

# The Role of Global Governance Systems in Shaping Responses in the Era of Pandemics: Lessons from Chinese Covid-19 Experiences for South Africa

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## 1 ABSTRACT

The South African government has set up sound governance structures to respond to growing demands for services since 1994. Although the country has functional institutional structures and is one of the largest economies in the African continent; the healthcare system was substantially impacted by the outbreak of the global Covid-19 pandemic. As with countries around the globe, South Africa struggled to devise timeous response strategies to the pandemic resulting in huge losses of lives and depressed socio-economic activities. As co-members of the BRICS power bloc, the South African and Chinese economies share commonalities. This paper therefore draws some significant lessons from China's experience in managing the epidemic, while also taking account of uneven social and economic impacts. Chinese experiences of good governance systems and meaningful capacities to engage in trial-and-error responses to the pandemic resulted in the containment of the disease. A systematic analysis of literature was conducted to answer clearly formulated questions. This research adopted a case study design together with a qualitative research approach. The results reveal that there are weaknesses in South Africa's constitutional democracy with a three-tier system of government and an independent judiciary. This aggravated the severity of Covid-19 which negatively impacted the people and put more strain on the healthcare system and the economy. The governance structures' late response to adjust led to losses of lives and the rapid spread of the virus, which resulted in the implementation of strict lockdown measures. On the contrary, the Chinese government's robust global governance structures enhanced its ability to promulgate laws and guidelines which informed rapid changes across all aspects of its functions. This resulted in the swift implementation of initiatives that ensured strict safety protocols to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and generated advanced analytical technological systems and created new markets for new technologies. As a result, of the global phenomenon, South Africa has learnt from Chinese experiences as the largest developing economy in the world. In view of the findings of the study, it is recommended that South Africa collaborates with other countries to facilitate real-time information and skills transfer and to avoid being left behind. As part of the proactive measures to enhance emergency responses to pandemics, commitment to planning and implementation of long-term strategies is required to circumvent future pandemics. In conclusion, the study reveals that governance system reforms are needed to improve and strengthen primary healthcare and to ensure that government processes and systems foster good governance. The paper further suggests that South Africa should consider investing in competent skills, technology and adequate budget to ensure good governance systems, as well as actively conducting research studies in preparation, responding to any future infectious diseases.

Keywords: Global governance, Covid-19 pandemic, Construction sectors, Economic and population growth, spatial planning

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The era of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the global economy and social well-being of many people, both from the physical and mental health viewpoints, with regard to how global-geo-politics affects national systems of governance. Clearly, South Africa was not prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, the 2020 report of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board concluded that the majority of countries were unprepared for COVID-19 because "our understanding of pandemic preparedness has been inadequate" (GPMB, 2020). In some cases, preparedness was understood too narrowly. For example, some countries laid in stocks of PPE but failed to complement this with a robust testing system to identify infected people. They also did not build community-level systems for handling outbreaks (GPMB, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic was regarded a global public health emergency; the first case was reported in the City of Wuhan, and Hubei Province in China in 2019. These patients most notably presented with clinical

symptoms of dry cough, dyspnea, fever, and bilateral lung infiltrates on imaging. Cases were all linked to Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market, which trades in fish and a variety of live animal species including poultry, bats, marmots, and snakes. Subsequently China cautiously informed the World Health Organization (WHO) given that many of the Chinese's reported cases were from vendors at sea point and poultry amongst others. The spread of the disease to other countries including South Africa prompted the WHO to declare a global pandemic in March 2020. This resulted in China declaring "peoples war" against the virus and adopting a model which became a Chinese Covid-19 diplomacy and policy instrument which set the global political agenda (Nian, 2021).

This paper, therefore, draws some significant lessons from China's experience in governance and policy perspectives in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chinese model is a very useful benchmark for policy instruments and sets a political agenda for the effective implementation of governance systems. The Chinese government understood that in order to successfully conquer the Covid-19 pandemic, it was imperative to strengthen its power relations and maintain cordial ties with neighbouring countries to improve and restore its national image, given that the first victim of Covid-19 was detected in China (Nian, 2021). Nian further reveals that the dynamics and changing power relations as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have reshaped China- Southeast relations in the political ties, and economic co-operation in the immediate and long term. For instance, Singapore drew a valuable lesson from China's experience to combat the spread of the pandemic. Once the virus was detected, it expanded its screening process to all checkpoints including airports and sea points.

Compared to China, which is the second-largest economy, the African continent has been dealing with a rapidly changing global environment since the early 90s. These changes have major implications for the continent's future development. However, they are also a part of an era of greater global structural weakness, which has posed complex challenges for the continent, and where the spectra of global marginalization has always loomed large. In this regard, steering mechanisms of global governance take on added meaning in the African context. These evolve "through the sponsorship of states, and the efforts of actors other than states at the transnational or subnational levels, or through states and other types of actors jointly sponsoring the formation of rule systems" (Rosenau, 2009).

