

MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT (CHM) AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN NORTH-CENTRAL ETHIOPIA

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Abstract: The main aim of this study was to assess the multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on heritage conservation and management and the possible strategies as a way out of the corona pandemic in North-Central Ethiopia. The study was conducted by using a descriptive study design. The study found that : 60.9 % of the heritage sites in the study area were forced to close due to the sudden outbreak of the Coronavirus. And, 71.7 % of staff who worked in the conservation and custodian was not able to work during the pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic has affected by delaying heritage conservation projects works especially in Lalibela, Dessie Museum, and Mereho Palace. 63 % of the heritage collections were not monitored during Corona time. Disruption of community life in and around heritage properties was also one of the major impacts of the Coronavirus. Communication and social mobilization, fast decision making, inviting partners to participate in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, institutional Cooperation and using social media as a platform were identified as the possible strategies for heritage conservation during and post crisis.

Key words: COVID-19, Cultural Heritage Conservation, Heritage Management, strategies

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INTRODUCTION

The crisis was heard everywhere at the moment. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2020 is likely to be the worst year for the global economy due to the sudden outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19: CO implies Corona, VI implies Virus, D implies Disease whereas 19 indicates the year of its outbreak (2019). Since the first infections in China at the end of 2019, the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has continued to spread across the world. No continent has been able to escape this virus since its declaration as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020; COVID-19 has become a global emergency, given its impact on the entire world population and the economy (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2020; WHO, 2020). The effect of COVID-19 on economies around the world has been unprecedented. While evidence of this impact is only beginning to emerge, it is clear that the economic damage has been particularly severe for Small and Growing Businesses (SGBs) in emerging markets. Just as small and growing businesses; art and craft sectors of the economy are majorly tested in their “sustainability” (Aspen Network of Development entrepreneurs, 2020; Roigé, 2021). A multitude of cultural events museums (Giannini and Bowen, 2022; Abend and Lisa, 2020; UNESCO, 2021; Network of European museum organizations, 2020; International Council of Museums, 2020), religious institutes (Future for Religious Heritage, 2020), archival centres and libraries (American Library Association, 2022; Welsh Parliament: Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, 2020) and heritage sites (Douglass and Herr, 2020; Andrea, Romagnoli and Vannucci, 2021; UNESCO, 2021) were closed their doors because of the outbreak of COVID-19. According to the research conducted by Nguyen and Andres (2021); 90% of UNESCO World Heritage sites closed of partly in 2020 due to the outbreak of Corona in Europe. UNWTO calls on governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil societies and educational institutions to mobilize their resources to study the multidimensional impacts of the pandemic in different sectors and recommend implementation and policy direction. The government of Ethiopia also encourages research-based intervention on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in all sectors as well as its impact on the social and cultural life of the community.

Heritages possessed a development opportunity and valuable endowments in all the world countries (ICOMOS, 2021; Harrison, 2013; Tomas and Kristina (eds.), 2018). For their sustainability heritages need integrated conservation of its collecting and management are necessary tools (Global Heritage Fund, 2020). Heritage conservation is a desire to save and to see it, and thus it is also hastening its demise and also is the process of looking after a place, building intangible legacies

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so as to retain its values and bestowed to the future generation. It includes maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation, and protection. Heritage conservation refers to identifying the historical, aesthetic, architectural, cultural, natural or scientific, social and other values of heritage properties and also maintaining and thereby increasing the value of the heritage properties (Sen et al., 2006). On the other side; heritage management is an administrative means by which the cultural and natural properties are protected from human and natural threats of damage and destruction and involves identification, interpretation, preservation, conservation of cultural and natural resources and promoting them for sustainable development (McManamon et al., 2008). All the activities of both heritage conservation and heritage management are majorly affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many heritage management and conservation practices are stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic but the process of damage to heritage resources is not stopped (Federica, 2022; Guest, 2021). Ahmadreza and Giuseppe (2022) studied on resetting cultural heritage policy and management practice -moderating mass tourism in post-pandemic times. The study of these two authors concludes that; a new policy should be initiated based on a multi-sectorial and multi-level approach in planning practice to mitigate tourist flows in vulnerable World Heritage centre. However, this study did not touch how COVID-19 affected both world heritage sites in multidirectional areas and how these impacts reduced by what strategy still need answers. Europa Nostra (2020) has worked on to identify specific impacts of the COVID crisis on cultural heritage sites and stakeholders.

