered coping was discovered to suppress the negative influence of psychological distress on the sensation of poor physical health, corroborating the critical role of meaning in life in promoting well-being, according Quiroga-Garza et al. (2021). This falls in line with the logotherapy theory, which sees the will to meaning as the main energy behind the survival of human beings.

In Kenya, Adam et al. (2021) conducted a study on the staff of Kijabe Hospital in Nairobi County to determine personal coping strategies used by the staff during Covid-19. The results of this study revealed that prayer, reading the Bible, listening to music, watching movies, and

interacting/sharing with family members were the five most popular personal coping strategies reported. These are part of the psycho-spiritual strategies in coping with Covid-19.

In yet another study done by Sambu et al. (2020) to assess the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on religious activities and faith of worshippers in Narok, Kenya, the researchers discovered a significant difference in the majority of religious activities performed by worshippers before and after the pandemic. The majority of the members continued to have strong faith in their religious doctrines and leaders.

In the same vein, Egunjobi (2020) suggests five broad-way mechanisms of fighting Covid-19 biologically, psychologically, socially, and technologically and spiritually (biopsychosociotechno). Particularly, the spiritual activities enlisted include bibliotherapy/scriptural teaching, repentance/forgiveness, family prayer, televangelism and so forth.

Objectives

The main purpose of this research was to identify the coping strategies that are used in coping with Covid-19 pandemic. The psycho-spiritual wellbeing of the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, Adams, Nairobi County was the brain behind this search for coping strategies.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The research design used in this study is embedded mixed method design. The embedded design is a mixed method design in which one data set plays a supportive, secondary role in a study based primarily on the other data type (Creswell et al. 2003). The study collected data from participants who were willing to give such information for the success of this study.

2.2 Location of the study

This study was carried out in the Catholic Parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Adams, Nairobi County. It is located within Adams Arcade area in Nairobi South County. The Parish serves the Catholic Faithful and the community around Kibera, Jamhuri, Adams, Kilimani, Satellite and Lavington Areas.

2.3 Target Population

The population the study targeted was 1075 members of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, Adams, Nairobi County, Kenya. The researcher used this number to make the generalisations of this study.

2.4 Sampling size and procedure

The sample size was 292, determined using simple random sampling technique. Simple random sampling is a sampling method in which every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample. Because the selection of individuals was solely based on chance or

likelihood, this sampling method is also known as a technique of chances. The study adopted the Yamane (1973) formula with confidence level at 95% and the margin error at 5% to decide the sample size of the study. With a target population of 1075 (N), the sample size (n) was calculated using Yamane's mathematical formula thus: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)}$

where: n= the sample size

N= the target population (number of parishioners)

e= margin of error (in percentage)

Sampling size for this study was: $n = 1 + \frac{1075}{1075(0.05)^2}$

n= 291.525, approximated to 292.

2.5 Data Collection Instruments

To arrive at the purpose of this study, and in accord with embedded mixed method design, two instruments were employed namely, questionnaire and interview guide. The questionnaire was distributed among 280 participants while the interview guide was used on 12 participants. In order not to enclose the participants inside the box, the questionnaire consisted of both open-ended as well as closed-ended questions to allow the participants field in their experiences.

2.6 Data analysis

Responses from the questionnaires were inputted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0, arranged in tables, charts and themes and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1.1 Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Respondents' Age		
18-25 Years	38	20.8
26-40 Years	81	44.3
41-50 Years	45	24.3
51-100 Years	19	10.4
Respondents' Gender		
Male	84	45.9
Female	99	54.1
Respondents' Level of Education		
Primary School	35	19.1
University	60	32.8
Other	15	8.2

Table 1.1 shows the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study. The study deliberately excluded minors because the majors would explain the situation of the minors. Other than that it included all age range in order to know what age range was more affected. The study found out

that coping strategies were observed by all groupings based on either age, gender or level of education; just as the disease affected all the groupings.

After exploring the coping strategies adopted by the members of this parish, the study found that the highest population rely more heavily on God to live than a host of other sources of support put together, even though they were all important. It indicates that 174 (95%) of the members of the parish still depended on God in their time of distress. This implies that despite the difficulties imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, God remains their bastion of hope in the same way 172 (94%) confirmed they never forgot God during the time of Covid-19. By this, it means faith in God and God himself is their first and main strategy of coping with the pandemic. In her confession, Respondent J stated that ultimately they were surrendering every situation to God. Respondent K asserted that the church, praying to God for satisfaction, Christian community, casual jobs, and God were their major sources of support during Covid. Respondent L submitted that amidst all this "God was there, God is there, and God will still be there. (Interview, February 27, 2022)

It is interesting to note that a cumulative average of 19 (10.4%) denied believing in God's help, remembering him, and having any connection with God. Respondent L also presumes that "not everybody believed in God, because people would ask: how come all these things are happening and God is there" without any intervention? (Interview, February 27, 2022). More interesting is the paradox displayed in the magnitude of damage done to the community by Covid-19 as expressed by the participants and the level of commitment toward God. Ordinarily, one would think that more than 10.4% would reject God due to the pervasiveness and severity of Covid-19. However, the insistence on worship despite lockdown portrays the undying faith of the people in their God, and shows a positive aspect of Covid-19.

