

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS – MYTH OR REALITY?

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ABSTRACT

Aim. During the pandemic situation of Covid-19, various true or false information about the spread, treatment, prevention, and vaccination against Covid-19 began to spread in the media, as well as in the real world. It is necessary to fight against various hoaxes on the basis of modern and especially scientifically documented information.



Method. This study addresses human rights and change in society before and during the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The authors of the study worked with specific texts and with the help of literary and textual analysis, as well as analytical and synthetic methods. Basic human rights and freedoms during the pandemic were pointed out, together with various myths which circulate among non-professional individuals

Results. The results of the study confirm that the pandemic situation of Covid-19 requires constant explanation, exploration, and confirmation of professional and scientific studies by experts in the media as well as within the social life of people, just to reject various hypotheses of people who are not experts in the field and who disseminate false and scientifically and technically unsubstantiated information.

Keywords: pandemic situation, changes, legislation, hoax, myth, reality

INTRODUCTION

We know from history that various pandemics, despite their great impact on society, are less remembered than wars. The authors of this article assume that the 21st century pandemic called Covid-19 will be mentioned in world vocabularies for a long time, despite the fact that it provokes many negative reactions. This modern pandemic has driven people to slow down their hasty lives and realise what is really essential. In most cases during quarantine, many people realised that their free time should be used more meaningfully, to deal with things that had long been forgotten, to spend time with family, not only to deal with their private lives, but also with public affairs. The Coronavirus has also revealed to the less concerned that the world is globally connected in almost everything, largely in technology, information, economics, and transportation. These connections have a huge impact on humanity. In an instant, humanity found itself in a controlled situation without protesting. It reveals that the world is one big laboratory where experiments are being made about what the world will look like in the coming period (Daněk, 2020).

CHANGES BEFORE AND DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Tomáš Daněk states that the world after the pandemic will be different, whether people like it or not. Individuals are already getting into situations where nations are closing down and, in order to work together on vaccine development, they are ahead of which one will be the first. This points to a rivalry between them, but in a system where only money comes first and not human lives, so that revolutionary evolution cannot take place. If the world is to truly connect after the pandemic, then this connection must have coherent and strong roots, based on humanity, culture and voluntary partnership.

Despite a huge effort on the part of the scientific community to warn people of the danger of a pandemic, various hoaxes are still coming to the fore. There is pressure on people to comply with anti-pandemic measures, which is provo-

king the opposite reactions to those expected. Many people downplay the topic of Covid-19 and attribute it only to seasonal flu. It is true that there are people who have overcome Covid-19 with an easier course, and perhaps that is why they approach this topic with an ease. Unfortunately, there are also people, who lost their health or even life. It may be unequivocally confirmed that the pandemic has divided current society into two camps arguing whether or not there is a Covid-19 pandemic that robs society of its life. Although, according to the authors and world statistics, it is clearly confirmed that Covid19 has caused great loss of life, there are still doubters who claim that people lost their lives not to Covid19, but to ongoing health problems, and Covid-19 was only an associated component. But if it were not for Covid-19, these people could still be here. So where is the truth? This question may be probably answered in the years to come, when coronavirus will have been examined in more detail. But even though the authors share the view that Covid-19 has caused a pandemic of enormous proportions, a few opposite views may be stated:

- lobbying pharmaceutical groups, are behind the extension of the state of emergency;
- a group of Belgian doctors pointed out that diseases require physical activity in the fresh air, social contacts, stress reduction, etc., which, contrary to the measures ordered in the case of Covid-19, also points out that stress pandemic triggers many other diseases;
- the crisis caused by the pandemic supports the introduction of political interventions that in other circumstances would cause resistance;
- a certain business is activated;
- pandemics are an illusion of the powerful who see profits in them;
- at the beginning we were afraid of infection, this condition went into ubiquitous control when we were willing to take the test even with a common cold, just to avoid looking away from our surroundings (Budayová, 2022; Daněk, 2020; Ludvigh Cintulová et al., 2022);
- based on an unpublished US intelligence report, it is worth considering whether the virus has escaped from the laboratory (European Parliament, 2021);
- Covid-19 is not life-threatening and more dangerous than the flu;
- Covid-19 is propagated via 5G radio waves;
- real statistics of people infected with coronavirus are hidden from the public;
- the coronavirus is artificially created in a laboratory and does not come from animals;
- the coronavirus has been purposefully spread throughout the world to harm world economies;
- according to a survey by Focus, 39% of primary school teachers say that wearing children's towels during classes causes their health problems, and vaccination against the virus is a preparation for micro-chipping people;
- the coronavirus is a biological weapon on an already crowded Earth (Kardas, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected people's lives to such an extent that the number of individuals with mental illnesses is growing. The measures that accompany the pandemic undermine the mental experience and emotional integrity of the person (Budayová & Ludvigh Cintulová, 2021). Mental health studies show an enormous increase in depression, anxiety, and stress compared to the pre-Covid-19 situation. A sample of 679 people participated in one of the studies, which looked at the relationship between fear of Covid-19 and depression, anxiety, and stress. Among them, 467 respondents were women (68.8%) and 212 respondents were men (31.2%). It was found that the level of fear was significantly higher in women than in men and that the insecurity from the pandemic is directly proportional to the surge of anxiety and stress that lead to depression (Ionescu et al., 2021; Ionescu et al., 2022; Karakose, et al. 2022; Kardas, 2021).