The study found that COVID-19 crisis has impacted every dimension of the cultural heritage value chain, conservation and protection, outreach, training and education. The study focused on European Union and its Member States, as well as towards regional and local authorities and other international organisations by overlooking the third world countries and the impact of the pandemic in all directions especially in heritage management and conservation works. Research Centre of the European Commission (2020) studied on European cultural and creative cities in COVID-19 times by focusing on jobs and the policy response. This study also did not indicate and cover the third world experience on job loss working in heritage sites. The conservation practices in Lalibela, Dessie Museum, and Mereho Palace are taken examples all the impacts were happened. However, all these concerns were not studied scientifically to forward possible strategies and recommendations on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in the study site heritage resources. Therefore, the concern of this study is to see the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on heritage management and conservation practice in North-Central Ethiopia.

According to International Centre for the study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (2020), heritages are significant in providing social and post-trauma support, enabling social cohesion and building resilience of communities during times of crisis. Heritage resources are also no less significant in the UN 2030 agendas by providing a great role in economic, social and environmental knowledge to reduce the risks of any pandemic. However, with the sudden outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic many heritage resources, management and conservation projects are at risk of possible neglect due to the economic difficulties (Wyman, 2020). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic complicates the caring of heritage collections in museums, archival centres, and research institutes. The wooden, metallic and texture heritage conservation practice in the time of COVID-19 very seriously affected and a major challenges for its sustainability. Many conservation works including alcoholic disinfectant, waxes and oil or other bio-based consolidation of heritage conservation did not worked in the time of COVID-19 (Walsh, 2022). More importantly Jorge (2022) indicated that; the heritage management and conservation works affected by the pandemic and its future depend on the scientific conservation models we use. Due to the COVID pandemic, the whole museum heritage has become suddenly fragile and vulnerable and the process of re-approaching of museum resources and communities, current practices and approaches needs to be considered. However, all this studies overlooked the experiences of Ethiopia and in what level of the pandemic affected the heritage management and conservation in museum, archives, on site and public libraries and the response of stakeholders on the impact (Lerario, 2021). In the case of our study area, we cannot find any study on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural heritage conservation and management practices. Therefore, our concern is to study the impacts of the pandemic and the ways forwards for heritage resources conservation and management by focusing on the North-central Ethiopia.

Objectives of the study

- To assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on cultural heritage management and conservation practices in the study area.
- To describe the response of different actors in cultural heritage management and conservation practices during the time of COVID-19 pandemic.
- To describe the possible heritage management and conservation strategies during and post COVID-19 pandemic era in the study area.

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Description of the study Area

The study was conducted in major cities of Dessie and Kombolecha and small towns of Lalibela and Haik in the North Central Amhara regional State, Ethiopia. In these major cities and towns a number of tourism attractions found. Dessie is a historic city rich in both cultural and natural resources (Nigatu and Tegegne, 2021). Especially during the time of Ras Michael, the city of Dessie was the site of the oldest and most historic palaces and castles. Churches were established in the city by the emperor, four in particular: Medhaniale Church (1904), St. George's Church (1902), Mariam Church (1904), and Menbere Tsehai Theological Church (1904). Among the major tourist attractions in Dessie are the principal compound, Aitefef Hall, Dessie Museum, and Wollo Cultural Centre. These historical and cultural relics in Dessie have played an important role in tourism and related development. King Michael's Palace, Aitseef Hall, and other architectural complexes

and landscapes are a timeless legacy built during the reign of King Michael Wollo Wetgre. This indicated that the longevity of our country's architecture and art is a permanent heritage of more than a century of Greek, Armenian, Arab and national sages. Aitefef compound is located at the entrance and exit of Kombolcha (Amhara National Regional State Bureau of Culture and Tourism, 2006 [https://visitamhara.travel/.](https://visitamhara.travel/))

