

Multidimensional Challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte City Administration, Oromia, Western Ethiopia: A Preliminary Study

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ABSTRACT

Over the last four years, the challenges of COVID-19 on numerous aspects of human life have engrossed the attention of academic literatures as challenges of COVID-19 are intricate. Particularly, special consideration of literatures in the area vis-à-vis many-sided challenges of COVID-19 is tremendously increasing during this neo COVID-19 time. Thus, this study was conducted to ascertain multidimensional challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration, Oromia regional state, western Ethiopia. To triumph objectives of the study, qualitative study was designed and employed, and data was pursued from focus group discussion (FDG) and in-depth interview (IDI). By means of thematic analysis, the study found that COVID-19 is imposing magnificent economic, social, cultural, and institutional quality contests in the study area. The finding of the study also revealed that disintegrating challenges of COVID-19 are hardly possible as the pandemic challenges are all multifaceted in nature. The policy implication is that nations need to plan multi-layered plan in the response measures to neo COVID-19. This is since injecting one side of the economy alone hardly combats the challenge as the problem is complicated. It follows that all economic, social, institutional quality and cultural scars that COVID-19 put should be taken into consideration when responding to the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19; Multidimensional; Challenges; Nekemete City

Introduction

Since the emergence of COVID-19 in 2019 and its declaration as pandemic on March 11, 2020, the challenges of the pandemic have addressed almost all corners of the world. The hit of COVID-19 was harder especially in developing countries. The battle against COVID-19 is also very challenging in such a region. Unquestionably, COVID-19 pandemic imposed greater arrest developing countries compared to developed nations of the world [1,2]. Regarding the current global status of COVID-19, there are still increasing confirmed cases as evidenced by the World Health Organization. For instance, as of 14 February 2023, there have been 756,135,075 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,841,152 deaths along with a total of 13,168,935,724 vaccine doses have been administered as of 30 January 2023. It follows that the challenges of the COVID-19 is continuing at the global level. The total vaccine dose utilized internationally was reported to be 13,168,935,724 [3].

In Africa, although lesser COVID-19 related death is registered than expected the challenges of COVID-19 in many aspects is heavier in Africa compared to other parts of the world. As of the second week of February 2023, new confirmed cases in Africa were found to be 11,979,753 while registered confirmed death of 254,66. Of the total vaccine doses administered globally, only 746.9 million doses were administered in the African continent. Very recently, as of 12 February 2023, only 28.2 percent of African population is fully vaccinated out of 1.4 billion African populations [4]. The world health organization data shows that there is huge gap between low- and high-income countries on the globe. Africa's case disparity is unique. While only 23.1 percent of people have been fully vaccinated in low-income countries, 74.9 percent of population in high income countries was fully vaccinated indicating huge disparity across the countries based on their economy [5]. Coming to Ethiopia, as of this February 15, 2023, the registered COVID-19 confirmed cases were found to be

499,794 with confirmed deaths of 7,572. The unique issue regarding COVID-19 in Ethiopia is the huge number of recoveries found to be 487,016 [6,7].

Several studies have been conducted on the challenges of COVID-19 in Ethiopia. For instance, Abagero, et al. [8] investigated challenges in the response of COVID-19 in Ethiopia. From the systematic review conducted, their study found that COVID-19 resulted in shortage of different health facilities due to acute shortage in the financial resources in organizations. Wondimu & Girma conducted a review of literature with the objectives of identifying challenges and opportunities of COVID-19 in Ethiopia. Their study found the challenges of COVID-19 in terms of health sector service distortion, slowdowns in economic activities and interruptions in social activities that include social life in general [9]. Mulu, et al. [10] examined challenges of the COVID-19 regarding its testing in Africa giving focus to Ethiopian case. The study found that the COVID-19 is posing a great challenge on the world economy, society and politics. Their study emphasized the challenge of COVID-19 in public sector organizations. The study found that the challenge of COVID-19 on economy is multidimensional and needs to be further investigated.

