
Some social-economic implications of COVID-19 pandemic in our life

Yosif Yosifov * 1 A

*Corresponding author: ¹ PhD in Social Medicine, Chief Assistant at the University and an actuary at the Bulgarian Financial Supervision Commission, e-mail: y.yosifov@foz.mu-sofia.bg, ORCID: 0000-0003-0929-0297

^A Medical University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Received: September 6, 2021 | **Revised:** September 22, 2021 | **Accepted:** September 30, 2021

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6466464

Abstract

The article analyzes the transformations of our everyday life that are caused by the social processes that have occurred under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes affect spheres such as education, entrepreneurship, politics and the spiritual sphere. The irreversible state of the transformation that has literally divided the society into “before” and “after” the pandemic is thoroughly analyzed.

Key words: COVID-19, pandemic, everyday life, society, transformation, religion.

Introduction

Due to its rapid spread, the Covid-19 crisis quickly transformed into a world-wide pandemic, which in turn deeply affected the environment in an intensely altering way and has led to some substantial changes in our daily lives and routines. These changes touched various socio-cultural, political and economic aspects of our everyday reality and will have a long-term impact (Dechev, 2018, pp. 7-44, Dechev, 2016, pp. 33-59, Dechev, 2015, pp. 50-71, Dechev, 2012, p. 5). As for now, some radical alterations are already influencing the inter-person relations, the ways of communicating the political decisions, the main functioning economic mechanisms and the social existence of each and every person. This is valid not only for persons from certain regions or countries, but also has way more general implications to the mere way of life of the citizens around the world.

Material and methods

A literature review on the topic ordered and systematized. The study used the comparative method of Max Weber which consists in description of the phenomena related to the perception and commenting on the effects that arose from the COVID-19 pandemics in the spheres of education, business, labour market and politics. The comparative method is also used in order to explain the similarities and differences between the same social phenomena, which is COVID-19 pandemic, occurring in different social domains at the same time. The main research technique is qualitative content analysis. Descriptive and analytical methods were used to discuss the results of the study, which showed how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the society into “before” and “after” the pandemic.

Results and Discussion

Let us start with the fact that the COVID-19 crisis led to a great leap forward with respect to education, which was the first sphere of knowledge and practice that needed prompt restructuring of the means of communication (Schneider and Council, 2021, pp. 389-390). In this way, it can be clearly stated that the quality of the service and the efficient integrity of the educational system directly determines the possibilities for improvement of the intellectual potential of those social groups, which decide the social success of the whole country. It should be mentioned that the educational system is the one that “creates” and “supplies” the much needed specialists in a country. On the other hand, it should

be underlined that the current reality requires the incorporation of efficient use of up-to-date technology resources.

It is self-evident that the modern system of education is subject to the *Zeitgeist* and it is becoming more and more involved in the processes of digitization. Moreover, it also launches its own rationalizations that are related to the adoption of means of remote communication. The modern society forms a new kind of unique culture, the basis of which becomes the adequate use of opportunities that the hi-tech innovations can offer. It is characteristic that one of the options for such a development of the educational process has the potential (and in the long run it surely will) to completely re-organize educational programs without the use of any teachers (Cárdenas et. al., 2022, pp. 153-175).

It turns out that the COVID-19 crisis and the related response measures have become material drivers that accelerated the processes of digitization in the sphere of education. Indubitably, such a process has some positive and some negative effects. On one hand, in various educational structures, the distance learning methods have been established and actively implemented, whereas the risky (for health condition) in-person auditory activities have been replaced by various forms of educational procedures, which benefit from the use of cloud systems (such as zoom, skype, google classroom, etc.), (Stefanile, 2020, pp. 33-40). Other educational institutions took a step forward and developed their own unique educational portals and technical facilitators aiming at fully functioning digital educational environment. Also, the final product – the educational resources created, as a part of that digitization process, have undeniable advantages such as accessibility, openness and the opportunity of creating an education setting that serves individual needs (Toquero, 2021, pp. 162-176).

