Sub-Saharan African Countries, Public Policymaking, Challenges, Flaws and Lessons for Human Growth or Distortion: Focus on Post-COVID-19 Appraisal in Cameroon

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Abstract

Historically, public policymaking, in its most primitive or developed processes, form and character, remains the preeminent and most powerful political tool of governance in all societies. Its prominence is next only to God's omnipresence and omnipotent in shaping man's livelihood and his environment. Irrefutably, after creating the earth and its dwellers, the shaping of these dwellers - natural resources or primary goods, to suit man's secondary needs, radiates through man's mindset in the form of planned or unplanned actions or inactions (polices). Given its preeminence and permeation over man, the why, for what, when, which kind, for who and how, eventually fashion the character of man's secondary needs production, which expedite or dissuade his livelihood. Herein, I argue that, since policymaking, irrespective of its form and character, is man's preeminence action or inaction, must prominently preoccupy people's mindsets, especially the rulers. Paradoxically, in most sub-Saharan African countries, policymaking suffers gratuitous inadequacies due to the imbued unpredictable measurable processes. Consequently, in Cameroon, like other sub-Saharan African countries, dissuades policymaking emerging from unpredictable and immeasurable processes, thus, rendering governance hostile to livelihood.

Introduction: The Research Problem and it Context

Among the multidimensional and multifaceted political tools available to the man in the governing process, the most important and attractive, which also occupies the supreme place amongst these tools in all societies, and which is usually referred to as "the high order task" (Dror 1994), in terms of its preeminence character over man's environment and livelihood, is what Lasswell and Lerner (1951), Ranney (1958), and Dye (1995) call, the science of public policymaking' radiated from systematically articulated and distilled high cognitive, development-oriented and citizenry-friendly policymaking process.

Actually, this conforms to the rationally objective intellectual traditions, philosophies and trends of ancient philosophers - (Plato 428/427-348/347 bc, Aristotle 384-322 bc); and modern thinkers - (Locke 1467-1767, Hobbes 1588 – 1679, Ademolekun 1999, Dietsch 2003, Ray 2004, Rosenbloom, Kravchuk and Clerkin 2009); with mindset highly attuned towards the political, economic and social sensitive preservation of humanity in developed rather that in underdeveloped material conditions. Consequently, they imbued and projected into humanity, the consciousness and conscientiousness objectivity and rationality to bequeath foundational inculcation of people's confidence in the governing process, through public policymaking. These mindsets, haven profoundly viewed public policymaking in its rational totality, and having understood that its preeminence is next only to God, endavoured to theoretically and empirically transmit their knowledge of public policymaking to mankind though their

multifaceted oral and written actions as we study today (Dye 1995:209, Adamulekun 1999:218).

Arguably, every mindset, which opts to popularly embrace the emergence of good societies, in which are found cognitively progressive populace, which must live in self-propelled happiness-ridden political, economic, social, cultural landscapes with their own created opportunities – good employment, enviable haulage, health, education, food production, security systems, epitomising equitable human development, prosperity and cheerfulness, have always unambiguously anchored human development unto people-sensitive rulers' mindsets. These types of mindsets do not concern themselves much about articulating public policymaking on human underdevelopment. Rather, they concern themselves with articulating human emancipation in opportunities, obtained through man's own-cognitive abilities to conquer his natural environment not for self-seeking aggrandisement; but to acquire, practice and entrench inclusive human development. Thus, these people-conscious mindsets engage into creating attractive and important inroads and aspects into the governing of man through predictable and measurable public policymaking. Definitely it is this type of mindsets, which arouse extensive loyalty, cooperation, empathy and national cohesion towards governance, whose rulership is essentially legitimate; given the large spectrum of enthusiasts, whose individual or collective is not coercively driven; but through people-self-induced acceptance of such governance (Dye 1995, Wayne 1995).

Historically, civilised as opposed to primitive human mindsets, converge on that, public policymaking is *par excellence* the single and most important political tool for shaping man's environment by mobilising resources to facilitate or destroy man's livelihood. And most importantly, politics, is the most prominent channel and ever permeating man's activity above all other activities in society, through which public policymaking is achieved. Politics, Aristotle (Aristotle, 384 – 322 BC) argues, "is the superstructure set of activities of man, that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, collectivities and organisations, in the form, such as the distribution of resources or statuses". Consequently, if rulers must claim divine authority to rule, they must acquire the ability to rule divinely in terms of articulating policies, which are divinely inspired to foster human development, rather than human underdevelopment. Failure to acquire such authority renders rulership a mere subjective mortal exercise devoid of any objective positivity. As we must note, in every mortal exercise, the respect and expected sympathy from the ruled – the population, becomes suspect, eroding and apathetic; thus, reddening governance with

illegitimacies, chaotic upheavals and popular disillusionment (Njamnjoh 1995, Achebe 1988, Oromo 2012).

In this light, the quest and ability of rulers to avoid governance failures, arising from man's policymaking subjectivity, must objectively lead rulers to objectivity in acquiring the right mindsets to predict, prescribe and measure futuristic actions or inactions for addressing social problems in society, irrespective of the magnitude of such social problems. As Dietsch (2003:342) argues, "…achieving objective knowledge and reasoning capacities in the governing process must remain the ruler's preoccupation." Amongst this preoccupation, the central trust be must be that, rulership and governance must be anchored upon collective exercises entrenched and embraced into a Social Contract = an imaginary agreement between the rulers and the ruled Locke (1642-1703). Essentially, as Locke (1698:376) opines, "Government must emerge from the consent of the people, for the purposes of addressing social problems." Thus, the inability to adequately solve social problems through seasoned public policymaking renders governance unattractive, which by extension provokes untold citizens' apathy, sometimes extensive chaos.

The policy implications for the foregoing is that, Government and governance must remain constantly alert to realise the *raison d'etre* of state- and nation-building, translated as the catering for the immediate or remote needs of the ruled in society. Truly, the shortfalls accruing from the non-adherence to this process, radiates the character of public policymaking, which renders governance unpalatable. Paradoxically, this is what prevails in most sub-Saharan African countries, and eventually this leads these countries into characterized by debility and failures, at the chagrin of a vulnerable population. Obviously, man's solitary desires are not inelastic, hence, as Thomas Hobbes argues, without a caring Government, man would live in "A State of Nature". He will fern for himself in any way possible, engaging into chaotic actions in a short, brutish and nasty livelihood.

