Perceptions of Citizens on Government Responses to COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa

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1.0   Abstract

The study sought to interrogate people's perceptions and satisfaction level regarding the way different governments have responded to COVID-19 pandemic. The research undertaking was hinged on the general postulate that a strong policy measure that integrates social distancing, partial or total lockdown is likely to lead to lower spread and risk of infections as compared to where policy measures are not strong enough and not fully effected. Therefore, the study aimed at understanding people's satisfaction levels with the policy measures including in particular, how the economic policy options during and after the pandemic is likely to contribute to significant economic recovery outcomes for different nations. It also sought to understand recommendations that citizens would give to their governments during or after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is limited in scope and may not give conclusive opinion on the general state of affairs for the countries that participated. The survey was administered via social media. However, only 11 countries responded. Out of the 11 countries, 10 were African countries with meaningful responses emanating from Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Its therefore, emphasized that this report is a result of a quick scan survey intended to provide a general understanding and overview of the state of affairs as it relates to COVID-19 pandemic.

2.0   Introduction

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus has led to massive loss of lives and slowed down economic growth in many countries. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects global growth to slow down by 0.5% for 2020[1] . Even though African countries have acted fast to contain the spread of the pandemic, delaying the course of the virus, uncertainty about how the pandemic progresses still looms[2].

African countries have also instituted a number of policy measures to contain further spread of the pandemic including direct income support, tax breaks, food relief to groups affected, deferred interest payments as well as empowerment of local manufacturers example, those producing face masks and sanitizers[3]. There is no doubt that the lockdown will slow growth rates and cause massive unemployment[4]. For instance, out of over 440 million people, Africa formally employs a workforce number of about 140 million people – which is far less than a third of the total[5].

Thus, this means that the remaining work force, totaling to as much as 300 million people get absorbed in the informal employment. This presents huge constraints to people's income, lives and livelihoods. Indeed, the disruption of people's way of life – how they feed and provide for their families and the failure therein during this circumstantial period elicits vast degree of fear amongst citizens. Indeed, – when people's livelihoods are threatened, it creates pathological fear. It's only pertinent then that efforts to contain the spread of the virus such as instituting social distancing

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[1] African Union (2020). Impact of the Coronavirus (covid19) on the African Economy
[2] Kartik,Jayaram et al (2020).Finding Africa's Path: Shaping bold Solutions to Save Lives and Livelihoods in the Covid19 crisis
[3] African Union (2020). Impact of the Coronavirus (covid19) on the African Economy
[4] Isaac B, Israel (2020). The end of exponential growth: The Decline in the Spread of Coronavirus
[5] Kartik,Jayaram et al (2020).Finding Africa's Path: Shaping bold Solutions to Save Lives and Livelihoods in the Covid19 crisis

measures and partial or total lock-down is heightened in the hope that the virus is contained, and normal businesses resume. Unfortunately, even with widespread infections and deaths, some African countries such as Tanzania ignored this much dreaded global pandemic and continued almost like in normal life. No wonder, there has been phenomenal increase in number of infections in that country.

Therefore, it's on the basis of the above arguments that the Center for Multilateral Affairs undertook a survey targeting participants from different nationalities via social media to ask their opinion in regard to how their various governments have reacted and responded to the spread of the pandemic. The overall aim was to gain a deeper understanding on the level of perception from citizens regarding the measures instituted by their governments. The research undertaking was based on the hypothesis that where a strong policy measure instituted to contain the virus are in place, the likelihood of its spread and further infection are minimized but where measures are not undertaken or those that are instituted do not fully support the containment of the virus, its spread is likely to increase. To test this hypothesis therefore, the study sought to ask the opinion of participants in several countries. However, only 11 countries responded. Out of these, 10 were from Africa. Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe gave meaningful data relevant for this report.

We reiterate the fact that this is not a fully-fledged research undertaking, but rather a quick scan. The study is limited in scope. Out of the several nationalities to the survey, 11 countries responded with 10 of those being African countries. The research instruments were, therefore, not robust and did not employ several data collection tools but only one – the survey which was administered primarily via WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter.

3.0   Methodology
A quantitative research design was employed in this undertaking. The survey was shared on online platforms for all nationalities. However, 11 countries responded to the survey. Out of the 11 countries, 10 were from Africa. Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe were the only countries where meaningful data was generated. Data was collected through SurveyMonkey which was specifically shared on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Participants were selected randomly to participate in the survey so long as they had access to the survey link. Using desktop or laptops and or smart phones, participants were able to respond to the questions. The survey considered aspects of safety and security of users and highlighted that the results of the survey would be confidential and used only for the purposes of the research. Data generated from SurveyMonkey was further analyzed and considered for completeness using the statistical package for social scientist (SPSS) – a software program that is used for analyzing social science research.

