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CORONAVIRUS 2020

**the Role of Individuals in the UAE
in the Implementation of the SDG
Agenda 2030 after the pandemic**





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Abstract

Purpose

This paper's objective is to investigate the individual contributions to the SDG Agenda 2030 following the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic had substantial social impacts. The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the contribution of individuals in the UAE to the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

Design/Methodology/Approach

This paper uses descriptive and analytical methods to examine the contributions of individuals to the SDG agenda. Data used in the paper are drawn from the existing literature on pandemic effects in society, and from data interviews with selective individuals from 10 different nationalities living in the UAE.

Findings

Published literature provides a substantial amount of information about the effect of pandemic on society and individuals. The findings also reveal the important contribution of individuals' foresight to the agenda, both positively and negatively.

Research limitations/implications

No literature on the pandemic in the UAE was found, only research papers from other regions were available. The research data are only for the UAE; similar research can be conducted in the future in other regions to create a comparison. health benefits of camel milk and to satisfy special needs diets.

Originality/value

The originality of this paper lies with the discussion on the implementation of the agenda in the UAE.

Keywords

**Society, Social, Community, UAE, Individual
foresight, SDG Agenda 2030, Pandemic,
Coronavirus.**

Introduction

Judging by the number of cases being reported across the globe on a daily basis, the COVID-19 pandemic can be said to be moving like a wave. The United Arab Emirates has, for instance, registered 45,683 cases, with 305 people succumbing to the infection against 33,703 who have successfully recovered from the virus. Globally, 9,228,562 cases of the virus have been confirmed so far, with 475,125 people succumbing to the infection against 4,971,111 who have successfully recovered. COVID-19 is nonetheless more than a health crisis, majorly because of the strain that it places on different aspects of various nations' economies. There is a need for the leaders of nations to ascertain that their countries are well prepared to respond and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. In making those decisions, leaders need to be guided on the best approach that their countries should adopt, thereby ascertaining that they look beyond recovery and towards the realisation of Agenda 2030.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are the basis of Agenda 2030, is a blueprint that has been established to realise a sustainable and better future for all. The SDGs are aimed at addressing the global challenges being faced by people from different communities. The goals include no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, and gender equality. Additional goals include the need to guarantee sanitation and clean water for all, affordable and clean energy, and for everyone to have decent jobs that provide them with the platform for economic growth. By 2030, nations across the world should be well ahead when it comes to innovation, industry, and infrastructure, the reduction of inequality, and the need for the development of sustainable communities and cities. The goals further encourage individuals to work towards responsible consumption, climate action, improving the lives of species residing in water, enhancing life for all species on land, and encouraging the realisation of peace and justice through strong institutions as well as partnerships.



Objective

The United Arab Emirates, as is the case with the rest of the world, is dealing with the COVID-19 crisis that is having monumental impact on the nation and the economy. The lives being lost and the livelihoods being made uncertain are no doubt immeasurable. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the UAE, together with a number of governments, globally, understood the severity of the challenge quite early and responded in a proactive and highly organised manner. The nation's leaders adopted various effective strategies that were founded on technology and the input being provided by the World Health

Organization (WHO). As studies are being undertaken by researchers to determine the possibility of a vaccine being discovered, it is important for nations to further identify some of the mechanisms through which they will be able to work towards the realisation of the sustainable development goals. Consequently, this research was carried out to identify the particular steps that different stakeholders across the UAE can adopt to ensure that the SDGs are realised by 2030.

Literature Review

Sustainable Recovery

According to Srivastava et al. (2020), the global coronavirus pandemic that has already resulted in unimaginable hardship and devastation has brought the normal way of life to a complete halt. There is equally considerable evidence that the outbreak is set to have a significant impact on the social and economic corners of the globe. Despite the challenges that have been brought about by the virus, it has provided a platform for essential lessons to be learned. According to Srivastava et al. (2020), one of these lessons is that all the gains that are typically made with the aim of addressing hunger, good health and poverty are often likely to face significant setbacks unless efforts are made by stakeholders across the globe to urgently address the global threats that have similar capacities on the planet and humanity at large. The scholars submit that the future-proofing of sustainable recovery and development is typically possible only when sound environmental policies and plans are accorded the importance that is required.