As Hobbes (1588-1679) asserts, "…the only way to escape the state of nature is to create a social contract," wherein people would commune in peace, according to their reasoned willingness to a set of laws, and creating a sovereign. The contract, thus, sets the pace for people to objectively protect themselves from each another to preserve their common good. Contrarily, when rulership becomes a one-man show or that of a few people's mechanisms, devoid of the consent of majority of citizens, the obvious governance tendencies are failures, which lead to sectorial or national upheavals.

The Research Problem

Essentially, the foregoing profoundly highlight the height, public policymaking blight, bane, and challenges in sub-Saharan African countries, with specific focus on Cameroon. It divulge the occasioned colossal loss of human lives from the sudden outbreak of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic, otherwise called COVID-19. Due largely to the managerial incapacities related to inappropriate processes, forms and character of public policymaking by most sub-Saharan African countries, the emergence of the pandemic startled African rulers into confused policy trusts resulting into policy summersaults, thereby rendering curbing the spread of COVID-19 very ineffective, inefficient and highly uneconomical against a vulnerable population, which had previously become weakened due the malaises of debilitating governance in this region. These incapacities devastatingly exposed the weak character of governance in terms of public policymaking, which existed and continue to exist in most sub-Saharan African countries.

As the COVID-19 emerged, what was regarded as a light health issue that would sooner or later disappear, became a dreadful long lasting and life-threatening health issue, which prodded great trepidations within the entire citizenry; as it also become a great quagmire to governments in sub-Saharan African countries, which were caught off-guide in terms of public policymaking unpreparedness. Indeed, Cameroon, like in other sub-Saharan African countries' governments' inabilities to quickly and decisively contain, safeguard and ensure human lives, and to boost social and economic formations – entrepreneurships, companies, employment and employment mobility, became the immediate soft-catchment-spot that confronted and brought to the limelight to bare weaknesses and failing character of policymaking (Agu 2022, Little 2023).

In this regard, in Cameroon the use of the spur-of-the moment as public policy mechanism, which became the policy trust, exposed the contextual realities of non-predictive matrix-based public policymaking formulation mechanisms. Consequently, as Cameroon became a stark victim of this sort of governance style, this paper examines the shortcomings in this governing approach in the light of government's incapacity to cope with averting colossal loss of human lives, economic mishaps, which prodded crunching unemployment, as a result the shutdown of several enterprises with workers thrown out into the streets. The empirical implications for policymaking in the foregoing are the huge citizens' apathy and unbridled disillusionment witnessed in the Cameroon's political, economic, social and psychological landscapes (Ngongang 2022, Batie 2023).

A Brief History of COVID-19

CIVID-19 has a lengthy human threatening, although highly informative history. According to Saxena, et al, (2020) "…severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a pandemic that has shocked the world twice over the last two decades were caused by a highly transmissible and pathogenic coronavirus (CoV) several years ego." Actually, this virus causes life threatening disease in the lower respiratory tract in humans that was first reported in late 2002 in Guangdong Province, China, and later on in December 2019 in Wuhan, China (Saxena, et al 2020:11). Consequently, these two viruses designated as SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2, respectively, possibly arose from bats, from where humans became infected via carrier animals. Thus, the constant re-mixture and evolution in the CoV genome may have facilitated their cross-species transmission resulting in recurrent emergence as a pandemic" (Saxena, et al 2020:12, Fokam 2023).

Thus, in December 2019, the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) viruses, which affected the whole world, emerged. This emergence prompted sleepless nights to sensitive governments, which are constantly pre-occupied and highly mindful of people-friendly public policymaking processes. Consequently, the emergence of details on the epidemiology, infection source, transmission mode, and prognosis of SARS-CoV-2 gave sensitive governments sleepless nights all over the world. In this direction, strict universal infection control standards, for combating the virus became some of the public policies' trusts. These included but not limited to regular washing of hand as personal and collective hygiene measure, environmental cleanliness, use of personal protective equipment, and quarantine.

These public policy trusts prevailed against the spread of the virus, which were in most cases put far after the arrival of the virus in nascent governments, become the prevailing policy tools to prevent the spread of COVID-19 without vaccine were essentially very remote thereto. However, many vaccine candidate studies were carried out globally with using traditional and technological approaches. Essentially, given sensitive and responsive governments' pressures to save human lives, certain innovations in technology allowed the development of nanotechnological tools and the formation of systems that were used to inactivate SARS-CoV-2 in patients. These very important health processes were expected to include technologies that combine different disciplines in the natural as well as in the social sciences. Thus, public policymaking became the most readily tool, especially in introducing the use of robotic applications, antimicrobial nanotechnology, and tissue engineering for the future treatment of COVID-19. This post COVID-19 assessment-based paper discusses some salient challenges

and lesson from the relationship between COVID-19 and related pandemics and public policymaking based working principles.

Herein, we hold the hypothesis that, it is the absence of predictive public policymaking, which enabled the spread of COVID-19 and its subsequent human disasters particularly in sub-Saharan African countries, and in Cameroon in particular. The intellectual purpose of this brief account of this post-COVID-19 assessment is to profoundly highlight for the interest of Governments in sub-Saharan African countries that governance is better if it links the governing process with historical events in collaboration with the population. Indeed, good public policymaking is the accurate setting of mindsets towards the reminiscence of antecedents – that is the remembering and bringing to bare upon prevailing circumstances, those actions or inactions that enabled governance in the past. As Aristotle postulates, "nothing on earth is new to man, because, anything which happens or occurs in a specific man's activity must have occurred to man in the past, even if not in the same manner."

Thus, if governance is devoid of reminiscence, the obvious results are trajectories to tragic governance failures, which the COVID-19 demonstrated in most sub-Saharan African countries.

