



RESEARCH PAPER

Covid-19 Pandemic and Future of Democratic Governance: Policy Responses and Way Forward

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world not only socially but economically and politically. It has challenged the capacity of the high income economies of the world, the preparedness of public health management and the capacity for outbreak response. The conceptualization of the study is closely aligned with the concept of the capacity of the state. That is how effectively the state is making policies to secure public health and physical infrastructure because the pandemic has also witnessed coercive policy responses from the public. The state's policy measures like forced lockdowns, market shutdowns, isolation strategies, travel bans and wearing masks are not welcomed throughout the world. These strategies are considered as the change of democratic values of freedom of expression, free movement and a right to live independently. Amid the pandemic where nobody can predict a logical conclusion, this study aimed to unravel some fundamental questions. First, whether democracies failed to effectively manage the pandemic because some authoritarian systems won praise for their effective response. Secondly, why some democracies have successfully managed it and whether the regime types matter in dealing with the pandemic. A qualitative method has been applied to build the argument and a comparative approach has enabled the researcher to suggest a way out for the future.

KEYWORDS Authoritarian System, Democratic Value, Public Health Management

Introduction

Liberal democracy underpins an ideology and a system. It operates within a constitutional framework. Its ideological underpinnings entail a free market economy, respect for human rights, and the principle of limited government. Regular elections, the peaceful transfer of power, the presence of political parties, and the principles of representative government are some of its features. Respect for fundamental rights and freedoms are essential features of liberal democracies.

COVID-19 affected virtually all aspects of everyday life. It represented a huge challenge to governments all over the globe. It was a test of the governments' capacities, and a strain on the system. The strength of a system is tested in times of strain. How well-equipped a political system is to meet formidable challenges and pervasive problems could be known only when the system is subjected to strain. It represented an emergency situation; and emergency situations demand strict policy responses. Thus, it brought to light many hitherto neglected and other factors which were previously unknown came to the fore.

Liberal democracies throughout the globe had to put severe restrictions on free movement; the right to association had also to be suspended indefinitely. Sometimes taking strict policy measures becomes difficult in a democracy. Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau wanted to invoke the Emergencies Act in April 2020, but all thirteen provincial and territorial premiers as well as the Council of the Federation firmly opposed them. Such problems might spring up in liberal democracies and hinder the undertaking of emergency measures. This could, in turn, lead to devastating consequences in some cases.

Covid-19 not only called into question the performance and capabilities of liberal democracies in dealing with emergency situations, but also the very principles of liberal democracy (Goetz & Martinsen, 2021). Also, European liberal democracies witnessed a deviation from the principle of parliamentary supremacy as the power of the executive was immensely increased during the pandemic, and the parliament practically receded into the background. Parliamentary meetings were suspended indefinitely and executive had to make virtually all decisions. Single-party governments were noted to be more susceptible to executive aggrandizement than coalition governments (Bolleyer & Salàt, 2021).

A remarkable variation was observed in the response or behaviour of liberal democracies toward the challenge of COVID-19. Hasty generalizations cannot account for these differences. And, these differences are very significant for any well-informed analysis. Various factors were at play in shaping governments' reactions to COVID-19 and their effectiveness. The degree of trust the masses had in their leaders was also a significant factor in determining, or influencing, the effectiveness of the policy measures and the support rendered by the masses.

Where the masses had a high level of trust in the policymakers, they rendered more obedience as compared with the cases where there was a trust deficit. Consequently, the amount of trust the masses had in their leadership was directly proportional to their tendency to willingly comply with governmental restrictions and restraints. Public opinion and response towards COVID-19 was not only a factor influencing governments' policies, but was, in turn, influenced by the government as well. Not only were public attitudes and behaviours influencing and shaping governmental responses, but the attitude of the government was also significantly shaping, molding and affecting the behavior of the masses. Thus, a complex interplay of various forces could be seen.

Countries sharing many similarities and having similar governments' systems differed in the amount of trust the ordinary citizens had in their respective leaderships which, in turn, lead to differences in public response toward governments' policies.

