

Impacts of COVID-19 and Future Action Plan: A Sociological Perspective

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ABSTRACT:

Coronavirus or COVID-19 is a disease based on an unknown virus before its origin. The virus has different mutations, and it significantly impacts society and individual and group behaviour in many countries (231 by February 2023). The origin is a dilemma, which heavily spread in China initially. It is a global pandemic that has positive and negative impacts. When compared with the influenza pandemic in 1918, some believe the death toll would have been about 50 to 100 million. COVID-19 has infected 682,533,441 persons and caused 6,819,806 deaths worldwide.

The article is aimed at analysing the positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 from a sociological perspective. Also, it has a proposal for the control of the disease and the entire socioeconomic, environmental and political atmosphere in a country while giving more weight to South Asia. The proposed actions are analysed on a short-term, mid-term and long-term basis, and any expert and social worker who is involved in the pandemic control and management process can gain insight into what to do and how to perform their tasks. The article emphasises the importance of sociological analysis in a pandemic situation. Naturally, anyone would think of a pandemic situation negatively due to its emotional, socio-economic, environmental, political, and cultural factors. However, it is also positive due to certain factors that help to reintegrate and reorganize the social system. Especially the pandemic situation is a novel experience since the modern world is highly dependent on modern technology than in the past.

Key Words: Control and Management, COVID-19, Positive and Negative Impacts, Social Domains, Impacts of COVID-19, Future Action Plan, Sri Lanka and South Asia

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the positive and negative impacts of COVID-19 and to propose a future action plan or COVID-19 recovery action plan for Sri Lanka and other South Asian countries. Sri Lanka is a country significantly affected by COVID-19 and is gradually progressing into a non-affected stage. Thus, the country is in need of having a comprehensive action plan to avoid the same and similar health hazards for at least a significant period.

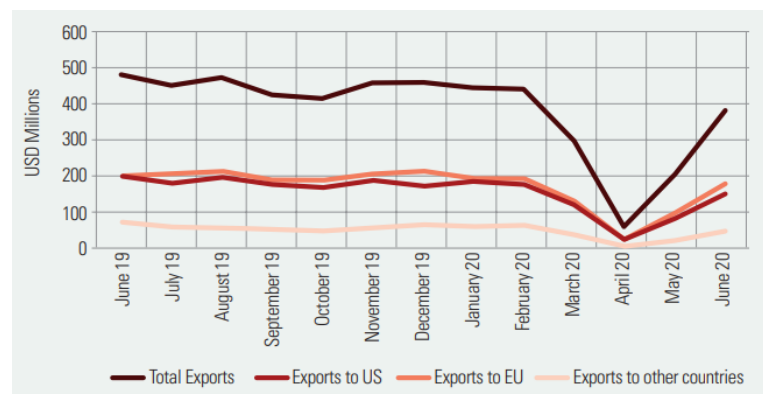
Current Sri Lankan Socioeconomic and Political Situation

When the Sri Lankan scenario is examined, the economic growth has translated into shared prosperity, with

the national poverty headcount ratio declining from 15.3 per cent in 2006/07 to 4.1 per cent in 2016 (World Bank, April 2020). Extreme poverty is rare and concentrated within some geographical pockets; however, a relatively large share of the population subsists on slightly more than the poverty line. However, COVID-19 has increased poverty incidents to some extent since many apparel sector workers are unemployed or under-employed. Foreign migrant labourers are affected due to the situations in their respective countries and are losing their decent income. Simultaneously, the tourism and the hotel industry have been severely affected, sometimes temporarily, as Sri Lanka is managing the pandemic situation satisfactorily, and this could attract future foreign tourists on the lookout for healthy living.

There is no argument that the local economic, social, and global spheres have been challenged significantly, and some sectors have been drastically dismantled (Malpass, David. World Bank, April 2020). Therefore, we need to repose our trust mostly in local spheres, which facilitate our basic needs and other socioeconomic need structure. As we know very well, Sri Lanka is in possession of a substantial service sector rather than industrial and agricultural sectors. In contrast to these sectors, we need to maintain sound industrial and agricultural sectors to maintain a good service sector. However, our industrial sector was severely damaged due to COVID-19. Especially the apparel and textile industry is heavily damaged due to COVID-19 since the pandemic has severely affected giant countries such as the USA and European countries. The apparel industry significantly contributes to the GDP in Sri Lanka as it accounts for 15% of Sri Lanka’s exports and provides over 300,000 direct employment and 600,000 indirect employment opportunities. Sri Lanka is no exemption when it comes to the effect of COVID-19. The damage does not stop there as we expect further demand contractions that could reduce apparel exports by an additional 30 – 40% after June, in a best-case scenario (Sukumaran A. April 2022). The apparel industry has a high demand from overseas buyers, and the raw materials used in its production are primarily imported from other countries. COVID – 19 virus has severely hampered the manufacturing process and the availability of raw materials from suppliers due to foreign transaction restrictions (Kavindi B.G.H, Priyasath G.D. et al. April 2021). This situation has summarized as shown in Figure 01 below.

Figure 01: Monthly Apparel Export from June 2019 to June 2020 in US \$ Millions



Source: Sukumaran, A. Chairman, Joint Apparel Association Forum. Business Sri Lanka. Vol. 33, Issue 1/2020. Export Development Board of Sri Lanka.

The export volumes and value of Sri Lanka decreased in 2020 (US \$ Million 9,912) by 6.29% when compared to 2019 (US \$ Million 11,940), which shows that all sectors in export have declined. However, compared to December 2020, there is a high trend of growing the export market in Sri Lanka (Export Development Board of Sri Lanka). Though the World Bank stated on March 30, 2020, it does not provide any forecasts for Sri Lanka or South Asian countries. It focuses only on East Asian and Pacific countries while highlighting the poverty incident that would increase dramatically (World Bank. March 2020). If the economic situation were to deteriorate further, and the lower-case scenario prevails, then poverty is estimated to increase by about 11 million people in these regions. In April 2020, the World Bank illustrated

the South Asian context of COVID-19 and its impacts. It says that the impact of the pandemic will hit hard low-income people, especially informal workers in the hospitality, retail trade, and transport sectors, who have limited or no access to healthcare or social safety nets (World Bank. April 2020). Furthermore, it focuses that the Sri Lankan economic growth in the first quarter of 2020 is between 3.0 to -0.5, and it will remain low throughout the year. It may slowly grow until 2022 with a 2.5 per cent growth rate. The forecast analysis shows that Sri Lanka will struggle with the economy. Thus, the country needs a well-integrated plan to avoid economic hardships as well as social and political tensions. It especially needs political stability, a high level of mass participation in all sectors, attitude change in domestic production and use, low level of dependency on foreign aids and foreign goods and services.

