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Redrawn Socio-Economic Realities-Covid 19

COVID-19'da Ortaya Çıkan Ekonomik Gerçeklikler

 Hassan SYED¹ Sema YILMAZ GENÇ²
¹ Department of Management, Euclid University, Central African Republic, hassan@euclidfaculty.net² Department of Economics, Yildiz Technical University, Turkey, sygenc@yildiz.edu.tr

ABSTRACT

The economic realities of the globe have stretched beyond the realms of academia in a re-defined world of Covid-19. The social media has replaced investigative journalism, the government appointed medical officials have replaced the elector-chosen legislative members. The pharmaceutical giants like Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca etc. have become some of the economic winners during this global pandemic. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is being criticised for not operating at an arms-distance from the corporate economic beneficiaries of Covid vaccine developers etc. Amid these stark realities, the economic future of the world's population hangs in a balance. United Nations Development Program, in its report of 2020 titled, "Coronavirus vs. Inequality" speaks of the Covid-19 fuelled economic disparities not only amongst the developing nations but also amongst the middle and lower segments of some of the richest economies of the world. International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its 2020 report states that during the first three quarters of the year 2020 reported 17% decline in the working hours worldwide due to Covid-19 global lockdowns compared to the same period in 2019. These findings translate into the equivalent of 500 million full-time jobs lost worldwide. Food supply chain disruptions leading to acute food shortages have added almost 150 million people to the world's poorest population according to MIRAGRODEP Simulations in 2020. This paper examines the real impact of global economic downturn due to Covid-19 beyond the economic modelling of various governments during this ongoing pandemic.

Keywords: Socio-Economics, Pandemic, Covid 19

ÖZET

Dünyadaki ekonomik yansımalar, COVID-19'la yeniden şekillenen bir ortamda akademik dünyayı da etkisi altına aldı. Sosyal medya, araştırmacı gazeteciliğin yerini alırken, resmi kurumlarda çalışan sağlık görevlileri, seçmen tarafından seçilen vekillerin yerini aldı. Pfizer, Moderna ve AstraZeneca gibi ilaç devleri bu küresel salgın sırasında ekonomik kazanç sağlayan firmaların başında geldi. Dünya Sağlık Örgütü (WHO), COVID aşısı geliştiricilerinin kurumsal ekonomik yararlanıcılarıyla arasına mesafe koyup ortak çalışmadığı için eleştiriliyor. Bu sert gerçekler arasında, dünya nüfusunun ekonomik geleceği muallakta duruyor. Birleşmiş Milletler Kalkınma Programı, "Koronavirüse Karşı Eşitsizlik" başlıklı 2020 raporunda, yalnızca gelişmekte olan ülkeler arasında değil, dünyanın en zengin bazı ekonomilerinin orta ve alt kesimleri arasında da COVID-19 kaynaklı ekonomik eşitsizliklerinin altını çiziyor. Uluslararası Çalışma Örgütü (ILO) 2020 raporunda, 2020 yılının ilk üç çeyreğinde, 2019'un aynı dönemine kıyasla dünya genelinde COVID-19 küresel karantina nedeniyle çalışma saatlerinde %17 düşüş olduğunu belirtiyor ve bu kayıp dünya çapında kaybedilen 500 milyon tam zamanlı işe eşdeğerdir. Akut gıda kıtlığına yol açan gıda tedarik zinciri kesintileri, 2020'de MIRAGRODEP Simulations'a göre dünyanın en yoksul nüfusuna yaklaşık 150 milyon insanı eklemiştir. Bu makale, COVID-19 nedeniyle küresel ekonomik gerilemenin gerçek etkisini, devam eden bu pandemi sırasında çeşitli hükümetlerin ekonomik modellemesinin ötesinde incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyoekonomi, Pandemi, Kovid 19

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1. Introduction

The socio-economic realities of the globe have stretched beyond the ivory towers of academia in the re-defined world of Covid-19. Social media has replaced investigative journalism, the government-appointed medical officials have replaced elector-chosen legislative

members. Pharmaceutical giants like Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca etc. have become some of the economic winners during this global pandemic.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is now a controversial entity that is not operating at an arms-distance from the economic beneficiaries of its advice. Amid these stark factual realities, the economic future of the world's population hangs in a balance. United

Nations Development Program, in its report of 2020 titled, “Coronavirus vs. inequality” speaks of the Covid-19 fuelled economic disparities not only amongst the nations but also amongst the various segments within the richest economies of the world. International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its 2020 report states that the first three quarters of the year reported a 17% decline in the working hours worldwide due to Covid-19 global lockdowns compared to the same period in 2019. It translates into the equivalent of 500 million full-time jobs. Food supply chain disruptions leading to acute food shortages have added almost 150 million to the world’s poorest population according to MIRAGRODEP Simulations in 2020. This paper examines the real impact of the global socio-economic downturn due to Covid-19 beyond simulations and modelled data.

