

A Study of The Socio-Economic Hurdles Experienced During The COVID-19 in South Africa

Volume 7 Issue 1

(April 2025)

e-ISSN 2716-5191

doi: [10.30997/ijsr.v7i1.554](https://doi.org/10.30997/ijsr.v7i1.554)

Nzuzo Ncana¹, Simon Murote Kang'ethe¹

¹ *Department of Social Work, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha, South Africa*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 11-09-2024

Revised version received: 11-15-2024

Accepted: 04-19-2025

Available online: 04-28-2025

Keywords:

coping; COVID-19; families; pandemic; socio-economic hurdles.

How to Cite:

Ncana, N., & Kang'ethe, S. M. (2025).

A Study of The Socio-Economic Hurdles Experienced During The COVID-19 in South Africa. *Indonesian Journal of Social Research (IJSR)*, 7(1), 81-95.

<https://doi.org/10.30997/ijsr.v7i1.554>

Corresponding Author:

Nzuzo Ncana

nzuzoncana3@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The pandemic imposed a weighty socio-economic quagmire that left the residents of Joza township economically disenfranchised. The study adopted a qualitative approach and phenomenology as a specific design, with data collected from semi-structured interviews. Joza residents faced various socio-economic hurdles, which included economic decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic decline led to increased unemployment, which subjected more families to poverty. Another socio-economic hurdle that this study uncovered was the increased cost of living during the pandemic, which made many families unable to afford basic needs such as food and clothing, hence exposing many children to malnutrition. The study found that some companies resorted to retrenchments as they were not making a profit due to unfavorable economic conditions, and that led to job losses and increased crime involvement among youth. Women from previously disadvantaged communities were the most affected by the socio-economic hurdles of the COVID-19 epoch. This paper recommends that the government must increase the COVID-19 Social Relief Grant to meet the poverty line and make it permanent; the government should also strengthen support of Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) by providing more financial support to these Enterprises and encouraging them to employ youth and women. This will help reduce crime among youth and poverty among families.



Available online at <https://iojs.unida.ac.id/index.php/IJSR/>
Copyright (c) 2023 by Indonesian Journal of Social Research (IJSR)

1. Introduction

Disasters can have a profound impact on poverty and inequality. Historically, the COVID-19 corona virus surfaced in late 2019, causing a pandemic that killed many people in South Africa and leaving others devastated due to other factors such as the loss of income due to unemployment and diminished market for those who relied on vending different wares. The occurrence prompted varying social and governmental efforts to decrease transmission (Scheunemann et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected marginalized communities in ubiquitous contexts, with developing countries experiencing the worst onslaught. In South Africa, just like many other countries, a 21-day mandatory lockdown was imposed, which restricted social and economic activities, among other things. This may have helped the country prevent the virus from spreading further, particularly in townships, informal settlements, and rural regions where access to health facilities is generally limited (Iwara et al., 2020). The government's early execution of a lockdown approach aimed at minimizing virus spread and lowering infection rates was well received initially. However, when the lockdown lasted, and the effects became clear, unavoidable negative consequences developed (Ncube, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic did not come without controversies in South Africa. One of the prominent controversies was the shift in South African Twitter discourse from widespread support for lockdowns to growing dissent and anti-lockdown sentiment (Powers & Peters, 2024). The second was the controversy surrounding the AstraZeneca vaccine's rare side effects and how they could impact people in the long run. The third controversy surrounded the COVID-19 restrictions that only allowed essential workers with COVID-19 certificates to pass through certain points in mid-2021. These points included towns and healthcare facilities. The fourth controversy was about the prohibition of religious gatherings, which was strongly opposed by many religious organizations (Powers & Pieterse, 2024).

According to Scheunemann et al. (2023), the impact of the coronavirus epidemic amid an environment of limited resources in the public healthcare and social welfare systems in South Africa largely affected people's mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic posed an acute threat to the well-being of children and families due to challenges related to social disruptions, such as financial insecurity, caregiving burden, and confinement-related stress. The consequences of these difficulties were likely to be longstanding, partly because of how contextual risk permeated the structures and processes of family systems (Prime et al., 2020). The pandemic significantly disrupted higher education in South Africa, necessitating a rethinking of its approach. It provided an opportunity to address the persistent imbalances within higher education systems, which have been exacerbated by the transition to online teaching and learning (Anakpo et al., 2024).

In a study conducted by Chitiga et al. (2021), results indicated that women in South Africa, where Joza Township is situated, experienced disproportionately higher unemployment because they typically work in unskilled labor, which is concentrated in industries that were most negatively impacted by the COVID-19 response mechanisms. South Africa faced severe socio-economic challenges, which included inequality, unemployment, and poverty. The pandemic entrenched and astronomically intensified socio-economic problems in Joza Township as many people who were previously living on the periphery of poverty lost everything, including their lives, due to the pandemic (Odeku, 2021).