Dessie Museum is one of the museums that Ethiopia claims to have. This museum was built in 1909 by Dejazmach Yosef Birru and is said to have been built by experts from India. It is said to be a cone-shaped field at the entrance of the museum. This house served as the seat and residence of their government when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1928. After leaving Italy, he was reportedly used by various government offices for office work. It was inaugurated in 1967 by Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam and became the first museum in the region. Prince Asfawossen's palace was built before the arrival of the Italians in Ethiopia and served as the residence of the heir apparent, Prince Asfawossen, from 1926-to 1966. The palace is located in Dessie and was built in 1922 by Asfawossen, the heir apparent of Wollo General. Lalibela World heritage site, Haik Museum, many battle fields around Haik, Haik Estifanos monastery and its treasures, many historic houses, archival centres, church museums, public libraries and Islamic heritage centres are found in the study area, where our study conducted (South Wollo zone culture and tourism office, 2019).

Study Approach and Design

In designing research the activities are differed in terms of approach and philosophy. In the management and service research the agenda is differ in the emphasis and the stakeholders involved in the study. This study used a qualitative approach and descriptive research design. Qualitative data was helpful to obtain in-depth information about the issue under study (Creswell, 2003). The aim of this descriptive research is to discover, describe search what has happened now? What are the practices undertaken? And the extent of the problem is described. As shown in the the research approach and strategy flow chart above in figure one above; the researchers developed a formulated research questions in guiding the study with a framed exploratory and descriptive technique as aresearch strategy. By developing the strategies; the researchers gather, observe and conduct interview to undertaken the analysis and tp develop a ways-out strategy. By doing these; conclusion and possible recommendations were addressed.

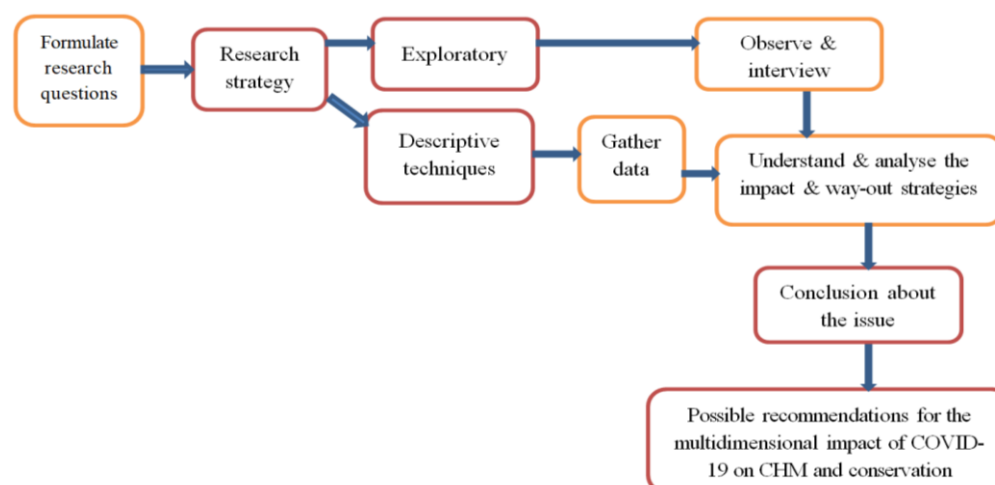


Figure 1. The research approach & strategy flow chart (Source: developed by the researchers in 2021)

Data Collection Tools

The qualitative data were collected by using qualitative questionnaires, interviews and field observation by the researchers in the heritage sites. Open-ended semi-standardized questions were prepared. These questions were mainly asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewees were permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions. All interviews were recorded by digital voice recorder after requesting their consent and notes were taken throughout the interview.