2. Background of the SARS-CoV2/Covid-19

There is no consensus amongst the scientific community about the exact origins of the virus SARS-CoV2 or severe acute respiratory syndrome virus 2 that is responsible for the global pandemic caused by coronavirus disease Covid-19 (Platto et al. 2021). The World Health Organisation (WHO) in its advisory [dated January 20th, 2020](#) announced the detection of lab-confirmed 2019-nCoV (that later became Covid-19) cases from Wuhan, China. By January 31st, 2020 the WHO declared 2019-nCoV as an ‘[international concern](#)’. The number of active cases reported by January 31st, 2020, were approximately 9800 cases, according to the WHO advisory.

WHO relied on International Health Regulation 2005 (IHR 2005) to suggest protocols and measures for the international community. IHR (2005) was first adopted in 1969 and came into force as an instrument of International Law on June 15, 2007. All 194 State-members of the WHO are parties to IHR (2005). WHO relied on Article 3 of IHR (2005) to caution countries against stigma and discrimination in their travel restrictions concerning Covid-19. WHO relied on Article 43 of IHR (2005) to inform the WHO if any additional travel restrictions were being imposed by the member states due to Covid-19. WHO finally relied on Article 44 IHR (2005) to seek global cooperation to deal with measures, therapies, and vaccines to tackle Covid-19. All these measures suggested by WHO were communicated in their [Situation Report](#) dated January 31st, 2020. It is worth mentioning but beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the violations of IHR (2005) by some member states in issuing discriminatory travel advisories (Article 3 IHR), additional travel restrictions without informing WHO (Article 43 IHR) and unfair distribution of Covid-19 vaccines to poor countries (Article 44 IHR) etc. WHO in its Situation Report-51 dated March 11, 2020, declared Covid-19 as a [global pandemic](#).

3. The Emergence of Non-State Actors During Covid-19

WHO was created in 1948 under the auspices of the United Nations World Health Assembly to, “prevent the international spread of disease”. It is noteworthy that membership to the WHO is restricted to countries or ‘State Membership’ in line with its constitution. The decision-making body for the WHO is the World Health Assembly, which set the objectives for the WHO. The funding for WHO comes from the member states. Since 2006, WHO started a public-private alliance to attract private sector investment for WHO projects internationally.

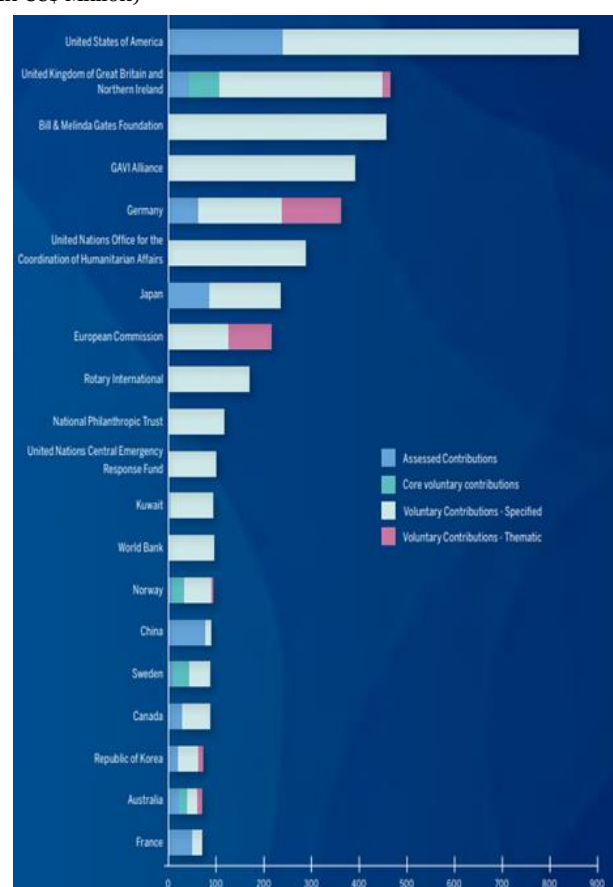
Bill & Malinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) is the largest private donor to the [WHO](#). The graph (1) below provides a glimpse of the funding provided by BMGF to the WHO in the year leading to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The graph (1) above indicates that BMGF is the third-largest donor of the WHO, ahead of many member states. The graph (1) also shows that BMGF’s donation is specific to ‘Specified’ objectives of BMGF that may or may not be the approved objectives of the WHO by its governing body appointed by the member states. Criticism of BMGF’s inadvertent or intentional influence on WHO’s working has been denied by both the WHO and BMGF. Regardless of the influence factor, it does raise the point of a non-state actor sitting above an international organisation that has 194 member states.

Some interesting debate has been generated about the hosting of [Event 201](#) ‘Global Pandemic Exercise’ in October 2019. The three major sponsors were the John Hopkins Centre for Health Security, BMGF and the World Economic Forum (WEF). While BMGF and WEF have vehemently denied any links between the Event 201 projections and the subsequent emergence of Covid-19 almost a month later, the controversy continues still. Bill Gates and WEF have been at the forefront of Covid-19 headlines and have been the media-go-to for comments about how governments all over the world have and should be handling the pandemic. These non-state actors have been projected as ‘experts’ on pandemic handling and global governance by the mainstream media as well as social media. Needless to mention that these non-state actors are amongst the world’s richest who also control the mainstream media and social media.