As an example, the threat of avian flu led to calls for "pandemic preparedness," but readiness entails preparation of a certain kind (Buck & Ghiglione, 2020). This became evident in the context of the current pandemic. The European countries had enough ventilators to meet the challenge related to coronavirus except Germany, which had to order an additional 10,000 ventilators from a domestic supplier. Another example was the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) developed in 2000. This is a global partnership among public health institutions, laboratories, NGOs, and other organizations designed to observe and respond to epidemics. The WHO provides much of the staffing and assistance for GOARN but does not directly fund it, and there are currently proposals to enlarge and strengthen this network so that it can engage in emergency interventions at the local level, where the WHO is not designed to assist (Obstfeld, 2020).

Global governance offers an alternative perspective from which to reimagine the world order. As it becomes a serious contender for explaining how we see the world, it is guiding us in legitimizing our actions in the world.

The erratic workings, inadequacies, and flaws of institutionalized structures, rule systems and norms of global governance have conspired to bring Africa to a critical juncture. This is compounded by the view that global governance is devoid of any grand logic, made up as it is of a borderless web of interactions by formal or informal institutions, states, markets, and citizens. This multiplication of spheres of authority gives global governance its myriad of control mechanisms which derive from "different histories, goals, structures, and processes". Thus, the " global Covid-19 pandemic health emergency crisis brought into unambiguous relief the magnitude and scope of the challenges that the world should confront". In this regard, the world found itself in a storm which was the novel coronavirus epidemic (Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, 2020).

This paper examines the role of the global governance system during the Covid-19 outbreak, and the experiences in South Africa in the context of learning from the Chinese, model and public policy discourse. The paper further provides an argument and a deep sense of reflection on South Africa's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and whether it had a mechanism in place to mitigate the spread of the disease, in

particular since the pandemic's emergence in early March 2020. The pandemic further provided an opportunity for researchers to understand that the global response to the infectious Covid-19 pandemic would play a very critical role in improving future policy discourse and governance systems in the management of public healthcare systems. The impact of the pandemic exposed some existing socio-economic inequalities in developing countries including policy gaps in both public and private healthcare systems.

In essence, the pandemic has widened the existing gap between the rich and the poor, and the urban and rural communities. Hence, Fourie and Lamb (2023) argue that those who lived in developed countries and in the past had access to adequate health care facilities including regular income found themselves to be living in the best times during Covid-19. This paper further provides an overview analysis of how South Africa, the African continent, and the world have responded to diseases and pandemics that had a much more severe impact on the global economies of scale and healthcare systems. The paper also provides significant opportunities for natural and social scientists, as well as researchers to learn more about the pandemic and future healthcare emergencies.

The paper depicts how the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the world economy and led to public health fatalities and increased mortalities. It negatively impacted the country's gross domestic product (GDP) leading to a high rate of unemployment arising from strict lockdown measures which were imposed to mitigate the spread of the disease.

### 3 CONCEPTUAL SYNOPSIS

#### 3.1 State governance

The notion of global governance is referred to in the context of the movement towards political cooperation amongst transnational actors, aimed at negotiating responses to problems that affect more than one state or region. Studies show that a global governance perspective helps elucidate how scale mattered in relation to the Covid-19 crisis. For instance, Rosenau and Czempiel (1992) view Global Governance "as a process of confluence and cooperation among multiple actors, state, and non-state actors". However, Weiss and Wilkinson (2014) stress that the unevenness of power has always been present in global governance, where some states have been far more capable actors than others, and non-state actors. In order to deal with such unevenness's, the South African government has adopted its long-term National Development Plan 2030. This unpacks the role of different sectors of society in contributing to the achievement of its desired long-term goals. In shaping its global governance, however, compared to the development plans of other countries such as China and their strategies of bi-lateral and multi-lateral institutions, the South African plan places a great deal of emphasis on good governance as part of the non-physical infrastructure that must be developed to support socio-economic change. Thus, South Africa has determined its critical role to participate in the global governance space.

In South Africa, the case of the Covid-19 pandemic had far reaching implications for all sectors of society across all spheres including at the global level. Its impact was mostly felt in the health sector, as it had to respond to the growing pressure of the virus and ensure that the health facilities were not overrun and consequently health services did not collapse. South Africa consequently adopted a governance approach in managing the pandemic and understanding the role of the cities and patterns of human behavior during the outbreak.

#### 3.2 Political system

In this discussion, it is necessary to reflect on reasons why China remains the second largest economy and continues to pursue the dominant player in global and political governance. This can simply be tracked to the fact that the Chinese firmly believe that the political system must first be founded on a sound system to ensure political stability in the country. This can be traced back to the generation of leadership in China since the founding of the Republic of China in 1949. The Chinese rise to global economic power can also be attributed to its huge growing population and its rapid implantation of reforms, particularly in the economic sectors (Zhu, 2019).

