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Migrants and Resources as Challenging Factors in Fighting Covid-19 in Jordan: Social Exchange Perspective

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Abstract

In contrast to neighboring countries, Jordan initially succeeded in mitigating the COVID-19 outbreak. However, this privileged situation was short-lived as Jordan eventually became one of the worst-affected countries globally. This paper examines the dynamics of Jordan's response to COVID-19 through the lens of Blau's theory of exchange and power in social life. It explores the exchange process amongst the government, migrants and the Jordanians, highlighting how the government exerted maximum control over people's movements and gatherings. Despite these efforts, the government failed to meet people's expectations of safety and basic needs, leading to a loss of trust and the spread of misinformation. The inability to maintain control over gatherings and movements resulted in a surge in cases. This analysis underscores the importance of transparency, trust, awareness, and collective efforts in effectively combating pandemics.

Keywords: Covid-19, Coronavirus, Sociology, Social Exchange, migrants, Jordan.

Introduction

Jordan is located in the eastern Mediterranean region, surrounded by Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Israel with its occupied Palestinian territory. Jordan's population is estimated at 10,355,554 people as of Tuesday, January 4, 2022 (Worldometer, 2022) including migrants from 57 nationalities that are more than 3 million.

Jordan achieved a unique success in preventing the outbreak of Covid-19 at the beginning of the pandemic. Compared to nearby countries such as Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan was in a privileged situation. For example, Israel registered the first case of COVID-19 on February 2, and after that, it imposed a comprehensive curfew with strict regulations. Nonetheless, "As of April 12, 2020, the number of confirmed COVID cases in Israel was 10,878. There were 103 deaths, which is 12 per million citizens" (Gesser-Edelsburg, et al. 2020). In contrast, as of April 21, 2020, the total number of infected cases in Jordan was 425, and 136 cases were in recovery, 282 cases were recovered, and 7 deaths. Although Saudi Arabia, which shares its northern borders with Jordan, imposed a lockdown and curfew on 24 April 2020, its total number of cases was 13,930 with 121 deaths (Arab News, 24 April 2020).

Based on the traditional nature of social life that values strong bonds, social capital, and intense face-to-face interactions, COVID-19 was expected to affect a large majority

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of Jordanians, with subsequent high rates of deaths (Al Hourani, 2021). However, the total number of cases until September 11, 2020, was 2945, and the total number of deaths was 21. (Worldometer, 2021). The privileged situation lasted just for a few months. Thereafter, Jordan witnessed three successive waves of the COVID-19 outbreak with the highest numbers of cases and deaths.

Drawing on Peter Blau's theory: "Exchange and Power in Social Life" 1964, this paper reflects on the dynamics of fighting Covid-19 in Jordan. Employing Blau's theory is justified by the following considerations that are consistent with the subject of this paper: first, the paper considers the management of the COVID-19 crisis as a social exchange process between the government and the population. Second, Blau's perspective is distinguished by using a bundle of exchange concepts and implicit principles to bridge the micro-macro gap (Blau, 1964: 8). Hence it could provide an analysis of the exchange relationship between government and population. Third, Blau's perspective places the concept of power at the heart of the exchange process, it provides an insightful analysis of the case of Jordan that started with exercising the government's power.

The main goal of the article is to reveal the gaps in the practices of both the government and people who are sharing responsibility for producing the high rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths. To achieve this goal, the paper focuses on four points that are derived from Blau's theory: Exercising power by government, legitimization of exercising power, trust, and society's response in the time of lockdown and curfew, and Sustainability of fair exchange.

Exercising Power

The first case in Jordan was discovered on March 2, 2020, in a student who had traveled from Italy. However, the first case that led to the virus outbreak was from a man who came from Spain to attend his daughter's wedding on March 13 in Irbid, a city in northern Jordan. Only the man himself was aware that he was infected. Despite this, he still attended the wedding, which had over 350 people in attendance (CNN Arabia, 2020). The man infected 85 people and caused one death. However, it's important to note that not all party attendees were infected. This situation shows that social bonding is very strong and widespread in Jordan. Additionally, based on their beliefs and judgment, Jordanians may deny the possibility of being infected and act as if Coronavirus cannot affect them. (Al Hourani, 2021).