On the other hand, there are some negative tendencies that are not directly connected to the pedagogical aspects (e.g. grading, course management), but to the obvious threat of dehumanization that can arise from the process of digitization (Markowitz et. al., 2021, pp. 285). The incorporation of hi-tech into the educational process led to the introduction of distance forms of learning, but also is being heavily criticized by all stakeholders on the lack of human interaction and on the possible decline in the intellectual culture of society. In principle, a person starts to realize himself as a machine, or figuratively speaking – as a sheer appendix to a hi-technology. Thus, the new digital paradigm has the potential to encumber the universal development of the individual, which in turn may lead to a degradation of his intellectual prospects.

It is true that in pace with the new technological developments that educational process has radically changed. In such a framework, the students have gained the opportunity to manage the educational content. This in turn contributes to the formation of purely individual educational pathways, which would become a milestone of the educational standards of the future.

Furthermore, the analysis would encompass the radical changes that affected the methods, principles and the realization of the economic processes. A number of studies showed that many economies, affected to a different degree by the COVID-19 pandemic, were forced to make a transition from the regular goods realization channels – from face-to-face marketing to hybrid and distance forms of presentation and sale. It can be stated that three basic strategies of transformation of business activity emerged:

1. Old goods/services – new distribution channels;
2. Old business infrastructure – new goods/services;
3. Old goods/services – new business infrastructure.

Analyzing the essence of these strategies, it should be underlined that the first of them requires market re-orientation from direct to distance sales, including the implementation of institutions that are specialized in distance commerce (Bhatti et. al., 2020, pp. 1449-1452). The adoption of this strategy has led to a sharp increase in the online orders and to the closure of some physical facilities. Particularly, some of the companies were forced to reduce as much as 50% of their physical facilities due to profit issues and regulations (Oliveira et. al., 2021, pp. 33-58). Apart from these considerations, the surge in online orders has led to a transformation of the distribution channels. Thus, a new necessity emerged to digitize the logistics sector, to enhance the electronic trade, to adopt drones as

a form of parcel delivery as well as various methods of contactless supply of goods and services. Furthermore, a wide adoption of BigData was observed in the logistics sector, coupled with improvement of cyber-security and optimization of the delivery routes, aiming at boosting efficiency and cost minimization (O’Leary, 2020, pp. 1-8). Obviously, the business as a whole, embraces a tendency towards security resulting from the COVID-19 crisis in the environment of a *force majeure*. This is of extreme importance because of its influence on the choice of action regarding the already closed deals and contracts, as well as with regard to service provision connected to movement of people. The spread of COVID-19 has led to a total halt or paralysis of international aviation communication, which steered the need of rapid resolution of numerous economic disputes related to cash refunds and/or compensation for previously committed deals. As an example, in this direction, it can be pointed out the decisions of national authorities on the obligation of air carriers to refund the full cost of non-refundable tickets (Singh et. al., 2021, p. 363). Such decisions were made in time intervals, when the date of the travel coincided with the imposition of lockdown measures, closure of state borders and etc.

Another strategy for transformation of the economic relations proved to be the transformation of the infrastructure of production. As a main consequence of COVID-19 pandemic, the sharp decrease in the demand for certain goods and services should be underlined, which was coupled with a simultaneous increase in demand for other goods and services that gained a status of essential commodities in pandemic circumstances. As an example, the demand for disinfectants was so high at a certain point of time that totally unrelated businesses, mainly associated to the manufacturing of prestigious goods, perfumery, and beverages immediately started to produce sanitizers (Thomson and Bullied, 2020, pp. 47-52). Certainly, one of the main economic laws found its proof in this situation – the demand creates supply.

The adoption of the third-mentioned strategy was derived from the fact that the existing economic subjects, retailers and drop-shippers were unable to cope with the avalanche of online orders. Clearly, the situation required the enhanced involvement of the e-commerce players in order to meet the increasing demand for product delivery, which in turn generated new types of interrelations between producers and distributors. Thus, a transformation has encompassed not only the ordinary markets but the whole infrastructure of the distribution channels (Pantano et. al., 2020, pp. 209-213).