Graph 1

Top 20 Contributors to the Programme Budget 2018-2019
(In US\$ Million)



Source: WHO Results Report Programme Budget 2018-2019, Driving Impact in every Country.

Social media has surpassed the traditional means of media communication such as newspapers and television news. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram etc. are now at the forefront of disseminating

information and the means of reaching the most remote corners of the globe. Cell phone data services have outpaced traditional means of accessing information compared to other computing devices such as desktops, laptops etc. Due to the loose content assessing, editing and research policies coupled with vested interests of the groups controlling social media, it is virtually impossible to separate facts from fiction for an average person with limited research capabilities. Search engines like Google and websites like Wikipedia have become the sources for truth and facts. In the midst of all this, the social media giants have emerged as the most powerful non-state actors that can impact and alter the powers of any sovereign state due to their overreach. Covid-19 has exposed the power dynamics between corporate interests using non-state actors to coerce and influence the course of legislative powers for public policy during the pandemic. The global pharma industry and governments have effectively used social media to propagate their Covid-19 objectives to the populations at large.

Scholarly research calls for candid questioning of any theoretical reasoning. The non-state actors have assumed the role of the guardians of truth and facts that ingeniously veils their own financial and corporate interests. These non-state actors have also successfully silenced any questioning of the science behind Covid-19 vaccination/measures including any government decisions impacting their citizen's life. Labels such as 'conspiracy-theorist', 'covid-idiot' and, 'anti-vaxxers' are now loosely used to silence anyone that may have any scholarly scepticism about the topic.

4. Increase in Global Poverty and Hunger

The topic of unfair wealth distribution as a consequence of the contemporary capitalist system is not new. The plethora of scholarly research exists to prove that capitalist economic policies borne of the European colonisation, have paved the way for the catastrophic climate emergencies that the world faces today. One of the consequences of the capitalist economic system is the destruction of agriculture through a mono-crop system controlled by the western economies. The destruction of traditional means of agriculture, use of chemical fertilisers and building of dams over riverways have turned fertile lands into food deserts. The world's leading economies, the G-7 countries control the global pharmaceutical and food supply chains. The G-7 are also the largest conveyers of the military-industrial complex. It is the combined effect of all the above facts that have resulted in millions of refugees, both economic and impacted by war zones in the developing world. Poverty, hunger, and physical displacements for millions of people in Africa and Asia is a daily reminder of their bleak existence. Covid-19 has simply exacerbated the situation with global poverty and hunger. Below is the synopsis from two of the leading organisations around the globe about their research on the dire situation of poverty and hunger exacerbated by Covid-19:

United Nations Organisation: The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030), Goal-2 aimed to eliminate hunger by the year 2030. The UN in its report released on July 12, 2021, admitted that UN SDG 2030 Goal-2 for eliminating

hunger by the year 2030 would be missing over 660 million people with over 30 million from the lasting impact of Covid-19. Global hunger increased 9.9 percent in 2020 compared to the global hunger index in 2019. The UN report states, "the year 2020 was sombre. Overall, more than 2.3 billion people (or 30 percent of the global population) lacked year-round access to adequate food: this indicator – known as the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity – leapt in one year as much in the preceding five combined (UN, 2021)."

OXFAM: The organization based out of the UK has been advocating addressing the 'Hunger Pandemic' on the same scale as that of Covid-19. According to Oxfam, "Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, vulnerable communities around the world have been sending a clear, urgent and repeated message: 'Hunger may kill us before coronavirus'. Today, deaths from hunger are outpacing the virus (Oxfam, 2021)." The aid and relief agency has warned that the 'hunger virus' is deadlier than the Covid-19. The agency also reported that "Mass unemployment and severely disrupted food production have led to a 40% surge in global food prices – the highest rise in over a decade. More than 40 million people experienced extreme levels [of] hunger primarily due to economic shocks largely caused by the pandemic. This is a near 70 percent increase over the previous year (Oxfam, 2021)."

5. Conclusion

Covid-19 has exposed the grave inequalities facing our world today. While the pandemic has claimed millions of lives and continues to influence strict restrictions on the populations around the world, the real consequences of the pandemic remain hidden behind the veil of panic and fear promoted by social media and governments. It is certainly necessary to protect the populations from this pandemic, but some of the severe challenges such as socio-economic inequalities, perpetual wars in 23 nations resulting in millions of refugees, controlling of world's food supply and medicines by a few corporations must also be addressed with some urgency. Covid-19 has also proven to be a divisive topic amongst scholars and the general population alike. The opportunity to discuss controversial topics with rational and civilised dialogue has been replaced with hate-filled and emotionally charged verbosity, thanks in part to social media. The unfair distribution of food, medicines and the influence of non-state actors on public policy continue to marginalise communities and populations around the world. Covid-19 provides a unique lens to view some of these inequalities and gauge the global response to these challenges.

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