

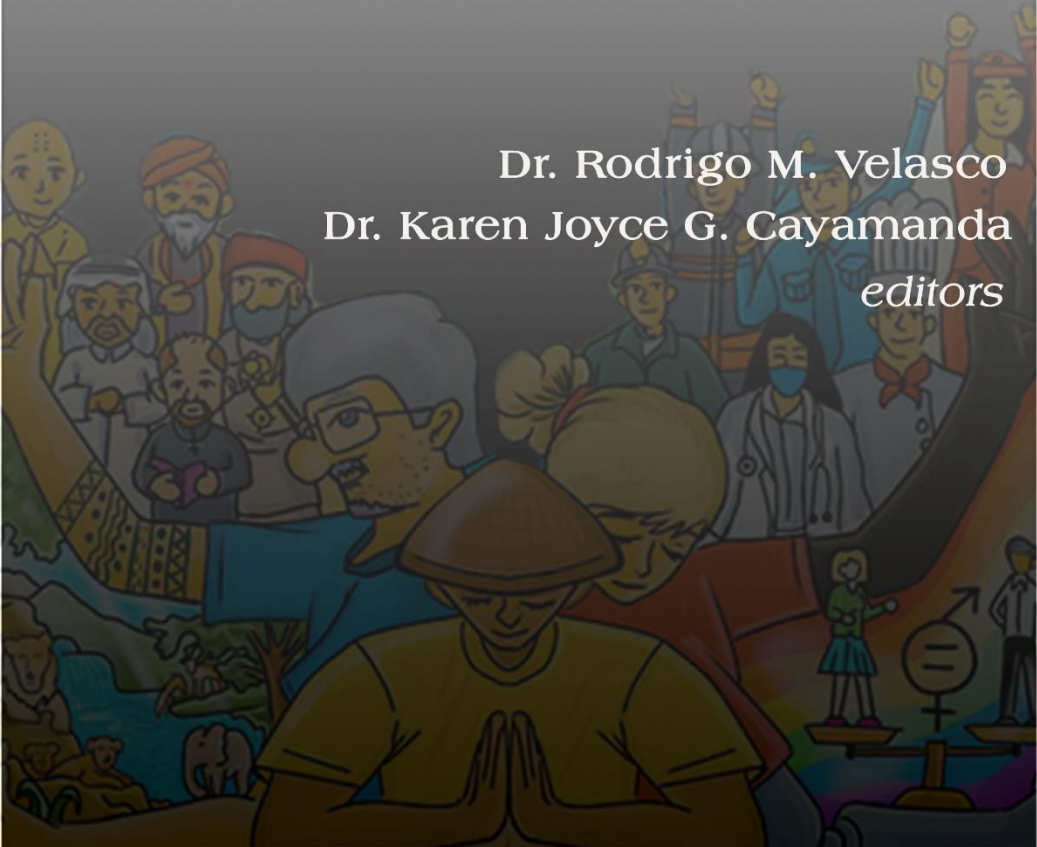
The WORLD

in Different PERSPECTIVES: Rebuilding Lessons after a Crisis

Dr. Rodrigo M. Velasco

Dr. Karen Joyce G. Cayamanda

editors



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Preface

The world is in chaos. The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic created the havoc that all parts of the globe had to deal with. In addition, there are still other personal and social crises that everyone endures.

Rebuilding Lessons after a Crisis attempts to present the whys, whats and hows of humanity's risk perception across the world as we embark on this challenging journey and help define the most appropriate and most effective risk-related behaviors for survival.

The current pandemic has brought about the abrupt shift in all sectors of the society in different parts of the world. It has resulted to immediate adjustments and development of coping mechanisms to transcend beyond the challenges of this pandemic. Like any other crisis, the current situation taught us to reflect and manage its overwhelming effects.

This book compiles articles that reflect the different perspectives in varied concerns such as health, economy, education, and social transformations. Its impact to the physical, emotional, psychological and financial conditions of humanity across the world are also presented.