Sampling Technique

For the qualitative questionnaire, all the tourism and culture officers, library heads, archivists on the site, storekeeper heads and experts in all areas of the tourism, culture, religious institutions, public libraries, and archival centres were asked. The samples were selected by using the purposive sampling technique. 12 interviewees were also contacted in addition to the questionnaire. The interviewees were selected from culture and tourism officers, the national authority for heritage conservation officers, destination managers, and project consultant's heritage conservators, archivists, public librarians, tourism and other related subjects experts. As shown in the table above, each sector's sample of respondents was identified. Based on this, from the South Wollo Culture and Tourism Bureau, eight respondents were selected; from the Dessie City Administration Culture and Tourism Bureau, samples were contacted; from Kombolecha City Administration Culture and Tourism Bureau, and from Lalibla Town Culture and Tourism Office, two and four respondents were selected, respectively. Lastly, from heritage sites (Dessie Museum, Mereho Palace, Nigus Mikael Palace, Haik Museum), from public libraries and archival centers, and from religious institutions; thirteen, six, and nine samples were taken, respectively.

Table 1. Purposively selected experts proportion

R/No.	Experts where from	Number of Purposively selected experts
1	South Wollo Culture and Tourism Bureau	8
2	Dessie City Administration Culture and Tourism Bureau	4
3	Kombolecha City administration Culture and Tourism Bureau	2
4	Lalibla Town Culture and Tourism office	4
5	Heritage sites (Dessie Museum Mereho Palace, Nigus Mikael palace, Haik Museum)	13
6	Public Library and Archival centers	6
7	Religious institutions	9

Data Analysis Method

After the data was collected by using different data collection strategies the data was edited and analysed to get the proper information. Most of the time qualitative data are analysed by using manual interpretation (Veal, 2011). The qualitative data of this study was analysed manually by describing immediately after its collection and simultaneously (especially translation of Amharic to the English language). During translation, the researcher was follow translated the word of the interviewees without distorting the meaning. This increase the reliability and validity of the research. The questionnaire data were analysed using simple statistical packages by applying descriptive statistics. The analysis of the research work is presented in aggregate level from the response.

Finding of the Study

Demographic Characteristics of the respondents. As shown in the above chart; the majority (71.7%) of the respondents were male while the remaining re female. 54.3 % of the respondents was found in the age range of 29-39 while very few (2.2 %) were above 62 years old. In related with the educational background of the respondents (58.7 %) were holders of bachelor degree while the remaining are secondary, primary, masters educators. According to the questionnaire result, the highest percentage (41.3%) of the respondents had a working experience in their organization 5-10 years. On the others side; 39.1% of the respondents were worked in culture and tourism office while 23.9 % and 19.6 % were worked in heritage sites and religious institutions respectively. The remaining was worker of archives, libraries and museums.

As shown in the above chart; 60.9 % of the heritage sites in the study area were forced to close due to the sudden outbreak of the Coronavirus. Only 39.1 % of the respondents affirmed the heritage sites were not closed. Not only these, but 71.7 % of the respondents also showed that; staffs who worked in the conservation and custodian workers were not able to work during the pandemic. Only a very few numbers (28.3 %) of the workers were engaged in the conservation practice during the pandemic. These were not the only impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the heritage resources. Based on the interview response the following major impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the heritage resources were summarized.

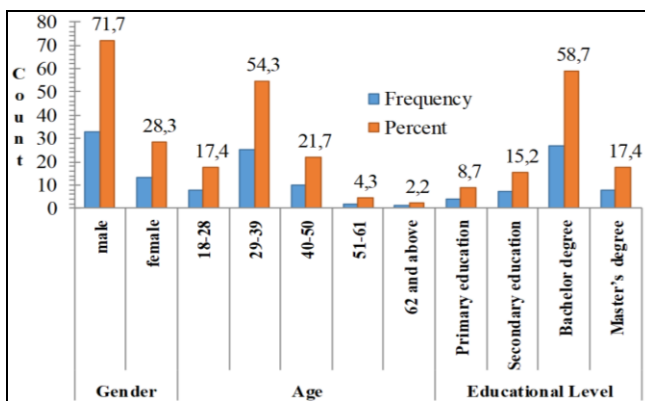


Figure2. Demographic characteristics (Source: Researchers survey, 2022)