Climatic Action

The arguments above have further been reaffirmed by Cohen (2020) who submits that leaders need to prioritise the climate crisis despite the notion that it is progressing slower compared to the pandemic. Cohen's reasoning is enhanced by the fact that, despite the advancements in technology, none of them is efficient enough to reverse the extent of global warming that has taken place across the world. Scholars recommend that global warming should be further contained because it is typically linked to the increase in global pandemics and extreme weather events, such as flooding and drought, as well as extensive destabilisation of the global food supply. These factors can directly impact the ability of humanity to fight the causative agents of different illnesses. Cohen (2020) stresses that the plans that are set to be formulated by nations to help their inhabitants and communities to rebuild their societies provide an opportunity for the world to make amends by adopting renewable forms of energy and green technology. In addition, other sustainable sectors can all help the planet in realising the decarbonisation objective.



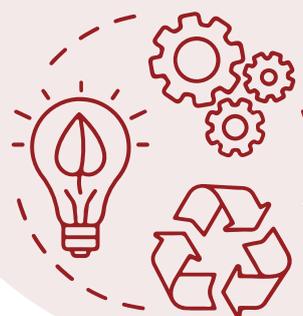
Life on Land

Wang and Tang (2020) submit that the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed reaffirmed that there is still a high possibility for zoonotic illnesses that are passed from animals to human beings to attack. In light of the given circumstances, leaders should take note of the fact that the degradation of habitats has the possibility of encouraging direct animal and human interactions, enhancing the evolutionary process while similarly contributing to the diversification of illnesses. To avert similar outbreaks in the future, it is critical to reduce the global destruction of existing natural habitats (Wang and Tang, 2020). This is major because, in the recent past, concerns have been raised that considerable degradation has been practiced across different parts of the world to make room for unsustainable farming practices, the settlement of humans, and mining (Wang and Tang, 2020). In this regard, Wang and Tang submit that governments and stakeholders from civil society and the private sector need to ensure that they find ways of working with the environment instead of against it, as has been the case in the recent past. Scholars argue that the approach is important because it will enhance the degree of resilience in case such pandemics arise in the future.



Responsible Consumption

According to Ventura et al. (2020), there is a need for humanity to adopt the concept of responsible production and consumption. The assertion is major because unsustainable production and consumption that is founded on negative lifestyle choices and brown financing have not only resulted in the depletion of natural resources but have also similarly contributed to the disruption of the ecosystem. Economies have consequently become carbon-intensive as health issues increase (Ventura et al., 2020). The pandemic has no doubt illustrated several weaknesses across different



systems. It has further proved that responsibilities do not need to be left to governments alone, but to stakeholders across the private sector as well. Some of the practices that the world should focus on in the future include the adoption of online work and acquiring local products and services (Ventura et al., 2020). As economies reopen, there is a need for some of the approaches that have been adopted over the course of the pandemic to be maintained. Responsible consumption is likely to put the world in a better place to respond to pandemics each time they arise.

Research Design

The research adopted a qualitative research design, which is a form of inquiry that often seeks to develop an holistic understanding of the concepts being evaluated. Qualitative research methods are typically designed in a manner that helps to reveal the perception of a target audience on a given topic. One of the benefits of adopting a qualitative research method is that it typically provides both detail and depth by taking note of the attitude and behaviour of respondents (Bengtsson, 2016:11). Moreover, it creates openness and is often known to stimulate people to provide their individual experiences, thereby ensuring that they avoid any form of pre-judgement. The participants of the research were identified through a random sampling method. The ten participants were all briefed on the research and the role that they were to play in the realisation of the set objectives.

Data on the research were collected through an interview method. This intimates that the research team took time to hold one-on-one interviews with the participants regarding the strategies that the UAE administration should adopt to ensure that it continues working towards the realisation of the SDGs. The interviews were advantageous because they provided the research team with the opportunity to control the interview while at the

same time capturing both verbal and non-verbal cues of communication. The interview questions that the research team asked were designed in a manner that ensured that the autonomy of the participants was guaranteed. This is because they were not asked to provide any personal information except for their age range, their country and some of the ideologies that they had on how the UAE administration should approach the SDGs.



Findings

The data analysis of the information that was collected revealed that there is a common belief that while the COVID-19 pandemic has dealt the UAE economy considerably negative impacts, there is a need for the recovery process to take into consideration the objectives of the sustainable development goals. Regarding the first goal, which is the need for all forms of poverty to be ended everywhere, 70% of the participants agreed that it is important for UAE leaders to work towards the reduction of poverty, for it is set to increase because of the manner in which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted different sectors.