Part I as the opening chapter attempts to describe the situation in terms of how a crisis has been evaluated in different lenses as to the risk perception and the risk related behaviors as to how various sectors have adapted to the situation.

Part II describes the varied effects of the pandemic and the adjustments and coping responses manifested by the different sectors.

Part III offers the strategic actions and coping mechanisms that can help recover and sustain ways of life in these challenging times.

About the editors

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Theoretical Perspective on Covid-19 Related Social Problems

Farhana Yasmin

Introduction

Disease moved from country to country, continent to continent without passport and geographical restrictions because health and disease have no political or geographical boundaries (Awan, 2013). Similarly, Covid-19 is first seen in China and later spread across the whole world (WHO, 2020) without any obligations and restrictions. No one thinks that the whole system of civilization will be changed due to the pandemic. For instance, social interaction is a common nature of human being and is part of the community. However, lockdowns, long isolation and social distancing were introduced instead of social interaction. The move to protect the people from Covid-19 led to government actions on lockdowns which has caused emotional and psychological problems such as depression, fear, anxiety, frustration, tension (Kant, 2020) and other social problems.

The COVID-19 as a global issue not only hampers the health system of any country but rather gave birth to multitude of social issues that urgently needs to be addressed. However, people have misconceptions of harmful behaviors and social problems. In theoretical perspective, the COVID-19 related harmful behaviors that have subjective and objective elements are the social problems. There are different approaches used to evaluate the society which are the focus of this study. As such, this study aims to identify the various social problems associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and evaluate the related theoretical perspective of the social problem.

Literature Review

It is commonly observed that social problems increased during and after any kind of crisis. Similarly, the effects of COVID-19 pandemic are more significant on both social and economic dimensions which directly linked to the life style of human being. For instance, food, food security and the living conditions were severely affected due to rising instances of poverty during the pandemic. In reality, a social problem in Bangladesh was enough controlled but during the pandemic it was totally uncontrolled (Oliveria, 2020). Similarly, the lockdowns paved way for addiction to online platforms leading to increased online criminal activities and cyber bullying aggressions (Alsawalqa R. O., 2021). In addition, suicide rates in Bangladesh also increased in 2021. Between March 2020 and February 2021, there were 14,436 suicides as compared to 8,462 COVID-19-related deaths. The leading cause of increase is the depression due to economic and social reasons (Sakib, 2021).

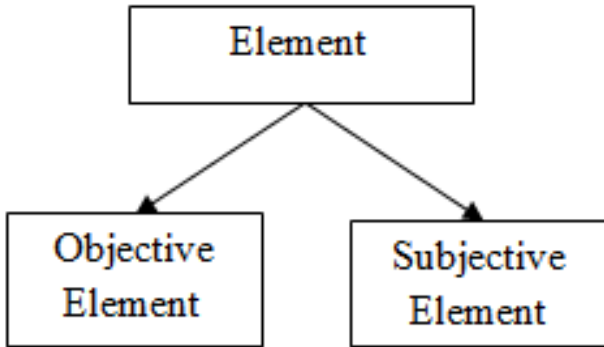
The never ending social battle with the pandemic led to societal division. The uncontrolled spread of the virus led to social stigma and discrimination (Kumar, 2020). The more affected communities are the marginalized causing health-risks, harassment, discrimination, life-insecurity, psychological disorder, loss of social capital and emotional capital, shattering family bond and social solidarity (Mahmud, 2020). Relatively, the increased unemployment rate due to shutdowns of companies (Blusteina, 2020) added much to the injury of the underprivileged. Left without options, children of marginalized families fall victims to child labour, trafficking, child marriage, sexual exploitation and death (GHOSH, et al., 2020).

Overview of Social Problem

Social problem is defined by a combination of subjective and objective standard that vary across societies, among individuals and groups within a society and across historical period. There are two elements of social problems as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Elements of social problems



The objective element of a social problem refers to the existence of a social condition. People are concerned on the social condition through their own life experience, median and education (Mooney, 2007). For example, since bombing is not common in Bangladesh, it is not seen as a social problem. Since corruption is extremely rampant in Bangladesh, it is a social problem.