Mekonnen and Kassegn Amede (2022) state that food insecurity and unemployment are major issues in South Africa including Joza Township, and that these problems became worse because of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and containment efforts. This pandemic was a medical disaster that exacerbated South Africa's unemployment problem. Due to the lockdown, many people could not report for work, which increased South Africa's unemployment rate (Ranchhod & Daniels, 2020). They found that employment in South Africa had significantly decreased. Their study revealed that in April 2020, 48% of the South

African population consisted of people considered employed, a decrease from 57% in February. If workers on temporary leave were excluded, this ratio dropped to 38%. Because of this, about one in three working persons in the sample either chose not to work in April, received no compensation, or lost their jobs. This demonstrates the degree and scope of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on unemployment in South Africa (Ranchhod & Daniels, 2020). Despite starting as a health concern, COVID-19 has greatly impacted many parts of life. The epidemic has caused an unavoidable disruption in both social and economic dimensions, leading to the most significant recession since the economic crisis in the early to mid-twentieth century (Molete, 2024).

1.1. Problem Statement

The coronavirus pandemic has increased family poverty in South Africa and across Africa (Ahmed et al., 2020). Many rural homes in South Africa were left to struggle and contain the situation. As a result, they faced severe socio-economic consequences than those in metropolitan regions (Dlomo & Rogerson, 2020). During the lockdown, numerous rural residents struggled to go to health facilities. Even though the government had designated all forms of health systems, such as hospitals, clinics, and local pharmacies, as essential, allowing them to operate throughout the lockdown, the majority of them, particularly privately owned ones, were inefficient and skeptical of meeting the needs of rural residents (Iwara et al., 2020). Due to COVID-19 limits, some enterprises were obliged to lay off employees, particularly women, resulting in family impoverishment (Chitiga et al., 2021). Only businesses that provided critical essential services were permitted to operate during the lockdown in South Africa. Small business owners, particularly suppliers, ceased operations by the lockdown regulations. Savings, social grants, and donated food packs served as many families' primary means of survival (Mashiane, 2024). The following verbatim from one of the affected community members from Joza Township supports this.

Participant 10: Without the support and food I received from my family, I would not have survived this pandemic. It is difficult to rely on others for survival, but I do not have a choice.

This pandemic has increased the poverty levels of families in South Africa and on the African continent (Ahmed et al., 2020). Joza Township was not spared from this socio-economic hurdle as it is among townships severely affected by the pandemic. Cases of closed schools and shops getting vandalized and plundered were not uncommon. Some households in Joza Township experienced burglaries, which exacerbated their COVID-19 trauma (Anthony et al., 2024). Literature reveals that the majority of South Africans, as well as the entire world, have suffered immensely because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study paper, therefore, explored the socio-economic hurdles experienced during the COVID-19 epoch in Joza Township, Sarah Baartman District Municipality, South Africa

1.2. Study Aim and Objectives

This study aimed to assess the socio-economic hurdles experienced by families during the COVID-19 pandemic in Joza township.

1.3. Research Domain and Justification of Choice

This research was conducted in Joza, Grahamstown, now officially known as Makhanda. Makhanda is a city of about 140,000 people in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Historically, the layout of Makhanda was to create physical segregation based on race, with the non-white inhabitants of Grahamstown East located in the extensive townships of Joza, Tantyi, Hlalani, and Fingo, being significantly poorer than the people of Makhanda's western,

predominately white suburbs. Joza township is one of several townships surrounding Makhanda that are referred to as Rhini. The community's residents experience a dearth of basic services, inadequate housing, poor economic opportunities, and a less well-kept environment than Makhanda's wealthier, whiter, and cleaner neighborhoods.

It was therefore deemed interesting to generate the perceptions of families from such a community regarding the socio-economic hurdles they experienced during the epoch of COVID-19, especially given the adversities that these families were already exposed to before the COVID-19 pandemic. The above case was purposively selected to yield data that would allow holistic perspectives of the socio-economic hurdles that COVID-19 imposed on rural communities.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Approach

McCusker and Gunaydin (2015) state that there are three research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed, and this study used a qualitative approach. The main objective of the qualitative research approach is to comprehend the different sides of social life, and words instead of numbers are used. Interpreting and aiming at obtaining an overview insight into the feelings and outlook of life of the population under study forms the main objectives of qualitative research (Mckusker & Gunaydin, 2015). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a deeper understanding of a phenomenon than other approaches do. It allows the researcher to describe and explore events and experiences rather than making predictions (Willig, 2013). Qualitative research studies people in their communities and naturally occurring contexts. Willig (2013) asserts that qualitative research explores meanings, how people interpret the outside world, and how they perceive events.