The Jordanian community values its close relationships between families, clans, and neighborhoods. As a result, during the beginning of the pandemic, the government utilized its full authority to limit people's mobility (Hanifat, 2020). who were expected to strongly resist restrictions on social interactions. Exercising power is attained by the issuance of defense laws, deployment of the army and police, and employing preventive measures (Albanna, 2021).

The Jordanian government is progressive and forward-thinking compared to the traditional community. It has taken several measures to tackle infections among incoming individuals, including the establishment of designated hospitals for treating infected individuals. In response to a wedding-related outbreak, the government implemented strict measures to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. These measures included a lockdown starting on March 17th, followed by a comprehensive curfew that aimed to limit large social gatherings. According to Blau's perspective, power is the ability of the government to impose compliance and subordination through negative sanctions (Blau, 1964: 117-118). In this sense, exercising power by the government includes rewarding the population by ensuring safety, in return people reward the government with compliance. However, it should be noted that, at least at the beginning of the pandemic, the government didn't give people the opportunity to choose between compliance or

suffering from the consequences. This means that the government exercised coercive power provided with negative sanctions.

The Jordanian government implemented measures during the curfew to prevent travel outside the country. The measures started with prohibiting travelers from certain countries, such as China, South Korea, and Italy, from entering Jordan. Jordanian travelers were required to undergo a 14-day quarantine upon their return. Additionally, individuals who held religious or social events would face significant fines. A crucial decision was also made to suspend all work in the public and private sectors, except for work in the health sector or essential needs providers such as grocery stores and pharmacies. (Al-Tammemi, 2020).

Therefore, Jordan implemented one of the most stringent lockdowns in the world, which resulted in the closure of markets, factories, restaurants, and mosques for two and a half months (The National, 2020). Moreover, movements between cities and governorates were prohibited for an extended period. As reported by Euronews (2020), around 1657 Jordanians were taken into custody for violating the curfew, which conveyed a strong message from the government that it was committed to enforcing the regulations. Consequently, the majority of Jordanians felt compelled to comply with the regulations.

The Jordanian government used the Jordanian armed forces to gain complete control over the country, according to Al-Tammemi (2020). This approach was crucial because officials recognized that Jordanians respect, trust, adore, and feel safe when the military is present. The military played a significant part in regulating the movement of individuals and providing them with essential services. The positive connection between the military and the general population dates back to a period in the nation's history when it was the largest organization that employed people and awarded them prestigious ranks. Consequently, the military is still viewed as a reliable protector of society.

The deployment of the Jordanian armed forces over the country created an initial impression that the subordination of people to the new regulations had been a hard mission. According to Santucci (2020), data compiled by the Oxford University Blavatnik's School of Government showed the level of severity in Jordan's governmental response to the pandemic, or its (stringency index) increased from 80 percent to 100 percent during mid-to-late March.

The Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan conducted a survey that revealed that 91% of Jordanians were content with the government's efforts in handling COVID-19. Additionally, 92% of Jordanians supported the defense law and curfew, including movement restrictions between governorates, while 85% believed that the government effectively managed the crisis. At that time, Jordanians did not experience adverse effects from the curfew and lockdown and were proud of the government's success in minimizing the number of cases. Although there were no random PCR tests throughout the country, only critical cases that required hospitalization were identified and reported. This indicates that the claims of no coronavirus in the country did not represent the whole truth.

Jordanians suffered economically from the sudden curfew and lockdowns. However, they showed high levels of commitment toward the regulations imposed by the government which reciprocated their obedience with promises of supplying them with services. According to Blau (1964), if the government regularly renders needed services for the people during the pandemic, they will comply with its requests as long as it continues to meet their needs. Depriving people of what they need and preventing them from obtaining their needs by themselves makes the mission of controlling society impossible. Thus, it is expected that people will not comply with regulations when their government stops supplying them with necessary needs.

Jordanian people believed that the curfew period would not last long and that regulations would be lifted once the virus was under control. The duration of the spread of the virus was uncertain, but people assumed that it would be a short-lived situation. During this time, the government promised to fulfill all the necessities and requirements of the people, including their daily needs like drinking water, bread, oil, and medicine.

The purpose of implementing lockdowns and curfews through the use of coercive power was to reduce the spread of the virus. This was necessary due to Jordan's weak economy and the absence of effective antiviral medicines and vaccines. The sudden rise in cases and fatalities could lead to disorder and societal breakdown. The government recognized that it could not preserve its advantageous position under these circumstances. Nonetheless, this was just a single step in a broader plan to prepare the infrastructure and critical services for dealing with the pandemic.