Furthermore, it should be noted that China's political system is socialist and pursues a state governance system under the Communist Party of China (CPC). This focuses on developing a sound system for the

party’s visionary leadership. It gives priority to developing the economy, stable politics, its culture and society and the military as well as foreign affairs to enhance state governance. According to Zhili and Juan (2020), the Chinese state governance model has led China to be relatively successful in the implementation of policy instruments and economic development since its reform to achieve developmental goals. It is therefore the reason why China’s foreign trade policy remains significant in the country’s integration into the global economy. Hence, China plays a dominant role in or is party to many treaties and institutions involved in the Group Twenty (G20).

This phenomenon was proved sound when China was faced with the mammoth task and responsibility to contain the spread of the very first difficult global public health emergency Covid-19 pandemic in modern history.

The notion of global governance provides a better understanding of the various practices that fall within the concept of globalization. Hence, Lederer and Muller (2005) state in more practical terms that global governance combines both domestic and international institutions, which includes both political and economic power relations as determined by the process of globalization. This provides a much broader interpretation and understanding of the concept of global governance and political economy which in essence includes how political choices can shape patterns of economic integration and development.

#### 4 STUDY AREA

The paper sketches the challenges faced during Covid-19 with a focus on all nine provinces in South Africa. In response to the global and domestic challenges confronting the provinces, the government has committed to the plan which reflects a collective vision for the city region in a decade’s time and beyond. The plan seeks to address the fundamental problems of unemployment, poverty, and hunger, as well as health, inequality as a consequent effect of the pandemic. Hence in the main, South Africa has committed to rebuilding its economy after the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

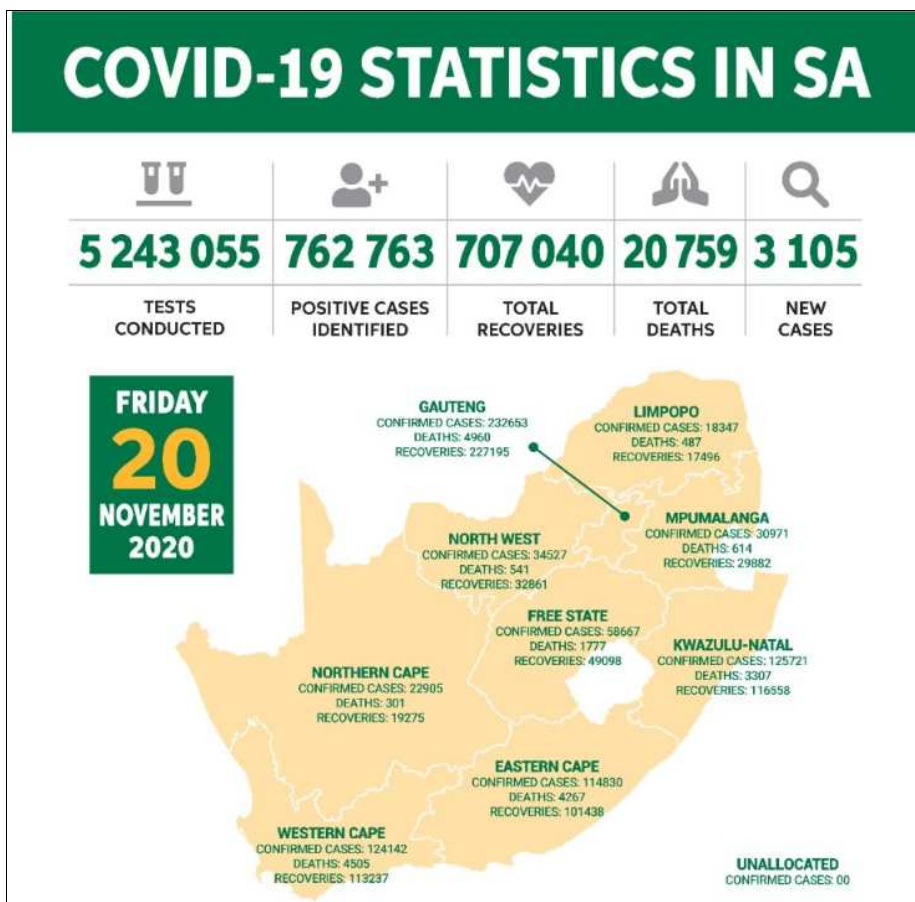


Figure 1. Reported cases in South Africa by November 2020, across all nine (9) provinces. Source: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/11/20/update-on-covid-19-20th-november-2020/>



The Covid-19 pandemic has given impetus to efforts in adaptive governance which have existed since South Africa achieved democracy, given that all measures had to be put in place to collectively achieve a cooperative system across all spheres of government. At the helm of these collaborative efforts to address the pandemic government announced a solid governance structure and systems intended to coordinate decision-making processes faster, as well as enhancing the flow of information and responsiveness.