Gudina, et al. [11] argued that the COVID-19 challenges identified previously were not that robust due to the challenges that were imposed on scientific research during the pandemic. For instance, some data collection methods during the COVID-19 lockdown were impossible. This adversely affected the findings of the studies conducted during the initial phases of COVID-19 responses. Shimels [12] studied the challenges of COVID-19 in health facilities of Addis Ababa with the focus of bringing the ideas of the trend analysis in his study. From the mixed study method utilized, the study found that there is difference in capacity of the health care facilities in Addis Ababa. It follows that the health institutions facility was found to be one of the main challenges imposed by COVID-19. Thus, the distortion in service delivery points was sharply affected by COVID-19 in the city. Nigussie [13] examined the challenges of COVID-19 during the intervention in Northern Ethiopia. His study found that huge challenges are imposed by COVID-19. The issue is that culture of the society which is cooperatively living together is a major challenge. People culturally demand less physical distancing issues. Market places are also part of the area from where limited physical distancing was observed.

Farnoosh, et al. [14] found that COVID-19 is imposing large challenges on the economy of the globe. Further, their study argued that the challenges of COVID-19 got more emphasis in developing countries while the opportunity of the pandemic is the major focus areas of the pandemic around the globe. Pak, et al. [15] investigated economic consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak with the main objectives of identifying the needs of preparation in preventing and responding to it. Their study found that the all-rounded challenges of COVID-19 will last long and do not end in a short period of time. This is because it is multidimensional and a little bit complicated. It is a challenge that

affects economy and society. Ayana, et al. [16] investigated economic consequences of COVID-19 in western Ethiopia with the main objectives of identifying some challenges and opportunities. From the descriptive analysis employed in the study, their study found that COVID-19 affected the economic activities in western Ethiopia. Further, the finding of their study revealed that the greater challenge of COVID-19 was imposed on daily laborers.

Notwithstanding plenty of literatures that investigated the challenges of COVID-19 in different aspects in Ethiopia, the studies that investigated multidimensional challenges of COVID-19 remain limited. Moreover, except the study of Ayana, et al. [16] who investigated the economic impact of COVID-19 in western Ethiopia, other studies were restricted to a single dimension of COVID-19 challenges. Furthermore, to my best knowledge there is no study that explored multidimensional challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration, western Ethiopia. Thus, study focuses on the multidimensional challenges of COVID-19 in Western Ethiopia to fill this gap. The current study is dissimilar from the preceding study in three ways. First, it considers challenges of COVID-19 from a multidimensional perspective. Considering the challenges of COVID-19 from one dimension does not provide a full picture of the pandemic impact. This makes the present study unique from the past. Secondly, this study employed qualitative data analysis while previous studies were mainly used systematic literature review. Thirdly, this study covers western Ethiopia, where there are limited literatures, during this neo COVID-19.

Objectives of the Study

The central objectives of this study are to identify the major economic challenges of COVID-19 in western Ethiopia, Eastern Africa.

Specifically, the study seeks:

- a. To explore economic dimension challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration, Western Ethiopia
- b. To examine social dimension challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration, Western Ethiopia
- c. To identify cultural dimension challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration, Western Ethiopia
- d. To analyze the institutional quality dimension challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration, Western Ethiopia

Significance of the study: The rationality of the study can be justified in a variety of ways. First, the finding of the study will benefit public institutions, private business institutions and socio-cultural institutions in the study area. Secondly, the study will support the policy makers in responding to the COVID-19 scars especially during post COVID-19 responses. Thirdly, this study will add a drop of knowledge on existing stock of literature and will help as a reference for further studies in the related areas.

Review of Literatures

This section provides a review of relevant literature regarding the challenges of COVID-19.

Economic Challenges of Covid-19 in Health Sector: Habtemariam [17] examined the impact of COVID-19 on the health sector with the major objectives of identifying its major challenges in the sector. The study also explained that the impact of COVID-19 is high in sector as it overlaps with communicable and non-communicable diseases in Ethiopia. Desta, et al. [18] investigated the challenges of COVID-19 on the delivery of essential services such as health services in Tigray regional state of Ethiopia. In the pre-post study conducted, their study found that institutional service delivery system in the study area was distorted. For instance, the blood demand increased with the decrease in supply of blood associated with the issues of COVID-19.

Ness, et al. [19] studied the challenges that faced health care system in the organization. From the qualitative study conducted, their study found four main challenges including managing segregation, fright and apprehension and disseminating to changes in healthcare practice and policy. It is also found that the role of the nurses was complicated as duty was overlapped with their conventional responsibility. Santos, et al. [20] examined challenges that are related to the work environment for the health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic in the economy of Brazil. Their study found that the hospital working environment was full of fraud and trait as nurses were filling insecure due to lack of the testing equipment in the hospital and fear of the unknown in related to COVID-19 was also one of the challenges in the workplace.