Upon reflection, it becomes evident that the government had previously acknowledged its inability to sustain a reciprocal relationship with society, leading to the inevitable spread of the coronavirus. This so-called reciprocity was nothing more than a manipulation of time. As a result, the government's credibility suffered greatly, along with the subsequent measures taken to address the situation. From Blau's perspective, the government's actions shattered the expectations of those who believed it could protect their safety and safeguard their interests. Moreover, this serves as an indication that the government will struggle to foster integration, establish trust, enforce adherence to new regulations, and cultivate collective values (Blau, 1964) in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Thus, exercising power made the government hold the whole responsibility for society's safety and security. Exercising coercive power means that people don't have access to manage their everyday life, they are completely dependent on the government. This situation explains why Blau and all social exchange theorists focus on exercising power that grants subordinates a level of freedom, choice, and responsibility (Blau, 1964: 117-118).

Legitimization

According to Blau (1964), the major determinant of legitimacy is found in the exchange aspect of power, if the benefits people derive equal to or exceed their expectations of a fair return for the costs they have incurred, their collective approval of exercising power legitimates it.

Alongside exercising power, it is very important to legitimize exercising it. The process of legitimization is crucial for the continuity of exercising power preserving subordinates' approval and achieving the goals of exercising power. Thus, Legitimacy transforms power into Al Houraniity because legitimacy makes it proper to obey. Legitimization makes people convinced that resisting power will be harmful to their interests (Blau, 1964).

Accordingly, two main factors have played a central role in legitimizing the reality of Coronavirus, which in turn led the Jordanians to obey the orders and regulations of the government:

The first factor is that the mass media provided daily reports about infected people, and where they lived, new information about prevention, new procedures and regulations from the government, and the formal report of cases including total and new cases of deaths per day as well as of recoveries. Jordanians trusted the formal reports on the Coronavirus situation, specifically, the daily report that was provided by the Minister of State for Media Affairs and the Minister of Health. Jordanians await this report daily as it provides guidelines and a frame of reference for the public. This information includes the time of curfew and lockdown: when citizens are allowed to go outside, how long they can stay outside, how they can stay safe, punishments for violations, and so on.

The Minister of Health has had a significant impact on people's awareness and emotions, portraying himself as a charismatic leader dedicated to the safety of the country. This was particularly evident in the cooperative attitude and enthusiasm of the Jordanian people during the fight against COVID-19, which also contributed to the Health Minister's popularity. Even local football stars acknowledged that the charisma of Sa' and Jaber, the Minister of Health, overshadowed their fame. His gentle demeanor and direct communication with citizens resonated with them, leading to a deep connection. Whenever he made public appearances, people would rush to take selfies with him, and his photos were widely shared on social media by Jordanians. Furthermore, people eagerly awaited his daily evening TV appearances. (Al Ghad, 2020).

The popularity of the Jordanian minister extended beyond the country's borders. This was evident when, on April 15, 2020, the American newspaper CS Monitor featured the headline "From healing hearts to stealing hearts: Jordan's 'Dr. Fauci'" on its front page. The article highlighted the fact that Jordanians, during the coronavirus lockdown, relied on Health Minister Saad Jaber for accurate information. While Anthony Fauci is celebrated in the United States through bumper stickers and bubbleheads, Saad Jaber is revered in Jordan through love ballads, poetry, and portraits (Luck, 2020).

He was able to show that he is loyal to his job by providing people with information and by his fieldwork. He was able to convince people about the dangers of Coronavirus and the importance of following the government's directions and regulations.

Moreover, the government employed social media to effectively raise awareness about COVID-19. Specifically, Facebook pages were directly connected to the Prime Ministry, the Ministry of Health, and the Crisis Management Center (CMC) (Al Shakhaneh and Habes, 2022). This approach plays a vital role in disseminating and upholding the impact of government information regarding the COVID-19 situation. Exercising control over the information that shapes public awareness is an effective method for maintaining legitimacy. According to Blau(1964): the legitimation of power through interactive processes(involving the way society members define the situation), undergoes a dramatic change and drives subordinates to show their approval and acceptance(p 221).