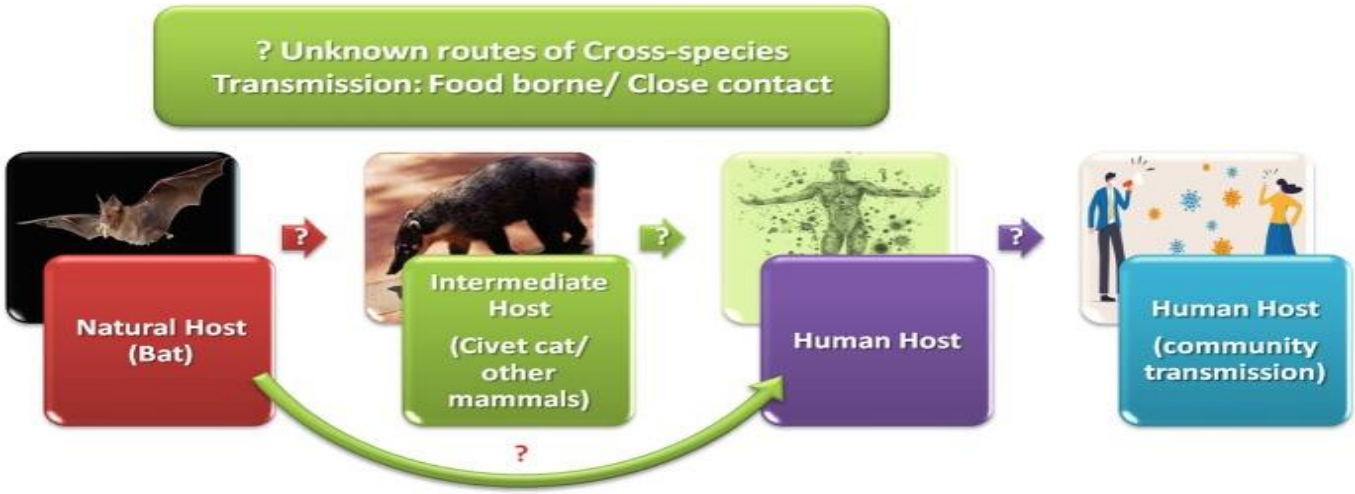

Fig. 1: The probable transmission path of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 from natural hosts to various hosts.

Source: Saxena, S. K., et al. (2020). "Transmission Cycle of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2", New Delhi: Centre for Advanced Research (CFAR)-Stem Cell/Cell Culture Unit, Faculty of Medicine, King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow, India. Retrieved on 18th May 2024 in Buea, Cameroon

Cuing from the data presented above, and for the avoidance of doubt and most importantly, for the essential purposes of academic dishonesty, we are far from alluding that, COVID-19 dealt disastrous loss of human lives only in sub-Saharan African countries. What we are emphatically and scholarly saying is that, relying of the empirical data presented in figure 1 above, the public policymaking processes, in terms of early-warning and early pre-preparedness, in the form of

early possession of sound public health infrastructures – well-equipped hospitals, highly and regularly trained and recycled public health personnel, imbued into long-term predictive measures to combat pandemics, would have availed the use of the spur-of-the-moment, ah-hoc, or fire-fighting measures, which characterized and which remain characteristic of public policymaking, which are generally witnessed in most sub-Saharan African countries, especially in Cameroon, particularly against the COVID-19. In countries, where public policymaking is predictable, with the imbuement of early possession of sound public health infrastructures – well-equipped hospitals, highly and regularly trained and recycled public health personnel, imbued into long-term predictive measures the fight against the COID-19, was less stressful, although human lives were lost, due largely to the immense character of the acuteness of the pandemic in those countries – the US, China, European countries and so on.

Given also the character of overzealous affluence of people in these countries, the death toll arising from the COVID-19 was irrefutable (Lisette 2022, Hazels 2023). As Krishnani et al., (2023) assert, the production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) masks, which are categorized essentially into three groups based on their filter types became the immediate public policymaking measures used to combat the spread of COVID-19 in most countries. These included: disposable one-use masks, respirator masks, and surgical masks. The ideal mask standards involve the efficient filtration of bio-aerosols while ensuring proper comfort for the wearer. (Mallakpour et al., 2023). When designing a PPE mask, consideration must be given to various factors, including humidity levels, ambient temperature, airflow patterns, and, most importantly, the properties of the material used, as all these elements significantly impact the mask's filtration effectiveness and quality.

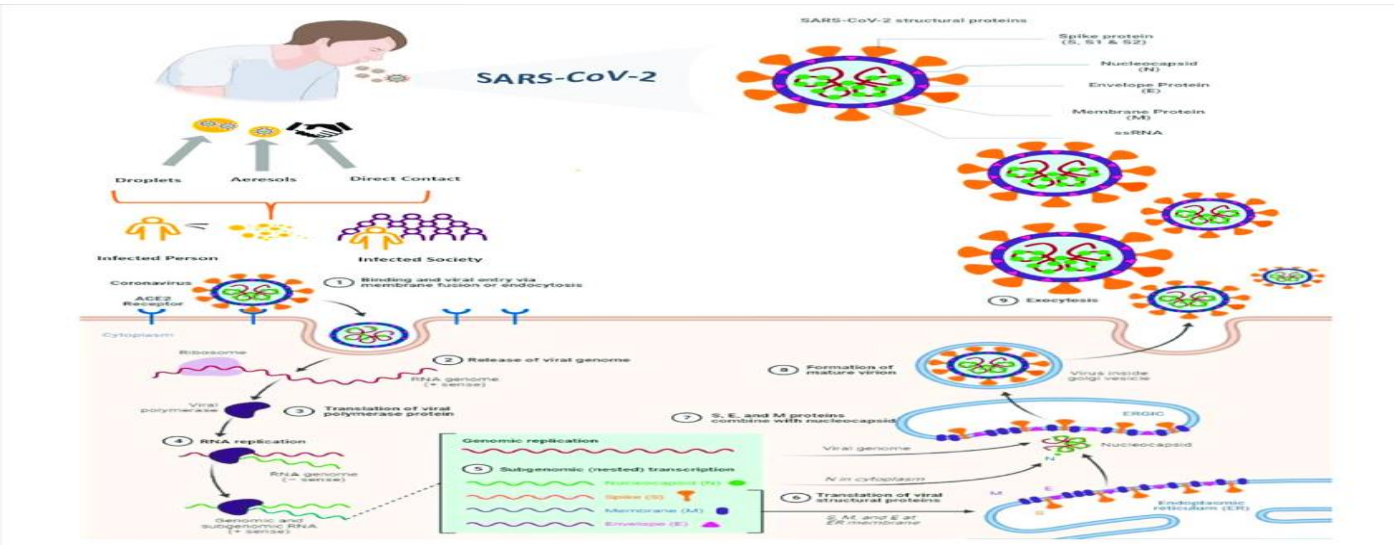

Fig. 2: Transmission modes COVID-19, life cycle and structure of SARS-CoV-2.

Source: Krishnani et al., (2023). Nanotechnology and COVID-19: Prevention, diagnosis, vaccine, and treatment strategies, Transmission mode COVID-19, life cycle and structure of SARS-CoV2.Download Scientific Diagram(researchgate.net)

This category of diagnostic devices has been subject to extensive research and development programs, as a result of which they are now capable of delivering high rates of sensitivity and specificity in real-time. While different types of nanomaterials have been incorporated into the structure of biosensors by many studies, gold, magnetic, and carbon-based nanomaterials are more frequently used for successful development of clinically effective nano biosensors (24). A functional biosensor is composed of recognition and transducing elements. While the recognition element is responsible for molecular identification of the target molecule, it is the transducer that translates this response to a signal that can be visualized and read by the human eye (Ayan et al., 2023).