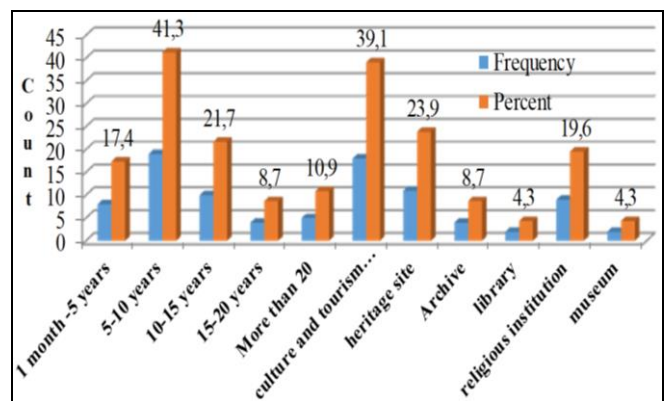


Figure 3. Experience and Working Sector of the respondents (Source: Researchers survey, 2022)

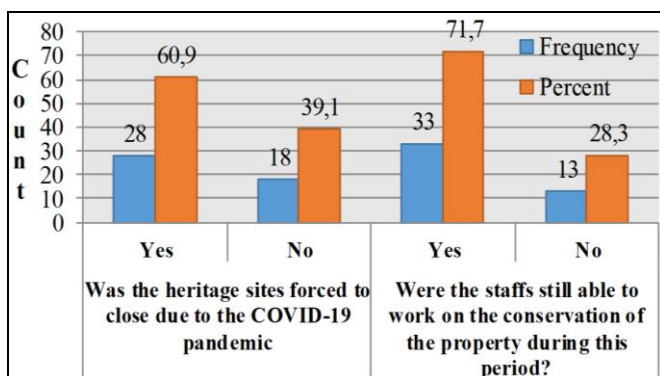


Figure 4. The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Heritage Conservation (Source: Researchers survey, 2022)

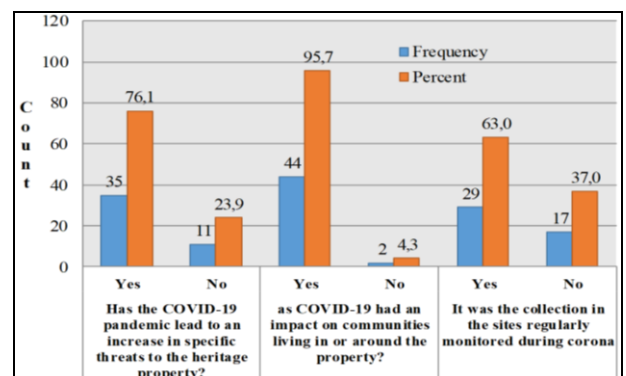


Figure 5. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on heritage properties and local communities (Source: Researchers survey, 2022)

Heritage conservation projects were delayed

It was very common in times of crisis. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic heritage conservation practice in Lalibela, Dessie Museum, and Mereho Palace was delayed for almost a year. The conservation practice in Lalibela World Heritage Sites is not beginning till now. The delayed project and funds were not only problems in Ethiopia; it was a global issue. For example, Andrew White (National Lottery Fund Director) speaks about the problem ‘around 1.7 million Euro projects of heritage conservation withdraw, that is also a risk in a long term and even they come back again’ (Andrew, 2020).

Impacts on heritage collections in Palaces and Museums

Based on the reports people can potentially become infected with COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If an infected person coughs or exhales in the direction of collection objects or handles objects with contaminated hands, objects could be contaminated with the virus, and be transmitted to those who handle the objects afterwards. The risk was higher where people work in heritage interiors and use heritage furnishings or where books, records or study collections are handled frequently by multiple users, potentially in quick succession. Therefore, Heritage collections in the Dessie museum and Mereho palace were at risk because the collections were not regularly monitored and cleaned. The heritage resources in museums and palaces were not disinfected with alcoholic contents sanitizers because it is not recommended for the conservation of heritage and it may also damage the heritage collections. Hand sanitizer was not given to heritage professionals, staff and visitors in Dessie Museum and Mereho palace even though it was opened after lockdown.

