



## AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE NON-COMPLIANCE TO COVID-19 PREVENTION AND CONTAINMENT PROTOCOLS IN MASVINGO URBAN (ZIMBABWE)

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### ABSTRACT

*This study sought to assess the factors that influence non-compliance to COVID-19 prevention, containment and management protocols in Masvingo Urban. The study was prompted by an observed gross breach of measures put in place by the Government of Zimbabwe to prevent and contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus without regard to the significant raise in the number of reported cases of infections in the country, the region and the world at large. The study used a descriptive design narrative and a qualitative discourse. The descriptive survey design was preferred for its suitability and simplicity as well as its focus on analyzing data gathered for purpose of describing attitudes and behaviours that influence and shape how the population under study feel and understand things around them. The data for the study, particularly the overt breaches of measures put in place to prevent and contain the spread of Covid-19 were gathered through observation. Interviews were used to explore possible factors that contributed to non-compliance to Covid-19 prevention and containment measures. While observation was for all and sundry, interviews targeted a total sample of thirty-five respondents made up of five (5) respondents drawn from revealers, vendors, public transporters, operators of small and medium enterprises, the clergymen and opposition politicians/civic activists. These groups were considered as the mirror of the population under study. The study revealed that the residents of Masvingo Urban were breaching Covid-19 prevention and containment protocols due to a multiple of factors. Economic hardships were an underlying cause for breach of the procedures among people from all walks of life and the small and medium business community. Other notable contributing factors included misinformation, psycho-social and mythical factors, religious and cultural factors, political and administrative factors. The study primarily recommends that the government should ease restrictions for all business sectors but set strict operating procedures which if breached, calls for heavy penalties including complete withdrawal of trading license. The transport sector should be opened up for more but regulated players to reduce shortage. This will fix the problem of overloading and overcrowding at waiting points. Targeted enforcement of restrictions must be adopted mounting pressure on business operators and public transporters to become positive conduits to enforce critical procedures such as putting on face masks through 'no face mask, no service campaign'. Peddling and vending by individuals in the central business district must be indiscriminately banned to avoid unnecessary crowds. There is need for the National Covid-19 Taskforce to intensify provision of Covid-19 related information, educating the general public as well as creating discussion forums to deal with misinformation and covid-19 myths. Finally, political parties and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches must be encouraged work in their own areas hand in glove with government to ensure that they do not misguide the people on the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.*

**Key words:** Coronavirus, COVID-19, Preventive and Containment Measures, Lockdown Restrictions

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## INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 is real and surging cases of its menace have been reported worldwide. Globally, by the 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2020, confirmed cases stood at **62 875 460** confirmed infections and **1 461 763** confirmed fatalities (WHO <https://covid19.who.int>). Zimbabwe has not been spared. According to statistics by the Ministry of Health and Child Care (<https://www.mohcc.gov.zw/index>) by the same date, 30 November 2020, Zimbabwe's figures stood at **10 034** confirmed infections and **277** confirmed death. All the ten provinces of Zimbabwe have reported cases of corona virus infections. The detailed statistics are tabulated below.

**Table 1.1: Confirmed Covid-19 cases in Zimbabwe**

Province	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov
Bulawayo	5	12	18	58		1 274	1 447	1 656	2 306
Harare	2	19	81	213		2 532	3 252	3 327	3 393
Manicaland	0	0	9	29		376	478	526	564
Midlands	0	0	9	55		535	591	686	843
Mash. Central	0	0	9	10		144	205	209	240
Mash. East	0	5	3	49		348	391	414	493
Mash. West	0	3	6	37		239	331	352	489
Masvingo	0	0	27	53		212	231	240	317
Mat. South	0	0	16	54		638	777	804	1 030
Mat. North	1	1	3	16		114	135	153	359
<b>Cumulative Case Load</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>3 169</b>	<b>6 412</b>	<b>7 838</b>	<b>8 367</b>	<b>10 034</b>
<b>Monthly Case Load</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>2 595</b>	<b>3 243</b>	<b>1 426</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>1 667</b>
<b>Cumulative Fatalities</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>277</b>