Public Policymaking, COVID-19 and Political Development or Underdevelopment in sub-Saharan African Countries

The policy wits to combat the COVID-19 and similar pandemics arise from the character of a country's political development, which provides the senses to attract either development or underdevelopment. However, explaining the concept of political development has been very elusive amongst scholars, given the usual ideological inclinations attached thereto. It is used frequently by both normative and non-normative or existential thinkers. Sometimes, normative theorists stress that a political system develops as it approaches the good political order. Such thinkers devote less attention to systematic statement of conditions which give rise to and maintain political development, and are more concerned with specifying ends and justification for having such political development. The existentialists spend more time on specifying the characteristics of what they regard as politically developed systems in their conditions and processes, which give rise to them. For instance, Pye (1965) examined certain diversities in explaining the concept of political development, as he agrees that "several interpretations of political development arise, such as self-respect, attainment of dignity in international affairs and so on," which to him, create confusion. However, to him, these various interpretations share some broad characteristics, which can provide the basis of agreement. Accordingly, he categorises them under three major aspects and interlinks them in the form of development syndrome:

(a) Spirit or attitude towards equality:

It includes participation, universalistic nature, standards of achievement, and so on.

(b) Capacity of political system:

It is related to outputs: economy, performance of government, effectiveness and efficiency, rationality in administration, and secularisation of public policies; and

(c) Differentiation: Pye (1965)

It involves increase of structures, institutions, division of labour, specialisation, followed by ultimate sense of integration. Thus, political development, according to him, is a three-dimensional process of equality, capacity, and differentiation. He admits that these do not necessarily or easily fit together. Diamant (1963) conceives it as a 'process by which political system acquires an increased capacity to sustain successfully and continuously new types of goals and demands and the creation of new types of organisations.' For this process to continue over time, a differentiated and centralised polity must come into existence. It must be able to command resources from and power over wide spheres and regions of the society. Almond and Coleman (1965) visualise it as the acquisition by political systems of a new capability, in the sense of a specialised role structure and differentiated orientations, which together give a political system the possibility of responding efficiently, and more or less, autonomously to a new range of problems. Both Almond and Powell reiterate that political development shows the formation of new capabilities, with specialised role-structure and differentiated orientation which enables the political system to deal with new challenges.

Hagan (1942) also finds it as 'the formation of new structures and patterns which enable a political system to cope with its fundamental problems.' Political development can also be characterised as 'institutionalisation' which can be applied both to past and present. Thus, it is the development of institutions to meet people's demands. Accordingly, this process of institutionalisation can go forward and breakdown and can decay as it has happened many times in the past. He wants to use it as a 'value-free' concept, applicable to all types of societies. However, Pennock (1966) puts a caution that it should not be measured in terms of the ability of political systems to survive only but also to satisfy the demands of those who are subject to its rule. The system has to satisfy them with 'political goods. Riggs (1974) also concurs with him and observes that political development opens a number of choices to satisfy political goals. The foregoing present lessons for sub-Saharan African countries to fashion their political systems, regimes and politics to ensure people-oriented public policies.

Cameroon: Lessons in public policymaking, state-building, the COVID-19 and other pandemics

Public policies can rightly be viewed as a political system's responses to public demands for addressing social problems arising from its environment in domains such as, transportation, education, agriculture, health, social and economic well-being, law enforcement, security, business, and so on, depending upon whether a chosen policy approach falls within the armpit of constituent, distributive, re-distributive, regulatory policy type (Dahl and Stinebrickner 2003, Widavsky and Naomi 2007). Consequently, Public policy problems are conditions or situations, which generate a human need, deprivation or dissatisfaction, self-identified by a group or groups of people, for which relief is sought for a large number of people in society, but on the contrary, it is not a policy problem if it affects only a few persons in society (Dye 1995:69, Anderson 2011).

Talking of the political system, it comprises the identifiable and interrelated institutions and their activities, otherwise known as governmental institutions and political processes, which authoritatively allocate values in form of decisions, which are binding upon society. Certainly, binding as these decisions could be, and going by this view of public policies; what character of policy responses did Cameroon enunciate against COVID-19; and what are the challenges, lessons and implications of these responses to human and social capital – the economy Cameroon now and in the future? Are there predictive policy responses against COVID-19 akin to impromptu approach with weak physiognomies? Are there alternative policies open to Cameroon for combating COVID-19? Confronted by these worries, this study undertakes an empirical and content analysis methodology to examine relevant primary and secondary data, for divulging Cameroon's chosen policy, which Anderson (2011:140) calls, "spur-of-the-moment approach" against COVID-19. Specifically, it assesses this approach in relation to the impulsive massive loss of human and material capital, including Cameroon's economic downturn; and highlights lessons and policy implications in the approach; while suggesting alternative policy. It is worth recalling that, since the early 2020, COVID-19 has been ravaging the Cameroon society, especially its human capital and the economy; with the trepidation of re-occurrence.

As Anosh a medic in the gynaecology and obstetrics hospital in Douala, Cameroon, said on 6th May 2020, "…this hospital, like others in the country is in acute short supply of protective equipment – caps, overalls, protective glasses, visors and gloves and medicines; and with the influx of COVID-19 patients over ten (10) daily running, the government should urgently reverse its strategy in handling this pandemic by providing this equipment well in advance, rather than wait until we complain. With the death toll advancing towards 100 or more with

over 2000 cases in the country, the present measures are inadequately devastating." Thus, will Cameroon confront future pandemics with the same or different approach? The foregoing question represent the research question, which this article will scientifically attempt to fix.

Weaknesses of the Spur-of-the-Moment Policy Approach: Lessons for Cameroon

Consequently, this study argues that, the primary weakness of the spur-of-the-moment approach, which also serves as a lesson and policy implication for Cameroon is that, "…it lacks major and profound scientific orientations for serving a nation in times of grave threats to human health and the economy, [such as the current scourge of COVID-19]" (Anderson, 2011). In a political system imbued with democracy, this approach is contradictory as it is simply outdated. With the rational-comprehensive approach available to take precedence; including several other approaches in the policy arena, the Spur-of-the-Moment Policy Approach has proved very ineffective, inefficient and highly uneconomical to serve in the combating a serious health issue such as the COVID-19. This precedence is usually informed by the inbuilt mechanisms of the rational-comprehensive approach, which compels the propulsion of scientific reasoning, radiated from sound intellectual capabilities of the human mind, inundated with science-oriented inputs and mechanisms for taking into deep consideration several details from the concerned policy domain(s).