4.0   Results
        Demographic characteristics of respondents
    a) Nationality of respondents

The respondents came from eleven (11) different countries. Out of these 10 were from Africa and one (1) was from North America. Indeed, it was only Canada that had one participant. Majority of the respondents came from Uganda accounting for 71 participants followed by Tanzania with a total number of 18 respondents. Meanwhile, Zimbabwe had 3 respondents to the survey. Therefore, Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe respectively contributed to the greatest number of respondents.

Fig: 1.1 Nationality of respondents
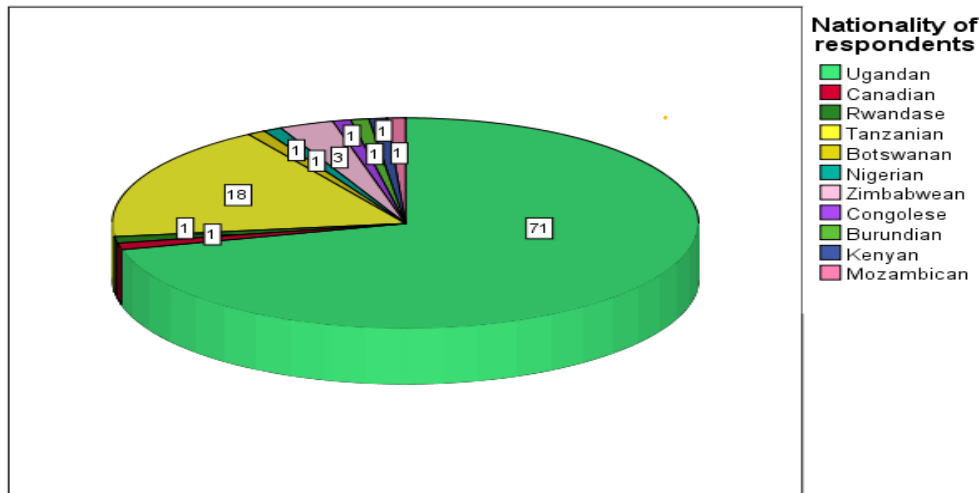
    b) Age bracket of respondents

Most respondents were youthful by the categorization of youthful bracket as popularly defined in Sub-Saharan Africa as those between 18-35 years of age. Therefore, 43 respondents fell within the age bracket of 31-40 while 42 of those respondents were within the age bracket of 18-30. Majority of the respondents were thus youthful as can be seen from the figure below.
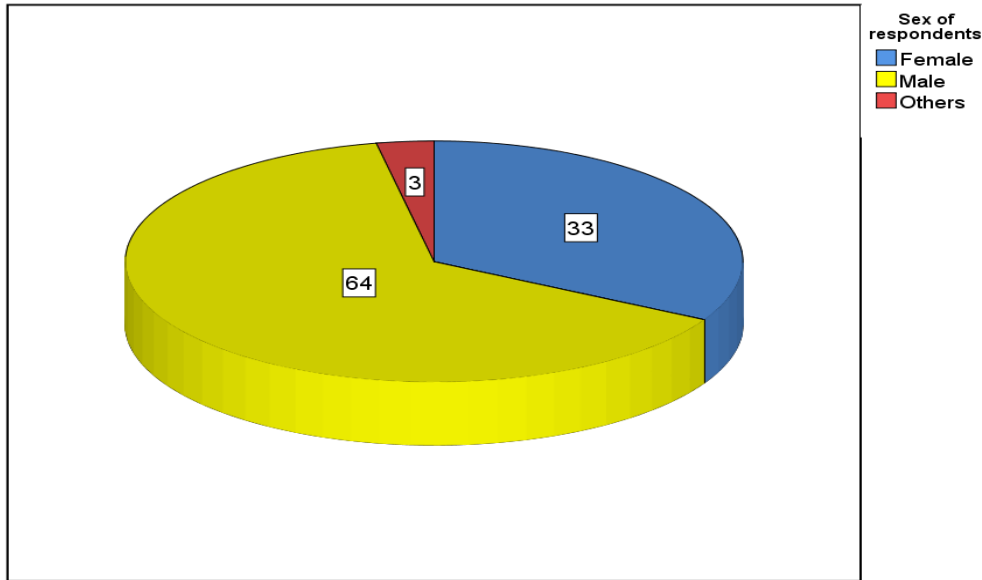
Fig: 1.2 Age of respondents.
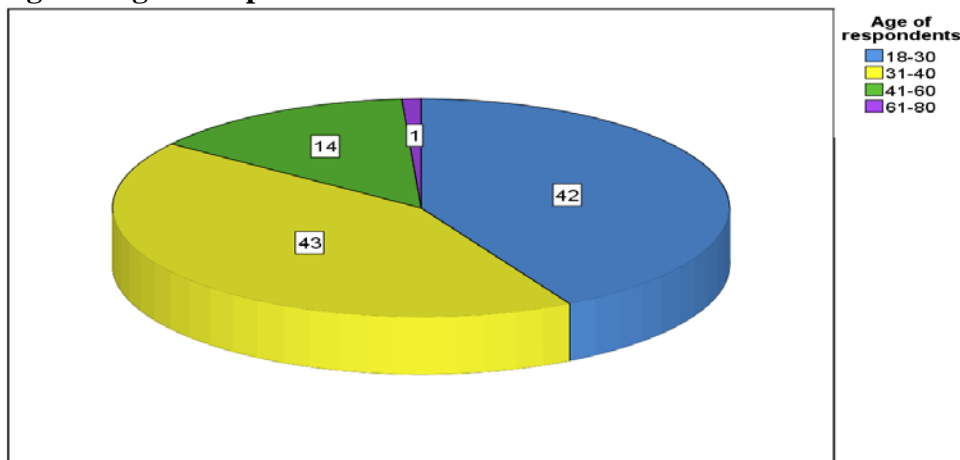
c) Sex of respondents

