

Living together in the Context of Covid-19 as seen by Burkinabè Pupils of CM2

Badolo Bawala Leopold

Department of Philosophy and Psychology, University Joseph KI-ZERBO, Burkina Faso

Abstract: This research aims to study the apprehension of living together in the current context of pandemic due to Covid-19 among CM2 students in Burkina Faso. A sample of 96 participants (52 girls vs 44 boys), moderately aged 12 ± 6 months was interviewed by questionnaire. The results show that participants have knowledge about barrier measures to combat Covid-19. Girls, more than boys, see these measures as instituting social distancing between individuals. However, these measures do not constitute an obstacle to living together. We just have to do it differently. While encouraging, through education and awareness, respect for "barrier" measures to contain this social scourge, it is necessary to promote the virtues of living together, otherwise.

Keywords: Burkina Faso; Covid-19; discrimination; stigmatization; living together.

INTRODUCTION

Living together expresses the peaceful links of good understanding that individuals, peoples or ethnic groups have with others, in their environment of social and cultural diversity¹. It is based on mutual respect, acceptance of the plurality of opinions, interactions in openness and cooperation, benevolent relations, as well as on the refusal to ignore or harm each other (Loobuyck, P. and Caroline, S, 2014; Worms J.P, 2011; Fortin, J, 2001; Milot, M, 1998; Touraine, A, 1997; Imbert, F, 1997; Benoit, É, 1966). Living together implies an openness to the other and an acceptance of difference (Thibault, A, 2017). It is guided by a logic of non-exclusion of anyone because, beyond our differences, beyond the difference between the universal and the relative, there is the "irreducible human" which is the same everywhere and aspires to the dignity inherent in every human person. Living together holds important issues, some of which are outlined by Saillant, F, (2015):

"Reflecting on living together is one of the paths that can be taken to go beyond identity-based perspectives and their communitarian drifts, on the one hand, and on the other hand, those of the agreed criticisms directed towards contemporary, post-modern societies, both fragmented and globalized. This requires to find the places of passage between the irreducible singularities, what they inevitably generate of fragmentations, and the return of a collective concern of the common, of the common humanity, which would not fall in any totalizing drift and which would not leave in plan the question of solidarities".

Today, humanity is facing the pandemic of Covid-19. Started as an epidemic in China in December 2019 (Tian, S. & *et al.*, 2020), Covid-19 very quickly became a pandemic and was declared as such by the World Health Organization (Zhang, R. & *et al.*, 2020), with enormous consequences: paralysis of land and air transport, a sluggish world economy, a deepening of the social divide, bringing international finance to its knees, and existential anguish in each of us (Waldvogel, F, 2020).

The measures enacted and adopted by the states (closing borders and public places, isolating homes, communities, quarantining entire localities, confinement, restrictions on gatherings, nightly curfews, physical distancing, wearing mufflers, washing hands...), are aimed at adapting to the Covid-19 crisis and limiting its spread (Matsuishi, K. & *et al.*, 2012; Andremont, A, 2003). According to Roy, M.A. *et al.*, (2020), these "barrier" measures are helping to contain the expansion of this pandemic. This is illustrated in the figure below.

