PUBLIC MIND AGAINST COVID-19: HUMAN FOUNDATION TO COPE WITH HAZARDOUS CRISES

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Abstract

The objective of this academic article was to consider how to deal with destructive disasters like the covid-19 pandemic by public-minded people in the global community. Public-mindedness was regarded as a morality, which was suitable for people during the terrible crisis because duties and responsibilities based on public consciousness assisted people to stay home and stay safe without an opportunity to infect a novel deadly coronavirus. At the same time, involved persons – patients, doctors, nurses, public heal officials, mass media, social media, state agencies, private sectors, the country's government and foreign countries - performed their jobs with awareness of public health prevention, including inspection, observation, supervision, close watch of the Covid-19 disease as well as other disasters of mass destruction.

Keywords: Public Mind; Conscious; Consciousness; Conscience; Covid-19;

Introduction

According to Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher, "Man is by nature a social animal" (Aristotle. 2000, November 15). Human beings were all said to live together in groups like most of animals living together. For all animals; the weaker being prevented from risks, dangers and hazards, and the stronger acting as a warden to protect the weaker, living together in groups was aimed at mutual dependence. In any group of animals, the stronger were appropriately accepted the role of leadership or any certain role from their groups. However, human beings were physically feeble in comparison to animals. So, settlement in groups; families, villages, communities, societies, and countries, was regarded good for them to increase safer feelings from unexpected perils. As far as humankind around the world was concerned, the covid-19 disease was

counted as one of the most enormous disasters on the globe as seen from the latest 109,224 reported deaths and 401,582 recovered patients of 1,779,006 confirmed cases, which was last updated on April 12, 2020 (Channelnewsasia.com. 2020, April 12). A problem led to this pandemic was believed from indiscipline of people around the world, which reflected their absence of public-mindedness. So, the objective of this academic article was to consider how people in the global community deal with such a pandemic of the covid-19 disease with the public mind that was regarded a morality for human beings around the world. Initially, two key issues were to be talked about: covid-19 and public mind.

Covid-19 Pandemic

On December 31, 2019, then, the whole world was initially recognized something called the outbreak of Covid-19 disease, which was described a new member of coronavirus family. It was shocked the global society because its spread rate was found higher in the Chinese city of Wuhun with more than eleven millions of people. At the same time, it was also found to have a higher mortality rate than common illnesses such as seasonal flu. Formerly, there were found terrible epidemics of six human-transmitted coronavirus families, and the Covid-19 was its seventh family. Thais had experienced the coronavirus from the epidemic of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which was initially found during the year end of 2002 in the Chinese southern county of Guangdong. After that, it was transmitted into several countries with more than 8,000 infected people and the death of nearly 800 patients (bbc.com. 2020, March 12 a)

WHO named COVID-19

Apart from the study, the causal virus was an unknown novel coronavirus, the disease from which was initially named 2019-nCoV (derived from 2019 novel coronavirus) by World Health Organization (WHO). Next, this new disease was officially renamed on February 11, 2020 as COVID-19, an abbreviation from Coronavirus Disease, including the number of the year, when its epidemic was initially reported. On the same date, International Committee on Taxonomy of

Viruses (ICTV) specified the name of Covid-19 virus as SARS-CoV-2, derived from severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 because of its closed relationship to the SARS virus (bbc.com. 2020, March 12 b).

In fact, Viruses, and the diseases they cause, often have different names. For example, HIV is the virus that causes AIDS. People often know the name of a disease, such as measles, but not the name of the rubeola virus that causes it (World Health Organization, 2020)

Source of COVID-19

At that time, the source of new virus was not exactly known, but it was previously presumed to make the jump from wild animals to humans late last year. The epidemic source was likely from Chinese cobras and kraits, sold in the Huanan seafood wholesale market in the center of the Chinese city of Wuhan where many of those initially infected were found. The presumption remained suspicious because it was unusual for a virus to make the jump from one species to another (The Guardian. 2020, March 17)

According to a new study in the journal The Lancet, a world-leading medical journal, on January 29, 2020, although the source of such a virus was from bats, there were probably other 'carrier animals' to transmit the virus to humans. Chinese cobras, according to the researchers, were speculated as carriers to transmit this new coronavirus from bats to humans because such poisonous snakes naturally hunted for food those bats in caves. However, it was undoubtedly unclear how a coronavirus had capability to adjust itself to live and reproduce in the bodies of both cold-blooded and warm-blooded animals.

The researchers from several Chinese virology labs and contagious disease centers analyzed 10 genome sequences of the deadly virus — dubbed 2019-nCoV — obtained from nine patients in China and found that they shared more than 99.98 percent of the same genetic sequence,

The case of this coronavirus without the genetic diversity meant the infection of a coronavirus to humans occurred not long because a coronavirus was generally able to adjust and mutate at the fast rate. As a

result, any strain of a virus infected in humans for a certain longer time would have more genetic characteristics than a new virus.

