

THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON INDIVIDUAL LIFE

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Abstract

Covid-19 pandemic caused many problems in human life. Estimation if different types of problems were inter-related and if some types of problems were more frequent than others revealed that the health-related problems were subjectively assessed by 524 Bulgarians as the most influential ones during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the diminishing order of influence of economic, psychological, family, and political problems. These different types of problems were all interrelated with each other and the presence of one type of problem was accompanied by all the other problems. This finding means that the efforts for handling some specific problems should be concentrated at the same time on a constellation of problems.

Keywords: *Covid-19 pandemic, economic problems, family problems, health-related problems, political problems, psychological problems*

Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic provoked some deep changes in human life and most of them were related to a variety of different problems – economic, psychological, health-related, family-related, political problems that seem interconnected. Considering the impact of COVID-19 on human life, we attempt to estimate if some types of problems were more frequent than others. Such findings may concentrate more efforts for handling some specific problems.

COVID-19 pandemic has affected physical and psychological health (Dai et al., 2021; Scapatucci et al., 2022), social, economic (Haleem et al., 2020; Kalil et al., 2020; Karunathilake, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; OECD, 2020), and family functioning (Kalil et al., 2020). The economic problems during the pandemic period were related to disrupting the production and supply of some goods (Haleem et al., 2020), diminishment of income and increase of unemployment in some industries (Mishra et al., 2020), for example tourism, travel, and transport (United Nations, 2022). Income losses during the pandemic are associated with some psychological problems such as depressive symptoms, stress, diminished sense of hope, and negative interactions with the family members, but if parents spend more time with their children without income losses, then parent-child interaction is more positive (Kalil et al., 2020). Some other psychological problems during COVID-19 pandemic are anxiety, increased risk for domestic violence, and reduced opportunities for coping with stress (Fegert et al., 2020), for example because of the restricted social contacts and in this way limited social support.

The political problems during the pandemic period were related to some measures to cope with the problem such as studying or working from home (OECD, 2020) and lockdown. Lockdown measures during Covid-19 pandemic in Europe and the United States (the government imposed at least one compulsory, non-pharmaceutical intervention that restricted peoples' freedom and possibilities such as limiting travelling, closing schools, etc.) had little to no effect on COVID-19 mortality, had little to no public health effects, but lockdown measures imposed enormous economic and social costs where they had been adopted (Herby et al., 2022).

The health - related problems during the pandemic period concerned the threat for human life from the coronavirus disease, increased stress and apprehension, overburden of medical staff, neglect of the needs of patients suffering from other diseases (Haleem et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020), partly disrupted medical supply (Haleem et al., 2020), worsened health status and a higher risk of different illnesses after diagnosis with Covid-19 (Hacker et al., 2021) or because of sedentary lifestyle and social isolation (Scapaticci et al., 2022).

The social consequences of coronavirus pandemic were related to imposed social isolation that negatively affected the personal life and intimate relationships, restricted public celebration of holidays, diminished possibilities for entertainment (Haleem et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020), including cancellation or postponement of some sport events, as well as restricted travelling (Haleem et al., 2020).

In the scientific literature, one study described 29 positive impacts and 25 negative impacts of coronavirus pandemic at the local, regional and global contexts (Karunathilake, 2020), so one could get the impression that the pandemic situation has stimulated more positive changes in the society because of the higher number of positive impacts than negative impacts, but most of these described positive impacts (17 out of 29) were seen as opportunities that have not been realized/finalized yet. This is an optimistic approach to the COVID-19 pandemic as an experience to be learned for further growth and family cohesion, but its disadvantages may outweigh its benefits (Fegert et al., 2020). Another study found the equal number of 4 negative and 4 positive experiences of COVID-19 pandemic, and the negative experiences were mainly related to psychological and social problems (Fioretti et al., 2020).

These different types of problems (health-related, psychological, economic, family, and political) experienced during COVID-19 pandemic seem interrelated. The aim of this study was to establish if these different types of problems were interrelated and if some specific problems prevailed during COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Methodology

Procedure

Data were collected online by means of Google Forms in 2021. Participation was voluntarily and only Bulgarian adults over 18 years old were invited to participate.