Economic Challenges in Private Business Institutions: Different businesses are facing several challenges during COVID-19. Businesses are suffering from the current stiff competition in a global market. Micro and medium enterprises are lacking access of the market during the lockdown. Further, small-scale enterprises couldn't survive in the market. Some of them are forcefully exiting the market [21]. Engidaw [22] found that businesses are almost crushed due to COVID-19 and many of them are struggling to survive with the low revenue and decreased sales volume. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the low market performance of the companies as they lost many of their customers due to lockdown. Similar study by Novitasari [23] also found that one of the challenges of businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic was lack of capacity to implement digital marketing strategies during the problem. Enesi & Ibrahim [24] examined the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the performance of business enterprises to find that COVID-19 pandemic is adversely affecting the performance of small businesses in Nigeria. Of all businesses micro and small businesses are damaged a lot. The major challenges such as loss of knowledgeable staff ensuing from lessening in staff salary, weak income group and lack of seriousness on the side of government administration were identified in their study.

Sociocultural Challenges of COVID-19:

Zakar. et al. [25] studied socio cultural challenges of COVID-19 during the implementation of the lockdown in public hospitals of Pakistan to find that COVID-19 increased poverty and unemployment in the study area. It also led to the underprivileged living conditions and living condition duty-bound the society linked mainly with the measures of COVID-19. Kamran & Ali [26] investigated the challenges of COVID-19 during the third wave of COVID-19 for the economy of Pakistan. Their study found that the challenge is mainly associated with the strategy and the attention the government provides to social and cultural issues. It follows that government budget is diverted from cultural and social development to the protection of COVID-19 pandemic which in turn resulted in another challenges of COVID-19.

Stamu, et al. [27] conducted a literature survey to understand the psychological challenges of COVID-19. Their study found that COVID-19 brought greater psychological challenges to society. It has affected the family life, parental relationship and phobia of all news was observed in the study. Another finding of the study was that the psychological effect of COVID-19 was harder on the health workers and patients of the pandemic. Brown [28] found that the world was hit by the huge stress and damage in parental life was happened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Patients were neglected and children were abused during the pandemic. Further, the greater the support for the children during COVID-19, the lower the stress while lower moral and financial support during COVID-19 was associated with high stress.

Sociopolitical Challenges of Covid-19: Countries around the globe have experienced several sociopolitical challenges since the outbreak of COVID-19. This was associated with the border interruptions and lockdown enacted by the country's governments. This affected migration policy of the countries and affected the migrant workers that want to cross border. Seasonal migration and international remittances that might benefit the needy peoples was interrupted. Rashed, et al. [29] found that the lockdown declared by the government of Pakistan due to the COVID-19 pandemic was resulted in deteriorated health care provision for migrants and adversely impacted the livelihood of the peoples as 7.15 million peoples lost job during the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. Lipsy [30] argued that COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the global political crises as the tension was high between the two lions of the world: United States and China. International relations were challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic along with international collaboration and financial integration. This added fuel on fire and resulted in the political crises during COVID-19. Ambiguity and distress during the COVID-19 was also one of the contributing factors to the political crises. COVID-19 created volatile images politics. Public perception was another crisis. This all summed together to create sociopolitical dimension of countries.

Rouet [31] found that election of countries was mainly challenged by lockdowns and closures of the nations. On one hand, the pandemic

accelerated digital democracy but only in technologically advanced countries. On the other hand, countries with low advancement in technology postponed their election which in turn gave birth to other domestic crises in many countries. Saltzman [32] explored another side of sociopolitical challenges of COVID-19 where diversionary war was considered as the means escaping from domestic COVID-19 crises and transferring the political crises output to another external body by the way Trump attempted to throw the COVID-19 name to China. This shows that the COVID-19 became even the political campaign tool as Trump utilized the principle of naming, shaming and blaming another body to stay under the shadow of COVID-19 crises.