Social security, enlightenment, and good governmental policies lead to success in curbing and controlling the spread of the virus. Resorting to a more 'authoritarian' mode of governance thus became necessary in cases where the public didn't render the requisite support to, and obey the instructions of the government.

The current research titled "Covid-19 Pandemic And Future Of Democratic Governance: Policy Responses And Way Forward" has used the qualitative online poll that involves a structured and systematic approach to collecting data from identifying the target population by developing a set of open-ended questions that allow participants to share their thoughts and opinions using a random sampling technique. A larger sample size can increase the validity and generalizability of the findings. The questions have been designed to elicit detailed responses that provide rich data for analysis aiming to gather in-depth insights and opinions. In this exploratory research, the comparative analysis of different cases such as New Zealand, Australia, United States, Canada Brazil, China, Sweden, Finland, Spanish, Germany, UK, India and Pakistan is guided by the argument of the study which is aimed to identify different responses as to whether democracies or authoritarian govrenmnets have effectively managed the pandemic.

Different Governments' Responses to COVID-19 and Their Implications

Different governments might employ different responses to the same situation or problem. The response of the political elite has repercussions and is itself dependent upon the capacities or capabilities of the political system. In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, the governmental machinery of states had to take immediate actions, make policies and impose lockdowns alongside other restrictions and precautionary measures (Hale et al., 2020).

Distinctive responses on the part of governments not just affect the infection rates and spread of contagion, but influence the psychological tendencies and overall orientation of the masses towards the disease and their perceptions of the appropriate response (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021). The behavior of the people towards COVID-19 and their views about the appropriate conduct influenced by the policies and statements of government officials and political leaders.

The states which have successfully managed to check the spread of COVID-19 have two characteristics in common. Firstly, those governments who were devoted to a policy of high regulatory measures for curbing viral transmission, and strict implementation of SOPs were able to get good results. New Zealand, for instance, was committed to such a strict policy (Officer et al., 2022). Second, the masses of such countries, under their being educated, aware and enlightened public rendered support to the government. Checking an emergency confronting a state demands strenuous efforts both from the common citizens and the government. In China, the public rendered great support to the government in its policies aimed at controlling the transmission of COVID-19 (Greer et al., 2020). If the requisite sociocultural environment and psychological propensities are present among the masses and if they are aware of the intensity of the problem and their responsibilities, then it becomes much easier for the governments to curb the crisis confronting them.

Comparison of Effectiveness of Various Governments' Policies Implied in Different Countries

The massive difference in infection rates among countries is related, in part, to the governments' response to the virus (Hale et al., 2020).

New Zealand: New Zealand, under Premier Jacinda Ardern, manifested impressive performance in controlling the spread of COVID-19 (Officer et al., 2022). The spread of the disease in New Zealand has been quite minute as compared to other countries. It is generally agreed upon that this was due to the small population of the polity. However, both the public and the government of New Zealand displayed a remarkable attitude in dealing with the pandemic. The first case of COVID-19 was reported on the 28th of February 2020. Thereafter, a strict lockdown was imposed. The initiatives of the NHCC (North Henepin Community College) proved extremely successful in this regard. New Zealand has successfully vaccinated about 93 percent of its population aged 12 and above. It is among those OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) member countries that have reported the lowest mortality rates.

Australia: The rate of transmission of COVID-19 in Australia has been lower than that in many other countries. The immediate imposition of stringent restrictions and lockdowns including the closure of educational institutions, restaurants and other places helped curb the transmission of the virus significantly (Angie et al., 2020). Empowering police officials to issue on-the-spot fines to individuals not complying with the restrictions as ordained by the government was yet another move that helped curb viral transmission. Compliance with social distancing was made mandatory and enforced by the police. The government also facilitated those who became unemployed through financial aid. Special efforts on the part of the Australian government to mitigate the psychological distress induced by the pandemic among the citizens were also made. The Australian government's efforts during this time were remarkable. It became construed as highly responsive to the demands and needs of the public.