Participants

The participants in the study were 524 Bulgarians, among them 150 men and 374 women, 178 suffering from chronic diseases and 346 not diagnosed with any chronic disease, 86 suffered from COVID-19 and 438 not diagnosed with COVID-19, 329 without children and 195 had children, 228 did not have any intimate partner and 296 had an intimate partner, 372 did not practice sport and 152 practiced sports at least once per week.

Instrument

A survey was conducted by means of several questions formulated on the basis of the questions offered by Burkova (V. Burkova, personal communication, 26 April 2021) and slightly modified. These questions were:

- Did the economic problems (change in income, price increase) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Did the family problems (change in relations with a spouse, parents or children; unsettled personal life, etc.) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Did the health-related problems (illness, restriction of access to medical care, sleep problems, and increasing use of alcohol/drugs etc.) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Did the political problems (tense situation at the international level and in relations between countries) influence your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Did the psychological problems (increased stress, anxiety, aggression on the background of a pandemic) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?

These questions were answered on a 5-point Likert scale (-2 - not influenced; -1 - rather not influenced; 0 – it is difficult to answer; 1 - rather influenced; 2 - yes, influenced).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Spearman's rho correlation coefficient, Mann-Whitney *U* were computed by means of SPSS 20.

Research Results

Table 1 shows the results about degree of influence of economic problems on individual life within one year of the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of the Degree of Influence of Economic Problems on Individual Life within One Year of the Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic

Did the economic problems (change in income, price increase) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Frequency	Percent
Not influenced	18	3.4
Rather not influenced	15	2.9
It is difficult to answer	8	1.5
Rather influenced	465	88.8
Yes, influenced	18	3.4

Most participants (92.2%) considered that economic problems influenced their life during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 1). The participants suffering from chronic diseases (Mean Rank = 273.51) estimated that the economic problems more strongly influenced their life than the participants non-diagnosed (Mean Rank = 256.83) with any chronic diseases (Mann-Whitney $U = 28833.500, p = .030$). The participants who had children (Mean Rank = 271.94) estimated that the economic problems more strongly influenced their life than the participants who did not have (Mean Rank = 256.91) any children (Mann-Whitney $U = 30237.000, p = .045$).

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of the Degree of Influence of Family Problems on Individual Life within One Year of the Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic

Did the family problems (change in relations with a spouse, parents or children; unsettled personal life, etc.) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Frequency	Percent
Not influenced	20	3.8
Rather not influenced	23	4.4
It is difficult to answer	7	1.3
Rather influenced	461	88
Yes, influenced	13	2.5

Most participants (90.5%) considered that family problems influenced their life during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 2). The participants who did not have any intimate partner (Mean Rank = 276.07) estimated that the family problems more strongly influenced their life than the participants who had (Mean Rank = 252.05) an intimate partner (Mann-Whitney $U = 30650.000, p = .001$).

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of the Degree of Influence of Health-related Problems on Individual Life within One Year of the Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic

Did the health-related problems (illness, restriction of access to medical care, sleep problems, and increasing use of alcohol/drugs etc.) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Frequency	Percent
Not influenced	17	3.2
Rather not influenced	20	3.8
It is difficult to answer	2	0.4
Rather influenced	465	88.7
Yes, influenced	20	3.8

Most participants (92.5%) considered that health-related problems influenced their life during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 3). The participants who were infected with COVID-19 (Mean Rank = 280.15) estimated that the health-related problems more strongly influenced their life than the participants non-diagnosed (Mean Rank = 259.03) with COVID-19 (Mann-Whitney $U = 17316.000, p = .031$). The participants who did not practice sport (Mean Rank = 267.61) estimated that the health-related problems more strongly influenced their life than the participants who practiced sport (Mean Rank = 249.99) at least once per week (Mann-Whitney $U = 26370.000, p = .028$).

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of the Degree of Influence of Political Problems on Individual Life within One Year of the Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic

Did the political problems (tense situation at the international level and in relations between countries) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Frequency	Percent
Not influenced	16	3.1
Rather not influenced	17	3.2

Did the political problems (tense situation at the international level and in relations between countries) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Frequency	Percent
It is difficult to answer	457	87.2
Rather influenced	23	4.4
Yes, influenced	11	2.1

Most participants (87.2%) had some difficulties to estimate if the political problems influenced their life during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 4). Only 6.5% of the participants stated that the political problems influenced their life during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 4).

