

COVID-19 Pandemic Curfew Related Stresses in a Sample of Women in Kimumu Ward of Eldoret Town

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This study examined COVID-19 related stresses in Eldoret East District, Uasin Gishu County. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What is the level of stress among women in Kimumu Ward, Eldoret Town during COVID-19 pandemic curfew? (2) Is there a relationship between age and areas of stress among women during the COVID-19 curfew in Kimumu Ward, Eldoret Town? (3) Is there a relationship between level of education and stress in Kimumu Ward, Eldoret Town? (4) What are the areas of stress among women in Kimumu Ward, Eldoret Town during the COVID-19 curfew? (5) Is there a relationship between a woman's occupation and COVID-19 related stress in Kimumu Ward, Eldoret Town? The following research hypotheses were addressed: H_1 : There is a relationship between age and COVID-19 curfew related stress in a sample of women H_2 : There is a relationship between level of education and COVID-19 curfew related stress in a sample of women H_3 : There is a relationship between occupation and COVID-19 related stress in a sample of women. The study used cross-sectional survey design. The sample consisted of 50 women (25 employed and 25 self-employed) in Eldoret East. Respondents were sampled using multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a twelve item questionnaire and analysed using mean scores and standard deviations. H_{01} was tested using chi-square test, H_{02} tested using ANOVA and H_{03} tested using t-test for independent groups. The results indicated that the majority of women in Kimumu Ward had stress and anxiety that ranged from mild to moderate levels. Most women in Kimumu Ward were stressed by the following: health, workload, surroundings, time, public transport, managing children, failing to pay debt, communicating and relating to their husbands, and communicating and relating with neighbours. $H_{01}, H_{02},$ and H_{03} were rejected.

Keywords: COVID-19, curfew stress, women

Introduction

COVID -19 is an infectious disease caused by the most newly discovered Coronavirus. The new virus and disease was unknown worldwide prior to an outbreak in Wuhan China in December 2019. According to World Health organization (WHO),

an assessment was done in March 2020, which led to COVID-19 being characterized as a disease affecting all the countries in the world over therefore, it has been considered as a pandemic (WHO, 2020)

The thought of the present historical time, children, teenagers and even adults especially women had their normal daily activities of nation build-

ing running smoothly until the Kenyan government imposed some restrictions with an aim of containing the spread of the COVID-19. Such restrictions include; quarantine, partial lockdown in some regions and curfew for the whole country. This group of people had to bring themselves to accept the government's regulations and confronts the possible stress triggering events that has tremendously interfered with their lives (Satcher, Kennedy, & Evans Jr., 2020)

All the public health authorities in the world are acting around the clock to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Some of the methods employed by different countries include; lockdown, quarantine and curfew. It is possible for the techniques employed by the Kenyan government in the process of curbing the spread of the virus, to lead to accumulation of intense stress and uncertainty among the populace; the most affected groups are women. This is because violence appears to be a daily reality for them across Kenya. According to the government data prior to COVID-19 outbreak, 45% of women and girls have experienced physical violence and 14% have gone through sexual assault in various parts of the country. In different parts of the world, the regional or global nature of pandemics provide an enabling environment for violence against women, for example during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa; rape, sexual assaults and violence were among the highest cases reported (Yasmin, 2016)

A Dusk to dawn Curfew was announced in Kenya, a few days after the first case of COVID-19 related deaths was reported. This meant that movement restriction measures were put in place. Anecdotal evidence indicates that this has been particularly cruel on expectant women in need of prenatal care and due to fear of police brutality; many of these women do not seek necessary medical attention during Curfew hours and therefore suffer in silence.

Anxiety about their own mortality fears surrounded by a great deal of online articles which form the most obvious Psychological effect of COVID-

19 virus; Other effects may not be noticeable from a far but can be obtained based on earlier disasters such as floods and famine among others. An estimate of about 10% of the people who are affected by trauma causing activities progress to suffer from severe Psychological problems such as, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Effects of Curfew Related Stress

Stress has generally been viewed as a set of neurological and physiological reactions that serve as an adaptive function (Frankenhaeuser, 1994). Physiological stress is a kind of relationship between a person and the environment (Lazarus, 1960) as it is in the case of COVID-19 pandemic. The stress relationship is one that goes beyond the person's ability and the unit analysis is a continuous encounter which is evaluated by the individual affected which may involve destruction, the threat or harm, optimistic, mobilized and a yearning attitude about defeating the difficulty are generally alluded to as charge. The theory puts into consideration the fact that the way an individual assesses the inspiration will put in place the impression that comes thereafter (Sincero, 2012)