Meanwhile, the subjective elements of social problem refer to the belief that a particular social condition is harmful and that should be changed (Mooney, 2007). For example, people in the past were not concerned on the eve-teasing or unwanted sexual remarks. People had taken aback on the male actions which were found sexually offensive in Bangladesh culture. After people felt the impact, it has been accepted as a social problem.

Methodology

The study used the qualitative research design using telephone interview strategy.

The participants of the study are researchers, teachers and columnists who were purposively chosen. The profile of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Profile of the Participants

	Age	Education	Occupation
1	25	Honor's degree	Researcher
2	42	Master's degree	Researcher
3	28	Master's degree	Teacher
4	30	Master's degree	Teacher
5	32	Master's degree	Researcher
6	26	Graduate level	Columnist
7	30	Master's degree	Columnist
8	32	Master's degree	Columnist
9	38	Master's degree	Columnist
10	30	Master's degree	Columnist

The participants were asked open-ended questionnaire including the type of COVID-19 related social problems reported and published in Bangladesh. These results were tabulated and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Result and Discussion

Figure 2
Common Social Problems in Bangladesh



Figure 2 presents the tag cloud of the common social problems in Bangladesh as identified by the participants. The commonly perceived social problems reported and published are child marriage, poverty and unemployment.

Figure 3
Common Causes of Social Problems in Bangladesh

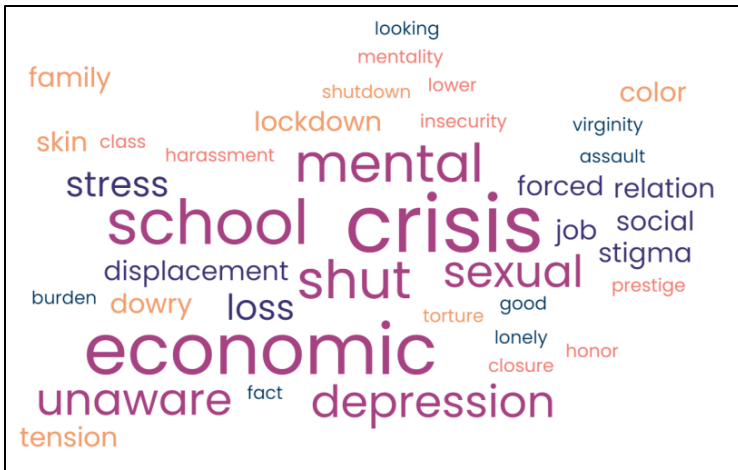


Figure 3 reflects the tag cloud of commonly identified causes of social problems in Bangladesh. The two commonly identified causes of the social problems are the crisis and economic factors. The participants are clearly associating the social problems with the current health crisis that led to the economic downfall due to shutdowns of businesses worldwide. The causes mentioned are linked to the common social problems as perceived by the participants.

Addressing COVID-19 Related Social Problems

The problems identified by the participants have subjective and objectives elements thus qualify as social problems. Relatively, these problems are associated with other similar or related

problems affecting the daily life of all individuals. The results of the interview clearly indicate the underlying relations between the COVID-19 pandemic and the other social problems arising from the pressures of the government actions to protect its people. The existence of these common social problems roots from the occurrence of the pandemic. The existence of these social problems emanate from various reasons which can be explained through theoretical perspectives.