For example, majority (168, 91.8%) of the population agreed that they have deeper appreciation for life during Covid-19; majority (169, 92.3%) agreed they have been more grateful for each day during Covid-19; and 158 (86.3%) submitted they have found new ways of connecting with their relatives and God. Sambu et al. (2020) made the same findings in an earlier study when they held that majority of the members still had strong faith in their religious doctrines and leaders. Families kept apart by carrier now have the privilege of enjoying stable union notwithstanding some unpleasant experiences. This is also part of synthesising one's happiness using the paradoxical intention technique of Frankl.

In line with Frankl's logotherapy (1946), one who sees a higher meaning to live pursues it to its logical conclusion despite all odds. Hence, 159 (86.8%) of the parishioners agreed that life is meaningful with a sense of value and purpose despite Covid-19. It means that external forces do not determine one's happiness and meaning; these are purely the product of inner disposition. The determination to achieve one's goal, or lack thereof, either increases or

decreases one's level of happiness in life. The findings show that, aside from making hasty generalizations about Covid-19's negative impact, there is practically no correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable, and no evidence to support either.

Strategies employed during Covid-19

From the findings of this study, common psychological effects were experienced namely, anxiety, depression, insomnia, fear, sadness, isolation/stigmatisation, disruption of religious activities, and so on. In spite of all this, the participants confessed that they emerged strong. What strategies did they employ to arrive at this victory?

From the qualitative question attached to the questionnaire to explore their major sources of survival during Covid-19, responses from participants indicate that they had five different groups of strategies namely, spiritual, social and economic, Covid-19 protocol, physical support, and psychological support. Spiritually, they resulted in trust in God alone, prayer and fasting, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament when there was a little relaxation of restrictions, faith sharing, correspondence from the church hierarchy, reading of the Word of God, community support and so on.

Socio-economic support came from casual labour, Association of Sisterhood in Kenya (AOSK), NGOs such as SHOFCO, relief materials from the Church, family members, online information, social media interactions, healthcare workers, the government, other enlightenment programmes and so on. Covid-19 protocol include washing and sanitizing of hands, maintaining social distance, wearing of face mask, healthy dietary habit, testing, taking a lot of warm water and so on. Some of the physical support include farming/gardening, sports/exercises, learning new skills at home and so on. In order to maintain their psychological health, they used this time to have good rest (deep sleep), positive sharing about the Covid-19 situation, finding new hobbies, sharing with others about their problems, having counseling sessions and so on.

IV. DISCUSSION

As expressed in the findings, the Christians of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish had enough strategies at their disposal to manage their lives during Covid-19. Just as the prevalence of the disease experiences were huge, so also the coping strategies. There was no indication that the strategies were limited to one group of persons. Age did not count when it came to observing the safety rules of Covid-19, neither was gender or level of education. All groups submitted that they keyed into the exercises. The only difference might be that elderly people may have had more experiences in dealing with situations of this nature than the younger age groups and minors; and would guide them appropriately. Most of the findings of this study are in agreement with other earlier studies concerning the main stay of people during Covid-19. Most important of all was the psycho-spiritual support.

Interventions of psycho-spiritual nature among other measures prove to be more effective in restoring distressed persons to their sources of strength. A study by Baldacchino and Draper (2001) found that spiritual coping strategies might enhance self-empowerment, leading to finding meaning and purpose in illness. Moreover, multidisciplinary intervention, which inculcate spiritual component effectively, contribute to quality of life (QOL) of patients (K.M. et al., 2014). Several methods that were employed including performing prayers, being faithful to God, practicing certain chants and prayers, persevering with God's will, and being happy sustain patients and anxious persons in a great measure. It is apparent that religious mechanisms incorporated with spiritual elements demonstrate positive influence in comparison with treatments from Western countries that focuses on healing patients physically (Aziz et al. 2020).