Stress is an organism's total reaction to ecological demands or pressure; expectant mothers' experience this kind of pressure especially if they go through complications during Curfew period when movement is not freely allowed. For example, a mother from Baringo had to walk for long distance to a nearby dispensary in search for Maternity Services, when she arrived at the dispensary after a long struggle she found the place locked due to curfew; this forced the woman to seek help from an old woman from a nearby village which caused her a lot of distress. Stress in this case is due to fear that she might lose her own life, putting the baby's life in danger and fear that she might be arrested for violating the curfew rules (Standard, Newspaper Team 6th April 2020).

Beginning on the first day of curfew, people trying to go back to their homes were attacked and assaulted. This unfolding of events activated a lot

of Psychological stress especially among women and girls due to fear of sexual harassment and even rape. In Uganda, a court charged a group of police officers for allegedly forcing dozens of women to rub mud on their private parts as a punishment for breaking COVID-19 curfew. This is a very serious form of inhuman activity that can lead to intense form of stress that is traumatizing (Ugandan vision newspaper 7th April, 2020)

According to Caroline Njunge, the National Council on administration of Justice (NCA) released a statement that Sexual offences had gone up drastically. This was attributed to the government's declaration of the Dusk to Dawn Curfew. The cases constituted 35.8% of the criminal matters reported within this period. The new corona virus is a biological related kind of calamity that happens instantaneously and the effect stays for a longer period of time. Some of the effects are felt through restrictions imposed by the government such as curfew which may pose both short and long term effects. An individual who is exposed to such calamities are exposed to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, insomnia and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Brooks et al., 2020).

Women, especially the expectant mothers went through a lot of challenges during the restricted period. As reported, a doctor from Kakamega hospital was called upon to carry out an emergency operation on an expectant Mother to save her life. The woman was able to get to the Hospital through the intervention of the chairman of the Community Health Volunteers after a long Struggle due to Curfew rules, on arrival to the Hospital she had lost her twin babies. This is a true indication that women are suffering and therefore stressed from the ripple effect of COVID-19. In addition, many other women in the rural areas may resort to home delivery which poses a lot of life threat and due to pressure from the uncertainty they suffer a lot of stress which may develop to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Nzioka et al, 2020).

According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey and the United Nations, about 370

Women die for every 100,000 women who give birth, these numbers could be worse due to challenges posed by COVID-19.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is described as the act of hostility against someone living in ones household especially from a close family member who is in turn, punished for making the matter known to others not involved in family affairs. According to Ken Ouko a Sociologist, the African woman has been prepared to withstand whatever comes up in their marriage. This is one of the reasons why women choose to stay in relationships that are very abusive until it is too late. In addition, domestic violence can also take place among people who are closely related which may leads to the abuse any time there is a kind of disagreement in the family and can escalate from jus a mere word of mouth and emotional abuse to physical abuse (Standard Digital Media, 2016)

Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence (GBV) is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights whose victims in most cases are women and are often left without any immediate protection when it happen. GBV is created under different revelation to cover a wider area of activities and form, it ranges from close partners hostility to act of violence carried out in online spaces. These different forms are jointly restricted and many cases of violent behavior can be happening at once and support the other.

The sense of human value and respect for women has continued to be always low due to deep-rooted Patriarchal systems and imbalanced power dynamics that restricts women from attaining their full potential in society. Needless to say, that the damages GBV victims endure are not only physical but extend to the mind and soul. It is as if they exist but no longer live, violence creates a wound that robs women of their dignity, integ-

rity and identity with life altering consequences. WHO, has acknowledged the fact COVID-19 crisis is generating a lot of stress and as a precaution cautioned people to refrain from taking too much time to follow, or even listening to news that lead to feelings of anxiety and suffering in their lives. It is true that crisis can include feeling overwhelmed, fearfulness, sadness and helplessness (Jessica M. & Harriet S., 2020)

In Kenya, gender based violence has been on the rise with 357 cases reported in the month of January 2018 alone. The up rush of violence of this magnitude is affecting the country as a whole as the violence resulting in killings of women and girls have subjugated the limelight throughout the year. What is worrying is that Kenya has tried to look into the rising cases of violence against women by putting in place laws and policies such as the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, the Marriage Act and Matrimonial Property Act however, laxity from the authorities in escalating their response to GBV as the laws does not explicitly protect women and girls against domestic violence but protects women from inhuman treatment or torture. For example, under Domestic Violence Act, the law has specific rules that guide the rights of people whose rights have been infringed into by domestic violence, protection measures and the protection procedure applicable to the putting in place such measures therefore, a domestic violence victim has the right to go to court (UAF Africa Grant making Program).