**Source:** Ministry of Health and Child Care – Zimbabwe

Most Covid-19 cures developed are still under various of testing and the few that have been approved for possible distribution are beyond the reach of generality of the population in terms of both cost and availability. Under such a scenario, people are safe only if they avoid contracting the virus. The World Health Organization (WHO) has put in place some prevention, containment and management protocols to help curb the spread of the virus (<http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>). The protocols are centered on social distancing and avoidance of any form of physical contact such as handshaking and hugging, face masking, testing and screening and practicing good hand hygiene. The effectiveness of the set protocols is a collective responsibility of all people. It is however, concerning that many people and service providers in Masvingo urban are not following the set prevention and management protocols meant to reduce the exposure to the risk of contracting and spreading the coronavirus.

On 30 March 2020, the Government of Zimbabwe, through Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020 on Public Health (Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown), set a cocktail of measures in line with WHO protocols to be followed by citizens to curb the spread of the virus. On inception and up to the month of June 2020, the measures were satisfactorily enforced and adherence was high among the generality of the people. During the period from March 2020 to June 2020, the month on month case load was generally low and according to the Ministry of Health and Child Care, over 90% of the reported cases related to Quarantine Centers opened for Zimbabweans returning from foreign countries. The infection rate suddenly swelled in July 2020 (Table 1.1 above refers). The month on month case load jumped from a mere **396** to **2 595** cases. The sharp

turn was not only in the numbers but also in the proportion of locally transmitted infections which according to the Ministry of Health and Child Care, had now surpassed imported cases. July 2020, was a month when complacency among citizens crept. It is also the month in which the highest number of people ever in the history of Zimbabwe were arrested. According to statistics by the Zimbabwe Republic Police, between 30 March 2020 and 31 July 2020, over **105 000** people were arrested for violating Covid-19 restrictions – eighty-seven percent (87%) being arrests made in the month of July. The massive arrests represent non-compliance to regulations in worrisome proportions. Non-compliance to Covid-19 preventive measures is suicidal considering that some patients may go without showing any symptoms of sickness and may thus spread the virus unassumingly.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite the fact that the reported cases of Covid-19 infections and fatalities are surging and that the search for a cure is yet to produce a sustainable solution, people defy effective preventive measures put in place to protect them from contracting the virus. They brazenly indulge in risky behaviours which expose them and other innocent souls to the pandemic. The study sought to assess the factors that promote the risk taking behaviours by the people in Masvingo Urban who openly go against Covid-19 restrictions put in place to curb or prevent the spread of the virus.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To assess the people's awareness of the Covid-19 prevention, containment and management protocols.
- To explore the common forms of breach of the Covid-19 prevention, containment and management protocols.
- To evaluate the factors contributing to the breach of Covid-19 prevention, containment and management protocols.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- To what extent are the people informed of the Covid-19 prevention, containment and management protocols.
- In what ways are the Covid-19 prevention, containment and management protocols breached?
- What factors influence the breach of Covid-19 prevention, containment and management protocols.

The study is meant to benefit policy makers and other stakeholders to understand the behaviours and concerns of the public in times of crisis for decision making and development of appropriate intervention strategies,

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Dealing with a communicable or infectious disease such as Covid-19 has proved difficult. In areas where it has not been well managed, the disease has spread like wild fire and become tragic. Unlike the SARS-CoV experienced and easily contained in 2002-2003, SARS-CoV-2 or Covid-19 has proved to be highly infectious and more life threatening hence has been declared a pandemic. Its containment has become a collective responsibility for all and sundry under the guidance of the World Health Organization (WHO). The basic and cost effective WHO strategy to fight infectious diseases is prevention and containment of transmission. In line with this strategy, WHO developed a cocktail of measures that all countries must cautiously follow in all their day to day general lives and activities (<http://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>). The WHO packet

comprises general and sector specific Covid-19 prevention measures. The general measures are centered on the following critical social principles;

- One must wear a face mask or screen whenever in public places.
- Always keep a distance of at least one meter away from others, especially those not from the same household with you.
- Avoid large gatherings and social events or any congested areas.
- Avoid physical contact (kissing, hugging, handshakes) with anyone who is sick or has symptoms, a stranger, anyone not living in the same household with you.
- Avoid sharing stuff.
- Practice good hand hygiene – through frequent wash with soap or using 70% - alcohol bases sanitizers.
- Avoid frequently touched surfaces or objects and if you have to, disinfect first.
- Avoid bank notes in public circulation and use plastic money.
- Avoid unnecessary travel – stay at home and stay safe.