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of the Degree of Influence of Psychological Problems on Individual Life within One Year of the Spread of COVID-19 Pandemic

Did the psychological problems (increased stress, anxiety, aggression on the background of a pandemic) have influence on your life during the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic?	Frequency	Percent
Not influenced	19	3.6
Rather not influenced	14	2.7
It is difficult to answer	8	1.5
Rather influenced	458	87.4
Yes, influenced	25	4.8

Most participants (92.2%) considered that psychological problems influenced their life during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic (see Table 5). The participants who did not have any intimate partner (Mean Rank = 273.45) estimated that the psychological problems more strongly influenced their life than the participants who had (Mean Rank = 254.07) an intimate partner (Mann-Whitney $U = 31248.500, p = .012$).

There were not any gender differences in the estimated impact of any kind of problems (psychological, economic, political, health-related and family) on human life ($p_{\text{Mann-Whitney } U} > .05$).

Perception of economic problems as influential on human life positively correlated with perception of family problems ($r = 0.246, p < .001, N = 524$), health-related problems ($r = 0.460, p < .001, N = 524$), political problems ($r = 0.221, p < .001, N = 524$), and psychological problems ($r = 0.275, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential for human life during COVID-19 pandemic.

Perception of family problems as influential on human life positively correlated with perception of health-related problems ($r = 0.513, p < .001, N = 524$), political problems ($r = 0.149, p = .001, N = 524$), and psychological problems ($r = 0.511, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential for human life during COVID-19 pandemic.

Perception of health-related problems as influential on human life positively correlated with perception of political problems ($r = 0.412, p < .001, N = 524$), and psychological problems ($r = 0.611, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential on human life during COVID-19 pandemic.

Perception of political problems as influential on human life positively correlated with perception of psychological problems ($r = 0.316, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential on human life during COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

The influence of health-related problems on human life prevailed among the studied participants (92.5%) during the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the influence of economic and

psychological problems (92.2% for each of them), and then by the influence of the family problems (90.5%), while only 6.5% of the participants were influenced by the political problems during the spread of COVID-19 pandemic that may be related to the fact that the political actions in different countries were generally directed to cope with the pandemic spread and its consequences. The psychological and family problems more strongly influenced the participants without an intimate partner who did not receive enough support to cope with such problems during the Covid-19 pandemic. The economic problems more strongly influenced the participants with children and the participants suffering from chronic diseases who needed more expenses for themselves or for their family members who depended on them. The health-related problems more strongly influenced the participants who were infected with COVID-19 and the participants who did not practice sport. That is evidence in support of participants' sincerity.

These different types of problems were all interrelated with each other and the presence of one type of problem was accompanied by all the other problems. The strongest positive connection was between the health-related problems and psychological problems ($r = 0.611, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential on human life during COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the strong positive connection between the health-related problems and family problems ($r = 0.513, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential on human life during COVID-19 pandemic. In the third place, there was a strong positive connection between the psychological problems and family problems ($r = 0.511, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential on human life during COVID-19 pandemic. There was also a strong positive connection between the health-related problems and economic problems ($r = 0.460, p < .001, N = 524$) as influential on human life during COVID-19 pandemic. These connections reveal the central place and importance of health-related problems, psychological problems, and family problems for human life. Such finding corresponds to the leading values health and happy family life shared among Bulgarians (Stoyanova, 2005).

There are some limitations of this study related to the subjectively assessed impact of different types of problems on human life during the coronavirus pandemic and the lack of some objective measures of this impact. However, there are some indicators of sincerity of the participants such as correspondence of the findings with some previous research on human values or on the benefits of physical activity for human health.

Conclusions

This study compared the subjectively assessed degrees of influence of different types of problems on human life during the Covid-19 pandemic. The efforts for handling some specific problems should be concentrated at the same time on a constellation of problems – health-related, economic, psychological, and family problems that all were intertwined. A cross-cultural study may further establish if such interconnections between these different types of problems are global or culturally specific. Different countries faced similar problems during the COVID-19 pandemic that gives some reason to expect that globally the impact of different types of problems on human life should be interrelated.

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