Similarly, International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlights the current economic impact in Sri Lanka as a result of COVID-19, issues in government financial management, and other global issues. COVID-19 severely hit the economy, causing a loss of tourism receipts and necessitating several strict lockdowns. Pre-pandemic tax cuts and the impact of COVID-19 led to fiscal deficits larger than 10 per cent of GDP in 2020 and 2021 and a rapid increase in public debt to 119 per cent of GDP in 2021. Sri Lanka’s access to international capital markets was lost in 2020, prompting a decline of international reserves to critically low levels and large-scale direct lending to the government by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL). External debt repayments and a widening current account deficit have led to foreign exchange (FX) shortages, while the official exchange rate has been de facto-fixed since April 2021. Inflation is rising, reaching double digits in December 2021, reflecting imported inflation, supply shocks, and a pickup in domestic demand amid loose monetary policy (IMF, Sri Lanka. Staff Report for the 2021 Article IV Consultation, February 10, 2022). This situation led to severe public protests in Sri Lanka and political instability. The general public agony has mainly targeted the government and corrupted politicians in the country; finally, the executive president left the position migrating to an unknown safehouse overseas.

COVID-19 Impact on the South Asian Countries

The impact of COVID-19 on South Asia is significant in many ways. When compared with the demographic factors, health-related impacts are very high. As per the statistics given in Table 01 below, 50,431,987 cases were reported, and 627,937 deaths were identified. When compared with the total population, about 2.7% of them are infected with COVID-19. Among the countries, India reported the highest number of cases and deaths. It is 3.2% of the country’s total population. Compared with the smallest nation, Maldives, it is 34.3% of the total population. As the second smallest country, about 3.1% of the infected with COVID-19 are in Sri Lanka.

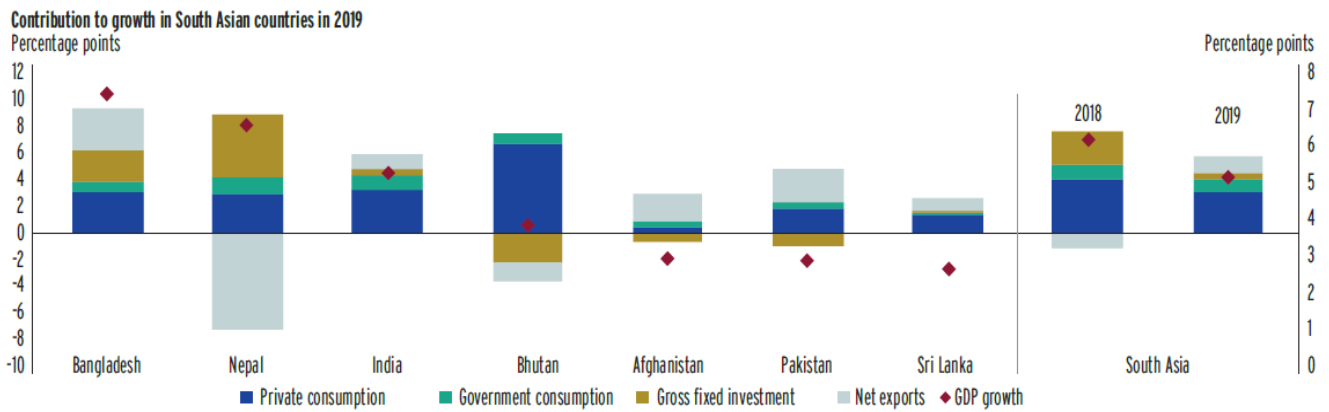
Table 01: Reported Covid-19 Cases in South Asian Countries by the End of February 2023

Country	Total Cases	Total Deaths	Total Cases/1M Pop.	Deaths/1M Pop.	Tests/1M Pop.	Total Population
India	44,686,371	530,771	31,768	377	653,106	1,406,631,776
Bangladesh	2,037,773	29,445	12,138	175	90,862	167,885,689
Pakistan	1,576,999	30,643	6,872	134	133,213	229,488,994
Nepal	1,001,145	12,020	33,122	398	198,947	30,225,582
Sri Lanka	672,030	16,830	31,147	780	300,619	21,575,842
Afghanistan	209,322	7,896	5,136	194	29,455	40,754,388
Maldives	185,732	311	343,322	575	4,092,223	540,985
Bhutan	62,615	21	79,467	27	2,923,739	787,941
Total	50,431,987	627,937	542,972	2660	8,422,164	1,897,891,197

Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>, 28 February 2023

The countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal have reported a significant number of cases so far. However, the number of deaths is relatively low than in India. Even today, India has the highest number of cases among South Asian countries.

Figure 02: Investment Weakened in South Asian Countries in 2019



Source: South Asia Economic Focus Spring 2020, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank

The World Bank’s assessment of the economic impact in South Asia in 2019 is illustrated in Figure 02 above, and it proves that COVID-19 has made a considerable negative impact on the field of investment in the economy. Except for Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, all other countries negatively impact gross fixed investment and gross domestic product growth.

South Asian region is unique due to multicultural and social identities. Thus, the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has made negative and positive impacts on short-term and long-term scales.