### **Corroborating COVID-19 Prevention, Containment Measures Set by Government of Zimbabwe**

At local level, the Government of Zimbabwe, through Statutory Instrument 83 of 2020 on Public Health (Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Treatment) (National Lockdown), set a cocktail of measures in line with WHO protocols to be followed by citizens to curb the spread of the virus. The statute adopted all the universal measures by WHO as highlighted above and went on to impose further measures outlined below;

- Restricting people's movement to within five kilometers radius and only to access basics otherwise one had to stay at home.
- Decongesting central business districts by restricting the follow of people into town.
- Regulating and monitoring public transport to ensure that carrying capacity that allowed social distancing were adopted. Only the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO) has to provide public transport in urban centers.
- Regulating business operating hours through imposition of curfews.
- Streamlining business operations to providers of essential goods and services.
- Banning the selling of imported second used clothes and other suspicious items.
- Restricting vending to designated places with hygiene facilities.
- Criminalizing movement in public space without putting on a face mask.
- Banning social, religious and political gatherings or restricting number of people that can meet at a time and under strict adherence to WHO preventive measures.
- Ensuring that all businesses that operated provided hand washing facilities or sanitizers and had infra-red thermometers to screen clients and employees for Covid-19 symptoms

### **Why is it Important to Follow the Set Prevention and Containment Measures?**

According to Iftikhar, (2020) and Harvard University- Medical (2020) concur that strict adherence to measures is paramount because of the following reasons;

- One can carry Covid-19 until they fully recover without symptoms at all and unknowingly transmit to unsuspecting others. It must be understood that a person without symptoms can have the same viral load with one that has severe symptoms.

- Those that develop symptoms later may start spreading before they realize that they have been infected. This is possible because Covid-19 has a longer incubation time than the coronaviruses experienced before.
- SARS-CoV-2 can stay alive for up to 72 hours on surfaces hence exposure to deposit and collection risk is high if such surfaces are not frequently disinfected.

Historically, reports and papers on epidemic and influenza that affected England and Wales between 1889 to 1892 put together by Eyre and Spottiswoode (1983) share similar experiences.

### **Enforcement Strategies**

By nature, the general guidelines by the WHO appear largely to be social and quite difficult to criminalize and enforce through court systems – example maintaining social distance and practicing good hand hygiene. All what is required is instilling a sense of responsibility through clear understanding that by taking up the measures, one protects himself and others around him. From a social point of view, the most effective way to enforce the preventive measures is to educate and persuade the people to accept responsibility to play a role in containing the pandemic. However, making people understand may take more time than is necessary when dealing with issues of urgency. Throughout the world, once Covid-19 was declared a pandemic, countries mostly relied on decrees and use of security agents to enforce restrictive measures adopted.

### **Possible Factors that Contribute to Non-Compliance**

People do not exist in isolation. They are an active part of the environment in which they exist. Their interaction with surroundings and circumstances shape most of their behaviours and how they respond to challenges they face. From a sociological perspective factors such as fatigue, political strain, religious injunctions, economic deprivation, change of social structure, and misinformation may cause people to misbehave in the face of a challenging and life threatening situation brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

#### Political and Civic Activists

According to Carr Center for Human Rights (2020), political and civic activists have great influence on how people relate with the government. Their primary aim is to provoke authority and sway public opinion on important matters. They usually look for opportunities to expose government on slightest of shortcomings. All activists by nature are merchants of change. As advocates of rebellion they usually arouse the masses to claim rights denied. By virtue of holding a different view with the government, the opposition politicians are not short of '**how things could have been done better**'. It is not unusual that people who follow activists end up disrespecting set rules, procedures, policies and statutes.

#### Religious Beliefs

The power of religion to influence people should not be under estimated. It involves indoctrination and brainwashing. Beliefs are stronger than logic and reason. The believers are known for following without question. The founders of different Church Organizations impose doctrine to be followed by congregants. If the statutes and restrictions set by government are incompatible with church doctrine, congregants usually go with their doctrine. There could be a possibility that the Covid-19 restrictions, just like any other laws, may cross doctrine of various churches.