United States: The situation in the US had been quite miserable, especially in the early phase. Coronavirus caused more American deaths than all US military operations since the Korean War combined (Woolf et al., 2021). It has caused more than 930,000 deaths in the US. A significant proportion of the US populace openly protested against COVID-19-related governmental restrictions. A significant proportion of the US population openly

denied the very existence of the virus (Merkley et al., 2020). The public, on the whole, did not show deference and compliance to the governmental restrictions. This, though ironical, sheds light on how imbecile an ordinary American citizen is, despite the tall claims of enlightenment citizenship commonly made by Americans. Furthermore, the government, too, did not exhibit the sort of response that was demanded of it under such circumstances (Yamey & Gonsalves, 2020). US government gradually implemented travel restrictions and lockdowns, increased vaccination rates and provided additional financial support to individuals and businesses. The government has also implemented mask mandates and other measures to slow the spread of the virus. Notwithstanding the aforementioned facts, President Trump exhibited a rather harmful policy, especially so in the very beginning which lead to disastrous consequences (Gauchat, 2012).

Canada: Canada has exhibited a more supportive attitude toward the recommended restrictions and precautionary measures. The Canadian populace was comparatively much more vigilant in the observance of standard operational procedures (SOPs) than that of the US (Merkley et al., 2020). Before the vaccine, non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) were the only effective measure to curb the rate of transmission of the virus. Hence the transmission of COVID-19 during that period solely depended upon two factors: governmental response and public behavior. It is inevitable to have a comprehension of the subtleties of politics and policy to comprehend the various governmental responses to COVID-19 as well their consequences (Greer et al., 2020). The success of strict public health measures like SOPs which governments desire to implement ultimately depends upon the support rendered by the populace towards their government. Such support is possible only when the economic status of the people permits them to do so (Greer et al., 2020).

Brazil: In Brazil, COVID-19 caused a great loss of life. The Brazilian President Bolosonaro adopted such an approach that involved denial, the results of which were devastating. Among the worst of all governmental responses, Brazil is considered one of them (Ferigato et al., 2020).

China: The government's response to COVID-19, the strictness of policy and the extent to which NPIs were successfully employed in a country depends upon many factors like the economic condition, the capacity of the health care system, the number of confirmed cases, and the behavior of the government officials. However, as mentioned earlier, to successfully curb and control the spread of the virus, voluntary support on the part of the public is necessary. This, in turn, depends upon several psycho-social and cultural factors. The cultural orientation of the masses, literacy rate and awareness are all factors that shape public perceptions about and response towards the virus. China is characterized by a sort of consensus on the part of the populace regarding high government interference and regulation (Gelfand, 2011). Hence, the Chinese citizenry manifested compliance with government's regulations. This high level of support rendered by the public towards the high level of government's regulations resulted in successful control of the rate of transmission. The government's ambition to the employment of strict regulatory measures met with public support. Full-fledge lockdowns were implemented in Chinese cities that had major outbreaks (Hale et al., 2020). China, where the virus was first detected, implemented strict measures to contain the spread of the virus. This included strict lockdowns, travel restrictions, mandatory quarantines, and the widespread use of contact tracing and surveillance technology. The Chinese government also built several new hospitals in record time to provide medical care for those infected with the virus.

Sweden: The policies adopted by different countries varied in terms of strictness. The Swedish government decided not to adopt a policy of a full-fledge lockdown, based on their claim that a strict policy would be unpalatable to the public in the long run, and that such policies ought to be adopted as are acceptable to the public in the long run and has the potential to successfully control the pandemic (Bendix, 2021). But the results were disastrous. Sweden's response to the virus, avoiding strict policies, leads to grave

circumstances. Sweden had the highest COVID-19 per capita deaths during the first phase of the pandemic (Engler et al., 2021). Sweden represents a case in even which international travel was not banned during the initial phase when other countries were adopting different policies (Yarmol-Matusiak et al., 2021).

