

## Sociology of Pandemics A Sociological Approach to Understanding the Social Impacts of COVID- 19

Hosni Ibrahim Abdelghani<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*There is no doubt that there is a social and ethical necessity to monitor the various aspects of this pandemic, and to reveal its effects on the social reality in its various aspects, and thus the results of the study can be used to develop a scientific plan to limit the spread of the pandemic, and there is no doubt that This contributes to creating a safe social environment capable of responding to all social and economic development programs. The Sane Society is the society that is most capable of change and development in all fields. The study problem is determined in revealing the sociological approach to the Corona pandemic, identifying its various dimensions, and monitoring the sociological effort in revealing its most prominent results and its various effects on some social systems. The study uses the Discourse Analysis method, where the study aspires to analyze an aspect of the Arab and Western sociological discourse related to the Corona virus, and to identify the extent to which this discourse monitors the effects of that epidemic.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Sociology of Pandemic, Epidemiological Transition, Risk Society, Social Distancing.

### Introduction

The Corona 2019 pandemic, known as COVID-19, represents the most profound health, social, and economic crisis in modern times. What once seemed impossible has occurred to change the world as we know it perfectly: borders between countries have been closed, social activities have stopped in all societies, individuals have been isolated inside their homes, the whole world has lived an unprecedented social experience, and that living laboratory is ready for sociological analysis (Matthewman and Huppertz 2020).

The world has struggled with what some researchers have dubbed "covidisation" to refer to the multiple and far-reaching medical, economic, and social impacts of the global health emergency left by the novel Coronavirus. Researchers have provided a tremendous amount of analysis of the many health and economic dimensions of the twenty-first century's first significant global health and civil emergency (Bhattacharya 2020). According to the World Health Statistics report issued by the World Health Organization in 2022, the Sultanate of Oman was one of the countries that had integrated digital platforms for health information through which it was able to develop weekly mortality curves by age and gender. It accurately monitored excess deaths in the Year 2020 (WHO 2022).

Since late 2019 and early 2020, experts in China and worldwide have tried to deal with the new virus, its risks, and how to control them. This new and unknown threat has challenged governments, experts, and the public from the outset and had to rely on a combination of uncertain knowledge and available (professional) experience (Zinn 2021). Human societies have gone through milestone historical moments as they face the Corona pandemic, characterized by three features that made it a subject capable of sociological research. These features are the gradual spread of the pandemic from local to global, the depth of the impact that affected all social structures in their structural and functional forms, and their impact on world vision and perceptions of life, existence, and human destiny (Malkawi 2021). Based on the above, the current study reveals the approach of sociology in understanding the social and cultural aspects associated with the spread of the pandemic and monitoring the most significant repercussions that resulted from it, focusing on Gulf societies in general and Omani society in particular.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sociology and Social Work Department – College of Arts and Social Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University

### *The Research Problem and its Objectives*

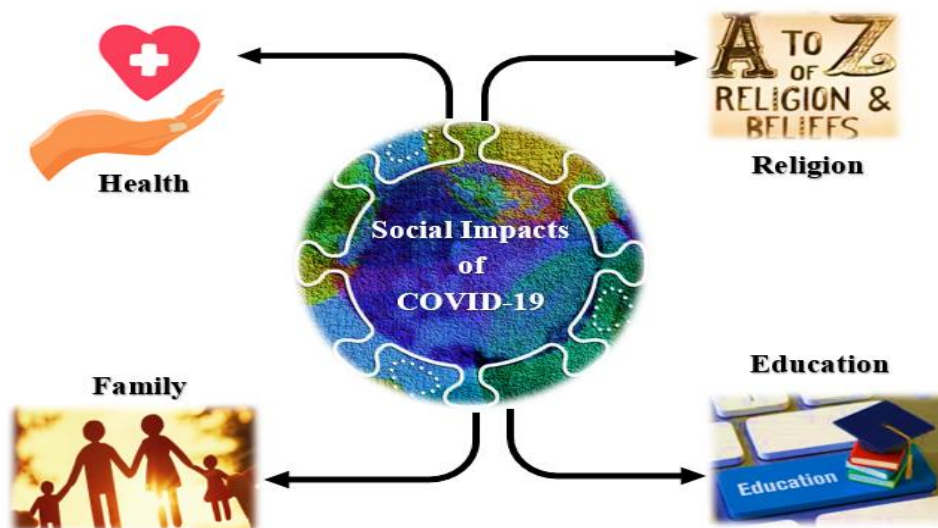
The novel coronavirus–coronavirus spread worldwide quickly and has provoked unprecedented social responses. People worldwide had to face the experience of a new, unknown threat under very different circumstances. Sociologists immediately worked hard to carry out a growing body of scientific research, formulating theoretical frameworks within the sociology of risk and the sociology of pandemic to understand the social responses to the pandemic and its effects (Zinn 2021).

Accordingly, the problem of the current study is to monitor the sociological approach to understand the social and cultural aspects associated with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify the sociological effort to reveal its most noticeable results and effects on human societies. Based on this, the study attempts to answer a fundamental question: What are the features of the sociological approach to understanding the social and cultural aspects associated with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the most critical results revealed by sociological research regarding the effects of this pandemic on society?