According to the World Health Organization, by November 2020 the number of Covid infections had sharply increased, leading to more deaths reported. This negatively impacted social wellbeing, and created economic pressure thereby increasing the current material conditions of inequality and unsustainable infrastructure. South African Covid-19 Statistics for 2020 reveal that South Africa remained one of the 20 most infected countries with a high rate of reported Covid-19 cases. Figure 1 below shows the extent of reported cases in South Africa by November 2020, across all nine (9) provinces.

The severity of this Covid-19 outbreak resulted in it being declared by the WHO as a global pandemic. This prompted the South African government to declare a national disaster, and to establish a command council to coordinate South Africa’s response to the Covid-19 challenges (Government Gazette, 15 March 2020). The command council announced measures to combat the pandemic including a nationwide lockdown for 21 days with effect from 26 March until 16 April 2020. This meant that all South Africans had to stay at home except for health workers in the Public and Private sectors, Security Services, as well as those in the categories deemed to be providing essential services. According to Beaubien (2020), Covid-19 was a global phenomenon, considering the rapid chain of events, and it seemed that the lockdown model allowed governments throughout the world to act decisively and effectively from both a public health and governance perspective. The turn to lockdowns also highlighted the prominence of centrally driven or ‘centre of government’ (CoG) arrangements to coordinate the government machinery to respond to a pandemic (Kunicova, 2020). An over-arching lesson was gleaned from how various countries employed CoG mechanisms to fight Covid-19. This was that trans-national learning that feeds into ‘good practice’ is a necessary but insufficient marker of success – the structure and character of CoG mechanisms must also demonstrate ‘good fit’ with individual country contexts. Good practice features might include hands-on executive leadership, clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and interfaces between policy command and operational structures, as well as public awareness campaigns. Figure 2 below shows South African demographics for all nine provinces, and their reported Covid-19 cases by June 2021.

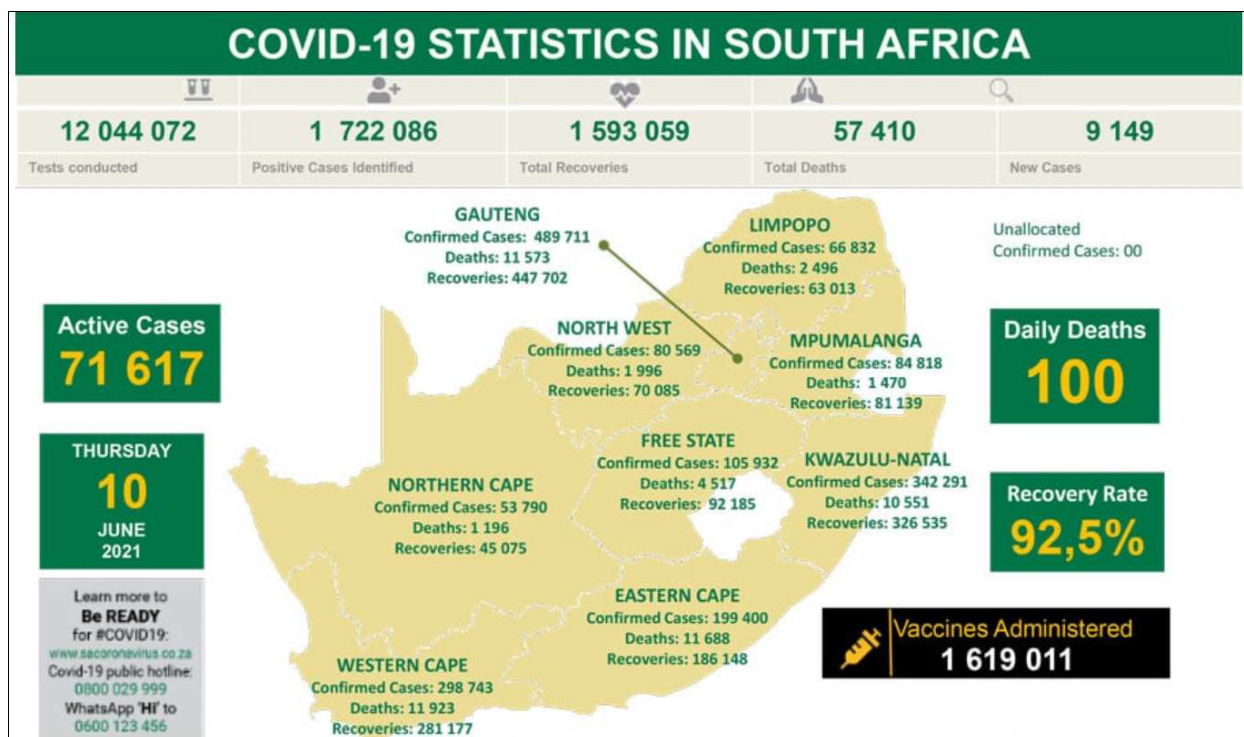


Figure 2. South African demographics for all nine provinces and their reported Covid-19 cases by June 2021. Source: <http://sacoronavirus.co.za/2021/06/10/latest-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19-in-south-africa-10-june-2021/>

#### **4.1 Significance of Data Management in Decision-Making Process and Governance**

An effective integrated model of governance required coordinated efforts in ensuring that the quality of information flowed properly through the system. This denotes that a proper structure was required to provide a synoptic view of the progress of the pandemic ranging from the collective planning of responses and interventions including monitoring of the effects of the pandemic.