2.2. Research Design

In concept, the research design serves as an architectural blueprint for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The qualitative paradigm, technique, and research design principles served as the foundation for this study. An exploratory and descriptive research design was used, with a case study as a specific research approach. According to Piekari and Welch (2018), a case study is an in-depth investigation of a subject or phenomenon within its context. A case could be any of the following: an individual, a group, an organization, an association, a process of change, an event, or any other occurrence. The emphasis on context in this design was a significant factor in its selection. According to Saunders et al. (2022), a case study design can generate insights from intensive and in-depth research into the study of a phenomenon in its real-life context, leading to detailed, empirical descriptions and the development of theory.

2.3. Data Collection Process

Data was collected cross-sectionally, as data was collected only once in September 2024. According to (Creswell & Poth, 2016), cross-sectional studies collect data over a single period, whereas longitudinal studies collect data from the same groups of respondents at regular intervals. A cross-sectional approach was adopted in this study as the researcher was interested in assessing the socio-economic hurdles experienced by families in Joza Township during the COVID-19 period. To put all of the participants at ease and allow them to express themselves in their native languages, the interviews were held in isiXhosa or English, depending on their preferences.

2.4. Data Collection Instrument

An interview guide with unstructured questions was used to facilitate in-depth interviews and discussions. To meet the scientific standards of validity and reliability, the instruments were evaluated and refined in a pilot study before the study started. In-depth one-on-one interviews with key informants and interviewees allowed the researcher to corroborate data while evaluating various perceptions, beliefs, and opinions about the research topic (Chivanga, 2016).

2.5. Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were employed in the study as a method of data collection. The researcher used interviews to obtain the exact descriptions of participants and their perceptions of the socio-economic hurdles caused by COVID-19. According to Quick and Hall (2015), face-to-face interaction and conversations with the population under study assist in obtaining valuable and descriptive research data.

2.6. Sample Selection Criteria

A non-probability purposeful sampling approach was used to select study participants. Using purposive sampling, the researcher chooses subjects that satisfy the requirements for the study's goals (de Vos et al., 2014). According to Creswell and Poth (2016), this sampling procedure aims not to draw statistical conclusions but to sample a group of people who will best inform the study about the research problem under investigation. In purposive sampling, the study uses discretion and knowledge of the population to select samples that match features deemed crucial for a study (Pandey et al., 2015).

2.7. Data Analysis

The research data was organized according to themes following Tesch's eight steps of qualitative data analysis as documented by Creswell (2009), who described theme analysis as a procedure that begins with verbatim transcription of audio data, followed by data pruning/cleaning, which involves removing meaningless and incoherent utterances from the transcribed data sets. The cleaned data were then exposed to a coding procedure where data were classified according to the similarities of ideas (Neuman, 2014). The codes were then turned into themes and subthemes that addressed the study's primary issues (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The research report included verbatim quotes to contextualize and expand the study's conclusions.

2.8. Ethical and Legal Requirements

Throughout this study, the ethical principles that govern all social science research were strictly followed. Particular attention was placed on ensuring that the information provided by the participants was kept confidential and that they volunteered to participate in the study after making informed decisions. Prospective participants were briefed on the study's objectives, and those who consented to participate were required to sign consent forms confirming that they agreed to do so voluntarily. The principal researcher confirmed that the university's study protocols were strictly followed. These protocols ensured that the study followed all relevant ethical, administrative, and moral requirements. The principal researcher applied for a research clearance certificate from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was duly approved. The participants' identities were concealed to maintain their anonymity. Pseudonyms were used to conceal the names of participants and the institutions or organizations to which some of them worked or were linked. Codes were allocated to retain their anonymity regarding other persons in the communities in which participants are known and conceal their identities from members of the public who read the study report.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Results

This part includes the findings regarding the attitudes, views, and insights of the ten family members who were interviewed. The heaps of raw data were organized into categories using the code approach, following the thread of the same idea. As a result, themes emerged, serving as the foundation for the study's conclusions. The first portion of the findings describes the demographic characteristics of the ten research participants.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of The Participants

NO	Pseudo names	Age	Gender	Race	Educational status	Employment status
1	Participant 1	30	F	Black	Grade 12	unemployed
2	Participant 2	29	M	Black	Grade 12	Employed
3	Participant 3	39	F	Black	Degree	Employed
4	Participant 4	48	F	Colored	Diploma	Employed
5	Participant 5	25	F	Black	Grade 12	Unemployed
6	Participant 6	45	F	coloured	Degree	Employed
7	Participant 7	38	F	White	Grade 12	Self-employed
8	Participant 8	45	M	Black	Grade 10	unemployed
9	Participant 9	26	F	Black	Grade 8	Unemployed
10	Participant 10	31	M	Black	Grade 11	Unemployed

Table 1 shows that the ages of the selected family members who were interviewed ranged from 26 to 45 years. These family members were considered mature and relevant to give information about families and their exposure to COVID-19. Many of the key informants' ages ranged from 31 to 50, and this might mean that they had ample experience profession-wise or were considered adequately knowledgeable of the phenomenon of socio-economic hurdles that the disease placed on the community.