For example, in Nigeria, during the early heydays of oil-boom, this rational-comprehensive served in augmenting the agricultural policy with "Operation Feed the Nation" under the Obasanjo's military regime between 1978 and 1981. The regime imagined that, with the arrival of crude production and sales by Nigeria, agriculture which was hitherto the backbone of the economy will be relegated; consequently, people were instigated into embracing agricultural production with the creation of juicy farmers' incentives through cooperatives, agricultural centres, colleges and universities of agriculture in all parts of the country (Nwachukwu 2013, Egon 2015). The rational-comprehensive policy approach enables policymakers to predict and anticipate the development of socio-economic infrastructures against existing or future social problems.

This approach, according to Dahl (2007) and other scholars, has proved very useful in solving anticipated social problems occurrences in most developed countries, thus, it can as well work for Cameroon; and other sub-Saharan African countries, as it worked for Nigeria, even if it was short-lived.

For instance, as Dahl (2007:57) posits, "during the Soviet Union's deployment of missiles in Cuba, just a stone-throw to the seashores, south-eastern borders of the US; it is this approach

which the US employed in confronting the 'Cuban Missile Crises in 1963, otherwise called the 'Bay of Pigs', between United States and the then Soviet Union." Similarly, the Nigerian Guardian Newspaper of 27th October 2019, reports that, during the outbreak of the Ebola Fever in some countries in West Africa, Nigeria employed this approach to curb the spread of Ebola in Nigeria, through its anticipated installation of sound health and social structures/facilities, closing its borders with neighbouring countries to stem or accommodate future real or imagined cases of Ebola Fever.

Apart from its lack of any profound science-orientation, the other weaknesses of the spur-of-the-moment approach include, its limited time-frame, (from its conception to its application); whereby the society's preparedness to willingly accept its outcomes (safety measures enunciated to combat a particular pandemic) should be well received and consummated. Due to its impromptu character, people become unduly resistance towards government, and in the case of a pandemic, the mortality rate becomes astronomical. However, I concede that even with the rational-comprehensive approach, the human mortality rate can rise during a pandemic given the obvious subjective human factors. However, other factors, such as natural intervention, the undue peoples' deviance and excessive exercise of democratic tenets of liberty in situations like in COVID-19, as the actions of some Americans in different states in the US illustrate can be detrimental to the application of the rational-comprehensive approach. Nevertheless, people, even Americans must understand the concept of democracy must be enunciated and be foremostly directed to saving human lives and not otherwise.

As it has been applied in China, where the COVID-19 originated, the absence of excessive use of democratic tenets appeared playing the magic wand role, of low mortality rate, as compared to the figures in Western democratic societies. While not admonishing democracy, it behoves that people must exercise caution in its application. Another intrinsic weakness in the spur-of-the-moment approach is that, it is a harbinger of extensive repression rather than democracy. In societies which claim democratic credentials, certain policy measures appear retrogressive instead of progressive. For instance, not long before they had obeyed weeks of confinement, US citizens in several states of the US federation, starting advocating for policy change, by matching in streets asking for the opening up of the American society, despite the continuous ravage of the COVID-19 on human capital and the American economy.

This is not because, the US applied the spur-of-the-moment approach, but because, confinement curtailed Americans' liberties as a core value in their democracy. As Thomas Hobbes once said, "…refuse the human nature everything except his liberties…" So, while

repression as an attribute of the spur-of-the-moment policy approach prods human safety, the policy itself has several disadvantages, especially its being spontaneous. Although, operated as a human endeavour with probable limitations, the rational-comprehensive approach offers policymakers greater latitude for accommodating social problems. Consequently, it should largely guide Cameroon's public policy-making processes. As a state, Cameroon should, during normal periods anticipate the erection of accommodative social, health and economic structures or facilities to counter futuristic outbreak of pandemics or even famine. Waiting to act only when a pandemic arises does not play well in the governing processes.

Further public Policy implications of the Spur-of-the-Moment Approach

Essentially, one major public policy implication arising from the spur-of-the-moment approach adopted by Cameroon against COVID-19 is the extensive of peril, which human capital and Cameroon's economy faced in the nearest, and whose remedy can be achieved only if Cameroon decides to adopt an alternative public policy trust, to fight pandemics. This article thus, suggests the adoption of the rational comprehensive approach, because, its application would assist in curtailing the loss of human and economic capital. Adopting this approach also assists in redressing a battered national economy by saving large spectrum of social infrastructures, which new ones are created. As most people would agree, the extent of loss of manpower – university professors, farmers, transporters, bankers, engineers, artists – Manu Dibango, and so on; healthcare professionals, such as doctors and nurses, working husbands and wives; greatly weakened Cameroon's economy.

For instance, the grounding for weeks of the air, land and sea haulage systems, to and from Cameroon, the look-ups of manufacturing industries, wholesale and retail business houses, hotels and restaurants, limitation of open market operations, and even intellectual think-tanks outfits, most of whom not able to obtain any substantial financial bail-outs from the state; posed enormous setbacks to the economic re-take-offs and normalisation.

Thus, for Cameroon to re-build the shattered economy, without depending on donations and borrowing from advanced nations and other so-called development partners, who had equally been menaced by COVID-19, Cameroon must employ its own resources through an enlightened application of the rational-comprehensive approach within predictive measures. In this direction, Cameroon should inject massive resources into the healthcare system by creating affordable health centre with adequately trained personnel. In addition, the agricultural sector should be boosted with high food production in plantains, cocoyam, beans, maize, cassava, yams, sorghum, oil palm, rubber, cocoa, coffee and assorted vegetables, fish and meat within

the few coming months and years. This country should not wait for the occurrence of widespread pandemics and famines to start planning on producing enough healthcare facilities and food for its remaining but teeming population after the COVID-19. The spur-of-the-moment approach has amply demonstrated wide paucity encountered by the government to stem the spread of COVID-19. Generally, if policy-making is anchored on intermittent responses, such as Cameroon's measures against COVID-19, the unavoidable population's inclinations are engagements into uncontrollable abuses of such policy measures. The arrest by the police of some people in Douala, Cameroon's economic capital city, for disobeying government's measures against COVID-19 was an illustrative weakness in governance (Abba, 2020, Aliyu 2020). As Debbie (2019) opines:

"Some key policy implications in intermittent policy approach are that, besides being expensive to implement, it worsens government's relations with populations; weakens several aspects of government work; its impromptu character with demand for immediate population's compliance renders it antagonistic. Governments, which do not predict social problems and project measures to counteract such problems respond to social problems, usually attract unpopularity from its population. Since policy beneficiaries are also the victims of social problems and are vaguely kept abreast of the problems' solutions, government-population relations are usually sour."

