

A Scoping Review of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Wellbeing in Africa

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Abstract

Despite the immense interruptions to relationships and family life during the COVID-19 pandemic, only a few studies explicitly focused on family wellbeing. Therefore, the present study aimed to synthesize current evidence in the African context to provide a state-of-the-art representation of the pandemic's impact on family wellbeing. Using a scoping review, 22 articles on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing in Africa were analysed. The results of the study showed a diverse and immense impact of the pandemic on family wellbeing. We noted that there were few studies on this topic and that wellbeing outcomes were measured from a deficit perspective rather than as a positive state of being. The theme of stigma was more pronounced in Western Africa, whereas domestic violence was linked more to Southern African contexts. Furthermore, the economic impact of the pandemic was emphasized in Eastern and Southern African countries than in Ghana and Nigeria in Western Africa. In line with the recommendations from the articles reviewed, a multifaceted policy response is needed to protect family wellbeing. Such interventions need to focus on family functioning, happiness and social wellbeing, and not just reactive and preventative approaches, to promote wellbeing.

Keywords: COVID-19, family wellbeing, Africa, impact, scoping review

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on the African continent (Bwire et al., 2022), resulting in significant disruptions in already fragile health systems, socio-economic processes, and overall functioning of individuals (Mahlangu et al., 2022). Previous research primarily focused on studying the individual impacts of the pandemic (Al Dhaheri et al., 2021; Modise, 2021), but it is crucial to closely examine the institution of family and its wellbeing within the context of the pandemic because of the vital role families play in the care and wellbeing of individuals to facilitate their effective functioning in the society (Adebiyi et al., 2021). The concept of family, for the purpose of this paper, encompasses individuals connected through biological, kinship, and lineage relations, shared living spaces, legal ties such as adoption and marriage, or relational proximity in terms of interpersonal relationships (Hall & Mokomane, 2018; Isaacs et al., 2019). In the African context, family extends beyond immediate family members to include extended family, comprising uncles, aunts, cousins,

nieces, and nephews, thereby encompassing the entire family unit (Mafumbate, 2019). The wellbeing of African families relies on interconnectedness, interdependence, a sense of solidarity, and belongingness, with connectedness serving as a fundamental aspect of care and support for African people (Stavrova & Luhmann, 2016). Consequently, when families are impacted, individuals and societies also experience repercussions. The COVID-19 pandemic was observed to have negative short- and long-term impacts on the overall wellbeing of families in Africa (Adebisi et al., 2021; Stokes & Patterson, 2020).

Wellbeing, as defined by the World Health Organization (2001), represents a state in which individuals have no ill health, realize their own abilities, cope with life's stresses, work productively, make meaningful contributions to their communities, and perceive that life is going well. While the traditional definition of wellbeing primarily focuses on the absence of mental illness, for the purpose of the current paper, wellbeing encompasses both the positive and negative experiences of families during the COVID-19 pandemic (Diener et al., 2009). The components of family wellbeing under consideration were derived from the works of Keyes (2002) and the World Health Organization (2001) as well as the Family Wellbeing Framework (Tautolo et al., 2020). The family wellbeing framework comprises five core components of family wellbeing: psychological, social, emotional, economic, and physical wellbeing; all of which are subject to the dynamic influence of factors such as circumstances, locality, activities, psychological resources, and interpersonal relations. Psychological wellbeing focuses on individuals' inner, private functioning, and social wellbeing pertains to their evaluation of personal life circumstances and functioning within society (Keyes, 2002; Westerhof & Keyes, 2010). Emotional wellbeing involves awareness, understanding, and acceptance of one's feelings, as well as the ability to balance positive and negative emotions experienced in life (Keyes, 1998). Physical wellbeing relates to the overall condition of the body and its optimal functioning, encompassing factors such as physical fitness, absence or presence of diseases, nutrition, and rest (World Health Organization, 2001). Economic wellbeing refers to having sufficient income to meet basic needs, including healthcare, housing, food, and education (World Health Organization, 2001).

A number of studies shed light on the emotional, economic, psychological, and physical impacts of the pandemic on families, and the studies documented reports of mental health issues, financial losses, sicknesses, and fatalities (Foley et al., 2021; Prime et al., 2020; Wolfson & Leung, 2020). The resulting evidence called for policy considerations in preparation for pandemics (Forman et al., 2022). A study was identified that explored the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing (Gayatri & Puspitasari, 2023). This study provided insights into the impact of the pandemic on family dynamics, mental health, and social wellbeing; however, it revealed a significant research gap due to its focus on higher-income countries such as the United States, Canada, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Israel, China, Taiwan, Japan, and Bangladesh. This geographical focus raises questions about the applicability of its findings to low- and middle-income countries, especially within the varied psychosocial and socio-economic landscapes of Africa. The study's geographical limitations highlight the necessity for continent-specific research because there is limited knowledge about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing on the continent.

Although there have been other pandemics in Africa, for instance, Ebola, its impact on African families' well-being has not been directly explored, in countries where it occurred (Koch et al., 2021; Vygen et al., 2016). Studies on the 2014–2016 Ebola epidemic recorded mostly its health consequences with some evidence pointing to various challenges in accessing maternal health services, including family planning and reproductive care (Jones et al., 2016). The outbreak exposed weaknesses in the health systems of these countries, affecting their ability to respond promptly and effectively to the crisis (Koch et al., 2021). Regarding the economic impact of the Ebola virus, there were significant financial burdens to already strained health systems and economies (Dramé et al., 2021; Elmahdawy et al., 2017). Additionally, the psychosocial implications of the epidemic, such as enacted stigma and its effects on health-related quality of life, were noted as areas requiring attention and intervention (Kokou-Kpolou et al., 2022). However, unlike Ebola, which was largely confined to specific regions, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has affected families globally, with a particularly significant impact on the African continent.

