

Peer Review

Review of: "Post-Pandemic Reflections from Sub-Saharan Africa: What We Know Now That We Wish We Knew Then"

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1. Introduction

✓ Strengths:

The introduction clearly establishes the global and regional context.

References are abundant, suggesting strong scholarly grounding.

The narrative transition from the global to the sub-Saharan African context is effective.

⚠ Areas for improvement:

The introduction reads as an annotated summary rather than a synthesised narrative. Consider tightening it for flow.

Instead of “we have also published several manuscripts...”, use a neutral, impersonal tone for scholarly consistency:

“Several African researchers, including the present authors, have contributed to literature on epidemiology, public perception, and policy responses during the pandemic...”

The transition to the research question (“What has sub-Saharan Africa learnt...”) could be more explicit:

“This paper therefore reflects on key lessons learned and proposes strategies to strengthen epidemic preparedness across sub-Saharan Africa.”

2. Separating Science from Politics

✓ Strengths:

Excellent contextual analysis; real examples (e.g., Nigeria) make the argument concrete.

The author clearly articulates how political interference erodes trust in science.

 Areas for improvement:

Some sentences could be condensed for clarity; currently, the tone becomes slightly polemical.

Consider tempering statements like “*governments should steer clear from making uninformed statements*” by making them more policy-oriented:

“Governments should ensure that public health communication is grounded in scientific expertise and transparent evidence.”

Add a brief note on **positive exceptions**—African countries where science-policy coordination worked better (e.g., Ghana’s early genomic surveillance)—to balance the critique.

3. Separating Medical Practice from business.

 Strengths:

Unique and bold section—rarely discussed in pandemic literature.

The section raises ethical and equity concerns around profit motives.

 Areas for improvement:

The section leans toward moral argument; consider linking back to structural issues (e.g., weak regulation, lack of transparency in procurement).

The idea of insurance refunds, while ethically intriguing, reads as speculative; reframe as a **provocative question for debate** rather than a prescriptive recommendation.

Clarify the causal link between COVID-related healthcare spending and the neglect of other diseases (cite data if available).

4. Separating Proven Public Health Practices from Untested Behaviours

 Strengths:

Highlights a real problem: the proliferation of unverified practices and products.

The reflection on “mask fashion” and unregulated products is insightful and relatable.

 Areas for improvement:

Avoid overgeneralising; not all NPIs (non-pharmaceutical interventions) lacked effectiveness. Instead, emphasise **contextual variation** and **regulatory lapses**.

“While hand hygiene and masking remain scientifically supported interventions, the lack of product regulation and standardization in low-resource settings reduced their effectiveness.”

Consider briefly acknowledging misinformation as a factor affecting compliance and product misuse.

5. Separating Prevention Practices by Culture and Context

✓ Strengths:

The work exhibits an excellent anthropological perspective.

It emphasises the disregard for local realities in one-size-fits-all global health policies.

⚠ Areas for improvement:

Strengthen the conceptual argument: this section supports **contextualised pandemic governance**—consider explicitly stating that.

The comparison between natural ventilation in African homes and sealed environments in temperate regions is powerful; back it up with one or two studies (if available) on indoor air quality and COVID-19 spread.

6. Discussion

✓ Strengths:

Integrates multiple key lessons and broad implications (child health, burnout, modelling, vaccine manufacturing).

Demonstrates multidisciplinary understanding.

⚠ Areas for improvement:

The discussion reads as a **summary of external sources** rather than a synthesis of the four preceding reflections.

Suggest reorganising around **core lessons**: governance, equity, health systems, and community resilience.

Reduce citation density and instead show analytical linkage:

“Collectively, these lessons highlight that effective pandemic management in sub-Saharan Africa must balance scientific rigour, ethical governance, and culturally grounded implementation.”

7. Conclusion

✓ Strengths:

Clear structure: revisits the four key themes.

The paper concludes with a strong sentence that aligns with its title.

⚠ Areas for improvement:

The current structure is somewhat repetitive, with each “separating” section rephrasing earlier content. Instead, condense this section into **two parts**:

This section should serve as a summary of the key lessons learnt.

Include forward-looking recommendations such as establishing science-policy councils, bolstering local manufacturing, and investing in public trust.

End with a stronger, actionable statement:

“Future pandemic preparedness in sub-Saharan Africa must prioritise evidence-based governance, ethical healthcare delivery, and culturally adaptive public health systems, ensuring that the region is better prepared for whatever crisis comes next.”

◆ Style and Technical Notes

Maintain **consistent citation formatting** (some references are bracketed inconsistently).

Reduce redundancy (e.g., repeated phrasing “in sub-Saharan Africa” or “during the pandemic”).

Use active voice where possible to increase clarity.

A few long sentences could be split for readability.

◆ **Overall Rating (for journal submission readiness)**

Criterion	Rating (out of 5)	Comment
Structure & Organisation	4.5	Logical, coherent framework.
Clarity & Readability	4.0	Strong, but could be more concise.
Scholarly Depth	4.2	Solid references, though discussion can be better synthesised.
Originality	4.7	The “four separations” framework is novel and contextually rich.
Policy Relevance	5.0	Highly relevant to African pandemic preparedness discourse.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.