Majority 64 participants out of the total of 100 respondents were male while 33 participants of that total constituted female. Only 3 participants identified as transgender. The figure below further illustrates

Fig: 1.3 Sex of respondents

d) Satisfaction with the way the governments responded to address COVID-19 Pandemic

When asked if they were satisfied with the way their respective governments have responded to address the COVID-19 pandemic, 71 respondents agreed that they were satisfied with the way their governments had responded to address the pandemic while 29 respondents out of the 100 participants to the survey were not satisfied with the way their governments responded to address COVID-19 pandemic.
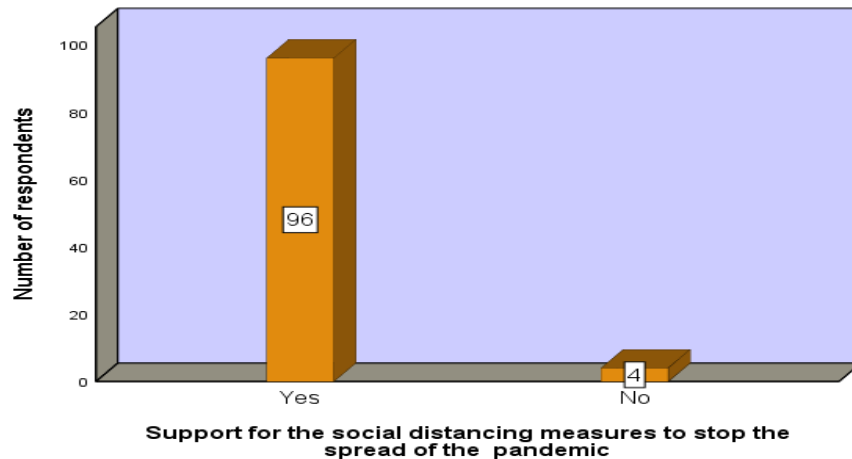
Fig: 1.4 Satisfaction with the way government responded to address pandemic
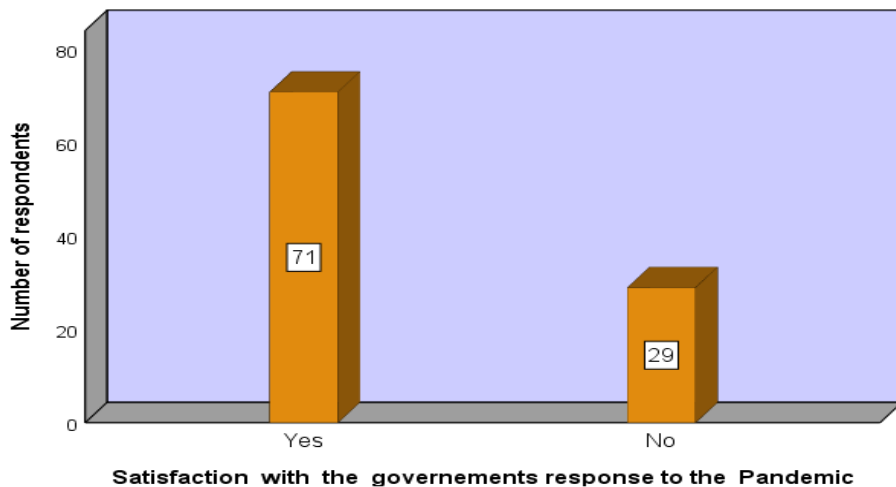
e) Support for the social distancing measures instituted or advised by governments to stop spread of COVID-19 pandemic

