Acting in Solidarity: A Phenomenological Study of the Global Response to COVID-19 and Common Good Concept

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Abstract

This socio-phenomenological study examines the responses of the global community to the outbreak and spread of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as a global pandemic. The analysis focuses on the understanding of "common good", arguing that certain assumptions underpinning the discussion around global cooperation and acting in solidarity are weighed down by a strong commitment to the neoliberal social order whose hegemony remains unchallenged till date. In offering an alternative lens through which to (re)appreciate the importance of our collective commitment to common goods such as the public health which COVID-19 threatens, the paper utilises a hybrid perspective drawn from both an African (Afro-) relational framework (ARF) and Social Connection Model (SCM) of Young. The emerging theoretical understanding underscores the salience of 'other' regarding or inter-subjectivity hinged on the narrative of common humanity and the interconnectivity and interdependence of (social) systems and things. Selected use of speech acts and the flow of misinformation (infordemic) to undermine responses and acting in solidarity were used to illustrate lessons from what has been done, and what to look forward to in the management of the pandemic and its impact.

Keywords: COVID-19, Solidarity, Afro-relationality, Social Connection Model, Common Good.

Introduction

The year 2020 will be remembered for the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. As the name suggests, COVID-19 is a new strain of a large family of coronaviruses, which was not associated with humans until late 2019 (He, Deng, & Li, 2020). Coronaviruses generally cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases like the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). What has now become a global threat is generally believed to have emerged in a seafood and poultry market in the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2019 (Garg et al., 2020; He et al., 2020). While it is currently impossible to accurately articulate the actual impact of the pandemic, there is a growing consensus that COVID-19 is poised to bring down the global economic system with damaging social, political, and psychological consequences that are set to endure for years to come (Barua, 2020; Buss & Tobar, 2020; Sułkowski, 2020).

The pandemic has generated a diverse range of scholarly interests around the interface between society and health emergencies such as COVID-19. Among these include the utility of physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection for COVID-19 prevention (MacIntyre & Wang, 2020), race and COVID-19 (Devakumar et al., 2020) COVID-19 and ethnicity (Treweek, Forouhi, Narayan, & Khunti, 2020) interventions, immunity and reduction in infections (Okell et al., 2020), gendered effects of school closures (Burzynska & Contreras, 2020), going beyond the medical to "a sustainable politics of life" (Sandset, Heggen, & Engebretsen, 2020) as well as the issues of vaccines for all (Usher, 2020) among. Along this socio-phenomenological line of thoughts, this study explores how the global community is (and should be) responding to the pandemic, the values that should inform such response (individually and collectively), and the ramifications for the containment of this pandemic. The study also seeks to highlight policy lessons that can be derived from these response pathways for future global emergency and building a better society post-pandemic. We re-examine the concept of the global common good in light of the spread of COVID-19 pandemic to demonstrate the rationale underlying the slow translation of cooperative politics into resolving the pandemic. Through the theoretical lenses of Afro-relationality framework (ARF) and the social connection model (SCM), the study critically engages various news media reports on the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights prevailing social attitude towards COVID-19 vis-à-vis the attitude towards the global common good.

Our discussion refocuses attention to the centrality of humanity in global governance encapsulated in a relational construct, one that sees beyond the pursuit of private interests typical of the prevailing neoliberal social order. The paper projects the ARF, an African relational socio-political imagination (Okoliko & De Wit, 2019) and the SCM proposed by Iris Young (2006) as meaningful lenses for evaluating the global reactions to the pandemic in light of the ideals of the global common good. We argue that the prioritization of the global common good is indispensable in the ongoing fight against global threats such as COVID-19 among others. To achieve this aim, this study shall proceed in the following

order. We begin by exploring the concept of the global common good, highlighting biases in the prevailing neoliberal social order, and how these biases limit cooperation beyond boundaries. We lay this foundation to demonstrate how the values underlying the neoliberal social order could undermine the global common good, especially in terms of the "immediate health response required to suppress transmission and to tackle the many social and economic dimensions" of the pandemic (United Nations, 2020, p. 1). Secondly, we present an alternative theoretical lens, namely the ARF and SCM, for a meaningful advancement of the global common good concept in the context of COVID-19. The section demonstrates how the blend of ARF and SCM can be applied meaningfully toward containing the pandemic and its multidimensional impacts. Subsequently, some findings regarding the global response to, as well as the multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are highlighted. This is done to underscore the inherent dangers in neglecting the global common good as informed by the above hybrid framework. The findings underscore the damaging effects of the logic of self-preservation and individualism that typified the various conspiracy theories and attitudes shaping the response to the pandemic. It is against this backdrop that the subsequent section attempts to apply the alternative logic of ARF and SCM under the critical discussion on acting in solidarity. The discussion accentuates the importance of the hybrid perspective in addressing various aspects of the pandemic in both short and long term. This is proceeded by a concluding section that makes relevant policy recommendations for managing the pandemic and its extensive effects into the future.

The Global Common Good, COVID-19, and International Cooperation

There is now a proliferation of global crises that warrant rethinking our understanding of, and approach to, global common goods. Whether these crises are economic (e.g. the financial crisis of 2008/2009), or socio-economic (global poverty and inequality), or environmental (climate change dubbed as "risk multiplier") (Scheffran, Link, & Schilling, 2019), or the crises threatening public health like the COVID-19 global pandemic, the common denominator is their extensive impacts beyond social boundaries.