Reduced maintenance and conservation

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus conservation efforts, measures, plans and strategies were disrupted because the funds for the conservation program were used for extra public spending and many of the funders stopped the budget release for almost a year. The site managers in Lalibela and Dessie Merho palace and Dessie Museum reports concerns that the economic disruption due to corona, and the community’s livelihood disturbance affect the conservation effort of the sites for a long time. Still, the conservation efforts were not practised on a full scale in the specified heritage sites of Dessie and Lalibela. One of the site managers stressed that because of the coronavirus for almost 8 months maintenance, monitoring and site management of the heritage properties were not conducted. In Lalibela (the site in danger) the conservation process, site facilities, information centre, awareness-raising and public education during church education ceased.

Lack of protection and management of heritage and increased threats

Due to reduced site revenue, a decrease of employees in the heritage sites for a long protection n of heritage resources and management practices already decreased. The FGD discussants affirmed that because of the lack of protection and management of heritage resources the increasing threats seen in different heritage sites of the study areas. Among the threats the discussants raised were; a few local community residents trying to open a new market within the compounds and neglected the heritage resources, due to the long lockdown many of the sites in Dessie Mereho palace, Dessie Museum and Lalibela plants and vegetation’s were grown and worsened the threat over heritages, the staffs were unable to monitor the heritage sites, especially in Mereho palace and some illegal activities seen in the compound of the heritage sites.

Created environmental pollution around the heritage sites

During the lockdown, many of the heritage sites in the study area were covered with environmental waste.

As indicated in table two, the COVID-19 pandemic created a specific threat to the heritage properties of the sites. 76.1 % of respondents affirmed this issue in the study area specifically in Lalibela, Dessie and Haik. The major threat on the heritage sites were due to the decreasing level of visitors, the heritage conservators did not permission to got visa for their conservation work due to travel restriction especially in Lalibela world heritage site. Not only had this 63% of the respondents show that; the heritage collections in the sites included in the museums, Palaces, Archival centres and public libraries, religious heritage storehouses (Eqa bête) were not monitored during Corona time. Disruption of community life in

Table 2. Table on the impact of COVID-19 on the employment in heritage sector (Source: Researchers survey, 2022)

Questions/Items	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Were any permanent staff members made redundant due to the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes	18	39.1
	No	28	60.9
If yes, percentage of Permanent staff made redundant?	Less than 10%	4	8.7
	11-20 %	2	4.3
	21-30 %	4	8.7
	31-40 %	1	2.2
	41-50 %	1	2.2
	51-60 %	2	4.3
	81-90 %	1	2.2
	Over 90 %	3	6.7
Were any temporary staff members made redundant due to the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes	24	52.2
	No	22	47.8
If yes, percentage of temporary staff made redundant?	Less than 10%	4	8.7
	11-20 %	4	8.7
	21-30 %	4	8.7
	31-40 %	2	4.3
	41-50 %	2	4.3
	51-60 %	2	4.3
	81-90 %	4	8.7
	Over 90 %	2	4.3
Missing	24	52.2	

and around heritage properties was also one of the major impacts of the Coronavirus. This was also affirmed by 95.7 % of the respondents in the study area while only 4.3 % indicated that the coronavirus has no impact on the communities living around the heritage sites. According to the interviewees in the study area communities living around the heritage sites have suffered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The problem was worsened in Lalibela where more than 90% of the community's livelihood depends on the heritages and associated tourism services. The tourism supply and value chain have already been cut. Hotels, hospitality establishments, different forms of transport and traditional bars and restaurants and vents have been impacted severely by the lockdowns and confinement measures. COVID-19 triggered tourism industry instability. Thus the risk of COVID-19 affected the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental conditions of the local communities living around who depended on the tourism industry and associated services.

