



Abstract

This paper will briefly discuss approaches to and perspectives on analysing the complex relationship between fiscal space, fragility, and conflict and its underlying causes and dynamics in Africa. Although research on fragility and conflict abounds, studies which critically examine the context of fragility and conflict are how they are affected by COVID 19 are rather limited. Qualitatively designed, this study attempts to explore and explain the challenges and implication of COVID 19 concerning fiscal space, fragile and conflict situation across Africa. This paper argues that Africa has a limited proactive measures in tackling COVID 19 as realities on the ground underlies its risk on fiscal space, fragile and conflict situation, or fragile and conflict-affected countries and/or contexts that are affected by fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) in Africa. The objective of this paper is to give a comprehensive overview of

more vulnerable to pandemic outbreaks and triggering a wake-up call to the global community. Thus, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2012, it stated that “Infectious pandemic diseases have shaped societies, driven conflict and fragility and also spawned the marginalization of infected individuals and communities throughout human history (WHO 2012: 10). Although, many health experts have warned of growing risks of pandemic outbreaks, especially with accelerated anti-microbial resistances and increasing non-compliance with vaccination or preventive policies (NIAID 2004: 71). Ultimately, there is wide-ranging recognition that one horrendous aspect of the pandemic outbreak is the

malnutrition prevalence, scarcity of and worsening rates of extreme poverty, man-made migration and humanitarian crisis, extreme environmental and economic challenges. By drawing attention to the granular understanding of the context of fragility and conflict in the time of COVID 19 pandemic across a wider pool of countries, it is hoped that this paper comprehensively maps out, reviews and examines diversely the links and interface between fiscal space, fragile and conflict which warrants serious attention, noting the variety and driving attributes of impact, challenges and associated implications in view of COVID-19 on fragility and conflict in Africa as well as provide possible explanations on their significant. In this modest attempt, it explores current debates, actors and approaches, explains key conceptual terms and its interlinkages and exposes crucial differences based on a broad range of existing literatures and experiences. Underscoring this reason, this paper offers a snapshot on theoretically-grounded overview of reactions and responses of African nations caught in the web of fragility and conflict situation and its link to fiscal space including their efforts in containing the deadly COVID 19 pandemic since it is observed that Western nations react rapidly and more proactively. This aims to show a comprehensive analysis on why addressing fragility and conflict is critical for the emergence of the COVID 19 waves and subsequently and other re-emergence pandemic outbreak. Thus, there is a need to disaggregate data finding from case study evidence of countries, in order to understand a more nuanced interpretation of the nature of the context of fiscal space, fragility and conflict. In doing so, the paper is intended and hoped to be a contributing academic review to the available literature and ongoing debates towards articulating a better understanding of responses needed in fiscal space context, conflict affected and fragile states. As such, it contributes to a recent research analysis conducted on the immediate and long impact of COVID-19 on conflict in Africa between March and June 2021. Thus, responding to the long-term challenges underlined by the pandemic will require sustained and concerted efforts.

Against this background, the paper attempts to address the following three key questions: 1) what are the implications of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak to fragile and conflict situations in Africa? 2) What are the existing and emerging challenges of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak to fragile and conflict situations in Africa? 3) Are there differences in impact of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak between fragile and conflict situations in Africa? These questions are of interest because much remains to be understood about the nature, extent and implications of the challenges and implications of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak between fragile and conflict situations in Africa, as evidences gathered to date is limited and the dynamics and mechanisms potentially and theoretically at play are often difficult to research. This is compounded by the fact that Africa remains less proactive compared other continents in tackling the COVID 19 pandemic. It concludes with the way forward that outlines potential solutions about the current state of knowledge, the policy implications of existing evidence on related areas on health financing and service delivery, politics stabilization, good governance

(fiscal space, fragility and conflict) which have been too context-specific in literatures.as it is manifested through forms of governance, instability and conflict and hard to quantify in ways that allow for comparative analysis and also critically the degree of interaction between these phenomena during and after the COVID 19 era.

Study objective(s) and question (s)

The general objective of this paper is to analyse the context and concept of fragility and conflict through a coherent understanding of its potential relevance with the scope of global health literatures in view of the time of COVID 19 pandemic, identifying its existing definitions and underscoring what drive fragility and conflict and the general context of the analytics of fiscal space, fragility and conflict. However, the paper is not intended only to be an extensive academic review of the available literatures but contribute to the ongoing international debates in articulating a better understanding of responses needed in fragile and conflict settings. Against this background, the paper attempts to address the following three key questions: 1) what are the implications of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak to fragile and conflict situations in Africa? 2) What are the existing and emerging challenges of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak to fragile and conflict situations in Africa? 3) Are there differences in impact of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak between fragile and conflict situations in Africa? These questions are of interest because much remains to be understood about the nature, extent and implications of the challenges and implications of COVID 19 pandemic outbreak between fragile and conflict situations in Africa, as evidences gathered to date is limited and the dynamics and mechanisms potentially and theoretically at play are often difficult to research. This is compounded by the fact that Africa remains less proactive compared other continents in tackling the COVID 19 pandemic.

