COVID-19 Discourse in African Contexts

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Perspectives, Challenges, and Opportunities

Edited by

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and Lilian Lem Atanga

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To all those directly or indirectly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

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PREFACE

The spread of COVID-19 across nations around the world has generated diverse discourses with shared elements but unique narratives, some of them told in this collection with the aim to minimise the spread and deaths, and maximise strategies to brazen impending pandemics. Our scope is discourse analysis, with a focus on how values, beliefs, practices, assumptions, innovations, discoveries, fears and hopes, truths and half-truths about the COVID-19 pandemic are communicated in diverse contexts in the Africa continent. Perspectives, challenges, opportunities, and possibilities are explored as COVID-19 discourses are analysed. We explore the array of COVID-19 discourse using discourse analytical approaches that interpret discourse as a social practice, a "vast field of critical social science" (Fairclough, Hoellerer, Jaeger, Wodak, Meyer, Meyer, Mautner, Maier, van Leeuwen, van Dijk, Unger, Reisigl, Jancsary, and KhosraviNik, 2016). Thus, considering discourse analysis a fluid discipline, our scope intersects with other analytical approaches, empirical and theoretical, including opinion statements, and diverse themes within COVID-19 and post-COVID times. We are grateful to all authors who accepted to contribute to this diverse but cohesive volume.

The commonality in these discourses is the discourse of scare, of compassion, and competitive efforts to stop the spread as nations count their deaths. Research on pandemic vaccines heightens in developed and developing nations, and the use of African traditional remedies soars in Africa, all efforts generating diversity in discourse. COVID-19 is the alien that has overwhelmed the world; it has challenged advanced medical science, resilient health systems and infrastructures. This change in world health discourses has subsequently extended to border closures and travel control by governments amidst citizens protesting against lockdowns and precautionary measures, with poorer nations' fear of hunger surpassing the fear of COVID-19.

Each nation perceives COVID-19 from a global, yet an own cultural perspective, and within sub-cultures of the mainstream, it is perceived from domain-specific practices and the search for local to global solutions. To some African tradi-medical practitioners, it is the witching time, the

mysterious ailment that indigenous remedies could dare; for believers in God, it is another plague, God's vengeance on mankind. It is a new strain of virus with the urgency for the upsurge of laboratories to the medics; a recession in world economies to the economist; a manipulation of discourse to the politicians. To the youth it is ironically, a non-threat that has destabilised their world order. As folk minds circulate a discourse of myths and beliefs, conspiracy theories abound; media freaks explore the conspiracy theories; and to the artist, a fresh thought to write, talk, cartoon, and sing about. Paradoxically, it is a welcome relief to the environmentalist who thinks lockdowns and restricted travel are right for a reduction in carbon emission. Nature can breathe, having been suffocated by urbanisation and obstruction, by industrial air, water, and soil pollution, and having distorted habitats for wildlife. To the discourse analyst, COVID-19 generates pandemic discourse across disciplines.

CHAPTER ONE

ENGAGING COVID-19 DISCOURSES IN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

KELEN ERNESTA FONYUY AND LILIAN LEM ATANGA

Abstract

If one were to put the alphanumeric acronym COVID-19 in a database, it will have the highest hits as the most used word in the last half of 2020 and the first half of 2021. If the search continues with other words that collocate with it, we will quickly find words such as cough, flu, fever, shortness of breath, sore throat, and many more contextual innovations. These words and phrases have populated COVID-19 discourse across the world with different realities according to contexts, yet even with the divergence of these discourses, there is convergence as to different global issues brought about by the virus. Written within COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 times, we have taken a bold step in this volume, **COVID-19 Discourse in African Contexts: Perspectives, Challenges, and Possibilities** to use the field of discourse analysis to understand how COVID-19 impact(ed) African contexts, not only during the pandemic but also after. We have audaciously brought together contributions from several fields impacted by the pandemic but with a unifying (African) context of experiences and methodological frameworks in the analysis of discourse in these fields. The fields in this volume include COVID-19 Educational Technology Discourse, COVID-19 Multimodal Digital Health Discourse, COVID-19 Environmental Discourse, COVID-19 Ambivalent Discourse, COVID-19 Political Discourse, COVID-19 Socio-psychological Discourse, COVID-19 Socioeconomic Discourse, and COVID-19 Remedial Food Discourse. Typically, discourse analysts see discourse as a social practice, and as a social practice, the COVID-19 discourse circulates (like clouds) in all domains and fields of human interaction and intervention. Thus, this collection is as diverse as it is integrated. It integrates diversity in

discourse content, diversity in perspectives and scientific approaches, wherein the conventional format of academic writing merges with applied approaches that relate the reader to our works including endeavours that inform policy on future pandemics.

