

Financial Sustainability Preparedness Of Vincentian Charitable Programmes In Nairobi County, Kenya In Light Of The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

It is no gain saying that the COVID-19 pandemic affected many aspects of human life including the financial sustainability of many organizations. The study thus sought to examine the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on financial sustainability of Vincentian charitable programmes (VCPs) in Nairobi County. The study adopted an embedded mixed research design. The population of the study comprised of 146 main staff and subordinate staffs, managers (CEO), and directors from three identified Vincentian charitable organizations in Nairobi. The study population all participated in the study. The data collection tools were questionnaires, interviews, and observation. The quantitative data collected and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the qualitative data was thematically analyzed. Pearson Correlation was utilized to establish the relationship that existed among the variables. Key findings showed that COVID-19 affected the VCPs both positively and negatively, but the negative effects outweighed the positive ones. Positively the VCPs grew its digital capacity, new way of doing things, organizations learning, staff side hustling, environmental safety and hygiene improvement. Negative effects included: VCPs documented loss of lives and livelihoods of beneficiaries, expensive administration and running cost, interrupted donations, and job instability among staff. Conclusively, COVID-19 Pandemic affected financial sustainability preparedness of the Vincentian charitable programs in Nairobi County.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Financial Sustainability, Vincentians, Vincentian Organization

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I. Background

Covid-19 was first discovered in September 2019. Its origins were limited to Wuhan and China in Asian continent. The illness is caused by SARS-Cov-2; on this note therefore, it is a viral infection. The Covid-19 virus has had various variants mutating from variants SARS-Cov-2 to Covid-19, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta to now Omicron (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The illness was described pandemic by scientists in 2019. The term pandemic refers to an endemic disease that spreads across a huge region such as multiple continents affecting and infecting a significant number of individuals. Covid-19 has had immense effects on the people all over the world. In relation to statistics, from 2020 to 2022, as of November 1, 2022, the virus has affected with over 6.5 million deaths, 629,370,889 confirmed cases and has left millions incapacitated, financially stressed and jobless. According to WHO (2022), a big number of the people who suffered it has also recovered to the tune of 557,060,204 recoveries. In Africa, the pandemic was largely felt in South Africa with 3m people infected with 12,054,880 throughout Africa, which represents 2.6% globally. In Kenya also the pandemic was largely predominant in bigger cities and towns such as Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. Since then, it has led to death of 5,678 and 339,756 confirmed cases and 332,353,292 recoveries respectively (Ministry of Health, Kenya, 2022). The study's interest is in financial sustainability preparedness. Sustainability refers to the organization's ability to mobilize resources to fulfill its current obligations and being able to cater for the future needs of the organization. This study acknowledges that other aspects of sustainability have been explored in academic world. However, financial sustainability has been loosely explored, and no studies exist on financial sustainability of Vincentian organizations. It is due to this that the current study focuses on the gap. The financial sustainability that interests the research is of Vincentian charitable programmes considering COVID-19 pandemic.

The Vincentian congregation started in France in 1625 with its Charism being service to the poor. In Africa the Congregation came in first to Madagascar in 1645, and in 1982 the Congregation came to East Africa and Kenya. Since then, the Congregation in Kenya has had twelve (12) VCPs. In Nairobi County, there is total of four programmes in Kamulu Primary School, DePaul woodwork, DREAM Centre and St. Vincent Kibera nursery school. The programmes profit 3000 beneficiaries. The well-being of these beneficiaries depends largely on the

Vincentian programmes and interventions which offers services including food provisions, school fees scholarship, clothing, and other basic needs.

However, with the pandemic, the donations dropped significantly raising the question whether the VCPs were prepared to face any unexpected scenario such as the pandemic. This further raises the question of financial sustainability of the VCPs run projects in the event of donor withdrawal. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the VCPs, besides livelihood, have had to separate with close to 20 of their staff and beneficiaries.

Also, the VCP employees have had to work from home, work less hours and to some extent close down operations. This meant that services reaching out to the beneficiaries had been reduced by a great percentage probably for lack of financial sustainability. The number of people that have been unable to receive help has increased by 30% (Western Province Newsletter 2021, Issue 5). If the trend is allowed to continue, this would mean that VCPs financial sustainability is threatened. This study therefore aimed or purposed to address this gap.