Methodology (Theoretical framework)

Cross-examining Walker and Avant methodology (1994, p. 38), on distinguishing the definition on the conceptualization of attributes connection and its irrelevant via a systematic process (Nuopponen, 2010). Nuopponen (2010) acknowledged Walker and Avant (1994) distinguishing steps that is crucial for undertaking a broad concept pre and post analysis. Drawing from this and scoping along with integrating other detailed literatures review that significantly references different theoretical and empirical works and case studies, this paper adapts a desktop-based secondary methodology analysis, drawn from bibliographic databases and grey literature sources which gives a descriptive and qualitative analytical framework towards filling gaps between perceptions and facts where existing sufficiently disaggregate data cannot fill, given the complex nature of the paper focus. Thus, the qualitative analytical sources in this paper were chosen purposively to capture a full, range of literatures and fundamentally oversimplify complex and fragile and violent conflicts situations within fiscal space. However, providing simple snapshots on data deficits that characterise many Africa countries covered by such situations and studies. Further, it offers crucial reflections to the critical discourse of current existing factors driving fragility and conflicts and its dynamics to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along this view, the scoping review of this paper methodology and selection sources, are deliberately broad; no restrictions relating to settings, publication date, types of publications or materials (e.g. presentations, documents, videos) applied. Towards this perspective, applicable data were extracted in relation to search strategies and study identifiers (e.g. study author, year of publication); settings (i.e. country, areas or regions under study); on the methodology context (e.g. quantitative, qualitative, literature review); as findings were standardised (i.e. main results as presented in the study) and restrictions (both author and reviewer specified) to iteratively capture and refine the full breadth of relevant studies and information (Levac et al., 2010).

Overview Context of the analytics of fiscal space, fragility and conflict

With reference to the concept of “fiscal space” is still an evolving and complex concept that is recurrent in the on-going academic discourse, a clear consensus on its definition and measurement is lacking. Its emergence in the late 1990s as part of far-reaching discussions between countries and international financial institutions about the capacity to rise public

of force, the incapability to make collective decisions and offer basic public services. This is to say that several caveats to this concept of fragility is generally connected with a lack of will or capacity of the state to perform its core functions or in its broader sense, the deficiencies in one or more of three core functions of the state underpinning the inability to provide basic services and meet vital needs, unstable and weak governance, a persistent condition of extreme poverty, lack of territorial control, and high propensity to conflict and civil war. Accordingly, the OECD, DAC in recent times characterized fragility as states that 'unable to meet [their] population's expectations or manage changes in expectations and capacity through the political

Equally important, a number of researchers, using diverse theoretical perspectives, have empirically documented the concept of conflict which as a key focus of this paper is controversial. According to Robbins (2015:5) who clarifies that Psychologists and sociologists have different definitions to the concept of conflicts. Amidst the different meanings conflict is being defined as a process by few, an obstructive behavior, and goal incompatibility by others. Thus, a lot of people understand conflict only from physical form, such as a quarrel, pronouncing profanity, to each other, but few of individuals who understand and defines the concept of the conflict different particularly from the negative aspects. Generally dysfunctional phenomenon like discord, dispute or fighting are characterised with the concept of conflict. However, in literature, the concept of conflict is a literary element that involves a struggle between two opposing forces, or a struggle between characters or competing forces, usually a protagonist and an antagonist such as man against nature, society or himself (Dewantaro 2016:23). The conflict as written by Schellenberg in Eunson (2007) define conflict as the opposition between individuals and groups based on competing interests, different identities, and/or different attitudes. However, the concept of conflict is divided or expressed in three types. First, conflict within a person (intrapersonal). This conflict is known as called psychological conflict. Second, conflict between people or a person and society (interpersonal). This is often called social conflict (social conflict). Third, conflicts between humans and nature. This conflict is often referred to as physical or element conflict (natural conflict). These shows that conflict is context-specific, multi-causal and multidimensional and could result from a combination of the certain factors:

- Political and institutional factors: weak state institutions, elite power tussles and political exclusion, breakdown in social contract and corruption, identity politics.
- Socioeconomic factors: inequality, exclusion and marginalisation, absence or dwindling of social cohesion, and rise in poverty level.
- Resource and environmental factors: greed, scarcity of national resources repeatedly due to population growth leading to environmental insecurity, unjust resource exploitation.