Figure 4

Common Causes of Social Problems in Bangladesh

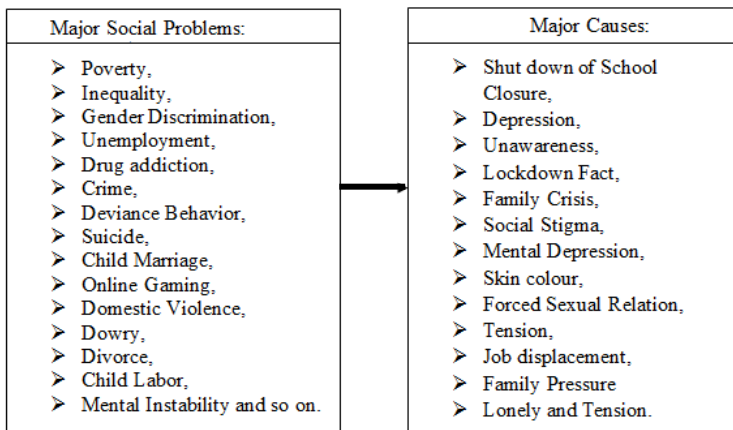


Figure 4 shows a simple relational illustration between the major social problems and the identified causes. Based from the responses of the participants, the social problems and the identified major causes are analyzed accordingly based on the theoretical perspectives. The mere acceptance of the participants that these social problems exists and/or exacerbated by COVID-19 is a clear indication that there are still major associated causes. These associations are then analyzed and identified through the well-known theories relative to the social problems.

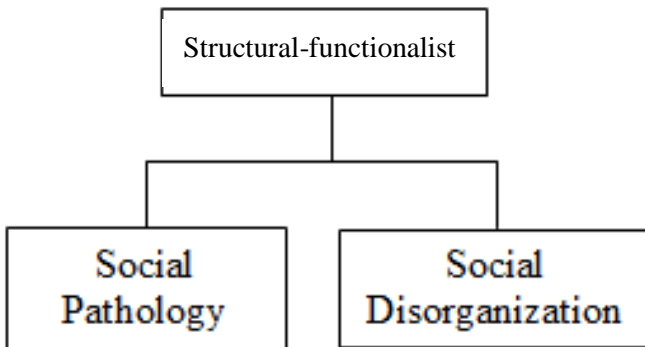
Theoretical Perspective on Social Problems

Theoretical perspective refers to different approaches which are used to view social world. The three major kinds of theoretical perspectives are (1) structural-functionalism, (2) conflict perspective (3) and symbolic interactionism (Schaefer, 1997). The foregoing descriptions are based from the book of Mooney et al. (2007) entitled “Understanding Social Problems.”

The Structural-Functionalism

In the perspective of structural-functionalism, there are many parts and structures of the society which are interrelated and interconnected. These worked together keeping balance of the society. According to structural-functionalist, there are two theories that explains social problems during the COVID-19 period as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4
Two Theories of Structural-functionalist



Social Pathology

Social pathology means measuring the illness of the society. According to social pathology model, social problems result from ‘sickness’ in the society. As such, human organs (head, hand, eye etc.) cannot perform proper function because of their

illness. Similarly, social institutions (education, culture, family etc.) cannot perform properly if there are ‘illnesses’ within its structure. The root cause of the social problems are the problems within its systems and structures. These greatly affect the society in general constituting a clear description of ‘social’ problem.

Illustration: During the pandemic, more and more youngsters get addicted to online addiction due to the shift to remote and online classes. Similarly, the lockdowns contributed much to the online addictions since there are no other activities available. This scenario illustrates the social constructs of educational system as triggered by the pandemic. Due to the fact that the educational systems are not in place, several other social problems occur. The inability of the students to adapt to the current situations created a social problem that must be addressed.

Social Disorganization

According to social disorganization, rapid social change disrupts the existing norms, values and beliefs of the society because members of society cannot catch up with this rapid social change. The inability of the society to adapt to the sudden change give rise to the various social problems.