Women in the process of going about their duties can face a lot of challenges more so during this period of COVID-19 where there is fear of violating the curfew and in the process lead to intense stress. According to report by Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) the Director of Public Prosecution and the National Council on Administration of justice (NCA) sexual offences have overtaken all the crime as the country restricted movements. The closure of schools and curfew has forced millions of children to remain indoors making them vulnerable to attack. It was noted that

majority of sexual abuses were reported in Nairobi were 13, Mombasa 11 and Uasin Gishu 10 cases all these cases affected women.

According to the Cabinet Secretary of health, about 90% of gender based violence cases that are reported during this period are mainly from women while the remaining 10% are said to be from their male counterparts, (NTV, 7th May 2020).

Inhumane Degrading Treatment

According to UNFPA (2020) the toll of COVID-19 Pandemic is only beginning to take shape, but it is estimated that human cost could be extraordinary. This is because of the physical and economic disruptions caused by the disease which in the end could have vast consequences for the rights of women and girls. During curfew period, many women face a lot of violence by their husbands which has been on the increase due their husbands' loss of jobs, for example the case in Nandi County where a husband injured his wife and killed two men who tried to intervene.

Spikes in sexual violence during periods of national crisis are new in Kenya. They were also seen during 2007-2008 and 2017 Post election violence where a great deal of women suffered.

Financial and Economic Stress

Curfew psychologically affects low income earners as their stress level may increase due to reduction in income because they are unable to function fully as expected within their environment and as a result meeting daily basic needs becomes a challenge. Extended periods of stress can affect physical, mental and emotional health compounding the difficulties that many low- and moderate income communities face during troubled economic times ; it should be noted that financial instability can have on health outcomes at the individual level (Choi, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The advent of Coronavirus pandemic in the country has not only threatened to eradicate a panic-wounded people, it has equally conspired to take place at the time when there is great economic confusion in the country which has threatened to take away even the little earnings that people possess. This has led to a lot of stress which can be seen through the actions that people portray for example, In India according to Hindu Star times, 2020 some women were arrested for attacking a councillor in Mohali for not including them in the list of those from poor families so that they could benefit from ration given to the poor an event that happened during the COVID-19 curfew.

In places where lockdown is used as a way of containing the spread of the virus, disruption that lasts over a period of six months could leave a total of 47 million women in low and middle income countries unable to use contraceptives leading to a projection of about six million additional unintended pregnancies and an additional 31 million of cases of gender based violence (UNFPA, April, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic which is responsible for a serious respiratory illness in a group of people in Wuhan China; WHO was alerted in December 2019 was alerted about an unusual pneumonia which had taken the world by storm due to its effects. In Kenya, the first case of the new virus was detected in March 2020 with the initial case reported in the capital city of Nairobi. The Kenyan Government immediately initiated measures to contain the spread of the virus. Comprehensive guidelines to protect people were released and people were advised to stay at home unless it was necessary for them to go out. When two more cases were confirmed, the government closed educational institutions including schools, colleges, and universities on 15th March 2020. The numbers continued to rise. When the number of infected people reached 30 with 2 deaths, the Government imposed a nationwide dusk to dawn curfew on March 27, 2020.

A review of literature shows that no study has

been conducted to examine the COVID-19 related stresses on women. Therefore, this study examined COVID-19 related stress in women in Kimumu Ward, Moiben Sub-County.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of stress among women in Kimumu Ward during the COVID-19 pandemic curfew?
2. Is there a relationship between a woman's age and COVID-19 related stress?
3. Is there a relationship between a woman's education and COVID-19 related stress?
4. Is there a relationship between type of occupation and covid-19 curfew related stress among women?
5. What are the areas of stress for women in Kimumu Ward during COVID-19 curfew?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were addressed:

- H_1 : There is a relationship between age and COVID-19 curfew related stress among women.
- H_2 : There is a relationship between level of education and COVID-19 curfew related stress in a among women.
- H_3 : There is a relationship between a woman's occupation and COVID-19 Curfew related stress among women.

Method

Research Design

The study used cross-sectional survey design and sought to investigate COVID-19 Curfew relate stress in a sample of women in Kimumu Ward. In cross-sectional survey, the researcher measures the outcome and the exposure in the study participants at the same time. In addition, cross-sectional survey design was used to determine the prevailing characteristics for example, stress level in a sample

of women in Kimumu Ward Moiben Sub-County during this period when movement is restricted to control COVID-19 pandemic.