Accordingly, the study aspires to achieve the following objectives: (1) Identify the sociology of the pandemic as one of the most promising areas of sociological research. (2) Monitoring the most important sociological theoretical trends explaining the spread of the pandemic and its impact on society. (3) Highlighting the most important sociological contributions in monitoring the effects of the Corona pandemic on the Gulf society in general and the Omani society in particular. (4) Reveal the social areas most affected by the pandemic as shown by sociological research.

### **Methodology**

The current study adopts the Discourse Analysis methodology, as the study attempts to analyze an aspect of the Arab and Western sociological discourse related to the coronavirus–coronavirus and identify the monitoring of this discourse for the effects of that epidemic. Discourse analysis is generally defined as the analysis of spoken and written language, as it is used to formulate social and cultural visions and perspectives on specific issues. There are various forms of discourse analysis, and one of these forms cannot be considered valid and the other false. However, the difference lies in the variation of the tools it relies on in text analysis, and multiple forms of discourse analysis often reach similar results (Gee, 1999).



**Figure 1. Sociological Impact of Covid 19 In Terms of Social Perspective**

The concept of discourse analysis refers to the systematic and realistic analysis of linguistic texts and practices, and discourse analysts are concerned with the interpretive aspects of discourse patterns. This

approach draws attention to how people express themselves through structured and codified means of speaking and writing (Bruce, S. & Yearly, 2006).

The discourse analysis approach emphasizes that each discourse has its specificity. Discourse is the texts and cognitive practices that occur at a time. A conscious reading of the discourse leads to revealing explicit - and implicit - connotations in the discourse, whether at the level of the "spoken" or the level of the "concept," to analyze the structure of the discourse stylistically and cognitively (Abou Zeid, Nasr 2000).

### *Main Concepts*

The current research includes several concepts related to the subject of the research, the most important of which are presented in figure 1 and in detail as follows:

#### *COVID-19*

At the end of 2019, at a seafood market in Wuhan city in Hubei Province, China, a new infectious disease appeared that looked similar to the outbreak of the dangerous SARS epidemic in 2003; the market was closed on January 01, 2020. When the virus began to spread in and out of China, knowledge of its nature and the risks it causes were uncertain. Its ease of spread between humans had not yet been revealed, nor was it explicitly known whether it was a relatively weak virus like the flu or deadly like SARS. (Zinn 2021).

By mid-June 2020, the World Health Organization announced that 217 countries had recorded cases of infection with the emerging Coronavirus and that the number of infected people worldwide exceeded ten million, of whom more than half a million died (Mashhadani 2020). The new coronavirus infection is spread through scattered droplets from those who show symptoms while coughing or sneezing and may also be transmitted from people with no symptoms. This droplet can be transmitted through a range of one to two meters and then settle on surfaces. After that, the virus can survive on surfaces for limited periods under certain conditions, but it is wiped out in less than a minute by ordinary disinfectants (Öner 2020). About the number of registered cases and deaths caused by the pandemic, according to the World Organization, the number of officially registered cases globally until August 26, 2022 (at the time of writing this research reached 596,119,505, the number of deaths reached 6,457,101 deaths, and 12,409,086,286 vaccines were administered globally (WHO 2022).

#### *Social Epidemiology*

The idea of epidemiology arose from observations made by Hippocrates (460-370 BC) more than two thousand years ago concerning the influence of environmental factors on disease occurrence. However, the distribution of disease among specific populations was widely measured in the nineteenth century. This nineteenth-century effort (for example, Jon Snow's study of the cholera outbreak in London in 1854) marked the official beginnings of epidemiology and some of its astonishing achievements (Bonita 2006). Epidemiology can be defined as the scientific study of the occurrence, prevalence, and distribution of diseases among specific populations (Porta, 2008). As for social epidemiology, economics, ethnicity, social class, and housing conditions, intervention studies seek to modify adverse factors and improve conditions that promote good health (Porta 2008: 231). Many medical sociologists consider themselves researchers in social epidemiology, especially in terms of methodology (Mechanic 1978).

#### *Epidemic and Pandemic*

Multiple concepts in epidemiology refer to the epidemiological situation in society, these concepts are interrelated and complementary, and many people think they are synonymous. However, they are different, and there are subtle scientific differences between them, from these concepts: epidemic - a pandemic - endemic epidemic and others.

The term epidemic refers to the occurrence and spread of the disease at high rates in a particular community or region in a specific period and can be traced back to one public source; then it is called the "limited

epidemic outbreak," and its spread may expand to include an entire country or an entire geographical area (Attia 1995).

A pandemic is an epidemic that occurs worldwide or over a large area, crosses international borders, and infects enormous populations. (Last 2001). The pandemic represents the highest degree of spread of the disease geographically so that it does not leave an area without spreading, which requires direct intervention and supervision by international organizations, especially the World Health Organization (WHO), to follow up on preventive measures and determine the right health policy (Al-Qahtani 2021).

The World Health Organization declares a pandemic when the growth of the disease is accelerating, meaning that the growth rate is constantly rising, and cases are increasing more every day than the previous day. When declaring a pandemic, attention is not focused solely on the pathological aspects and the degree of immunity of the population or the severity of the disease. Attention also extends to the vast area over which the disease spreads, requiring interventions to contain its impact on countries and populations (Mailman School of Public Health: 2021).

Some researchers have argued that it is likely to lead to significant social changes, which may lead to the "end of neoliberalism" and perhaps the end of "the world as we know it" It is a genuinely extraordinary crisis. However, the various crises that have occurred in recent decades, such as the Chernobyl disaster, AIDS, the September 11 attack, and climate change, are already calling for us (Zinn 2021).