Thus, there arise additional policy implications with the non-avoidance of the dearth of prior widespread policy knowledge. Cameroon needs to create anticipative social and economic structures that should radiate policy knowledge through several sources, with sequential projection and gradual approval by the population. Concerning healthcare, the policy knowledge must emanate directly from Cameroon's Ministries of Public Health and Communication and transmitted through existing health facilities, schools, colleges, universities, villages, community-based organisations, public spaces. If the government ignore this strategy, there is bound to be direct negative policy role that promotes policy deviance amongst the population.

For instance, in the former West Cameroon, slogans such as: 'Speed Kills,' 'Smoking is Dangerous to Health,' 'Taking Alcohol While Driving Kills,' and so on, were prior public health policy measures, which saved several human lives in Cameroon. Additionally, 'Always Wash Your Hands,' 'Cover Your Mouth and Nose When Snitching or Coughing in Large Gatherings or Public Places,' 'Do Not Hug Irresponsibly,' 'Conduct Regular Health Check-Ups,' and so on, eloquently placed on billboards in public places can provide good health

incentives against epidemics or pandemics. In this direction, these slogans must permanently infused as a way of life in the Cameroon society, with constant updates when necessary.

In the beginning, less impacted than the rest of the world, sub-Saharan African countries, including Cameroon, faced the spread of COVID-19. However, the challenges against COVID-19 and their responses in Cameroon, sums the totality of policy shortcomings in sub-Saharan African countries. With data obtained from the African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, on the number of confirmed cases and deaths, which were analysed in the regularity and severity of the tests and confirmed cased, compared to those numbers with neighbouring countries, Cameroon needs to be predictive in its policymaking. Different phenomenological models to models were tested in the early phase of the outbreak. The resulting artefacts were that, since the first reported cases on the March 7th, 18.662 people had been diagnosed with the coronavirus, and by 24th August, 186.243 tests had been performed and 408 deaths certified. Ironically too, it was noticed that, an increased risk of past COVID-19 infections with increasing patient's age, and this was consistent with earlier studies in the country's rates of diagnoses. Other studies outside Cameroon reported advanced age as a risk factor for COVID-19 related infection, with severity of infections and death rates (Fokam 2022, Li et al,

Public Policymaking, COVID-19 and related pandemics: More on challenges and lessons

The concept and occurrence of pandemics, be they the COVID-19 or whatever is not any new news to mankind. What appears new is the character of the public policymaking initiatives adopted by some governments, especially in sub-Saharan African countries to stem the spread or the immediate treatment of citizens, who have unfortunately been affected and infected by a pandemic. This is where the social scientists and medics in the public policymaking arena must become readily available, to work in a matrix, and to be alert and responsive. For instance, it is already known as proved by specialists and versed medics that, the causative agent of SARS is a coronavirus (CoV), more accurately SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV), has been previously assigned to group 2b CoV, and is now a member of the lineage B of genus Beta coronavirus in the family Corona viridae and subfamily Coronavirinae (Drexler et al. 2014, Chen et al. 2020b, Kumar et al. 2020).

Invariably, further, studies show how it shares similar genome organisation with other coronaviruses, but exhibits a unique genomic structure which includes several specific accessory genes, including ORF3a, 3b, ORF6, ORF7a, 7b, ORF8a, 8b, and 9b (Hu et al. 2017). Herein, we argue that, specialists and medics in sub-Saharan African countries are in possession of the knowledge, which Li et al. (2003), and Qian et al. (2013) canvass that, SARS

coronavirus (SARS-CoV) uses angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) as a receptor and primarily infects ciliated bronchial epithelial cells and type II pneumocytes. Thus, engaging in the preventive public policymaking approaches well in advance in societies is a *sine qua non* for sub-Saharan African countries. Given the foregoing, it is therefore an aberration in terms of public policymaking, should sub-Saharan African countries prove ineffective, inefficient and uneconomical in their core professional rulership obligations.

The CoV from China into sub-Saharan African Countries: The Case of Cameroon

Apparently, Cameroon – an important sub-Saharan African country in terms of it population, size and central place it occupies to the economies of the central sub-Saharan African sub-region, was caught off guard; at the outbreak of the COVID-19 in December 2019, given the character of public policymaking approach it churned to combat the COVID-19, which anchored on, "the-spur-of-the-moment" (Masumbe 2021, Nkouchou 2022). Indeed, the outbreak of a new CoV strain during December 2019 in China drew huge attention throughout the world, during which period, the administrative and scientific communities of China worked hard towards the etiology, prevention and control, and drug development for the epidemic. On January 12th, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) provisionally named the new virus as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), which was later renamed as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, SARS-CoV-2 (Gorbalenya et al. 2020).

Thereafter, the continuous evolution and transformation of the CoVs lead to the sudden outbreaks in different parts of the world, suggesting that, it posed serious global health hazard in a very short period. Definitely, in today's changing climate and ecological balance and the incessant human-animal interactions, there is an increased risk of CoV disease outbreaks, which public policymaking processes must take into predictive account, if human lives must gainfully occupy the most important concerns in the governing process. And this is where Cameroon as a country with a government comes into limelight in this paper. Cameroon must systematically development dependable healthcare facilitates to counter any outbreak of pandemic, irrespective of its magnitude. Certainly, this makes an utter requirement to focus on efficient, effective and economic measures to fight against CoVs and other pandemics.

It is useful in this paper to highlight that, several medical researchers have proved that, a disease that usually occurs among animals but can infect humans in specific conditions is known as a zoonotic disease. It has amply been proven that; this has largely affected human populations in the past hundreds of years. Nonetheless, it also important noting that, with passing of time they have changed in several perspectives concerning their occurrences and pathogenicity

(Rodriguez-Morales et al. 2020). Currently, medical health specialists have several proofs to indicate that CoV transmission occurs via "zoonotic spillover," a term indicating the transmission of a pathogen from a vertebrate animal to a human host. Although the mechanism of such transmission is not very clear and therefore it is a matter of concern, certain factors determine zoonotic spillovers such as behavioural characteristics of CoV and the susceptibility of a human host must be guarded against (Plowright et al. 2017).

