

## The Social Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

April 16, 2020

### Speakers



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### Moderator

## The most prominent recommendations

Organizing a study to verify the social impact of programs and societal initiatives aimed at facing the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will have to determine the extent to which these programs and initiatives have achieved their intended goals, as well as pinpoint their limitations to that have to be avoided in similar conditions.

Developing alternative social care plans that will be used in any of the emergency crises.

Focusing, during exceptional simultaneous COVID-19 and pandemic circumstances on delivering more social welfare initiatives and programs. Concern will be channeled to the groups most affected by the pandemic, such as the elderly and poor families.

Creating an appropriate mechanism for coordination and complementarity between official government efforts and those undertaken by charitable institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic or other emergency crises.

 The webinar is on the International Aspar Forum YouTube channel

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- **Second:** COVID-19 pandemic effect on family relations.
- **Third:** People's social behavior and influence by COVID-19.
- **Fourth:** Welfare programs and initiatives to counter the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sources and references.

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### First: Recommendations.

- Organizing a study to verify the social impact of programs and societal initiatives aimed at facing the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will have to determine the extent to which these programs and initiatives have achieved their intended goals, as well as pinpoint their limitations to that have to be avoided in similar conditions.
- Creating an appropriate mechanism for coordination and complementarity between official government efforts and those undertaken by charitable institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic or other emergency crises.
- Focusing, during exceptional simultaneous COVID-19 and pandemic circumstances on delivering more social welfare initiatives and programs. Concern will be channeled to the groups most affected by the pandemic, such as the elderly and poor families.
- Developing alternative social care plans that will be used in any of the emergency crises.
- Realizing the importance of intensifying awareness-raising efforts devoted to the following:
  - Educating the families to take advantage of the emergency house quarantine during COVID-19 pandemic conditions. The quarantine time can be utilized to enhance the mutual relations between the spouses. It can also be used to better communicate with the children, know their needs, and guide them to develop their skills commensurate with their capabilities.
  - Rearranging social priorities by families in terms of patterns of consumer behaviors, entertainment habits, and social relations after the COVID-19 pandemic, in a manner that bears fruit at the levels of economic benefits and social cohesion.



**Second:** COVID-19 pandemic effect on family relations.

- COVID-19 resulted in a state of physical distancing that has become a reality for millions around the world. This reality has been brought about by the precautionary measures taken by countries to limit the spread of the new Coronavirus. As a result, family members stay together at home for long periods, and this has had different consequences around the world.
- This situation offers an opportunity to enhance the family rapprochement that many may have missed in light of the pressures of life and the daily routine of work. Therefore, home becomes a safe haven for family members.
- Among the most outstanding outcomes of house quarantines is strengthening family relations between husbands and easing up on the differences in views on matters of life on the one hand and strengthening relations with their children on the other. Besides, they found themselves forced to provide a non-routine atmosphere they desperately needed in light of the rapid pace of modern life. Also, it is certain that the family meeting for dinner at one table was usually almost absent in many families before COVID-19. This had positive outcomes on the stability of the family in many respects: social, psychological, behavioral, emotional, and educational.



- Also, the family gathering in light of the new reality imposed by COVID-19 created an opportunity for closer communication with the children. This provided them with some skills that are appropriate for their age through joint home activities with their parents. Such skills were driven by the children's wishes and hobbies. The parents also helped their children with distance learning. They could identify children's needs, desires, inclinations, and became more aware of the individual differences between them. This made them consider these aspects, directing their children to positive aspects that help them overcome life problems that may face them in the future. They also became more able in implanting religious and social values, and educating their children on health matters to protect them from the transmission of infectious diseases. This time provided an opportunity for educating the children on personal hygiene and physical distancing during pandemics.

- Indeed, the repercussions of the pandemic put family members in all countries of the world before a real test. The strength of their relationships and the extent of their success in forming a cohesive family with distinct moral values is put to test. The weakness of their relationship is viewed through a microscopic look, which gives the parents a golden opportunity to address the defects.
- It is important to point out that being physically at home for relatively longer periods compared to the previous situation before the pandemic, following the instruction necessitated by the current conditions of social distancing, should not affect the marital relationship.
- This makes it necessary for the parent to establish solid grounds of understanding between them. If they succeed in so doing, their marital relationship will be enhanced. There will also be an open dialogue among the family members, enhancing their cohesion, and providing a healthy family atmosphere.



- The importance of this lies in protecting the family from the negative effects of this pandemic. In this case, we might be talking about the exacerbation of domestic violence, be it psychological, verbal, or physical. These pandemic conditions may also lead to more cases of mutual abuse among members of the same family, more cases of divorce, and other unfavorable effects that may result from direct contact in a narrow space at home for longer periods.
- In general, at the family level, the conditions brought about by Coronavirus such as cohesion, solidarity, and convergence which the family was experiencing during the house quarantine are supposed to affect it positively. There are some families, on the other hand, that feel bored by their members being together almost all the time. This makes them want to break free and leave the family once these exceptional circumstances are over.
- In a related context, the status of society after COVID-19 has had extensive discussions with different trends, meaning that they did not agree on the impact of the pandemic on social relations in the future. Perhaps we are likely to have three possibilities for human attitudes after this pandemic. The first is that people will not change, the second is that they will change positively, and the third is that they will change negatively.