Key words: Engaging discourses, COVID-19, Africa, perspectives, challenges, Possibilities

1. Introduction

The spread of COVID-19 has generated diverse discourses and unique narratives. The (con)texts vary, but with unifying elements of fear, apprehension, doubt, (mis)information, infodemic "a flood of information on the COVID-19 pandemic" (https://www.who.int/teams/risk-commun ication/infodemic-management). There is the shared commonality discourse of scare, vulnerability and insecurity, of compassion and competitive efforts to stop the spread. As infection rates jump, conspiracy theories multiply on the origin, evolution, precautionary measures, remedies, treatment, and the (side)effects of COVID-19 and its vaccines. Health systems and infrastructures are overwhelmed as the virus unrelentingly comes in waves. The COVID-19 challenge results in transborder discourses of social distancing, mask-wearing, hand-washing or sanitising, quarantining, lockdowns, hospitalisation, death, travel control amidst protests against lockdowns and recently, vaccine and vaccine discourses.

In Africa, various perspectives, challenges, and possibilities emerge as the virus devastates the world. African COVID-19 discourses initially were dissonant with WHO discourses because of African realities, whose discourses are representations of understandings of the pandemic and search for local solutions. By extension, "… a plethora of framing options facilitate the communication of various aspects involved in the COVID-19-related discourse on the social media" (Wicke and Bolognesi, 2020), and these are significantly reflective of a community's perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic. The perspectives and perceptions have changed across culture with emerging deadlier strains of the virus named after countries. Hopefully, as Moh and Fomunjong, this volume preview, "The COVID-19 challenges presented unprecedented opportunities for relevant educational stakeholders to exploit diverse openings provided by technology to provide meaningful and effective solutions to education, health, and other developmental problems." The vaccine discourse keeps mutating as (mis)information alternates with disinformation, thereby expanding the challenges and possibilities of the during and after COVID-

19 discourse in African contexts on eight thematic discourses. These include educational technology discourse, multimodal digital media discourse, environmental discourse, ambivalent discourse, political discourse, socioeconomic discourse, socio-psychological, and remedial food discourse.

Given the diversity of the chapters unified by the challenges around COVID-19 and the post-COVID-19 ambivalent and conflicting discourses on vaccines (those who took, those who did not take, and the consequences), we shall present a synopsis of the authors' perspectives in this chapter, reflecting on their contributions to the volume. The entire volume is made up of 9 chapters with this one as the introductory chapter. The next 8 chapters explore issues around COVID-19, reflections on the contributions and perspectives during and after COVID-19 in African contexts.

Chapter Two is titled, **Educational Technology: Facilitator or Inhibitor of Quality and Inclusive Education Delivery in Cameroon during the COVID-19 Pandemic**. Using a cross-sectional mixed methods research approach, Fomunjong and Moh, this volume, in an educational and technologically savvy discourse, report the challenges posed by the COVID-19 on the education sector in Cameroon. They highlight the possibility of stakeholders to mitigate the present challenges, and leverage from the challenges, some decisive measures for the present and the future. The gravity of the COVID-19 challenge is communicated through noun phrases such as "pandemic attack", verb phrases such as "caught in this web" of the challenging effects of the pandemic, and education stakeholders resort to the possibility to mitigate the challenge. The possibilities include exploiting 21st century technological tools and methods, adopting distance learning through online learning platforms, as well as television and radio channels. The challenges of implementing the possibilities are highlighted in, "Despite these pre-emptive actions, UNICEF (2018) Cameroon reported that the use of technology in education is still quite rudimentary in the country". This is illustrated by the integration of ICT technology in the educational domain that continues to face challenges ranging from "resistance from teachers and communities, teachers' inability to teach using ICTs, weak internet connectivity, inadequate technical support, and difficulties in using ICTs in the teaching of abstract concepts across the curriculum".

