

# COVID-19 Challenges, Opportunities and Lessons for Developing Economies

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the Covid -19 challenges, opportunities and lessons for developing countries particularly Uganda. This is motivated by the covid -19 epidemic, which was first reported on 27 December 2019 in China- in the capital city of Wuhan, in Hubei province. This pandemic of covid- 19 began to spread like bush fire and affected mostly at first European nations of Italy, United Kingdom, German France, and United States of America (leading currently). The pandemic later in early March 2020 spread in Africa, which abruptly left them with no choice other than closure of their borders, implementation of WHO guidelines on covid 19. There was abrupt lockdown of sectors, which started from education to the rest, a part from the health sector to cater for the patients in many countries including Uganda and excluding Tanzania. This study utilized qualitative method; narrative approach and narrative data analysis were used from personal perspective point of view. Findings revealed that although covid 19 had challenges, it come along with opportunities and developing countries have been availed with plentiful lessons to learn to be able to cope up with post covid 19 as they pull up from the yelped and winced economies and attain sustainable development. This paper has limitations, implications and recommendations as detailed in the paper.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Challenges, Opportunities and Lessons Developing Economies

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## 1. Introduction

Covid 19, also called corona virus, is one of the pandemic, first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan city of China has claimed many lives and left many economies bankrupt especially the developing nations like Uganda [4]. This pandemic of covid- 19 began to spread like bush fire and affected at first European nations of Italy, United Kingdom, France, and United States of America (leading currently) [7]. The pandemic later in early March 2020 spread in Africa, which abruptly left them with no choice other than closure of their borders, and implementation of WHO guidelines on covid 19 [8]. There was abrupt lockdown of sectors, which started from education to the rest, a part from the health sector to cater for the patients in many countries including Uganda and excluding Tanzania. This study aimed at examining the challenges, opportunities and lessons from covid -19 epidemic, which will aid developing countries like Uganda to handle, mitigate their shrinking economies now

and after covid 19. Uganda in particular through its health sector and presidency has indeed been instrumental in fighting covid 19 and I personally thank the president of Uganda and the medical doctors for the work well done in saving the lives of many Ugandans. The strict abrupt measures of checking all people thoroughly at all airports and borders, quarantining all people entering the country at their own costs, and shutting down borders, null flying/ cancelling all air flights and later banning all passenger flights, and eventually total lock down by shutting down all sectors, apart from the health sector and those supplying essential need. These study findings from personal views will guide the Ugandan economy and other mushrooming countries on how to address the challenges when faced in future with similar abrupt pandemics to stabilize their economies for sustainable development, basing on the recommendations and lessons drawn.

It should be recalled that, in this study, there are some key terms or main concepts, which are operationalized (for a

clear meaning), as jotted below:

- (1) Challenges. In this study, challenges are hindrances from covid -19, which have affected the world economies and have endless effects.
- (2) Developing Economies. In this study is Uganda and those countries with similar characteristics like high population, poverty, low-income earners, poor infrastructures, less formation of capital, a lot of diseases, high death rates, low levels of technological development, high mortality rate and high levels of corruption.
- (3) Opportunities. In this study, opportunities are good things, which people are deriving from covid 19 pandemic season and even after it has ended.

## 2. Challenges from COVID-19

The quarantine and isolation measures have brought a lot of psychological torture to the victims of covid-19. Some people who are quarantined cannot afford the bills imposed on them for maintenance in the selected hotels especially students who were returning back home from abroad and other poor people who had gone for greener pasture returned with nothing since the Covid- 19 calamity was abrupt.

Covid-19 has brought a lot of domestic violence in the world and more so in developing countries like Uganda. A lot of misunderstanding between partners due to lockdown has seen many married people fighting, injuring and some killing each other due to frustrations, cheating discovered from mobile phones messages, conversations heard from eavesdropping, and uncertainties of when the lockdown will cease, coupled with the disease itself. After covid-19, it is most likely that many families in developing countries like Uganda will end their marriages. Similarly, this has been reported in some countries which due to lockdown [14, 15] and [16]. Conversely, some studies reported mental health issues [17-19] and increased crime rate [20].