The second factor is King Abdulla II's significant role in leading virtual meetings to monitor and ensure proper implementation of government procedures. During these meetings, the king emphasized the importance of Jordanians adhering to social distancing and other government regulations (Kingabdulla, 2020). In his speech on March 23, 2020, King Abdulla addressed the Jordanian people, referring to them as soldiers of the nation in their respective roles. The purpose of the speech was to prepare and legitimize the stringent health measures that would be implemented. Jordanians expressed their respect for the King's guidance through their cooperation and by warmly welcoming soldiers with roses, who were deployed across the country to combat COVID-19. (Al Sharafat, 2020).

The King's speech and monitoring the effectiveness of government procedures aim not only to provide directions but also to emphasize the need for shared responsibility with the government by respecting regulations. Traditionally, Jordanians have been taught to perceive the King's speech as an indication of a serious situation, requiring careful listening and understanding. Additionally, the King's speech legitimizes the anticipated sanctions that the government will impose on individuals who violate the rules. As Blau points out: people may legitimize the situation and show approval and acceptance because they are afraid to be sanctioned, especially when they don't have alternatives(Blau, 1964: 223). Blau's notion draws attention to the fact that sometimes people obey the orders not because they are convinced of them, but also because they are under pressure. Thus, it should be noted that the government conducted a double movement: controlling sources of information and exercising power.

Legitimization of the new reality was very decisive, and effective, and achieved its intended outcomes. As an indication of the government's success in compelling people to

follow the new regulations, Jordanians stigmatized people who violated the regulations. Also, they became part of the preventive measures by watching each other's movements. Bonding social capital and strong ties facilitated this mission for the community. People reciprocate their efforts, patience, and cooperation to ensure society's public health and stability.

Sometimes, the process of legitimization can go awry, leading to obvious claims and pretensions. In a notable incident, the Minister of Health, who played a prominent role in the legitimization process, made an exaggerated statement suggesting that the coronavirus had become non-existent in Jordan (BBC, 2020). This statement was met with irony and jokes throughout society. Additionally, it raised critical questions among Jordanians, such as why social distancing measures, curfews, and lockdowns were still being enforced by the government. The Minister of Health effectively manipulated the situation to exert control over the population for an extended period. However, this undermined the validity and credibility of the government's actions. This incident serves as a reminder that legitimization should be approached with caution, as a single mistake can undermine all the efforts that have been made over a prolonged period. According to Blau's perspective: legitimization is dynamic, subordinates withdraw legitimacy when they realize that they were exploited or the owner of power failed to meet their expectation (Blau, 1964: 22).

The culture and social order in Jordan have contributed to the legitimization process. Stigma has played a significant role in shaping the new reality, particularly about Covid-19. Infection with the virus has become stigmatized within the traditional social capital networks, leading infected individuals to conceal their illness. As a result, the National Epidemics Committee in Jordan has faced challenges in disclosing new cases, while uninfected individuals have been more motivated to adhere strictly to prevention measures to avoid the stigma rather than solely to prevent contracting COVID-19 itself. Therefore, the assertion that Jordan has achieved zero cases is unfounded. (Al Hourani, 2021).

Trust and Society's Response

According to Blau (1964:94), "social exchange generates trust in social relations through their recurrent and gradually expanding character". Therefore, Trust could be considered a social construct. This means that, in terms of people's evaluation of benefits and fair returns, the trust could be maintained. Therefore, trust is an important source of social support as well as social control (Blau, 1964). Fair returns and benefits are very decisive when people come to evaluate social exchange relationships. Thus, legitimation of any social exchange relationship does not emerge and continues only from functionalizing ideology or legitimization. It also depends on the sense of justice and fulfillment of interests and gratifications.

During the initial stages of the pandemic, Jordanians felt disconnected from the events unfolding around them. Public perception initially regarded COVID-19 as mere speculation, later transforming into a belief that it was part of a conspiracy aimed at facilitating the century deal between Jordan and Israel, resulting in the displacement of Palestinians to Jordan as an alternative homeland. Consequently, concerns regarding contracting COVID-19 began to emerge among Jordanians. The distressing images and videos emanating from Wuhan, coupled with the abundance of conflicting and misleading information regarding the virus's nature, preventive measures, and treatment options, only added to their apprehension.

