SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SARS-COV2 PANDEMIC

Camelia Elena Nichita (Vasile)[1],
Miruna Angela Mutu[2]

Abstract*:*

The worldwide situation created by the SARS-COV2 pandemic has forced authorities to find adaptable and responsible solutions in order to ensure the health and safety of the population and minimize the harmful effects on citizens. At a time when restrictions imposed by the authorities have forced some business areas to restrict their activity, interpersonal communication has moved to the online environment, unemployment is rising, social activities have been restricted to near extinction, teaching has been moved to the online environment for all age groups, education is undergoing a major transformation, a clear understanding of the impact of the new normality on the parts involved is required. The media and online environment are constantly updated with news on the current situation of the disease and the numerous houses of infection, as well as the reported number of deaths, which induces a state of fear among the population. Thus, the effects on social life and on the human psyche are still not fully discovered, but their consequences are palpable and can be indicated as having correspondence in the increasing number of cases of domestic violence..

Keywords*: pandemic, SARS-COV2 virus, social life, social impact*

JEL Classification*: I10, I12, J12*

1. Introduction

Man is a social being, is a product of society and cannot exist outside it. Marx stated that the "human essence" is the "assembly of social relations", being represented by the social relations in which man lives and which he configures by his existence and action as a social being.

In the nature of today's man, the biological and social are closely linked and manifested by the importance and necessity of communication, friendship, the expression of emotions, the formation of social rules of cohabitation.

The formation of the first formations of individuals and then of state formations and systems of law, led to the development of the social form of matter. Man's instinct, "strengthened by reason, leads him to society...". According to Voltaire, isolation from society degrades man: "He who would live completely alone would lose the faculty to think and express himself ... would at most succeed in turning into an animal."

Moreover, we can say that compared to other people Romanians are recognized by the international environment for the hospitality they show whenever they are requested. This innate quality of our nation is appreciated by foreigners who transit our country, Romanians instinctively building these social relations.

Thus, the quarantine and restrictions imposed by the authorities in the context of the pandemic generated by the spread of the SARS-COV2 virus, by limiting the movements and the number of people who can be in various spaces at the same time, by forcing the wearing of protective masks and preserving social distance, have radically changed the way people live at the social level. Meetings with friends, family and colleagues, leisure at the restaurant, holidays, access to the gym and beauty centers, participation in classes, all activities that were a habit and/or were a way of relaxing have undergone drastic changes or have been eliminated. All this has an impact on the human temperament and psyche and is reflected in behavioural changes, often with serious consequences, such as physical abuse, as well as

---

[1] PhD student, "Valahia" University of Targoviste, Doctoral School of Economics and Humanities, Major: Management, Lt. Stancu Ion Street, No. 35, Targoviste, Romania, cam3vas3@yahoo.com
[2] PhD student, "Valahia" University of Targoviste, Doctoral School of Economics and Humanities, Major: Management, Lt. Stancu Ion Street, No. 35, Targoviste, Romania, miruna.mutu@yahoo.com

abuse manifested online. Mental health suffers from social isolation, change of routine and fear of the possible effects of illness.

2. Review

Jeong et al. (2016) in the article "The mental health status of people isolated from Middle East respiratory syndrome" examined the prevalence of symptoms of anxiety and anger in people isolated during the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) epidemic both during isolation and four to six months after release from isolation. They also "determined the risk factors associated with these symptoms at four to six months. Of 14,992 people isolated for 2 weeks due to contact with MERS patients in 2015, when MERS was introduced in Korea, 1,692 people were included in that study. Symptoms of anxiety were assessed with the 7-element scale of generalized anxiety disorder and anger was assessed with the inventory of expression of state trait anger four to six months after release from isolation for MERS. The results showed that mental health problems four to six months after release from solitary confinement can be prevented by providing mental health assistance to vulnerable mental health professionals and providing accurate information, as well as adequate supplies, including food, clothing and accommodation".