#### *Social Impact of the Corona Pandemic: A Sociological Perspective*

The sociological approach to the pandemic is based on a central issue, which is that although the pandemic is essentially a pathological event, it quickly turns into a social phenomenon, acquiring social and cultural dimensions, as when an event occurs somewhere, its effects and repercussions are related to solid and intertwined links with other events, and this was evident in the Corona pandemic (Kiran 2020).

In this context, we will present aspects of the sociological approach to understanding the social impacts of the Corona pandemic through three main issues, which includes social and cultural dimensions of epidemics, theoretical trends of sociology on the pandemic, and sociological effort to monitor the social impacts of the COVID-19.

#### *Social and Cultural Aspects*

It was long believed that the phenomena of health and disease are research areas far from the influence of sociology due to their association with pure medical and biological concepts, concepts that researchers in sociology need to deal with. However, experiments proved the efficiency of researchers in this science in analyzing all the elements and influences associated with health and disease.

As a result, a modern branch of sociology concerned with health and disease issues has emerged, namely Medical Sociology, which is concerned with applying sociological theories and approaches in studying health and disease issues in human societies, focusing on the socio-cultural context affecting health and disease. (Amzat and Razum 2014).

Since epidemics are recurrent disease events that significantly affect societies, sometimes even threaten their existence. Especially if epidemics move from the local scope to the global scale, the plague and the Spanish flu, for example, have profoundly affected the human cultural and cognitive reserve. Corona represents a miraculous and influential experience in human history. (Zinn 2021). Some scholars may understand that Phillip Strong's article Epidemic Psychology, published in the Journal of Sociology of Health and Illness in 1990, was the first reference to the sociological analysis of the epidemic. AIDS in the eighties of the last century and the black plague that swept the world in the middle of the fourteenth century (Dingwall 2013).

The sociological effort related to epidemics has revealed the importance of the socio-cultural dimension in health and disease issues. Medical problems – including epidemics – have social and cultural roots, so they

should be aware of how societies characterize diseases, how they respond to them, and the extent of their consequences (Dingwall 2013).

Ahmed Zayed believes that the sociology of the pandemic helps detect the spread of the epidemic by trying to answer important questions: Is the epidemic spreading among social groups more than others? Moreover, to what extent does class affiliation affect the spread of the epidemic? Does people's lifestyle affect the injury? What are the social conditions associated with it? Does food pattern affect or does it not affect? Does academic and cultural education play a role in change? How do pandemics lead to significant changes in the body and the way the body is present in life? We now wear masks on our noses and mouths and try to prevent the disease with specific formulations of physical interactions through social distancing. Zayed believes that human meetings will be different if this epidemic continues for an extended period. In this case, the sociology of the pandemic will take on particular importance, just as the health field of treatment and health care will be necessary. It may play a huge role in rationalizing societies to formulate new policies to deal with epidemics. (Zayed, Ahmed 2020)

### *Theoretical Trends*

As we mentioned, the interest in sociology in the issues of epidemics and diseases emerged through one of its essential branches, medical sociology. Despite the novelty of this science, it is full of a wide range of theories that explain various aspects of health and disease.

By the late twentieth century, sociological theory in medical sociology had become widespread. There has been a general development in the scientific effort in medical sociology so that applied studies have been associated with theoretical trends so that sociological theory is used as a general framework to explain or predict the relationship between health and social behavior. At the same time, medical sociology has moved away from its dependence on medicine in the research agenda to a relatively independent situation (Cockerham 2001).

### *Epidemiological Transformation Theory*

The theory of epidemiological transformation is associated with the name of the American epidemiologist (Egyptian origin) Abdul Rahim Omran (1925 – 1999). The theory was first formulated in 1971 in the article " The Epidemiologic Transition: A theory of the Epidemiology of Population Change," published by Omran in issue 49 of the Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly (Omran 1971). In 1998, as a result of the many criticisms of the theory, Omran made some modifications to his theory one year before his departure, where he modified some issues of the theory and added new evidence, data, and statistics to support the hypotheses of the theory (Omran 1998).

The epidemiological transformation model is seen as a theoretical statement on the shift from infectious diseases to chronic diseases accompanying modernization. However, Omran was not directly concerned with the emergence of chronic diseases, and his theory was closely related to efforts by the World Health Organization to control fertility within the framework of population control programs through health issues. On the other hand, the theory was part of Omran's effort to establish a new subspecialty in epidemiology, Population Epidemiology (Weisz & Gryn 2009).

The theory of epidemiological transformation focuses on the profound change in health and disease patterns, the patterns of interaction between these patterns, and their demographic, economic, and sociological determinants, and Omran believes that the epidemiological transformation has coincided with the demographic and technical transformations now underway in developed countries, and is still underway in less developed societies. There is ample evidence documenting this shift from infectious to artificial diseases and epidemics (Omran 1971).



### *The Age of Pestilence and Famine*

The Age of Pestilence and Famine is the longest of the three stages. It extends from the early ages in human life until the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in developed countries and until the middle of the twentieth century in some third-world countries. This stage characterizes a high mortality rate due to the spread of epidemics and famines, so the average life expectancy at birth ranges between 20-40 years. It was also characterized by prolonged population growth.

According to Omran, children and women in adolescence and childbearing are the age groups most affected by changes in health and disease patterns. Infectious diseases and chronic malnutrition take a heavy human toll – especially among children and women in their teens and reproductive years – and a small percentage of the population survives the high mortality rate of young people.