However, the objective reality of coronavirus that associated with uncertainty and ambiguity of the whole situation and forced Jordanians to trust the government's procedures and regulations. Also, they accepted the situation as it was defined by the officials of the government. In this case, according to Blau's perspective: the government will be able to extract only esteem and approval from society's members (1964: 118).

During the government-imposed lockdown and curfew, Jordanians became aware of the increasing number of infected individuals being admitted to hospitals and experiencing severe illness. This firsthand experience convinced a majority of the population about the reality and seriousness of the Coronavirus. Consequently, trust in the government's measures was strengthened. The first recorded death in Jordan due to Coronavirus occurred on March 27, 2020, involving an 80-year-old woman (Royanews, 2020). Two days later, on March 29, 2020, the second death was reported, this time a 70-year-old individual (CNN Arabic, 2020). These fatalities further solidified the perception of the virus's threat within the Jordanian public.

As previously mentioned, the initial efforts and measures taken by the Jordanian Government to control COVID-19 were considered the most stringent in the whole region. The main latent idea was that without the intervention of the Jordanian government, people would not voluntarily act to create a new collective social strategy to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. Specifically, Jordanians are heavily burdened by commitments and obligations within their social relationship networks. On a macro level, it is important to question what the government expects from society in return. The government's role goes beyond ensuring safety and security; it also requires gaining society's trust to establish legitimacy, especially during times of crisis. During the early stages of the pandemic, limited protests were reported due to both strict government enforcement of physical distancing measures and general approval of the government's approach (Brookings Doha Center, 2020: 8). Therefore, Blau's model can be enhanced by formulating the conditions, including crises, that foster trust and legitimacy between society and the government.

Jordanians have realized that they now live in a new reality that is growing beyond their control and that it is in their own best interest to follow the necessary public health guidelines. As we note, the objective reality of COVID-19 has not been shaped gradually by the spontaneous interactions of people; in fact, the public response to COVID has been the result of the power of government and the power of mass media (Al Hourani, 2021).

During the peak of its Al Houraniity, the government demonstrated a strong level of coordination among the relevant institutions operating under the National Center for Security and Crisis Management (NCSCM), which was established in 2015 by the Royal Court. The NCSCM's main responsibility was to coordinate and unify the efforts of national institutions during times of national crises (NCSCM, 2021). Acting as the primary source of information for Jordanians, the NCSCM provided updates on new cases, recoveries, deaths, total cases, government plans and procedures, and health protection measures related to the pandemic. This effective coordination and availability of pandemic-related information ensured consistency in the collective awareness that guided Jordanians during the initial stages of the pandemic. The centralized decision-making, smooth flow of information, and clear government procedures not only promoted public compliance with the measures but also enhanced public trust in the government.

Given Jordan's efforts, they successfully controlled the spread of the disease, which was made possible by the positive attitudes and responses of the Jordanians. In the cultural context of the Middle East, Jordanians are renowned for their magnanimity and moral commitments. These values motivated them to comply with health regulations and prioritize the well-being of all. Additionally, Jordanians have embraced the symbolic significance of the country's defense law. They understand that the issuance of these regulations indicates that COVID-19 poses a significant threat to national security and public safety, compelling them to cooperate with the government by adhering to these regulations.

Research conducted in Jordan shows that individuals who are part of close-knit networks benefit from various resources such as financial assistance, security, social status, reputation, and support during crises (Al Hourani, 2012; Tweissi, 2013). This bonding

social capital enables Jordanians to collectively address public issues. Initially, Jordanians had trust in the government's procedures and utilized their social capital to support government initiatives.

Due to the significant financial challenges caused by COVID-19, Jordanians have shown their support for the government's efforts to combat the pandemic. By defense order No. 4, 2020, the Prime Minister has established the "Himmat Watan" initiative to collect and manage donations from various community networks, individuals, and organizations. Within two months, the total donations received amounted to JD 67 million (Himmat Watan, 2020).