According to Weifeng Shi, a professor of epidemiology affiliated with Shandong First Medical University, it was striking that the sequences of 2019-nCoV described here from different patients were almost identical. The finding suggested the virus originated from one source within a very short period, made its "jump" to humans very recently and was detected relatively rapidly, because if it had happened a long time ago, the virus sequences would have been more different (Youtube.com. 2020, February 1)

In comparison of the 2019-nCoV genome with the existing coronavirus database, a new strain of coronavirus was found genetically identical to two strains of coronavirus from bats at the level of 88%, where as it was identical to SARS at the level of 79% and to MERS at the level of 50%.

According to Dr. Wu Kuichen, a research of Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDC), this information indicated that the deadly 2019-nCoV was undoubtedly from lesser horseshoe bats, but they were not found sold at the seafood wholesale market in Wuhun. So, there was a reliable presumption that a certain animal was likely to be a host to transmit a virus from bats to humans, but it was definitely unknown (bbc.com. 2020, January 31).

According to the statement of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the coronavirus epidemic with the number of confirmed cases neared 77,000 in mainland China and more than 2,400 people dead was the country's most serious public health crisis since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949 (bbc.com. 2020, February 23).

Public Mind to reduce Covid-19 Pandemic

All of the above was referred to the COVID-19 disease as an event of any pandemic, which was able to occur all time like other epidemics of diseases in the past. The deadly pandemic of diseases was regarded as a heavy problem that all humans over the world had to cooperate to battle and eliminate immediately to decrease human death. Many lessons from those pandemics made humans agreed on face-to-face discussion, assisted each other and reduce their attitudes to meet

each other because they all would be perished and demolished by such diseases, which were also capable to develop themselves upon the human civilization, if they denied to do this.

However, an opportunity was seen in every crisis. The first thing from the Covid-19 disease was the people's public mind because, while many people were selfish not to be checked temperature, to report themselves or to be quarantined in hospitals or their houses, many people with public mind agreed to save themselves, not to go to public places, and to stay at home. In case they found anybody to do risks to infect or to be infected the virus, they attempted to warn those people by themselves or to inform other authoritative officials.

The first thing that appeared from the case of the COVID-19 disease was a morality called 'public conscience' or 'public mind.' As seen from this coronavirus pandemic, there were several negative human behaviours responsive to the global Covid-19 disease. For example, many people from risky areas attempted to avoid fever check because they thought they didn't touch the virus, they didn't want to waste their time, they didn't want anyone to know if they were infected, they didn't want to be quarantined, etc. No matters what reasons were, all of them who lived or had lived their lives in the risky areas should recognize that they had a chance to be infected, too. The body temperature check was important for all of them in order that they would not be coronavirus hosts to others. Without public mind, several people attempted to flee away from fever check and quarantine and didn't be apprehensive to be deadly virus hosts for other close persons.

Even several negative events were often reported nearly every day. As seen from Novel Coronavirus Cases in Channelnewsasis.com (2020, April 12), many people in USA, including many European countries, thought that they were not in at-risk groups and they lived their heedless life and as a result, they became finally infected. There were, however, various positive stories found in many places around the world. For example, the announcement of Italy lockdown by Italy's premier and acceptance of covid-19 infection by Matthew Deane, a TV actor a TV actor and owner of a boxing camp in Thailand, were accounted for public mind cases. A dramatic case of public mind was an old Belgium woman who infected covid-19 denies treatment in the

hospital due to her age and she wanted other younger patients to be treated instead of her. Apart from these cases, public mind might be said a kind of morality.

Meaning of Public Mind

The word 'public mind' or 'public consciousness' was a new word and a new topic for Thais. It was differently called as recognition of the public interests, consciousness on the society, consciousness on the public, consciousness on the public property, etc. Such words were described very similarly. In comparison of public mind and public consciousness, several definitions were given as follows:

The definition of consciousness was that the state that human mind was alert and conscious and able to respond to stimuli from five external senses: form, taste, smell, sound and touch (Royal Institute. 1995: 231). Consciousness was resulted from evaluation, or importance recognition, based on people's attitudes, beliefs, values, views and interests (Phornsak Phongphaew. 1998: 60). Consciousness was described as people's perception or knowledge in various things. The perception or consciousness was regarded as a fundamental of such mental processes as innovation perception and attitude process (Chanchar Suwannathat. 2535: 11). The term 'conscious' was unable to be defined clearly but it was closely described as two ways: the first was a though changing all time, and the second meant a person's conscious that was a personal feeling existing all time even in the free period of time as sleeping (Raj. 1996: 605).