#### Economic Factors.

Economic deprivation or hardship push individual to act in a certain way. The United Nations Development Programme (2020), posits that economic hardship induced by COVID-19 pandemic has seen an escalation in numbers of people pushed into poverty worldwide and is fast becoming a bigger threat than the pandemic itself. In the face of

hunger and starvation, people easily surrender their pride and dignity and risk their lives. Any rules that do not fully consider the economic welfare of the vulnerable has potential to generate discontent and conflict. Thus if Covid-19 restrictions are viewed as disabling the people economically and exposing them to poverty, they may be disregarded.

#### Cultural / Social structures

These encompass traditions, norms and values. Rules that disconnect people and isolate them from their loved ones are not easily acceptable, for example social distancing and lockdown / restriction in homes. Change of social order in general has an impact on lives. People can only adapt gradually but some take longer to change their mindset hence some form of resistance should be expected.

#### Psychological and Informational Factors

Birch, (2020), gives insights on psychological and informational factors as possible causes of defiance to social order. These encompass perceptions, attitudes, peer influences, etcetera. All these are shaped by the amount and quality of guidance available to individuals. The same views are supported by Hager et al (2020) who emphasize the effect of knowledge, attitude and perception towards coronavirus in defining how people behave. Lack of information or misinformation affects not only the decisions people make but also the way they react to threats and challenges. It is very important for individuals to first accept that they are in problem in order for them to cooperate and frankly support the initiatives to solve the problem. When people are in denial, whatever prescriptions you make for them would not make sense. For example, lower Covid-19 statistics reported in Zimbabwe compared to its neighbour, South Africa may be misinterpreted if not well explained in context. Birch (2020) observes that;

- Defying guidance make people feel that they are in control of their lives
- Fear can cause people to experience denial and if not addressed the affected may end up behaving against the norms.
- Lack of personal connection with friends and loved ones makes life feel empty and unreal.
- Mixed messages from influential people causes confusion

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a descriptive survey design coupled with a qualitative approach. The descriptive survey method was preferred for its flexibility in allowing the researcher to interact with respondents in a natural and unobtrusive manner thus experiencing reality in how respondents view things. The descriptive survey also allows focused analysis of data gathered for purpose of describing attitudes and behaviours that influence and shape the feelings and understanding of the population under study. Cooper and Schindler, (2014) note that the descriptive study has the power to describe the phenomena / characteristics associated with the subject population as well discovering the association between variables of interest. The descriptive survey was also found handy because it allows and emphasises the use of multiple qualitative techniques such as comparing and contrasting, measurement, classification and evaluation. Cooper and Schindler, (2014) observe that understanding different meanings that people place on their experiences require qualitative research techniques that delve deeply into people's hidden interpretations, understandings and motivations.

The data for the study was mainly collected through observation, use of questionnaires and interviews to ensure triangulation of techniques. The targeted population were all students enrolled with the Zimbabwe open university Masvingo Regional Campus across all programmes on offer and levels.

The study used convenient stratified random sampling to come up with five (5) respondents drawn from revealers, vendors, public transporters, operators of small and medium enterprises, the clergymen and opposition politicians/civic activists. This gave a total sample of thirty-five respondents who were interviewed on the causes of breach of set Covid-19 prevention measures. Data on the common behaviours and practices that were inconsistent with set covid-19 prevention and management measures associated with the population under study were gathered through observation using the WHO and Zimbabwe statutory restrictions as baseline checklist. Observation was preferred to play the central role in this study for its advantage of providing natural and unbiased results as people behave their usual if they are not aware that they are under scrutiny (Cooper and Schindler, (2014)

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Common Forms of Breach of Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Management Protocols.