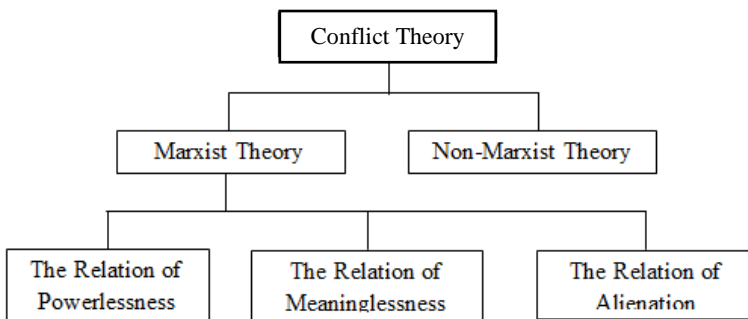
Illustration: The sudden spread of the Covid-19 that turned into worldwide health pandemic caught all countries unguarded. The absence of concrete plans and immediate response to the pandemic worsen the situation. The last known pandemic occurred in the mid-1300s thus no countries thought of a more severe health epidemic would eventually occur. The situation was given temporary solutions through lockdowns, social distancing and isolations just to contain the virus. All these actions are new to the people especially to the marginalized who need to work to sustain a living. Thus, people resort to various actions to survive leading to various social problems including poverty, unemployment, suicide, and crime among others. It is relatively clear that the current pandemic ushered social

problems due to the inability of the people to respond to the crisis.

The Conflict Perspective

Conflict perspective views society as composed of different groups competing for power and resources. In this concept, enjoying power and wealth is the main target of the group. These societal groups aim to dominate those who do not have power and resources. There are two types of conflict theory of social problem: (1) Marxist Theory and (2) Non-Marxist Theory as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5
Types of Conflict Theory of Social Problem



a) Marxist Theory

The Marxist theorists believe that class conflict and economic inequality are the main reasons of social problems. This theory focused on the problem of alienation.

The Relation of Alienation

Alienation is linked to social problems like crime, violence and anti-social activities. During the pandemic, the situation of isolation, discrimination and lockdowns caused a feeling of alienation. For instance, the students were not used to study online while at home. This creates a feeling of alienation due to

the fact that they have less social interaction. These students believe that they are powerless and that they are not learning in the new educational setup.

The Relation of Powerlessness

The power of an individual is associated to the ability to provide actions and solutions to a certain situation. For instance, the job displacement that happened during the COVID-19 from the shutdowns of the companies coupled with mandatory lockdowns held the terminated employees powerless for having no ability to provide solutions to the matter. The situation left everyone powerless due to the scare of infection.

The Relation of Meaninglessness

Finding meaning during the time of pandemic is similar to finding the real purpose of the existence. For instance, due to several national lockdowns in Bangladesh several companies need to shut down permanently. The purpose of continuing is found meaningless due to several factors such as costs, marketing, sales and resources. Similarly, the employees dispatched do not find meaning in continuous employment during the lockdown periods. As such, there are two options for them: find the reason to end or the reason to continue.

b) Non-Marxist Theory

The non-Marxist theorists believe that conflict among interest group is the main reason of social problems. It focuses on the opposing view of different groups.

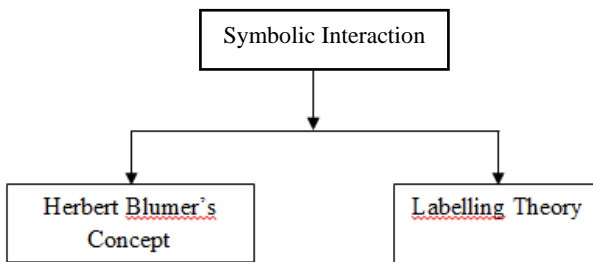
Illustration: Child marriage is a social problem in Bangladesh. However, the period of COVID-19 pressed the households to provide for their needs. To reduce the burden, some families forced daughters to marry at an early age. This actions provides families with the resources (as in the case of dowry) and pass on the obligations to the husband. The conflicting ideologies on the early marriage is seen as the root of the social problem. As the society perceived that child marriage is not acceptable, families

need to meet ends. With the justification to provide for their family needs, the early marriage is seen as the only right option during the crucial crisis period.

The Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interaction approach to theoretical framework sees society as the product of individuals interacting with one another. Social problems are described by the two theories as shown in Figure 6.