Hence, consistently with Blau's perspective, in return for the government's efforts to maintain the safety of Jordanians, the government extracted four types of rewards: money, social approval, respect, and compliance (Blau, 1964:188-119). Additionally, the fifth reward can be attributed to social support. Civil society played a crucial role in assisting individuals in place of the government. This was achieved through the establishment of volunteer committees within neighborhoods, aiding those in need. These committees facilitated the transportation of individuals to hospitals, while also ensuring access to essential provisions such as food, water, bread, infant milk, and medication for those with chronic illnesses. Moreover, merchants and affluent individuals directly provided financial assistance to the less fortunate. These voluntary committees bridged the gap where the government was unable to fulfill its promises to citizens. Needy individuals were able to find security through these societal networks, resulting in both the providers and recipients feeling content and fulfilled in fulfilling their obligations and commitments. The Jordanian population demonstrated exceptional solidarity, appreciating the government's efforts and placing trust in its procedures.

Popular initiatives aimed to increase government transparency during the lockdown and curfew, as well as provide compensation for those who lost their income. Despite the challenging social and economic circumstances, the government maintained uniform procedures. This approach may lead to a decline in trust and generate opposition towards the government, as elaborated in the following section. Due to significant public pressure, the government eventually eased restrictions, allowing a semblance of normalcy while emphasizing the importance of social distancing and mask-wearing.

Sustainability of Fair Exchange

Blau recognizes that people establish expectations about what level of reward particular exchange relations should yield. However, he recognizes that these expectations are normatively regulated. These norms are termed norms of fair exchange since they determine what the proportion of rewards to costs should be in a given exchange relation (Blau, 1964: 90).

People follow the rules and obey them when they receive the expected returns for their obedience. The expected returns could be received in the present or the future. However, the maintenance of rules requires restrictions and sanctions to control people who tend to violate them (Blau, 1964). Nevertheless, the sustainability of rules could not be achieved only by restricting and sanctioning people's behaviors, but also by taking their interests into account.

The government began easing the restrictions they had imposed, allowing borders to open with necessary safety regulations. However, the use of partial curfews proved less effective in controlling the spread of the virus. The parliamentary elections held on November 10, 2020, marked a significant moment when people realized the government was permitting a return to normalcy, leading to gatherings. The elections and interactions between candidates and voters demonstrated government irresponsibility, leading people to believe they were safe and the situation was under control. Consequently, individuals began disregarding regulations and being less cautious in protecting themselves, resulting

in a doubling of new cases every two weeks. Jordan has recorded 1,680,179 confirmed cases and 13,959 deaths (March 17, 2022, Worldometers).

Furthermore, the rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 in Jordan highlights the conducive socio-cultural environment that facilitated the transmission and dissemination of the virus. As reported by the Ministry of Health, the first two cases of Omicron were identified on Thursday, December 10, 2021. One of these cases involved a young man who had recently returned from South Africa, while the other case involved a young man who had not traveled outside the country. Therefore, according to the Ministry of Health, Omicron was transmitted through interactions among Jordanian citizens. By December 26, 2021, the total number of cases had reached 328 (Al Arabiya News; 2022). This also suggests that people disregarded the previously imposed government regulations, as they became convinced that the government was not taking the situation seriously and not considering their interests.

As previously noted, even though Jordan reached zero COVID-19 cases by May 2020, it reached one of the highest rates of new cases six months later (see Table 1). As soon as the government lifted its restrictions, the number of new Covid-19 cases soared. Why did this happen? the exercise of government power to control the situation was a positive and desirable move only for the short term. However, the internalization of new rules, awareness, and responsibility is very necessary for the sustainable mitigation of COVID-19.

The curfew and lockdown measures had a significant impact on the economy, society, and mental well-being of both the people and the government in Jordan. Unfortunately, the government was unable to effectively address the concerns of its citizens and maintain a sense of fairness. They struggled to balance the needs of the people while mitigating the spread of COVID-19, leading to feelings of desperation and boredom among the population. Additionally, Jordanians were well aware of the long-term consequences of the pandemic on their livelihoods, prompting them to take steps to manage their situations. Blau(1964: 90) asserts that aggression is forthcoming when these norms of fair exchange are violated.

It should be noted that obeying rules at the beginning of the pandemic is contingent on morals and social approval. Thus, violating the rules of curfew and lockdown is considered deviant behavior. Exchanging compliance with the good of all and social approval, and respecting the rules collapsed after the government failed to overcome economic, social, and other challenges. As Blau(1964: 92-93) asserts: self-interest, but not moral norms represents the necessary condition for maintaining exchange relationships.