Lu et al. (2020) in the article "Pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 in Taiwan: an online survey on concern and anxiety and related factors" explored "associations of individual factors (demographic characteristics, self-confidence and response to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and self-assessed physical and mental health) and environmental factors (perceived confidence in COVID-19 management by the regional government and the adequacy of resources and support available to address the COVID-19 pandemic) with concern about COVID-19 and general anxiety among people in Taiwan. In total, 1970 respondents were recruited and completed an online survey on concernabout COVID-19, general anxiety during the pandemic, and individual and environmental factors. In total, 51.7% and 43.4% of respondents reported high levels of concern about COFID-19 and general anxiety, respectively. Less self-assessed mental health, lower self-confidence in COVID-19 management and insufficient mental health resources were significantly associated with high levels of concern about COVID-19 and general anxiety. The results showed that high levels of concern about COVID-19 and general anxiety were prevalent during the outbreak. This suggests that healthcare providers need additional surveillance of concern and anxiety during the pandemic. Several individual and environmental factors related to concern about COVID-19 and general anxiety were identified".

3. Content

Epidemiological terms such as "social distance, quarantine, isolation, self-isolation" *have a beneficial impact in the community in the event of a threat to the health and safety of citizens. These involve the conscious efforts of specialists to reduce contact between people in order to prevent the spread of a virus, which causes a pandemic. However,* **all these terms are contrary to human** *social instinct* **and nature**. *People's natural response to a calamity is the closeness between them and the spirit of help. Sociological research has shown by studying the phenomena of disasters (tornadoes or earthquakes, wars,) that in the face of disaster, natural behavior is of human closeness.*

In the current context, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, companies were forced to adopt rules of physical social distance in order to limit the spread of the virus.

These rules cover the following aspects:

- moving activities to the online environment (conferences, tele-work, conducting school courses),

- markings and physical barriers which have to encourage social physical distancing, (a physical social distance of between 1,5-2 metres),

- quarantine or isolation for a period of 14 days for those suspected of virus infection,

- limitation of human contact (payment by bank card, lack of hugs),

- protective equipment in relations with others: masks, gloves, hygienic solutions, protective clothing,

- closing restaurants or limiting people to events, parks, theatres, performances, meetings,

- traffic rights/needs are also reduced, travel restrictions which have in certain cases prevented meetings with friends and family,

- schools are closed, work at home is encouraged.

Thanks to these restrictions we have begun to become aware of the immediate social effects of the crisis: changes in lifestyle, in relations between people, but also a decrease in quality of life. Globally, we identify an impoverished and more polarized society, as well as a visible increase in national self-awareness.

All these restrictions imposed by decision-makers at the personal and institutional level, without their being required a minimum consultation, establishing, on a personal level, a state of frustration, aggression, a conflict relationship with the state authorities. Every day we learn through online means that at least one known person is experiencing the pathology of COVID, families who have lost at least one family member and have not been able to perform or attend funerals under normal conditions. Also, people's fear of interning is very high amid a loss of trust in the authorities. The state of forced isolation constitutes an important source of inner tension, of frustration, which over time can lead to behavioral disorders and serious psychiatric pathologies. In the literature it is known that the degree of loneliness and time spent forced in isolation can lead to pathological forms of loneliness: fleeting states of dissatisfaction, chronic feeling of mental isolation, lack of communication, distrust in people, or even suicides.

At the sametime, in order to protect ourselves and stop suffering, we begin to live in a more selfish world, we focus on our own self-interest: each for itself, we forget the interest in the other, which can become a possible competitor.

The economic-social impact leads to the restriction of employment, businesses are closed and a significant percentage of people are sent to various forms of employment: unpaid leave, technical unemployment or even actual unemployment, until the loss of jobs.

The Western economy has reduced opportunities for immigrants by also entering the restriction, which has led to the return to the country of a significant part of co-nationals working abroad who want to find job opportunities.

A worrying fact is that, according to an Ires study (2020), half of Romanians do not have savings to cope with possible crises, 41% of Romanians have some economies that can ensure their decent survival, but only 2 months at most.

Some specialists also appreciate that we are facing the return of the potential delinquent population of around 70 000 families, which will form mainly Roma communities, characterised not only by poverty and chronic non-occupation, but also by criminal structures, which will lead to an increase in crime against the background of poverty.