### *The Age of Receding Pandemics*

At that point, the mortality rate continues to rise but gradually declines. The decline increases as epidemics rapidly recede, life expectancy at birth steadily increases from 30 to 50 years, the demographic gap (between births and deaths) widens, and population growth gradually increases. Females are still at high risk of death in their teenage and fertile years. Infant and child mortality is high with a low neonatal rate; the mortality rate at fifty years and older increases somewhat. The mortality rate in urban areas is still higher than in rural areas.

In its early periods, the leading causes of death are endemic and parasitic diseases, epidemic lesions, and childhood and maternal diseases. Industry-related occupational diseases are also increasing, and nutritional deficiencies are still present, although somewhat improved. The most common diseases are tuberculosis, smallpox, heart disease, and malnutrition. This phase is characterized by weak healthcare institutions and low drug effectiveness, and hospitals are seen as "death traps," so people rely on traditional or popular treatment regimens.

### *The Age of Degenerative and artificial Diseases*

The mortality rate is rapidly declining and is finally close to stabilizing at a relatively low level. Life expectancy at birth gradually rises until it exceeds fifty years. During this phase, fertility becomes the determining factor in population growth; as the fertility rate decreases – except occasionally increases at times – population growth is generally weak but regular.

These are the three main stages that Omran analyzed. However, in the course of modifying the theory in 1998, he added two other stages: the stage of reducing mortality from cardiovascular disease, aging, and lifestyle modification, and the fifth and final stage (which is a future stage) was called the age of aspired quality of life, which is represented by longevity and the development of health systems strongly (Omran 1998).

Through issues of theory and with the emergence of the Corona epidemic, the question arises here, is there a return to the era of epidemics again despite the change in social and demographic conditions that accompanied the spread of epidemics in the first stage? The truth is that, according to the theory, the Corona epidemic is an exceptional case as a result of specific circumstances, and this does not mean a return to the era of epidemics because the social, demographic, and health conditions in the world at present are radically different from the ancient historical stages that were characterized by the existence of a social and natural environment suitable for the spread of epidemics.

### *Risk Society Theory*

Ulrich Beck (1944–2015) put his ideas on the risk society on the map of human thought through his sociological theory of late modernity, which produced many risks and disasters. His theory received widespread academic attention in Europe and beyond. More than any other sociologist, Beck has placed

environmental issues and the risk society at the forefront, offering through his writings a profound and original conception of the nature and problems of late modernity (Cattle 1998). Beck presented his theory of the risk society through his best-known books *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (published in German in 1986 (and translated into English in 1992) and *World Risk Society* (published in English in 1992). Guinis Zehn wrote of Ulrich Beck's conception of the risk society as "a new social state, where the state of exception becomes the new normal." Beck points out that we now face the unintended consequences of industrial modernity; "We are no longer able to predict or control the threats we have created" (Zinn 2020). Beck asserts that contemporary risks know no geographical boundaries or barriers between social classes. However, the poorer classes are generally more fragile, and the ability to face threats to human beings becomes a real challenge. The risks affect the current generation and may have consequences for future generations. Beck stresses that these risks are not the result of contingent errors. Therefore, their side effects can be minimized, but on the contrary, they are inherent in human behavior in industrial society (Federici 2020). He also believes that contemporary risks are very different from the risks of previous eras; in the past, the risks could have been attributed to a lack of clean technology, but today the risks stem from the inflation of industrial overproduction. So the risks of the modern era differ from the risks that existed in the Middle Ages profoundly from two aspects: their comprehensiveness (where they include humans, plants, and animals) and their causes (modernism) are the risks resulting from modernization, and the comprehensive product of industrialization, and they are intensified systematically becoming a cosmic risk (Beck 1992).

Risk has gained popularity among researchers as an important topic in modern sociological studies that have addressed issues as diverse as health and health behavior, life history and "life chances," modern and late industrial society, technological and environmental hazards, and "political decision-making". These studies have shed light on how risk is socially formed, as there is a dialectical relationship between how social structures shape risk and how individuals react to it (Rhodes 1997).

The risks are related to the development of human life, not only in terms of environmental degradation and the prevailing uncertainty but also about the risks resulting from the intensification of human activity; the danger has been associated with every human activity in modern society (Federici 2020).

According to Beck, the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus and its associated health and social consequences is one of the twenty-first century's most meaningful events and social risks in human life. What made this outbreak different was the global sense of the fragility of human biological life and then the demand for a "sterile society" free from any dangers (Sadati, 2020).

The Corona pandemic has shown a relationship between dietary behavior and housing pattern and promoting a mutation in the spread of viruses. The pandemic has also alerted us to how vulnerable current societies are biologically and mentally (Sadati 2020).

We conclude from the above that the theory of the risk society provides a critical discourse of Western modernity, as it believes that profound risks are currently threatening the world. These risks stem from the industrial society and accompany Western modernity. The Corona pandemic can be seen as one of the enormous risks that have significantly affected human society in various respects, and accordingly, confronting this pandemic and containing its destructive effects should not only stop at its appearance and emergency external causes but instead come from During the trapping of the dangers posed by modernity and industrialization.

#### *Some Sociological Efforts to Monitor the Social Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic*

There is no doubt that epidemics and pandemics significantly impact society in multiple ways. One of the most important results of the outbreak of the Coronavirus is to create a state of social anxiety around the world, which has led to serious concerns among citizens in all societies, even in countries where the epidemic has not spread significantly. The pandemic has revealed that our societies are fragile in the face of danger (Sadati 2020).

