

Review sustainability manuscript # 2019558

1. This study takes on an important topic and provides a substantial amount of information that can be useful for COVID-19 or similar pandemic responses elsewhere. However, a flaw in the study, at least the way it is written, is a general lack of organization of the article as one based on the case study methodology. The authors may refer to one of the book chapters (or books) on case study methodology, including one by the pioneer of case study methodology, Robert Yin,--(e.g. Yin, Robert K. "Case study methods." (2012)).
2. In its current form, the article reads like a review article with some figures included from grey literature without properly declaring the sources of data for those figures. The methods section is missing altogether. The authors must include a methods section right after the introduction section, and cover the following:
  - a. The authors must describe their study design and what is the justification for calling it a case study
  - b. Explain how they selected case study materials for their analysis, including whether primary or secondary data are used.
  - c. What type of data did they analyze (qualitative, quantitative, mixed); and how were they analyzed, using which software? How did these data and variables correspond to their implied/stated study objectives of quantifying costs for COVID-19 initiatives, determining the COVID-19 surges in fatalities, and other quantifiable objectives? How was the thematic analysis of any qualitative data conducted? How were these qualitative data coded (using which software) and synthesized?

Here are some more specific points authors should address:

TITLE:

3. Replace “;” with a “:” to indicate it is a subtitle. The use of the semi-colon is not a convention.

ABSTRACT:

4. The abstract needs to be rewritten. The authors have completely skipped the methods section. In addressing this comment, the authors should provide details in the abstract covering:
  - a. Study design
  - b. Data sources and details of which qualitative and quantitative data were included in the case study.
  - c. A brief mention of qualitative and quantitative methods used to analyze the data included in the case study

5. State the results clearly, listing the “key factors that cities and researchers must consider as a part of usual business to effectively assist their populations during times of stress and crisis.”

#### INTRODUCTION:

6. The authors have completely skipped the details about data-driven policymaking, including:
  - a. Why an emphasis on data-driven policy making is essential in responding to COVID-19 pandemic?
  - b. What are enabling factors for data-driven decision-making in general and policy decisions in particular?
  - c. What is the state of information systems used in COVID-19 response in South Africa and elsewhere?
7. While the above details are skipped, the authors have provided some unnecessary details COVID-19 pandemic, without properly creating relevance of these details to their study.
8. The entire first paragraph is not properly cited. Provide proper references to published literature to support the following statements in the first paragraph :
  - a. “The 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic....”
  - b. “Although faced with the same virus,...”
  - c. “In particular, countries with a high proportion...”
  - d. “Cities have been particularly...”
9. Line 37-39: The statement should be properly cited.
10. Line 43-46: The statement should be properly cited.
11. Lines 59-65: The statement should be properly cited.

#### METHODS:

12. After the “Introduction section”, the entire section titled “2. South African and Cape Town Context” seems out of place. Even though the research utilizes a Case study approach, the methods are expected right after the introduction section is concluded. See the other details states in the points 1 and 2.