Majority which is actually 96 respondents out of 100 participants (supported the social distancing measures instituted or advised by their governments to stop the spread of the COVID-19 while only 4 respondents did not support the social distancing measures.

Fig: 1.5 Support for social distancing measures

f) Satisfaction with the measures set up by governments to improve the economy during and after COVID-19 pandemic

Regarding the economic measure, 65 participants out of the total number of the respondents did not believe that the measure that their respective governments had instituted would help improve the economy during and after the pandemic. Meanwhile, 35 participants of the total 100 of the respondents believed that the measures were good and sufficient.

Fig: 1.6 Satisfaction by measures to improve the economy
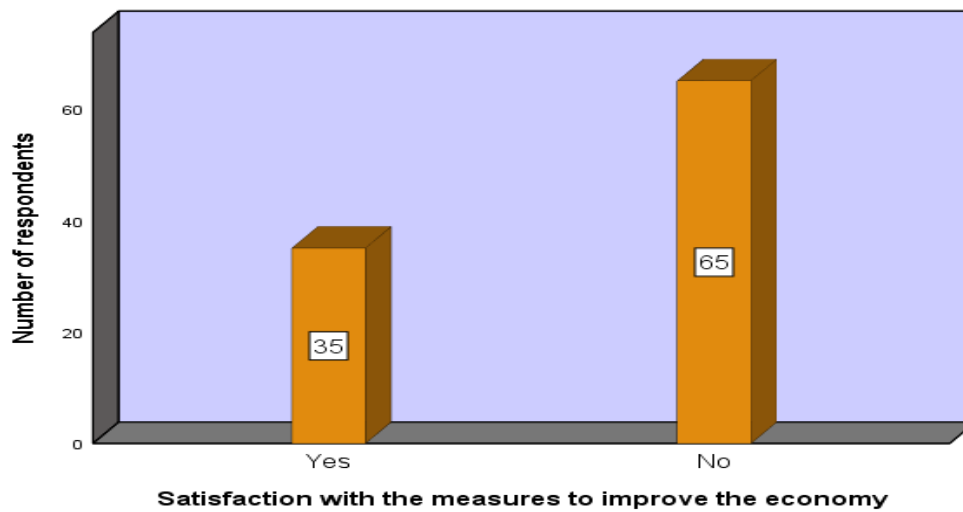
g) **Nationality of respondents and satisfaction with the way governments responded to address COVID-19 pandemic**
   ***Crosstabulation**

To determine satisfaction rates on the way their various governments responded to address the COVID-19 pandemic, 71 respondents from Uganda (100%) agreed that they are satisfied with the way their government have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic while 18 respondents from Tanzania (100%) disagreed and were not satisfied by the way their government responded to the pandemic. Other countries that were not satisfied with the way their governments have responded to the pandemic include Zimbabwe with respondents (100%) followed by countries such as Botswana, Nigeria, DRC Republic, Burundi. Kenya, Rwanda and Canada in that corresponding order as indicated on the subsequent table.

Table 1.7 Satisfaction with government response to address the pandemic

Nationality	Satisfaction with governments response to the pandemic		Total
	Yes	No	Total
Ugandan	71	0	71
Canadian	0	1	1
Rwandese	0	1	1
Tanzanian	0	18	18
Botswanan	0	1	1
Nigerian	0	1	1
Zimbabwean	0	3	3
Congolese	0	1	1
Burundian	0	1	1
Kenyan	0	1	1
Mozambican	0	1	1
Total	**71**	**29**	**100**

h) **Nationality of respondents and support for social distancing measures instituted or advised by governments to stop spread of COVID-19 pandemic**
   * Crosstabulation

Out of the total participants in the survey, 71 of those from Uganda who responded said they support the social distancing measures in Uganda. Meanwhile, 18 participants from Tanzania – also support the social distancing measures. This same trend was seen in Zimbabwe where 3 participants in Zimbabwe support the social distancing measures. Respondents from Canada (1), Burundi (1), Kenya (1) and Mozambique (1) did not support the social distancing measures as illustrated on the subsequent table.