Finland: During the first phase of the pandemic, Finland's government decided to ban international travel and did not adopt strict policies as regards to social mobility within the country.

Spanish: The Spanish government during the first phase of the pandemic decided to go for strict measures, like strict quarantine policies and restraints on mobility.

Germany: The government's response to COVID-19 in Germany has been a combination of decisive action and cautious measures to balance public health with economic concerns. The German government quickly implemented a nationwide lockdown and several restrictions depending on the local infection rates in March 2020, which helped to slow the spread of the virus (Chen, & Assefa, 2021). Later on, Germany imposed several lockdowns, including a strict nationwide lockdown in the spring of 2020 and a partial lockdown in the fall and winter of 2020-2021. These lockdowns involved the closure of non-essential businesses, schools, and public spaces, as well as restrictions on gatherings and travel. One of the keys to Germany's success in managing the pandemic has been its strong public health infrastructure and its ability to rapidly test and trace cases. The government has also provided extensive financial support to individuals and businesses affected by the pandemic, including a comprehensive package of stimulus measures. Germany has implemented a comprehensive testing and contact tracing system to identify and isolate individuals who have been exposed to the virus. In terms of the future of democracy in Germany, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of strong leadership and effective governance in times of crisis. On the other hand, it has also raised concerns about the potential for authoritarianism and the erosion of civil liberties. It remains to be seen how Germany's response to the pandemic will impact its democratic institutions in the long term. However, the country has a strong tradition of democracy and a robust legal system, which should help to ensure that any measures taken in response to the pandemic are consistent with democratic values and principles (Kropp, & Schnabel, 2021).

UK: UK government's response to COVID-19 lacks a parliamentary scrutiny and decisions have been made by a small group of ministers and officials. The government has introduced a range of emergency measures to respond to the pandemic, including lockdowns and restrictions on movement. The government's decision-making process has been criticized for being opaque and lacking public consultation and is failed to engage with key stakeholders, including healthcare professionals and local authorities. The emergency powers to respond to the pandemic including the Coronavirus Act 2020 have limited scope for individual freedoms, with limited checks and balances in place to ensure that they are used proportionately (Morgan, 2020). The devolved administrations have been critical of the government's handling of the pandemic, arguing that it has failed to engage with them and respect their autonomy. This has led to tensions between the central government and the devolved administrations because it has undermined the principles of devolution. There have been some concerns about the UK government's response to COVID-19 and its impact on democracy but the pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges for governments around the world. Many of the measures taken by the UK government, such as lockdowns and the vaccination rollout, have been widely supported by the public that effectively reduced the spread of the virus. The government has imposed restrictions on international travel, including quarantine requirements for people arriving from certain countries. The government has provided financial support and grants for businesses to individuals affected by the pandemic (Grace, 2021).

India: The Indian government's response to COVID-19 has been marked by a mix of successes and failures. The government implemented a nationwide lockdown in March 2020, which helped to slow the spread of the virus initially. However, the sudden announcement of the lockdown caused mass migration of workers from cities to rural areas, leading to a humanitarian crisis. The government's handling of the pandemic has been criticized for inadequate testing and contact tracing, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and a lack of transparency and communication with the public. The vaccination drive has been slow and has faced supply constraints, leading to inequities in access to vaccines. In terms of the future of democracy in India, the pandemic has highlighted existing challenges, such as rising authoritarianism, polarization, and attacks on freedoms of speech and press. The government has been criticized for using the pandemic as a cover to suppress dissent and silence opponents in India as well as the Indian administered Kashmir. The suspension of internet services and arrests of activists and journalists have raised concerns about the erosion of civil liberties (Khanna, Cicinelli, Gilbert, Honavar, & Murthy, 2020).