Additionally, the pandemic facilitated the emergence of new ways of product delivery. A leading cause for such a phenomenon is the regular Internet use as an order vehicle. Nowadays, the methods of viral marketing are largely popular, whereas the social networks and mobile apps are an actual marketplace. The modern marketing also requires “smart” contextual advertisements that are as closely targeted as possible (He, H. and Harris, 2020, pp. 176-182).

It should be stated that not only the business strategies and the distribution channels have been transformed, but also the relevant customer perception and the labour market as a whole. The labour market has proved itself to be a litmus test for the overall state of economy, due to the fact that it presents the demand for particular labour resources, professionals and types of professions. For this reason, the labour market is an indicator for the level of well-being of the working population, as well as for the level of economic efficiency and entrepreneurship.

It can be argued that in the pandemic environment two tendencies evolved. The first is the companies’ aspiration to lay off a part of their staff, due to the severe deterioration of the economic circumstances (Gulyas and Pytka, 2020, pp. 70-107). On the other hand, some of the companies preferred to cut working hours and/or reduce the salaries of their employees, instead of laying off personnel (The Vatican, 2020). In fact, the pandemic conditions on the labour market highlighted a certain level of a labor crisis, which is accompanied by an expected increase in demand for jobs, coupled with a reduction of vacancies and with a reduction in real wages.

It is no wonder that all over the world, and especially in developing and emerging economies, a huge number of small and medium-sized businesses either stalled some activities or completely went out of business. On the other hand, given the circumstances that permeate in our daily life, many

companies started to show strong interest in finding delivery persons, online education and entertainment specialists and not to mention – medical staff. Simultaneously the demand for specialists in the tourism and hospitality sectors rapidly declines (Marek et. al., 2020, pp. 78-96).

The main question that stands open is what the labour market would look like after the COVID-19 pandemic is over. Based on the analyzed pre-conditions and the evolutionary logic of the social systems development, it is supposed that the underlying market changes would be strong enough, in order to preserve the demand for delivery persons, drivers, medical staff and a number of other professions requiring “hands-on” rather than remote participation of workers. Without any doubt the COVID-19 crisis, even to a larger extent than the World Financial Crisis of 2008, would play an important role for years to come in the transformation of the labour market and the society as a whole. As it was discussed, even today the pandemic circumstances dictate the demand for certain professions and almost decide the fate of others. The only allegory for the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market is that of a world-wide economic shock therapy that changes and radically transforms the social interactions and interrelations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has radically changed the modern political reality. It should be underlined that these changes have consequences both at the internal and the external political arena. It is obvious that the pandemic changed the essence of the rights and liberties of the individual person. In the pre-pandemic situation, the freedom of movement of people was something apparent but afterwards the post-pandemic reality let the authorities dictate a number of limitations.

In their nature, the above-mentioned limitations are justified with the protection of the health and well-being of the citizens, but also there are various questions that put a shed of doubt on their expediency. An interesting parallel can be made between the COVID-19 measures and the historical development of the anti-terrorism measures. In the beginning of 21st century the war against terrorism led to an unprecedented rise in the power and responsibilities of the special services in many countries that included mass surveillance and phone tapping (Zöller, 2004, pp. 469-494). Clearly, the main problem is not the fact that the civil liberties suffer in extraordinary times. Just as an example, in 2020 the global threat of terrorism had drastically decreased, but the extraordinary responsibilities of the special services had been almost fully preserved.