The tension created among the worshipers of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a community of faith was rather mystifying. While Covid-19 struck at the very heart of their spiritual life wire, namely the Eucharist, faith in the same reality was what kept them moving. For example, it was noticed that not only was lockdown imposed at wrong times and stopped worship during Covid-19 but on two occasions, in 2020 and 2021, Easter celebration which is the heart of Christian worship was called off. This community felt their faith was tempered with, but at the same time, their incorporation into the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is also their major source of hope for transcendence, remained unshaken. This mode of coping is also similar to a study conducted by Tate (2011), in which prayer is used as a medium for patients to communicate with God and strengthen their relationship with him.

All the psycho-spiritual related strategies were meant to guide the population towards the ultimate meaning of their life. Naturally, such a community of faith would rely more on the spiritual resources to maintain link with the divine. Accordingly, the supposition is that the best link to arrive at full meaning in life is to be connected to the main source of life. Basic to this understanding of spirituality is the premise that we regard the human and/or the rest of creation as composed not only of matter, but of something immaterial, something invisible, and something beyond our present knowledge (Okpalaenwe et al, 2019).

By way of handling the psychological concerns of the faithful during Covid-19, counseling sessions were occasionally organised. However, due to the enduring nature of some psychological and spiritual problems, more strategies need to be employed to deal with the issues. For example, cases of grief sometimes may take more time to overcome than other psychological issues. Sometimes, when certain enshrined cultural constructs such as mourning rituals are desecrated, the wounds last for a longer time. Because cultural problems need cultural solutions, it becomes necessary to explore.

The absence of such traditional mourning rituals has the potential to cause profoundly traumatic grief in people who are deeply rooted in their culture. According to Asatsa et al. found in Okpalaenwe (2017), the process of "grief and bereavement counselling" must be followed for proper treatment of such issues. This is not only necessary, but it is also urgent. Delay at this material time creates a risk for those who have been traumatized, to 'create an African version' of Covid-19 or any other disease.

Since psycho-spiritual approach is one which seeks the healing of an integral person, it could become a veritable tool at this material time in bringing back to normal those so wounded. Lenairoshi et al (2019) believe strongly in this position that such indigenous counseling is still practiced by the Samburu people, particularly in family counseling, trauma counseling, and developmental counseling. Spirituality is being blended in order to honor the divinity.

V. CONCLUSION

We have seen that pandemics are not new phenomena to the world. They have occurred at different times and seasons with varying degrees of impact. Each time they strike, the economy, education, social interaction, general health as well as mental health of the world population is affected adversely. Covid-19 was no exception and did not cause any less havoc. Though not classified the most deadly (Rosenwald, 2021) of all pandemics, its emergence and spread were faster and wider, in a very short time, and are leaving more concerns like the previous ones.

One area most affected is that of mental health. An unquantifiable world population was enmeshed in overflowing emotional distress, posttraumatic disorders, anxiety, depression, insomnia, fear, sadness, isolation/stigmatisation, and several others. In some quarters, genuine efforts were made to cushion the devastating effects of the pandemic on mental health. However, in many places, this was not recognised among the top priorities of the concerned bodies, be they governmental or non-governmental. It often appears bleak whose responsibility it is to raise consciousness to this reality.

The submission of this work is that over and above all facets of human existence, mental health should be given prior attention as urgently needed. Every organisation and institution as a way of minimizing the effects of the pandemic and optimizing both mental and physical functioning of people across the world should employ psychotherapy. More than this, psycho-spiritual therapy will ensure the total realisation of those who are completely weighed down because of the pandemic. It will give them a new impetus to pursue meaning in their lives for a better living.

The ultimate source and essence of human existence subsists in God. Adherents of many religious traditions hold this belief strongly. In Christian tradition, the conviction that God will provide solutions to all distressing situations is rather

immortal. The Christians of Our Lady of Guadalupe parish Adams have demonstrated this overtly in their responses. Most of them, both through the quantitative and the qualitative instruments expressed the certainty of God's intervention in the situation of Covid-19 more than human efforts. God alone will heal the human spirit.

One of the surest ways to lead people suffering from mental distress, mental disorders, stress disorders, psychosomatic or 'psycho-spirituo-somatic' is the psycho-spiritual approach. Put in another way, in a crucial time like this, as always, human problems are often psychological and spiritual, resulting physical expression. Invariably, these cannot be resolved using only psychological approach; spiritual tool must be employed to lead the human spirit to its original source. This is what is also called the 'biopsychosociotechno-spiritual' approach (Egunjobi, 2020).

This approach is perceived of being capable of establishing lasting panacea to the world problem beyond just Covid-19 when used. The Christians of Our Lady of Guadalupe and others elsewhere need this urgently now and always. It will a worthy idea if psycho-spiritual therapists accompany these people to resolve some of the issues that need this intervention.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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