Chapter 35
MET in Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)
Setting: A Curse or a Blessing in Disguise?

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35.1 Introduction

The world is facing a scourge of COVID-19 which has created a sense of insecurity to humankind as there is still no vaccine to combat it at this stage. It is alleged that this virus started in a place called Wuhan (China) in November 2019 and has spread to a number of other countries in the world. Thousands of people have succumbed to the virus, with Italy being the country with the most number of deaths having surpassed China in recent weeks.

Several measures have been put in place by different countries to try and curb the spread of this deadly virus, and these measures include travel bans, lockdown and others to mention just a few. Life as we know it has changed, and people are engaged in various activities aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. Though the measures implemented are mostly seen as being negative, however, there are some positives that may be taken from the spread of the virus, and these will be looked at individually and discussed in the following discussions throughout this paper.

Firstly, I will discuss the negative impact that the virus has caused, and then the positives will be entertained thereafter. It will be noted that the impact both negative and positive will be discussed in the context of South Africa, but they can also be applicable to other countries in the world.
35.2 Disadvantages

**Poor Families**  South Africa has high levels of poverty and unemployment, and as such, most people depend on selling different items as vendors in order to obtain some form of income. Considering what has been said, it is evident that the spread of COVID-19 has limited the movements of people from one place to the other due to lockdown which has put into effect as of midnight of Thursday, 27 March 2020. The resulting factor is that the source of income for the poor has been restricted to such an extent that more people will suffer as a result of the virus [1, 2, 3].

**Socialisation and Interaction**  Limited movements of people have also reduced socialisation and interaction amongst individuals in the country. People are afraid to be in contact with others because one cannot tell if someone else has contracted the virus or not by just looking at an individual.

**Boredom**  Most people find themselves indoors with no activities to engage in during the lockdown phase. Boredom is also linked to the point discussed in the paragraph above about socialisation. Many activities such as sports, education, entertainment events, etc. have all been banned, postponed or even cancelled.

**Health**  As people find themselves locked-up in their house, unable to attend the gym and engage in exercises such as road-running, it is envisaged that there might be prevalence of diseases, e.g. hypertension, stroke, diabetes and so forth, which may have been reduced by exercising daily. People are advised to exercise indoors, but the limited space in some of the homes does not allow for effective training.

**Housing**  In South Africa, there is a large number of people without proper housing, some are living in the streets, whilst others are found in cramped spaces such as in hostels or in shelters. The effect of this is that the possibility of contraction of virus by those individuals is increased hugely.

**Water**  The country is still having a shortage of water supply in some areas (e.g. Hammanskraal et al.). Hygiene is very important especially during the spread of COVID-19; however, water shortage makes it difficult to maintain the required standard of hygiene. Households with sufficient clean water are expected to pay more for their water bills as people try hard to maintain a level of cleanliness.

**Jobs and Unemployment**  A number of businesses have been closed during this difficult time of COVID-19, and many of them cannot generate revenue. The impact of this would be evident when many people are being laid-off because businesses won’t be able to pay their staff after the virus has been contained or a cure is found.

**Economy**  The economy of South Africa has particularly been unstable in the recent past, and this is reflected through the strengthening of dollar or the weakening of the
rand against the dollar. The spread of COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation, and the levels of unemployment and poverty are expected to rise in the not so distant future.

35.3 Advantages

Emissions vs. Climate Change With the fact that most people will not be going to work during COVID-19 spread, it is expected that the emission of toxic gases, such as CO\textsubscript{2} from vehicles, will be reduced. The fact that less emissions than normal will occur serves as a positive to the protection of the environment. Climate change, though at a limited scale, will be reduced, and this is good for the environment.

Technology The rapid spread of COVID-19 has somewhat forced countries to accelerate their efforts in the implementation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). Institutions such as companies, universities, schools and other organisations are forced to execute their duties remotely, staff members are required to work from home, and this is all possible with the use of technology.

Family Interaction Family members are seen to be spending more time together as parents and kids find themselves locked-up in their homes. The time spent should be seen as a way to strengthen the bond amongst family members, and not be used as time for children and women abuse.

Transmission of Diseases Individuals and families will be at home; consequently, the transfer of diseases among a large group of people will be reduced drastically during this time of COVID-19 pandemic.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse The lockdown as ordered by the South African Government, if implemented correctly and respected by all citizens, will result in the reduction of alcohol and drug abuse, which might lead to others quitting those hazardous substances all together.

Crime The lockdown will result in the deployment of a large number of the South African Police Services (SAPS) and the South African Defence Force (SANDF) members which must be seen as a plus in the prevention of crime in the country. It should be noted that criminals do not abide by the law in most instances; however, the deployment of these entities will act as a deterrent to those criminal activities.

Cleanliness The eruption of COVID-19 has forced or coerced people into looking after their hygiene by making sure that hands are washed or sanitised frequently than normal, which is supposed to be the case all the time. Strict measures are being put in place in stores and other amenities to safeguard against the spread of COVID-19.
Conclusion

In conclusion, South Africa is no different from other countries of the world in terms of the spread of COVID-19. The number of infections is seen to be on the rise every day, and it is expected that more people will be tested positive during the lockdown. However, there are positives to take from the spread of virus; in other words, it is not all doom and gloom. Just as the President of South Africa, Honourable Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa, indicated, we need not panic about the situation, but adhere to the regulations as stipulated by the government.

References

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3. COVID-19 Corona Virus South African Resource Portal, Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on Progress in the National Effort to Contain the COVID-19 pandemic, https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/07/12/statement-by-president-cyril-ramaphosa-on-progress-in-the-national-effort-to-contain-the-covid-19-pandemic/ (12 July 2020)