Using the WHO guidelines and Zimbabwe statutory restrictions as the basis for compliance measurement, some gross violations of the Covid-19 prevention, containment and management measures were observed and tabulated in table 1.2 below;

**Table 1.2: Common Forms of Breach of Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Management Regulation**

COVID-19 Measures Check List		Observed Gaps / Breaches in Implementation
1	Face masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-standard masks</li> <li>• Dirty and hazardous masks</li> <li>• Improper adornment of masks,</li> <li>• Exchanging of masks,</li> <li>• Removing of masks at the slightest opportunity in public spaces,</li> <li>• Increasing number of people that have discarded the use of face masks</li> <li>• Only putting masks at entrance point to be allowed to pass through.</li> </ul>
2	Social / physical distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to maintain social distance in shops banks, churches as well as in public spaces.</li> <li>• Markets and other spaces not adequately decongested</li> <li>• Handshakes, touching, hugging, and other bodily contact going on</li> </ul>
	Provision of appropriate protective gowns and gloves for Officers responsible for screening and sanitizing customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officers responsible for screening and sanitizing customers not provided with gowns and gloves at most shops.</li> <li>• Employees at some shops sharing protective a few pairs of equipment available.</li> </ul>
	Operating Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal traders and churches operating at undesignated places without ablution facilities and hand washing facilities.</li> <li>• Money changers operating at entrance points of supermarkets, restaurants, food courts, etc., overcrowding the places in the process.</li> <li>• Money changers operating in the supermarkets – looking for customers right in the supermarket congesting the shoppers' space.</li> </ul>

	Operating Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operating hours not respected. Shops and churches opening earlier and closing well after the stipulated closing time.</li> <li>• Speculations are rife that security details on patrol are bribed by the business community who breach curfew.</li> </ul>
	Business activities that violate key preventive measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saloons and beauty parlors have been allowed to operate despite that social distancing and avoidance of physical contact is impossible.</li> </ul>
	Lack of enforcement by the police -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zimbabwe Republic Police Officers on patrol ignoring people in breach sighting overwhelming numbers in comparison to officers deployed</li> <li>• Municipal Police overwhelmed by the number of vendors operating in every corner of the city</li> </ul>
	Restrictions on numbers for social and other events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social gatherings, church services and political meetings have been restricted to between 50 and 100 people but these numbers are not adhered to. People continue to gather in hundreds as if nothing has happened.</li> </ul>
	Hand washing stations Hand sanitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People ignoring the procedure even when washing points are established.</li> <li>• Customers dodging hand sanitization and screening.</li> <li>• Shop operators and churches not enforcing good hand hygiene even when facilities are available.</li> <li>• Use of sub – standard sanitizers.</li> <li>• Shop operators and churches totally disregarding the requirement to provide suitable hand hygiene facilities.</li> </ul>
	Screening of visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers or congregants deliberately not screened</li> <li>• Customers or congregants sneaking in</li> <li>• Shop operators and churches not enforcing screening though facilities are available.</li> <li>• Main entrance not manned all day at some shops.</li> </ul>
17	Sharing of materials, equipment, eating utensils, linen, clothing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregants, revelers sharing contagious stuff.</li> </ul>
20	Refuse disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refuse disposed in public spaces</li> <li>• No covered bins at convenient places in individual classrooms.</li> </ul>
25	Transporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overcrowding at pick up points especially after working hours</li> <li>• Buses overloading</li> <li>• Bus crew not enforcing wearing of masks</li> <li>• No hand sanitizers provided</li> <li>• No disinfection of frequently touched surfaces in buses</li> <li>• No screening of passengers at all.</li> </ul>
36	Overcrowding in public places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bus terminus, supermarkets, banks bottle stores, churches sometimes overcrowded</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

*Source: Original Data from Observation*

### **Factors Contributing to Breach of Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Management Protocols.**

For easy assessment of the reasons preferred for the violation of the Covid-19 preventive and containment measures, responses were first sorted according to the section of society affected and then further classified for modelling purpose.