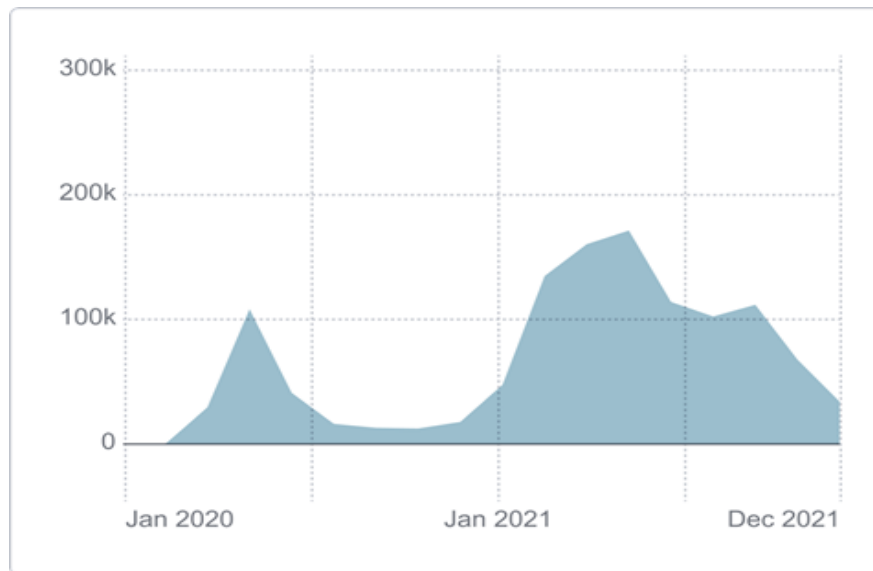
Global COVID-19 Epidemic Situation

When looked at generally, COVID-19 is a disease spreading through close human contact in day-to-day social relationships. It is a virus. In the meantime, some powerful elements in the world are claiming it is a man-made virus or biological weapon (https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/27/us-energy-dept-says-covid-probably-came-from-a-lab-leak?traffic_source=KeepReading, 28 Feb. 2023). FBI of the USA claims that it is more likely a Chinese government-controlled lab leak (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-64806903>, 01 March 2023). Similarly, World Health Organization (WHO) says it is crucial to know how the coronavirus pandemic started (https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/15/who-to-push-until-we-get-the-answer-on-covid-origins?traffic_source=KeepReading). However, there is no conclusive evidence on who made it or for what purpose. There were 682,533,441 cases reported and 6,819,806 death confirmed by 20 February 2023.

The majority of those directly affected are the elderly, and a considerable number of people are dying. The percentage is changing from country to country, and the USA, which is highly affected, shows that 15.4% representation (105,266,332) of total affected persons (679,912,028 by the end of February 2023). The death toll is very high, and it is 1,145,415 in the USA, which is 16.8% compared to the total death by the end of February 2023. The second highest is Brazil which is 699,006 cases. The third highest is India, which confirmed 530,771 deaths. However, China is far behind though they faced a critical pandemic situation in

2022. The WHO is waiting for their statistical update. Other countries, including France, Germany, and Japan, are the highest number of cases reported countries (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/#countries>, 28 February 2023). Figure 03 below presents a shaded area that depicts the number of COVID-19 deaths that have been reported to WHO by countries (<https://www.who.int/data/stories/global-excess-deaths-associated-with-covid-19-january-2020-december-2021>, 28 February 2023).

Figure 03: Reported COVID-19 Deaths



As per Figure 03, there are three peaks of COVID-19 deaths spread worldwide for two years (January 2020 – December 2021); however, most death cases were reported in the year 2021.

The impact of the pandemic has been over several waves [with different mutations of the virus], each characterized by unique regional distributions, mortality levels and drivers. Twenty countries, representing approximately 50% of the global population, account for over 80% of the estimated global excess mortality for the January 2020 to December 2021 period (<https://www.who.int/data/stories/global-excess-deaths-associated-with-covid-19-january-2020-december-2021>, 28 February 2023).

Moreover, when compared to the current population statistics, Austria (651,978), Slovenia (639,172), France (604,054), South Korea (594,463), Greece (567,040), and Portugal (548,954), Denmark (544,168) are the leading countries show the highest number of cases reported for a million of population. Austria (23,302,116), Denmark (22,141,743), UAE (19,759,020), Spain (10,082,298), and Hong Kong (10,011,143) are the leading countries who done the highest tests to a million population. India, Brazil, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand are the countries that have done a low number of tests for a million population as highly populated countries. It seems that the level of development is not a critical factor in managing a pandemic situation. Highly developed and populated countries are highly affected.

Most researchers and policymakers are struggling to control the disease from spreading further. One big factor in spreading this disease is the immigration of infected people from one place to another, which affects more people and hence causes the spread of this disease (Alrabaiah, Hussam. et al. Alexandria Engineering Journal, (2021) 60, 573 – 585). Low-developed countries are less affected. In contrast to development indicators, people have high or fewer social networks in their day-to-day lifestyle, and it is a decisive factor in the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. When focused on other virus infections such as cold viruses, influenza, measles, mumps, rubella, polio, echo, coxsackie, hepatitis A, rotavirus, herpes 1 and 2, HIV, HPV, hepatitis B, yellow fever, dengue fever, rabies, etc., COVID-19 is one of serious virus affected the human society in recent past.

COVID-19 Epidemic in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is an island nation with having high human development index (0.782 and 73 among the world rank) by 2022. The country claimed 76.4 years of life expectancy at birth, which indicates a stable healthcare system maintained for several decades. Though the country's economy is highly impacted by COVID-19, several social indicators are showing sustainability in parallel to the Sustainable Development Goals (Human Development Report 2021/22, UNDP). The COVID-19 situation was well managed by the government, with 672,029 reported cases by the end of February 2023. The total death is 16,830 cases to this date (<https://www.epid.gov.lk/web/>, 01 March 2023). As per the government statistics, the majority of death cases are aged over 60 adults representing 76.29%. At present, the daily number of reporting cases is about 2 – 5. About 300,619 tests have been done per a million. When compared with the Indian context Sri Lanka has been in an advanced controlled situation from the beginning of COVID-19. Primarily, the lockdown of all socioeconomic activities has significantly impacted the country's economic and political instability.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