The closure of schools, the transfer of education to the online environment, the decrease in educational standards, lead to poor education and a much lower quality level. If we take into account the fact that the school has a dual role in the education and formation of the behaviour of the future adult in the sense that it forms its sense of responsibility, the spirit of competition, teaches it to follow a strict schedule, it forms a subordinate behavior towards the authorities, we believe that in the future we will witness some disadaptive behaviors,which we will encounter in the future adult.

Preparing for the parliamentary elections and the fact that we are at the beginning of the cold season make the future uncertain in these conditions, leaving room for the establishment of a substantive concern, the forecast of a possible state of emergency after the parliamentary elections and the anticipation of spending the winter holidays in conditions similar to this year's Easter ones. The reduction of constitutional rights, the unpredictability of the evolution of the disease, will accentuate a state of frustration and aggression. Underdeveloped well-founded social services (health, education, social assistance) as well as the lack of coherent policies and strategies for areas of interest make the risks of the future a heightened area of interest.

A particularly important aspect concerns the human resource, which in our view is the most important in all areas. At the moment it is exhausted, devalued, fearful, in various situations of conflict, without hope. When we say human resource we mean the medical resource, education, security, or any person who has a professional activity in any field and who at the moment needs that by certain policies of the state can be understood, supported and helped.

The DSM in Axis 4 specifies "psychosocial and environmental problems". These problems, such as poverty, dysfunctional families, as well as other factors in the person's environment, may have some impact on the person's (psychological, social and professional) ability to function.

On 26.04.2020, it was drafted by Colonel Doctor Dr. Octavian Vasiliu, primary psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, specialist psychotherapist, Clinical Psychiatry Section, Central Military Emergency University Hospital "Dr.Carol Davila", Bucharest, a research that was carried out independently, not sponsored by any governmental organization, NGO or economic entity. The completion of the questionnaire was anonymous and no personal data was collected as part of this research.

The findings of the research reported the occurrence of psychopathological phenomena during self-isolation, identified in particular the following symptoms (insomnia, nervousness/irritability, anxiety/panic, unmotivated fatigue, depressive mood, changes in appetite, concentration problems, and many people had symptomatic clusters, not just isolated manifestations). These symptoms are recently developed and can be attributed mostly to (self)isolation-induced stress, given that only 3% of respondents admitted pre-existing psychiatric disorders. There is a reduced addressability to psychological or psychiatric assistance services and the use of coping methods in order to cope with symptoms (self-medication for sleep, coffee for drowsiness, alcohol for anxiety). Less than 4% of respondents enlisted the help of a mental health specialist (psychologist/psychiatrist) during self-isolation/quarantine.

These phenomena show that there is a risk of the installation of psychiatric disorders (anxiety and depressive type), which is expected during this period of (self)isolation/quarantine, but that there is also a risk that these psychiatric disorders will rapidly worsen in the absence of specialized consultations.

In this context, by increasing frustration and aggression, the UN has already alerted the world's governments to the significant increase in domestic violence during this period. In France, the number of cases increased by a third in the first week after closure. In Spain, online consultations offered by the website associated with the telephone line for victims of gender-related violence increased by 270% in the first two weeks of isolation compared to the same period in 2019.

According to data provided by the police Romanian, in the first 9 months of this year, the largest share in crimes in the sphere of domestic violence is the acts of "kicking or other violence" – 62%, followed by "abandonment of the family" – 14% and "threat" – 9%. Between January and September 2020, 6,472 provisional protection orders were issued in

Romania, 10% more than in the first 9 months of last year. Of these, 6,383 were issued at the request of the victims, 54 at the request of other persons, 5 at the request of NGOs and 30 at the request of other institutions empowered to do so.

Global domestic violence has increased, with the United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and The Granting of Power to Women (UN Women), after the onset of restrictions, showing evidence of the impact of the recent Global CoVID-19 pandemic on violence against women and girls. Thus, the data showed that in France, for example, domestic violence cases have increased by 30% since the block on 17 March 2020. Support lines in Cyprus and Singapore increased calls by 30% and 33% respectively. In Argentina, emergency calls for domestic violence cases have increased by 25% since the blocking began. In Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, government authorities, women's rights activists and civil society partners have reported growing reports of domestic violence during the crisis and/or increased demand for emergency shelter. Where women have access to technology, online violence against women has also increased. Before COVID-19, one in 10 women in the European Union reported being the victim of cyberbullying from the age of 15 (including receiving unwanted, offensive and sexually explicit emails or SMS messages or offensive messages inappropriate on social networking sites). During the COVID-19 restrictions the use of online platforms increased. This has been used by some as an opportunity to lure young people into exploitation situations. According to Europol, the online activity of those seeking child abuse material is on the rise. Millions of women and girls use videoconferencing frequently, sometimes daily, to work and study. According to various media outlets, social media posts and women's rights experts, various forms of online violence are on the rise, including stalking, assault, sexual harassment and sexual fishing. Examples include unsolicited pornographic videos while calling a social event through a virtual chat room.