### **Responses from Revelers**

Five (5) unsuspecting revealers were interviewed. They admitted that some of their behaviours were outside the acceptable range in an environment threatened with Covid-19. They however, had reasons as to why they inconsistently comply to the preventive and containment measures set by government. Tabulated in Table 1.3 below are the reasons yielded by the interview;

**Table1.3: Reasons Why Revelers Violate Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Management Measures**

<b>Excuses Raised</b>	<b>Number Reasoning (n=5)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Need to be with family and friends socializing	5	100
Desire for leisure and sports	3	60
Getting used to the threat of contracting the virus	2	40
Covid-19 is a disease for those who live in the cold environments.	1	20
Covid-19 kills only those with underlying medical conditions.	3	60
Covid-19 does not kill those who take alcohol	3	60
Partying and boozing is being done even in countries with high infection rates.	3	60
We are not aware of some of the regulations	1	20
Restricted physical contact like shake hands with the bereaved relatives is not in line with 'our' and traditions.	2	40
If you do not attend family gatherings, you are either too proud of yourself or you are an outcast.	2	40
There is no harm in sharing stuff with friends/relative.	2	40

*Source: Original Data for Interviews*

The results above strongly suggest that restrictions put in place have divided family and friends to levels that are intolerable as all revelers (100%) indicated that they breach the preventive measures and risk their lives for the sake of being with friends and family. The other reasons raised by 60% of revelers suggest that psychologically, Covid-19 has gradually been accepted as fate and myth has strengthened that state of mind. About 40 % of the respondents are heavy entrenched in cultural beliefs and values and these values take precedence of any circumstances.

### **Vendors**

The vendors that participated in the study were fully aware of their breach of Covid-19 preventive and containment measures. The Reasons advanced in defense of their indiscipline are summarized in table 1.4 below;

**Table1.4: Reasons Why Vendors Violate Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Management Measures**

<b>Excuses Raised</b>	<b>Number Reasoning (n=5)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Queuing for commodities in short supply and other services	5	100
Need to hustle around to meet family financial needs – we can't stay at home without anyone putting food on our table.	5	100
Lack of financial resources to secure PPE and to provide mobile facilities for refuse disposal, hand washing / sanitizers etc.	5	100

Restructuring of the informal sector done to decongest public market places by reducing official stalls leaving others without places from where to do business has thrown us everywhere on the streets.	4	80
Restructuring of the informal sector has seen market stalls relocated to places with better water and sanitation facilities but 'inconvenient' for the customers. Threat of non-viability has resulted in the vendors going back to cleared spaces where they conveniently meet their clients.	3	60
Getting used to the threat of contracting the virus	5	100

*Source: Original Data for Interviews*

The reasons advanced showed how badly the vendors were economically pressed. This confirmed that economic hardships were a serious underlying cause for non-compliance with the smart restrictions. The vendors cannot afford to stay away from the people who propel their livelihood. They keep with the crowds risking their lives. What they earn could also be marginal that they cannot spare much for proper personal protective equipment. They also showed that they have accepted and are now ready to live with the threats of Covid-19. The acceptance has given them a false hope of safety to the extent that some no longer see need for personal protective equipment such as face masks. The views of the vendors may also be a mirror of many other unemployed people grappling to make ends meet in an economy that has +/- 90% unemployment rate.

#### **Small and Medium Enterprises**

**Table 1.5: Reasons Why Small and Medium Enterprises Violate Covid-19 Prevention, Containment and Management Measures**

<b>Excuses Raised</b>	<b>Number Reasoning (n=5)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Short operating business hours. The inflow of last minute customers brings temptation to extend operations into prohibited hours.	5	100
Meeting Covid-19 prevention requirements such as hand sanitizers increasing business running costs.	2	40
Need to meet fixed operating costs such as rentals which are paid even when business is closed has caused an attempt on banned activities	3	60
Some customers do not want to follow set procedures like sanitizing hands or have their temperature taken so they are left alone otherwise they move to the next shop where they are treated as they like.	4	80

*Source: Original Data for Interviews*

#### **Opposition Politicians and Other Civic Activists**

This group was a bit elusive in that they did not see themselves in as contributing to the problem but as mere advocates for better arrangements to be made for the voiceless and downtrodden. They raised the following challenges as promoters of public discontent.