Institutional Quality Challenges of COVID-19: Tang, et al. [33] examined the way institutional quality matters in reducing fatality during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study further observed that female fatality associated with COVID-19 found to be low in the countries with better institutional quality while it is found to be very high in countries where institutional quality is low. However, their study did not deny that COVID-19 pandemic challenged institutional quality in a variety of ways. Moreover, education infrastructure and health care facility are what matters more in reducing the challenges of COVID-19 on institutional quality.

O Dowd, et al. [34] examined the linkage between institutional quality and customers compliant in one teaching hospital in Irish. They collected data between the first quarter of 2019 and the last quarter of 2020 revealing that the time is during the outbreak of COVID-19 and declaration of COVID-19 as the global pandemic disease. Accordingly, the complaint registered in the hospital during the time was regarding institutional quality as the service in the organization is found to be lesser. The complaint was severe during the time indicating that the COVID-19 has imposed huge challenge on institutional service delivery system. Zhang, et al. [35] examined the effect of COVID-19 on food security of Ethiopia with the main objective of identifying the quality of agricultural institutions in supplying food during COVID-19 pandemic. They found that the negative impact of pandemic varies across regions. Interruptions of the flow of aid and social security programs have increased the challenge of COVID-19. This is since institutional quality is in a challenge as it failed to deliver the services for the needy group.

Conceptual framework of the study

Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework of the study showing the multidimensional challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. It incorporated four major dimensions considered in this study; economic dimensions, social dimensions, cultural dimensions, and institutional quality dimensions.

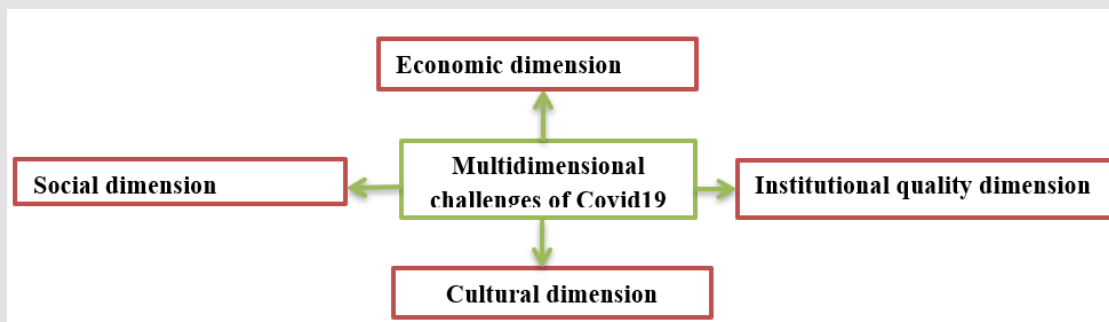


Figure 1: Conceptual frame work of the study, Source: Own development.

Methodology of the Study

This study is qualitative study. It is preferred as it offers better opportunities in providing experiences of researchers and insights of the investigator. It further enables us to obtain in-depth understanding of what a closed ended data collection method cannot deliver. In qualitative research, it is an investigator who gets respondents freely disclosing their idea. They can add a drop of their thoughts to the betterment of the study. The process of data collection can proceed smoothly without constraint.

Accordingly, the study employed focus group discussion and in-depth interview for the purpose of data collection. The former

method of data collection, focus group discussion is preferred over other methods in this study as it provides the advantages of measuring reactions instead of opinions. Further, focus group discussion is effortlessly replicable. The fact is that it can be repeated again and again to achieve the desired level of accuracy in the study. Another countless advantage of focus group discussion is that it enables to in providing betrothed contestants in the study which enhances the procedure of data collections. Thus, this study conducted 4(four) focus group discussions with respondents. The participants are Wollega university hospital medical doctors and nurses, Wollega university lecturers, Nekemte comprehensive specialized hospital medical doctors and nurses, staffs of Nekemte city (the largest and central city

in Western Ethiopia) administration and members of the community. The numbers of participants were seven per focus group discussion just to prohibit the domination of individuals within the study. The researcher avoided large numbers to ensure each participant get the role in actively participating in the focus group discussion.