¹<https://www.linternaute.fr/dictionnaire/fr/definition/vivre-ensemble/>

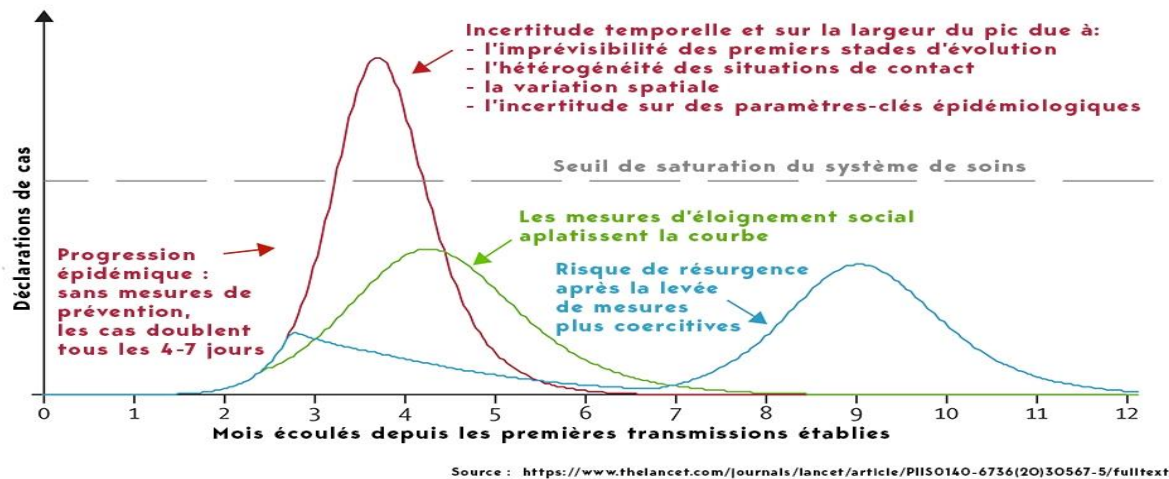


Figure 1: Simulations of a Covid-19 transmission model

These measures have led to various disruptions in the daily habits of the population. They have disrupted the codes of living together. Masks, "barrier" gestures, physical distancing (new social etiquette) are now part of language and daily life. Shaking hands, offering help to an elder to cross the street, holding the door for the one who follows... seem to belong to another era: the one when we lived together in total carefreeness outside our homes². The respect of the other person now goes through the fact of protecting him or her from oneself. Everyone is potentially a transmitter of the virus.

Covid-19 has provoked a series of stigmatizing and discriminatory acts across continents, with different groups as targets (Rahman, M.A. & Islam, M.A, 2021). UNESCO³ notes that the emergence of Covid-19 has created instability and fear, which exacerbates existing human rights concerns, such as discrimination against certain groups (Asians, for example). These groups have often been targeted for allegedly causing the pandemic and its spread. Discriminatory episodes have included verbal assaults in public places, smear campaigns on social media, boycotts of their business activities, and in some cases, difficulties in accessing educational institutions. In other cases, fear of contagion has led to stigmatization and discriminatory attacks on homeless people who, because of their circumstances, cannot comply with containment or other basic preventive measures. It is inferred that Covid-19 discrimination and stigma take many forms that

vary by context. With stigma, people are labeled, stereotyped, segregated and/or have their status undermined, which can have negative consequences for the affected individuals themselves (Croizet, J.C. & Martinot, D, 2003), as well as for their caregivers, family, friends and community. It may be recalled here that, in its contemporary use, stigma describes the segregation of a person for differences that are considered contrary to societal norms (Bischel, N, & Conus, P, 2017; Ky-Zerbo, O. *et al.*, 2014). Linked to complex phenomena at the societal level, stigma plays a fundamental role in maintaining relationships of power and control. Stigmatizing attitudes are detrimental to social cohesion and cause eventual social isolation of stigmatized groups (Gardziuleviciene, L. & Raisiene, A.G, 2021). The fight against stigmatization and discrimination is a citizenship issue (Noël, O, 1996). This health crisis resulting from Covid-19 therefore raises questions about living together. How can we build a way of living together in a context of adopting "barrier" measures, of fear, of uncertainty due to Covid-19? How do young learners, future leaders, read the issue of living together in the context of Covid-19? Does this apprehension vary according to the gender of the learners? In the context of Burkina Faso, these questions have yet to be answered, hence the purpose of this research. It is useful to look at this segment of the population that can both transmit and contract the Covid-19 virus, even if in smaller proportions than adults. The United Nations⁴ notes that children have so far been

² <https://www.lapresse.ca/societe/2020-05-29/vivre-ensemble-au-temps-de-la-Covid-19>

³ <https://fr.unesco.org/news/discrimination-stigmatisation-liees-au-Covid-19-phenomene-mondial>

⁴ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/note_de_synt_hese_-_limpact_de_la_Covid-19_sur_les_enfants_0.pdf

largely spared the severe symptomatic reactions that are more common in the elderly. The exceptional cases of hospitalization and death of children who have succumbed to the virus are probably related to previous health problems. Far more common is the tragic loss of a parent, family member, or caregiver to COVID-19. The psychosocial impact of such a loss on a child should not be overlooked.

The interest in taking the gender variable into account lies in the fact that the gender approach presupposes the education of children in an equitable manner, which education should enable them to grasp the difference and the necessary complementarity of the sexes (Hurtig, M.C. & Pichevin, M.F, 1982; Robert, 1987, cited by Lafond, D. ⁵). If this is the case, there should be few differences between girls and boys in their understanding of living together in the context of Covid-19.

Awareness-raising messages and the education of populations should integrate the different social strata, including young learners, based on the way living together is perceived in the context of Covid-19. This is the way to make each person responsible and a citizen aware of his or her commitment to self and to the community (Lefort, H. & Clervoy, P, 2020).