Covid 19 has caused a lot of poverty among people globally and domestically in the case of Uganda. This has been catalyzed with lockdown of most businesses yet the majority of the Ugandan population live hand to mouth, where by if they do not go to work, they cannot get what to eat. For instance, people working in the informal sectors like markets vendors, boda boda riders, taxi drivers, wheelbarrow pushers, hawkers, peddlers, among others [21, 22].

Covid- 19 has caused many nations to close their borders, planes are not moving hence causing a lot of losses to the tourism industry. Tourism industry in Uganda has been contributing a lot of economic growth, but due to covid- 19 and lock down of travel planes, and buses, tourists could not move as they also fear to get the diseases or spread it more, given the fact that covid- 19 was and is still more among European countries (were most tourist come from).

Increased ICT usage for communication in case of distance relationships, training, learning, meetings, conferences, workshops, to name it. This has increased on the demand of ICT equipment like computers, modems for Internet

connectivity, Smart mobile phones, among others. This has increased the standard of living of the people trading in such businesses.

Covid-19 and lock down has brought sanity and discipline in capital expenditure among people in all homes globally but mostly in developing countries like Uganda. People now days only spend on what they cannot do without and not want they want or need. This habit continues after Covid-19, there will be a lot of saving and economic growth and development in the country.

The education sector has been hit down mostly since all learning institutions throughout the world were the first institutions to be closed. Consequently, pupils, students, teachers and lecturers are lagging behind in terms of academic normal progress and they are in a state of quagmire. They are uncertain when they will open since the virus is increasingly claiming lives of many people each day.

Unemployment has increased due to covid 19. Many people in developing countries like Uganda lost their jobs as they laid off by their employers and some who were self-employed became jobless due to lock down. This saw the later hopeless and resorted to eating their little savings and the small amount of capital they had prior to covid 19 [1]. Now capital is over and they are only surviving on government.

## 3. Opportunities from COVID-19

Covid 19 has brought numerous opportunities in the following ways below:

The opportunity derived from quarantine and isolation measures is that, people from different background and nations were able to interact with one another through technological means (WhatsApp, tweeter, skype, Instagram, zoom meetings, Imo, Microsoft team, WeChat, Join.me, Face Time, Group Me, Go Tomeetings, Pexip, Go to Webinar Team Viewer, ezTalks Meetings, Apache open Meetings, etc). This is in line line with the studies conducted by some prior researchers [5, 9-13]. This resulted created a big social network, good relationship, some were able to get job opportunities and future partners as well, and this may extend after covid-19 as life partners.

The opportunity from lockdown is that it has brought sanity and good morals among some married people. They have erased all photos, phone numbers, cut off temporarily the conversation with their side dishes (illegal partners), to remove suspicion from their better halves and hence bringing peace, love and joy at home.

More so, due to lockdown, parents have had the opportunity to help their children by guiding and counselling them and knowing them better, as they prepare them to become future responsible citizens. This has created a great bond between kids and their parents which prior to covid-19 was lacking as parents were busy working and left kids to the house helpers.

On the contrary, covid-19 has given people the opportunity to think beyond their nose by being creative and innovative.

This has seen a number of people diversifying businesses to those ones, which are highly demanded like masks, basic daily needs at home (foodstuffs).

On the contrary, some schools have utilized electronic learning methods to keep students busy with the academic progress. This is mostly effective in families, which can afford internet connectivity and those with power connectivity. The e-learning software like zoom, webinar, skype, and some use off line methods like teaching using Television and radio broadcasting channels as per the program agreed upon.