A focus group discussion was conducted for 1 hour to ensure that all participants can speak and deliver their data for the study. This also eliminates boring and confusing discussion during data collection. The researcher acted as a facilitator and the discussion was made in Afan Oromo, the working language in the region. All participants can speak Afan Oromo. Later the investigator translated the data into English to write data analysis. During the focus group discussion, the investigator wrote the note as they speak on the notebook. The data collected from the study was analyzed using thematic analysis. The other technique of data assortment engaged in this study is in-depth interview. It was selected due to its improvement in providing detailed comeback in data collection. Further, in a depth interview qualifies to afford more precise selection equated to other processes of data assembly. Accordingly, this study conducted 5 in-depth interviews with medical doctors of Wollega university referral hospital, medical doctor of Nekemte comprehensive specialized hospital, Nekemte city administration office leaders and deans of Wollega University.

The in-depth interview conducted provided the advantages of getting detailed and reliable information that substantiates the data collected by focus group discussion. The in-depth interview was accompanied in Afan Oromo as both investigator and the respondents can speak it. This enables us to collect data mining that supports accuracy of the study. The investigator took notes and wrote the words of the interviewee on the notebook and analysis was made from it. Data analysis in this study was conducted using thematic analysis which was super over the other and more popular method of data analysis in qualitative studies.

Study Participants' Consent Statement

All participants that are studied in this study are well informed about the purpose of the study in advance. They participated in the study by believing that this work is academic research that benefits the entire community in the study area and scientific community in general.

Ethics Committee of the Study

Since ethics is part of research methodology in qualitative study, the ethical issue is seriously followed through the study. The letter of permission is obtained from Wollega University, department of economics. This work is reviewed by ethics committees as indicated in table 1 below. The ethics committees are formally assigned by the department of economics, Wollega University.

Table 1: Members of ethics committees of the study.

S.No	Name of the committees	Academic ranks and institutions of the committee
1	Dr. Gemechu Mulatu Kerorsa	Assistant professor of economics, Wollega university
2	Dr. Temesgen Furi Kotin	Assistant professor of economics, Wollega university
3	Mr. Melkamu Welde Geleta	Lecturer of economics, Wollega university

Table 1 above shows that the ethics committee is formally assigned for this qualitative study. The implication of this is that the study has passed through all the necessary ethical procedures as per the required criteria.

Results of the Study

From data collected through focus group discussion and in-depth interview, the study carried out thematic analysis. This section takes time to discuss the results of the study.

Economic Dimension Challenges of COVID-19

The data collected in this study shows that COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situations of economy. One respondent of the FDG replied as follows.

"I consider COVID-19 as a curse. Would please tell me the section of economy not damaged by COVID-19? Business is collapsed. Markets are sterilized. Small and medium scale trade is hung. Shops were

closed. Agriculture, including urban agriculture was threatened from uncertainty. Jobs were lost. Hotels were closed. How can I express the huge damage thrown on trade and service industries in Nekemte city? Labor supply was complicated. Inflation skyrocketed in our city. Speaking frankly, COVID-19 is a curse that stormed the earth. We are still under the pressure of the pandemic." (Focus group Discussion, Male)

From the above focus group discussion note, we can conclude that COVID-19 created a huge burden from economic dimension points of view. For instance, private business declined in Nekemte city. In addition to this, both private and public projects were stopped following the lockdown due to the COVID-19. This adversely affected both private and public projects in the study area which finally contributed to urban unemployment and gallop inflation in the city. Another point of discussion here is that the economic dimension of COVID-19 can be viewed from micro level and macro level indicating that the economic challenge is real and huge in size. Further, the discussion

included that COVID-19 included most all economic activities such as agriculture, small scale trade and service sector in general. This can be justified by the major question the FGD respondent asked on the first line of his quote; would please tell me the section of economy not damaged by COVID-19? Of all sectors, the respondent replied, trade and service industries in the study area were severely affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Uncertainty created due to the global pandemic; COVID-19 was among the factors that added fuel on fire. This fact was highly substantiated by IDI conducted in the study.

Social Dimension Challenges of COVID-19

One of the FGD respondents replied as blow in his own words.