3.1.1. Gender

Most of the stakeholders who participated were female, as only two males did, as seen in Table 1. This reflects the feminization of the responses and the feminization of some professions, such as social workers, who are more likely to be females than males. However, other careers, such as community development practitioners and community leaders, were male. The following table indicates the themes that emanated from the data analysis.

3.1.2. Educational Qualification

The participants' educational backgrounds ranged from eighth Grade to a degree. Kang’ethe and Nomngcoyiya (2014) outline that the participant's ability to provide thoughtful answers, solid judgment, and information originating from the wisdom of educated minds made their educational background crucial to this study (Kang’ethe & Nomngcoyiya, 2014). This is due to the belief that education through multiple training tiers helps people execute their work efficiently and effectively (Kang’ethe, 2015a).

3.1.3. Employment Status

Research findings indicated that a higher percentage of participants were unemployed, many of whom were still looking for work. Many selected participants were probably impoverished and depended on grants for their children and an old age pension. This pandemic increased the poverty levels of families in South Africa and the African continent in general (Ahmed et al., 2020). Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, some companies were forced to retrench their employees, especially women, which led to families' impoverishment (Chitiga et al., 2021). Therefore, their poverty might have been a sign of a lack of coping mechanisms and resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects. Since they lacked tangible means of self-support, they might have been severely impacted by COVID-19's economic effects. The COVID-19 phenomenon likely served as an indication of a possible coping deficit on account of COVID-19 (Putwain et al., 2022).

3.1.4. Marital Status

Most of the participants were single women in charge of their households. This reflected the feminization of poverty and women being left by men to run and manage households while the fathers were either working outside the town or were absent. This is also a testament to the lived reality within the South African context of marriages. Globally, marriage is declining, and this can be traced to as early as the 1940s in South Africa. Women with higher education attainment opt for a later age of marriage to establish themselves financially, gain independence, build their careers and some assets, and improve their families' living standards (Maharaj & Shangase, 2020).

3.1.5. Socio-Economic Status

The results showed that many family members relied heavily on state grants because they were unemployed, impoverished, or of low socio-economic position due to the economic decline as the COVID-19 pandemic escalated. Kawohl and Nordt (2020) agree with this and contend that this implies difficulties in coping as the nation's economy weakened because of the COVID-19 outbreak. The global COVID-19 pandemic was characterized by the adoption of severe regulations that significantly impacted the global economy, including an increase in the unemployment rate globally. The mental health, economic, and social well-being of people and communities are severely impacted by unemployment (Blustein, 2019). Between 2020 and 2021, the outbreak of COVID-19 not only hampered normal economic and social patterns but also distorted the development trajectory (Fagbemi et al., 2022).

Table 2 Table of Emergent Themes

No	Theme
1	Families struggled to cope with the economic decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2	Families barely coped with the increased cost of living
3	The economic impact of COVID-19 motivates the youths to go to criminal states.
4	Engaging in online business as a coping mechanism increased.

3.1.6. Families Struggled to Cope with the Economic Decline due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The findings of this study, as can be seen in Table 2, demonstrated that the COVID-19 outbreak had a significant detrimental ripple effect on the economy, and families struggled to cope with the poverty that came with the advent of COVID-19. During the study, some participants expressed concern about the issue of retrenchment and high unemployment rates. Retrenchments were more prevalent in the private sector. The participants expressed that more employees were retrenched from work in the government sector compared to the private

sector. Hence, this led to more families being subjected to poverty. The following are some extracts from the participants about the socio-economic hurdles people faced.

Participant 1: The COVID-19 pandemic affected us badly because afterward, we ended up losing our jobs]

Participant 2: uhmm... I do not think lockdown should have happened the way it did. It greatly affected many people, especially in specific industries where people lost their jobs. Contrastingly, some industries were not affected; for example, if you were a teacher, you would be paid your full salary.

Indeed, the impact of COVID-19 presented menacing socio-destroyed hurdles, making the lives of many people in Joza town miserable and difficult to cope with. They struggled to be resilient.

3.1.7. Families Barely Coped with The Increased Cost of Living That Came With The COVID-19 Epoch

Study findings showed that families in Joza township struggled to cope with the rising costs of living following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some participants reported that after the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of living sky-rocketed, leading to ordinary people and low-income households struggling to afford necessities such as food and clothes. This was especially harsh to those who relied on social grants, especially the R370 SRD. Some participants reported that the taxi fares had increased significantly and the food prices were unaffordable. The following excerpts support the nature of the socio-economic hurdles that COVID-19 placed on the Joza community.