Covid- 19 has assisted academic researchers to author a number of papers, which will enable them to get promotions and improve on academic performance. It is believed that any higher institution of learning growth or ranking is dependent on the number research projects or articles produced, together with number of doctors and professors [6]. Therefore, covid 19 will most likely lead to institutional and academic personal growth of lecturers.

Covid 19- has helped me personally to give more of my time to learning about God, to shape well my body by doing indoor exercises. Besides reviewing literature for academic work to improve on my PhD, I have used this quiet time for learning more about holy book and new languages via online (French, Spanish, Iris, Korean, German, Kinyarwanda, Runyankole and Swahili). This has given me a competitive edge and brought me more closely to the creator.

#### 4. Lessons Drawn from COVID-19

From my personal perspectives, the following below are some of the lessons derived from covid- 19 which in one way or another may be reflected on by developing countries.

1. I have learnt that the value of life and I know life is too short and one has to enjoy it. Never allow to live a miserable life. Live happily with the people you cherish and share time with our loved ones maximally. 2. I have learnt that God is real, most powerful and king of kings. His words are most precious and above everything on earth, beneath the earth surface, in the sky and in heaven.

3. I have learnt that the earthly wealth and life style many people live does not matter now in Covid- 19 season. What matters most is the oxygen we breathe now, freely given by God, and lets us enjoy it to its fullest.

4. I have learnt that what is happening now as Covid-19 was already predicted in the holy bible and some researchers too had known about it and when it will happen. We have seen lake and river waters turning red like that of Jamaica and other parts of the world, to name it, as end of times written in the bible.

5. I have learnt that there is no permanent situation in life. Whatever happens, will go and new situations will crop up, as the previous becomes a learning process for one to manage the new one. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves before the situation forces us to do so. 6. I have learnt to be kind and respect others, irrespective of their status. 7. I have learnt that Africans have strong immune system compared to their

counterparts the whites.

8. Similarly, I have also learnt that covid -19 has claimed more old people in Europe and male creatures have tested positive globally than women. 9. I have learnt that beyond technology and science, there is God.

10. I have learnt that in this covid 19 season, 5GB has spread across the globe and this has resulted in a drastic change in the digital transformation, even in the developing nations like Uganda. Also currently, robots are working in some developing countries like Rwanda, and other places like Saudi Arabia, granted citizenship to her female robot called Sofia. This implies that technology is steadily replacing humans and this has an economic implication on the economies, as majority are likely to lose jobs. Conversely, these technological innovations, as part of digital transformation, will increase efficiency, effectiveness, accuracy, quality work, save time, among other benefits, hence resulting to economic growth and development.

11. I have learnt that the lockdown will lead to increased population, as most productive married partners will be chewing a lot each other in the lockdown, as they nurse their frustrations for lacking what to do. 13. I have learnt that the lockdown will lead to increased marriage breakdown /divorce.

14. I have learnt that east west home is best. Since every nation is now struggling with covid 19 effects, every person need to stay in his or her country/home and fight as a family against covid 19. 15. I have learnt that, the covid-19 calamity made people to turn to God/Allah.

16. I have learnt that quarantine has given an opportunity to the kids to enjoy seeing their parents on a daily basis and know each other better, get guidance and relate well. Most parents had turned out to be visiting professors and kids could hardly see them. 17. I have learnt that all humankind in this planet were brought into a global village (small bucket) by covid-19. All nations are trying hard to get the medicine or vaccine to cure the common deadly disease covid- 19.

18. I have also learnt that nothing in this world is worth in this world and people should forgive one another as well as nations. They should call for unity now and forget their differences in terms of political, religious, economic, social, technological terms.

19. Some presidents who initially had prior said Covid-19 is just simple flu and not so harmful, they have now felt the heavy impact of the virus by registering higher death rates and became humbled. It is also a lesson to them that in the near future, they should not take any pandemic not serious and perhaps should openly now apologize to the world for the utterances they made and ask for forgiveness from God for the laxity in taking immediate safe measures which has led to massive loss of lives in their countries.