According to Guan et al. (2003), "Earlier, genetically similar CoVs were isolated from civet cats and raccoon dogs. Thus, studies show that SARS-CoV has the ability to infect and produce disease in macaques and ferrets too, while did not produce any readily observable symptoms in cats (Fouchier et al. 2003, Martina et al. 2003) Actually, a more recent study reports about 80% gene similarity between SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV (Gralinski and Menachery 2020, Xu et al. 2020). As Zhou et al. (2020) asserts, "Correspondingly, one more study reports a 96% sequence similarity between SARS-CoV-2 and the CoV isolated from *Rhinolophus affinis* indicating bats as virus source. However, to date, there is not much clarity about SARS-CoV-2 host and it is reported to be snakes, minks, or other animals (Ji et al. 2020).

As figure 1 above represents, the tentative transmission path from a natural host to a human should be informative to Government's public policymaking mechanisms, derived exclusively from highly skilled health experts to the political power wielders in sub-Saharan African countries. The natural host of the CoV is considered as a bat (Li et al. 2020). While the species differ, CoV can still manage to migrate from its natural host to humans via intermediate host depending on its ability to access the host cell (Rodriguez-Morales et al. 2020). Since the last few decades, CoV has evolved to adapt to bind the receptors to enter inside the host's cells through its surface glycoproteins. These surface glycoproteins show significant variations that allow the virus to bind to varied mammalian host species (Rothan and Byrareddy 2020).

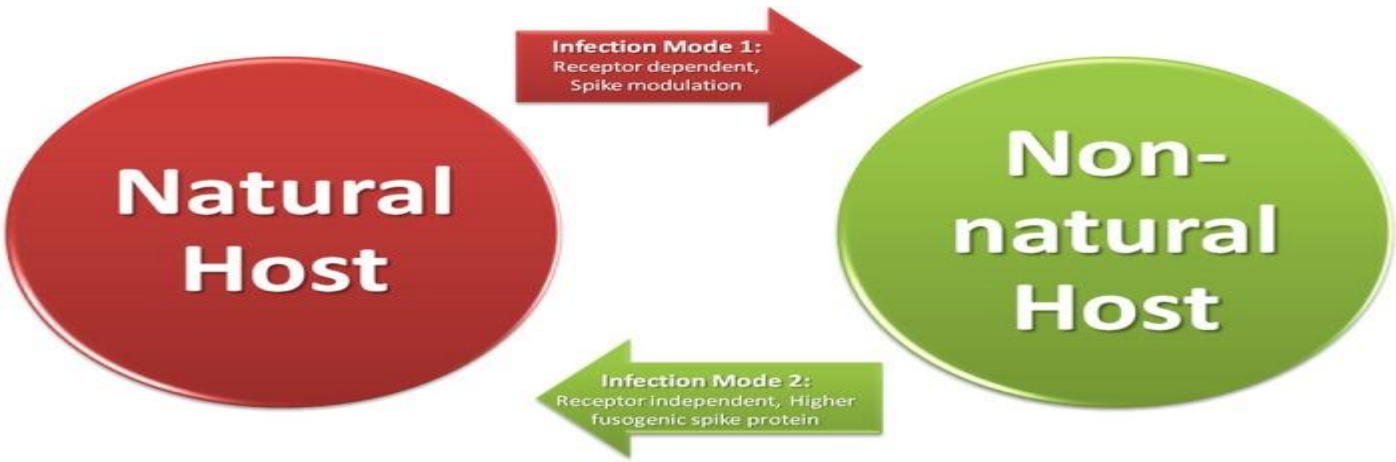

Fig. 3: Potential cross-species transmission mechanism from natural host to non-natural hosts (other animals and humans

Sources: Saxena, S. K., et al. (2020). "Transmission Cycle of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2", New Delhi: Centre for Advanced Research (CFAR)-Stem Cell/Cell Culture Unit, Faculty of Medicine, King George's Medical University (KGMU), Lucknow, India. Retrieved on 18th May 2024 in Buea, Cameroon

COVID-19 and its Transmission Among Animals: Indicators for public policymaking

Essentially, in 2005, two individual research groups reported novel coronaviruses associated with human SARS-CoV, which were named SARS-CoV-related viruses or SARS-like coronaviruses, in horseshoe bats (genus *Rhinolophus*) (Lau et al. 2005, Li et al. 2005). Based on these studies it was understood that bats may have played a natural host for SARS-CoV while civets acted only as an intermediate. One more study exposed the co-existence of varied SARSr-CoVs in bat populations inhabiting one cave of Yunnan province, China, that was also the first information regarding human ACE2 (angiotensin-converting enzyme 2) as a receptor for bat SARS-like coronavirus (Ge et al. 2013, Hu et al. 2007). Further, it has already been known that the coronavirus genome frequently undergoes recombination (Lai and Cavanagh 1997), suggesting the high possibility of the emergence of new SARS-CoV through recombination of bat SARS-CoVs existing in same or another bat caves.

However, Cui et al., (2019) speculated the production of SARS-CoV direct progenitor via recombination within bats, and thereafter it passed on to the farmed civets and other mammals leading to virus infection to civets by fecal-oral transmission. These virus-contained civets transported to the Guangdong market where they infected market civets and further mutated before affecting humans. The phylogenetic investigation of novel CoVs suggests the existence of several cross-species transmission events; however, most of these events were transient spillover. The high recombination frequency of CoVs in bats suggests bats being a vital reservoir for CoV recombination and evolution (Banerjee et al. 2009).

COVID-19 and its Transmission from animals to human: Further indicators for public policymaking

According to Rothan and Byrareddy (2020)," ...the zoonotic origin of SARS-CoV-2 in Wuhan, China, can be strongly associated with the wet animal market since a large number of people who got infected in the beginning of the outbreak were more or less exposed to it." In this direction, several attempts were made to confirm the primary host or intermediary carriers from which the infection may have transmitted to humans.

As Perlman (2020) and Zhou et al. (2020:21) observe, current research confirms that, more than 95% genomic similarity between SARS-CoV-2 and bat coronavirus, indicating bats as the most probable host of the former exist. Besides bat, several other animal hosts have been

reported as a virus reservoir. And as Ji et al (2020) demonstrates, "...snakes are possible virus reservoirs for human infection, while Lam et al. (2020) identified SARS-CoV-2-related coronaviruses in pangolins (*Manis javanica*) as another strong source of reservoir, as he stated the possibility of minks being intermediate hosts for SARS-CoV-2.