**Table 1.6: Reasons Why Opposition Politicians and Other Activists Violate Covid-19 Prevention and Containment Measures.**

<b>Challenges Raised</b>	<b>Number Reasoning (n=5)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
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Selective application of the restrictions to curtail opposition activities (Rallies and demonstrations organized by opposition parties are not cleared by police while those by the ruling party are cleared)	5	100
There restrictions are meant to silence the discerning voices as peaceful demonstrations even under strict Covid-19 monitoring have been outlawed.	5	100
Covid-19 aid is distributed on partisan lines. There is no reprieve for the known opposition voices so have to risk and do whatever they can to survive.	5	100

*Source: Original Data for Interviews*

There was consensus among the opposition activists that the Covid-19 restrictions were stumbling on other fundamental rights of the ordinary citizens such as expressing their discontent through demonstrations. Whether this view is meant to justify their interventions and relevance or otherwise, there was an element of their influence in some defiance overtures by the people who follow them.

#### **Public Transporters and Passengers**

Operators and passengers that participated were in common agreement that the operating standards in this sector were no longer in tandem with the general Covid-19 prevention measures. Given in table 1.7 below were the main reasons given for the fall in standards.

**Table 1.7: Reasons why Transporters violate Covid-19 prevention, containment and management Measures**

<b>Excuses Raised</b>	<b>Number Reasoning (n=5)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Restructuring of the public transport sector has shut out private players who now operate against the laws.	5	100
Transport shortage during pick hours leads to overload and overcrowding at the bus terminus.	5	100
Complacency on the part of bus crew to enforce the wearing of masks	5	100
Passengers willingly accepting overload and failing to cooperate with the bus crew on adherence to preventive measures.	5	100

*Source: Original Data for Interviews*

There was concurrence that the restructuring in the transport sector by government has brought in bus-fare stabilization but at the same time creating artificial shortage of service providers. This has motivated non-compliance through overloading and the participation by unauthorized commuter bus operators. Competition from unauthorized operators has brought down all operating standards that the government had in mind when they centralized provision of public transport in urban centers under the Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO).

#### **Religious Groups**

The five (5) clergymen interviewed showed that they were aware of the omissions they were committing in their daily operations. Tabulated in table 1.8 below are the reasons they proffered for the omissions.

**Table 1.8: Reasons why Religious Groups violate Covid-19 prevention, containment and management Measures**

<b>Excuses Raised</b>	<b>Number Reasoning</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
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	(n=5)	
Do not believe in putting on face masks.	2	40
Believe that use of alcohol based sanitizers is unholy.	2	40
Believe that God protects His own.	5	100
Generally, earthly restrictions on the Church are anti – Christ	2	40
Splitting of the congregants into smaller groups to decongest the church, is time consuming and tedious the for priest.	3	60
Stopping the elderly, and children from coming to church is discriminatory – God is for all.	4	80
The church is there to care for the sick, hence discouraging those with underlying conditions to attend church erodes their hope.	5	100
If congregants are not constantly met, some of them may be lost forever.	4	80
Churches survive on financial contributions from followers. If they stay at home nothing may come to the church.	5	100

*Source: Original Data for Interviews*

All the clergymen are afraid of losing their followers hence the need to keep in touch through gatherings. The Church leaders also need to keep their followers closer for financial reasons. The older the congregants the stronger the faith thus the elderly refuse to stay away from their church. The church is believed to deliver the sick hence the sickling defy separation from the church. The deep split/division of the clergymen on issues to do with the use of face masks and alcohol based sanitizers confirmed that not all that is emphasized by the various churches has to do with Christ but is all about doctrine. Religious leaders sometimes force their own personal beliefs on their followers.

A closer look at the excuses or reasons raised by the various community groups above for violating/breaching the measures that can prevent or contain coronavirus have traces to the state of the mind, economic deprivation, informational gaps, belief in certain norms and values as well as infringement of rights of association and other freedoms. The analyzed factors above can therefore be fitted into five (5) generalized classes stated below;

- Psycho – social and mythical factors,
- Economic factors,
- Political and administrative factors,
- Religious and cultural beliefs
- Informational gaps.

Accordingly, Table 1.9 below shows the reclassification the factors that causes breach of Covid-19 prevention and containment regulations in Masvingo Urban as revealed by this study.