Although studies on aspects such as education (Soudien et al., 2022), pathophysiology, epidemiology, aetiology, vulnerability, preparedness, and economic impact in Africa (Anyanwu & Salami, 2021; Lone & Ahmad, 2020; Tessema et al., 2021) were conducted, a significant knowledge gap remains concerning the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing.

Following a review of existing evidence, what was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the wellbeing of families in Africa?

This scoping review aimed to answer the aforementioned research question by providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the pandemic on family wellbeing in Africa. The findings can inform policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to develop targeted interventions to support African families during and beyond the pandemic.

The current scoping review had the following objectives:

1. Examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the psychological, social, economic, physical, and emotional wellbeing of families; and
2. Discuss potential recommendations for further research, practice, and policy in this area.

Methodology

Our scoping review inquired into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing in Africa. This work aimed to provide synthesis on state-of-the-art research on the African continent that relates to family wellbeing in the context of the pandemic. The scoping review was conducted following the PRISMA guidelines and our methodological approach followed the iterative six-step process laid out by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). We took the following steps:

1. We identified the research question, which asked what the impact was of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing in Africa.
2. We completed an abstract analysis of the relevant articles published in academic journals. As our research questions were directed toward empirical findings, we

limited our search to peer-reviewed articles in academic journals and to articles written in English.

3. We included selected studies based on abstract analysis in a full-text analysis.
4. We charted the data gathered from selected studies after reading the full text.
5. We collated, summarized, and reported the results.

We searched through the following databases for peer-reviewed academic articles: PsychINFO, BMC, ProQuest, DOAJ, Google Scholar, MEDLINE, PubMed, Sabinet African Journals, Scopus, and Web of Science. We used the following search terms: (((((covid-19[Title/Abstract] OR coronavirus [Title/Abstract] OR 2019-ncov[Title/Abstract] OR sars-cov-2[Title/Abstract] OR cov-19[Title/Abstract])) AND (family [Title/Abstract])) AND (wellbeing OR wellbeing OR wellbeing)) AND (Africa)) AND (impact OR effect OR influence)) AND (("2020"[Date - Publication]))).

Eligibility Criteria

After collecting articles generated from these searches, three team members conducted two screenings by analyzing the titles and abstracts of the gathered papers that were stored on a shared Google Drive. The first screen's eligibility criteria required that articles be published during the period in which COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Other eligibility criteria included empirical papers in English that focused specifically on family wellbeing as the outcome variable. Although wellbeing was conceptualized as experiences of positive feelings and functioning, most articles focused on the pathological view of wellbeing, and so we had to include these in the review. We explored wellbeing in terms of material/economic, physical, emotional, social, and psychological impact. In summary, we included articles that met the following criteria:

1. Focus on family wellbeing
2. Data gathered during the pandemic
3. Samples from Africa
4. Date: 2020 to 2023
5. Written in English
6. Qualitative and Quantitative studies
7. Review papers
8. Journal articles

Data Analysis and Synthesis

We came to a consensus on inclusion or exclusion based on a shared understanding of the criteria. Our final list of articles was divided among the team members and discussed collectively (see Figure 1). We read the full text and extracted the following information from each article: Author, title, abstract, year, country, qualitative/quantitative/both methods, findings, and recommendations. All of these data were organized using Google Sheets. The results section of this article captures the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing in terms of economic, social, physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing.