One more remarkable phenomenon observed for SARS-CoV was that the human strain recovered at the time of epidemic retained efficient hACE2/cACE2 recognition; however, the in vitro adapted civet strains quickly achieved hACE2 recognition (Sheahan et al. 2008). These data indicate the competent human/civet ACE2 recognition as a key factor to support SARS-CoV in human populations, offering an animal reservoir for continual persistence. The main culprit for SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 in humans is considered as bats since they are known to contain a wide variety of coronaviruses, although the mechanism for virus zoonotic spillover is still unclear. The pieces of evidences suggest the occurrence of recombination events among SARS-CoVs exist in the neighbouring bat population. Such phenomena may be responsible for the series of recombination within the S gene and around ORF8 leading to the origin of SARS-CoV direct progenitor. Moreover, it is expected that from here the spillover took place from bats to civets and later on to the people residing near the location or due to indulgence in wildlife trade of infected animals (Hu et al. 2017, Ahmad et al. 2020, and Lu et al. 2020:11). The probable spillover proceeds via several consecutive events that facilitate CoVs to establish infection in humans.

The probability of animal-to-human transmission is ruled by various factors such as the dynamics of disease in an animal host, level of virus exposure, and the susceptibility of human population. All these factors can be summarized into three major stages that depict the way of virus transmission. The primary stage defines the pathogen pressure on human host, i.e., the amount of virus interacting with humans at a particular instant regulated by virus prevalence and dispersal from the animal host, followed by its survival, development, and distribution outside the animal host. In the next stage, the behaviours of humans and vector defines the chances of viral exposure, the route of entry, and the dose of the virus. The last stage is influenced by genetics, the physiological and immunological status of the human host along with stage two factors determining the possibility and severity of infection (Plowright et al. 2017). The aforementioned stages create a barrier for transmission of the virus to the next level, and spillover necessitates the virus to surpass all barriers to establish an infection in the upcoming host.

COVID-19 and the Transmission Amongst Human Beings: Indicators for public policymaking

Data from various studies so far implicate the zoonotic origin of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2, and its fast spread among humans confirms person to person transmission. Many research works present added information on such modes of transmission. SARS being an airborne virus, transmit via the same way as cold and flu do. The virus spreads by an infected person on coughing or sneezing leaving small droplets in the air or by stool. So, the person who inhales such droplets or touches the infected surfaces may also get infected. In recent works, live SARS-CoV-2 has been detected in the stool of patients evidencing the subsistence of SARS-CoV in the gastrointestinal tract justifying the gastrointestinal symptoms, probable recurrence, and transmission of the virus via fecal-oral route (Gu et al. 2020, Holshue et al. 2020). However, it is not sure whether the consumption of virus-contaminated food may cause infection and transmission (Wu et al. 2020).

As Ghinai et al. (2020:45) found "...the person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 may occur between human beings due to the prolonged and unprotected exposure with the infected person suggesting constant pathogen pressure leading to infection and disease." Thus, a case of SARS-CoV-2 transmission along four successive generations has been studied, with such incidences producing correct examples of sustained human to human transmission (Phelan et al. 2020, WHO 2020). So far, the SARS-CoV-2-infected person acted as a major infection source and respiratory droplets as the main route of transmission, along with aerial droplets and close contact (Jin et al. 2020:18). The virus infection commences via binding specific host receptors then fusing with the cell membrane. Reports state that the receptor-binding domain (RBD) of virus spikes binds with ACE2 receptor of the potential host cell in case of SARS-CoV human-to-human transmission (Jaimes et al. 2020, Wan et al. 2020).The most interesting feature is that SARS-CoV-2 and SARS-CoV spikes share RBD sequence similarity strongly suggesting their common route of entry into the host cells via the ACE2 receptor (Wan et al. 2020) Currently, there is inadequate information on the transmission of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 from pet animals like dog and cat to the human; however, in a fast-evolving situation it is difficult to predict the future.

a) The recurrent emergence of pathogenic CoVs indicates the disturbances in their ecological niche.
b) There is still no clarity on the specific potential animal reservoir for the virus, although some studies point thereto.

c) The alleged zoonotic origin and cross-species transmission of SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 need further attention to confirm the underlying adaptation-evolution mechanism.
d) Understanding the molecular basis for ACE2 receptor usage by different SARS-CoV strains is vital to obtain clarity on cross-species transmission and check on possible future disease outbreaks.

Numerous viruses have existed for years without affecting the human population, and their recurrent spillover on other animals and humans is the consequence of man-made activities. Therefore, the best way to keep them away is to keep a barrier between their natural reservoirs and civilisation. There is a need to scrutinise more animal models for infection and transmission of SARS among animals and humans. There is dire need studying the effects of ethnic and cultural differences on CoV transmission and pathogenesis.

Conclusions

This study undertook a post-COVID-19 appraisal of the theoretical and empirical relevance on available

primary and secondary data, to divulge the character of pandemic oriented public policymaking in sub-Saharan African countries, with focus on Cameroon. It analysed the historicism of the COVID-19, its threats to humanity and Cameroon's public policymaking preparedness for an eventual the outbreak and spread, in the manner the December 2019 COVID-19 spread from China.

The article argued that, many sub-Saharan African countries, including Cameroon's public policy responses grounded on the "spur-of-the-moment approach," which is essentially characterised by policy summersault. Thus, this approach is hardly suitable in handling the spread of pandemic such as CsOVID-19. Herein, several and enormous shortfalls were churned out to serve Cameroon's social capital and economic well-being at times of severe health challenges as orchestrated by COVID-19. COVID-19 impelled sustained increase in the number of deaths rate, which surpassed 1000 people daily in Cameroon. In adopting this approach Cameroon fell short of two things. First, it was the impulsive massive loss of material and human capital, including the threat to the national economy. Second, it was the neglect of the highly predictive rational-comprehensive policymaking approach, which portends more advantages in its usage than the spur-of-the-moment approach, characterised by policy summersault. Essentially, public policies are political system's responses to public demands arising from its environment. Invariably, a political system is the composite or aggregate procedures located within identifiable and interrelated institutions and activities, otherwise

known as government, which authoritatively allocate values – through decisions, which are binding upon members of society.

Consequently, Cameroon's adoption of the spur-of-the-moment policy approach was not suitable for tackling the COVID-19; given the enormous shortcomings intrinsic in the approach. While the approach could conveniently be adopted in solving other social problems, it was not suitable for a huge health risks such as that occasioned by COVID-19. Cameroon's human capital and the economy, became victims of a hostile rather than soothing public policy trust even to the immediate policy beneficiaries – the population. As an augmentation of Cameroon's public policymaking on health and similar social problems, we suggest the re-introduction of Preventive Medicines Centres, Health Officers, Sanitary Overseas or Inspectors, whose were the primary focuses public health in urban and rural areas, in terms of the synchronisation, energenisation and the promotion of people-friendly policies and ethics in healthy public health institutionalization in Cameroon, and other sub-Saharan African countries.

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