**Table 1.9: Broad Classification of the Factors that Contributed to the Breach of Covid-19 Prevention and Containment Regulations in Masvingo Urban.**

Classification of Factors.	Itemized Factors / Causes Raised
Psycho - socio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Need to be with family and friends socializing</li> <li>○ Desire for leisure and sports</li> <li>○ Getting used to the threat of contracting the virus</li> <li>○ Misinformation</li> </ul>
Mythical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Covid-19 is a disease for those who live in the cold environments.</li> <li>○ Covid-19 kills only those with underlying medical conditions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Does not affect those who consume alcohol</li> </ul>
Informational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of information or misinterpretation of given information, misinformation.</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Queuing for commodities in short supply and other services</li> <li>○ Need to hustle around to meet family financial needs</li> <li>○ Lack of financial resources to secure PPE</li> </ul>
- Individuals	
- Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Short operating hours for business and vendors</li> <li>○ Meeting Covid-19 prevention requirements such as hand sanitizers increasing business running costs.</li> <li>○ Need to meet fixed operating costs such as rentals which are paid even when business is closed.</li> <li>○ Restructuring of the informal sector has decongested public market places by reducing official stalls leaving others without places from where to do business hence they now operate anywhere on the streets</li> <li>○ Market stall relocation to inconvenient and nonviable locations has resulted in the vendors going back to cleared spaces where they conveniently meet their clients.</li> <li>○ Restructuring of the public transport sector has shutout private players who now operate against the laws.</li> <li>○ Some customers do not want to follow set procedures like sanitizing hands or have their temperature taken so they are left alone otherwise they move to the next shop where they are treated as they like.</li> </ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Selective application of the restrictions to curtail opposition activities (Rallies and demonstrations organized by opposition parties are not cleared by police while those by the ruling party are cleared)</li> <li>○ The restrictions are meant to silence the discerning voices.</li> <li>○ Covid-19 aid is distributed on partisan lines. There is no reprieve for the known opposition voices so have to risk and do whatever they can to survive.</li> </ul>
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Centralization of public transport services</li> <li>○ Laxity of law enforcement agency</li> <li>○ Lack of information</li> </ul>
Religious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do not belief in putting on face masks</li> <li>○ Believe that use of alcohol based sanitizers is unholy</li> <li>○ Believe that God protects His own</li> <li>○ Generally, earthly restrictions on the Church are ant – Christ</li> </ul>
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Restricted physical contact like shake hands with the bereaved relatives is not in line with ‘our’ and traditions.</li> <li>○ If you do not attend family gatherings, you are either too proud of yourself or you are an outcast.</li> <li>○ The is no harm in sharing stuff with friends/relative</li> </ul>

Source: Original Data for Interviews

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the residents of Masvingo Urban were breaching Covid-19 prevention and containment protocols due to a multiple of factors. Economic hardships were an underlying cause for breach of the procedures among people from all walks of life and the small and medium business community. Other notable contributing factors

included misinformation, psycho-social and mythical factors, religious and cultural factors, political and administrative factors

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above findings and conclusions, the study recommends that;

- The government should ease restrictions for all business sectors but set strict operating procedures which if breached, calls for heavy penalties including complete withdrawal of trading license. This eliminates illegal trading.
- The transport sector should be opened up for more but regulated players to reduce shortage. Strict operating procedures including mounting of various police check points on major central business district access roads should be introduced.
- To decongest local passenger waiting points, the municipality must establish additional pick up points designated for different suburbs during rush hours.
- Enforcement of restrictions must be strengthened by considering options like targeting enforcement focal points such as business shops and public transporters. The targeted inspection allows enforcement agents to deal with manageable numbers. If pressure is put on business shop operators and public transporters, they will in turn successfully implement simple but critical procedures such as ‘no face mask, no service rule’ thereby automatically putting members of the public to order.
- Vending should be restricted to designated points. Peddling and vending by individuals in the central business district must be indiscriminately banned to avoid unnecessary crowds. Persistent raids on defaulters over a few days can send a very clear message on this issue and yield the desired compliance.
- Members of the public must be encouraged to move around with their own sanitizers especially when visiting public markets.
- There is need for the National Covid-19 Taskforce to intensify provision of Covid-19 related information, educating the general public as well as creating discussion forums to deal with misinformation and covid-19 myths.
- Political parties and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches must stop pursuing their selfish agendas and work in their own areas hand in glove with government to ensure that they do not misguide the people on the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

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