Reflexive modernisation theory[1] offers some insights on the nature of our 'risks society' and the challenge with contemporary governance practice. The theory argues that a necessary measure to getting past current challenges requires a heightened level of reflexivity about the nexus between the post-war social order, industrial and technological advancement and the resulting "risks society" (Alario & Freudenburg, 2003; Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003). Such a reflection for instance, regarding the ecological crisis, ties "industrial capitalist system" and its logic of blind pursuit of wealth at the expense of sustainability

[1] Propagated by the works of two main theorists, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, the sociological theory essentially raises questions on the legitimacy of the contemporary social order as it relates to technological risks (Alario & Freudenburg, 2003)

concerns to problems such as loss of biodiversity, ozone depletion, climate change, environmental pollution and their implication for social life (McCright, Marquart-Pyatt, Shwom, Brechin, & Allen, 2016). Given the centrality of individual good in the post-war social order, motivating solidarity across boundaries tends to be a major challenge for global governance.

Globalisation has increasingly made possible and relatively easy for people across geographical boundaries to interact. In this context, the concept is used to describe the kind of unprecedented changes experienced in recent human history. One such description asserts that globalisation refers to "the intensification of cross-national interactions that promote the establishment of transnational structures and the global integration of cultural, economic, ecological, political, technological and social processes on global, supra-national, national, regional and local levels" (Beumer, Figge, & Elliott, 2017, p. 704). With the aid of technological advancement, global interactions and cross-sharing of ideas, cultures, economies and power between societies have drastically changed following the Enlightenment, the American and French revolutions.

The positive trend is accompanied by a proliferation of institutions evolving to guide different aspects of global interactions, from the political to the economic, cultural and resource management. Notable among them are the United Nations and its numerous organs, World Trade Organisations (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Health Organisations (WHO) and others. In turn, these institutions are legitimised as the bulwark of guides to galvanising response to collective problems often in collaboration with national, local and citizen-led organisations. From the functional perspective, they are collectively recognised as "'enablers' or 'constraints'", depending on whether "as rules, regulations and conventions", they facilitate collective actions (Gebreyes, 2018, p. 123).

Given this high confidence in institutions, a common approach to governance problems often includes prescription of institutional reforms to address inefficiency and improve on strategies to deliver collective good. However, confidence in institutions tends to conceal an important aspect of dynamics in human society, namely, that institutions are socially embedded and are co-constitutive alongside social roles, agency, identities and spatial-temporal contexts (Jessop, 2005). This interlinkage between institutions and agents informs why power asymmetries explain "how actors make use of institutions differently, with powerful actors taking most of the advantage of the production and use of institutions" (Gebreyes, 2018, p. 123). Mainstream institutional studies tend to force a dichotomy between institutions and social relations and downplay the importance of the latter in analysing demotivation for global action against common threats.

Baumer et al. (2017) acknowledged the above dynamics regarding institution in their analysis of historical policy documents of leading transnational organisations. They suggest

that the current narrative of international cooperation lack "social robustness", a concept they used to describe the absence of inclusive cultural perspectives crucial for the sustainability of global interactions. They identified six of these cultural perspectives describing possible 'ways of life' and visions about the world: the Hierachist, egalitarian, individualist, fatalist, autonomous and dynamic integration (Beumer et al., 2017). The authors' evaluation of policy discourse emanating from trans-national organisations, including WHO, UNEP, IPCC, ILO, WEF, and OECD on issues ranging from economies to climate change and human wellbeing (health) indicates that "[t]he individualist is the most dominant perspective" and that this dominance comes "at the cost of other perspectives" (Beumer et al., 2017, p. 711). Eva and Norren (2014) came to a similar conclusion on the literature covering global development goals (MDGs), attesting that the contribution of the "[Global] Southern concepts" is minimal or absent. This lack of diversity of perspectives on the formation of global ethics of cooperation is problematic both from the angles of "epistemic justice" and benefits (Chimakonam, 2017; Ward & Wasserman, 2015).

It is important to understand the characteristic assumptions underpinning the dominant ideology, which limits its usefulness in the contemporary world of global interaction. The discursive strategies of the dominant individualist worldview underscore certain assumptions about 'humanity' (of human nature) and 'good' (of the end) which makes cooperation problematic. First, the human being is treated as an autonomous individual with rational capacity. Second, society is construed merely as a collection of discrete individuals, and the co-existence of these individuals is made possible by a social contract. Third, human *telos* is constructed as the maximisation of 'wellbeing' (of the individual or majority) through the exercise of rational choice of "the *homo economicus"* (De Wit, 2019). Collectively, these assumptions underpin the popularisation of the "Washington Consensus", which have historically encouraged market-orientated policies against forms of regulation and of government involvement in the distribution of economic goods (De Wit, 2019). Standard measures of what constitutes wellbeing in this orthodoxy translate to the aggregation of wealth often given in numerical strengths such as in gross domestic products (GDP). Qobo (2013, p. 340) captures this understanding aptly: "raising income per capita is generally seen in economic orthodoxy as a proxy of how well people live".

What is amiss in the mechanistic construct above, however, is the straightforward assumption about humanity and of ends outside normative consideration. Influenced by Newtonian science, Amartya Sen argues that modern approach to human welfare assessment, as led by the neo-liberal social order, has been primarily preoccupied with "logistics issues rather than with ultimate ends and such questions as what may foster 'the good of man' or 'how should one live'" (cited in Mcgregor, 2010, p. 507). Sen's intervention was the introduction of the capability approach in the late 20th century. The 'capability' concept provided a departure from the utilitarian approach to the debate as it refocuses interest in the development of human capabilities, drawing attention to wellbeing and broader human progress. Sen defines capability as "the various combinations of

functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve" where functionings refer to "the various things a person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1995, p. 40).