According to the survey by the Lalibela town culture and tourism office the mid of 2020 because of the outbreak of the coronavirus hotel revenue in the town of Lalibela, guides the business in the town, heritage sites revenue from the entrance fee and tourism activities decreased by 85 %. The local communities who depend on the heritage properties and their associated services the livelihood option reached in miserable level. As shown in the above table; the majority (60.9%) of the permanent staffs neither was nor reduced in the study area while 39.1% were redundant from their work because of corona virus. However, very few staffs were reduced. As compared to the permanent staff, temporarily staffs were reduced because it counted as 52.2 % of heritage conservation and management workers.

Stakeholder’s response on cultural heritage management and conservation practices in the time of COVID-19 pandemics

The majority of the respondents (89.1 %) in table three indicated that the international actors in the heritage conservation and management works were not responded property. 73.9 % of the regional actors were not also act actively in the heritage conservation and management works during the corona virus time. According to the interviewees; to some extent Ethiopian heritage conservation fund and Heritage conservation and management authority provide financial support in Lalibela. On the other hand 82.6 % of the regional actors were not also properly responded to the pandemic crises sin the study area. There are some response from the ministry of culture and tourism, regional tourism and culture office, site level intervention were also done in some heritage sites, museums, public libraries and archival centers in the study area.

Table 3. The Response of different actors on the impact of COVID-19 on Heritage (source: Researchers survey, 2022)

Questions/Items	Category	Frequency	Percent(%)
Do you think that the international actors respond properly for the heritage conservation practices during corona	Yes	5	10.9
	No	41	89.1
Do you think that the national actors respond properly for heritage conservation practices	Yes	12	26.1
	No	34	73.9
Do you think that the regional actors respond properly for the heritage conservation practices	Yes	8	17.4
	No	38	82.6

The Possible Heritage Management and Conservation Strategies during and post COVID-19 Pandemic Era

Communication and social mobilization strategy: the contemporary communication strategies widely used through media, the extent of heritage management and conservation practices during the pandemic engaged in dialogue. According to the interviewee social mobilization activities played a key strategy to create public awareness, partnership ad collaborators in heritage resources management and conservation during and the post-pandemic era. The social mobilization process also creates allies, partners and cooperators among NGOs, policymakers, religious groups, media, private sectors, communities and individuals in the management and conservation of heritage resources. In the case of religious heritage sites in the case of our study areas; creating social mobilization and communication channels is especially significant for heritage conservation and management during and during the post-pandemic period. According to the FGD discussants, the social mobilization program was especially significant in creating awareness among the laities about the preservation, cleaning and primary conservation practices of heritage management during the lockdown.

Strengthening project leaders: many of the heritage sites including the Lalibela World Heritage site, Dessie Mereho palace and Dessie Museum renovation process were handled by the international and national heritage conservation projects. Therefore, in order to save the heritage sites from further deterioration project leaders play a major role in the continuation of the projects. The project leaders and different national and international donors communicated simply, clearly and frequently about the heritage conservation projects before the heritage resources were totally damaged during the corona pandemic.

Fast decision making: it is a known fact that when a crisis of uncertainty happened any organization and institution is overwhelmingly paralyzed. However, in the case of heritage conservation, it is better to make a strong and fast decision making on the process of conservation of heritage at any cost because the heritage deterioration process has not stopped and the heritage resources may be totally loosed. Amhara Regional State culture, tourism and park development bureau, Ethiopian Heritage conservation Authority, and the Ministry of culture and tourism of Ethiopia take the lion's share of the decision making.

Inviting partners to Participate in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities: in times of crisis, many public and private organization employees participated in CSR activities. In the heritage conservation and management practices public servants, private sector employees, and non-governmental organization workers aggressively engaged. These stakeholders should be engaged in the CSR process through free labour in cleaning the compound of the heritage sites, monitoring and evaluating the heritage sites and contributing some amount of philanthropy for heritage

management and conservation. As one of our interviews explained that; *“Art and entertainment economy sector greatly affected ad the impact is also last long, especially in the town like Lalibela (a town covers its economy through tourism and travel-related art and entertainment sector). Our major sources of the economy are totally drained, and no events (Shady) are celebrated in the month of August 2020 and 2021. The festival contributed a lot to our economy and social networking. However, due to the coronavirus, the festival was not conducted. Therefore, in order to escape from the economic disorder, we need responsible business organizations to support us in every situation”*.