Table: 1.8 Support for social distancing measures

Nationality	Support for the social distancing measures		Total
	Yes	No	Total
Ugandan	71	0	71
Canadian	0	1	1
Rwandese	1	0	1
Tanzanian	18	0	18

Botswanan	1	0	1
Nigerian	1	0	1
Zimbabwean	3	0	3
Congolese	1	0	1
Burundian	0	1	1
Kenyan	0	1	1
Mozambican	0	1	1
Total	**96**	**4**	**100**

i) **Nationality of respondents and satisfaction with measures set up by governments to improve the economy during and after COVID-19 pandemic**
*Crosstabulation

In Uganda, only 35 (49%) participants out of the total 71 participants were satisfied with the economic measures set up by the Ugandan government while 36 (51%) of the all Ugandan respondents were not satisfied. Meanwhile, of the 18 respondents from Tanzania all, meaning 100%, were not satisfied with the economic measures taken by the government of Tanzania. In Zimbabwe, 3 respondents were not satisfied with the economic measures set up by the Zimbabwean government. While respondents from Rwanda (1), Kenya (1), Canada (1Burundi (1), Botswana (1) and Zimbabwe where not satisfied as illustrated on the subsequent table.

Table:1.9 Satisfaction with economic measures

Nationality	Satisfaction with the economic measures set up		Total
	Yes	No	
Ugandan	35	36	71
Canadian	0	1	1
Rwandese	0	1	1
Tanzanian	0	18	18
Botswanan	0	1	1
Nigerian	0	1	1
Zimbabwean	0	3	3
Congolese	0	1	1
Burundian	0	1	1
Kenyan	0	1	1
Mozambican	0	1	1
Total	**35**	**65**	**100**

j) **Age of respondents and satisfaction with the way governments responded to address COVID-19 pandemic**
*Crosstabulation

The table below shows the age brackets of the different participants and the satisfaction with the way governments responded to address COVID-19 pandemic. It's clear that out of 71 respondents who are satisfied with the way the government responded ,42 respondents constituting 59 percent of the total responses of 71 are within the age bracket of 18-30 followed by 29 respondents constituting 41 percent of 71 respondents were between the age bracket of 31-40 and no one out of those who said yes was between the age bracket of 41-60 and 61-80 respectively .

On the hand other, out of the 29 respondents who are not satisfied with the government responses, no one was between the age bracket of 18-30 while 14 constituting 48 percent of those who are not satisfied were between the age bracket of 31-40 followed by 14 also between the age bracket of 41-60 Meanwhile, only 1 respondent was between the age bracket of 61-80 as shown in the subsequent illustration.

Table: 1.10 Satisfaction with government response to pandemic

	Satisfaction with government response to pandemic		
Age of respondents	Yes	No	**Total**
18-30	42	0	42
31-40	29	14	43
41-60	0	14	14
61-80	0	1	1
Total	**71**	**29**	**100**

k) Age of respondents and support for social distancing measures instituted or advised by governments to stop spread of COVID-19 pandemic
*Crosstabulation

From the table below, out of the 96 respondents who supported the social distancing measures instituted or advised by their governments to stop the spread of COVID-19 pandemic,42 respondents constituting 44 percent were between the age bracket of 18-30 followed by 43 respondents constituting 45 percent are between the age bracket of 31-40 while 10 respondents constituting 10 percent are between the age bracket of 41-60 and only 1 respondent constituting 1 percent of those supported the measure was between the age bracket of 61-80 years respectively. It can be seen that those within the age bracket of 31-40 took a slight edge over those within the bracket of 18-30. The table below illustrates it further.