However, as Mcgregor (2010, p. 540) argues, the capability approach contribution pays little attention to "the social, and therefore, political nature of human wellbeing", thereby, limiting its utility. For instance, it is possible that in a polity, different individuals may have conflicting ideas about functionings which they value differently (e.g. consider the interest of the environmentalists versus those of corporations in the oil industry). Hence, while Sen's capability approach is geared towards a *telos* couched on "living-well", Mcgregor (2010) submits, it is useful to broaden it further to incorporate "the *telos* of 'living well together'". Under this construct, the focus shifts from the individual *per se*, to contributions which expand the social conditions in which people can live well with others in society (Mcgregor, 2010). Such a construct allows for the consideration of 'good' which goes beyond the individual to incorporate others, including future generations and the ecological world.

This brings us to the concept of the common good. Messner offers one useful description of the common good that is apt for our discussion which is "the social cooperation that individuals obtain as members of society for the fulfilment of their existential ends" where the ends include those conditions that support the flourishing of lives (cited in Melé, 2009, p. 235). Common good espouses the idea that ultimately, institutions and society exist for the human person (Argandoña, 1998, p. 194). The Akan proverb which says that "[h]humanity has no boundary" is relevant here (Eva & Norren, 2014, p. 257). As we argue below, introducing a relational approach to international cooperation from both the African relational perspective and Young's social connection model, the interest in the human person is about the shared humanity of all. The common good can be about humanity and not partially realised for a few. It is critical to pay attention to an understanding of the social aspects of institutions and to seek to provide an ethic of motivation primed on human solidarity and shared identity for directing actions towards global risks. This involves an appreciation of the cultural perspectives which drive contemporary inter- and transnational relations and cooperation. It also involves the disruption of a near-universal norm that has hitherto guided global interactions.

The relation between common good and citizens' participation is of important interest. Habermas evaluation of contemporary politics suggests that there is a gradual receding of political participation as largely driven by the corporatisation of governance (cited in Kellner, 2004). He argues that the public sphere which used to accommodate the participation of citizens in shaping opinions on common good has ceded ways to the dominance of elites and their private interests. It should be clear that this trend follows through from the bias of neoliberal social order on the concept of humanity. By individuating persons and promoting self-interests, it follows that citizens increasingly became consumers rather than participants in the common interest. This loss of the

political, and how it contributes to disempowering citizens who often than not show remarkable interests to forge collaboration across divides to achieve the common good, is also translated to institutional levels encouraging or dissuading meaningful and cooperative problem-solving attitude in society. The negative implication thereof for the management of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its long-term effects are enormous. To this end, we shall now turn to a detailed rendition of the ARF and the SCM as alternative approaches to forging a better foundation for acting in solidarity

Afro-relational Framework and the Social Connection Model

Afro-relationality places relationships as fundamental to the understanding of 'humanity' or 'humanness'. In the Ubuntu tradition, for instance, humanity is defined largely by the participation in communal life, which is open to all. Ubuntu, which also stands for humanness, "means that one's humanity only comes through the humanity of others, or that our humanity is bound or linked together" (Etieyibo, 2017, p. 318). This remark goes beyond Marxist central tenet about the social situated-ness of humans to account for the ontological interconnectedness of the ecosystem of which humans are part. For example, Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* ontology drawn from the Igbo lifeworld argues that being is "that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality" (Ogbonnaya, 2014, p. 120). Similarly, an Ubuntu ontology from Southern Africa underscores "be-ing" as "rheomodic" – that is, founded on the notion of motion in an onerous universe where harmony is the essential character (Bewaji & Ramose, 2003, p. 413). In a world viewed as deeply interconnected, the social functions as a connected whole so that ethical consideration focuses on networks of relationship.

The centrality of inter-subjectivity espoused in Afro-relationality contrasts the Hobbesian idea about human nature earlier adumbrated as playing a dominant role in modern thinking. Hobbes' state of nature describes a pre-social state of the human, one which views the being as a brute and fundamentally self-interested and anti-social (Okoliko & De Wit, 2019). Then came the post-contractual phase where necessity forced humans to enter a cooperative union. In contrast, Afro-relationality grants the "capacity" for relationship (Metz 2016, 138), and this is considered as inherent to human nature. Consider this *Akan* proverb for instance, "when a man descends from heaven, he descends into a human society" (Obioha, 2014, p. 14). The proverb expresses a belief that the being of human holds a capacity for social relationships.

Ubuntu literature particularly highlights the modals through which the relationality inherent in the understanding of humanness is actualized. According to Metz, for instance, there are two pathways in this regard, one being through *identity* where one considers self as a part of the whole, sharing "a way of life, belonging, and experiencing oneself as bound up with others" (Metz, 2020, p. 4). The other mode is *solidarity¸* which flowing from the first modal, entails a feeling of empathy and concern for others (Metz, 2014, p. 309). These relational pathways provide the fulcrum for social participation and relationship.

Consider this axiom from the Nguni people of Southern Africa for instance, "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu",* meaning "a person is a person through other persons" (Tschaepe, 2013, p. 49). The saying emphasizes the embeddedness of one's wellbeing in the interactions which hold within the society. Such a relational construct places mutuality as the basis between how the individual and the society are related. As Eze (2008, 386) argues, "[t]he individual and the community" are not "radically opposed in the sense of priority but engaged in a contemporaneous formation". Eze's concept of "contemporaneous" as designating the relationship between the individual and the community highlights the interlaced nature of both the good of the individual and that of the community. It addresses the "mutually constitutive" nature of the private good of the individual and that of the common good belonging to the society (Eze, 2008). In contrast, Western moral philosophy upon which contemporary social order is built assumes "the dualism of practical reason", "the idea that one person's good is separate from another's" (Lutz, 2009, p. 318). In Afro-relationality, communalistic values allow for the reciprocity of relations (Okoliko, 2018).