Blau’s exchange model is vitally concerned with the conditions under which conflict occurs, and so, the deprivations arising from violating the norms of fair exchange can lead to retaliation against violators. Simply put, when individuals do not receive the rewards they expected for their actions such as donations, legitimization, and compliance, it can lead them to resort to violent retaliation against those who denied them. This scenario occurred when people realized that the government had neglected their safety and well-being, as reported by Human Rights Watch in 2021. Thus, protests, demonstrations, measures violations, and confrontations were aroused across the country.

Table 1: Monthly Total New Cases and Deaths in Jordan 2020-2022

Monthly Total Covid-19 Cases	Monthly Total Cases 2020	Monthly Total Cases 2021	Monthly Total Cases 2022	Monthly Total Deaths 2020	Monthly Total Deaths 2021	Monthly Total Deaths 2022
Jan 31	0	326855	1225309	0	4316	13217
Feb 28	0	391090	1623474	0	4701	13835
March 2	1	402282		0	4739	

March 31	274	605007	1693226	5	6858	14035
April 30	453	711373	1695945	8	8836	14066
May 31	739	736534	1697127	9	9462	14066
Jun 30	1132	751404	1698316	9	9760	14068
Jul 31	1191	770712	1709879	11	10032	14074
Aug 31	2034	797126		15	10422	
Sep. 29	11825	822892		61	10710	
Oct. 31	72607	862541		829	11038	
Nov. 30	219430	953943		2751	11608	
Dec. 31	294494	1063405		3834	12653	

Source: developed by Al Hourani according to the worldometers

website. <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/jordan/>

The government's measures to restrict social gatherings and face-to-face interactions hurt the bonding social capital. This led to increased feelings of boredom, anxiety, frustration, and worry as individuals lost their normal social routines and activities (Abdel Jalil, 2020). Consequently, the government facilitated active transport for Jordanians who were eager to return to their pre-lockdown social lives.

Not all districts and regions were directly controlled and overseen by the government. People in small villages and deserts continued with their regular social activities during the lockdown. Consequently, the government may not have had accurate data on Covid-19. Samrah et al. (2020) suggest that the relatively relaxed nature of the outbreak could be attributed to the implementation of less stringent measures in the initial stages (p. 4).

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Jordanian economy (Abu Matar, Al Sufy, and Abu Afifa, 2020), leading to the government's inability to meet the expectations of its people. The implementation of curfews greatly affected livelihoods, businesses, and everyday life, placing immense pressure on families' budgets and essential needs. Consequently, the government decided to ease lockdown measures and reopen the economy. To prioritize work, Jordanians were willing to compromise their safety. According to a survey conducted by UNDP, which included 12,084 respondents, only 6.8% reported that they were still employed, while 58.6% lost their entire income. Furthermore, 72.5% of respondents faced difficulties in affording rent, food, heating, and medicine (UNDP, May 2020).

Also, it should be noted, that Jordan has a large number of refugees, particularly Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Most of these refugees live outside refugee camps, about half a million Iraqis and 1.6 million Syrians. They are not officially registered as refugees. Even before the onset of COVID-19, this situation resulted in enormous pressure on limited resources in the country (Al Sharafat, 2020). With COVID-19, this situation aggravated the pressure on those resources.

Furthermore, the government's inability to save individuals infected with the virus led to a situation spiraling out of control. The recent oxygen outage at Al-Salt Hospital, resulting in the deaths of seven COVID-19 patients, highlighted the government's mismanagement of the crisis. This was further emphasized by the resignation of the Minister of Health and the Chief of the Hospital, indicating an unresolved and dire situation (Al Arabiya News, March 15, 2021). Consequently, Jordanians defied the night curfew and took to the streets, chanting "Down with the government, we are not afraid of the virus." The government acknowledged its negligence in preserving citizens' lives and refrained from confronting the protestors. From Blau's perspective, failure in reciprocity leads to many harmful consequences including subordination and not being worthy of trust (Blau, 1964:97), so the government allowed people to violate curfew and express their discontent.