METHODS

Participants

A simple random sample of 96 students (52 girls vs. 44 boys) from Cours Moyen 2 (CM2) was interviewed. The average age was 12 years \pm 6 months.

MATERIALS

A questionnaire was used to assess the vision of living together in the context of the pandemic. In terms of form, it was a closed questionnaire. In terms of content, the questions asked concerned knowledge of the "barrier" measures instituted by the government to combat the spread of Covid-19, the link between the "barrier" measures and social contact, and the possibility of living with a relative who has contracted Covid-19.

Procedure

Prior contact was made with school officials to explain the purpose of the research and to seek their agreement. The participation of the teacher in charge of the class was required. Participants were

organized into two groups of 48 (26 girls vs. 22 boys). A random draw was used to determine the order in which the participants were drawn. Each participant was asked to complete the questionnaire. The average completion time was 20 minutes.

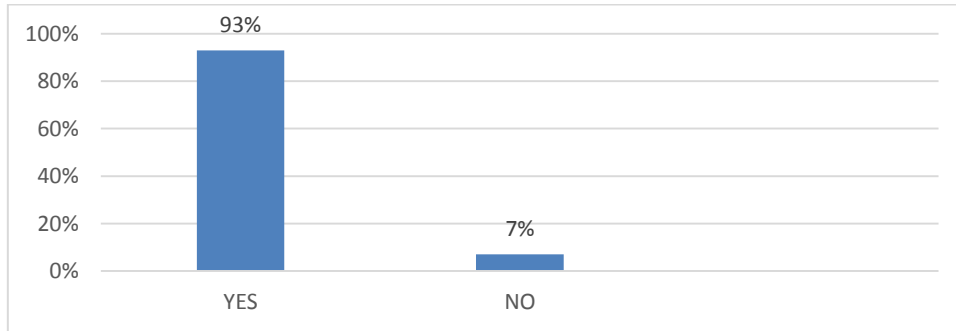
The Chi-square statistical technique was used to analyze the results. According to Chanquoy, L, (2005), this technique allows us to measure the difference between one or more observed population distributions and one or more population distributions considered theoretical or expected. When the observed numbers are less than ten (10) or when the theoretical numbers are less than five (5) in a cell, the Yates correction is used.

RESULTS

Knowledge of "Barrier" Measures

When asked if they were aware of the "barrier" measures instituted by the government to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of participants answered in the affirmative. 93% could name at least two "barrier" measures. The graph below provides an overview.

⁵ <https://www.agoravox.fr/tribune-libre/article/l-estime-de-soi-dans-la-prediction-23787>



Graph 1: Knowledge of "barrier" measures

The relatively large number of participants who were able to name at least two "barrier" measures to combat the Covid-19 pandemic can be noted. The young age of the participants is not an

obstacle to acquiring knowledge about this pandemic. Taking into account the gender variable, the distribution of participants according to knowledge of "barrier" measures is as follows.

Table 1: Gender and knowledge of barrier measures

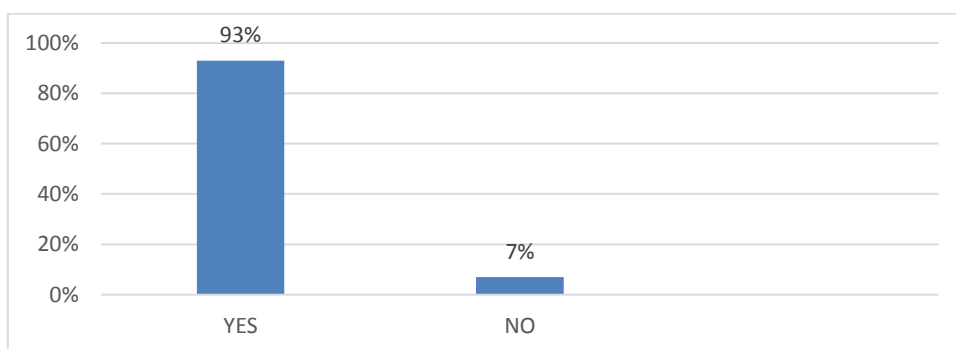
Knowledge of barrier measures	Gender		Total
	Girls	Boys	
Yes	49	40	89
No	03	04	07
Total	52	44	96

This table shows that there is no difference between girls and boys in terms of knowledge/awareness of "barrier" measures to combat Covid-19. Girls and boys show knowledge/ignorance of these measures in relatively equal percentages. Using the Chi-square technique, it appears that, at 1 degree of freedom and at the .05 probability threshold, the calculated Chi-square (Yates) is lower than the theoretical Chi-square (0.052 vs 3.841). We therefore reject the H1 hypothesis and retain the null hypothesis

H0. Participants do not differ significantly in their knowledge of "barrier" measures to combat Covid-19.