Each of these factors may constitute a cause, dynamic and/or impact of conflict as new issues may arise during conflict which prolong the conflict. However, identifying and understanding the interactions between different causes, dimensions, correlates and dynamics of conflict and the specific contexts in which conflict rises, is crucial in determining prospective areas of intervention and designing right approaches and methods for conflict prevention, resolution and transformation.

Research into the sources and categories of conflict has generally highlighted two conflict approaches: the subjectivist and the objectivist approach. The objectivist approach searches for the cause of conflict in the social and political make-up and structure of society, and reflects on the goals at stake that could be thoroughly compatible. On the contrary, the subjectivist perspective focuses primarily on the supposed incompatibility. The level of incompatibility is the most significant variable that affects the intensity of the dispute and dynamic of conflict phases.

Perhaps more interesting in the perspective of conflict is the unprecedented nature and relationship of conflict and the COVID-19

and surprising ways and also assessments about its ramifications shift daily. To complicate matters, the challenges and implication of the pandemic and related containment measures has varied between different countries, regions and conflict zones in sub-Saharan Africa, as it has aggravated the impact of pre-existing drivers of fragility, notably conflict, in complex and unpredictable ways, making it difficult to render broad judgments about its implications, challenges and consequences.

Also, it is too early to fully assess the magnitude of how the coronavirus pandemic could rise the risk of conflict and vulnerability of fragile states and also undermining fiscal space, however, the pandemic is presenting long-term challenges which could have long-lasting implications for conflict and fragility in Africa. While some African countries are taking immediate action in response to COVID-19, others were unable to react appropriately and imposed overly repressive measures to withstand the pandemic's shocks, fuelling societal discontent. All the same, the challenges encountered by fragile and conflict-affected countries in Africa in the time of COVID-19 pandemic are distinct and arguably greater highlighting the context of exacerbation and vulnerability from the pandemic crises and less able to address and manage its critical implications notably on social cohesion, economic and human development, political stability, community security and the environment; thus, magnifying and widening existing poverty as well as inequality and exposing the structural vulnerabilities of fragile and conflict contexts, therefore, posing lasting challenges and related implications. This situation requires urgent and decisive action. Hence, it is critical for response strategies and policies in fragile and conflict affected settings to target contextual sources that accelerate these issues.

At this point, it is useful to reflect on the ability of many sub-Saharan African states and societies affected by armed conflict and acute fragility to respond to the COVID 19 pandemic as inhibited by myriad challenges such as weak state capacity, access to reliable information, the politicisation of the response (unpreparedness or lack of response), limits peace operations and stalls or distracts conflict parties from nascent as well as enduring efforts at conflict resolution. Further challenges include disruption of donor and humanitarian supply chain and immediate or protracted emergencies as well as poor health systems and infrastructure. Interestingly, unscrupulous leaders may exploit the COVID 19 pandemic to advance their aims in ways that exacerbate conflict or fragile situations such as cracking down on dissent at home or accelerating conflicts with opponents on the assumption that they will not be found wanting while the world is otherwise occupied. COVID-19 has fuelled geopolitical friction between super powers, as the U.S. blaming China for the disease while Beijing seeks greater ties by offering aid to affected countries mostly in Africa, aggravating existing great-power tensions that make more difficulties in cooperation on crisis management. More alarming to reflect are the outlines of what could trigger further challenges and impacts from the pandemic due to known risks such as economic collapse, extreme weather events, acute food insecurity, poor hygiene measures, lack of access to containment health measures and related exacerbating factors to increasing the risk of conflict and fragile settings. In the same way that the COVID 19 pandemic fuels the fault-lines challenges of inequality and exclusion, discrimination and stigmatization, human rights and injustice concerns, poverty and the highG[(that)-9(ma)] TJETQq0.0000

estimates suggest that by 2030, nearly two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could be found in these contexts. The majority of fragile and conflict settings are within low- and middle-income countries and also persistent health emergency incidents in these countries account for an estimated 140 million negating events and 3.5 million deaths annually.

environmentally-linked conflicts transcend borders. At the same time, environmental shocks

transparency, and accountability. This is particularly important for Africa in view of this paper analysis. The leadership factor is critical as it allows for policies that promote economic stability, strengthen institutions and build capacity in mitigation the risk of fiscal policy, fragility and conflict.

- The international community needs to fully recognize the desperate situation of Africa low-income countries and take prompt, decisive actions to help restore growth through strong international partnership, collaboration and support in the form of financial and technical assistance focused simultaneously on security, debt relief and service as well as development in a way improve the effectiveness of the state, coordinating their efforts closely, and focusing their capacity efforts on building economic institutions.

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