Participant 9. The R 370 social relief grant is tiny, and the cost of living is too much. With that kind of money, I can't even buy food that will last for a week.

Participant 5. The social relief grant I am receiving does not even cover the full cost of food per month. The government must create jobs because we are suffering.

Participant 7. At least the government is trying to give people the R370 COVID-19 grant, but that will not last even a week.

Indeed, the advent of COVID-19 had perfidious socio-economic impacts on the Joza community, with those relying on grants barely affording to meet their basic needs.

3.1.8. The Economic Impact of COVID-19 Motivates The Youths To Go To Criminal States.

Study findings revealed an increase in youths' engagement in crime-related activities as a coping mechanism. Participants lamented the increase of youths who were involved in drugs and crime, called anaphora. The significant contributing factor to the increase in crime was attributed to high unemployment and the increasing number of youths who were abusing drugs to raise their coping mechanisms for the pandemic. The following verbatim sentiments support the finding above.

Participant 1: The poverty rates have increased significantly, and that has motivated the youth to turn to criminal activities as a coping mechanism. Indeed, the epidemic has led to high crime rates and a surge of criminals called anaphora.

Participant 3: Sir, the loss of jobs motivated many youths to turn to criminality as a coping mechanism. If people cannot put food on the table, they may be motivated to steal.

The advent of COVID-19 and the effects of economic loss due to the loss of jobs and other economic gains led to a surge of criminal activities in the township. This was to raise their coping mechanism. It was also a sign of raising their resilience to the pandemic.

3.1.9. Engaging In Online Business as A Coping Mechanism Increased

Table 2 demonstrates that another finding that emerged from the participants was using online marketing strategies and buying goods online. During the hard lockdown, especially when level four and five stages of lockdown restrictions were implemented, cases of online business engagement were reported. For example, this is what one of the participants had to say:

Participant 2: Depending on the type of work you do and the industry, some adopted an online system, which helped them to be resilient during COVID-19. People have adapted to online shopping, which is quite daunting as we are social beings. Many people were forced to do things that they would not do ordinarily.

Participant 9: We were forced to explore the online shopping option as we were afraid of being infected by the coronavirus

The discussion above demonstrates that the challenging effects of COVID-19 led to various kinds of innovation, such as people starting their businesses, like those of online platforms, as a coping mechanism and a way of increasing economic resilience.

3.2. Discussion

The selected family members who were interviewed ranged in age from 25 to 45. These family members were considered mature and relevant in giving information about families and their exposure to COVID-19. This suggests that the study's goal, which was to explore the socio-economic hurdles experienced by families, was accomplished. This group was the primary study participants, and a thorough assessment of them demonstrated that the study had the desirable qualities of reliability and trustworthiness. Furthermore, the participant's age helped ensure that the individuals who participated could provide the information necessary to address the research questions (Laher et al., 2021). The participants fully understood informed consent and were all adults with basic literacy skills (de Vos et al., 2014).

Findings indicated that most of the stakeholders' genders were female, as only two males participated. This reflects a feminization of some professions, such as social workers, who are more likely to be females than males. Wendt and Moulding (2016) agree that social work is an essentially feminine profession, and they contend that there has also been a natural alignment between feminism and much of social work throughout the past 100 years (Wendt & Moulding, 2016). The researcher thinks this was because the proportion of men and women who tested positive was comparable globally. However, men were about 60 % more likely to be severely ill or to die from complications of COVID-19 than women, and this led to women being left to take care of their families alone (Mukherjee & Pahan, 2021). Women, in general, were the most affected by the socio-economic hurdles of the COVID-19 epoch.

The participants' educational backgrounds ranged from eighth Grade to a degree. This reflected their capacity to make adequate responses. According to studies by Kang'ethe and Nomngcoyiya (2015), the participant's ability to provide thoughtful answers, solid judgment, and intuitive responses is informed by their level of education. This is due to the belief that education through multiple training tiers helps people execute their work efficiently and effectively (Kang'ethe, 2015). Research findings indicated that a higher percentage of participants were unemployed, and many were still looking for work. This reflected unemployment as a socio-economic hurdle experienced by participants. This pandemic increased the poverty levels of families in South Africa and the African continent in general

(Ahmed et al., 2020). Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, some companies were forced to retrench their employees, especially women, which led to families' impoverishment (Chitiga et al., 2021). The research findings established that some participants voiced worries about job layoffs. This worsened the already dire state of unemployment in South Africa, which existed even before the COVID-19 pandemic. This is confirmed by Francis (2020), who suggested that, in South Africa, about half of the population seeking paid employment cannot find it. The rate of layoffs was more significant in the business sector.