Barrier Measures and Social Distance

When asked if barrier measures are a way to create distance between people, 54% said they were not, while 43% said they were. 3% of the participants did not express an opinion. The following graph gives an overview of this.



Graph 2: "Barrier" measures as a means of social distancing

From a psycho-differential point of view, taking into account the gender variable, the distribution of the participants is as follows.

Table 2: Gender and perception of "barrier" measures

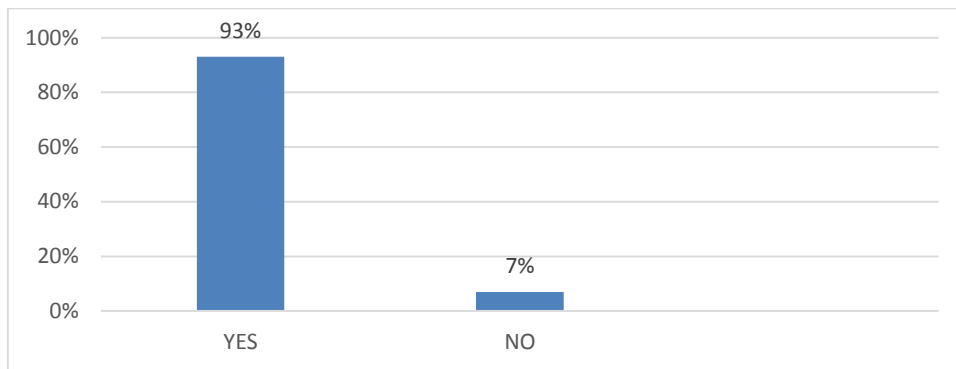
Knowledge of barrier measures	Gender		Total
	Girls	Boys	
Yes	35	17	52
No	15	26	41
No opinion	02	01	03
Total	52	44	96

More girls than boys (57% vs. 33%) think that "barrier" measures are a means of social distancing. Conversely, more boys than girls agreed with this idea (63% vs. 37%). Two of the three participants who did not express an opinion were female. From a statistical point of view, at 2 degrees of freedom and at the .05 probability threshold, the calculated chi-square (after Yates correction) is higher than the theoretical chi-square (7, 549 vs. 5, 991). We reject the null hypothesis H0 and retain the alternative hypothesis H1. We conclude that there is a significant statistical link between gender and the perception of "barrier" measures as a means of social distancing. Girls,

more than boys, develop this perception. It appears that more than physical distancing, it is social distancing that is the subject of the responses produced by the participants.

Possibility of Living with Someone Who has Contracted Covid-19

64% of the participants declare that they would be ready to live with a close relative who has contracted Covid-19, but with the need to protect themselves. 29% of the participants rejected this possibility, insisting on the danger of Covid-19. 7% of the participants did not express an opinion on this question. The graph below illustrates this.



Graph 3: Possibility of living together

There is a clear majority of participants who say they are willing to live with someone who has contracted Covid-19. This reflects a general tendency among the participants to live together (respect, solidarity, concern for others). On the

psycho-differential level, taking into account the gender variable, the distribution of participants according to their perception of the possibility of living together with someone who has contracted Covid-19 is as follows.

Table 3: Gender and possibility of living together

Possibility of living together	Gender		Total
	Girls	Boys	
Yes	34	27	61
No	15	13	28
No opinion	03	04	07
Total	52	44	96

The application of the chi-square statistical technique (with Yates correction) makes it possible to observe that, at 2 degrees of freedom and at the .05 probability threshold, the calculated chi-square (0.078) is lower than the theoretical chi-square (5.991). We therefore reject the alternative hypothesis H1 and retain the null hypothesis (H0). Girls and boys do not differ significantly from each other with respect to the possibility of living together with a relative who has contracted Covid-19.