Human history is replete with examples of pandemics that have had profound social repercussions, changing the shape of political practices, undermining social order, and some of which have resulted in social unrest and unrest. Throughout history, too, outbreaks of infectious diseases have provoked an ethnic or religious backlash or exacerbated tensions between economic classes (Barret 2020).

It is noticeable that the economic aspects have received much attention - compared to the social and cultural aspects - especially by international organizations, due to the direct and significant impact of these aspects on various societies, as the outbreak of the Coronavirus affects all segments of the population and mainly affects members of those social groups in the most vulnerable situations, including people living in situations of poverty, the elderly, persons with disabilities, youth and indigenous peoples. Early evidence suggests that the health and economic effects of the virus are borne by the poor, especially the homeless, as they may be unable to stay in a safe place and are at high risk of the virus. People without access to clean water, refugees, migrants, or displaced people are also at risk of suffering greatly from the pandemic and its consequences – whether due to limited mobility, lack of job opportunities, or increased xenophobia (Kiran 2020).

The analysis of the sociological discourse related to the effects of the Corona pandemic on society reveals that the effects of this pandemic were not all negative but resulted in many positive (unintended, of course) effects. This context, it can be called the idea of the latent function put forward by the pioneer of the well-known functional theory Robert K. Merton (1910 – 2003), which means the unintended and unexpected consequences and consequences of social phenomena and actions as opposed to the apparent function Manifest Function that is, the intended and foreseeable consequences (Bruce & Yearly 2006).

The analysis will be based on four basic issues: the social and cultural response to the epidemic in Arab societies (the Sultanate of Oman as an example), the system of values and social interaction within the family, religious belief, and the educational system.

#### *The Social and Cultural Response to the Epidemic in Arab Societies*

Philip Strong (Strong, P., 1990: 250) argues that sociological analysis of pandemics reveals that there are three epidemics (social and psychological) that accompany the spread of the pandemic or pathological epidemic: the epidemic of fear, the epidemic of moral explanation, and the epidemic of action, in times of pandemic, waves of individual and collective panic, bouts of interpretation and a flood of moral debate about the causes of the epidemic prevail in every society, and at the same time Many control strategies, aimed at containing the disease, controlling epidemics of panic and ethical debate about the epidemic. From a sociological point of view, these three epidemics have the potential to spread widely among individuals, just like disease epidemics, and are more severe when the epidemic is new, or the way it spreads is unusual for members of society.

There are different features of the social discourse associated with each type of epidemic; in the stage of social panic, there are many questions posed by society, for example: Can the epidemic reach society? Is a severe epidemic worth fearing? Does the pandemic threaten the survival of society or its demographic structure? How many individuals will we lose? Are community members capable of taking risks? Does the state assess the risks well and prepare for them? At the stage of moral interpretation, there is harsh blame for many things (the source of the epidemic - the precautionary measures, the risk management system, the institutions concerned with confronting the epidemic... As for coping strategies, they include fighting the epidemic instead of fighting individuals or institutions, as a society in all its compositions realizes the importance of moving collectively to confront the epidemic and a sense of public responsibility towards it, showing respect for science and scientists, and awareness of the importance of adapting to restrictions on daily life, isolation or quarantine, and staying at home (Al-Hamdani 2020).

In Omani society, for example, Mubarak Al-Hamdani (2020) monitors these three epidemics. It is mentioned that the harbingers of the first stage (panic and panic) coincided with the beginning of the emergence of the pandemic in China and deepened with the speed of spread between countries, and deepened with the official announcement of the first two infections with the virus in the Sultanate, and that



was on February 24, 2020. At that stage, the role of the state in preparing for risks, updating information, and preparing local communities emerged – Monitoring the map of potential societal risks – Managing information sources – Developing strategies Rest assured.

There is a correlation between the COVID-19 pandemic and higher levels of anxiety, stress, and depression, according to a second study conducted on a sample of 289 people in Sohar, Oman's North Batinah Governorate. The study also revealed various strategies to combat the pandemic, including acceptance of the status quo, positive reactions, a trend toward a commitment to religion, and active adaptation (Elsheshtawy 2021).

#### *Changes in the Family's Value System and Social Interaction*

Values are fundamental in society, especially in times of crisis. Values as fundamental beliefs guide and motivate members and institutions of society and as individual and collective judgments about what is essential. As a result of their association with culture, religion, and law, they stimulate positive actions aimed at confronting the disease and minimizing the damage caused by it, whether related to public health or the environment (Kiran 2020).

The study of Mubarak Al-Hamdani (2020) revealed the emergence of some features of change in the patterns of values, perceptions, and beliefs in Omani society, accompanied by a change in the patterns of daily social behaviors, individual and collective practices, where the need to adhere to social distancing measures that impose physical separation and the absence of intimacy in social communication and sufficiency to respect distances and activate electronic communication, and the emergence of some signs of interest in health culture.