These are the challenges that must be explored as possibilities for the sustainable use of ICTs in education at national and international

platforms. The possibilities are embedded in the 2030 education objectives of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the educational objectives of Cameroon's 2035 socioeconomic development vision. The latter references the global technological ambitious call for nations to leverage technology and other digital tools to provide informed solutions to socioeconomic problems. Fomunjong and Moh, extend the discussion in 5.1 Relevance of Technology in Promoting Quality and Inclusive Education in Cameroon; 5.2 Adoption of Technology by Education Facilitators; 5.2.1 Exposure to Technology; 5.2.2 Access to the Requisite Technology; 5.2.3 Adaptation to Novel Technology for Teaching; 5.3 Technological Platforms Used to Foster Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic; 5.4 Challenges Faced by Teachers in Leveraging Technology to Foster Quality and Inclusive Education in Cameroon; 5.5 Possibilities in Leveraging Technology to Foster Quality and Inclusive Education in Cameroon.

They recommend that in order to ensure technology is adequately leveraged to promote quality and inclusive education in Cameroon in subsequent years; teachers should be trained to use the technological devices in teaching, engender a culture of self-development, and financially supported to afford these devices in order to respond to emerging educational needs as well as adapting to the fast-evolving contemporary education context. Educational institutions, with government subsidy, should be able to put in place adequately equipped multimedia centres that can accommodate online learning, create a school management system in which teachers can share resources to be accessed by students and parents, and ensure sustainable growth of school continuity and accountability. Students should also be trained on digital technologies needed for learning purposes. This will enable them to master the tools needed for online teaching and learning. The authors conclude that both the willingness to make use of technology and the demonstrated ability to use technology for teaching as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed the opportunity technology presents as a key lever to enhance inclusion and quality education in Cameroon within the framework of the 2035 national development vision.

Chapter Three features a multimodal digital health discourse titled, **Mediatising the Challenges of COVID-19 Crisis in Nigeria: A Multimodal Digital Public Health Discourse Approach**. Ope-Davies and Anowu aim at exploring the power of new media and social networking services to support public health emergencies, thus, extending the communication realities and handling strategies in the digital health

humanities**.** The authors note that before the lockdown, many information outlets such as churches, mosques, schools, markets, hospitals, etc., were avenues through which health agencies and government institutions tried to spread how diseases could be avoided. However, the social media, especially WhatsApp was to play a crucial role in reaching people with (un)necessary information before, during, and after the lockdown. With objective insight, the new digital media platforms promote fake news, hate speech, misinformation, or fuel political violence, yet remain indispensable in our daily activities. Their role during the pandemic demonstrated the benefits and the downside of the platforms as public communication channels. Their usage and applications have been extended beyond private chats, social relationship, and public communications to include heavy deployment in medical services, public health communication, public emergencies, and usages in other sectors of human endeavours never imagined a few years ago.

The data set comprises posts, chats, comments, and images extracted from the WhatsApp handles of some citizens elicited through media monitoring, participant-observer, and manual download from the WhatsApp platforms of the researchers, associates. Other copies were extracted using Google search engine. In the text "…WASH/SANITISE YOUR HANDS FREQUENTLY", the authors' perspective is an interactive meaning in the verbal language mode that strategically positions the written declarative-based imperative sentence in the uppercase part of the post. This provides a simple and clear instruction on how to prevent the spread of the virus while the mild imperative does not give any room for readers to avoid responsibility.

Conspiracy theorising is highlighted by the authors in, "The discourse of distrust of the citizenry on government pre-dates the pandemic, it only got accentuated with the outbreak of the disease… as many expressed their doubt on the authenticity of the claim that such a thing as COVID-19 exists". Those in this camp ensured that messages carrying these doubts were circulated on social media. The conspiracy discourse highlighted in Nigeria is extended by Kelen and Fomuso Ekellem in ambivalent discourse in Cameroon. Ope-Davies and Anowu conclude that, as a sub-component of Digital Health Humanities (DHH), their study anticipates the future of public health delivery services in Africa that will be impacted by the use of social media technologies and other web-based services, including using these media to combat conspiracy theories (Fig. 3-4), and vaccine hesitancy (Fig. 3-5). It shows the resilience of new media technologies as instruments through which public healthcare delivery can

be modernised and advanced within the context of preventive and personalised healthcare protocols during and after COVID-19.