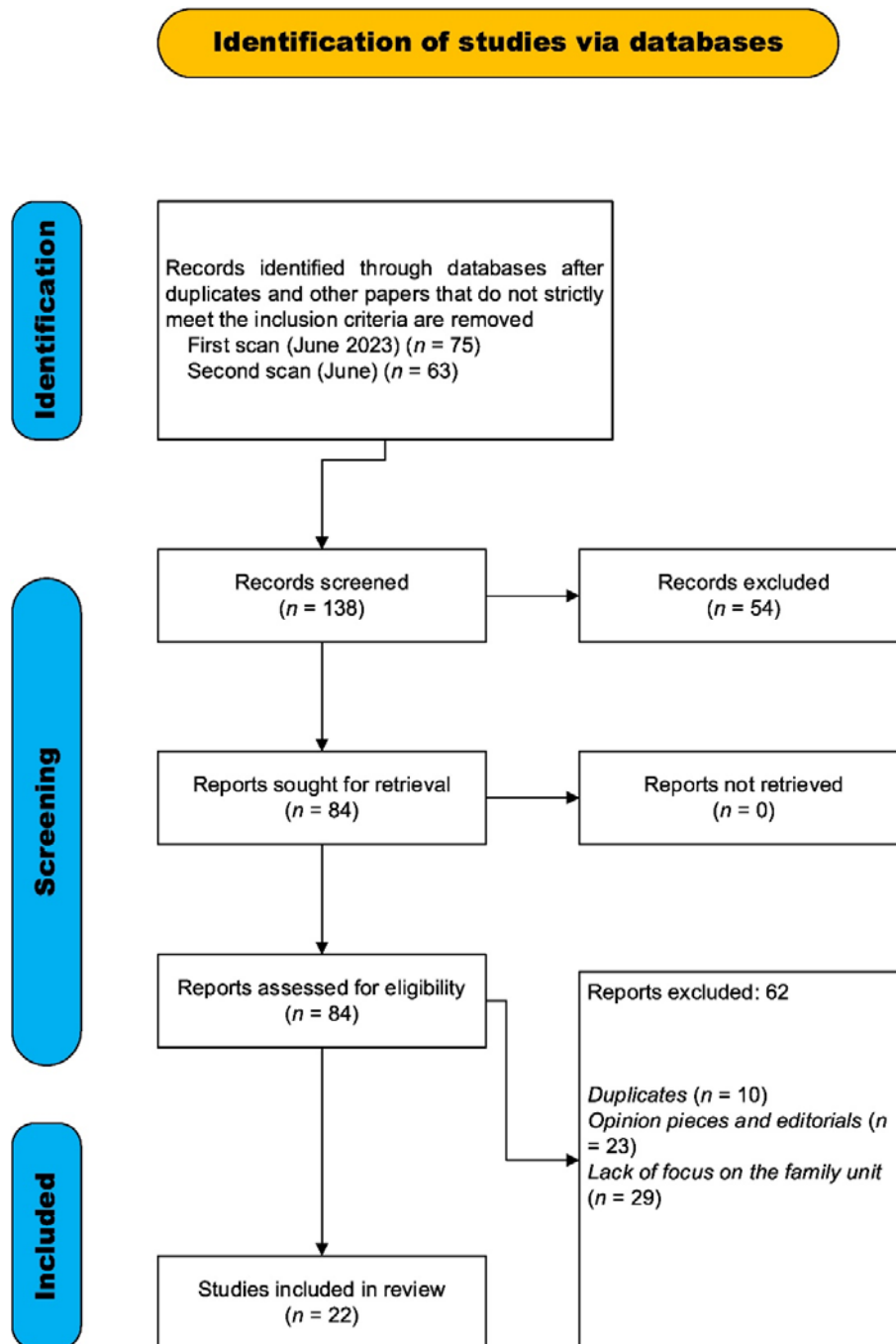


Figure 1. Prisma flowchart detailing search retrieval and inclusion.

Results

A total of 22 published articles were examined. These articles were spread across different time periods, with three articles published in 2020, followed by five in 2021, twelve in 2022, and two in the first half of 2023. Most of the articles (8) originated solely from South Africa. In addition, six articles were multi-site studies, two each were from Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Uganda, and one each from Zambia and Ghana (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Articles included in the Scoping Review.

Geographic area	Methodology/type of paper	Wellbeing outcome	Key findings	Key recommendations
<i>Family Resilience and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A South African Study</i> (Rich et al., 2022)				
Western Cape, South Africa	Original research, qualitative	Economic Social Psychological	Negative: Trouble adjusting to the imposed restrictions, but some families adapted and found new ways to build relationships and strengthen bonds; difficult challenges were children's schooling, financial impact from job losses, and separation from extended family members due to restrictions on movement; decrease in social interaction and relationships; loneliness and anxiety; family separation; financial impact; closure of schools affected feeding scheme at schools; and difficult to balance work and home duties and homeschooling for children. Positive: Communication was pivotal; being honest about struggles, needs, feelings; psychosocial support interventions focusing on families and relationships; raising awareness and encourage healthy familial relationships and communication; strengthening family resilience online through support groups, webinars, interactive online sessions, and family conferences; and schooling educated parents on how to support children academically.	Increased awareness and encouragement for families to continue strengthening bonds to foster family resilience. Psychosocial support interventions focusing on families and relationships Raising awareness and encourage healthy familial relationships and communication Strengthening family resilience online through support groups, webinars, interactive online sessions, and family conferences Schooling educated parents on how to support their children academically
<i>How COVID Reconfigured Family Relationships: Explaining the Work of Academic Women Through the Lens of Complexity Theory</i> (Kriger et al., 2022)				
South Africa	Original research, mixed methods	Social Psychological	A dramatic reorganization of once-stable familial roles. The recasting of family roles revealed a stubborn continuation of traditional and hierarchical gender assignments that privilege men, and their work and spaces. The scrambling of family roles ended up with men still in privileged spaces under the lockdown arrangements.	More fine-grained analyses of the long-term effects of the pandemic's disruption of women's academic work and on family relationships at home are needed. Suggestion on the longitudinal studies of the pandemic's social and academic effects centred on the home.

<i>Impact of COVID-19 on Population Health and Economic Wellbeing in Ethiopia: A National Pilot Survey (Belay et al., 2022)</i>				
Ethiopia	Pilot, population-based, cross-sectional survey, quantitative	Psychological Social Emotional Physical Economic Mortality	Family income of 55.9% participants, 9.1% lost their job, 17.1% perceived high stress in their household, and 1.14% reported death in their family in the month before the study. The findings showed family income were strongly impacted by the pandemic, with over half of study participants reporting loss of family income and about one in ten reporting loss of job. The pandemic placed serious economic pressure on individual households, and self-employed and unemployed people were most affected. High stress was compounded by deaths in the family.	Specific plans must be designed to address the needs of those in unstable working situations. In future pandemics, such plans must be put in place in the early stages of the pandemic to prevent similar economic hardships. Continuous surveillance is needed to actively monitor the impact of the pandemic on the community and families and safeguard the economic and health wellbeing of individuals and households
<i>Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Nigerian Case (Suleiman, 2021)</i>				
Nigeria	Secondary data, qualitative	Social Economic Health/physical	The pandemic was a big threat to the social and economic wellbeing and survival of infected and affected people in households. Many households were destabilised, impacting their sources of income and livelihoods due to the pandemic, leading to poor purchasing power, especially among the weak Nigerians. The infected and affected people suffer from stigma and discrimination in society with negative impacts.	The government must introduce sustainable policies and strategies for managing the pandemic; for instance, actions must be targeted to support the most vulnerable people. Government must produce means to train people on how to enhance their capacities in COVID-19 management. The public healthcare system and the economic system must be revitalised
<i>Intersections Between COVID-19 and Socio-economic Mental Health Stressors in the Lives of South African Adolescent Girls and Young Women (Duby et al., 2022)</i>				
South Africa	Mixed methods	Social Economic Psychological	For some school-going adolescent girls and young women who come from abusive or unhappy families, school usually provides a respite; however, when the schools closed, they were 'stuck' at home. Despite families being forced to spend more time together at home, respondents described emotional distancing between family members confined together, resulting in further loss of social connection and emotional support.	Interventions to provide parenting support and investments in family strengthening could fill additional gaps in mental health support for young people, especially in resource restricted settings.