Despite this, concerns were equally raised by some of the participants that eradicating poverty can be challenging given the extent of damage to the economy. Regarding the second SDG, that is the management of hunger and making sure that all citizens are food secure, 80% of the participants agreed that UAE could provide food to its citizens because, in the recent past, it has demonstrated interest to engage in sustainable agricultural practices. Moreover, the participants pointed out that input from the private sector is further likely to ensure that there is sufficient food for all. Nonetheless, a segment of the participants raised concerns that the weather and climate of the UAE can make it difficult for the country to be food secure.

The participants shared the same position that, indeed, the UAE is in a position to effectively roll out health promotion activities aimed at making sure that its citizens of all ages stay healthy. This is major because, over the recent past, health providers across the nation have been encouraging its citizens to adopt healthy lifestyles, such as exercising

frequently and eating foods that are nutritious instead of those that are processed and increase their risk of infections and illnesses. Regarding education, all the participants stressed that the UAE should continue investing in the development of educational facilities, even after the pandemic, because of the role that quality learning has on youths who are relied upon to ensure that the future will be guaranteed. The same position was reaffirmed in regard to realising gender equality, where the participants asserted that there is a need for the UAE to continue empowering females as has been done in the recent past. The participants further warned that the steps that have been made so far should not be eroded because of the pandemic.

In regard to ensuring that there is clean and sanitised water for all, 100% of the participants appreciated the steps that have been adopted by the UAE so far to ensure that water is available for all its citizens. They further maintained that because of the role that water plays in all other industries, the nation's administration needs to continue working towards making sure that all its citizens are able to access clean water. The position was similar in regard to making sure that all citizens have access to sustainable forms of energy. The participants insisted that this should not be a problem for the UAE, but that members of the public need to be educated on some of the ways through which they can use the available forms of energy more efficiently. The observation was similar when it came to the eighth sustainable development goal, where the participants acknowledged that indeed the UAE is often warm and welcoming to all and that it should continue providing resources for all individuals to be creative and innovative, thereby enhancing their possibility of success.



All the participants similarly pointed out that the UAE has made considerable progress in regard to developing its infrastructure over the previous decade and that it should continue doing so, even as it plans to recover from the pandemic. This is because infrastructure provides the platform for innovation to take place, which will be essential in boosting the nation's economy. The argument was similar in regard to the reduction of inequality across other nations, where the participants appreciated the efforts that have been applied by the UAE to support other countries across the world. However, they asserted that considerable efforts still need to be applied to make sure that Asia and other Middle East nations view each other with respect instead of

initiating conflicts with each other.

The participants further asserted that the UAE can still apply approaches to making sure that its cities and settlements are safe and resilient for all while at the same time encouraging its citizens to consume healthy products and services. At the same time, the participants encouraged the need for the country to continue taking action aimed at averting climate change, thereby conserving the environment and making it sustainable. In the long-term, the efforts will restore ecosystems and, at the same time, promote peace across different societies.

Value

The paper is of great value because the world is presently dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic that has brought about considerable destabilisation across different societies and communities. Given the extent of damage to the economy, leaders and nations can opt to focus on essential aspects in regard to recovery. The arguments above reaffirm that, despite the challenges being faced, there is a need for leaders to still be committed to the realisation of the SDGs. This is mainly because of the social crisis that is likely to continue emerging as a result of the pandemic. With approximately half of the global workforce at risk of losing their jobs due to frozen economies and growth, there is a risk of some goals being reversed or ignored. The SDGs are important because they provide a clear compass on the direction that should be taken in regard to the recovery process. The SDGs will further ensure that no part of society is left unattended to, for all the essential aspects will need to be taken care of. One of the lessons that have been derived from the COVID-19 pandemic is that the challenges facing the world are similar. Consequently, taking resources away from the SDGs is likely to be disastrous and will reverse the progress that has been registered over recent years. Given the role it plays in geopolitics, UAE stakeholders need to work with external agencies such as the UNDP with the aim of making sure that the set objectives are realised.



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Biography

Dr Muhra Rashed ALmuhairi has a doctorate in Administration with a research focus in self-leadership. She has worked in the education industry and in learning and development at both the federal and government level in the UAE. She worked as a faculty member of the Higher College of Technology, then as Chair of Business Administration. She also worked as an advisor for community service in the Abu Dhabi government, then as Director of Programme in the Abu Dhabi government. She is an executive coach, and her aim in life is to inspire by sharing knowledge and empower individuals. She currently has an active blog to inspire individuals on the Art of Being (theArtofbeing.ae).