From an environmental discourse perspective, Munang in Chapter Four, **Turning Biosafety Risks into Opportunities in Africa's Food Systems in the Context of Climate Change and the COVID-19 Challenge** integrates biosafety, food systems, climate change, and the COVID-19 emergency. He underscores how the COVID-19 pandemic challenges have stirred solution-based minds in turning biodiversity risks into opportunities with a focus on Africa's food system in the context of climate change. In professional environmental discourse, he starts by locating the cause of the pre-, during, and post-COVID-19 challenges in biosafety, and suggests possibilities of turning risks and challenges into opportunities in answering his research questions. He calls for fundamental consideration of three aspects.

First, we ought to re-imagine, re-organise and re-design environmental biosecurity measures to ensure food safety in the context of the changing climate and the unsettling realities of COVID-19 in Africa. Second, as a critical source of capital to this end, we need to rebuild better and different, leveraging the youth, who are currently lost, and unemployed. Third, actions need to be focused on the informal sector which constitutes up to 80% of Africa's economies to position Africa as a globally competitive and resilient region. Stakeholders need to enable the informal sector that feeds urban and rural communities; enable accessible, affordable financing that is tied to safe production practices; enable the availability of affordable alternative inputs and technologies, to enable them to take up safe production practices.

His discourse goes beyond environmental diction, as he adopts insightful African proverbs that suggest biosafety vulnerability for all humans, irrespective of whether they are in the Africa continent or other continents around the world such as "rain does not fall on one roof alone". He sees possibilities for biosafety solutions in "the cow that bellows does so for all cows", insinuating engagement at the individual level for the common good; "Biosafety solutions need to be driven in the context of combating climate change and rebuilding better under the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 realities". His solution-oriented mind sees further possibilities in another African proverb, "an arrow that has not entered deeply is not hard to remove"; biosafety solutions, when implemented, will alleviate challenges on three fronts: climate change, food security and COVID-19. Environmentally friendly strategies to adapt to climate change will yield

more food. Food availability guarantees food security both during the pandemic and in post-pandemic times.

However, he highlights the challenges in attaining his proposals, "From global protocols to regional laws, and national legislation, standards, and institutions, Africa has its fair share of elaborate legal provision but the gap is in implementation". Yet with a solution-based mindset, he sees possibilities in this challenge, "To bridge this gap, we need to appreciate that complete implementation of the law can only happen within a willing mindset. Complying with the law must become second nature to people before we can claim any success. And for this, there must be positive incentives for people to implement the law. And one of them is making compliance both lucrative and accessible". Availing "affordable climate action solutions will provide a practical means by which producers can affordably meet food safety, health, quality, and environmental sustainability benchmarks, hence drive uptake". Accountability is in the chain of values in leveraging biosafety risks into opportunities and he expresses this in underlining the value of cooperatives. "The structures of these cooperatives need to be leveraged to offer a structure for traceability and accountability that can be relied upon by national standards bodies…, checking members to ensure compliance to safe production techniques as the climate action solutions shared". He advocates leveraging on youth potential in "empowering youth to be providers of the affordable tools needed to drive compliance", and this is possible through the vital adjectival phrase, "innovative volunteerism" denoting creative thinking and self-engaging action. Munang concludes by seeing potential, possibilities, and opportunity in the current and post-COVID-19 African informal sector in yet another proverb, "Do not call the forest that shelters you a jungle".

Chapter Five is titled, **Harnessing the Challenges of Ambivalent Discourse and Attitudes toward COVID-19 Vaccines in Africa for Posterity**. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Fonyuy and Fomuso-Ekellem analyse the challenges of hesitant discourse and attitudes toward the COVID-19 vaccines in Africa, and propose measures for harnessing the challenges to possibilities. In highlighting the challenging ambivalent discourse and attitudes, they think while some governments, groups and individuals engage in the discourse of sensitisation campaigns on vaccine benefits, some engage in discreet discourse, the outcomes which are visible only when read beyond and above the sentence. While some extremist discourse communicates outright denial of the vaccine, some whine of vaccine apartheid or discrimination against the continent. As governments face the challenges of the appropriate discourse and strategies

to (dis)engage their communities from/ or in the COVID-19 vaccine crusade, ambivalent discourse and attitudes continue thriving in these communities, seen in pockets of resistance and of acceptance, pitting the pro-vaccines against the anti-vaccines.