<i>Lessons Learnt During COVID-19 Lockdown: A Qualitative Study of South African Families (Donga et al., 2021)</i>				
South Africa	Original research, qualitative	Social Psychological Economic	For some, the pandemic meant spending more time with family than ever, and for others, it meant not seeing family at all. Despite the cases being different, the participants shared the view that the pandemic taught them to have a greater appreciation for family. Households that were financially vulnerable before the pandemic saw their situation deteriorate, particularly those from low-income communities.	The development of family policies that takes into consideration the strategies that taps into the strengths of families to enhance family well-being in times of future pandemics.
<i>Parenting Amid COVID-19: Challenges and Supports for Families with Young Children in South Africa (Naicker & Richter, 2022)</i>				
South Africa	Survey, quantitative	Economic Psychological Social Physical	The challenges were disruptions in childcare, and difficulties feeding their children and showing affection. The main underlying factors were fear of infection, lack of money and negative effect in the household, including stress, tension, hopelessness, and depression. Fathers and families living in rural areas reported the most challenges. They were more likely to report difficulties showing affection, struggles to provide meals for young children, and higher levels of violence towards their children. Families living in cities/suburbs were more likely to receive help from their family and community to report not needing support from NGOs, and to report not needing help from government than families in townships and rural areas. Families in townships were significantly more likely to report not receiving NGO support. A lack of finances was a substantial driver for challenges, with 79% of parents reporting that they could not buy enough food, 39% could not afford to maintain their child's childcare or preschool attendance, and 30% could not afford to keep up with clinic appointments. Stress contributed to conflict in the home, which was the reason for difficulties being affectionate towards a	Different stakeholders should make efforts to support and protect children, including support for families, or at the very least parents, which extend beyond material resources to psychosocial support and guidance.

			child. More than a third of parents cited feeling stressed and irritable, or hopeless and withdrawn. Tension in the home was cited as a reaction to their child crying more. The most common reasons for anger and violence towards a child were someone losing their temper and hitting their child, the child breaking or touching something they were not supposed to touch, and their child getting close to danger such as fire, poison, or an open water source.	
<i>Perceived Changes in Food Security, Finances and Revenue of Rural and Urban Households During COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria</i> (Bamiwuye et al., 2022)				
Nigeria	Secondary data sourced from the COVID-19 National Longitudinal Phone Survey, quantitative	Economic Physical	Food security of all the households (rural or urban) was threatened as a result of the pandemic, which may be because of the loss of jobs because of social distancing and total lockdown or loss of income as some people were not paid by employers. At least 83% of urban households and 78% of rural households were food insecure because of the pandemic, which implies that the level of food insecurity as a result of the pandemic is more pronounced in urban households than in rural households. Household finances measured in terms of current sales revenue: There was a significant association between household place of residence and household finances of all households that operated a family business. This implies that change of revenue before the advent and during the pandemic depends on place of residence.	The government should embark on a new legislative decision process and proper channelling of resources that take cognizance of the disparities in the context in which the pandemic affects the rural and urban households. All-inclusive palliative measures should be sustained by the government and other stakeholders to reduce the effects and financial burden of the pandemic on the entire populace.
<i>Rapid Health Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Families with Children with Disabilities Living in Low-income Communities in Lusaka, Zambia</i> (Hearst et al., 2021)				
Lusaka, Zambia	Mixed methods, interviews were semi-structured with categorical (survey-based) and open-ended questions	Economic Psychological Physical	Families reported a major loss of income resulting in food insecurity, housing instability, stress, and increased risk of child separation and neglect. Most families did not report receiving governmental financial assistance and reported loss of access to health services, such as physiotherapy, for their child. Families faced greater food insecurity, more poverty,	An urgent need for responses that deliberately address the needs of children with disabilities and their families, notably uninterrupted access to adequate food, inclusive education, rehabilitation therapy, and income-generating activities.

			more crowding, and less healthcare services, and children were left alone or on the streets to beg.	
<i>COVID-19 Daily Realities for Families: A South African Sample</i> (October et al., 2021)				
Middle East and North African countries	Online surveys, quantitative	Psychological Emotional Economic	COVID-19 deaths affected families in low-income countries causing stigma, isolation and rejection, posttraumatic stress due prolonged grief, loss and reduction of wages, and marital conflicts. A positive effect was that testing positive in families strengthened their relationships	Social and psychological care for individuals suffering from COVID-19 deaths. Support with financial packages.
<i>COVID-19 Daily Realities for Families: A South African Sample</i> (October et al., 2021)				
South Africa	Qualitative	Psychological Emotional	Negative: Isolation, anxiety, family conflicts, family and communication changes, and financial management and constraints. Positive: Family's health and wellbeing, increased family cohesion, change in societal norms and traditional gender roles for men and women, and cleanliness and good health.	Interventions that help families adapt to new daily routines. Help changing socialization methods to maintain relationships and how to deal with conflicts and financial constraints. Research on diverse family structures, family composition, and family dynamics.
<i>Economic, Health and Physical Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic in Sub-Saharan African Regions: A Cross-Sectional Survey</i> (Mashige et al., 2021)				
East, Southern, West, and Central African countries	Quantitative	Economic	East and Southern African countries were affected more than West African countries, e.g., Ghana, Nigeria, and Central African countries. More business closure/shut down in East and Southern African countries, and in Central and West African countries most businesses were operating. More men contracted and succumbed to COVID-19 in East and Southern African countries than women.	Sub-Saharan African countries must learn from each other during recovery process. Holistic policies must be implemented to enhance recovery of the economy in different sub-regions. More research must be done on economic and health impacts of the pandemic in the sub-Saharan African region.
<i>Exploring the Illness Experience Amongst Families Living with 2019 Coronavirus Disease in Ghana: Three Case Reports</i> (Ayisi-Boateng et al., 2020)				
Ghana	Qualitative	Psychosocial Physical Economic	Impaired social interaction Loss of income Loss of friends Family separation/Loneliness Stigmatization	Telemedicine-virtual consultation and treatment centres to collect medicine. Advocate for protection of vulnerable families. Employ relevant family medicine tools while caring for patients with COVID-19.