When focusing on positive impacts, the immediate question may arise: What are the positive impacts of a global pandemic? Sociologically, there is a theoretical perspective and a method called functionalism or functional perspective, and this method could be utilised in analysing the impact of social action (Parsons. 1951 A, Parsons. 1951 B, Rocher. 1972, Luhmann. 1995, Knudsen. 2010). As defined by Giddens (2009), functionalism is “a theoretical perspective based on the notion that social events can best be explained in terms of the functions they performed – that is, the contributions they make to the continuity of a society – and on a view of society as a complex system whose various parts work in a relationship to each other in a way that needs to be understood”. The definition illustrates that individual action can be considered as functions in social events, and it may take as a manifest or latent contribution to the system whole where the social relationships are generated. Thus, human society is a system constituted of various functions, and the function itself is having a contribution to maintaining social order and change. When looking at these relationships between the individual and function in the complex system, many sociologists argue that the situation can be used to identify a strong relationship between theory and method in research. “Different notions of function and functional method have been in use in the history of the social sciences” (Knudsen. 2010). This link between theory and research was further developed by Niklas Luhmann, a German Sociologist. Knudsen argues that “in a reconstruction of the functional method, we face the problem that Niklas Luhmann wrote his main methodological articles at the beginning of the 1960s—that is 20-30 years before he wrote some of his major works” (Knudsen. 2010). He further describes quoting Luhmann that “a function can be defined as the unity of the difference between a problem and various equivalent solutions. A function is never only the solution, as the solution is only a solution to a specific problem. The problems, on the other hand, can be found nowhere else than in the problem-solutions. The problems are not observable as such; they are only detectable together with the solutions” (Knudsen. 2010).

COVID-19 is a social action or behaviour, and it can also be considered a significant social problem on the basis of Richard Puller's definition. Similarly, the functional perspective can be used to identify the negative impacts of social action. When analysing facts related to COVID-19, there is a possibility to identify both positive and negative impacts using this perspective, including many solutions to eradicate this problem from human society. Knudsen further describes that whereas Robert K. Merton (1963 [1957]) saw the distinction between latent and manifest as the gain of functionalism (pointing at latent, hidden functions), Luhmann claims that the gain lies in the establishing of possibilities of comparison. He states that “... the functional method is finally a comparative one” (1995, p.54). What is compared is not identities, countries, companies or the like, but solutions. Trust and distrust are, for instance, functional equivalents, as they are

different solutions to the same problem, namely (the reduction of) complexity (Luhmann, 1979). Also, symbolically generalized media such as money, power and love are functional equivalents.

POSITIVE IMPACTS

As per the functional perspective, there are positive functions of impacts in every social action. These positive functions are not significant in most social actions, but they contribute to maintaining social integration and system maintenance, upgrading, and changing the system. However, if the social action is influential to the social system and social actions of its members' functions are significant in many ways; positive, negative, short-term, long-term, etc.

COVID-19 is a highly influential communicable disease that has significantly changed the social system and its members' behaviour. Thus, it is important to understand what the positive impacts are. They are;

1. Many of them are unaware of the pandemic situation in human society, and they are experiencing and expanding their knowledge on how to behave, respond, and control the virus spreading among the people.
2. People are adapting to a pandemic situation, and they also understand what the ideal social behaviour is in a similar situation. This may include government pandemic management systems and policies. Particularly obeying the regulations, laws, and procedures.
3. They learnt about social distancing and its rules, conditions and procedures. Especially how painful it is but useful within the family and the community. Also, they adapt to the situation while contemplating the difference between a normal situation and a pandemic.
4. As a result of social integration, families and communities engage in a high level of social cohesion or social conscience to face a difficult situation. Hence, everyone is getting used to a common lifestyle, sharing and caring for others, especially the elderly people and poor segments of society.
5. The death of an elderly or chronically ill person results in a reorganisation or reunion of the family unit. Though it is not easy to bear the psycho-social factors, they finally come to certain common conclusions by maintaining equilibrium and suppressing the trauma conditions.
6. Similarly, the government and regional organisations in the global context may reunite to face the pandemic situation. For example, the SARRC countries reunited over COVID-19 and set up financial allocations for supporting poorer nations. The SAARC video conference on COVID-19 has resulted in the establishment of a fund for regional cooperation to combat the pandemic. The giant country India contributed USD 10 million, followed by Sri Lanka, which contributed USD 5 million to the fund. This fund can be utilised for the improvement of domestic and regional cooperation while aiming at an uninterrupted supply chain in the agricultural, industrial and service sectors. Similarly, the leading countries that invented vaccines have cooperated with poor countries supplying free quotas and low prices to vaccinate their countrymen. In this scenario, the UK, USA, China, and India have made a significant contribution to other nations.
7. Medical systems in any country have improved to sustainable levels to face a pandemic situation. They got a chance to understand the existing gaps in these systems. Especially many South and East Asian countries have focused on their indigenous medical systems and how they should be integrated with the bio-medical system, which shows poorer results. Indigenous medical practitioners may challenge their dominant authority due to the strength of the indigenous medical systems in treating COVID-19 patients.
8. There was a challenge to global hegemonic power as they managed the pandemic situation and how they supported other countries. In this scenario, China has extended their support to poor countries more than other leading countries. It seems that China could achieve its long-term goal of becoming the hegemonic power in the world. However, the USA can delay and disturb it through certain economic restrictions against China. Recently, the USA announced that they are willing to withdraw

its investments in China. Under such circumstances, South Asian countries, particularly India, can offer much better economic policies to attract US investments in India. Similarly, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh can grab some such opportunities in certain industrial fields.