The system of civil liberties that is a result of the natural status of the people nowadays is transformed into something that can be outlawed in an extraordinary situation. It turns out that the citizens of the countries do not belong to their selves, but they are already a function of supra-national political mechanisms.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the transformations of the political everyday life in the context of COVID-19 have led to new forms of international relations. Thus, in Western Europe, the problem of illegal migration has become severely aggravated, which is an extremely difficult and urgent issue for the European Union and the Eurozone countries, without a simple logical or any trivial solution (Jauhiainen, 2020, pp. 260-274). Moreover, a number of bilateral and multilateral relations, for example, between Turkey and the EU, have come under increasing tension due to the same migration of people, which in turn has an extremely strong effect on everyday cultural and economic forms and ways of existence, both in a given country and in entire global regions. The social interactions between citizens of one and even more countries, the disagreements on religious, cultural and other matters are of a priori nature and go into human psychology, which in the long term can lead to racist and even xenophobic attitudes and actions.

In turn, at the macro level of inter-person interactions, the pandemic and the migration issue also form negative relations between the countries. The struggle for supremacy in the international arena becomes the norm, when – through power – certain actors and coalitions have the opportunity to impose their own will and interests not only on their political allies, but on opponents as well. It is interesting to note that the transformations of everyday life have taken place not only in the secular part of society, but also, they have occurred, perhaps not in such a large volume, in the religious part of society.

It should be noted that the Christian religion has become one of the forces that made it possible to unite the European community, since spiritual leaders constantly called for human solidarity and a

joint solution to pressing coronavirus problems. Note that, being a traditional religion, Christianity, nevertheless, was forced to transform in accordance with the current sanitary rules and use modern means of communication for remote services and virtual pilgrimage (Bryson et. al., 2020, pp. 360-372). Thus, for example, the Catholic Church, represented by the Pope, has shown itself to be responsible and conscientious for its subjects and their social ties and relationships. A decision was made by Catholic religious leaders on the actual closure of churches and the cessation of services.

Interesting is the fact that “the Vatican’s apostolic penitentiary issued a decree on the provision of special indulgences for those who have contracted the coronavirus” (Corpuz and Sarmiento, 2021, pp. 110-122). The clarification of the Catholic Church is as follows: indulgence is not an unconditional forgiveness of sins, but an exemption from punishment for sins. At the same time, for a COVID-19 self-isolated patient, the indulgence is considered “reading the Creed, Our Father, prayer to the Most Holy Theotokos, as well as studying the Bible for half an hour” (Fisher et. al., 2020, pp. 247-252).

As a result, we see that the religious community has been transformed in accordance with the prevailing current social conditions. The Catholic Church, for example, switched to modern, digital forms of interaction with believers, and temporarily stopped full-time interaction with parishioners, through the adaptation of indulgences and the respective forms of receiving them in modern realities.

However, basically, the church for a certain part of the population becomes one of the most significant foundations of human existence, a kind of means of calming the human subject and his soul. Thus, being a socially responsible subject of national existence, the church took on a little more action than it did before the coronavirus pandemic. Religious organizations began to work together with the state to be more effective in the fight against the new infection.

Conclusions

Summing up, it can be stated that the COVID-19 pandemic required significant efforts from society to combat the situation. This led to the fact that daily practices in all areas of shared social life have changed significantly. New formats of educational activities were introduced, the ways of interaction between the church and parishioners changed, distance sermons, distance education classes became commonplace for the ordinary citizen. Economic relations have also dramatically changed. This has implication on the methods of selling goods, the forms and speed of their delivery, the principles of contactless payment and remote ordering. Delivery mechanisms have changed, the capabilities of various online services have expanded.

On the other hand, the essence and forms of display of advertising products have improved, which has become mostly contextual. In addition, the labour market is transforming. The range of professions and types of work which acquire special significance and are highly valued in conditions of restrictions is changing. At the same time, a group of professions is determined that are practically not used at all during the imposition of restrictive measures. Political transformations can be associated with the loss of some of the civil rights and freedoms in extraordinary conditions in general and in a pandemic in particular. Relations between states in the international arena are also changing; the national migration policies are increasingly alienating the countries, strengthening the nationalist rhetoric in the modern globalizing world. All the changes presented lead to the creation of new forms of social relations, that is, to the formation of a new society and a permanently emerging new world order.