There is a remarkable similarity between the African notion of relationality and Wojtla's "personalism". Wojtyla argues that persons are free agents with the capacity to be simultaneously subject and object of deliberate action (Clark, 2007). It is through participation in the "variety of forms of relationships with others (individual and society)" that a person finds expression and self-actualisation. With this understanding, wellbeing is cast as a possibility achieved within the inter-subjective space of human relations (Mcgregor, 2010). The foregoing suggests that a useful means to assess the response of the global community to COVID-19 pandemic must include whether existing structures and their underlying ideologies promote 'participation'. Participation in this sense means acting "jointly with others" or as "persons-in-community" (Okoliko & De Wit, 2019). The absence of such participation is 'alienation', which not only limits the possibility for a human community but also injures the dignity of persons.

We argue that the participation also needs to be driven by a sense of responsibility as promoted by the Political Philosopher, Iris Young's in her Social Connection Model. The model is put forward as a response to the question: "how shall agents, both individual and organizational, think about our responsibility in relation to structural injustice?" (Young, 2011, p. 95). Young's begins by noting that the judgment of circumstance as unjust presupposes an understanding that it is, at least, partly anthropogenic, in which case the culprit should rectify. However, there is a dilemma when such injustice is structural, wherein there is no direct agent to rectify the injustice. Hence, advancing the SCM, Young (2006) discourages the "'liability' model of responsibility that assigns 'guilt or fault for a harm' to particular actions of particular agents in the past". As far as the SCM is concerned, the idea of identifying the "wrongdoer, who was wronged and who now owes recompense" that defines the liability model of responsibility is ontologically and conceptually problematic (Young, 2006, 2013). This is because of one's ontological relation to others, "which is prior to self-consciousness and even prior to the possibility of egoism

or selfishness, as one modality of response to the responsibility" (Young, 2011, p. 162). Accordingly, responsibility for global justice is not chiefly 'backwards-looking', as the attribution of guilt or fault is. In lieu, it is ' forward-looking', thus making us capable of effecting social change to bring about justice (Peter, 2011; Young, 2006).

Similar to the ARF, Young premises the SCM on the notion of relationality, maintaining that individuals do not have to be blameworthy or guilty to be responsible for corrective actions. Being "prior to political institutions" and able to subsist without political institutions, the social connection underscores the natural interdependence among people due to an individual's subsistence in the world (David, 2020). An individual responsibility derives from their ontological relationship with others. Young rightly argues that the "responsibility for the other emerges from sense and desire, from being embodied in a world with other needful embodied beings" (Young, 2011, p. 162). Hence, "Being responsible in relation to structural injustice means that one has an obligation to join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust" (Young, 2011, p. 96). In this way, the authors "makes a case for how social structure should be considered as a subject of justice for which all people within that structure bear responsibility" (Young, 2013, p. e6). Such responsibility is virtue-based rather than liability based because it focuses on the moral agent's responsibility towards others in the face of injustice (David, 2020). The need for such virtue cannot be overstated in the global response to the COVID-19 and its impact if the common good all is to be promoted.

COVID-19 and Global Responses

At the time of writing (late June 2020) COVID-19 has reportedly affected about 213 countries and territories, as well as two international conveyances (Worldometer, 2020). From the initial few cases in Wuhan where the disease broke out, it spread sporadically to all parts of the globe through human-to-human transmission (Hoffmann et al., 2020; McKibbin & Fernando, 2020). Once the infection stepped beyond the bounds of China, with reported index cases in some part of Asia, like Japan, India, the Philippines, Europe, especially Italy, it became increasingly a global threat. After much hesitation, the WHO on March 14, 2020, declared the COVID-19 a global pandemic. The organisation and other international bodies embarked on various campaigns and public sensitizations to checkmate the further spread of the virus. Among the measures prescribed are proper hygiene such as regular hand washing, avoidance of touching once face, especially the nose and eyes, disinfection of surfaces, wearing of face mask and observance of 'social distancing' (better phrased as physical distancing) (Dayrit & Mendoza, 2020; Wyplosz, 2020). These were in keeping with information available on the spread of the virus which was mostly understood at the time to be through contact. Subsequent evidence also suggested that the virus can remain in aerosol, and on surfaces, for varying duration under certain conditions (van Doremalen et al., 2020). This partly explains the daily jump in the

number of confirmed cases globally despite various preventative measures being observed.

By mid-September 2020, there were over 28 million confirmed cases and over 930 000 deaths globally (Worldometer, 2020). Factors contributing to the rapid spread of the infection range from fundamental issues like international exposure to misinformation and lack of appreciation of the severity of the highly contagious disease. While international travels, engendered by the globalised nature of our world, greatly explain the global spread of the virus, other aspects of the current social order determine the effectiveness of the global response both to the virus and its long-term impacts. This study focuses mainly on how agential factors could facilitate the spread of the disease, as well as the needed efforts by all stakeholders to bring it under control for the common good of all. To better appreciate such agential factors, a cursory exposition of the values underlying various conspiracy theories in circulation on COVID-19 is helpful at this juncture.

Conspiracies Mar Solidarity

The novelty and complexity of COVID-19 provided a breeding ground for a host of conspiracy theories especially, regarding its origin or causation (Abaido & Takshe, 2020; Larson, 2020). By conspiracy theory, we simply mean any attempt to explain tragic or harmful events as the consequence of the actions of a group of people, while ignoring or jettisoning widely accepted narratives of such events (Motter, 2009; Oliver & Wood, 2014). While it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the veracity of theories on COVID-19, it is pertinent to highlight the principles beneath some of these conspiracies to better appreciate their deleterious implications for the management of the pandemic. For this study, we roughly group the various views in circulation on COVID-19 into two categories which we dubbed as (1) liability and (2) differential susceptibility conspiracies. Suffices it to acknowledge that not all the views in circulation necessarily fit into these categories. Our interest is to highlight a few of such conspiracies that undermine the containment efforts, considering their damaging implications for the pursuit of the global common good. We demonstrate how they tend to undermine containment efforts toward the health crises and the multidimensional impacts of COVID-19.