The Chinese government has played a critical role in ensuring epidemic prevention and control, thereby leveraging the digital data platform. Digital technology is a very important means of communication, and it should be noted that China is largely a mobile society with many of the Chinese community using smart technology. Hence, China became the first country to use artificial intelligence data to meaningfully fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The key lesson to be learned from the Chinese governance system was their investment in digital platforms and data. This played a very critical role during the prevention and control of the Covid-19 epidemic, as it is said that every Chinese app had some added features for a dedicated hub specific to the coronavirus.

This app played a crucial role in helping both the urban and rural communities get updates on developments during the pandemic. More importantly, the Chinese app helped many people in rural communities to reduce their travelling patterns to the cities, through usage of “We Chat” for the collection of necessary medicine for their well-being. Even truck drivers made great use of the app in terms of becoming “solidarity social forces” during the lockdown period.

The positive spin for these Chinese initiatives is that South Africa had to adapt to changing demand in technology and subsequently initiated its own mobile app to fast communicate messages and data related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, it was able to reach millions of South Africans including those in the rural areas who might not be privy to news broadcasting.

#### **4.2 The Impact of the Pandemic on the Economy**

The Covid-19 outbreak had a severe impact on the global economy and the ability of countries to trade in view of the lockdown measures which were implemented. This was also seen in China, wherein the first quarter of its economic performance declined and was resuscitated through business resumption and economic recovery after the lifting of the lockdown. The Republic of China’s strategy has been to focus on the domestic market economy whilst pursuing to maintain and expand its international markets domination and in that way remaining the second-largest economy.

In South Africa, the implication meant the rising rates of unemployment and poverty as businesses were now faced with severe pressure to close down leading to the financial markets and the banking system opting for the introduction of relief funds for business. To mitigate the dire economic consequences arising from these lockdown measures, the South African government adopted a ‘risk-adjusted strategy’ with five different levels of lockdown.

The introduction of the framework for the risk-adjusted strategy provided guidance to different sectors of the economy to return to economic activities using a phased approach. This, however, was done to ensure that the WHO safety protocols were adhered to and were ultimately mandatory for all citizens. These protocols related to social distances, regular hand washing and sanitizers, wearing of face cloth masks, as well as reducing social public gatherings including limiting the number of people attending funerals. These measures were applicable until the lockdown restrictions were lifted, and the economy was fully reopened.

The South African government further advocated for the provision of social grant relief packages and support of households through the distribution of food parcels and vouchers to the poorest communities, as well as relief packages for firms or businesses in distress. Central to that was the allocation of the Covid-19 budget to support health workers through the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE’s), surgical masks, ventilators, and oxygen equipment to support Covid-19 patients. Covid-19 revealed that the focus on WHO as the sole instrument of global health governance may have been misplaced. A pandemic creates problems of scale, and many of these require international cooperation. However, many of these may not be resolvable by an international organization, no matter how broad its reach. This pandemic has reinforced the message that stockpiles of PPE need to be preserved and updated at regional, national, and subnational levels (Feinmann, 2020).

### 4.3 Impact of Pandemic on Mental Health and Depression

The Covid-19 virus spread like wildfire across the world in a very short space of time. The high infection rate and associated health risks prompted the world to impose restrictions which had a major effect on people's mental health, causing fear, depression and anxiety (Oman et al., 2022). This is attributed to a lack of income and social support, as well as access to social amenities. A study by Oman et al. (2022) in Malaysia revealed that the psychological effect of the pandemic placed tremendous emotional stress on people. The rising death toll from Covid-19 also instilled more fear within people of losing their loved ones, their income and the possible next wave of the Covid pandemic.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

The authors analyzed literature by using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) tool, specifically adopting guidelines in the PRISMA flow diagram and PRISMA checklist. PRISMA helped to pinpoint and review research relevant to the role of global governance systems in shaping responses during the pandemic. The papers found were screened for relevance using a selection of defined criteria including the number of citations and the journal impact factor. The authors used the PRISMA checklist to assess the quality of the identified sources and only the most relevant papers were included. A variety of filters was also applied to the search to narrow the results, such as eliminating articles that fell outside a specified timeframe. Both journal and non-journal articles were included. The PRISMA flow diagram below (Figure 3) shows the four criteria which were used to guide the authors in their research: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