The authors' findings are based on the analysis of a primary source of data, an online semi-structured questionnaire; and a secondary source of data involving excerpts from some university students' essays, a selection of online documents, home and international news briefs, signature tunes, and feeds on COVID-19 and its vaccines. On average, results show a significant 74.4% of respondents have adequate information on COVID-19, knowledge of symptoms, knowledge of spread, and knowledge of preventive measures. Albeit this knowledge, ambivalence still looms on the pandemic and its vaccines, as below an average rate of respondents, "46.50% is vaccinated… Only 20% indicates it will take a booster, and 65.13% including those vaccinated will not take it".

Ambivalent responses are elicited from 46.51% *positive and negative*, as opposed to 27.91% *negative*, and 25.58% *positive*. Some of the ambivalent rhetoric includes; "Most people around me rejected the vaccine, saying it had side effects, they said 'they are trying to use us as lab rats to test their poison'. So the vaccine was rejected by many people, me included due to the rumours and silly talks. All this increased the level of confusion in the area". Merged with some degree of rationale in the concluding "silly talks", this excerpt illustrates confirmation bias, resulting to (mis)information, disinformation, (mis)trust, and conspiracy theorising. Rumours, hearsay, sabotage, and invalidated information dominate the discourse and highlight its ambivalence. Thus, irrespective of univalent attitudes of either positive or negative, ambivalent attitudes of positive and negative toward the vaccine are dominant.

Based on the findings, the authors' proposals for the post-COVID era, or mitigation of future pandemics include conceiving opportunities from the challenges. First, Harness the Potential of Conceptual Frameworks: Effective communication strategies require understanding and localising the FLICC taxonomy techniques of science denial; and the communication accommodation theory of knowing when, how, and what to converge to or divert from; thereby, minimising misinformation, and disinformation that encourage vaccine hesitancy. Critically analysing ambivalent attitudes and discourse as some of the root causes of vaccine hesitancy should generate strategies that target cutback on ambivalence. Stakeholders should implement elements of contrastive discourse and explore the Less is More

Approach (LIMA), where few instances of positively impacting discourse and attitudes could be models in the public health awareness drive.

Second, Leverage Data Potential: This is to influence policy, determine sensitisation strategies, and evidence-based reporting that challenge conspiracy theories and dissuade vulnerable populations from ambivalent practices. Data informs governments and development stakeholders to put in place favourable systems that include the vulnerable and minority groups in communities; subsequently, leaving no one behind in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and general wellbeing. Third, Utilise Local Parlance in Grassroots Sensitisation: Findings show that in naming COVID-19 in indigenous African languages, the phrased content words have symbolic, cognitive labels that represent COVID-19 as thorny, spiky, deadly, alien, etc. The academia, linguists and other stakeholders could document and utilise the cognitive influence of local parlance in grassroots sensitisation, especially through community radio. Fourth, Minimise Conspiracy Theorising: This by understanding the FLICC taxonomy techniques of science denial. Fifth, Harness the Potential of anti-COVID Indigenous Remedies, which Fonyuy and Atanga expatiate upon in Chapter Nine of this volume.

In Chapter Six, titled, **A Critical Discourse Analysis of the President of the Republic's Speeches during the COVID-19 Pandemic**, Gueche and Menguie aim to examine the raison d'être of the President of the Republic of Cameroon's (PRC) choice of words in his speeches during the coronavirus crisis, and the effect on future pandemics or crisis management discourse. They highlight the ideological and political stance reflected in his decisions to ignore, verbalise, sideline, and sometimes, maintain silence, as the pandemic ravages the world. Based on Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 2006), six (6) speeches of the PRC are selected with the objective of investigating how the PRC undercuts political antagonism, appeases the population, and justifies the measures he has taken for the country to be safe in the heart of the pandemic and after.