By liability conspiracy theory we refer to those narratives characterized by blame for or accusation on the origin or causes of COVID-19. Such views typically frame the narratives on COVID-19 around biological weapons intentionally or unintentionally leaked into the society. The adherents of this view include leading bioweapon expert and creator of Bio Weapon Acts, Dr Boyle, who believed 'the coronavirus is an offensive biological warfare weapon with DNA-genetic engineering' (Adams, 2020). What is hardly substantiated about such narratives, however, is the possible intention for such bioweapons. Yet such viewpoint informs those who generally believe and spread the idea that COVID-19 is not a natural virus, but intentionally created for sinister reasons. A commentator observed, "If it is correct that the virus had either been developed or even produced to be weaponized it

would further suggest that its escape from the Wuhan Institute of Virology Lab and into the animal and human population could have been accidental" (Philip Galradi, 2020).

Observably, the liability narrative is accusatory in its framing of the cause of COVID-19. For instance, accusatory fingers are pointed to or between various states including, the US, China, Canada and Israel (Dyer, 2020; NG, 2020; Philip Galradi, 2020; Spencer, 2020). The most notable demonstration of this accusatory narrative is the uproar that ensued between the two biggest economies in the world, namely, the US and China, since January. Those who accuse China believe that, contrary to the Wuhan seafood market claim by the Chinese government, COVID-19 was engineered by the Chinese government in Wuhan virology lab. The position is particularly oiled by the presence of an advanced virology lab in Wuhan, fuelling the "accusations that China had deliberately unleashed an attack" (Kaszeta, 2020). Events such as the later upward revision of death counts in Wuhan from 3,342 to 4,632 (Lee & Wu, 2020), which suggests that the Chinese government may not have been telling the whole truth, has been adduced as evidence to this claim. The faulting of the Chinese Government by the US government for lack of or inadequate information sharing on COVID-19 also serves the accusatory agenda under this liability conspiracy. Prominent figures such as the US Secretary of State, Mr Pompeo as well as President Donald Trump referred to the virus, as 'Wuhan Virus' or "Chinese virus". Expectedly, Beijing countered by accusing America of inventing the Virus. In the words of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, "It might be the US Army that brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent, US owes us an explanation" (cited in Chossudovsky, 2020).

Essentially, the deepening rivalry between the two world powers merely detracts attention from the necessary cooperation to defeat the scourge of the pandemic. Meanwhile, as Chossudovsky argues the "'Made in China' coronavirus label served as a pretext, the unspoken objective was to bring the Chinese economy to its knees" (Chossudovsky, 2020). In so far as identifying who or what is liable for the origin of the virus is not the most necessary step toward containing its spread, this rivalry could at best delay the requisite cooperation for a timely and decisive response. Or as a commentator of a Chinese state-run news agency, Xinhua, aptly observed, the "using of racist and xenophobic names to cast blame for the outbreak on other countries can only reveal politicians' irresponsibility and incompetence which will intensify virus fears" (NG, 2020).

Still, on this liability conspiracy grounds, a prominent global icon such as Bill Gates has also been accused of inventing the COVID-19. Gate's earlier warning about the global unpreparedness for such pandemic as well as commitment towards the development of vaccines attracted suspicion which roped him into the liability conspiracy narrative.

The "differential susceptibility" conspiracy pertains mostly to the initial posture toward the COVID-19 which was based on some misguided sense of vulnerability or otherwise of certain groups of people that potentially fuelled indifference to others' plights. Prominent among factors adduced for such differentiation include race, nationality, age, or climatic conditions, presented as differentiating who is vulnerable or not (European parliament,

2020; Martin, Karafillakis, Preet, & Wilder-Smith, 2020; Reuter Fact Check, 2020). The differential vulnerability narratives prompted either a triumphalist or a narrowed nationalistic attitude towards the fight against the pandemic. Consider for instance the triumphalism that gained media attention following the reported "cure" of the first African to have survived the illness in Wuhan, Mr Senou in February. It was reported that Mr Senou "stayed alive because of his blood genetic composition which is mainly found in the genetic composition of sub-Saharan Africans" (Reuter Fact Check, 2020). Riding on this an African motivational speaker Zanomoya Mditshwa concluded on the perceived 'indestructibility' of the African saying:

> Caucasians are always at war with our black skin because they know our melanin is our defence against all that they throw at us. This proves yet again that the black man is indestructible, our bodies are made of the same substances that make up this Earth because we are owners of this universe they will never wipe us off, history has already proved that (cited in Reuter Fact Check, 2020).

An adversarial logic of 'us versus them' is discernible in the above claims, which poses a challenge to addressing the global common threat. The above position is not only divisive and derisive of the 'Caucasian' thus standing in the way of cooperation, but it also puts many blacks at risk given that eventual and current COVID-19 infection rate among the black race and in Africa disproves such views. Pushed too far, this 'them versus us' narrative could deprive Africans of the needed support of, and cooperation with, the perceived 'other'. The negative dimension was also noticeable in the reported mistreatment of African nationals who were "left homeless after being evicted by landlords and rejected by hotels" in China on COVID-19 discrimination grounds (Marsh, 2020).