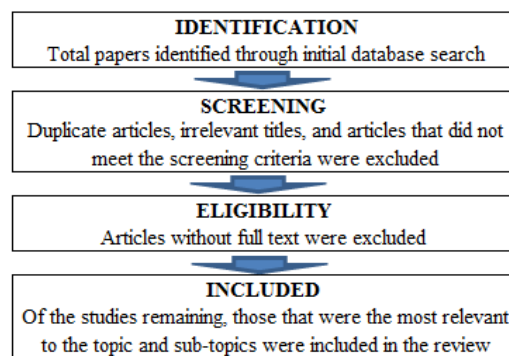


Figure 3. Simplified flow chart showing the selection process for the articles

## 6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper illustrates the value of global governance systems for South Africa in shaping responses during pandemics, and lessons learnt from the Chinese Covid-19 experiences. The research strategy for this paper involved a number of case studies to achieve its desired outcome. The study used data from books, conference papers, articles, and journals mapped in the form of tables and figures, as well as lessons learned.

Covid-19 created a sharp focus on the existing structural inequalities and institutional weaknesses in the Public Health sector in South Africa. Whilst the country had made tremendous progress in ensuring the quality and access to healthcare facilities for numerous people who were unable to afford private healthcare, studies still show that the healthcare sector had been under severe strain even prior to Covid-19.

This study focuses particular attention on the nine provinces, in South Africa, as shown in Table 1 below, Stats SA Mid-Year Estimate Population (2021) reflects the densely populated provinces in South Africa due to high in-migration. This required a swift response and effective management to reduce the increasing number of Covid-19 infections.

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa necessitated the health system to have adequate capacity to be able to deal with the emerging crisis. This meant that South Africa had to adopt a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach at the political and leadership level in order to save lives and livelihoods. The comprehensive health plan response was also prepared to ensure that health facilities had enough beds, particularly in the public sectors so that patients diagnosed with Covid-19 could access basic health facilities. Figure 4 below illustrates the daily infections and active cases in South Africa experienced during the third wave.

| Nine Provinces in South Africa | 2021 Mid-Year Estimated Population |              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
|                                | <i>n</i>                           | % of total   |
| Eastern Cape                   | 6 738 223                          | 11.1         |
| Free State                     | 2 913 531                          | 4.8          |
| Gauteng                        | 15 882 396                         | 26.3         |
| KwaZulu-Natal                  | 11 563 357                         | 19.1         |
| Limpopo                        | 6 063 742                          | 10.0         |
| Mpumalanga                     | 4 733 276                          | 7.8          |
| North West                     | 4 158 730                          | 6.9          |
| Northern Cape                  | 1 320 924                          | 2.2          |
| Western Cape                   | 7 092 527                          | 11.7         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>60 466 705</b>                  | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 1: Mid-Year Estimate Population (2021). Source: 2021 Mid-Year Estimate Population.