Table: 1.11 Support for social distancing measures

	Support for social distancing measures instituted		
Age of the respondents	Yes	No	Total
18-30	42	0	42
31-40	43	0	43
41-60	10	4	14
61-80	1	0	1
Total	**96**	**4**	**100**

l) Age of respondents and satisfaction with measures set up by governments to improve the economy during and after COVID-19 pandemic
*Crosstabulation

The table below also illustrate the way different age groups responded to the survey. Asked if they were satisfied with the measures their governments have instituted to address the economy during and after the pandemic, 43 (66%) participants of those who said no are within the age group of

31-40 were not satisfied, while 35(100%) participants of the age groups (18-30) were satisfied. However, 7(11%) participants of those same age groups were not satisfied. The rest is illustrated in table below.

Table: 1.12 Satisfaction with measures to improve the economy

Age of respondents	Satisfaction with the economic measures set up		Total
	Yes	No	
18-30	35	7	42
31-40	0	43	43
41-60	0	14	14
61-80	0	1	1
Total	**35**	**65**	**100**

   m) Sex of respondents and satisfaction with the way governments responded to address COVID-19 pandemic
   *Crosstabulation

Below shows that 33(46%) participants out of the 71 who said yes are female. While 38(53%) respondents out of the total of 71 who said yes are males. On the other hand, a total of 26 (89%) respondents out of 29 who said no are males while 3 (11%) who identified as other types of sex groups out of the 29 respondents said no or are not satisfied with the government response.

Table: 1.13 Satisfaction with government response to the pandemic

Sex of respondents	Satisfaction with government response to the pandemic		Total
	Yes	No	
Female	33	0	33
Male	38	26	64
Others	0	3	3
Total	**71**	**29**	**100**

   n) Sex of respondents and support for social distancing measures instituted or advised by governments to stop spread of COVID-19 pandemic
   *Crosstabulation

Regarding the social distancing measures, all the female respondents to the survey supported social distancing measures. Also 62 (65%) male respondents out of 96 respondents supported while 2(50%) of did not. Table below further shows

Table: 1.14 Support for social distancing measures

Sex of respondents	Support for the social distancing measures		Total
	Yes	No	Total
Female	33	0	33
Male	62	2	64
Others	1	2	3
Total	**96**	**4**	**100**

o) **Sex of respondents and satisfaction with the measures set up by governments to improve the economy during and after COVID-19 pandemic**
    *Crosstabulation

The table below further illustrates the satisfaction levels in the way government instituted measures to support the economy during and after the pandemic. Its disaggregated by sex.

Table: 1.15 Satisfaction with measures to improve the economy

Sex of respondents	Satisfaction with the economic measures set up		
	Yes	No	Total
Female	33	0	33
Male	2	62	64
Others	0	3	3
Total	**35**	**65**	**100**

p) **Recommendations by Respondents**

Participants were asked to give recommendations to their governments. There were several recommendations proposed. Most people repeatedly mention issues critical to their own governments while others simply commended their governments. These recommendations were clustered under five distinct roles of governments. It was classified without any order or relevance of importance. The different roles of government and its interpretation is based on understanding of the research team as reflected by responses participants gave in this regard. They are not conventional definitions and interpretation within the context of this study. These roles are 1) maintaining social order 2) providing public service 3) guaranteeing national security and establishment of laws. Recommendations with similar context to the roles were thus placed according to these roles. The Table below further illustrates.

Table: 1.16 Showing recommendations to governments

Uganda	Mentions	Tanzania	Mentions
Maintaining Social Order		**Maintaining Social Order**	
* Economic policies to support local manufacturers and produce locally, tax incentives and boosting local economy is key	7	*maintain strict social distancing measures and stop movements	5
*Focus energies on health sector	6	*stop church services	4
* Handle corruption in the processes... for example MPs stole 10 Billion Uganda Shillings	3	*lower prices of essential goods and services	3
* extend two more weeks of the lockdown	3	*reduce internet cost for more access	2
*bridge the increasing gap between the rich and the poor	2	*Am advice my government to employ more doctors and nurses for development of good health	3
		*Lower food prices	2
Providing public service		**Providing public service**	
*improve health	6	* To put more efforts on community awareness about issues related with corona virus disease	2
* poor families in the rural areas who should be considered for the food distribution	3	*Bring awareness on COVID19 especially in rural areas	2
* Give low income, day to day, and seasonal workers more relief	3	*lower cost of electricity	1
* Ugandan government should scrap of OTT to enable people access internet	3		
* should put into considerations how women are affected	1		
National Security		**National Security**	
* totally closed down the borders, because it's now the trailer drivers who are bringing in	5	*The Government is needed to stop travel from one region to another in order to stop spread of Covid19 pandemic disease,	4
* Put tight measures and deployments at the border and facilitate more medical supplies	2	*The government must stop all travels in and outside of our regions. Also, people must stay in their homes as a command from the government	4
Establishing Laws		**Establishing Laws**	
*slow down the lock down	1	**n/a**	
*extend the lockdown and curfew	1		
*pay rent and loans	1		
Other recommendations		**Other recommendations**	
*focus on economy	7	*Leaders should behave more responsibly and not present themselves before their people as careless leader	2