The coronavirus pandemic will ease over time, but it will certainly remain in people's memories and may cause fear of physical contact. These situations can lead to individuals not being able to make personal contact, this fleeing to the online space that is preferred in pandemic times. What this time has brought to society can affect future generations. At present, public actions are being cancelled due to the prevention of the disease, the tendency to transfer to online space is deepening, cashless payment is becoming more popular. Social contacts, which are supposed to be irreplaceable, are being limited. By wearing veil masks, infection can be prevented, but on the other hand, emotions are hidden as well. The period of Covid-19 also pointed to the fragility of relations between partners, who could not manage this difficult time and their paths parted as a consequence of it. On the other hand, people who would not have been able to get to know each other otherwise, did actually meet (Daněk, 2020; Hašková et al., 2020; Kobylarek et al., 2022; Maturkanič, Čeržeťová Tomanová, Králik et al. 2022).

It is necessary that science be used mainly for the benefit of all mankind and not for a narrow group of people. Scientific development must move forward. The unity of the natural world and science is needed, but it will not be static and dogmatic, but a dynamic and critical synthesis. This cannot be done in a one-sided technocratic way, but by defending the independence of the natural world from the current system, as well as by extending it to the current spiritually emptied technocratic world (Daněk, 2020; Maturkanič, Čeržeťová Tomanová, Majda et al., 2022).

Many people have found their way back to their own culture or the natural values of their homeland due to travel restrictions. By valuing the environment, people realise its true worth. Connections with nature support healthy mental development and eliminate the consumerist way of life. Nature and its protection evokes a sense of responsibility in people (Budayová et al., 2021; Daněk, 2020; Pavlíková et al, 2021; Roubalová et al., 2021; Roubalová et al., 2022).

HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS DURING A PANDEMIC

Due to the situation caused by the pandemic, many people have begun to point to the restriction and lack of respect for fundamental human rights. However, it should be borne in mind that such a situation is associated with many of the restrictions imposed by law. Human rights are specific in a way that they apply to every single human being. It is not just a right of the individual, but a right of all. It can only be a legitimate request of an individual if the same conditions are ensured for others. It is clearly a social relationship between equals, which shows the same valuable regressive response (Krejčí, 2011).

The Constitution of the Slovak Republic ensures freedom and equality for all people without distinction, while ensuring all rights and dignity at the same time. "Fundamental rights and freedoms are inalienable, inalienable, inalienable and irrevocable" (Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Article 12). They are also divided into absolute, which must not be limited in any case, and relative, where one of the two options may be limited by the state in public use, e.g., in the suppression of a pandemic. Any restrictions must be taken into account in their substance and meaning and may only be used for a specific purpose. The restriction applies with regard to:

- legality – the restriction must not be in conflict with the law;
- appropriateness – ensuring the purpose of the restriction, which sets a different goal;
- necessity – to achieve the goal it is necessary to restrict a certain right;
- proportionality – the balance between the restriction and the meaning of the restriction (Neszméry, 2020).