The objective of the study

The objective of the study is to establish the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial sustainability strategies of Vincentian charitable programmes in Nairobi County.

Methodology

The study adopted an embedded mixed research design. The target population was the 146 main staff and subordinate staff, managers (CEO), and directors from three identified Vincentian charitable organizations in Nairobi. All these participated in the study. The quantitative and qualitative data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observation. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while the qualitative data was thematically analyzed. Pearson Correlation was utilized to establish the relationship that existed among the variables.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented herewith.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics for the interviewed respondents are summarized thus: six (6) of the eleven (11) participants were female while five (5) were male; all of them were above 42 years of age and had worked over 10 years with the VCPs. Thus, they were knowledgeable and familiar with the sustainability policies and practices of the VCPs.

For quantitative data, the demographics characteristics of the respondents are presented descriptively using the scheme of gender, age bracket, level of educational and length of service in the VCPs as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Adolescent Respondents

Variable		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	41	48.8
	Female	43	51.2
	Total	84	100
Age Bracket	20-29	20	23.8
	30-39	32	38.1
	40-49	25	29.8
	50 and Older	7	8.3
	Total	84	100
Level of Educational	Postgraduate	4	4.8
	Graduate	21	25.0
	Diploma	34	40.5
	Certificate	21	25.0
	Secondary	4	4.8
	Total	84	100
Length of Service in VCPs	Less than 2 years	25	29.8
	3 to 6 years	28	33.3
	7 to 10 years	14	16.7
	Above 10 years	17	20.2
	Total	84	100

COVID-19 Effects on Vincentian Charitable Programmes (VCPs)

The objective of the study was to establish the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial sustainability strategies of Vincentian charitable programmes in Nairobi County. To achieve this, interviews were conducted among directors, managers, and employees in the three programmes. Respondents reported that there were both positive and negative effects, however the negative effects outweighed the positive effects.

Positive Effects of COVID-19 on VCPs

The major positive effects are treated under five themes: (1) enhanced digital literacy (2) professional development, (3) side hustling, (4) organizational learning, and (5) hygiene and environmental safety.

Enhanced Digital Literacy: Among the positive effects of COVID-19 on the VCPs several respondents mentioned the enhancement of digital literacy. In school especially, digital media became a means of reach out to students and staff to avoid infections during the COVID-19 period. Moreover, during the COVID-19 and after, new equipment such as Wifi, routers, modems, computers, tablets were purchased as a way of improving online communications outreach to teachers, students, parents and other beneficiaries” (Manager 1, interview, December 26th, 2022).

Digital literacy meant that much communication was in terms of reporting end of day or week work or assigned responsibilities. Some of these had been verbal or through reports in weekly meetings, but now they were reports that could be filed and provide permanent records.

Through observation, it was noticed that because of COVID-19 situation, there was enhanced digital literacy which resulted into improved record keeping methods and improvement of computers knowledge by teacher, parents and beneficiaries as compliance to online operations. Moreover, many more technological equipment such as computers, internet routers, modems and data were purchased and put in place to response to COVID-19 pandemic effects via online mode.

Professional Development: Respondents also acknowledged that lockdown period opened opportunities for additional professional enhancements and revitalization within the organization. Especially, the need to work from home required that staff become compliant with information technology and communication (ICT). For instance, some teachers took some online short courses; to boost productivity. To enhance the organization’s development, more technological equipment such as computers and cameras were purchased and teachers and support staffs trained on online operations for compliance to digital literacy.

Side Hustling: Even though it could have negative effects to the VCPs, respondents saw as positive the fact that a good number of staff started side hustles to survive the economic downtime. It was acknowledged that side hustling has remained a reality to many staff in all the programmes. Employees learned the vital reality of having additional income.

Organizational Learning: It is not always obvious for an organization or its employees to realize new learning and adaptation on new ways out of a specific experience. In the present case, respondents vividly acknowledged that due COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the organization learnt to do things differently: Including meetings, conferences were done via zoom, Skype, and Google meet. Likewise, due COVID-19 protocol observance, hygiene in the facilities was enhanced (Manager 1. Interview, December 27th, 2022).