Under these conditions, the government failed to establish sustainable rules to control people's behaviors and regain trust and legitimacy. The loss of trust led to Jordanians refusing vaccination, hindering the government's efforts to convince them of its necessity for their safety. Consequently, the government resorted to using Al Houraniity to impose new restrictions on the unvaccinated, limiting their access to basic needs and work. This included preventing their entry into governmental and service-providing organizations. Currently, the number of vaccinated individuals in Jordan stands at 4.25 million (41.6% of the population). Unfortunately, some individuals attempted to evade vaccination by engaging in the sale, forgery, and presentation of counterfeit vaccine certificates, as reported by the Jordan News Agency (Petra, 2021).

As mentioned earlier, when individuals are exploited and deprived of expected rewards, they may resort to violent retaliation against those responsible. In response to the government's failure to meet people's expectations, protests and demonstrations emerged throughout the country. Unfortunately, rather than addressing these concerns, governments resorted to the use of force. Consequently, international organizations like Human Rights Watch documented numerous human rights violations during the COVID-19 pandemic. These violations included the abuse of emergency measures to curtail basic rights such as freedom of speech, expression, and press freedom. Al Houraniities also suppressed demonstrations and detained protesters and journalists. As an illustration, the closure of the teachers' syndicate and the arrest of its leaders, as well as numerous teachers, serve as an example of these violations (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Instead of addressing public concerns and criticisms of their COVID-19 policies, the government chose to suppress all forms of dissent. This aligns with Blau's perspective, which suggests that the more those in power violate norms of fair exchange, the higher the likelihood of opposition (Blau, p. 203).

Conclusion:

Exercising power as in the case of Jordan to prevent the rapid outbreak of covid-19 was a necessary and strategic step taken by the government. This is because Jordan represents a favorable sociocultural context for the COVID-19 outbreak, and the government did not have the required infrastructure to face the pandemic efficiently. However, there was a lot of arbitrariness in exercising power by the government, because exercising power was focused basically on preventing people's movements without bearing in mind social, psychological, and economic effects. The manifest function of this procedure was the lowest number of exposed cases. Nevertheless, the dysfunction of depending on power was hiding the real number of cases, horrifying people, and the failure to establish real awareness among people of what was happening around them. The sociocultural system has helped the government by stigmatizing people who were infected. Hence, people resorted to hiding their infection with COVID-19 as soon as possible. Needless to say, transparency during a pandemic is very important to make people responsible and real partners in confronting the pandemic.

The inability of the government to establish a real partnership with the people excluded them from the battle against COVID-19. This situation has made people a burden instead of being active and responsible. It should be noted that all structures (e.g., trust, and legitimacy) that have been made at the time of exercising power were false and temporal products. This means that the government could not construct a real consciousness, trust, and legitimation that secure a sustainable exchange and collaboration against the pandemic. The loss of consciousness and trust in the government is very serious at the time of the pandemic. As was in the case of Jordan, people became convinced to manage the situation by themselves and rejected obeying any subsequent regulations imposed by the government.

Sociologically, the virus could be considered a social structure. The virus is produced, spread, and mutates through human interactions. Thus, rationality, awareness, and human will are very important to make the people responsible for fighting the virus. However, they cannot organize themselves on the macro level. Therefore, a partnership between the government and the people at the time of pandemics is very important. Civil society as an organized sector in society can play a pivotal role in the partnership with the government.

The legitimization of government intervention and issuance of orders should be based on transparency, otherwise, it will be turned into falsification. As soon as the public recognized this truth, they became disobedient and more hostile. The lesson that could be learned is that providing real information during pandemics immunizes society and makes people more motivated to collaborate for the good of the whole.

Society represents a huge resource in fighting pandemics. Therefore, governments should have a strategic plan about how and in which aspects they can invest in people at the time of pandemics. As mentioned above, the main fault of the Jordanian government is turning people into a burden and treating them as passive. *Himmat Watan* was only one example of how society may respond very quickly when the issue is associated with national security. However, the government failed to maintain a sustainable positive response from citizens. The government broke their expectations by not investing their donations in fighting the pandemic, and nobody knew where the donations were invested. This is an indication of the pivotal importance of transparency and trust between people and their government, especially at the time of pandemics.

Blau's perspective has not provided the detailed concepts required to understand complex structures. However, he provided conceptual derivations of social processes that govern complex structures of societies from the simpler processes that pervade the daily intercourse among individuals. Although he did not intend to present a systematic theory of social structures, as he said on the opening page of his work, he has been able to show the reciprocal and bridging nature of the concepts he employed such as power, legitimacy, and norms of fair exchange.

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