Depending on the discursive strategies used by the PRC, the speeches have been convened and analysed in four phases: Ignoring COVID-19: 1 speech, Verbalising COVID-19: 1 speech, Sidelining COVID-19: 2 speeches, Silencing COVID-19: 2 speeches. The analysis reveals an interdependence of ideology and language in the speech of the PRC who makes use of numerous discursive strategies in order to rally his people around him in his fight against the COVID-19. The speeches and speech categories show

the PRC is a tactful leader whose communication strategies are copied in the attitudes of his people toward the disease; seen in his choice of words, the structure of speeches, and even his silence, are all efficient communication tools.

In the structural analysis, the authors use the Tropes and Wordsmith digital tools to generate the word-sentence-paragraph count, frequencies, and percentages. For instance, on Ignoring the Pandemic, the speech made by the PRC on the eve of National Day 2020 is highly enunciative. It is made up of 1283 words, 62 sentences and 30 paragraphs. Out of the 189 verbs used in the speech, 85 are factive (dwell, validate, continue, emerge, resolve, etc.). The speech is also highly descriptive as the President resorts to 132 adjectives with 75 of them being objective qualifiers. The major themes of this speech are youth empowerment, sport, education, and employment. There is no mention of the coronavirus even as the pandemic rages around the world. These are indicators of what life is, and will be for Cameroonians, irrespective of the pandemic.

Conversely, on Verbalising the Pandemic in the 20th May National Day speech given on 19th of May 2020, The PRC gives enough details on the situation of COVID-19 in Cameroon, Africa and the world. For instance, the speech is highly argumentative because it has to convince the audience of the gravity of the situation. Out of the 147 verbs identified in the speech, 110 are factive (47%), 60 stative (24.3%), 61 reflexive (24.7%) and 10 performative (4%). Modalities are used to get involved in what he says, as in the expression of time (23), intensity (21), manner (16), and negation (10). 169 adjectives contribute to the depiction of the terrible reality the people have to face. Within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the authors identify some veiled realities in the PRC's speeches, demonstrating how power, ideology, strategy, and persuasive techniques interrelate to make the communication of a leader relevant to the context in which he finds himself.

Even though the PRC's communication seems to be tailored on the different attitudes of his people during the pandemic, the authors think there is still the need to fine-tune the discursive strategies he uses in his speeches. For example, his Silence on the Pandemic, as he addresses the youth, and Sidelining the Pandamic are highlighted in the 2021 speech: "We learn from history that this is not humanity's first epidemic, and it is undoubtedly far from being its last" needs to be revised, albeit, he urges the population to get vaccinated. Each category of citizens, especially the youth that constitutes over 70% of Cameroon's population has to be

sensitised on not to undermine the gravity of happenings. It is noteworthy that the statistics analysed in this chapter indicate the COVID-19 situation in Cameroon at the time of the PRC's speeches but the PRC does not mention the statistics on the ravages of the COVID-19. This is a tactic that may prevent panic but also, can be counterproductive in that people may undermine the gravity of the critical situation. The authors conclude there is the need for the PRC, in case of future pandemics, to be more down-to-earth and realistic, substantiating evidence with statistics when he talks about the casualties of a pandemic.

In Chapter Seven, Moye-Chiatoh and Fomonyuy, through a community-based cross-sectional survey, close-ended questionnaire, and interview, do a socio-psychological analysis of the knowledge and perceptions of COVID-19 vaccines of some adults in the North West and West regions of Cameroon, and make proposals to minimise the socio-psychological effects of future pandemics. Acknowledging that a majority of adults avoid the COVID-19 vaccine, the authors argue that the knowledge level regarding the COVID-19 vaccine was inadequate. Even though 48% knew the vaccines approved by the Cameroon government, low knowledge was recorded in the knowledge item; How many COVID-19 vaccines do you know or have heard of? wherein 42% of the respondents knew no vaccine, 63% had no sensitisation yet on the COVID-19 vaccine and vaccination. Knowledge was significantly associated with educational levels and occupation, whereby those with a higher level of education, and those that worked within the hospital milieu had more knowledge, but generally, knowledge about the vaccine was from social media (Table 7-1).