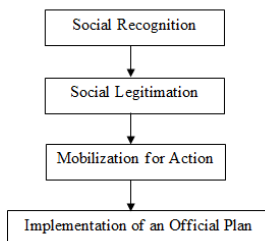
Figure 6
The Two Theories of Symbolic Interaction



Herbert Blumer's Concept

Herbert Blumer (1971) suggested that social problems developed into 4 stages as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7
The Four Stages of Social Problems



1. Social Recognition. A social condition is not considered as social problem without social recognition. The occurrence of the problem may be an isolated case thus no social recognition. However, a prevalent problem is seen as a social problem as being dictated by the judgement of the society.

Example: Drunk driving is not social problem in Bangladesh because of limited social recognition and less cases recorded. On the other hand, child marriage, suicide, divorce, dowry are recognized social problems that occur even during the pandemic due to high rates recorded.

2. Social Legitimation. The conditions recognized by the larger community including media, school, church and government as harmful to the society are perceived as social problems. The validation given by the larger portion of the society provides data and information that a particular situation is perceived harmful to the community at large.

Example: The data provide that during the lockdown period the cases of suicide due to poverty alarmingly increased. Through the data provided by the government, non-government organizations and the media, poverty and suicide are perceived as a core social problems that need to be addressed during the pandemic.

3. Mobilization for Action. If a condition is considered a social problem, an action must be taken against it. Otherwise, it will not be considered as a social problem.

Example: Child labor has grown to an alarming proportion during the pandemic period. In Bangladesh, there are many laws governing the issue on child labor. If there were no law provided, the case would not be considered a social problem.

4. Implementation of an official plan. To protect the community from the various cases of social problems, the

laws should be applied. There must be concerted efforts to implement the laws in order to protect the citizens from the various aspects of social problems. Therefore, concrete plans must be in place to address the issues. The laws are not meaningful without implementation. Similarly, the implementations would not be successful unless a clear plan of actions are visible.

Example: The laws on child labor must be implemented. However, it should not only stop at the implementation. There should be concrete measures and plans to save children from child labor. There are several other factors that should be addressed to sustain the implementation of the law.

Labelling Theory

People in the society put a label to a certain problem or issue. The main argument of the labelling theory is that when the society label a condition in the society as a problem then it becomes a social problem. On the other hand, when the society label a condition better for the society then it is not a social problem. Whenever a change in the definition of a condition occur, the situation it reversed.

Example: During the pandemic, the use of mask and social distancing are perceived better for the society to lessen the virus transmission. Thus, any deviance to the condition is seen as negative.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed people's lives in all aspects. It has also brought tremendous changes in the society, government, business and even the human perception of social and international issues. This study provides a theoretical framework as to how people can approach certain social issues that affect them.

The pandemic has interrelation to the other aspects of the society. As such, there are various social problems highlighted at an accelerated rate during this period. In Bangladesh, for instance, the issues on poverty, inequality, unemployment, drug addiction, crime, deviant behavior, suicide, child marriage, online gaming and domestic violence among others are pervasively reported every single day in various media platforms. Although these are already there pre-COVID, the alarming increased rates during the pandemic period need further scrutiny.

In view of the various social problems, different scholars and prominent sociologists view social problems according to the three perspectives. For instance, structural theorists (Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Herbert Spencer, Robert Merton and Sigmund Freud) developed two theories such as social pathology and social disorganization to explain the tenets of social problem. These theories suggest on proper socialization as a strategy to control social problem. Meanwhile, conflict theorists explained social problem in the context of Marxist (the relation of powerlessness and meaninglessness and the relation of alienation) and non-Marxist theories. Karl Marx, founding father of the conflict perspective, suggest on the value of 'respect' for people's opinion. Lastly, George Simmel, George Hebert Mead, C.H. Cooley are the interactionalists who explained that social problem developed into 4 categories such as social recognition, social legitimation, mobilization for action and the implementation for dealing with problem. If an issue is considered a social problem, concrete plan of actions are required. People should take actions to solve the problem by creating laws, providing plans and developing options to sustain the actions.

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