According to participants, there were more layoffs in the private sector than in the public sector, which led to a rise in the number of families living in poverty. This is consistent with the findings indicated by Roy (2020), who confirmed that more families are now living below the poverty datum line than before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study established that as fewer persons in most households worked during the pandemic, the families struggled to put food on the table. This is mirrored by Jain and Yuan (2020), who contend that during the height of the COVID-19 epidemic, 20–33% of those who lost their jobs ended up in poverty. However, about 20% of temporarily unemployed people received erratic poverty relief, while 33% who lost their jobs had no access to any significant social protection. Jain and Yuan (2020) further confirm that between February (pre-lockdown) and April (lockdown) of 2020, there was a 40% decrease in net active employment. This underscored that, to combat poverty, the government should foster an atmosphere encouraging investment and the development of jobs in the public and private sectors.

The rising cost of living also emerged as a socio-economic hurdle of concern. Families in Joza township struggled to cope as the cost of living sky-rocketed, making necessities for survival, such as food and clothes, unaffordable for the people. This is confirmed by Wasserman and Madrid-Morales (2022), who maintained that, in 2020, the rising housing costs, a never-ending energy problem, and sky-rocketing food prices were all part of South Africa's severe cost of living crisis. Millions of people struggled to make ends meet because of this complex economic crisis. Because of the pandemic's already severe financial strain and inability to keep up with price increases, South Africans were forced to make difficult decisions, resulting in the worst level of inflation in 13 years. Rathi et al. (2024) argued that a series of shocks contributed to the sky-rocketing of food and fuel prices, and high interest rates made it more difficult for families to pay off their home loans and other debts monthly, adding thousands to the burden.

The study found that family members could not afford bus fares as the transport fares had increased significantly and the food prices were unaffordable. Lechman (2023) agrees that following the revelation that the cost of a basic supermarket food basket had climbed by 8.3% in just a year, consumers continued to face excessive living expenses. This suggests that families struggling to afford basic food were incrementally slipping into poverty. The current study's findings noted increased crime rates amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as another socio-economic hurdle experienced by families. Participants lamented the increase of the youths who were involved in drugs and crime, called anaphora. Henrico et al. (2022) agree with this study that crime increased over the past four years and that criminal activities have increased dramatically in urban hubs where most people live and work. In terms of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown regulations on crime, this study found that lockdown escalated crimes, such as cable theft and vandalism. This is confirmed by Moyo (2020), who reported that under the national COVID-19 lockdown, copper cable thieves and vandals targeted the infrastructure of Telkom subsidiary Open Server. Further, the electricity company, Eskom, was also targeted by criminals as the lockdown continued, causing severe disruptions to the nation's electricity supply. Kendrick and Bohoslavsky (2020) agree that in South Africa, incidents of unauthorized connections and electricity vandalism increased at an unprecedented rate in the third quarter of 2023. Numerous vandalism hotspots, including Philippi and Mitchells Plain, were the locations of many reported incidents. Although illegal power

connections are an old crime, the advent of the COVID-19 environment undoubtedly increased unauthorized power connections (Kendrick & Bohoslavsky, 2020).

The findings depicted that some family members used online business marketing strategies by buying goods online during the hard lockdown, especially when level four and five stages of lockdown restrictions were implemented. Hasanat et al. (2020) agree with this and state that sales losses were largest in businesses affected by mandatory lockdowns, such as accommodation, which lost 91%, whereas online sales grew by 180%. The study also noted that some family members resorted to starting small businesses and selling products in the informal sector as a coping mechanism for socio-economic hurdles of COVID-19. They said they were engaging in this to fight unemployment, which increased significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic. This is supported by (Charan et al., 2021), who established that some family members had begun to sell goods in the unofficial market to attempt to deal with the effects of COVID-19.

These researchers recommend that the government increase the COVID-19 Social Relief Grant to meet at least the poverty line and make it permanent. The findings of this study suggested that most participants believed that the R370 COVID-19 grant was inadequate to meet even their most basic needs. According to Stats SA (2023), the monthly food poverty line was R760, with the monthly lower-bound line at R1058 and the monthly upper-bound poverty line at R1558. This proved that the current R370 for Relief of Social Distress (RSD) grant fell way below the poverty line and validated the participants' dissatisfaction. Some participants would have been willing to start small informal businesses if the R370 SRD COVID-19 grant had been increased. There was undoubtedly a desire among the youths to start small businesses. However, most youths did not have the capital to start such businesses. The government should also strengthen the support of Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) to create a conducive space for employment and possibly reduce crime among youth.