Sample

The sample consisted of 50 women in Kimumu Ward, Eldoret Town. The women were sampled using multi-stage sampling technique. Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage distribution of women in the sample.

Table 1
Frequency and percentage distribution of women in sample by age group

Age bracket	Number of Women	Percentage
20-29	17	34
30-39	13	26
40-49	16	32
50 and Above	4	8
Total	50	100

Instrumentation

The study used a stress and anxiety questionnaire to collect data. The questionnaire comprises a set of ten items which was formulated based on DASS-21 scale which was modified to determine stress levels in relation to COVID-19. The respondents were asked to indicate the statement that applied to them. The statements were anchored on a rating scale starting from zero where; 0= did not apply to me at all. 1= Applied to me to some degree or for a period of time. 2=Applied to me to a considerable degree. 3= Applied to me very much.

Validity

To ensure validity of the instrument, a committee of three experts in psychology was formed to judge whether the instrument was relevant to the research questions and appropriate for the respondents.

Pilot Study of the Research Instrument

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 10 women who are not part of the study, and revised after pilot-testing.

Reliability of Research Instrument Results

Twelve women who are not part of the study were asked to complete the questionnaire. The reliability of the results was assessed using split-half technique. The obtained $r=0.78$ was found appropriate.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher distributed questionnaires to women in the sample for self-administration. The researcher and her assistants used the questionnaire as an interview schedule to get data from women who could not read and write.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using mean scores, standard deviations, chi-square, ANOVA, and t-test.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are summarised in the following themes: levels of stress among women in Kimumu Ward during COVID-19 pandemic, key areas of stress among women in Kimumu Ward during COVID-19 curfew, relationship between age and areas of stress during COVID-19 curfew in Kimumu Ward, relationship between level of education and area of stress among women in Kimumu Ward, and areas of stress among women in Kimumu Ward; and tests of hypotheses.

The first research question sought to determine level of COVID-19 curfew related stress in women in Kimumu Ward. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Stress and anxiety levels among women in Kimumu Ward Eldoret Town

Stress and Anxiety Level among Women	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Normal	4	8
Mild	10	20
Moderate	26	52
Severe	10	20
	50	100

It is evident from Table 2 that the majority of the women in Kimumu Ward (52%) had moderate levels of stress and anxiety.

The second research question sought to determine the relationship between a woman’s age and COVID-19 curfew related stress.

Table 3 shows the stress scores for women of different age groups

Age groups	n	mean	Standard Deviation
20-29 years	17	20.29	4.3
30-39 years	13	22.14	2.24
40-49 years	16	22.6	2.26
50 years and above	4	20.5	5.45

Table 3
Stress scores for women of different age groups

Women in Kimumu Ward Eldoret Town are involved in different daily activities; some of them are employed while others are self employed. Occupation among this two categories studied appear to have an impact on the amount of stress faced by women those in self employment (Mean=21.80 & S. Deviation of 2.89) while those who are employed (mean=20.79 & S Deviation 2.91).

The third research question investigated the relationship between a woman’s level of education and COVID-19 curfew related stress. Table 4

shows the mean scores and standard Deviations of COVID-19 Curfew Related Stress of Women in Kimumu Ward by Level of Education.

Level of Education	n	mean	Standard Deviation
Didn’t go to school	15	22.6	2.69
Primary	11	21.18	1.40
Secondary	15	22.13	2.64
College	9	19.11	4.54

Table 4
Stress scores for women of different age groups

In Kimumu Ward, women are involved with different daily activities some of them have attained skills from different levels of education. All this have an implication on the amount of stress they go through especially during times of crisis such as during COVID-19 Curfew. Women who did go through formal education (Mean=22.6 & S. Deviation of 2.69); others only completed primary level (mean=21.18 & S Deviation 1.40); those who stopped at secondary school (mean=22.13 & S Deviation 2.64) and finally those who went through college (mean=19.11 & S Deviation 4.54).

The fourth question investigated the relationship between type of a woman’s occupation and COVID-19 curfew related stress The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Mean stress scores and standard deviations by occupation

Employment	n	mean	Standard Deviation
Self-employed	36	21.8	2.89
Employed	14	20.8	2.91

It is clear that self employed women had a higher mean stress score (21.8) than employed women.