References

- Bhatti, A. et. al. (2020). E-commerce trends during COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Future Generation Communication and Networking*, 2020, Vol 13(2), pp. 1449-1452.
- Bryson, J., et. al. (2020). COVID-19, virtual church services and a new temporary geography of home. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 2020, Vol.111(3) pp. 360-372.
- Cárdenas, S. et. al. (2022). COVID-19 and Post-pandemic Educational Policies in Mexico. What is at Stake? *Primary and Secondary Education During Covid-19*. Springer, Cham, pp. 153-175.

- Corpuz, G., Sarmiento, D. (2021). Going back to basics: experiencing Domus ecclesiae (house church) in the celebration of the liturgy during COVID-19. *Practical Theology*, Vol. 14(1-2), pp. 110-122.
- Dechev, T. (2012). Interaction between institutions and industrial relations. *Plovdiv, College of Economics and Administration*, p. 5.
- Dechev, T. (2015). Business, human rights and corporate social responsibility between voluntary action and regulation. *Panorama of Labor magazine*, Issue 9-10, pp. 50-71 (in Bulgarian).
- Dechev, T. (2016). Conflicts in the labor market as a threat to European security. *Sociology and Economics*, year IV, issue 4, pp. 33-59 (in Bulgarian).
- Dechev, T. (2018). Collective bargaining of labor productivity in the context of the problems of competitiveness and security. *Scientific Papers of the Higher School of Security and Economics*, Vol. IV, pp. 7-44 (in Bulgarian).
- Fisher, J. et. al. (2020). Community, work, and family in times of COVID-19. *Community, Work & Family*, Vol. 23(3), pp. 247-252.
- Gulyas, A., Pytka, K. (2020). The Consequences of the Covid-19 Job Losses: Who Will Suffer Most and By How Much? *Covid Economics*, Vol. 1(47), pp. 70-107.
- He, H., Harris, L. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 116, pp. 176-182.
- Jauhiainen, S. (2020). Biogeopolitics of COVID-19: Asylum-Related Migrants at the European Union Borderlands. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, Vol. 111(3), pp. 260-274.
- Marek, D., et. al. (2020). Economic impacts of Covid-19 on the labor market and human capital. *Terra Economicus*, Vol. 18(4), pp. 78-96.
- Markowitz, M. et. al. (2021). Dehumanization During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Frontiers in psychology*, Vol. 12, pp. 285.
- O’Leary, E. (2020). Evolving information systems and technology research issues for COVID-19 and other pandemics. *Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce*, Vol. 30(1), pp. 1-8.
- Oliveira, M., et. al. (2021). The Importance of E-Commerce and Customer Relationships in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic. *COVID-19, Technology and Marketing*, Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore, pp. 33-58.
- Pantano, E., et. al. (2020). Competing during a pandemic? Retailers’ ups and downs during the COVID-19 outbreak. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 116, pp. 209-213.
- Schneider, L., Council, L. (2021). Distance learning in the era of COVID-19. *Archives of dermatological research*, Vol. 313(5), pp. 389-390.
- Singh, B. et. al. (2021). COVID-19 Impacts on the World Aviation Industry: An Analysis of Events. *Hospitality and Tourism Industry amid COVID-19 Pandemic*, p. 363.
- Stefanile, A. (2020). The transition from classroom to Zoom and how it has changed education. *Journal of social science research*, Vol. 16, pp. 33-40.
- The Vatican (2020). Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary on the granting of special Indulgences to the faithful in the current pandemic. Available at: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>, [Accessed: 16 February 2022].
- Thomson, E., Bullied, A. (2020). Production of ethanol-based hand sanitizer in breweries during the COVID-19 crisis. *MBAA TQ*, Vol. 57(1), pp. 47-52.
- Toquero, M. (2021). “Emergency remote education experiment amid COVID-19 pandemic” in IJERI: International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation, Vol. 15, pp. 162-176.
- Zöller, V. (2004). Liberty dies by inches: German counter-terrorism measures and human rights. *German Law Journal*, Vol. 5(5), pp. 469-494.