4. Conclusion

This study has shown that families in Joza township of Sarah Baartman District Municipality experienced menacing socio-economic hurdles in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because all the livelihood costs escalated amid inelastic or dwindling resources. There is a need for the government to learn from COVID-19 and the need for preparedness for any other pandemic that may come shortly. The pandemic also exposed the vulnerabilities of poverty that rural communities face. There is a need for more policy pragmatism and practice that will reduce poverty among most South Africans in rural areas. The advent of online businesses in which people were involved needs to be continued as an employment avenue. The government and other employment-supporting bodies need to launch programs to train rural communities on how to enlarge the horizons of online businesses.

References

- Ahmed, M. Z., Ahmed, O., Aibao, Z., Hanbin, S., Siyu, L., & Ahmad, A. (2020). Epidemic of COVID-19 in China and associated psychological problems. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, *51*, 102092. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102092>
- Anakpo, G., Nkungwana, S., & Mishi, S. (2024). Impact of COVID-19 on school attendance in South Africa. Analysis of sociodemographic characteristics of learners. *Heliyon*, *10*(7). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29096>

- Anthony, M. G., Hoddinott, G., Van Niekerk, M., Dewandel, I., McKenzie, C., Bekker, C., Rabie, H., Redfern, A., & van der Zalm, M. M. (2024). The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on families affected by childhood respiratory illnesses in Cape Town, South Africa. *PLOS Global Public Health*, 4(3), e0003020. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0003020>
- Charan, L. S., Gheeta, R. V., & Vishnu Priya, V. (2021). Awareness About Viral Infections and Its Prevention Among Public After Covid-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 26(02). <https://doi.org/10.47750/cibg.2020.26.02.196>
- Chitiga, M., Henseler, M., Mabugu, R. E., & Maisonnave, H. (2021). How COVID-19 pandemic worsens the economic situation of women in South Africa. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 34(3), 1627. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-021-00441-w>
- Chivanga, S. Y. (2016). Qualitative research methodology and numbers. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 47(2), 119–122. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2016.11893551>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- de Vos, A., Strydom, H., Fouché, C., & Delport, C. (2014). *Research at grass roots: A primer for the social science and human professions*. Van Schaik.
- Dlomo, T. O., & Rogerson, C. M. (2020). Tourism and Local Economic Development in King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality, South Africa: Stakeholder Perspectives. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 10(1), 145–164. <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720-92>
- Endris Mekonnen, E., & Kassegn Amede, A. (2022). Food insecurity and unemployment crisis under COVID-19: Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2045721. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2045721>
- Fagbemi, F., Osinubi, T. T., Nzeribe, G. E., & Bankole, T. O. (2022). Human capital development challenge: Why corruption eradication is a panacea in Nigeria. *Journal of Development Policy and Practice*, 7(2), 180–205. <https://doi.org/10.1177/24551333221090312>
- Francis, J. R. (2020). COVID-19: Implications for supply chain management. *Frontiers of Health Services Management*, 37(1), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.1097/hap.0000000000000092>
- Hasanat, M. W., Hoque, A., Shikha, F. A., Anwar, M., Hamid, A. B. A., & Tat, H. H. (2020). The impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on e-business in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 3(1), 85–90.
- Henrico, I., Mayoyo, N., & Mtshawu, B. (2022). Understanding crime in the context of COVID-19: The case of Saldanha Bay Municipality. *South African Crime Quarterly*, 71(1), 2–1. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2022/i71a9539>
- Iwara, I. O., Musvipwa, F., Amaechi, K. E., & Raselekoane, R. (2020). COVID-19 lockdown socio-economic challenges faced by households in rural areas: A perspective from