9. The new hegemonic power may extend its supporting hands to developing nations and poorer countries. Thus, there will be competition among China, the USA and India to support regional countries in South-East Asia. The new world order may be a novel experience for the countries and their people. In the beginning, it will be optimistic as per the conflict theory in sociology.
10. There are many discoveries and innovations in all affected sectors or spheres by COVID-19 in national, regional and global contexts. Most of these results are in the field of medicine, environment, industry and sociocultural related. These discoveries and innovations are helped to manage many issues in these societies.
11. There were many potentials for domestic production and services to maintain local traditional lifestyles rather than adapt to modernity and new lifestyles. People reposed their trust in many local-level trade and business firms rather than depending on the supermarket systems. These trends strengthen the supply chain network at national and regional levels. Perhaps, there may be some new trading opportunities too among regional countries. Primarily many indigenous products have been exported to several countries. For example, '*Samahan*' is an Ayurvedic product for cold and influenzas produce by a Sri Lankan company with a high-tech, and it has become trendy in Sri Lanka and over 30 countries, including the UK, USA, Japan, and the Middle East countries (www.buysamahantea.com/jp/world-best-herbal-tea-samahan.html). At present, some popular characters such as Naomi Campbell are using it (www.vogue.in/fashion/content/what-does-naomi-campbell-carry-in-her-bag).
12. Domestic production has been increased due to family or cottage-level agricultural practices, including other small-scale handicraft productions in society. This may reduce the market demand to some extent and cause negative effects on international trade.
13. As mentioned above, the pandemic has increased the innovation level among the people. Some creative-minded people may introduce much effective and productive primary and secondary things, efficient ways and means of production, low-cost productions, technological advancements, etc.
14. Many people have been attracted to traditional foods and consumption practices mainly based on the human family. Intergenerational social integrity has been strengthened and consolidated by youths. Due to the social and physical distancing, there was a lesser demand for restaurant and hotel sector supply chains at each level, such as national, regional and global (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jors.12585>). Several studies were conducted on how to manage restaurants and supply chains during a pandemic (Messabia, Nabil. et al., 2022). In addition, keeping social distance, wearing masks, and putting barriers with transparent materials in-between visitors, visitors and service teams have become a general policy in many public places, including restaurants.
15. There was a decline in defence expenditure at national and global levels and minimising the need or requirements in the arms race, especially in nuclear weaponry systems, at least on a temporary basis. Thus, war fear has been minimized in certain regions. This situation was, in turn, to influence international terrorism and its supply chain networks of arms.
16. There were new ideological constructions in many critical subject disciplines, such as medicine, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, robotic sciences, and religious and humanistic sciences. Hence, research and development activities expanded in every country.
17. There were developments in sociological toolkits and social engineering skills to deliver efficient services and management of patients and the general public.
18. People have adapted to do some optional analysis and adjust to follow optimum use of resources, economizing resources, and sustainable approaches to satisfy their need structure.
19. The general public may develop positive attitudes toward the special duties performed by various essential services in society. Especially health workers, social workers, funeral parlours, transport

- service providers, police, and armed forces involved in quarantine processes.
20. As a result of docking down and quarantining the entire or selected areas, there was a reduction in plastic and polythene used at the domestic level, thus reducing environmental pollution. As a whole, it may contribute to global environmental protection efforts. Especially it may temporarily reduce greenhouse gases due to the minimum use of vehicles and industries in the world. Perhaps, there may be some climate changes in the environment.
 21. Reduction in environmental pollution in the world, regional and national contexts. Mainly, air, sound, and water pollution will be reduced. There are some studies conducted and reveals that pollution level is decreased drastically in all these three sectors.
 22. New and existing philanthropic ideas were formed among the upper hierarchy segments in society. Thus, the domestic supply chain networks should capture these demands effectively.
 23. When the government successfully manages COVID-19 instead of developing a pandemic situation, it can lead to a stable political order in many countries. Perhaps, the incumbent government could win another term in power as the pandemic has provided an excellent opportunity to compare each country and its skills in the governance of their political regimes. However, if the government is failed to manage economic and social demands, it may reverse the popularity of the government. This situation happened in Sri Lanka, and there was a significant protest against the government due to the lack of essential items such as fuel, electricity, food, and other commodities. Finally, President Gotabaya Rajapaksha had to resign and leave the country.
 24. Reduction in crimes such as drug addiction, alcoholism, gambling, prostitution or commercial sex, violence, suicide, etc., in some countries such as Sri Lanka, while these issues are slightly increased in countries such as Nepal (<https://www.nepalitimes.com/latest/suicides-a-pandemic-within-a-pandemic/>). The impact may be temporal but may influence many societal livelihood patterns.
 25. Some countries have amended or introduced specific regulations and legislations based on their experiences in the management of COVID-19 pandemic situations.
 26. Some countries have reviewed policy gaps and taken action for policy updates. Sri Lanka needs a policy on indigenous medicine (traditional medicine) which is not covered by the existing health policy in Sri Lanka. It is the right time to respond to the court decision and request a new pharmacopoeia with a list of codes.
 27. There was more utilisation of the internet for sharing ideas, and new knowledge, filtering knowledge gaps, news messages, etc. This may open up more avenues to reduce people's stress levels and stigma conditions.
 28. There were many return migrants as a result of COVID-19. In the meantime, there were some migrated members who had strong financial resources invested in Sri Lanka. These cases manifested after the socioeconomic and political stability established and complete control and management of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka.
 29. Returning migrants with less or poor financial resources may seek jobs in the apparel sector or plantation sector. Therefore, there is a high supply in the labour market in the country. This situation may impact the internal labour market and supply of labour in many developing countries.
 30. There were more research projects on COVID-19, particularly discovering a vaccine and medical strategies which are more effective in patient management.
 31. The use of face masks and other health practices have reduced communicable diseases such as influenzas, respiratory system-related diseases, etc. Also, it can be developed as a habit of people, and it will give them a chance to prevent many communicable diseases.
 32. The COVID-19 experience of the people can be utilized for future similar health hazards in any country. Recent outbreaks of monkeypox, swine flu, H1N1 influenza, and other influenzas are current pandemic threats reported in several countries. When such a situation has become an uncontrol health hazard, COVID-19 experience can be used as a preventive and control mechanism.
 33. The induction of online education and self-oriented education for the affected students while staying in their family settings.

34. Due to the new form of education, students' stress and anxiety levels have been reduced. They got an opportunity to improve social networks among family members, relatives, and neighbours.
35. As a result of the online education process, IT knowledge and technology have been diffused to peripheral areas in many countries.
36. There were many supply chains to provide complete online education for all common curricula in the education system. It may help the student fill the gaps in school education and may help non-school-attended/self-studied students.
37. Due to the prevention methods of COVID-19, the transmission of other common flu shows a reduction in many countries.
38. There was a high trend of using social media and other information channels during the pandemic to get correct guidance and facts (<https://www.news-medical.net/health/What-Role-has-Social-Media-Played-in-COVID-19.aspx>).

Therefore, positive impacts are relatively high; some are short-term, and most are long-term. Fortunately, COVID-19 is a controlled tendency in most countries, and there are sufficient health and socio-economic facilities to address the need structure of the pandemic situation in these countries now. However, China's most controlled country is finally affected highly though they have taken vaccines and preventive measures. It noticed that the Chinese preventive measures had become a stigmatized situation among the people, and they started some protests against the government. When the government released some control measures, COVID-19 spread out rapidly, reporting a high death rate. So far, no accurate figures have been released by the Chinese government.