The differential susceptibility mindset manifests itself in the way that states, and individuals respond to the crises. At state levels, inadequate internationally coordinated response strategy to aid other states hit by the virus was noticeable especially at the initial stage, as each state or regional bloc retreated to self-preservation. For instance, on March 15, 2020, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced a restriction on exports of medical goods to serve the interest of the EU in a Twitter video. Such a move, however, deprived non-EU member states, where the virus had spread, of "medical masks, gloves, protective clothing and respirators from the Union" (Anthonopolous, 2020). Similarly, political or economic interest was used to downplay the severity of the infection by influential state actors such as President Donald Trump who called the virus a 'mere flue' or hoax (Cook & Choi, 2020).

Observably, the differential vulnerability attitude, like the liability narrative, promoted indifference to the pandemic, due mainly to the lack of genuine human solidarity. Individuals riding on the differential susceptibility narrative could consciously or subconsciously downplay the regulatory measures put in place, including observing physical distancing and good hygiene aimed at checkmating the spread of the virus. In so

doing, such people who consciously or subconsciously perceive themselves as not vulnerable to the virus could go around spreading the infection while they remained asymptomatic. Besides, the deliberates spread of fake news without any personal responsibility to verify the validity also aggravated the spread of the virus (Pulido Rodríguez et al., 2020). All such attitudes are arguably threatening to the multi-dimensional impacts of the pandemic already manifesting, as we adumbrate below.

Multidimensional Impact of COVID-19

From the outset, the outbreak has been feared to be laden with a huge social, economic, and political cost besides the obvious health challenge. As Horton (2020, p. 1682) puts it, COVID-19 "is a 'triple crisis' – medical, economic, and psychological". The most touted negative implication of COVID-19 is on the economic side, which also bears directly on the social. It is impossible at this stage to fully appreciate the economic fallout from the pandemic. Many analysts predict that this is likely to be worse than the 2008/9 global economic recession (Barua, 2020; Chossudovsky, 2020). Coupled with the recorded slowest global growth in 2019 since the global financial crisis of 2008/2009, COVID-19 is plunging the world economy into a recession or even depression depending on how it is handled going forward (Maital & Barzani, 2020; Sułkowski, 2020).

The three interrelated channels through which the pandemic impacts on the global economy include (1) direct disruption of production due to the lockdown in virtually all the affected countries including China, which is a major exporting country; (2) disruption in the supply chain as depletion in production bears negatively on exportation and importation; and (3) disruption in financial markets and firms (Barua, 2020; United Nations, 2020). These interconnected channels of both national and global economy bear adversely on the labour market, given the grand scale of national lockdown across the world and their distortive implications for various economic sectors. Job losses are already being recorded across many nations. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) between 5 million and 25 million jobs and an income between USD 860 billion to USD 3,4 trillion could be lost directly from the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations, 2020). The tourism sector in many countries appears to be the first hit especially with the restriction of international travels. Besides the reduction of productivity engendered by the lockdown, the refocusing of national wealth toward addressing the health emergency alone takes the needed attention from other sectors. This will not only deepen poverty, reversing the gain made so far, it will also exacerbate horizontal inequality within and between countries (United Nations, 2020).

The differential spread of the virus or containment thereof, owing to various contextual factors also translates into differential impacts for different countries, both in severity and duration. For instance, Government such as South Korea, Singapore, and Israel employed tools such as blockchain, facial recognition, and other technological tools in their response (Calzada, 2020). Given the critical role of contact tracing of the infected persons, the so-called algorithmic nations, which employ such technological-driven strategies in its

handling are more likely to cope better than others that merely employed restrictive lockdown (Calzada, 2020). Arguably, this variance in approach also means differential outcome in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on economic and social life, as the algorithmic nations are likely to better balance economic and health interests.

The differential impact of COVID-19 will be worse felt in developing economies lacking social safety nets or stimulus packages to mitigate the socio-economic fallout. It may also lead to social upheaval against unresponsive elites (Sidiropoulos, 2020). The lockdown also presents many mental challenges including depression, fear, anxiety which may get even worse subsequently (Torales, O'Higgins, Castaldelli-Maia, & Ventriglio, 2020). In line with the aforementioned deleterious impacts, violent social conflicts including domestic violence are some of the social dangers that the pandemic poses, especially in fragile states. Countries around the world have recorded a dramatic rise in domestic violence, as the quarantine brings about the situations where victims of abuse have no escape from their abusers. Cases of domestic abuse rose significantly in Hubie province in China in February (Giuffrida, Smith, & Ford, 2020). The same trend was reported in some part of Europe as governments enforced stringent national lockdown. In the coastal province of Valencia, Spain, for instance, a man reportedly murdered his wife in the presence of the children on March 19 (Giuffrida et al., 2020). Information from the South African Police portal also reveals how about 870 000 cases of domestic abuse were reported a few days into the 21 days lockdown (26th March to 16th April) (Chothia, 2020). A similar trend was recorded in Brazil. Indeed, while some families may have been afforded a rare opportunity for family bonding, it is hardly the case in the abusive family or relationship settings, as the mental effects from the lockdown are being expressed in violence (Giuffrida et al., 2020). Given these negative implications of the COVID-19, the next section returns to the alternative pathway informed by the ARF and SCM hybrid perspective in forging a productive cooperative front towards dealing with various problem confronting humanity, including especially the current pandemic.

Acting in Solidarity: Inter-Dependency and Connectivity

The former UK prime minister Theresa May, in her popular Brexit quote said: "If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere" (cited in Calzada, 2020, p. 1). In the context of the pandemic, May's thinking can fuel the fear and panic that encourage "people and states to man the barricades" instead of taking collective action to tackle these transnational and transboundary problems (Sidiropoulos, 2020). However, the need for global solidarity engendered by the pandemic ought to take cognisance of the global citizenship of all individuals because of our interdependence. Hence, we argue for an alternative response strategy informed by the SCM and ARF as outlined earlier to shape the responses to the health emergency as well its multidimensional impact in the short, medium and long term. This must be seen at all levels (international, national and local) but also beyond the bounds of formal institutions (governmental or otherwise). The

complexity of this pandemic reinforces the need for private participation and solidarity with institutions in addressing the crises.