- Vhembe district, South Africa. *Sociološki Pregled*, 54(3), 761–798. <https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg54-27482>
- Jain, V., & Yuan, J.-M. (2020). Predictive symptoms and comorbidities for severe COVID-19 and intensive care unit admission: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Public Health*, 65, 533–546. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-020-01390-7>
- Kang'ethe, S. M. (2015). *An examination of HIV and AIDS campaign in South Africa towards eliminating stigmatisation*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09709274.2015.11906851>
- Kang'ethe, S. M., & Nomngcoyiya, T. (2014). Exploring selected cultures in mitigating an array of social vices in South Africa. A literature review. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(14), 458–464. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n14p458>
- Kang'ethe, S. M., & Nomngcoyiya, T. (2015). Exploring Underpinnings Weighing Down the Phenomenon of Adherence to Anti-Retroviral Drugs (ARVs) among the people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in South Africa and Botswana: A literature review. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 50(3), 237–243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09709274.2015.11906879>
- Kawohl, W., & Nordt, C. (2020). COVID-19, unemployment, and suicide. *The Lancet. Psychiatry*, 7(5), 389. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(20\)30141-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(20)30141-3)
- Kendrick, A., & Bohoslavsky, J. P. (2020). Austerity measures and women's social and economic rights: We need to look deeper. In *Research Handbook on International Law and Social Rights* (pp. 326–339). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788972130.00033>
- Laher, A. E., Van Rooyen, L.-R., Jawa, A., Enyuma, C. O., & Swartzberg, K. M. (2021). Compliance with hygiene practices among healthcare workers at an academic hospital emergency department. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 11(3), 352–355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2021.05.002>
- Lechman, E. (2023). Enhancing economic development through ICT-based governance: Evidence for developing countries. In *Governance in the Developing World: Transnational Insights on Economic Development* (pp. 61–86). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-2493-6_4
- Maharaj, P., & Shangase, T. (2020). Reasons for delaying marriage: Attitudes of young, educated women in South Africa. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 51(1), 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.51.1.002>
- Mashiane, K. (2024). Balancing Economic Development and Environmental Protection in South Africa: Navigating Challenges Post-COVID-19 for Sustainable Growth. *African Journal of Development Studies*, 14(3).
- McCusker, K., & Gunaydin, S. (2015). Research using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods and choice based on the research. *Perfusion*, 30(7), 537–542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267659114559116>
- Molete, T. (2024). *Analysing the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 on students in a South African University*.
- Moyo, N. (2020). Covid-19 and the future of practicum in teacher education in Zimbabwe: Rethinking the 'new normal' in quality assurance for teacher certification. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 46(4), 536–545. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2020.1802702>

- Mukherjee, S., & Pahan, K. (2021). Is COVID-19 gender-sensitive? *Journal of Neuroimmune Pharmacology*, 16, 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11481-020-09974-z>
- Ncube, M. (2024). Social development in Southern Africa in the wake of COVID-19. *Social Work*, 60(1), 16–37. <https://doi.org/10.15270/60-1-1249>
- Neuman, D. (2014). Qualitative research in educational communications and technology: A brief introduction to principles and procedures. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 26, 69–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-014-9078-x>
- Odeku, K. O. (2021). Socio-economic implications of COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 27, 1–6.
- Pandey, P., Pandey, N., Shamim, M., Srivastava, D., Dwivedi, D., Awasthi, L., & Singh, K. (2015). Molecular tools and techniques for detection and diagnosis of plant pathogens. *Recent Advances in the Diagnosis and Management of Plant Diseases*, 253–271. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-81-322-2571-3_19
- Piekkari, R., & Welch, C. (2018). The case study in management research: Beyond the positivist legacy of Eisenhardt and Yin. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods*, 345–358. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526430212.n21>
- Powers, T., & Pieterse, J. (2024). Vacillating vaccines: Responses to Covid-19 in the United States and South Africa. *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 47(1), 6–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23323256.2023.2226706>
- Prime, H., Wade, M., & Browne, D. T. (2020). Risk and resilience in family well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *American Psychologist*, 75(5), 631. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000660>
- Putwain, D. W., Wood, P., & Pekrun, R. (2022). Achievement emotions and academic achievement: Reciprocal relations and the moderating influence of academic buoyancy. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 114(1), 108. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000637>
- Quick, J., & Hall, S. (2015). Part three: The quantitative approach. *Journal of Perioperative Practice*, 25(10), 192–196. <https://doi.org/10.1177/175045891502501002>
- Ranchhod, V., & Daniels, R. C. (2020). *Labour market dynamics in South Africa in the time of COVID-19: Evidence from wave 1 of the NIDS-CRAM survey*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/saje.12283>
- Rathi, S., Majumdar, A., & Chatterjee, C. (2024). Did the COVID-19 pandemic propel usage of AI in pharmaceutical innovation? New evidence from patenting data. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 198, 122940. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.122940>
- Roy, S. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic: Impact of lockdown, contact and non-contact transmissions on infection dynamics. *MedRxiv*, 2020–04. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.04.20050328>
- Saunders, R., Buckman, J. E., Fonagy, P., & Fancourt, D. (2022). Understanding different trajectories of mental health across the general population during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Medicine*, 52(16), 4049–4057. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033291721000957>

- Scheunemann, A., Kim, A. W., Moolla, A., & Subramaney, U. (2023). Coping strategies employed by public psychiatric healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic in southern Gauteng, South Africa. *PLoS One*, 18(8), e0277392. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277392>
- Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2022). The messenger, the message, and the receiver: South African government communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. In *Manufacturing government communication on Covid-19: A comparative perspective* (pp. 319–333). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09230-5_16
- Wendt, S., & Moulding, N. (2016). *Contemporary feminisms in social work practice*. Routledge London. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315774947>
- Willig, C. (2013). *EBOOK: introducing qualitative research in psychology*. McGraw-hill education (UK). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555.n16>