### **Third:** People's social behavior and influence by COVID-19.

- It is certain that COVID-19 has brought about qualitative changes to the social behaviors of members of society. Some of these changes have taken on a positive character, while others have taken on a negative one.
- Among the positive changes in patterns of social behavior are the extinction of unnecessary and financially exhausting social visits, and a shift to preparing most meals at home. This was not only motivated by economic or freedom of movement. It was motivated by health considerations and fear of virus transmission through food prepared outside the home.
- In light of the current indicators, it is expected that the people's behavior in the post-coronavirus phase will not be the same as their behavior in the period before. New cultures and behaviors such as social distancing, avoiding the rush and crowding in the markets, shops and social events have begun to take roots in people. Besides, traditional social activities have been replaced with virtual meetings via visual communication technology. This would change the daily life behavior of many members of society in a way that might save them time, effort, and expenses.



- COVID-19 made us look at the elderly differently. They are our family and friends. They are the ones who worked hard when they were young to give us a decent life. Therefore, they deserve appreciation and care to prevent them from any suffering. This could be seen through having initiatives to help the elderly who are unable to shop alone or who need help in managing their daily life matters. A large number of young people kept themselves at home to protect the elderly from the risk of being infected by the Coronavirus. This is a positive behavior, like many others, that may find their ways out during crises.
- On the other hand, there have been some negative social behaviors that coincided with the pandemic. They included some people scrambling to buy items such as hand sanitizers and toilet paper, in addition to storing food commodities excessively. Such behaviors persisted even though all indications signaled their long-term availability. Such a stampede to purchase may harm others who are unable to purchase basic commodities. However, indicators still show that people continue to buy in relatively large quantities compared to the earlier stages of the pandemic despite official assurances that the supply of basic commodities will not stop.

**Fourth: Welfare programs and initiatives to counter the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic.**

- In its broad sense and during the COVID-19 pandemic, social welfare includes a set of services and programs provided by the State to the people to overcome the exceptional circumstances they are experiencing.
- The Saudi government, under the guidance of political leadership, has made many efforts to harness its potential and resources to fight the spread of the Coronavirus. It has offered many social welfare programs and initiatives to counter the negative effects of the pandemic.



- Among the most prominent initiatives that can be mentioned in this context is launching the Community Fund to mitigate the effects of Covid-19. This is based on activating the contribution of endowments and the non-profit sector to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. This initiative was embraced by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and the General Authority of Endowments, in association with the Health Endowment Fund, the Council of NGOs, the Council of Civil Associations and many endowments, donors and companies.
- Launching this fund is a gesture of the social responsibility of the non-profit sector during the crisis which the Kingdom and other countries of the world are facing. This enhances national participation in crises and disasters and supports government efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. The capital of the fund is 500 million riyals. The General Authority of Endowments donated 100 million riyals, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development offered 50 million riyals. The endowments, private institutions, and some companies contributed 50 million riyals. The Saudi banks provided support for the initiative, sensing its social responsibility to support the government efforts to mitigate the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic.

- The Fund is also working to mobilize societal efforts and direct them at this stage towards financing a set of community initiatives and projects to support the groups most in need and most affected by this pandemic. Such groups include poor people, the disabled, widows, divorced women, prisoners' families, the elderly, owners of small occupations, affected workers, students in need, and those who came to the Kingdom for Umrah or visit but could not return to their home countries, and others. Support took place in various fields such as relief, social, educational, health awareness, technical, service, accommodation, and others.



- In the same context of social welfare programs and initiatives to counter the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development decided to stop updating the medical reports for persons with disabilities as of the date of suspending attendance at workplaces. The update is postponed until the repercussions of the Corona crisis end, and health facilities return to work regularly. However, monthly payments continued for the beneficiaries except during the current period. This is in line with the social responsibility of the Ministry towards persons with disabilities in the Kingdom, especially in light of the pandemic.

- However, the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for measures to activate more social welfare programs and initiatives during normal or exceptional different circumstances. This includes working to strengthen solidarity and partnerships between social responsibility departments in the government sector or the private sector to support sustainable development. Accordingly, funds are allocated to help affected small projects to contribute to alleviating the financial burdens. Executive committees are also set up in the regions to develop short, medium, and long post-crisis plans to help vulnerable families and those most affected by this pandemic. The importance of developing alternative plans to benefit from disasters and crises emerges. This is in addition to developing the guides directed to sectors, society, families, and individuals, focusing on measuring the social impact of all societal initiatives launched to address this pandemic and documenting and monitoring efforts.



- In conjunction with the State's efforts, charities and institutions are also supporting the State's endeavors in combating the Covid-19 pandemic and reducing its negative effects. This work is somewhat lacking coordination and integration. These associations should not operate in isolation from the State and the private sector, as there is a need for a body to operate under its umbrella to achieve integration and coordination. The official effort will be like an umbrella to realize the goals of the Kingdom's 2030 vision. This is to unify the efforts of the government, private and charitable sectors to alleviate the suffering of affected families from such a pandemic or other emergency crisis. During unusual circumstances such as the one we are experiencing, the focus should be placed on the most affected groups or the so-called disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, children, people with special needs, mental and psychiatric patients, and poor and low-income families. These groups are likely to be the most affected when any crisis or disaster breaks out.

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