Based on ARF and SCM, we argue that the 'glocality' of modern challenges confronting humanity requires an appreciation of policies and practices that genuinely promote the wellbeing of the 'other' as the first step to promoting the wellbeing of oneself. Implications for reimagining cooperation around other glocal problems such as climate change is considered in light of solidarity and cooperation. Such is defined "by how we understand and enact our responsibilities to, and relationships with, each other" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2020). Hence these complementary frameworks highlight the two important dimensions of solidarity, namely ethical and political solidarity, required to defeat this current pandemic and other common threat to humanity. As Gaztambide-Fernández aptly puts it, "Whether we are confronting a pandemic, global warming, income inequality, racism or gender-based violence, solidarity depends on how we come together" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2020).

In pursuit of the global common good, there is a growing appreciation of the indispensability of global solidarity towards finding a solution together especially given the borderless-ness of humanity. For instance, major world leaders launched the Access to COVID-19 Tool Accelerators on 24 of April 2020. The landmark global collaboration aims to facilitate "the development, production and equitable distribution of vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics for COVID-19" (WHO, 2020, p. 1). This collaboration is underpinned by the belief that nowhere is free from the infection as long as one part of the globe is not. Hence no person must be left behind. The initiative discourages fragmented containment efforts deprived of the sense of global solidarity. The stakes are extremely high, and the role of government, private sector, and businesses are indispensable. Various demonstration of this sense of solidarity has been recorded in other areas, including efforts made in distributing food parcels and other life essentials to the 'have-nots' in many societies. This vision is to be pursued with the same vigour in an unprecedented manner to successfully and speedily contain the pandemic. The success of such solidarity will ultimately be defined by the underlying values and the extent to which such values appreciate the interconnectedness of all humanity.

Acting in solidarity should also provide glocal actors with the mind to approach the pandemic from a balancing perspective. The pandemic has further highlighted in many settings the inequality in access to health services. While the novelty of the COVID-19 makes it difficult to handle even for advanced economies, it is even worse for developing countries like those in Africa with historical infrastructural and workforce challenges (Kavanagh et al., 2020). Emerging evidence suggests that COVID-19 discriminates, following "deeply entrenched patterns of health inequities" so that "those who are already vulnerable – for example, the unstably housed, people on a low income, those with poorer education, and individuals with less access to reliable nutritious food" are more likely to suffer both infection and death from COVID-19 (Galea, 2020, p. 1897). As such, we join

Allen, Braithwaite, Collinson, Oskrochi, and Basu (2020) to asserts that "[t]his pandemic calls for collaboration rather than division". Such collaboration can only be driven by empathy and concern that is "other" regarding based on shared humanity as both ARF and SCM motivate. Beyond the present, there is a need to shift focus on addressing inequality as a preventive measure for future pandemics. It means investing in "preventive conditions of health – like safe housing, good schools, liveable wages, gender equity, clean air, drinkable water, and a more equal economy" (Galea, 2020, p. 1898).

As COVID-19 pandemic progresses and countries are looking into ways to ease lockdown measures, there is a need to motivate for 'other' regarding attitude in managing common spaces of interaction going forward. This is particularly handy concerning the use of face masks in communities. Initially, directives from WHO on the use of face mask as protective measures by healthy members of the public during the pandemic was unclear. However, the body has revised its directives based on new evidence supporting the utility of protective gears such as face masks (Cheng, Lam, & Leung, 2020). Thus, we argue that acting in solidarity can motivate the use of face masks to control community transmission across Africa. It requires the consciousness that the public good, in this case, community health, is one's responsibility and a collective commitment. Within Africa, a choice has to be made to reserve the medical or surgical masks solely for the professionals at the frontlines during this pandemic given the limited resources at the disposal of governments. However, clothe masks are handy, easy to manufacture and have the capacity "to control infection source" (Cheng et al., 2020, p. 1). Acting in solidarity should motivate persons within the community to utilise clothe masks to protect the community health within which they share life. Self-focusing will do the opposite. As an adjunct to other measures, including social distancing and hand hygiene, mass masking practised as acting in solidarity is a useful and low-cost management measures for the developing countries in Africa (Cheng et al., 2020). Similarly, vaccine development and use can benefit from the motivation of acting in solidarity as long as world leaders are committed to this goal, ensuring adequate accessibility by all (Kavanagh et al., 2020)

Importantly, the approach advanced in this paper advocate for a community or collective response to pandemic going forward. Mainstream responses to public health as demonstrated during this COVID-19 have largely been driven by governments in a top-down model. This trend neglects the resourcefulness embedded in community coalition. As Marston, Renedo, & Miles (2020, p. 1676) put it, "[c]ommunities, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, can identify solutions: they know what knowledge and rumours are circulating; they can provide insight into the stigma and structural barriers, and they are well placed to work with others from their communities to devise collective responses". In this sense, community participation is important and can reduce the risk of low compliance. Existing network of relations such as community-based groups can serve as mobilising fronts for collective responses. Co-production and – creation (Okoliko & De Wit, 2019; Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018) holds the potential for high impact inclusive

disaster response and preparedness (Marston et al., 2020) which we believe, the confidence in inter-subjectivity espoused by our hybrid framework motivates.