<i>Factors Associated with COVID-19 Related Stress Among Female Primary Caregivers in Vulnerable Families in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2023)</i>				
South Africa	Quantitative	Emotional Psychological	Increased domestic violence Job loss Financial constraints stress and anxiety Demands of home schooling with little to no accesses to online learning Impact on food security	Provide emotional support services to the caregivers and families.
<i>Risks and Opportunities for Children's Well-being in Resource-constrained Multigenerational Households During COVID-19: Implications for School Psychology Interventions (Mohangi, 2023)</i>				
South Africa	Qualitative	Psychological Emotional Economic	Impact: Financial constraints; family interpersonal conflict, e.g., children witness aggression or violence; verbal conflict and harsh discipline on children; adult stress to confinement in one house; and children face psychological maladjustment when parents cannot attend to emotional, physical, and schooling needs	School psychologists should build opportunities to mitigate risks, e.g., focus on improving family values and communication skills to alleviate communication-related conflict. Knowledge and awareness of diverse cultures to be sensitive to families' cultural backgrounds. Social support to help children re-enter social groups or establish new friends to extend support system. Learning support, such as grandparents and in-house relations providing learning support to children under class teacher supervision.
<i>Intergenerational Kinship Networks of Support Within Transnational Families in the Era of COVID-19 in the South Africa-Zimbabwe Migration Corridor (Maviza & Nzima, 2022)</i>				
South Africa, and Zimbabwe	Qualitative	Psychological Economic	Pandemic influenced intergenerational support within transnational families due to loss of income, job loss, and business shutdown. Difficult to send remittances to country of origin. Migrant children value familial duties and unconditional support for their parents and remained committed to provide support despite economic struggle.	

<i>Violence Against Women from Partners and Other Household Members During COVID-19 in Burkina Faso and Kenya (Decker et al., 2022)</i>				
Kenya, and Burkina Faso	Quantitative	Physical Psychological	Intimate partner violence and household violence against women in Kenya and Burkina Faso were prevalent, and in some cases, intensified during the pandemic.	Both primary prevention and survivor-centered support services, including economic empowerment, should be integrated in COVID-recovery efforts and extended into the post-pandemic period to fully meet women's safety needs.
<i>Unintended Socio-economic and Health Consequences of COVID-19 Among Slum Dwellers in Kampala, Uganda (Nuwematsiko et al., 2022)</i>				
Uganda	Mixed methods	Economic/material Physical	The slum dwellers of Bwaise I and Bwaise III experienced several negative socio-economic and health consequences of COVID-19 and its prevention measures that severely affected their wellbeing.	Response activities should be contextualized to different settings and protocols to protect vulnerable groups in the community, such as children and women.
<i>The Impact of COVID-19 Measures on Children with Disabilities and Their Families in Uganda (Mbazzi et al., 2022)</i>				
Uganda	Qualitative	Economic Psychological Physical	Lockdown measures had a negative effect on most participants' mental and physical health, social life, finances, education, and food security. Access to medical services and medication for chronic illness was limited or absent due to restrictions in travel, facilities restricting access, and limited financial resources. Most parents reported loss of work, which resulted in difficulties finding enough food and paying rent. Parents worried about children missing education and friends.	Greater attention must be paid to children with disabilities and their families when implementing mitigating and long-term responses.
<i>The Effects of COVID-19 on Livelihoods of Rural Households: South Wollo and Oromia Zones, Ethiopia (Asegie et al., 2021)</i>				
Ethiopia	Mixed methods	Economic	The livelihoods of 88.89% of households were affected by the pandemic. Households were forced to cease their livelihood activities such as daily labor (34.82%), small business trade (26.3%), livestock trading (23.7%), income from remittance (21.49%), and labor migration (11.48%). This implies that the pandemic particularly affected non-farm and off-farm livelihood diversification strategies.	The government and other rural development partners should focus on immediate and long-term intervention strategies to recover the most affected households through social security programs, creating market linkage and revolve funding mechanisms.

<i>Socioeconomic Impacts of COVID-19 in Four African Countries (Josephson et al., 2020)</i>				
Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda	Quantitative, longitudinal	Economic	The findings are 256 million individuals (77% of the population in the four countries) are estimated to live in households that lost income due to the pandemic. Attempts to cope with this loss are exacerbated by 2025% of households in each country being unable to access medicine and staple foods. Food insecurity is disproportionately borne by households that were already impoverished prior to the pandemic.	These findings can help inform decisions by governments and international organizations on measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and reveal the need for continued monitoring.
<i>COVID-19 Economic Problems, and Family Relationships in Eight Middle East and North African Countries (El Tantawi et al., 2022)</i>				
Middle East and North African countries	Online surveys, quantitative	Psychological Emotional Economic	The pandemic caused financial constraints in the form of job loss and reduced wages and deaths, which negatively influenced family relationship.	Development of strategies to provide social and financial support to employees to reduce the losses and adverse social impact caused by the pandemic

Regarding the methodology employed, eight studies used qualitative approaches, nine used quantitative approaches, and five incorporated mixed methods. Notably, the studies originating from Nigeria primarily concentrated on economic wellbeing, alongside physical and social wellbeing considerations. On the other hand, the South African studies delved into the complex interplay of multiple impacts, exploring the psychological, social, physical, emotional, and economic facets of wellbeing. The studies from Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana, and Uganda comprehensively examined all dimensions of wellbeing.

The multi-site studies encompassed regions such as East, Southern, West, and Central Africa, as well as countries like Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda. These studies exclusively focused on the economic implications of various factors, such as the loss of income due to business shutdowns. In contrast, the studies conducted in the Middle East and North Africa delved into the psychological, emotional, and economic aspects of wellbeing. Noteworthy examples include the South African-Zimbabwe study that concentrated on psychological and economic facets, and the Burkina Faso-Kenya study that explored physical and psychological wellbeing.