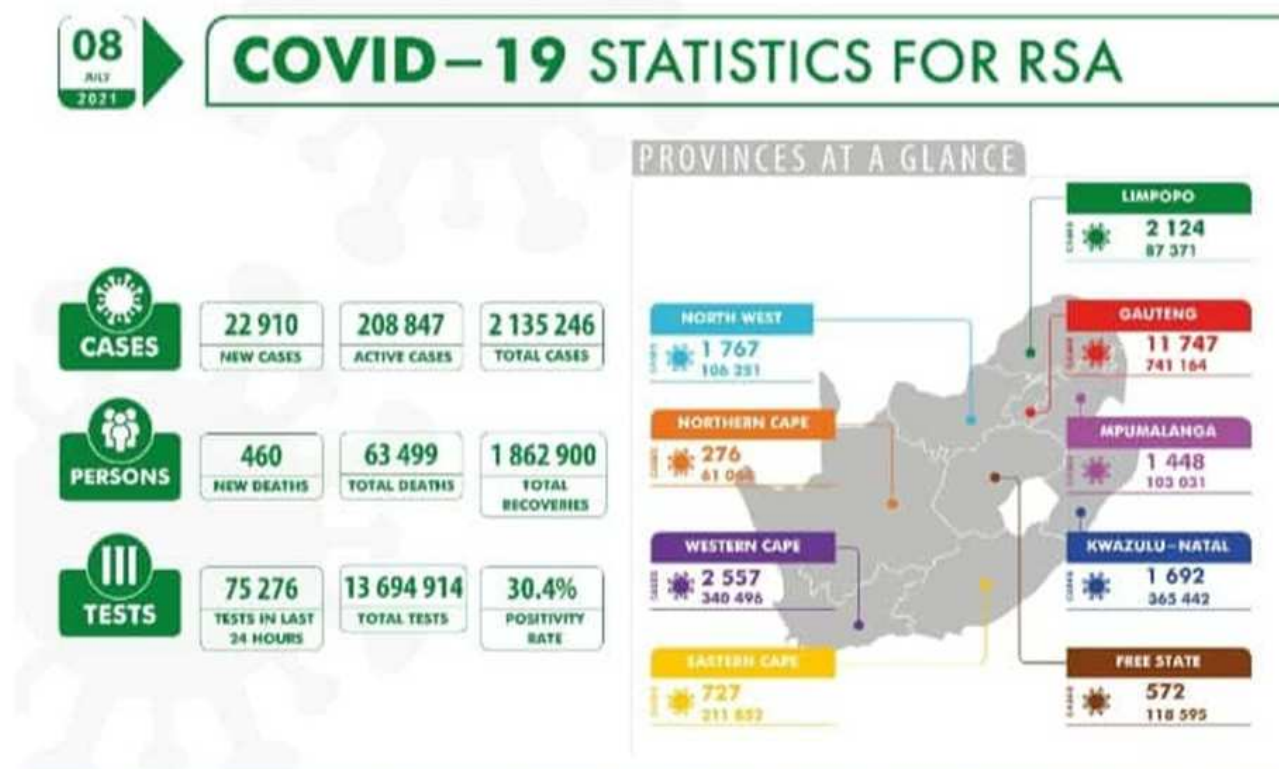


Figure 4. Daily infections and active cases South Africa. Source: <https://www.nhls.ac.za/latest-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19-in-south-africa-08-july-2021/#iLightbox/gallery19033/1>

The health plan response also had to address the challenges of health infrastructure to avert the fatalities that the other parts of the world experienced as a result of the increased burden of disease and poor infrastructure maintenance. South Africa had to reprioritize its healthcare system, create hospital wards and beds in facilities to accommodate Covid-19 patients, and repurpose additional identified spaces in certain health facilities. The discussion below illustrates the use of three spheres of government in regulating the Covid 19 pandemic in an effective manner.

### 6.1 South African governance system

The government is divided into three spheres: national, provincial and local. The legislatures in all three spheres are directly elected every five years by South African citizens of 18 years and older (SA Constitution 1996, S. 46). Only the second house of Parliament, the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) is not directly elected. Its ten (10) members per province are indirectly elected by the provincial legislatures.

The Constitution (S. 55 (2)) also requires that the National Assembly provide mechanisms to ensure that the executive organs of state remain accountable to it. This was the framework of government within which the Covid-19 pandemic had to be managed in line with the Constitution’s provisions regarding a state of emergency (S. 37). In order to curb the spread of Covid-19, the country put measures in place such as restrictions on public gatherings; cancellations of events; closures of workplaces, schools and public transport; stay-at-home requirements; public information campaigns; restrictions on internal movements; and international travel controls.



### 6.1.1 National level

South Africa's experience with the Covid-19 pandemic and the manner in which its government coped raised concerns about its impact on the country's democracy. This was because several democratic states' constitutional and political dispensations were directed towards more autocratic tendencies. During the pandemic, predictions were made that this trend could end in permanent regressions in democratic systems.

The current research assesses the South African government architecture, especially in the context of accountability and oversight requirements. In this regard, the relationship between the legislature and the executive is most relevant. The South African government decided on a state of disaster to manage the pandemic in contrast with a state of emergency as the constitutional alternative. Its implementation is analysed, especially the institutional framework underlying it. The role of Parliament during the pandemic is thus used as an important test of the quality of democracy. The summary is that South Africa's democratic principles did not degenerate during the pandemic, as determined by Freedom House (2021), but the pandemic's major impact was on the quality of democracy. The state of disaster's institutions, for example, were not those prescribed by legislation. Moreover, Parliament's involvement in the state of disaster's decision-making was limited. The 2021 local government election, on the other hand, was judged free and fair and its outcomes have been implemented without any public challenges. The main negative outcome is the public's trust deficit in the ruling party's use and abuse of pandemic regulations (Public Health and Democratic Governance, 2022).

### 6.1.2 Provincial level

The institutional arrangements of South Africa during the pandemic mainly included the Cabinet as led by the President, as well as the national and provincial Coronavirus Command Councils which were responsible for coordinating government's response by all spheres of government and society. The key role-players in these structures were the President of the Republic of South Africa (as the head of the NCCC), the various Ministers who issue regulations, Premiers of Provinces (as heads of Provincial Coronavirus Command Councils) and MECs, as coordinators of implementation (De Visser and Chigwata, 2020). In terms of sub-level governance, the question of who was responsible for the implementation of the directions issued in terms of the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (RSA 2002) arises. This was placed on all premiers, Members of the Executive Councils (MECs) responsible for Local Government in the provinces, the President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), all mayors (whether executive or non-executive) and institutions of traditional leadership (De Visser and Chigwata, 2020). The directions issued to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic instructed each province to establish a Provincial Command Council (PCCC) and coordinating structures to support the national institutional arrangements (COGTA, 2020d).