“ COVID-19 devastated our society. Look at the burdens created to our hospitals during COVID-19. Look at how the performance of our school was distorted. Education was interrupted. Government institutions provided only limited services. Children stayed home instead of school. Can you guess the stress and social dissatisfaction from this? Public transport was stopped due to the pandemic. Social life which was the icon of our society was threatened associated with the social distancing strategy implementation. People stopped working together. It was even advised not to talk and walk together. What kind of disaster you expect more than this?” (Focus Group discussion, Male)

The above qualitative data shows that COVID-19 challenge from the social dimension also attracts great concern. The data reveals that COVID-19 challenge is twofold for instance in hospital. On one hand, the COVID-19 created burden on hospitals and conventional patients in the institution. On the other hand, it created psychological burdens such as stress and fear related to COVID-19 cases on both patients and employees of the hospital. In addition to this, it creates tension on the surrounding community as there is sense of phobia about the transmission method of COVID-19. The result of the study also revealed that the challenge related to the education sector can be viewed in a similar fashion. Apart from the lockdown, tensions created on teachers and students are a huge burden.

The other issue revealed by the study was regarding the burden COVID-19 imposed on social life and social institutions. This was mainly declared through social distancing. The social institutions were also severely affected. Social gatherings, where communities discuss social problems, were prohibited. Even local funerals systems were banned by the social distancing declaration. This created a huge social burden and social fear indicating the impact of COVID-19 is multidimensional.

Cultural Dimension Challenges of COVID-19

COVID-19 challenged not only economy and society; it also challenged the culture of the society. One respondent from FGD replied in his own words below.

“Our culture is eating together. Living and walking together is among icon of our culture. Our children play together. We discuss our

social issue together. We worship our God together. We celebrate holidays together. We farm together. We share clothes and shoes within the family. This is our culture. We mourn together. All these were prohibited during COVID-19. So why do you ask me how the pandemic challenged our culture?” ((Focus Group discussion, Female).

From the above focus group discussion data reveals that COVID-19 hit the culture, norms, religion, and tradition of the society in the study area like it is elsewhere in the globe. It adversely damaged the way of eating, the way of working, the way of behaving and the way of social relations. From this we can easily understand that COVID-19 posed huge challenge on economic growth of the society in the study area.

Institutional Quality Dimension Challenges of COVID-19

COVID-19 tempted quality of all financial institutions including global health, education, and finance institutions. Likewise, quality and capacity of health, education, financial and public service institutions were seriously challenged in Nekemte city.

The result from Interview has confirmed that this was mainly observed in Nekemte city administration. One of the interviewees replied in his own words as:

The numbers of conventional patients were very high in hospitals. Expected additional COVID-19 cases were another headache. We had limited beds to host patients. Limited COVID-19 test kits, limited ward rooms, limited number of nurses and doctors as it is at national level and in many developing countries. Preparing new bedrooms, purchasing new facilities including testing kits were the main challenges. Above all altering the attitude of health professional it was among institutional quality challenges of COVID-19 (Interview with hospital medical doctor, Male).

From the above interview transcript paragraph, it is possible to understand that COVID-19 seriously challenged the quality of the service providing organizations in the study area. Lack of adequate number of nurses, doctors and other medical facilities were among the challenges of COVID-19 in Nekemte city administration. This is the huge challenge ever faced by such organizations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated multidimensional challenges of COVID-19 pandemic in Nekemte city administration using data obtained from FGD and IDI. From the qualitative data analyzed using thematic analysis, the study concluded that COVID-19 posed acute challenge economically, socially, culturally and institutionally. Economically, trade, service, in the study area were severely challenged by COVID-19 pandemic. Socially, health, education, civil service, and social life were unquestionably challenged. Culturally, way of living, way of behaving and ways of eating were challenged by COVID-19. From the institutional quality points of view, size of the institutions, facilities of the institutions, visions and missions of institutions and the entire capacity of institution were predominantly challenged. Thus, the general

conclusion from the study is that challenges that Nekemte city faced are multidimensional. It follows that one cannot generalize the challenges of COVID-19 to economy or society alone. It challenges all aspects of human life. It touches all corners of human activity. The policy implication is those responses and other measures taken against COVID-19 need to consider all dimensional challenges of COVID-19 as remedy from one angle alone is unsatisfactory.

Ethics and Consent Statement

Consent to conduct this study was obtained from all participants of the study. The consent includes the publicizing of all responses of the participants. In the process of conducting this study, the Declarations of Helsinki were strictly followed.

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Disclosure

There is no conflict of interest reported in any form or shape by the author regarding this article. The author is dedicated to contributing to the stock of knowledge in health-related issues in economic sciences. The purpose of this article therefore is encroachment of academics.

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