Greater collaboration was seen in other sectors, especially in the health and education sector. But it should be recognized and encouraged a greater collaboration in heritage conservation and management for its sustainability.

Institutional Cooperation: it is necessary to seek national and international allies and develop cooperative networks that are very important to help each other for the conservation and management of heritage resources process in the time and post COVID-19 era. It should be mandatory work in cooperation among institutions in order to control the illicit trafficking of heritage resources. Even COVID-19 had a positive outcome on the illicit trade of easily transported heritage resources because of the global border lockdown.

However, some looters and traffickers loot and stored the heritage resources from museums and archival centres for future illegal trade activity. Therefore, it should be mandatory for the study area stakeholders (whether they are institutions or individuals) to work in cooperation to protect heritage resources during the COVID-19 time.

Use social media as a platform for heritage conservation during crisis: in recent times especially image and photo-friendly social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and hashtags have received considerable attention in risks and crisis communication and management. Social media also provide an arena for the formation of cultural discourses in relation to the crisis. As one of our site manager interviewees affirmed that “ it is very important to use social media hashtags, using endangered heritage sites as a profile picture by using caching phrases and words like ‘Save Lalibela’ from destruction and further deterioration”. In order to save the cultural heritage resources heritage activism should be developed to facilitate a shared thematic interest among different stakeholders.

In the meantime, social media networks and platforms have a potential for digital resilience as well as digital engagement between different audiences and heritage. For the conservation and management of heritage resources, social media contributed to a connective collective memory among communities. Additionally, proper applications of heritages collection caring: preparing a destination management plan for sites, developing indicators for the future development and developing capital investment scheme for heritage conservation projects were identified as the strategic areas for heritage management and conservation practice in the aftermath of COVID-19 Pandemic.

CONCLUSION

All the activities of both heritage conservation and heritage management are majorly affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many heritage management and conservation practices are stopped or delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but the process of damage to heritage resources is not stopped. The concern of this study was to scrutinise the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on heritage management and conservation and forwards the possible recommendation to stakeholders on the issue. The study concludes that; almost 60.9 % of the heritage sites in the study area were forced to close due to the sudden outbreak of the Coronavirus. And, 71.7 % of staff who worked in the conservation and custodian were not able to work during the pandemic. COVID-19 pandemic has affected by delaying Heritage conservation projects works especially in Lalibela, Dessie Museum, and Mereho Palace. The pandemic has also had an impact on heritage collections in palaces and museums, religious institution stores and created environmental pollution around the heritage sites. 63 % of the heritage collections in the sites including the museums, palaces, archival centres and public libraries, and religious heritage storehouses (Eqa bête) were not monitored during Corona time. Disruption of community life in and around heritage properties was also one of the major impacts of the coronavirus because 95.7 % of the respondents in the study area affirmed that the local community livelihood option drained due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All the national (73.9%), regional (82.6%) and international (89.1%) actors were not properly responding to heritage conservation and management during corona. The study also concludes that; communication and social mobilization, strengthening project leaders, fast decision making, inviting partners to participate in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, preparing a destination management plan for sites: developing indicators for the future development, institutional Cooperation and using social media as a platform were identified as the possible strategies for heritage conservation during the crisis.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the following possible recommendations were forwarded.

✓ Firstly, the heritage owners and government offices should put the heritage conservation and custodian workers in their normal work with possible coronavirus protocol measures.

✓ Secondly, museums, palaces, archival centers and public libraries, religious heritage storehouses should be monitored regularly by the experts

Thirdly, all the national, regional, and international stakeholders should properly respond to heritage conservation

✓ and management during the corona and post corona era.

✓ Fourthly, communication and social mobilization, fast decision making, inviting partners to participate in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities and institutional cooperation should be developed to respond to the heritage management and conservation work during the time and post of coronavirus crisis

✓ Last but not the least is using Social Media as a platform as a possible strategy for heritage conservation during the crisis.

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