A similar situation was observed in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Not much control mechanism was launched, and people got similar painful conditions while they engaged in their daily routine tasks (Al Sattar, A., Irin, N., Belgrad, J. P. et al. 2022). Due to Bangladesh's massive population and low economic status and education, social distance enforcement, as recommended by the WHO, is impractical. The Bangladesh government should develop a standard operating procedure in coordination with health and epidemiological experts to prepare for potential future outbreaks. As per the research findings, the country's social, cultural, religious, and behavioural practices are crucial for adhering to government guidelines and regulations in a pandemic situation. COVID-19 has spread rapidly, and almost all have contaminated the virus, making it natural control. With or without vaccines, many people got COVID-19, which gradually spread out in the environment. Thus, millions of people have been affected, while the death rate has increased.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

The negative impacts towards the family, communities, nations, regions, and the world push them backwards in any sector or socio-economic and political spheres. Several elements which cause negative impacts can be identified as illnesses or COVID-19, pandemic situation, deaths, social distancing, curfew and the lockdown of the entire functional mechanism of a single society and the global network in production, trade, transportation, social networking, and political network. Therefore, this paper has given similar attention to the negative impacts of COVID-19 in the local and global contexts based on the experience gained by the people, professionals, researchers, administrators, etc. They are;

1. The pandemic has spread as a global pandemic, creating fear, stress, stigma, minimizing and unbalancing social networks, social unrest, etc.
2. Health and medical systems, especially biomedical systems, have made their maximum effort, but the healthcare system itself is affected due to various conditions in nature. Thus, many deaths are reported though the biomedical system has made an enormous effort.
3. High rate of deaths due to various illnesses or complications of diseases occurring among the patients,

especially the elderly who are affected by COVID-19. Particularly, some countries like India had to face a severe stage of managing death cases.

4. Impossible tasks and challenges given to the medical staff, supporting staff, social workers, and health administrators at local, domestic, and or global levels made negative results by victimizing them to COVID-19. Starting from China to other countries, such incidents are experienced by these professional groups.
5. The World Health Organisation (WHO) is the primary entity, followed by other United Nations (UN) agencies responsible during a regional and or global pandemic. However, they have confronted several issues while dealing with different countries. The best example is getting accurate data from China on their outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Some countries such as Italy, Spain, the USA, China and a few other European countries are facing a much higher disintegration in all subsystems of society. Especially the poor performance of the economy, education, transport system, etc., have collapsed during the pandemic situation. Thus, the social system needs complete reorganisation and integration to establish a new social order in every country.
7. Dismantled the family relationship and intimate relationships with relatives, neighbours, various communities, etc. These conditions have led to interpersonal conflicts and domestic violence within the family.
8. Losing the knowledge, experience, and services of the elderly would mean that the next generation could not share their knowledge and experience for the generation's betterment.
9. Downward trends of family economic conditions and several lower hierarchy social classes face unbearable economic hardships due to a lack of daily or monthly earnings. Though there was market accessibility and a supply chain network, even under the limitation of social mobility, they did not possess purchasing power.
10. Disruptions of schools, universities and vocational education segments where they have to seek certain optional strategies to cover up their educational goals. Especially they have confronted some irreversible gaps in their education.
11. Some groups and individuals have faced various kinds of stress, anxiety, social stigma, and depression conditions due to the malfunction of the social system and its subsystems. The WHO highlights that there was an increase of 25% in the prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide (<https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide#:~:text=Wake%20Dup%20call%20to%20all,mental%20health%20services%20and%20support&te>)
12. Several social conflicts or conflicts of interest in the subsystems led to the social system's disintegration. Some institutions and organisations have not possessed sufficient capacities to find remedial solutions to fill the gaps and issues due to COVID-19.
13. Declined in religious belief systems and practised in all religions, people may not believe in superstitious powers, God, and other divine and invisible elements in society.
14. Where there is a government and its subordinate authorities face inadequate workable decisions or binding decisions and poor policy applications, such governments have led to political instability in society. These conflicts of interest may cause political changes in society. The best example is Sri Lanka.
15. There was a condition of social unrest, stress, and social stigma among the family members due to their detachment from family due to local and international migration. This condition was aggravated further through the suspension of continental air transportation under lockdown situations. These issues especially erupted in many South and South-East Asian countries.
16. There were disruptions and backwardness in the production of primary and secondary items in society. Especially issues in the production of primary items have led to social unrest in society due to a lack of demand. The partial and complete closedown of social networking during the pandemic made less demand and a lack of proper supply chain networks.

17. Many people were losing their jobs and incomes in society's formal and informal sectors. In addition, they could not earn as usual from their side income. Furthermore, they could not involve in additional contributions to the profession and get an additional income.
18. There were severe problems with service providers (supply chain networks) due to the inability to continue the day-to-day supply of commodities and other services. It may lead to detachments from such entities or services, and some people may find alternative solutions. Thus, there was some temporal decline in supply chains in society.
19. People depended on rumours and other informal channels of information due to chaotic conditions in formation channels or the dissemination of information. Especially government authorities had been taken decisions to control some information for the general public. As highlighted above, China is not released accurate information yet on the pandemic situation recently experienced.
20. Certain social classes displayed their egoistic ideologies when accumulating primary or essential goods and services. These incidents have caused some negative attitudes among other social classes by creating a conflict of interest.
21. There was a global economic recession and an increase in poverty levels in many societies. These incidents have led to financial crises such as a decline in monetary values, share market values and businesses, changes in supply chain networks, purchasing power of the people, etc. The best example is Sri Lanka.
22. Many countries have taken alternative actions to maintain a stable economy. The developing and poor countries faced severe economic problems and had to get more loans and grants for their economy to survive. Thus, there was more economical and political dependency in these countries. As a result of this condition, countries in the hegemonic circle may directly or indirectly fulfil their hidden agendas in the territories of such dependent countries. Being South Asian countries, certain common social and economic characteristics need to be safeguarded during the pandemic.
23. The pandemic will directly influence the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by 2030 since some countries may not allocate financial resources to meet the country-specific targets.
24. Internal fragmentation has occurred in hegemonic countries, particularly the USA, and they have attempted to regain the hegemonic power through various economic and political strategies. The Russia-Ukraine war is an example to prove the fragmentation between powerful nations. Today, this war has become a confrontation between NATO and Russia.
25. Sri Lankans employed in foreign countries returned home, and foreign revenues have been reduced. It is a significant revenue in Sri Lanka, especially the migrant workers in the Middle East, Europe, and East Asian countries that significantly contributed to the Sri Lankan economy. This may have caused some effects on supply chain networks in Sri Lanka and South Asian countries.
26. There were some cases of side effects of vaccines given to people. However, there is no research-based evidence, but there are several suspicions of side effects related to the vaccines.
27. The facts or myths related to vaccines have developed some prejudices against the vaccine coverage to prevent COVID-19.
28. Several health check-ups, such as antigen tests, PCR tests, etc., were conducted to verify COVID-19. These tests were done irregularly in many countries. Some countries have done it as a service and free of cost, but some countries have charged the people. The charged amount was higher than in other countries compared to monetary values. It shows that private hospitals have earned much through these services, and the government and its responsible institutions can make such charges without any monitoring.
29. The burial regulations of death cases have become critical for some ethnic communities, such as the Islamic religion. For example, Sri Lankan government issued a circular to cremate all dead bodies. Therefore, certain sociocultural issues erupted, and it made some misconceptions among every ethnic community.
30. Health workers faced several problems of having close relationships among their family members due to heavy involvement in COVID-19 control and management activities.