Pakistan: Pakistan's government response to COVID-19 has been mixed based on “smart lockdown” strategy. Initially, the government was criticized for not taking the pandemic seriously enough and for delaying the implementation of measures such as lockdowns and mass testing. However, as the number of cases began to rise, the government implemented stricter measures, including a nationwide lockdown, to control the spread of the virus. In terms of vaccination, Pakistan has faced challenges in acquiring and administering vaccines. The government has struggled to secure enough doses to vaccinate the entire population, and there have been reports of vaccine hesitancy among some segments of the population (Noreen, Dil, Niazi, Naveed, Khan, Khan & Kumar, 2020). The pandemic has also had an impact on democracy in Pakistan. While the government initially suspended parliamentary sessions, limited public gatherings and restricted civil liberties. The government of Pakistan had implemented a number of restrictions including the closure of educational institutions, schools, colleges, and universities to minimize the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff, large gatherings were banned, including weddings, religious festivals, and other social events. The government had implemented specific timings for businesses and markets to operate in order to limit crowds and to promote social distancing. International and domestic travel restrictions were imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Yaseen, et. al. 2020). The government had made it mandatory for individuals to wear masks in public places, including markets, shopping malls, and public transport. COVID-19 restrictions changed over time in Pakistan based on the situation and the spread of the virus.

Both democratic and authoritarian governments have implemented public health measures such as lockdowns, testing, and contact tracing. However, authoritarian governments tend to be more aggressive in implementing these measures, often resorting to strict enforcement and punishment for noncompliance. In some cases, authoritarian governments have also been accused of using the pandemic as a pretext to crack down on dissent. Governments were found to be more liable in the undertaking of specific policies when the geographically adjacent states were employing or had employed those policies. Furthermore, states with established democratic institutions were even more influenced by the policies adopted in the states surroundings their territorial boundaries (Bendix, 2021.). This provides the governments a justification whereby they could justify their stance as regards to their policies to the public. The policies adopted by several democracies differed in terms of strictness and intensity. It is more likely that the public would render support to their government in a democratic system where the people trust their government officials and there is an open flow of information. However, democratic governments are liable to face obstructions in employing coercive measures, even when they become inevitable.

Stringency Index. COVID-19 entirely changed the dynamics of social life. Under these circumstances, the regulatory activities of the administrative machinery were significantly enhanced. In the absence of a vaccine, NPIs were the only means available to

curb the transmission of the virus. Oxford University developed a stringency index to measure and then contrast the relative strictness of governmental response to the pandemic (Hale et al., 2020).

Factors

Domestic factors are significantly important in the designing of policies by governments (Engler et al., 2021). The indigenous political, social, economic and cultural factors go a long way in influencing the process of policy formulation, its content and implications. Another important point to be noted is that the vaccination rate depends upon the level of trust the masses have in their government (Schmelz, 2021).

Socio-Cultural Orientation: Public compliance with regulatory measures depends upon several factors. One such factor includes the sociocultural orientation of the masses. People want validation and social approval (Wood, 2000). In this case, too, compliance is highly dependent upon the sort of sociocultural environment present in any given country. If compliance with the SOPs leads to social disapproval, the likelihood of people following them is decreased. Thus compliance with and the successful implementation of such instructions ordained by the government depend upon sociocultural factors.

Tightness or Looseness of Culture: Another important cultural factor is the relative tightness or looseness of culture. For instance China, is marked by a tight culture. Whilst states such as the US have a much more loose culture (Gelfand, 2011). Thus the successful implementation of policies to mitigate the transmission of the virus is related to the relative looseness or tightness of culture.

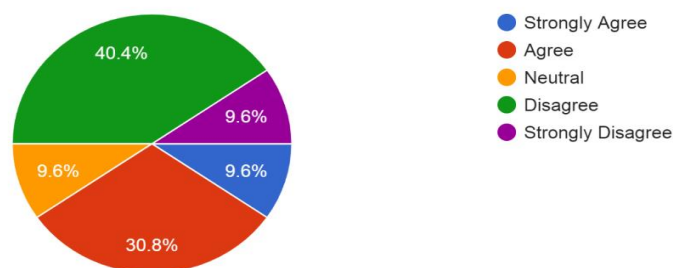
Socio-Economic Inequality and Disparity: Socioeconomic inequality is among highly significant factors not only in the formulation of the course of action to be taken by the government but also in the public's compliance with it. Countries where economic disparity is very high, therefore, proved more susceptible to being gravely affected by the pandemic. In countries confronting high levels of poverty like Pakistan, the government was reluctant in imposing strict long-term measures (Asghar et al., 2020). Thus socioeconomic factors go a long way in influencing the policies to be made by the government in countering a crisis.