Submitting written reports effectively using the computers and other communication channels (especially email and WhatsApp); was enhanced. Valuing personal space and use of personal protection gears, working from home and ensuring little family interruptions; and using the phone and valuing it as job tool without which much and essential communication was greatly enhanced, likewise, a major lesson was about digital transactions. Management enforced policies on bank payments; most staff learned to use ATM cards and or connecting bank account to M-Pesa accounts, hence, COVID-19 may have had negative effects, however, many positive effect were inevitable (Manager 1. Interview, December 27th, 2022).

Hygiene and Environmental Safety: COVID-19 protocols that enforced hand washing, sanitizing, and social distancing were taken seriously in VCPs organizations. Health care centers acknowledged that the organization’s environment became healthier and safe. Protocol observance resulted in reduction of hygiene related illnesses like stomach upset, bilharzia, and cholera. Other VCPs have equally acknowledged the improvement of environmental hygiene in their workspaces. The hygiene improvement has been kept up to date, contributing significantly to the organization’s health situation. (Director 1. Interview, December 28th, 2022).

The researcher observed that after the COVID-19 upsurge has reduced, several of the VCPs continued to observe some of the hygiene practices of washing of hands, for example. However, the researcher witnessed that the protocol of social distancing and wearing of masks had not been taken seriously in the Kamulu School and DePaul Woodwork.

Negative Effects of COVID-19 on VCPs

The study established some of the negative effects of COVID-19 on VCPs to include loss of lives of beneficiaries, expensive administration and running costs, interrupted donations and local income development, uncertainty of working conditions, and unhealed hurts and emotions.

Loss of Lives of Beneficiaries: Several parents of Kamulu primary school and one learner were reported to have succumbed to COVID-19. This information was circulated in all the VCPs and reactions were overwhelming. Besides the sympathy expressed about the lost lives, much of the reactions resulted in heightened fears of contracting the disease. This necessitated heightened hygiene and work at home measures and led to changed attitudes to COVID-19 containment measures from staff that would have shown resistance to the measures. Observation has already been made to the effect of some safety protocols being maintained while others such as social distancing were abandoned. This can suggest that costs and social behavior influenced the sustainability decisions after COVID-19 pandemic.

Expensive Administration and Running Costs: COVID-19 containment measures came as additional policies with unavoidable expenses. Particularly, the hygiene and sanitation department faced increased expenditure due to fixtures for hand washing equipment and detergents for mandatory hand washing and sanitization. For work-at-home arrangements, expenses on computers and internet connectivity became necessary and workers were expected to have smart phones. Respondents also reported that even though communication improved during COVID-19, it became very expensive within the organizations since almost everything was done through phones or online. Conversely, online medium of communication made face-to-face contact and human relationship lose value.

Interrupted Donations and Local Income: Respondents' views suggest that two scenarios concerning donations: First, donations were interrupted. Second, in school programmes, managers reported the organization experienced low income, especially when parents could not pay school fees because most of the activities were being done online due to COVID-19 and donors were not sending donations anymore.

Uncertainty of Working Conditions and Unhealed Hurts: It became apparent that organizations could not efficiently run their activities effectively; most staff were made to work half-day or alternate days, while others were laid off completely. Loss of job or half-salary led to low income or no income on the part of the staff. This led to hard economic times. Besides, during COVID-19 period and after, the cost of living generally was very expensive.

Levels of the Effects of COVID-19 on VCPs

The effects of COVID-19 to the VCPs as reported through interviews led the researcher to find corroborative information. Especially, the researcher sought to find the general opinions of VCP employees on whether the challenges of COVID-19 affected the sustainability of charitable programmes of the organization.¹