31. Some children of affected families have lost their educational and social opportunities to achieve their life goals.
32. The new methods of education, such as online education, has made some irregular and unattended self-oriented level of the learning process that has affected many ways. This situation has had negative results on the education system in many countries.
33. Online education was limited to certain social classes, and poor segments could not afford and engage in the education process. It brought some disparity in the education process.
34. It was a common fact that the students’ practical knowledge and experience were minimized during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Considering these positive and negative impacts, it is clear that COVID-19 has caused more positive impacts on nations, regions, and the world. However, some countries, such as Italy, Spain, India, the USA, China, and several other European countries, have suffered a lot. Comparatively, these positive and negative impacts are valid for these countries, too, irrespectively of the level of the spread of COVID-19. In terms of individual aspects, COVID-19 impacts are more negative for affected people in society.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The proposed future action plan for COVID-19 mainly focuses on the socioeconomic, environmental, political and administrative spheres and not on the medical and technical spheres or domains. However, these actions will help to control the COVID-19 pandemic situation further and manage similar pandemic situations that will emerge at present or in the near future. India is experiencing a similar pandemic, and India needs a proper action plan to manage such circumstances. Similarly, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and other regional countries would focus on a common policy of managing the pandemic situation by taking lessons learnt during the COVID-19 period. There are many similar socioeconomic and cultural aspects in these countries that can be put together for policy formation for South Asia. The global policy documents such as WHO ‘*Clinical Management of COVID-19: Living Guidance*’, published on 13 January 2023, updated the 2021 version. The clinical and management aspects are unique, and they can be applied to the global society. However, regional differentiations are essential when concerned with managing pandemic situations’ socioeconomic and cultural aspects. At least, all committed scientists at the regional level would be focused and gather regionally and have a discourse on managing pandemic situations. Furthermore, if there are some country-specific conditions, such countries can be developed their own national guidelines, or such available guidelines can be updated with the current experience and stock of knowledge on managing pandemic situations. For instance, Sri Lanka can think of its own guideline for managing pandemic situations that will be useful for future use.

Identifying the short-term, medium-term, and long-term negative and positive impacts is especially important when developing a future action plan. The following Table 02 illustrates this categorically.

Table 02: COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan Related to Socio-economic, Environment, and Political Domains (The number of Xs’ will indicate the gravity of the action and its manipulation, the scale is 1-3)

Domain	Proposed Action	Duration in Term		
		Short Term	Middle Term	Long Term
Social	1. Maintain an ideal life by a small productive action towards controlling the COVID-19 pandemic situation in your family, community and society. This is mainly focused on individual behaviour.		XX	

<p>2. Start home gardening practice with all possible family members to grow vegetables, yams, fruits, green leaves, medicinal plants etc., in your small plot of land or in pots or other containers. Many discarded containers are available in every homestead and can be reshaped as required.</p>			XXX
<p>3. Use valuable time in a fruitful manner and become the happiest person in the community. To achieve this goal, you can start cultivation, reading, spending meaningful leisure time, cleaning the house and homestead, horticulture, etc. Seeing the flowering, harvesting, and a clean and more beautiful garden than before makes you automatically reach the expected goal.</p>			XXX
<p>4. Maintain a healthy and close social relationship with your family members, especially prioritising elders and children. In any actions within the house and garden, you can cooperate with them and delegate some responsibilities to each member, like looking after the garden, cleaning the washroom, kitchen, rooms, living rooms, etc.</p>			XXX
<p>5. Extend your support to your neighbours when necessary. Also, not intervening unnecessarily in their affairs would be a greater favour to them. Usually, our cultural practices are mainly based on relatives, neighbours, and friends. Thus, this type of group behaviour causes many negative impacts towards the COVID-19 pandemic situation.</p>		XX	
<p>6. Economizing on the food and essential commodities at home. Especially be frugal when cooking, as wasting food is a crime and a sin. This is an important factor to consider at the individual level for an attitudinal change in society.</p>			XXX
<p>7. When cooking, diversify the menu for better taste and happiness. In this case, you can add some additional dishes such as jak, breadfruit, cassava and similar yams, etc. If you have some fruits, you can reduce the quantity of your staple food items. In addition, you can add some green leaves to your main course, enrich its taste, and balance the nutritional value.</p>			XXX
<p>8. You can initiate fasting one day each week as practised by many Hindus in India. If it is difficult at the beginning, you can fast for half a day and then gradually increase the time. This may help preserve the national food stock of the country.</p>		XX	
<p>9. When serving a meal, always serve the required quantity that you can consume. If the quantity is insufficient, you can serve a second round rather than serve excess and waste. Wasting food is a crime and a sinful act.</p>	XXX		
<p>10. If you are consuming more food than required, you can initiate a dietary or food control system. It is a physical and mental process. You need to control it mentally. There are several common new methods, such as the Keto, DASH, Mind, etc., and you can select any according to your age and preference. New strategies may help you to reduce your dietary quantity.</p>	XXX		