Results and Discussion

In current research, a qualitative online poll based on a structured and systematic approach to collecting data from identifying the target population by developing a set of open-ended questions allowed the participants to share their thoughts and opinions using a random sampling technique. Over 50 respondents filled out the survey and the questions have been designed in such a way that we can collect responses from the people on coercive policies by the states during the COVID-19 pandemic. When asked about “the percentage of people who believed that COVID-19 restrictions are against fundamental human rights”. Almost 42% of people strongly disagreed, while 30% agreed and the rest of the respondents strongly disagreed.

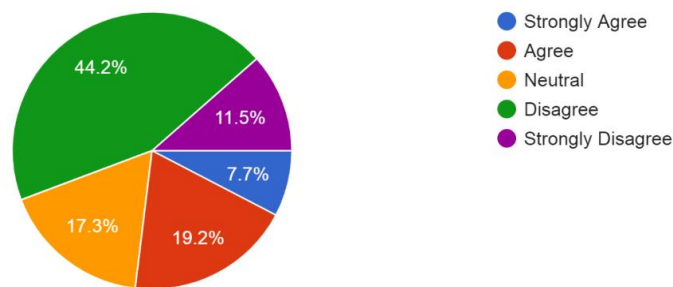
Do you find covid restrictions are against the fundamental human rights.

52 responses



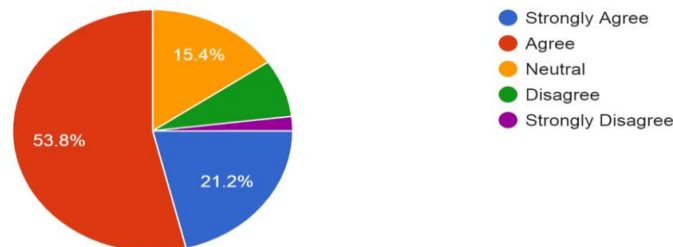
Another question was “Do you consider COVID-19 restrictions to be against the democratic rights of people?” This question had very strong answers as about 46% of people in Pakistan strongly disagreed, while the rest of the participants strongly agreed or remained neutral.

Do you consider covid restrictions to be against the democratic rights of people.
52 responses



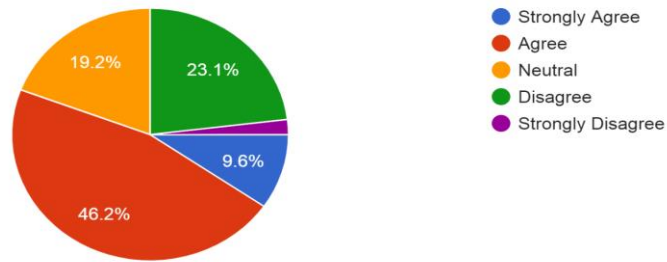
A candid and straightforward question was placed in the questionnaire when this randomly selected group was asked “to incorporate COVID-19 restrictions into daily life is difficult in your opinion. The overall population agreed or strongly agreed and a few percent of people disagreed. People were also asked “whether pandemic related restrictions are an intrusion on the freedom of movement”. 46% of interviewees agreed 24% of interviewees disagreed and the rest of them remained neutral. About 1% of the population strongly disagreed. It was also important to know as “the pandemic requires abrupt decisions contrary to liberal democratic norms, concentrating power in the hands of the executive. Do the actions justify their viability?” Almost everyone either agreed or remained neutral on the statement.