The analysis in Table 7-3 showed that 33% of the participants thought the COVID-19 vaccine could protect them from being infected with the coronavirus disease, while 25% thought it couldn't. A majority (42%) had undecided mindsets, as they wondered whether or not the vaccine could help them from being infected. 16.7% were willing to be vaccinated, 45% not willing, and 38.3% had not yet decided on being vaccinated. Analysing respondents' perception on adults taking the COVID-19 vaccine, 25% of the participants thought all adults above 23 years should take the vaccine, 16.7% was against it, while 58.3% was undecided. Therefore, the authors' socialist view of inter-social and inter-personal relations is reflected, as they state, in Rosside's (1990) conflict perspective, one he uses as the base in sociological analysis. With the conflict approach to human behaviour analysis, as in the undecided mindsets, those for and against, focus on disagreements and rivalries among groups and, or the authority.

This perspective also reveals society as always being on the brink of problems and in need for change. That is why improved and reliable communication strategies to minimise these societal contradictions are vital to mitigate false knowledge perception on future pandemics in Cameroon and beyond. They think social beliefs always have a serious influence on the mindsets of the individuals living within those social structures. Once people start having misconceptions, fear and doubts on issues they hardly participate or believe in, their ramifications entail special and carefully marked-out procedures of handling them. Thus, the authors recommend the need for immediate and future health education (sensitisation) programmes to be organised in health care units by workers who have a good social and cultural understanding of the communities in which they work. Policy makers should endeavour to gain public confidence by skilfully taking effective steps to ensure that more accurate information should be distributed and advertised by accredited sources and experts rather than getting information from non-experts (the street, social media, or relations).

Gwanbobga, in Chapter Eight, interconnects the discourses of the COVID-19 pandemic, socioeconomic wellbeing, and geographical location of persons in, **Investigating the Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 on Economic Agents and Wellbeing of the local populations in Anglophone Cameroon**. The economic challenges of the pandemic are highlighted in professional economic discourse wherein these are worsened by that of the ongoing sociopolitical crisis that equally restricts mobility and economic activity. These leave the region in an "economic downturn", "economic slowdown", "a fragile local business community", "decline in liquidity/cash flows", "rising income and non-income inequalities" amidst the fear of contracting, infecting others, or death from the alien virus. The "What" in the research questions and the "How" in the methodology underline a solution-oriented perspective derived from the cause-effect approach.

These lead to findings based on diverse themes such as the effect of sensitisation seen in the awareness on the different precautionary measures against COVID-19. On socioeconomic wellbeing, the respondents are equally aware of the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic as a consequence of the lockdown measures instituted; where learners and teachers could not go to school, people could not seek medical attention, go to the farm, or go about their businesses freely. As per the percentage in the family monthly income, all the respondents acknowledged a 20-60% drop. With such a setback, there was a decline in the living conditions of the citizens.

Sociocultural themes manifest in outliers wherein the symptoms of the virus are attributed to witchcraft. Some respondents argue that the COVID-19 symptoms have been "manifesting in people from time immemorial and it is not because of it that people are manifesting such signs". Generally, the respondents think "the virus can be prevented by sticking strictly to the barrier measures instituted by the government and that it can be treated through traditional herbal concoction and medical drugs". Thus, from the responses of the participants, the author concludes that there is much awareness of the existence of the virus, awareness of the mode of transmission, and prevention or cure, although ironically, 90% affirms that people are not respecting the barrier measures instituted by the government. Therefore, the validity of COVID-19 awareness implies that even those who deny its existence and the preventive measures have reasons, which are yet an aspect of the COVID-19 awareness dynamics in the African context.

In a gender disaggregated data-based discourse with the stereotypical conception that women are the weaker sex, 60% of respondents view females as more likely to contract the virus than males "because females by their very nature are weaker than men". This insinuates that the deficit theory is still unchallenged, visibly in the Africa continent, even though social constructionism challenges stereotyping. A credulous 40% claims that "men die faster than women" probably due to man-made factors. Respondents attribute the virus to "witchcraft" and the author thinks they are "superstitious". The noun, "witchcraft" and the adjective, "superstitious" are examples of the lexicon habitually correlated to some aspects of traditional African belief system. The author concludes that the policy measures related to COVID-19 will continue to be an important area of research. These measures, which are varied both in terms of scope and implementation, are expected to yield profound economic and social impacts beyond the COVID-19 era.