Table 2: Responses about COVID-19 Effects on Operational Sustainability VCPs

Statement		SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
1. HIV/AIDS care programs were kept on hold as Covid-19 containment measures	F	26	23	13	8	14	84
	%	31.0	27.3	15.5	9.5	16.7	100
2. Benefactors & volunteer workers for VCPs were no more available as travels ban & containment measures - controlling the Covid-19 infections	F	34	29	7	6	8	84
	%	40.5	34.5	8.4	7.1	9.5	100
3. The organization faced a deficit of resources to sustain its programs during the time of Covid-19	F	24	29	10	7	14	84
	%	28.6	34.5	11.9	8.3	16.7	100
4. Organization lost competent employees to carry out programs activities due to lack of training avenues and because of Covid-19 disruption.	F	21	20	13	10	20	84
	%	25.0	23.8	15.5	11.9	23.8	100
5. Charitable Programs faced tough operation challenges: purchase additional equipment such as mask, PPEs, additional workers during the Covid-19 pandemic.	F	35	30	7	7	5	84
	%	41.7	35.7	8.3	8.3	6.0	100
6. The food donation programs for our beneficiaries in Nairobi were highly affected during the time of Covid-19	F	34	26	12	7	5	84
	%	40.5	31.0	14.3	8.3	6.0	100
	F	22	32	14	8	8	84

¹ A Likert scale of seven items was used. Respondents rated their responses from 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Agree (SA), 2 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 4 = Disagree (D), while 5 = Strongly Disagree (SD). The results are presented in Table 2.

7. Our education scholarship program for poor needy students stopped due benefactor incapacitation as a result of Covid-19 effect	%	26.2	38.1	16.7	9.5	9.5	100
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The results also reveal that there are more responses to the choices of ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ compared to the neutral or the disagreements. The cumulative percentages of the choices strongly agree and agree for specific statements 1 to 7 are: 53%, 75.0%, 63.1%, 48.8%, 77.4%, 71.4, and 64.3% respectively which imply that more than half of the respondents acknowledged the negative effects of COVID-19 on the operations of the VCPs. To obtain a representation of the opinions expressed about the COVID-19 overall effect, the sum of the responses to the Likert scale were calculated. The range was 28 resulting from a minimum sum of 7 and a maximum sum of 35. The data was interpreted to mean, lower values indicated that COVID-19 had strong negative effects on the organization while higher values meant that COVID-19 did not have much effect on the organization. The range was used to obtain three levels of effects of COVID-19 on the VCPs namely: High Negative Effect (7.0 – 16.4), Moderate Negative Effect (16.5 – 26.4) and Lower Negative Effect (26.5 – 35.0). The mean was 16.48 while the standard deviation was 6.90.

Effects of COVID-19 on VCPs Funding Disruptions

The researcher sought to find the general opinions of VCP employees on whether COVID-19 affected the funding of charitable programmes of the organization².

Table 3: Responses about COVID-19 Effects on Funding of VCPs

Statement		NE	LE	U	GE	VGE	Total
1. The current programs would be financially sustained for a foreseeable future amidst the Covid-19 pandemic situation.	F	14	18	16	24	12	84
	%	16.7	21.4	19.0	28.6	14.3	100
2. Our organizations stop running because of financial constraints during the Covid-19 pandemic era	F	24	16	8	21	15	84
	%	28.6	19.0	9.5	25.0	17.9	100
3. Several of our projects will increase amidst the lack of donor support and donor/benefactor’s incapacitation.	F	24	19	17	13	11	84
	%	28.6	22.6	20.2	15.5	13.1	100
4. The number of employees will be retained in the payroll.	F	13	25	15	21	10	84
	%	15.5	29.8	17.9	25.0	11.9	100
5. Our projects will still be able to financially sustain their operations by employing additional employees.	F	22	20	17	17	8	84
	%	26.2	23.8	20.1	20.2	9.5	100
6. We will still be able to purchase additional equipment for staff’s protection such as masks, and PPE.	F	13	19	17	19	16	84
	%	15.5	22.6	20.2	22.6	19.0	100

The results also show that fewer respondents acknowledged the choices of ‘no extent’ and ‘low extent’ compared to ‘great extent’ and ‘very great extent.’ The cumulative percentages of the choice’s low extent and no extent for specific statements 1 to 6 are: 38.1%, 47.6%, 51.2%, 45.2%, 50.0%, and 38.1% respectively. This implies that several respondents would deny the devastating negative effects of COVID-19 on funding the operations of the VCPs.

To obtain a representation of the opinions expressed about the COVID-19 overall funding disruptive effect, the sum of the responses to the Likert scale were calculated. The range was 24 resulting from a minimum sum of 6 and a maximum sum of 30. The data was interpreted to mean, lower values indicated that COVID-19 did not have strong negative effects on the organization since the respondents indicated low or no extent. On the other hand, higher values meant that COVID-19 had much funding disruption effect on the organization. The range was used to obtain three levels of effects of COVID-19 on funding disruptions for VCPs namely: Low Extend of Funding Disruption (6.0 – 14.4), Moderate Funding Disruption (14.5 – 22.4) and Very Great Funding Disruption (22.5 – 30.0). The mean was 17.07 while the standard deviation was 5.36.