Incorporating covid restrictions into daily life is difficult in your opinion.
52 responses



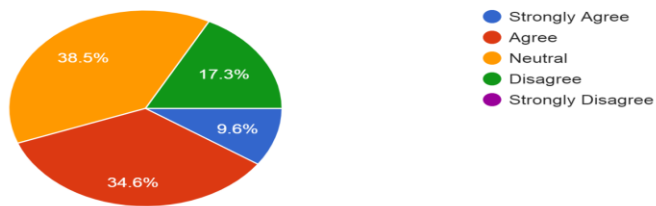
Pandemic related restrictions are an intrusion on the freedom of movement.

52 responses



As the pandemic requires abrupt decisions contrary to liberal democratic norms, concentrating power in the hands of the executive. Do the actions justify their viability?

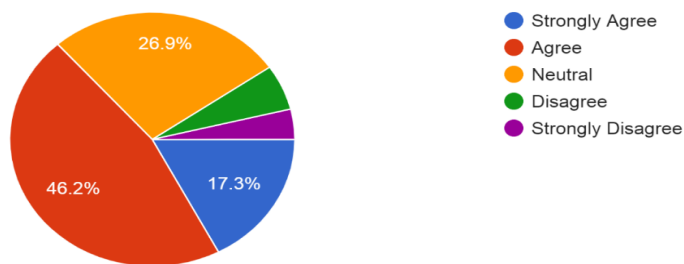
52 responses



It was then asked about the opinion of affectess regarding the general idea that as with the rise of Covid-19, health policy was at the core, but it quickly transformed into a reactionary and adaptive one, which was difficult for the citizens to uphold. While 48% of the population agreed with the statement, the rest of the population strongly agreed, and the same percentage of people remained neutral.

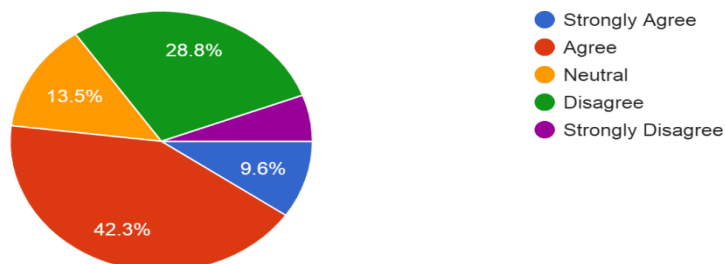
As with the rise of covid health policy was at core, but it quickly transformed into reactionary and adaptive one, which was difficult for the citizens to up-held.

52 responses



general.

52 responses



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Globalization and GHD: Globalization inevitably leads to the emergence of Global Health Diplomacy (GHD). The field evolved and gained greater importance with time. However, the COVID-19 pandemic gave it unprecedented importance in the sight of all state actors as well as profound international organizations (Kickbusch et al., 2014). In the past, collective efforts to counteract the spread of communicable diseases like AIDS have been made by developed countries. The governments of countries like the US paid special attention to making and implementing policies as could mitigate the spread of such diseases, especially STDs (sexually transmitted diseases). However, the present pandemic was compelling enough to force all countries around the globe to take immediate action in preventing the spread of contagion. On the 11th of March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global emergency by the WHO (*WHO Director-General's Opening Remarks at the Member States Information Session on COVID-19 - 11 March 2021, 2021*) which ultimately led to the imposition of lockdowns not only in the developed world of liberal democracies but even the underdeveloped countries like Pakistan (Asghar et al., 2020) and Bangladesh. The significance of GHD became greater than ever as the need for collective/international efforts to mitigate this global health crisis became axiomatic.