From another vantage point, part of the expectations of solidarity for common good involves the need to redress the lingering marginalisation of non-Western epistemic traditions, considering the implication thereof for global health. Given the importance of cooperation, the notable underutilisation of indigenous knowledge system (IKS) from around the world in health research is problematic (Bicker, 2003; Edington, 2017; Hewson, 2015; Heyd, 2000). As all research attentions are mostly, if not exclusively, focused on the development of vaccines and therapeutics that fit within the canon of Western epistemic tradition, the above challenge seems to be manifesting itself once again in the race to deal with COVID-19. Due to the hegemony of Western science, traditional or indigenous herbal remedies are either discouraged or given less consideration despite the evidence supporting their usefulness (Gall et al., 2018; Heaven & Charing, 2006; Khor & Lin, 2001; Manthalu & Waghid, 2019; Ullah et al., 2018). Where such remedies have been reportedly utilised during the pandemic (e.g Madagascar's use of 'COVID-Organics'), their usefulness is easily dismissed as lacking "scientific evidence" (BBC, 2020 April 22).

Indeed, while such cautioning against unproven cure is in order, it is interesting to know how much attention was paid to such 'cure' before being dismissed on the aforementioned grounds. Albeit this line of discourse is beyond the scope of the current article, it suffices to underscore that the post-COVID-19 should not be one that continues on the current path of marginalisation of non-Western epistemologies. Otherwise, humanity may be deprived of the potential benefits of IKS in global health practices, with implication for health crises such as the COVID-19. The growing appreciation of IKS's emphasises on holism and interconnectedness between human, animal and the environment should be encouraged in the global health system if the quest for authentic development is to be attained (Metz, 2012; Mika, 2017).

Within the global common good as advocated in the hybrid framework advanced in this paper, the solutions being sought for COVID-19 cannot afford to be short term oriented. Rather, lessons derived from the event should help the world prepare for such an outbreak in the future, which is arguably very likely, given our interconnectedness globally. The 'One Health' approach to health research, which seeks to promote a better appreciation and respect for the interconnectedness that exists between all lives and non-lives in the ecosystem, must be given unprecedented attention in global health. Fundamentally, the benefit of the current global partnership being forged to defeat the pandemic will ultimately be short-lived if it stops short as being a reactionary and not involving a paradigmatic shift in attitude towards human-environmental relationship post COVID-19.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There is a significant consensus that the world will not be the same post-COVID-19 pandemic. What are we to expect, and what type of world should the international community strive to build post-pandemic?

In this paper, we provided a phenomenological reflection on these questions by exploring the conceptual understanding that underpins collective action in the management of global health emergency such as the COVID-19. Importantly, the reflection draws attention to the heavy reliance on the (neo) liberal ideology in the construct and formations of institutions that deliver common goods. The result is the increasing marketization of governance directed to serve a *telos* that is oriented to a discretely conceived interest. The paper points out some limitations which confront this approach, including, the well-known market problem in public good delivery and a neglect of the social and the network of embedded relations. These are shown to negatively influence the operationalisation of institutions. By drawing on the concepts of "common good" and "humanity" as co-extensive vis-à-vis addressing a collective problem like a global health emergency, the paper points to an alternative that builds on a hybrid theoretical lens to foreground glocal solidarity approach to governance. ARF and SCM perspectives both highlight interconnectedness, inter-subjectivity and interdependence of our world. The solidarity approach to emergency management as a governance tool which flows from this hybrid framework can be usefully applied to policy options as we glide through COVID-19.

A starting point is a need for more participatory governance. As the pandemic has necessitated emergency orders in many countries, it is important to highlight the need for caution so that societies come off better in terms of democratic indices. During the crisis, the willingness to accept restrictions may have allowed room for more concentration of power in the executive. In Africa where democratic institutions have remained fragile by most indices, this trend can portend trouble, as reminiscent of the cases in Ethiopia, Zambia and Tanzania as they further slip into authoritarianism (Hartmann, 2020; Lemma, 2020). As we highlighted in this paper, both during and post-emergency time, collective approach exercised through solidarity holds potency for better governance. It avoids the danger of limiting critical discourse, alternative ideas, innovative potential and flexibility that comes with inclusive governance systems. The pandemic should not be used as an excuse to further alienate the people from managing their affairs but as a springboard to people-driven governance in Africa.

Another danger to watch out for as the world slide through the pandemic is isolationism. Like the previous point concerned with the domestic affairs, there is a danger for international relations to further slip into a state of less cooperation and for nations to

further raise nationalistic bars post-COVID-19. Weakened international solidarity poses a grave danger to effective glocal emergency management for which the global spread of COVID-19 has demonstrated. Our conclusion in this regard is mirrored by Hartmann (2020, 3) who argue that "In times of a global epidemic, in which rapid adaptability, transparent evaluation and communication as well as informed cooperation between many social actors is required", reduction in the quality of solidarity can have a damaging effect. Importantly, for the African continent, careful evaluation needs to be done to see that measures put in place during the pandemic do not negatively affect the recent progress made to integrate economies and consolidate fraternity across the member countries of African Union. We are convinced as Rausch and Petersen (2020), that "[T]he answer to the economic distortions of the Corona crisis must therefore by no means be protectionism".

Lastly, this paper makes a case that the solidarity principle must guide the recovery plans of nations looking past COVID-19. As already pointed out in the paper, the global pandemic has not only highlighted inequalities across and within nations. It equally heightened economic exclusion with the vulnerable poor taking harder hit. This is particularly grave for many African nations who are already grappling with falling economic indices and a reduction in resources as seen in South Africa and Nigeria. In the case of the latter country, recent oil shock has further weakened fiscal ability. In these austere times, leadership can benefit from ARF and SCM. The solidarity of governments must lean on the sufferers to elevate human dignity rather than starching the limited resources away in personal private pockets.

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