² A Likert scale of six items was used. Respondents rated their responses from 1 to 5, where 5 = Very Great Extend (VGE), 4 = Great Extend (GE), 3 = Undecided (U), 2 = Low Extend (LE), while 1 = No Extend (NE). The results are presented in Table 3.

II. Discussion

The main goal of this study was to examine the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the financial sustainability preparedness of Vincentian charitable programmes in Nairobi County in light of COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews, observations, and the quantitative analysis revealed both positive and negative effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on VCPs financial sustainability preparedness and revealed great influence on the operations of the CM charity in Nairobi County, Kenya, findings that were found to resonate with this study.

The study's established positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic: enhanced digital literacy, professional development, side hustling, organizational learning, and environmental safety. Through the use of mediums and technologies such as zoom conferences and Google meet to run conferencing, meetings, and online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions were able to remain functional amidst the pandemic. The period is also posited to have led to recovery of environment and impact on global climate change from changes in day-today human behavior on environment as pointed out by Verma, & Prakash, (2020), findings that resonate with those of the current study.

The negative effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic were established to be loss of lives of beneficiaries, expensive administrative and running costs, interrupted donations local income, uncertainty of working conditions, and unhealed hurts and emotions by this study. Fasani and Mazza (2020) in their study in the European Union, on COVID-19 response by immigrant workers notes the high loss of lives and livelihoods, lockdowns and its effects such as isolation, fears, stress and job losses. Griffin (2020) reported loss of life and livelihood, findings that concur with those of this study. Al-Habaibeh (2021) also points out to the expensive costs for organizations embracing online operations from home while integrating new technologies and practices such as video conferencing, purchase and installation of equipment and structures. Along with these, also came the drop in funding for institutions from donors and funding institutions Evans (2020), Manna (2021). WHO (2020) and (EFA, 2020) both reported many working families being rendered jobless and firms and institutions closing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, findings that were also established in this study.

A very important aspect brought out by the findings of the current study, especially the correlation results. The challenges that COVID-19 pandemic causes on the operations could have caused disproportionate ineffectiveness in the financial sustainability preparedness strategies in some Vincentian Charitable Programmes – such as the education institutions that had to close during the lock down and lost substantial support. However, the Dream Centre deals with health matters of HIV/AIDS which occurred to be a vulnerable group in the COVID-19 situation. Instead, many energies of donors and governments worked to keep such centers very sustainable, the efforts were part of the global fight against COVID-19 pandemic. This explains the negative weak but not significant correlation between COVID-19 Pandemic effects and the effectiveness of financial sustainability preparedness measures. The sustainability preparedness strategies of VCPs as a single entity might appear effective, this is because they are mixed, and that is, while others focus on education, others are of health concern.

III. Conclusions

The present study was anchored on Resource Mobilization theory to handmaid the understanding of financial sustainability preparedness of Vincentian charities in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it sought to establish effects of COVID-19 pandemic on financial sustainability preparedness of the Vincentian charitable organizations in Nairobi County. How did COVID-19 affect the operations of Vincentian run programmes in Nairobi County, and strategies that needs to be put in place towards financial sustainability preparedness of Vincentian charity programmes in Nairobi County? The study revealed that Vincentian programmes financial sustainability preparedness became vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 in terms of reduced and disrupted sources of funding which resulted into difficulty in funding programmes that depended on external donations. The findings also revealed increased operating expenses in compliance to Government protocol by Vincentian organizations on purchasing thermometer gun, sanitizers, personal protection equipment (PPE), and establishing hand wash water points as measures to protect workers from COVID-19 infection. In terms of organizational development, the findings revealed that the VCPs organization and their staffs learnt new way of doing things. During this time, employees as well as directors, managers learnt how to use computers, internet use, and internet banking such as operation of M-pesa account. During the COVID-19 period most transactions were done online, including online conferencing, Google meet, report writing and preservation. Hence, there was improved service delivery, and a new way of operations.

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