In America, it was observed that the conservatives have been entertaining a sort of anti-scientific outlook (Gauchat, 2012). The view that the right-wing citizenry of America is a victim of entertaining mistrust in scientific research could lead to disastrous consequences in times of emergency (*Science Scorned | Nature, 2010, p. 133*). This viewpoint was substantiated by the emergence of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Many citizens overtly refused to comply with the SOPs as enunciated and advised by the WHO. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the US population was seen entertaining and embracing conspiracy theories about COVID-19. Former American President Donald Trump has been held responsible by many political analysts for the quick spread of COVID-19 in America, especially in the initial phase of the pandemic. He has been under strong criticism for being engaged in fostering refusal to comply with the preventative measures among the public owing to certain statements that he issued from time to time. In the initial days of the pandemic, he repeatedly described the virus as something which ought not to be construed as a big threat, but rather a minor disease. The threat was downplayed by him (Yamey & Gonsalves, 2020). This attitude of the president is considered to be partly responsible for the enormous number of COVID-19-related deaths in America. It should also be noted that those American counties in which the Republicans constituted the majority of the population demonstrated less support or more resistance towards vaccine inoculation (Roozenbeek et al., 2020).

Countries that were successful in the face of the COVID-19 conundrum were marked by a commitment to apply immediate, appropriate, and strict measures. Countries like New Zealand (Officer et al., 2022), implemented immediate lockdown and strictly made the public follow preventative measures like social distancing and wearing masks were able to timely control the spread of the disease. Australia also implemented a rather rigorous policy right from the beginning and thus was able to manage the crisis (Ainge, 2020, May 5; Australia and New Zealand Travel Bubble: Coronavirus-Safe Plan to Reopen Border. *The Guardian*. - Google Search, 2021). On the other hand, countries which were lenient in the beginning as regards to their response and exhibited mismanagement were later faced with chronic COVID-19 conundrum (Greer et al., 2020; Yamey & Gonsalves, 2020).

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges for democratic governance around the world. From restrictions on civil liberties and human rights to the strain on economic systems, the pandemic has tested the resilience of democratic institutions and raised questions about the role of governments in protecting public health. Despite the challenges, the pandemic has also highlighted the importance of effective and accountable democratic governance in responding to crises. Countries with

strong democratic institutions and engaged citizenry have generally been more successful in controlling the spread of the virus and mitigating its impact on society. Looking to the future, the pandemic presents an opportunity for governments to recommit to the principles of democratic governance and strengthen their institutions to better address the challenges of the 21st century. This includes investing in public health systems, ensuring equitable access to vaccines and treatments, and addressing the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to vulnerability to disease. Ultimately, the pandemic has reminded us of the importance of collective action and the need for democratic governance to prioritize the public good over short-term political gains. By working together and upholding democratic values, we can overcome the challenges of the pandemic and build a more resilient and just society for all.

Policy Options for COVID-19 Pandemic and Future of Democratic Governance

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges to democratic governance worldwide. Governments have had to make difficult policy decisions to balance public health concerns with economic and social considerations. Many governments have implemented strict lockdowns and social distancing measures to slow the spread of the virus. While these measures have been effective in reducing infection rates, they have also had significant economic and social consequences, including job losses, business closures, and mental health challenges. The use of lockdowns and social distancing measures raises questions about the balance between individual rights and the public good, and the role of the state in protecting public health. Vaccination campaigns have been hailed as a key tool in ending the pandemic. Governments have implemented various strategies to encourage vaccination, such as offering incentives or making vaccination mandatory for certain groups. However, vaccination campaigns have also sparked debates about individual rights and the role of the state in mandating medical interventions. Here are some policy options that have been employed by governments to combat the pandemic and their implications for the future of democratic governance.

1. **International cooperation:** The pandemic has highlighted the importance of international cooperation in addressing global challenges. Governments have worked together to develop vaccines, distribute medical supplies, and coordinate travel restrictions. However, the pandemic has also exposed divisions and inequalities between countries, raising questions about the effectiveness of international cooperation in the face of future crises.
2. **Communication and trust-building:** Effective communication and trust-building between governments and their citizens have been crucial in ensuring compliance with pandemic policies. Governments have used various communication strategies, such as public health campaigns and social media outreach, to build trust and encourage compliance. However, the pandemic has also highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability in governance, as misinformation and mistrust have led to resistance to pandemic policies.

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