Discussion

This study is a comprehensive scoping review on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing in Africa (see Table 1). The scoping review aimed to identify and synthesize published research studies in Africa on the impact of the pandemic on family wellbeing. Consequently, measures that minimize this impact on families and recommendations for policy, research, and practice are discussed. The analysis of the selected 22 studies revealed the impact of the pandemic on the five facets of wellbeing, namely psychological, economic, social, physical, and emotional. We use a narrative approach to discuss the results on the impact of each facet on wellbeing on families across Africa.

Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

Research showed that family life fulfils an essential role in the wellbeing of its members and is a source of support, security, and resilience, particularly during difficult times (Koen et al., 2013; Roos et al., 2021; Vanderhout et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic that erupted during the 2019–2021 period only exacerbated the already fractured social system of the family in many parts of Africa (Chidume et al., 2021; Ekwe, 2021; Kalil et al., 2020). Based on the 22 reviewed research papers, psychological and economic impacts on families appear to be reported more than other facets such as social, physical, and emotional wellbeing. The lockdown restrictions caused psychological distress to many families due to prolonged quarantine echoing similar challenges observed during previous health crises like the Ebola outbreak (Kokou-Kpolou et al., 2022).

The study by El Tantawi et al. (2022) in the Middle East and North Africa reported that many people suffered from posttraumatic stress due to deaths in families and prolonged grief. Similarly, in Ethiopia many experienced stress and anxiety as a result of the increased loss of lives in families (Belay et al., 2022; Kalil et al., 2020). Naicker and Richter (2022) conducted a study in South Africa and reported that the increase in deaths due to COVID-19 seemed to have created a collective fear and feelings of helplessness among family members.

Furthermore, we found that, although families across the African continent experienced stigma, studies in West African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana reported more on stigma and discrimination experienced by families due to infected family members and/or deaths related to COVID-19 (Ayisi-Boateng et al., 2020; Suleiman, 2021). This is most likely due to victim-blaming and lack of understanding of the aetiology of the illness as well as how it is easily transmitted among individuals. The experience of social stigma associated with COVID-19 also impacted the mental wellbeing of families (Adebiyi et al., 2021; Attanasio et al., 2020; Kalil et al., 2020; October et al., 2021).

Children faced psychological maladjustment when parents could not attend to their emotional, physical, and schooling needs (Engelbrecht, 2023; Mohangi, 2023). Anxiety in children increased after schools' closure as it influenced family structures and their daily routines (Spiteri, 2021). A study done in Zambia reported that there was no or limited school attendance due to lack of educational resources, especially for children with disabilities (Hearst et al., 2021). Similarly, in a study done in Uganda found that most parents were worried about children missing education (Mbazzi et al., 2022).

Economic Wellbeing

In an attempt to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the economic wellbeing of families particularly in Africa were greatly affected (Suleiman, 2021). The high rate of unemployment caused by the lockdown restrictions resulted in many families experiencing financial challenges (Parsons, 2020). A number of African countries also reported a significant drop in employment; for instance, a survey report by Koos et al. (2020) using World Bank and the World Food Programme's data showed that Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, and Malawi all experienced an average drop between 43 and 80% in employment. South Africa also reported losing 2.2 million jobs in the second quarter of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The economic repercussions of COVID-19 were substantial, further burdening health systems and economies across Africa. This situation is reminiscent of previous health crises like the Ebola outbreak, which also imposed significant financial burdens on already strained health systems and economies (Dramé et al., 2021; Elmahdawy et al., 2017).

Based on the findings of this review, almost all studies done across Africa reported immense financial impact from job losses, closure of businesses, and decreases in family income (Ayisi-Boateng et al., 2020; Bamiwuye et al., 2022; Belay et al., 2022; El Tantawi et al., 2022; Hearst et al., 2021; Josephson et al., 2020; Mashige et al., 2021; Nuwematsiko et al., 2022; Rich et al., 2022). The study done by Mashige et al. (2021) on the economic, health, and physical impact of the pandemic in the Sub-Saharan Africa regions showed that East and Southern African countries were more affected by business closure than West and Central African countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, where most businesses operated as usual.

The scoping review also revealed that financial constraints have caused food insecurity in many African countries. The situation led to some individuals being unable to feed their families, resulting in starvation and malnutrition (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2020). Josephson et al. (2020) in their longitudinal study on socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in four African countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda) found that about 77% of the population in these countries were unable to access staple foods. This food

insecurity heavily impacted households that were already impoverished prior to the pandemic. Similarly, in a study done in Zambia on families with disabled children, Hearst et al. (2021) reported that the pandemic caused many families to reduce the quantity and quality of foods due to loss of income. Another study done in Nigeria by Bamiwuye et al. (2022) found that food insecurity was a threat to all households in rural and urban areas. They further explained that at least 83% of urban households and 78% of rural households were food insecure. Many families from impoverished communities relied on meals provided by the government, and therefore, the closure of schools meant an increase in their feeding size, frequency, and quality in addition to their already financially constrained circumstances (Rich et al., 2022; November, 2020).

Most African families survive on remittances in the form of food or money being sent by migrant children. The pandemic significantly influenced the intergenerational support within transitional families. A study done by Maviza and Nzima (2022) on intergenerational support in transitional families in South Africa and Zimbabwe reported that due to loss of jobs resulting in no or less income; it became difficult to continue sending remittances to their parents. However, as migrant children value familial duties and unconditionally support their parents, they remain committed to provide support despite economic hardships. Asegie et al. (2021) found in their study on the effects of the pandemic on the livelihoods of rural households in Ethiopia that the pandemic affected the income from remittance by 21.49% and labor migration by 11.48%. These findings reflect the severe impact of the pandemic on the economic wellbeing of many families in Africa.