From the above all, consciousness, either good sense or common sense, was a human's internal behavior that inflected a human's mental state on feelings, thoughts or wishes. It was the mental state that was alert, conscious and able to respond stimuli from five senses. Also, it was arisen from various human experiences, which were accumulated, related to each other, and evaluated into human's conscience.

The term 'public' was found with a wide range of meanings, covering things, people, places and actions. There were several meanings from many sources as follows: It was generally referred to people and public properties, especially people's public assets

(Academic Institute, 2538: 826). It was translated into Thai and it meant public places, communities, open, publishing, propagation, such common things as streets, state-owned things, and private-owned things (So Sethabutr, 1987: 5 9 2) , and it was a feeling on interpersonal relationship (Sills. 1972: 567).

In conclusion, the meaning of the term 'public' covered things, people, places and actions that belonged to all people and they had their own rights to utilize, possess and cherish those.

The combination of 'consciousness' and 'public' was given rise to the term 'public consciousness' of 'public mind.' Various different meanings of 'public mind' were recognition of common interests, social awareness, consciousness to the public, etc. The meanings of these words were given by several scholars as follows:

The meaning of 'public mind' was referred to a selfless thought, a desire to assist or to solve problems for other people or the society, an attempt to grasp a chance to really help other people, and optimism based on reality (Kriengsak Charernwongsak. 2000: 17)

'Public consciousness' was specified as the same to 'social consciousness,' meaning recognition and regard of the public or attention to others in a group (Kanittha Nitatpatthana and et al. 1998: 8)

The state of public consciousness was the state of a person's mind to think of common interests, or recognition of an importance of things to be consumed or to be effective to the community such as a forest or community peace (Sakchai Nirantawee. 1998: 57)

According to Phornsak Phongphaew (2 5 4 1) , the term 'consciousness' was defined as the state of mind on emotions, ideas, and desires. The state of mind arose from perception, which was similar to awareness, as a result from evaluation and importance recognition, which was derived from a person's attitude, beliefs, values, opinions, and interest. The term 'conscience' had a close meaning of the term 'belief,' which occurred from accumulation and relation of a person's experiences, and worked to evaluate whatever was important for the mind. Without beliefs, a person's existing experiences stayed only in his memory and no important things distinctly appeared. After evaluation and recognition of importance on that thing, it demonstrated that a person's consciousness of that thing appeared. A

person's conscience was the state of mind before a person's physical behavioral expression. Any human behavior was resulted from 1) attitude 2) social norm 3) habits, and 4) expected consequences after doing that behavior.

The meaning of 'public mind' was attention, participation and bustle in the public affairs, useful to the nation (The National Research Center of Thailand (NRCT). 1999: 14)

The term 'good consciousness in the society' was defined with the term 'society,' referred to one's own community in the society. It was referred to good behavior and participation in community activities, cooperation to monitor one's own community, coordination, devotion of one's labor of money for community's security, accommodation, friendliness and generosity (Boonsom Hansasiriphot. 1999: 71 – 73)

Wirat Khamsrichan (2 001: 6) gave the meaning that public consciousness was the person's thinking process and character from the individual level to the public level. It was a person's love and feeling of public ownership and a person's desire to do useful things rather than to receive from the public.

The meaning of public mind was given by Ladddawan Kasemnet et al (2004: 2 – 3) that a person's willing to attend, bustle and participate in public affairs.

Public mind, according to Chaiwat Sutthirat (2009: 17), was an action with a person's soul of love, worry and generosity toward the others and the society. It was regarded as a person's morality, doing no detriments or problems toward the society and the country. A person had a creative and wholesome mind, worked hard to do benefits for the public, thought a good thought, and thought not to harm others, the society, culture, country and environment. An action and speech from a good thought, a decrease of conflicts and morale boosting for each other were included in public-mindedness for the sake of public happiness.

Characteristics of the Public-minded

The public-minded were characterized by anyone who always gave without no returns and willingly assisted other troublesome

people. They were not selfish or narrow-minded, understood and listened to other persons (rkmissiondel.org. April 30, 2017)

According to Ladddawan Kasemnet et al (2004: 2 – 3), the public-minded were considered from their knowledge, understanding and behaviours as follows:

1. Avoiding any action or utilization that would harm or destroy public properties and regarding as their duties or responsibilities to participate in maintenance and protection of public assets based on their capabilities.

2. Paying respect to other people's rights to utilize public properties, not taking possession of public assets forcefully and not blocking other people's opportunities to employ those public things.

According to Yutthana Warunapitikul (1999: 181 – 183), a public-minded person was characterized by the following traits:

1. Devotion, dedication and social responsibility. A person did not only practice upon his right, but also perform to assist or provide other people with services in order to develop the society. For example, if members of parliament (MPs) that were responsible for people's demand and interest were needed, people had to pay attention to and follow up them. People not only put ballots to vote for candidates, but also devoted time to participate in local politics and in various political institutions.