*Don't give MPs money	5	*Insist her people to keep on praying to God so that our almighty God who hears, will stop this terrible situation and rescue her people from the virus!!	1
*conduct massive sensitization	1		

5.0   Discussion of findings

There are major findings emanating from this quick scan research undertaking. First, all participants from Uganda – constituting nearly 100% of total respondents in that country is satisfied with the measures their government generally took to respond to the pandemic. Meanwhile, Tanzania with all of its respondents – also constituting 100% of respondents in that country were not satisfied with the measure.

Secondly, when it comes to social distancing measures, while Uganda has implemented quite a robust social distancing measures and all 100% of the total respondents in that country were satisfied with the way their government handle it, Tanzania on the other hand did not implement a very clear and consistent social distancing measures apart from closing all educational facilities. Yet all the participants from Tanzania – constituting 100% of the total respondents in that country supported the social distancing measures. The interpretation drawn from it is that, whereas the government of Tanzania did not implement these measures quiet robustly, Tanzanians in principle, support it – as advanced by the World Health Organization (WHO) and indeed, perhaps would desire their government to implement the measures.

Similarly, it's interesting to note that the youthful groups – largely 65 participants out of the total number of participants did not support the economic measures instituted by their various governments. While the youthful groups between the age brackets (18-30) had 35 of the respondents saying they were satisfied with the economic measures, 43 of those in the age brackets (31-40) said they were not satisfied with the economic policy measures in their own country. This is important because, the youth which constitutes the biggest majority of unemployed nationals in countries like Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe are not only concerned about the political leadership and governance architecture of their own nations but how such governance translates into economic well-being of themselves and every citizen. Therefore, the issue of economic performance is significant for youth and countries should deeply engage the youthful population in the way their economic destinies (of their polities) are determined just like they do with their political governance – by way of elections and or voting of their leaders.

Generally, those that identify themselves as females seems to be satisfied with the social distancing measures, the economic policy measures and the general way their governments have responded to the pandemic compared to the male counterparts. Perhaps, the female counterparts are quite positive about the state of affairs and optimistic that measures – whether deemed sufficient or insufficient depending on interpretations that are undertaken by their respective governments is likely to yield positive outcomes. While women are key actors in decision making as far as elections and or choosing their leaders are concerned, perhaps women are keen to observe efforts their leaders employ to address difficult circumstances. Their male counterparts, on the other hand

perhaps due to their natural, cultural as well as patriarchal mindsets sees such scenarios as an opportunity to assert their voice and authority – whether in physical or other forms, no wonder, the male youth are very active in their political decision making process in terms of physical engagements example, during elections and or via protests and demonstrations.

Furthermore, the findings from this research undertaking is significant in several other ways and can be interpreted from different dimensions or perspectives. First, it helps to justify to a larger extent the central argument under which this research was hypothesized. That, where there is high degree of social distancing measures instituted by the government – including partial or total lockdown, the degree to which the pandemic is likely to spread and to cause further infections are mitigated.

The above is reflective in the case of Uganda. For instance, the Ugandan government shut down its boarders for all passenger planes, maintained fairly strict quarantine procedures, conducted massive testing of both citizens under quarantine and those that were close contacts. The result is that, unlike neighboring countries, Uganda has seen a steady and slow increase in the numbers of people infected with the virus. In fact, most of the recent increases in the country are attributed to truck drivers from foreign countries like Tanzania and Kenya delivering cargo. This explains why perhaps, 100% of Ugandans supported the lockdown.