Most parents also struggled to balance work and home duties due to home-schooling. Children from low-income communities and rural areas suffered in terms of transitioning to online learning because of lack of resources like cell phones and computers. The demands of home schooling appeared to become overwhelming and challenging in most African countries, especially for families in rural areas. These findings were reported in studies done in South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia (Mbazzi et al., 2022; Naicker & Richter, 2022; October et al., 2021; Rich et al., 2022).

Although the economic impacts of COVID-19 significantly affected family well-being in most African countries by reducing income, increasing poverty, and limiting access to essential services, it is important to note that social safety nets provided by governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and families played a vital role in mitigating these effects. For example, in a study conducted by Adebisi et al. (2021) on the negative impacts of COVID-19 in South Africa, the findings revealed that the South African government introduced the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) to help families cope with the effects of the pandemic. Similarly, a study by Suleiman (2021) on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa reported that the Nigerian government provided financial assistance as a palliative to a small number of households to cushion the economic crises. Furthermore, Mbazzi et al. (2022), in their study on the impact of COVID-19 measures on children with disabilities and their fathers in Uganda, reported that the government distributed food parcels for a few months during the outbreak of the pandemic, with many of these parcels being donations from neighbors. This indicates that community members also played a significant role in mitigating the effects of the pandemic. Additionally, families played a major role in providing financial and food support to elderly people. This is evidenced in a study by

Maviza and Nzima (2022) on intergenerational kinship networks among African migrants from Zimbabwe in South Africa. Their findings indicated that, despite the challenges of losing jobs, these migrants continued to send remittances back to their country of origin. All the aforementioned measures enabled the majority of families to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic, preserving their well-being and fostering resilience during a time of unprecedented crisis (Renzaho, 2020).

Physical Wellbeing

The loss of income mainly increased stress for breadwinners because of their inability to work and provide for their families, which spiraled into tensions within families, and as a result, women and children became more susceptible to violence in the home (Taub, 2020). Being confined to the same space for a long time also compounded the risk of domestic violence (October et al., 2021). There were a lot of interpersonal family conflicts, and children witnessed aggression and violence. Children were also victims of verbal conflict and received harsh discipline (October et al., 2021). Our review showed that although there was evidence of domestic violence in East and North African countries (Decker et al., 2022; El Tantawi et al., 2022), it appears that domestic violence cases were more prevalent in Southern African countries, especially in South Africa (Duby et al., 2022; Engelbrecht, 2023; Naicker & Richter, 2022; Rich et al., 2022; October et al., 2021; November, 2020). These interactional conflicts within families seem to have negatively affected overall emotional wellbeing.

Social Wellbeing

Families and family relationships are important predictors of human development and of individual health and wellbeing (Botha et al., 2018). Relationships are linked to indicators of wellbeing and play an important role in African families (Onyedinma & Kanayo, 2013). In African families, relationships are defined by interconnectedness, interdependence, a sense of solidarity, and belonging. However, due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, most families had restricted social interactions with other family members, friends, and community members. Some findings showed that most could not attend family gatherings and perform their usual rituals, and being unable to attend funerals and bury loved ones was difficult as family members could not have closure (Barasa & Shitandi, 2020; Kgadima & Leburu, 2024). This was supported by Mbiti (1991) and Owusu-Ansah and Mji (2013) who stated that harmony is deeply embedded in cultural values, and to be human is to be with the family participating in ceremonies, rituals, and festivals that give a sense of belonging among African families. In our review, a decrease in family interactions was mostly reported in Ghana and South Africa (Ayisi-Boateng et al., 2020; Rich et al., 2022; October et al., 2021). Lack of communication, especially with family and friends who reside in the rural areas where technology is a challenge due to insufficient resources, had a huge impact on families' social wellbeing. According to Killgore et al. (2020), Mbunge et al. (2020), and Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius (2021), this social isolation also resulted in increased cases of mental breakdowns and suicide attempts as a result of loneliness and depression.

Positive Outcomes

In our review, we noted that although many negative impacts of the pandemic were reported, there were also a few studies that highlighted positive outcomes. In a study done in Middle East and North African countries, El Tantawi et al. (2022) found that testing positive for COVID-19 within families strengthened their relationships. Family members began appreciating each other more than before and relational interactions improved (Donga et al., 2021). Similarly, a study conducted in South Africa by Rich et al. (2022) on family resilience showed that communication became pivotal, and that being honest with each other about feelings, struggles, and needs improved relationships. Concurring with above studies, October et al. (2021) found in their study on the daily realities for families in South Africa during the pandemic that family cohesion increased, which resulted in families' health and wellbeing improving. Mohangi (2023) also mentioned that although there were many risks related to interpersonal conflict due to the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities were also identified, such as academic support, shared responsibilities, life skills and values acquisition, and family cohesion. In support of this, quality family relationships promoted togetherness and social support among families (Calarco et al., 2020; Kalil et al., 2020).

In addition to strengthened relationships as a positive outcome, October et al. (2021) revealed that the pandemic brought a change in societal norms and traditional gender roles for men and women in some families in South Africa because men also started helping with the household chores. Furthermore, they also found an increase in cleanliness and good health. The COVID-19 protocols enabled families to be more cognizant about their hygiene, and the regulations resulted in behavioral hygiene changes as families had to incorporate the washing of hands and sanitizing frequently. However, it is important to note that based on our review, the above-mentioned positive outcomes were mostly reported in South African studies and not in the other African studies we reviewed.

Recommendations

All the recommendations discussed here are based on the reviewed studies. The recommendations are divided into practice, policy, and research recommendations.