DISCUSSION

This research examined the issue of living together in the context of Covid-19. It found that the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has tested human societies. Fear/panic has developed within communities, caused by a lack of information or insufficient access to information. This leads to irrational assumptions and the need to blame others⁶. In the end, it is the living together that pays a heavy price. Stigmatizing and

⁶ https://communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/04/COVID19-Stigma-guide-2002_FR.pdf

discriminatory attitudes and behaviors towards people affected or supposedly affected and towards their relatives are a blow to living together. Paradoxically, it is in these moments of difficulty that solidarity and mutual aid should be expressed. But the need to survive and the fear of death sometimes take over, fueled by insufficient knowledge of the pandemic. It is in the wake of this observation that we sought to understand how young learners (girls and boys) from elementary school perceive living together in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The results show that the participants have a certain knowledge of the measures enacted by the government to fight against this scourge. The majority of them think that the "barrier" measures are a means of creating social distance between individuals in the family, at school and in society in general. From a psycho-differential point of view, girls, more than boys, in percentages, think that "barrier" measures are a means of social distancing. This difference is statistically significant. However, the need to live together is not questioned. The differences expressed by the participants are not statistically significant in terms of knowledge of "barrier" measures and the possibility of living together. It is in the area of the perception of "barrier" measures as a means of social distancing that the differences between girls and boys are significantly expressed. But this perception does not prevent the expression of a desire to live together.

These results show a relatively favourable disposition of young learners not to interrupt relationships with family and friends in the context of Covid-19. However, they are aware of the need to protect themselves in order not to transmit or contract the virus. The "barrier" measures do not convey an ideology of hatred or rejection of the other. It is concern for our health and the health of others that guides the adoption and adherence to these measures. These findings are in line with the work of Matsuishi, K. & *et al.*, (2012), Andremont, A, (2003), which show that the binding measures enacted by the authorities in times of pandemic are aimed at countering the spread of the pandemic as a threat to life. They are consistent with the findings of Loobuyck, P. & Caroline, S, (2014) on the conditions of living together in school and society. "The Covid-19 epidemic has forced us to adapt, and to learn a new way of living together. The "barrier" gestures, the wearing of masks, the distancing are as many new "constraints"... as they are solutions to protect

oneself and the other"⁷. It is not the living together but the way of living together that is questioned by Covid-19.

The finding of a significant difference between girls and boys in the perception of "barrier" measures as a means of social distancing is in line with the position expressed by Hurtig, M.C. & Pichevin, M.F, (1982). For both authors "...the idea of a different nature of the two sexes, legitimizing differences in education and social status, has remained more or less explicitly present in all theoretical elaborations, including those which otherwise privilege the social determinants of development ". Robert, (1987, cited by Lafond, D.⁸) speaks of social pressures on girls and boys to behave according to their social roles and to adhere to sexual stereotypes during adolescence. These pressures force boys to excel academically, while requiring girls to excel socially. Conceptions of masculinity and femininity, which vary across societies, generate gender-based expectations of behavior and social roles.

Involving young people in the fight against Covid-19 is to exalt their sense of individual responsibility, regardless of gender or social conditions. This embraces and supports the idea of the "citizen-expert" developed by Lefort, H. & Clervoy, P, (2020). They had noted that, by making each citizen responsible, one made him an actor of his well-being and that of the others. Everyone becomes a citizen-partner, called upon to mobilize with his own weapons, to position himself as responsible. The citizen-experts are the first resources of resilience. It is this citizen awareness and sense of responsibility that will be able to promote a change in the habits and rituals of interactions with loved ones and the rest of the world.

CONCLUSION

Living together is consubstantial with the social nature of Man. It is a permanent construction and a quest because of the evolutionary dynamics and diversity of human societies. With the advent of the Covid-19, social habits are challenged and threaten the living together. It is in this context that the present research was undertaken. It appears that young learners are aware of the measures taken by the government and health authorities to

⁷ <https://masante.oiiis.re/portal/videos/vital/Covid-19-apprendre-a-vivre-ensemble-autrement,281,833.html>

⁸ <https://www.agoravox.fr/tribune-libre/article/l-estime-de-soi-dans-la-prediction-23787>

contain the spread of Covid-19. They think that these measures create a certain social distance but that this does not make it impossible to live together. The established social links, without being called into question, should however integrate the "barrier" measures against Covid-19. In order to truly live together, it would have to be different. We deduce that the fight against Covid-19 must not be done on the altar of living together. The victory over Covid-19 and the defense of living together are two challenges that Humanity is invited to take up. This can only be achieved if we do not oppose these challenges. In order to reconcile the fight against Covid-19 and living together, the education/awareness of populations is an essential lever to activate. It is necessary to involve the different ages of life, from the youngest to the oldest, by integrating in the awareness messages the level of language accessible to each social category and by diversifying the supports or the communication channels. This diversification of target groups, language levels, and communication channels takes into account individual differences and should increase the effectiveness and efficiency of public awareness/education efforts.

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