With its basic legal regulation, the Slovak Republic guarantees in its Constitution basic human rights and freedoms to all citizens. Due to the unexpected unfavourable situation, it is forced to pass laws that must significantly restrict these rights and freedoms. Restrictions on fundamental rights and obligations are defined in Constitutional Act no. 227/2002 Coll. And Act no. 387/2002 Coll. The Constitutional Act defines the conditions under which, within what time frame, and to what extent it restricts fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as proposes the performance of necessary tasks in the affected or endangered area. Based on a resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic, one such restriction was imposed on those employees who provide health care. At the same time, these employees were banned from exercising their right to strike (Neszméry, 2020). Citizens are limited in certain circumstances by the rights guaranteed to them, but such situations are limited by law and are determined for the necessary time. Such restrictions fall within the competence of the executive agencies and institutions, which in turn monitor the balance between the restrictions and the purpose of them (Neszméry, 2020).

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – MYTH OR REALITY?

Only science can explain the unambiguous answer to the above-mentioned question. The virus pandemic encourages the entire scientific community to cooperate globally. A few days after the first cases of Covid-19 were reported, this new virus was identified as a new coronavirus. This information was important for further research and vaccine development. Cooperation in the field of science is satisfactory. The number of scientific articles dealing with this disease is growing daily, e.g., for the previous year 2020, 90 536 scientific publications on the topic of Covid-19 were published. Ongoing research in this field focuses on understanding the detailed structure of viral particles, increasing the sensitivity of new coronavirus detection methods, isolating individual virus strains, identifying receptors, phylogenetic analysis of genetic sequences, detection of potential animal intermediate host, molecular evolutionary analysis, inter-transfer analysis, as well as the study of the spread in the human population as well as genetic variability and, last but not least, the development of an effective vaccine (Krasničanova, 2021). The tremendous efforts made by the scientists to fight the new coronavirus also show that the vaccines for Covid-19 entered the clinical trial after less than six months of research and were conditionally respected within ten months (Krasničanova, 2021; Ludvigh Cintulová & Kafková, 2020; Tkáčová et al., 2021).

In addition to spreading of the virus, the pandemic also brings a lot of misinformation, which spreads as conspiracy theories, mainly through social networks and the media. During the pandemic, many statements of scientists on current situations may be found in the media, although it is sometimes hard to understand what they want to convey. However, scientific thinking does not simply mean having more scientific knowledge. Science is about indicating an ability to understand the methods and principles of scientific inquiry and acquiring the skills needed to formulate, test and re-evaluate theories and think about the process of producing evidence. Scientific thinking helps to apply the methods or principles of scientific research to situations. In this sense, scientific thinking is a subset of critical thinking skills that help people think about any complex content, and despite its name, it is not something that only scientists have. The ability to think scientifically helps individuals function properly in society and make informed decisions about health, behaviour, and public policy (Paveleková et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important that people are able to assess whether the evidence is consistent with the claims made, to distinguish reliable information from misinformation, e.g. in connection with the outbreak of Covid-19. People cannot behave and think rationally not only because they cannot suppress false intuitions, but because they lack the relevant knowledge. Scientific thinking is an important factor in protecting against epistemically suspicious beliefs and in helping to make better decisions among the non-scientific population (Al-Rahmi et al., 2021; Čavojeová et al., 2021).

It is very problematic to combat misinformation because its disseminators are also high-ranking politicians, media celebrities and, more recently, influencers, who know how to impact a large number of individuals through their followers. People do not know how to identify with government regulations and in many cases express them as restricting their rights and freedoms. Our society should realise where the beginning and end of the limits of freedom are and take responsibility for the lives of people. By demonstrating the confidence and unity of scientific community, scientists are fighting against conspiracies and enhancing their work, which is also based on gaining awards and recognition within the European Union. This is evidenced by the recently obtained certificate of completion of external assessment of testing quality on SARS-COV-2. The BMC SAS (Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences Virology Laboratory participated in this testing, which was organised by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The BMC SAV) team defended its position as excellent and gained 100% agreement with the expected result.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic situation not only poses a global risk, but also threatens society as a whole. False and unscientific information is spread via people and the media, which affects the layers of society. In this situation, a man is restricted by legislation only on the basis of preventive measures against the spread of Covid-19. However, various Internet media are disseminating unsubstantiated, unprofessional information, the main aim of which is to attack people's defenselessness, to provoke fear, to act on an unprofessional, unscientific part of the population, which becomes vulnerable and thus accessible to various conspiracy theories.

It is therefore very important to influence people with scientific and professional arguments that are based on real results in an effort to prevent the dissemination of not only false information, but also to the spread of Covid-19.

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