To determine the level of stress and anxiety among women in Eldoret town, the researcher used DASS-21 stress scale which has a maximum of 42

and conclusion on stress levels was arrived at using the following table.

The fifth research question sought to determine areas of stress in women in Kimumu Ward. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6
Frequencies and percentages (in brackets) of responses of COVID-19 stress related items

Statements	DA	A	ACD	AVM
Worried about my health	8(16)	13(26)	25(50)	4(8)
Coping with workload	5(10)	8(16)	27(54)	16(32)
Nervous of the surroundings	8(16)	33(66)	4(8)	5(10)
Worried about getting late	4(8)	4(8)	21(42)	21(42)
Worried about public transport	4(8)	10(20)	16(32)	25(50)
Anxious about time	5(10)	4(8)	16(32)	25(50)
Managing older children	4(8)	8(16)	24(48)	14(28)
Worried about failing to pay debt	8(16)	21(42)	9(18)	12(24)
Communicating with and relating to my husband	8(16)	8(16)	29(58)	5(10)
Fear of travelling after 7pm	4(8)	24(48)	29(58)	12(24)
Communicating and relating with neighbours	8(16)	21(42)	12(24)	12(24)

Key: DA=did not Apply to me at all, A=Applied to me to some degree, ACD= Applied to me to a considerable degree, AVM= Applied to me very much

The study revealed that worries about getting late and public transport applied to half of the wo-

men in the sample.

Tests of Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

$H_{01} : \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 = \mu_4$ - There is no significant difference between mean COVID-19 stress related scores of women of different age groups

H_1 : Not all means are equal

Table 8 shows a summary of the results of the ANOVA test by age groups.

Table 7
ANOVA Summary

Source of Variations	Sum of Squares	df	F
Sum of squares between age groups (SSBG)	492.2	3	
Sum of Squares age Groups (SSWG)	516.69	46	14.61
Total	1008.89	49	

Since the calculated value of F (14.6) is greater than the critical value of F, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is a relationship between a woman's age and COVID-19 related stress.

H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between level of education and covid-19 curfew related stress.

Table 8
Summary of ANOVA test by level of education

Source of Variations	Sum of Squares	df	F
Sum of squares between age groups (SSBG)	76.71	3	3.07
Sum of Squares age Groups (SSWG)	383.85	46	
Total	460.56	49	

The results indicated that the calculated value is less than the critical value, therefore the researcher did not reject the null hypothesis, and concluded that there is no relationship between COVID-19 Curfew related stress and level of education among women in Kimumu Ward.

$$H_{03}: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

$$H_{a3}: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

Table 9
Mean scores, standard deviations, and t value

Employment	n	Mean	Variance	t-Value
Self employed	36	21.80	2.89	1.02
Employed	14	20.79	2.91	

Since t_{ob} (1.02) is less than t_{crit} (2.00), the null hypothesis is not rejected There is no relationship between a woman’s occupation and COVID-19 curfew related stress.

Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of the women in Kimumu Ward are suffering from COVID-19 related stresses and anxiety which ranges from mild to moderate. This means that a lot should be done to create awareness by the mental health practitioners to help in positive ways of dealing with stress and anxiety among women. Corona virus is still posing a lot of threat among women and the entire

family as a whole therefore more research should be done on the psychological impact of COVID-19 to be able to come up with more favourable coping strategies. The study also concluded that there is a relationship between age, and COVID-19 curfew related stress. The study also found that there is no relationship between level of education, and occupation and COVID-19 curfew related stress. Worries about using public transport, finance and ability to repay debts due reduced time for working are some of the things that led to the increased levels of stress among women in Kimumu Ward and its environs.

Recommendations

More appropriate measures should be carefully planned to prevent levels from escalating. This is because most of the preventive measures available only take care of the physical needs of the people. Therefore, measures that will address the psychological part should be sought after.

1. The study recommends that a support mechanism to provide adequate information to women on the best ways to deal with different areas of stress in a manner that will not endanger lives and that of their families.

2. Having carried out the study, the researcher noted that there is a relationship between age and stress areas among women therefore; there is need for Psycho-education to be able to create awareness on appropriate stress intervention strategies.

3. In order to address gender based violence, the government should put in place more strict rules that will help women deal with such cases especially during curfew period where movement is restricted and in addition there is need to provide avenues where husbands can vent out whenever they are faced with a challenge.

More studies should be carried out on effective ways of helping people in dealing with social and physical distancing which are ways used to curb the spread of COVID-19, yet can also be a source of other psychological disorders such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD).

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