20. I have learnt that our African presidents now have realized that there is no place in the world safer than their African countries. Therefore, they cannot run to Europe any more but rather invest in their own health facilities for future. 21. I have learnt that the slogan "Survival for the fittest," now has changed to survival per God's will plus favors as you pray and fast. Just imagine highly prominent people like

Pope, Prince Charles, and others in the same caliber, might have stayed home but they tested positive. I wondered

22. In the beginning of covid-19 in Africa in February and March i forecasted that Covid-19 would lead to divorce and death among some couples who have been acting as visiting professors in their homes. I went ahead and told my fellow PhD students in the group of about 100 and some refused to accept this and told me no way it will bring only unity. Currently, this has been evidenced in many countries, where domestic violence, increased due to covid 19 lockdown throughout the globe, and Uganda is not exceptional [15, 16].

23. I have realized that if we unit together as a global village, we will win covid-19 since all doctors world over will be looking for a solution or treatment to cure the deadly virus and will be got soon (United we win and the opposite we lose).

24. I have learnt that people have lost many resources due to lock down in some countries, businesses have closed down which has led some people to lose jobs. Many economies are shrinking and it will take long for them to regain post covid 19, unless there is a tentative working solution.

25. I have learnt that to stay home is to stay safe and simple personal hygiene are key to prevention contacting and spreading virus. Washing our hands frequently with soap and warm water if possible, use sanitizers, and masks and follow the government leaders and health organizations guidelines is vital now and after covid 19 to eradicate many diseases.

26. I have also realized that people out of their original countries are so worried and more stressed than those living with their families. 27. Everyone fears death but there are those who are heroes who have chosen to take their lives to save others like the old woman in Italy who sacrificed her life at 90 years and opted to give life support gargets to a youth patient who never had and was critically ill.

28. I have also learnt from Corona virus, that life is so short and the end of the world traditional way of doing things has ended. It is time to repent and adopt to the current way of conducting businesses, and alter the way we live behave and switch to recent technological use of 5G.

29. I have also learnt that in addition to Prayers, African local natural medicine works to relieve corona, like lemon, ginger, oranges, honey, and garlic, all mixed in hot water can relief or cure the covid-19.

30. Covid-19 was just planted and foretold in the book called "the Eye of Darkness" written by Dean Koontz in 1981 on page 312. He said in 2020, there will be a flu like disease, which will affect the lungs and will resist all the renowned treatments and many people will die.

31. I have learnt that majority of the countries thorough the world are using measures, which were initiated by World Health Organization (WHO). These measures are supplemented by others customized measures in some few countries to suit their economies. Nonetheless, the overall objective remains the same, to combat or reduce the spread of the deadly monster (covid 19).

32. Although, social media is very important at this time of lock down in many parts of the world but the fact remains that the majority of the people are depressed. Social media

content fuel this since covid 19 began with less or no regulations on what should be communicated online and by who. Currently, there is a lot of social media gossip, with a mixture of true, false and half-baked information posted online by all sorts of people about covid 19. This has left a number of people in a state of quagmire, and majority do not know which information to believe in or discard. For instance, on daily basis we have been hearing there is no cure of covid 19, then we read and hear from social media platforms that Bill gates has found the vaccine to cure covid 19 and should be compulsory for everyone especially in Africa. When you take lemon, ginger, and honey and steam your body, you cure from covid 19 or prevent it from affecting you, and many other comments.

33. More so, I have learnt that it will be tested first on the African people as dummies yet there are less covid 19 positive cases than in European countries. The at the same time we read Madagascar an African country has found a herbal cure but WHO refused to confirm it and insists no cure yet, just recently we have had that the Indian 12 year boy, who for told about covid 19, says will end in May 2020. Then in June 2020, there will be another deadly disease than covid 19. More so, the pastors are saying its ending now and scientists on the other side say it will not end we have just learn to live with it, among others.