	11. Develop good habits and practices (such as wearing a face mask, washing hands, sanitizing hands, etc.) which are appropriate to modern social systems. Acculturate and inculcate them in your community. So, you can be happy when others follow you. Finally, the whole family and community will develop, and they will enjoy health and reduce unnecessary burdens in day-to-day life.	XXX		
	12. Always think that you can do something. It will help you develop optimism within yourself, your family, and the community. When you think negatively, you will become pessimistic and always face negative results in your social life.			XXX
	13. Adapt to social distancing techniques, use face masks, avoid social gatherings, and clean hands when touching suspicious objects.	XXX		
	14. Maintain a sufficient network of quarantine centres to utilize when the demand comes. If there are high demands for the quarantine process, the government should identify additional institutional-based and self-quarantine strategies as per the requirements.		XX	
	15. The Foreign Employment Bureau has to develop a new strategic plan to cater for skilled foreign migrants who returned from different countries. The bureau can introduce a domestic labour strategic plan to preserve the skilled labourer's input to the socioeconomic system.		XXX	
	16. People can develop their philanthropical ideas to help others suffering from the pandemic. These ideas can be developed up to the formation of national-level funds and community-centred activities.	XX		
	17. There should be a way to support remaining family members after the death of parents and other adults.		XXX	
	18. Online education should be streamlined as per the education process requirements during the non-pandemic stage.			XXX
Environment	1. Adapt your children to the environment. Teach them its value and how to protect it, especially against environmental pollution.			XXX
	2. Protect the water resources and water. Learn and teach others how to use the minimum quantity of water without wasting it. Use wastewater for other purposes like watering your gardens.			XXX
	3. Minimise water pollution by initiating community-based actions, social mobilization and awareness programmes.		XXX	
	4. Do everything on your own and recycle or reuse physical elements and entities by effecting necessary repairs and innovations.			XXX
	5. Minimize agrochemicals, pesticides, weedicides, and fungicides as much as possible while using organic cultivation techniques.			XXX

	6. All informal sectors should be controlled, and they should manage their basic needs structure by introducing special social security programmes. Social security programmes should be managed through the government administrative system by directly involving relevant officers in different sectors.	XX		
	7. Especially the focus should be on daily wage labourers and ultra-poor segments in urban and rural sectors.		XXX	
	8. As a society, there should be a fund allocation to manage any pandemic situation in every country. The WHO should be maintained a monitoring mechanism for such activities. Also, there should be a global fund for immediate actions to control and manage the pandemic.			XXX
	9. The Global development partner organizations such as the World Bank, IFC, and IMF and regional development partner organizations such as ADB, AIDB, JICA, EC, etc., should be maintained a fund to support economically dependent economies in the world.			XXX
	10. All governments should be monitored all financial allocations and activities during the pandemic situation with a proper mechanism. Anti-corruption in pandemic situation control and management should be avoided. Especially when there are funds allocated to a public account by social groups, communities, societies, governments and international agencies, it should be monitored.		XXX	
Politico-administrative	1. Provide maximum support to the government, which is the key governing structure making resource allocations for the management of the pandemic situation.	XXX		
	2. The government must set up a pandemic control and operation committee representing experts, including medical, administrative, social, psychological, counselling, transportation, immigration and emigration, public security, foreign relations, and trade. Thus, the government could consult the committee and respective experts when making decisions related to the control of the pandemic situation as well as public management requirements.		XXX	
	3. The government needs to make policy decisions related to different spheres in the pandemic situation control process. This may minimize the unnecessary issues and bottlenecks that can emerge through other political parties and trade unions related to different spheres in society. Therefore, the government needs to make binding decisions to simplify the complexities.			XXX
	4. Accept and follow the law enforcement institution in the country and stay home to perform social distancing as a key technique to control the infection.	XXX		
	5. Cooperate with local governing bodies and government administrative officials responsible for maintaining a good administrative system.			XXX

	6. The government needs to give special attention to all categories of vulnerable groups in society and make all possible arrangements to provide the primary needs of each group.		XX	
	7. The government and specific committee should allocate all necessary resources to maintain a very efficient treatment plan for the affected persons (patients) and improvements of infrastructure facilities in the health and socio-economic sectors.	XX		
	8. If the government has taken a binding decision to curfew and lockdown the functions of institutional bodies and people's behaviour, there should be a highly coordinated system of supplying basic needs to the people. In this process, the government and responsible institutions and bodies need to play a significant role in keeping them satisfied at the minimum level at least.		XXX	
	9. Special attention should be paid to different cluster sectors such as urban, rural, estate, tribal or scheduled communities, prison communities, and some occupational clusters under the curfew and lockdown conditions. Some particular clusters should be given special permissions on their service and operations under each sector of concern.		XX	
	10. The government should take necessary action to get other political parties and their concerns in controlling the pandemic situation in the respective country.		XX	
	11. The country's political authority should cooperate with global, regional and country-specific agencies to keep and maintain pandemic-related data systems.			XXX
	12. The WHO should develop a common database for every country in addition to country-specific data sources. Thus, the WHO should initiate a dialogue with respective member countries to develop a common database.		XXX	

CONCLUSION

When these different domains or spheres are looked at, it becomes very clear that higher numbers of actions are identified under social domains. It implies that COVID-19 is a pandemic situation, and it has more critical aspects in the social domain, which needs to be looked at through a sociological rather than administrative or political perspective. Furthermore, all responsible officers and the public could provide at least a minimum input than all actions highlighted in Table 02. Moreover, most proposed actions focus on medium-term and long-term actions. However, some significant actions are identified under short-term actions related to individual and group-level attitudes.

Especially if the authorities focus on this action plan, it will help protect the family, the environment, and the nation. Therefore, we need to have an attitudinal change towards a more sustainable control of the pandemic situation in a country as well as in the world. The main analysis of this article is mainly focused on the Sri Lankan experience of managing and other Asian countries experience of controlling and managing the COVID-19 pandemic situation. If we can adapt to the situation, this approach will help us maintain a stable and sustainable approach to control and manage the pandemic situation. When looking at the history of the pandemic situation in the world, the requirement of having an action plan is emphasized.

Compared to several historical experiences in managing pandemic situations, this COVID-19 pandemic can be used as a development opportunity to enjoy a much higher take-off with a new set of attitudes in the development and management process of pandemic situations.

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