Turki Al-Shalaki's study on the impact of Corona on Saudi society showed that there is an increasing awareness of the importance of the family and the stability of relations within it, despite the presence of some tensions that may be due to the pressures and restrictions imposed by the pandemic. Safety and health values were at the forefront of the ranking of values, followed by the values of doing good and success in life as median values. The values of freedom and enjoyment of life fell to the bottom of the ranking. (Al-Shalaki, Turki 2021: 100)

Ali Al-Matari and Amal Al-Harmali's (2020) study in the Sultanate of Oman showed that the positive effects of social distancing during the pandemic in the Sultanate of Oman were more significant than the adverse effects. One of the most noticeable positive effects was the great interest in the family and significant changes in the daily life program, which makes parents talk to their children on various topics, including those related to the pandemic and ways to prevent it and work to help their children deal with anxiety and calm feelings and tension.

Hajar Al-Qahtani's study (2021) revealed that the psychological and social repercussions of the Corona pandemic crisis positively affected marital relations in Saudi families, despite some negative repercussions. The study revealed the diversity of strategies that the Saudi family relies on to maintain the strength of marital relations; among the clearest of these strategies are good communication skills, partner participation in his interests, and participation in the performance of religious business and rituals.

As for the study of Amal bint Hammad Al-Qadiri, it showed that social cohesion in the Saudi family was strong during the pandemic, and this was represented in four indicators: an increase in the level of social interaction within the family, the availability of family security (i.e., a sense of reassurance and trust in the family), a high degree of respect among family members, and the fourth dimension is the performance of family roles.

*Covid-19 and Religious Belief*

The religious thesis is one of the traditional theses in explaining the pandemic, which sees in every pandemic an expression of divine anger against the people of Zagua for the true path that God has set for humanity; They argue that the solution lies in return religion (Al-Daylami, Abdul Samad 2020).

Therefore, we find that the Corona pandemic has affected the consolidation of religious values, as the pandemic has deepened the religious feeling based on the belief in the existence of a divine supernatural force, to which man resorts when he feels weak, no matter how strong he feels central to the universe. As the pandemic worsened, that feeling emanated even among the less religious or even among religious deniers (Tamim 2020). The famous magazine RELIGION devoted an entire issue of its issues (Religion, Vol. 52, No. 2 2022) to monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on religious rites, addressing through a series of articles the positive and negative effects of the pandemic on some religious practices and rituals in several religious sects and sects.

The religious dimension has emerged in Arab societies during the pandemic, and this has been revealed by many sociological studies, as the study of Ali Al-Mutairi and Amal Al-Harmali (2021) conducted in the Sultanate of Oman showed that the social distancing resulting from the pandemic contributed to making individuals more interested in religious worship, and also contributed to the consolidation of some social values that religion urges, such as interest in reading, mastery of work, taking care of family affairs and effective communication with family members. Hajar Al-Qahtani's study (2021) revealed the contribution of the Corona pandemic to the participation of family members in religious rites and perseverance, especially performing prayers in congregation, praying for the end of the pandemic, and preserving the family from any harm. In the same context, Francisco Rugelli's study on a random sample of believers and non-believers online in Europe and the United States confirmed that the Corona pandemic generally affected the religious beliefs of the sample members, as it was found that in the wake of the emergency caused by the Coronavirus, religious believers expressed greater confidence in their religious beliefs, which led to the strengthening of those beliefs. However, it did not affect much of non-believers (Rigoli, 2021).

In a study conducted by Kalinga Silva and colleagues on the impact of COVID-19 on peacebuilding and reconciliation among religious communities in Sri Lanka, the study revealed that religious leaders had made a significant contribution to the pandemic response by participating in humanitarian services, providing public health information in culturally and religiously impactful ways, combating misinformation, building a fruitful relationship with government institutions at the local level, and donating religious spaces to establish Treatment and vaccination centers (Silva 2021).

*The Educational Consequences of the Corona Pandemic*

According to UNESCO reports, one of the salient effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the widespread closure of educational institutions worldwide; since February 2020, more than 190 countries have closed educational institutions to curb the spread of COVID-19. These closures have affected nearly 1.5 billion students at different levels of education (UNESCO 2020).

The education sector in the OIC member states – to which the Sultanate belongs – has been affected by the pandemic, as about 432.6 million students have graduated from schools and universities by late February. Throughout March 2020, most OIC member states imposed the closure of their educational institutions, and the Sultanate closed educational institutions on March 15, 2020 (Table 1).

**Table 1. Countries Effected Due to Pandemic from Feb 26th to Mar 31st**

Date	Country	Date	Country
Feb 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Bahrain – Iran	Mar 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Oman
Mar 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2020	Kuwait	Mar 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Egypt - Libya - Morocco

Mar 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2020	Lebanon	Mar 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Bangladesh G. Bissau
Mar 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2020	Azerbaijan	Mar 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Cameroon - Somalia
Mar 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Iraq	Mar 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	That's mine
Mar 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	UAE	Mar 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Chad - Djibouti
Mar 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Saudi Arabia	Mar 23 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Mozambique - Niger
Mar 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Qatar	Mar 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Guinea - Yemen
Mar 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Albania	Mar 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Nigeria
Mar 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Algeria - Maldives	Mar 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Benin - Brunei
Mar 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2020	Afghanistan – Pakistan	Mar 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2020	Sierra Leone

One study (Majali 2022) revealed the effects of the Corona pandemic on the educational and psychological functions of the Omani family. The study showed the shift to distance education, home quarantine, and social distancing.