Practice. In order to curb the increase in domestic violence in the event of future pandemics, it is recommended that response activities should be contextualized to different settings and protocols to protect vulnerable groups in the community such as children and women (Nuwematsiko et al., 2022). Decker et al. (2022) also stated that both primary prevention and survivor-centered support services, including those related to economic empowerment, should be integrated in COVID-recovery efforts and extended into the post-pandemic period to fully meet women's safety needs. Psychologists should provide emotional support services to families and caregivers (Engelbrecht, 2023). According to Mohangi (2023), school psychologists should create opportunities to mitigate risks by focusing on improving family values and communication skills to alleviate communication-related conflict in families. However, there was emphasis on knowledge and awareness of diverse cultures, and that psychologists must be sensitive to families' cultural backgrounds. Telemedicine-virtual consultation and treatment centers to collect medicine or from home to avoid risks of stigma

and adherence to chronic medication in lockdown situations were encouraged. Ayisi-Boateng et al. (2020) also encouraged protecting vulnerable families.

To increase social interactions, psychosocial supporting interventions focusing on families and relationships were encouraged. This can be done by raising awareness and encouraging healthy familial relationships and communication to strengthen family resilience, such as online interactive support groups, webinars, and family conferences (Rich et al., 2022). October et al. (2021) recommended interventions that help families adapt to new daily routines and encouraged interventions that help change socialization methods to maintain relationships and that give advice on how to deal with conflicts and financial constraints.

To support children, efforts should be made to extend support to the families, or at the very least parents, beyond material resources to psychosocial support and guidance (Naicker & Richter, 2022). Social support to help children re-enter social groups or establish new friends was also encouraged. With regard to learning, schools should educate parents on how to support children academically. Grandparents and in-house relationships can be leveraged to provide learning support to children under teacher supervision (Mohangi, 2023; Rich et al., 2022).

Policy. To alleviate economic hardships, sub-Saharan African regions should learn from each other during the recovery process. A policy instrument with a holistic approach must be implemented to enhance economic recovery in different sub-regions (Mashige et al., 2021). Suleiman (2021) also recommended that governments must introduce sustainable policies and strategies for managing the pandemic. For instance, actions must be targeted to support the most vulnerable people. Governments must create ways to train people on how to enhance their capacities in COVID-19 management. Bamiwuye et al. (2022) encouraged governments to embark on a new legislative decision process and proper channeling of resources that take cognizance of the disparities in the context in which the pandemic affects rural and urban households. All-inclusive palliative measures should be sustained by governments and stakeholders to reduce the effects and financial burden of the pandemic on the entire populace.

Belay et al. (2022) suggested that specific plans must be designed to address the needs of those in unstable working situations. In future pandemics, such plans should be put in place in the early stages of the pandemic to prevent similar economic hardships. They also recommended continuous surveillance to actively monitor the impact of the pandemic in communities and families and to safeguard the economic and health wellbeing of individuals and households. According to Duby et al. (2022), interventions to provide parenting support and investments in family strengthening could fill additional gaps in mental health support for young people, especially in resource-restricted settings. Asegie et al. (2021) believed that governments and other rural development partners should focus on immediate and long-term intervention strategies to support the most affected households through social security programs by creating market linkage and revolving funding mechanisms.

The findings showed that children with disabilities and their families were severely affected by the pandemic, and therefore, Mbazzi et al. (2022) suggested that governments should pay greater attention to children with disabilities and their families when implementing and mitigating long-term responses. Hearst et al. (2021) stated there is an urgent need for

responses that deliberately address the needs of children with disabilities and their families, notably uninterrupted access to adequate food, inclusive education, rehabilitation therapy, and income-generating activities.

Research. Donga et al. (2021) suggested that follow-up studies using the same setting must be conducted after the pandemic to assess whether the lessons identified in their study are retained by most families. Longitudinal studies were recommended to explore child wellbeing trends in multigenerational households in varying socio-economic contexts (Mohangi, 2023). Mashige et al. (2021) encouraged more research on the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Research on diverse family structure, family composition, and family dynamics were also recommended (October et al., 2021).

Conclusions

The aim of the present study was to conduct a scoping review to determine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family wellbeing. Overall, we found that there were only a few relevant studies and minimal use of longitudinal methodologies. The findings of the study also showed that although we conceptualized wellbeing in terms of capacities, inherent resources, and functioning, most of the studies conducted focused on ill-being or dysfunction in economic, social, physical, and psychological wellbeing domains. There were only a few measurements or conceptualization of wellbeing that included positive experiences, such as increased social interactions and strengthening of family relationships. The focus on pathology points to the current focus of wellbeing research on the continent and the need to bridge the gap on understanding wellbeing as a positive state of functioning.

Another key conclusion is the extent to which most studies demonstrated the multifaceted impact of the pandemic. Almost all the studies highlighted how the pandemic impacted different domains of life simultaneously. This emphasis shows the need for holistic interventions even in the aftermath of the pandemic to aid the full recovery of families on the continent.

In terms of the economic impact, studies from West Africa seemed to point to less economic impact as most businesses continued to operate despite the imposed restrictions. This is quite different from Southern and East Africa where measures to ensure adherence to COVID-19 restrictions were more stringent, resulting in a greater economic impact. It is likely that because of health vulnerabilities in Southern Africa and the initial mortality rate in West Africa, individuals' responses to COVID-19 restrictions varied. More so, the pressure to provide and ensure sustenance in contexts with little government financial assistance may have been responsible for this trend.

Related to physical wellbeing, reports of domestic violence were more prevalent in South African studies. It is possible that other countries published less about this or there was actually not an increase in incidences of domestic violence. South Africa has a history of violence, and aggression against women is not uncommon. The context of the pandemic and accompanying restrictions must have further exacerbated this.

Recommendations drawn from the various studies addressed the different domains of wellbeing. Notable is the need for a multipronged approach to support families on the continent. We suggest that future research can be designed as trend analysis that explores how the pandemic or related events impacted positive aspects of wellbeing, including happiness, family functioning, and social wellbeing. This would inform interventions directed at not only the prevention of distress but also the promotion of wellbeing.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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