Table 1.17 Shows recent coronavirus situation in Uganda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe

Source: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/
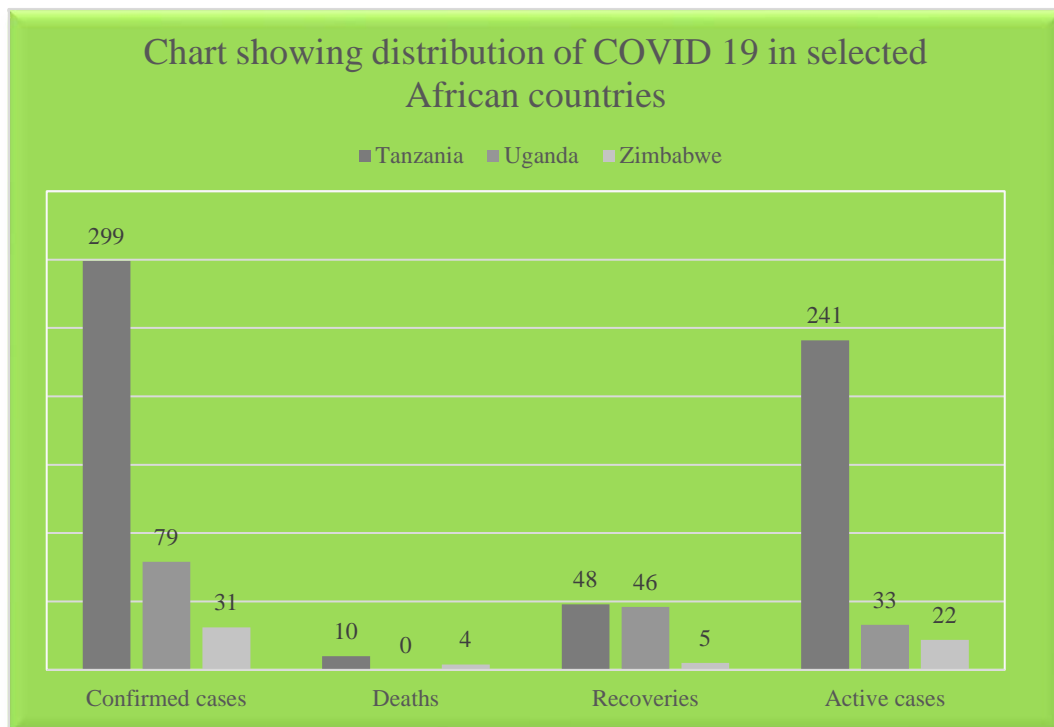
Tanzania for instance did not lock down apart from closing educational institutions and continue with business as usual. However, of late Tanzania has seen a surge in infection rates jumping up to over 299 with over 84 infections registered in a single day. This also explains why largely all respondents from Tanzania were not satisfied with the social distancing measures instituted by their government. Important to note though, is that Tanzanians in principle support the social distancing measures and would love their government to effect it even though, at the moment – this is not the case. Other countries that are not supporting of the social distancing measures by their governments include Kenya, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While it's possible that the Tanzanian government implemented measures due to fear of jeopardizing the economy, the approach is likely to cause sever risks of infections and loss of lives in the country. The African Union protocol on SARS illness and influenza like illness surveillance for COVID-19 2020 advisory recommends that African governments should adopt measures with care so that they do not cause sever negative impact on the social wellbeing and economic progress with a growing economy. Its plausible to argue that, Tanzanian President, John Pombe Magufuli could have adhered to such policy advise or so to say. But to say that the President of Tanzania is playing politics as the country draws to close of general elections is even more disheartening to the ears of Tanzanian citizens. Pauline Kerr et all (2003) argues that the impacts of pandemics such as COVID-19 affects substantially the quality of people's lives and their destinies which are and cannot be quantifiable by national decision makers who unfortunately, prefer to securitize or exert control over crisis and contingencies by reshaping their parameters and approaches in line with their own preferred concepts or vision or the "national interest"[6].

Last but not least, participants gave various but very important recommendations to their governments. Findings shows that people are more concerned about their health (health sector) as well as the economy. In addition, countries that are seeing new surge in infections due to drivers from neighboring countries testing positive of the virus has been a huge concern to participants especially those from Uganda who have urged their governments to strictly handle and block drivers from neighboring countries entering Uganda. Social distancing measures such as avoidance of mass gatherings example churches were a huge concern to participants from Tanzania.

Conclusion
This study recommends future in-depth research to focus on the implications of lock-down to economy, health and wellbeing of citizens. We recommend governments to adhere to citizen views – perhaps listen by gathering opinions of their citizens on how to handle the pandemic. This is because it seems there is a strong difference in opinions in the way government acts and people's opinions. Since this study was a quick scan, we implore future research to that seek to gain an understanding regarding differences in opinions that may arise between urban and rural areas as far as COVID-19 pandemic is concerned.

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