However, there are essential positive effects of the pandemic, as the study conducted by Mohsen bin Nasser Al-Salmi (2021) on the effects of the Corona pandemic on Omani society in the educational field revealed that the pandemic had a positive impact in this field, as it was a strong motivation for educational institutions to improve the quality of education, in terms of forming committees to deal with its effects, benefiting from local media and social media, identifying educational challenges and emergency conditions, and keeping institutions and students abreast of recent changes and developments in education systems. Moreover, benefit from international and regional experiences.

From a psychological point of view, one of the results indicated that general education students in the Sultanate of Oman possess high levels of integration skills in learning and self-regulation mechanisms for learning. Most of them are psychologically flexible, in contrast to low levels of academic anxiety, which indicates the ability of students to adapt to the distance learning environment, and at the same time, reflects the efforts of those in charge of the educational process in providing various ways that help students achieve learning goals.

The study by Yasser Al-Shahoumi and Muhammad Ghazali monitored the most prominent advantages of distance education in the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Morocco, as the study showed that the pandemic prompted the two countries to develop electronic educational platforms for all students and facilitated the possibility of distance learning for people with special needs and chronic disease conditions and that the experience of distance education highlighted the importance of information and communication technology in education, and pushed towards the start of the transition towards e-learning, and highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of educational systems and their ability to adapt to emergency circumstances. The experience of distance education highlighted the role of the teacher and educational staff. It showed the value of the teacher despite technological advances in explaining and simplifying information and instilling values that technology cannot replace (Al-Shahoumi, Yasser and Ghazali, Mohammed 2021).

We conclude from the above that despite the adverse effects of the Corona pandemic on the educational system at the beginning of the pandemic, Gulf societies and Omani society, in particular, managed the crisis adequately, which contributed to many positive results of the pandemic.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, sociology provides a valuable framework for understanding the social impacts of COVID-19. The pandemic has affected various aspects of society, including health, economy, education, politics, and social relationships. Sociological perspectives such as structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism offer different lenses through which to analyze and interpret the impacts of COVID-19 on individuals, groups, and society as a whole.

Furthermore, sociological research has demonstrated the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on marginalized communities, highlighting the importance of addressing systemic inequalities in health care, education, and employment. By examining the social impacts of COVID-19 through a sociological lens, we can better understand the interconnectedness of social structures and the ways in which they shape our experiences and outcomes during a crisis. It is important to continue applying sociological principles to the ongoing pandemic and its aftermath, in order to develop effective policies and interventions that address the diverse social impacts of COVID-19. By doing so, we can work towards creating a more equitable and resilient society that can better withstand future crises.

## Highlights

- Identifying the sociology of the pandemic as one of the promising areas of sociological research: The study sheds light on this new and essential field of sociological research, which provides a comprehensive view of the social and cultural aspects of epidemics, as influential social phenomena as well as severe pathological phenomena.
- Monitoring the most important sociological theoretical trends explaining the spread of the pandemic and its impact on society: The study monitored two sociological models explaining epidemics, namely the epidemiological transformation theory and the risk society theory, and highlighted the methodological and cognitive capabilities of these two models to deal with epidemics and contain their negative repercussions on societies.
- Highlighting the most important sociological contributions in monitoring the effects of the Corona pandemic on the Gulf society in general and Omani society in particular: The study presented scattered examples of sociological efforts – Arab and Western – on the social effects of the Corona pandemic and attention was intensified to the studies conducted in Omani society.
- Revealing the most affected social areas by the pandemic as shown by sociological research: The study monitored the areas most affected by the pandemic, which are the system of social values, patterns of social interaction within the family, the religious system, and the educational system, and the study also pointed to some economic effects, which received attention from other scientific disciplines.

## References

- Abou Zeid, Nasr Hamid (2000) *Text, Power and Truth: The Will to Know and the Will to Hegemony*, Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, Casablanca.
- Al-Dialmi, Abdessamad (2020) *The Sociology of the Corona Pandemic*, Believers Without Borders Foundation for Studies and Research, Rabat.
- Al-Hamdani, Mubarak (2020) *Mechanisms of Social Adaptation to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Omani Society: Initial Signals*, Gulf Studies Center, Qatar University.
- Al-Mashhadani, Akram (2020) *Comprehensive Security in the Face of Crises and Disasters: The Corona Pandemic as a Model*, Arab Journal for Security Studies, Volume 36, Issue 2.
- Al-Matari, Ali and Al-Harmali, Amal (2021) *The Effects of Social Distancing on Citizens and Residents in the Sultanate of Oman in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Arab Journal of Literature and Human Studies, Issue 16.
- Al-Qadiri, Amal (2021) *The Corona pandemic and the level of Saudi family cohesion: a field study on an applied mother in Riyadh*, um Al-Qura University Journal for Social Sciences, a special issue on the Corona pandemic.