## 5. Conclusion and Limitation

This study investigated challenges, opportunities and lessons drawn from covid 19 in developing countries like Uganda. It used narrative approach to qualitative research from personal point of view. Findings spelt out a number of opportunities, challenges and lessons drawn. The study was limited also to Uganda; other future research should carry out a comparative study based on mixed method or use quantitative research. This will help to generalize findings from it unlike these findings from personal perspective. Although the study brings a lot of positive insights and a significant contribution to the world from a personal perspective and narrative approach, it was limited to time zone done before in early months of February and March, so some lessons may not hold water as things are changing daily about covid 19 as it unveils each day. This calls for recent updates to the world regarding information about covid 19 from experts, doctors, and WHO with statistical evidence.

## 6. Implications

The results should give policy makers from the developing countries' governments like Uganda to look for measures to counteract the challenges of covid0-19. The patients of covid-19 should be given a lot of counselling and guidance from experts, psychologists, counsellors, and religious leaders. The result should also help the World Health Organisation (WHO), World Trade Organisation, European Investment Bank to focus and address these key challenges to help the shrinking economies to rise again in order to attain

sustainable development in the post covid 19.

## 7. Recommendations/Way Forward Now and Post COVID 19

The government should improve its health facilities and equip it well to save lives of people. This will prepare the nation to be ready to address the current future diseases, which may crop suddenly in the way like covid 19.

The government of Uganda and others similar developing countries should embrace the current ICT usage since it has proved be the key determinant in driving the economy even during of recent and beyond. ICT is no longer an option for any country if it is to survive in this dot com era and attain sustainable development [3, 2].

The study recommends that the Ugandan govern government should embrace ICT usage via webinar, zoom, skype, Microsoft team, to name it, is a redeemer for continual monitoring and evaluation of both students and lecturers by their top managers and other stakeholders in this digital era.

The government of Uganda through its ministry of Finance and economic planning should plan to help the low-income earners from the informal sector and send them capital after covid 19 since they consumed it all. This money could be sent via mobile money services or their bank accounts, to enable them to start afresh and boost the economy.

The banking sector should reduce on the higher interest rates it imposes on the borrowers to enable Ugandans to borrow money and boost their businesses. This will help the informal sector to start afresh with the aid of the capital obtained as a loan from the financial institutions. This will help the borrows to achieve a high standard of living, the government through its revenue sector on the other hand, will gain from increased the tax base and this will boost the economy in turn.

This study recommend the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund and World Food Organization, and others international bodies to invest more money and strengthen the essential health care sector in the developing countries like Uganda. They ought to equip it with all the necessary health equipment, food supplies, train health workers on the current Information technologies used in health care and monitor their progress to ensure universal health for all the citizens in Uganda and other developing nations. World Trade Organisations (WTO) will ensure that there is trade balance, free trade and good cooperation amongst African nations to achieve economic growth and development.

The government of Uganda should ensure that the agriculture sector as well as the industrial sector are given much attention in terms of investment to address current future challenges related to unemployment, poverty, hunger and problems of malnutrition among the citizens. Uganda being an agricultural sector, it should ensure that there is steady supply of food and advise the people to stock more food in granaries as they used to do.

The government of Uganda should devise means of collecting rainwater and preserve it for future use in this too much heavy rain. This water can also be used for irrigation purposes during dry season when stored safely in the underground reservoirs or tanks.

The government of Uganda should post covid 19 should allow first her national in the outside countries to return back home and during covid 19 currently, I suggest that the Ugandans in the neighborhood like Tanzania, Kenya and Rwanda, should be assisted to return home by the Ugandan plane and quarantined as usual for 14 days.

The Ugandan government should double salaries of doctors currently working on covid 19 patients since they are risking also their lives. This will motivate them to work more willingly now and post covid 19 when other calamities crop up.

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