Significant stressors that can occur during a quarantine include: duration of the caratine, fear of contracting infection, frustration and boredom, improper supply, poor and false infomation. The stressors that may manifest after the cessation of quarantine are: precarious financial level caused by income decrease and stigma.

4. Conclusions

Diseases have always existed, exist and will exist. Some have been eradicated, others will appear. But is it important how we adapt to the problem, what solutions we find, what measures we adopt, what are the pluses and minuses of the strategy, what experience we have gained and how can we use it in future situations?

Today, the whole of Europe and not only is under the sign of change at personal, social, institutional, economic level. A change of Romanian political vision is required in which the interest of Romanian society, the interest of the citizen, prevails. Professionally trained people of impeccable moral quality are needed, because only under these conditions will citizens once again trust the state authorities. It is also particularly important that the promotion of staff is done on the basis of professionalism and moral probity.

The authorities of the Romanian state must take responsibility for the economic and social development of the country. It must be involved in the creation of a national development project, as well as long-term strategic directions, for each area of activity. At the same time, restrictive measures must be presented in favour of the citizen, to make it clear that they are necessary for the protection of people and the maintenance of their health, effective communication being imperative. It also helps to maintain a good level of optimism and induces safety.

Communication and consultation of specialists in different fields of activity can lead to the identification and adoption of viable solutions in all fields of activity, including the

finding of a medical remedy for the COVID-19 virus. It takes teamwork and the involvement of all citizens, with no time for "various proportions of hubris". It is the period when we have to show that we are Romanians, that we care about our country and that every citizen can help change the image.

A rearrangement of the activity from top to bottom, on the hierarchical scale, bringing to the fore respect for the ordinary citizen and his needs and the adoption of effective strategies, will lead, over time, to a decrease in the level of psychosocial stress. We also believe that it is important to give the same respect for all categories and social areas: public system and private system, social, economic, health, educational, technical.

5. References:

1. Bogdan Ficeac (2014) Tehnici de manipulare, București, C.H. Beck,

2. http://dawn.uv.ro/sociala.html (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

3. http://www.scumc.ro/impact-regime-of-self-isolation-isolation-quarantine-in-context-pandemic-covid-19-on-function-cotidian-and-health-mental-results (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

4. https://acad.ro/SARS-CoV-2/doc/d01-QualityofLife.pdf (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

5. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

6. https://www.politiaromana.ro/ro/stiri-si-media/comunicate/bright-sky-ro-o-aplicatie-care-vine-in-sprijinul-victimelor-violentei-domestice, (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

7. https://www.qmagazine.ro/ (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

8. https://www.scientia.ro/homo-humanus/107-introducere-in-psihologie-de-russ-dewey/4682-cele-cinci-axe-ale-dsm-iv.html (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

9. https://www.ujmag.ro/drept/diverse/omul-societatea-statul-categorii-constitutionale-perene/rasfoire/ (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

10. https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006, (last accessed on 20.11.2020),

11. Jeong, H., Yim, HW, Song, YJ, Ki, M., Min, JA, Cho, J. and Chae, JH (2016). Mental health status of people isolated due to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, Epidemiology and Health, 38, e2016048. https://doi.org/10.4178/epih.e2016048

12. Lu, WH, Ko, NY, Chang, YP, Yen, CF and Wang, PW (2020). Coronavirus 2019 disease pandemic in Taiwan: an online survey on concern and anxiety and related factors, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,17 (21), 7974, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17217974

13. Usher, K., Bhular, N. and Jackson, D. (2020), Life in pandemic: social isolation and mental health, J Clin Nurs, 29: 2756-2757. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.15290.