- Al-Qahtani, Hajar (2021) The psychological and social repercussions of the Corona pandemic crisis on marital relations in Saudi families and strategies to confront them, um Al-Qura University Journal for Social Sciences, a special issue on the Corona pandemic.
- Al-Shahoumi, Yasser bin Juma'a, and Ghazali, Mohammed (2012) Distance Education in Light of the Corona Pandemic: A Comparative Study between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Morocco, International Journal of Educational and Psychological Studies, Volume X, Issue Two.
- Al-Shalaki, Turki (2021) The Social Effects of the Corona Pandemic on Social Values and Behavior in Saudi Society: A Field Study in Hail, um Al-Qura University Journal for Social Sciences, a special issue on the Corona pandemic.
- Amat, Jimoh and Razum, Oliver, (2014) Medical sociology in Africa, Springer International Publishing, Switzerland.
- Attia, Philip (1995) Diseases of Poverty: Health Problems in the Third World, Health Problems in the Third World, The World of Knowledge Series, Issue 161, Kuwait
- Barrett, Philip (2020) COVID's Long Shadow: Social Repercussions of Pandemics, International Monetary Fund Research Perspective, Vol. 32, No. 2.
- Beck, Ulrich (1992) Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity, Translated by Mark Ritter, Sage Publications.
- Bonita et al., (2006) Basic Epidemiology, World Health Organization.
- Bruce, S. & Yearly, S. (2006) The Sage Dictionary of Sociology, Sage Publications, London.
- Cattle, Simon (1998) Ulrich Beck, Risk, and Media: A catastrophic view, European Journal of communication, Vol. 13, No. 1.
- Dingwall, R. et al., (2013) Why a Sociology of Pandemics? Sociology of Health & Illness, Vol. 35, No. 2.
- Elsheshrawy, E. et al., (2021) Impact of COVID-19 on Experiences of Anxiety, Depression, and Coping Ability in Oman, The Arab Journal of Psychiatry Vol. 32 No. 1.
- Federici, Raffaele (2020) "An Uncertain Global Environment. Social Extremity, and Sociology of COVID-19", Journal of Scientific & Technical Research, Volume 26, Issue 4.
- Gee, P. Games (1999) An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method, Routledge, London, and New York.
- Kiran, Elif (2020) Prominent Issues About The Social Impacts of COVID-19, Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences, Special Issue.
- Last, J. (2001) A Dictionary of Epidemiology, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Mailman School of Public Health (2021) Epidemic, Endemic, Pandemic: What are the Differences? Available in: <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/public-health>.
- Majali, Musleh (2022) The repercussions of the Corona pandemic (COVID-19) and its impact on the educational and psychological function of the Omani family: a qualitative and analytical study, Educational and Psychological Research Center, University of Baghdad.
- Malkawi, Asmaa (2021) Corona and Sociology: New Questions in Asmaa Malkawi et al. (2021) The Corona Crisis and its Implications for Sociology, Political Science and International Relations, Ibn Khaldun Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Qatar University.
- Mathewman and Huppatz (2020) A sociology of COVID-19, Journal of Sociology, Sage, Vol. 56., No. 4.
- Mechanic, David, (1978) Medical Sociology, The Free Press, N.Y.
- Nasser Al Salmi, Mohsen (2021) The Educational, Psychological and Social Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Omani Society: A Study of Reality and Future Proposals, funded research within the Strategic Research Program to Confront the COVID-19 Pandemic, Sultan Qaboos University.
- NESCO (2020) Empowering Students with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Crisis. May 04, Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3bRDSRu>.2020
- Omran, A., (1971) The Epidemiologic Transition: A theory of the Epidemiology of Population Change, Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 4.
- Omran, A., (1998) The Epidemiologic Transition Theory Revisited Thirty Years Later, World health statistics quarterly, No. 51.
- Organization of Islamic Cooperation (2020) Socio-Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in OIC Member Countries, Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries, Ankara.
- Özdemir, Öner, (2020) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Diagnosis and Management. Erciyes Med. J. 42(3).
- Porta, M. (2008) A Dictionary of Epidemiology, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Rhodes, Tim (1997) Risk Theory in Epidemic Time: Sex, Drugs and the Social Organization of Risk Behavior. Sociology of Health & Illness, Vol.19, No.2.
- Rigoli, F. (2021) The Link Between COVID-19, Anxiety, and Religious Beliefs in the United States and the United Kingdom. Journal of Religion and Health, Vol. 60, No. 4.
- Sadati, Ahmed Kalateh, et al., (2020) "Risk Society, Global Vulnerability and Fragile Resilience; Sociological View on the Coronavirus Outbreak ."Shiraz EMedical Journal, Vol.21, No.4, Apr.2020.
- Sanjay Bhattacharya, Sanjay (2020) The Social Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic, ORF Issue Brief, No. 406, October 2020, Observer Research Foundation.
- Silva, K. et al., )2021( The Impact of COVID-19 on the Peace Building Activities of Local Faith Actors in Sri Lanka, Arts and Humanities Research Council and University of Leeds, UK.
- Strong, P. (1990) Epidemic Psychology: A model, Sociology of Health & Illness, Vol. 12, No. 3.
- Tamim, Mohammed (2020) The Corona crisis and its repercussions on the value system, Al Jazeera Net, 10/4/2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.net/opinions/2020/4/10>
- Weisz, George & Gryn O. Jesse (2009) The Theory of Epidemiologic Transition: the Origins of a Citation Classic, Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences , Vo. 65, No. 3.
- WHO (2022b) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, Available on: <https://COVID19.who.int/>



- Zayed, Ahmed (2020) Will Corona Enhance Our Critical Thinking, Press Interview, Independent Arabic Magazine, 6/5/2020. Available at: <https://www.independentarabia.com/node/116971>
- Zinn, Jenis, (2020) A monstrous threat': how a state of exception turns into a 'new normal' Journal of Risk Research, Vol. 23, NO. 7–8.
- Zinn, Jenis, (2021a) Towards a Sociology of Pandemics, Current Sociology Monograph, Vol. 69, No. 4.
- Zinn, Jenis, (2021b) Towards a Sociology of Pandemics and Beyond, Current Sociology Monograph, Vol. 69, No. 4.