The ninth and last chapter is titled, **The Scope of anti-COVID-19 Remedies and Food Discourse across Communities in Cameroon.** With globalisation and the new information and communication technologies facilitating easy access to information, Cameroonian remedial food culture was gradually being diluted and taken for granted until the health challenges of COVID-19 set in and got Cameroonians rethinking. From a critical discourse analysis viewpoint, Fonyuy and Atanga, this volume, observe that albeit some limitations, community and country specific remedial and food discourses are changing the narrative amidst the pandemic and post-pandemic challenges. The aim of this chapter

therefore, is to analyse the discourse of Cameroonian anti-COVID remedies and foods, highlight the scope of these indigenous foods and non-pharmaceutical remedies with proposals on learning from the limitations and leveraging the strengths during and after the pandemic.

As anti-COVID-19 remedies, Cameroonians ate more local food prepared with spices, leaves, tree barks, tubers and cereals such as achu and yellow or black soup, mbongo chobi, fufu and njama-njama, eru, ndole, nkwi, banane malaxée. These foods have antiviral potency because they are packed with vitamins and minerals such as zinc that supports the immune system; and carbs for energy. Cameroonians also drank hot beverages from herbs such as fever grass, artemisia, yaro, Ndawara, Ndu, and Tole teas. Some were brewed from seeds such as cloves, from roots such as ginger, from bulbs such as garlic, and onion. Often, some of these were combined with citrus fruit such as lemon, lime or, and orange, and sweetened with honey. All these herbs, fruit and seeds are packed with all kinds of vitamins that boost the immune system, making it an unfavourable habitat for viruses. What is challenging in the indigenous remedial beverages is the required dose such as the quantity that should be taken by whom and at what times. The indigenous health remedies often have prescribed doses in cups, litres, bottles, gallons, calabashes, and pots. From observation, the quantities of the content, and sometimes the content of the remedies are undisclosed. Without doubting the potential of these indigenous foods and remedies, quantified content and prescribed doses will incorporate aspects of ethics, efficacy, risks, as well as opportunities.

Digitally mediated oral and written interviews are conducted and collected from ten participants from the English-speaking and French-speaking regions of Cameroon, and analysed from a critical discourse analysis perspective. The linguistic and social elements of discourse include naming staple foods, interpreting the recurrence of some food items, describing anti-COVID-19 foods and remedies in which are embedded linguistic aspects of code mixing, code switching, semantic extensions in past and real time and spaces. The findings show an all-female category of respondents, insinuating that the know-how to interpret sex disaggregated data is urgent to enhance research, representation, and participatory cultures. Subsequently, these will encourage gender-responsive advocacy and implementation for improved livelihoods during and after the pandemic.

The primary discourse features of class, time and space are reflected in the illustration of local staples, the top indigenous foods that have been eaten

over time, and across communities in Cameroon. While conventional medical discourse may not have prioritised the foods rich in vitamin C and zinc over tablets, indigenous food culture did and has maintained its staples during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Ranking is drawn from the two-digit frequency of ingredients/food items, cooking methods, and word classes from all ten respondents. The consequence is that these are the top ranking anti-COVID-19 foods known to all ten participants. The recurrence of word classes such as verbs (boil, eat, drink, steam,); adjectives (hot, cold); noun (drink, steam) underline the "what", "how" and "why" of the anti-COVID-19 remedial and food discourse.

In understanding COVID-19 in an African, Cameroonian context; analysing, and discussing the data; the discourse features have been merged into other structural patterns to create a new functional whole, the indigenous anti-COVID-19 foods and remedies, albeit with limitations. For instance, in the recipes, the sequencing is fragmented in some instances, but the intended meaning is not distorted, creating a functional narrative. This narrative brings to the limelight the culinary art, health benefits, and cultural symbolism of some less known indigenous remedies and foods that could be developed to mitigate future COVID-19 related pandemics across communities in Cameroon and beyond. Concluding that the scope of this discourse is delimited by some degree of uncertainty, the authors propose the need for complementarity discourse that incorporates both conventional and indigenous remedies in future pandemic control. "When something is recognised as a representational practice rather than an authoritative description, it can be treated as contentious" (Alcock, 2009, 5). Investing in scientific research on Cameroonian anti-COVID-19 remedies and foods will minimise the contention, increase global trust, create opportunities for work, and improve health and livelihoods during and after COVID-19.

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