The delivery of major infrastructure projects on time and within quality standards is largely a concern in the South African public sector. This had further implications and challenges when it came to the delivery of functional beds to mitigate the challenges of accommodating the Covid-19 patients. These challenges also included the procurement of capital infrastructure, which was a consequence of poor planning. The national treasury consequently issued instruction number 08 of 2019/2020 to specifically deal with issues of emergency procurement for Covid-19. This was implemented, although infrastructure delivery management system provides a clear process that must be followed in the procurement of infrastructure in practice note number SCM 3 of 2003.

### 6.1.3 Local government level

At a local government level, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) directed the Committee on the actions which had been taken to assist local government to implement the Covid-19 disaster management directives. SALGA subsequently highlighted a wide range of challenges faced by municipalities as a result of the pandemic's economic impact. A major concern was the projected reduction in revenue collection by the municipalities owing to job losses, reduced household incomes, and local authorities being unable to rent out their facilities or generate the normal level of revenue from areas such as traffic fines. Simultaneously, the lockdown required people with reduced incomes to stay at home, resulting in higher-than-normal water and electricity usage. Municipalities were heeding SALGA's call not to disconnect residents who were unable to pay their electricity or water bills, but Eskom did not support the

proposal that municipalities be granted a payment holiday because of their revenue collection challenges. Moreover, R20 billion had been set aside by the Treasury to assist municipalities (Role of local government in combating the spread of Covid-19 virus, 2020).

## 6.2 Global governance structures in China and Covid-19 responses

The results reveal that there are weaknesses in a constitutional democracy with a three-tier system of government and an independent judiciary. This aggravated the severity of Covid-19 which negatively impacted people and put more strain on the healthcare system and the economy. Governance structures' late response to adjust led to losses of lives and the rapid spread of the virus led to strict lockdown measures to contain the virus. On the contrary, the Chinese government's robust global governance structures enhanced its ability to promulgate laws and guidelines which informed rapid changes across all aspects of its functions. This resulted in the swift implementation of initiatives which ensured strict safety protocols to reduce the spread of Covid-19 and generated advanced analytical technological systems to control the virus and create new markets for some new technologies. As a result, of the global phenomenon, South Africa has learnt from China's experiences as the largest developing economy in the world.

## 7 LESSONS LEARNT AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic was unprecedented in the history of humankind, and South Africa was not an exception in experiencing these uncertainties. Nevertheless, South Africa succeeded in providing infrastructure in the form of functional beds to accommodate Covid-19 patients. This was necessary for the country to adapt to changing needs which required an innovative approach and comprehensive strategy to respond to the health plan. Despite shortfalls in the delivery of capital infrastructure and planning processes, Covid-19 provided an opportunity for the public health system to be strengthened. Through these lessons, the health system responses were tried and tested which could help mitigate the negative impact of future emergencies should they arise. Studies show that a single source of data management, digital technology is critical for monitoring and reporting. This serves as an important lesson to be learned in cases of future healthcare diseases and emergencies since such data plays a very critical role in decision-making. These resources strengthen the centralized data repository for record-keeping, as well as for data analysis.

South Africa has, therefore, learned a valuable lesson through the intervention's measures implemented against great challenges and experiences. This has helped to shape its governance model. These experiences are not limited to the role of all stakeholders from both public and private sectors, academia in the form of researchers and scientists, civil society organizations, and communities in the fight against infectious disease. Effective political and administrative leadership has also played a critical role in the establishment of necessary governance structures and systems needed to coordinate and drive interventions and responses to future pandemics.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic largely impacted the global governance system and led to growing concerns and uncertainties amongst the world's economies. South Africa like other countries, had to ensure that there were prevention strategies in place and functional health facilities to respond to the growing crisis. The World Health Organization 2020 provided the necessary expeditious guidance regarding responsive policies and frameworks which different countries implemented to manage the impact of the pandemic.

From this study, it is evident that Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on global governance. Nevertheless, lessons could be drawn from China's response in the application of its governance system, and in reshaping its governance model during the pandemic. South Africa was able to move decisively to construct systematic responses to the threat of the pandemic. However, the pandemic had an impact on the GDP demand and supply economies which led to increasing rates of unemployment, poverty, and hunger, impacting millions of livelihoods of South Africans.

For example, Stats SA in its published Quarterly Labour Force Survey, indicated that the country's unemployment rate had increased by 1.0 percentage points thereby increasing to 30.1% in the first quarter of 2020 (Stats SA Quarterly Labour Survey, March 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic further demonstrated the need for the leadership management to close the existing gap between policy, planning and implementation in the immediate short-term. In this regard, a capable and effective state requires a long-term investment in

its communication systems as well as appropriate use of technology to respond to complex and changing demands in future emergencies. This study concludes by showing that an integrated planning approach is key for the country to achieve its intended outcomes in managing the pandemic and reshaping its governance model and systems.

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