2. Respect to differences between people. In the trend of individualism, people in the society were characterized as self-blocked, disbelieved, picky about identical persons, and disinterested in politics. As a result, they could not perform social mission for the public interest. When there was a conflict, the majority was chosen to culminate that conflict, but it was not useful for the public interest.

3. Consideration of the public interest. People in the society had to think over politics as an affair for publicity and morality.

4. Performance of acts. The criticism of existing problems could not alleviate the situation, but an act had to be performed to clear up those problems.

How to Instill Public-mindedness

The way to create public-mindedness (rkmissiondel.org. April 30, 2017) was referred to nurture responsibility in one's own. If without public-mindedness, various problems would appear continuously. Initially, public-mindedness could be easily nurtured in one's own as follows:

1. A person who had self-discipline was an optimist eager to willingly participate in the society and knew his duty and responsibility for himself and other people.

2. A person who paid attention to environment always recognized

that he was a part of the society; therefore, he had to know how to maintain and protect environment as possible.

3. A person who thought over effects, good and bad, on the society coordinated in all aspects and willingly solved existing problems.

4. A person who lived a moral life had a happy life and made the society suitable for living if he could follow religions teachings as every religion taught people to be good humans.

The instillation of morality and ethics was described by Duangduean Phanthumanawin (1995: 77) that children from infancy to before 10 years of age were very sensitive to nurture and instillation of morality, ethics and culture because they were still 'pliable and obedient.' Therefore, children were appropriately treated upon their physical development, especially their mental development. This became a way to protect problems that would occur when they entered the teenage years and adulthood.

Significance of Public Mindedness

Sompong Singhapon (1999: 1 6) said consciousness was a person's internal sentiment, which was arisen from learning. When consciousness was arisen, it was very difficult to come to an en d or eradicate. A public-minded person would perform properly and make useful affairs based on his consciousness.

The association of people in the society was based on dependent relationship and people in the society played different roles

and duties. If people in the society were without public-mindedness, absence of public-mindedness would affect not only an individual, a family and an organization, but also communities at the national and international levels as follows: (Paiboon Watthanasiritham and Sangkhom Sanchorn. 2000: 22 – 29)

1. The effects at the individual level led to following problems: troubles to one's self and other people.

2. The effects at the family level led to following problems: the decrease of harmony in the family and scramble and quarrel within the family.

3. The effects at the organizational level led to following problems: sectarianism in the organization, selfishness and contention, misappropriation of the organizational assets, and regression of the organization and reduction of work efficiency and quality.

In the organizational level, according to Wirun Tangcharern (2004: 2 – 3), executives or leaders had to possess several qualifications and an important qualification was public-mindedness, which meant the leader had to be a person who sacrificed oneself for other persons and the society, who adhered to the public interest, who devoted his physical and mental powers and his belief, or devoted even his material belongings. If the leader was without public-mindedness and became selfish, he would disadvantage the organization, and put his group's and companions' benefits before public interests and at the same time other problems would definitely occur to the organization.

At the community level, the problems were as follows:

1 . The community was weak without development because people left each other alone and the situation of the community was also the same without development. The more the time passed by, the more it was deteriorated.

2. The crime rate was higher in the community.

3 . The absence of the leader as the center of people's minds appeared because people in the community thought their own problems were significant and there was any person voluntary to develop the society because they were afraid of money loss and time waste, including fear of other people's blame.

At the national level, if people in the country lacked of public-mindedness, there would be the following problems:

1. The frequency of national crises, which were very difficult to deal with and they were led to destruction of public properties and resources.

2. The underdevelopment or backwardness of the country because people in the society were not powerful and any measure proposed by the country's leader would be ineffective without participation of such people.

3. Sectarianism, particularism, competition and corruption.

At the global level, if the global citizens were without public-mindedness, exploitation between countries would give rise to various following problems:

1. The weapon collection among countries because they were not confident of each other and feared attack from other countries; therefore, they attempted to occupy powerful weapons of mass destruction for threatening. When there was a conflict between them, they often used destructive armed forces to settle that problem.

2. The persecution, grab or domination of international trade because they tried all ways to take advantage of weaker countries in trade and to grant them no opportunities to develop.

3. The contempt and disdain of ethnic, racial and foreign people because they saw other nationalities and races inferior to them and they underestimated or were hostile to other nations.

Forms or Elements of Public Mind

Forms of public mind or public consciousness were different upon the age of informants (Sompong Singhapon. 1999: 15 - 16) as follows:

1. Self-consciousness was a conscious mind to develop oneself, and to make oneself more perfect. For longer time, Thai education had been aimed at instillation of such a conscious mind that either worked or did not work upon any situation. It was a classic conscious mind – diligence, responsibility, perseverance – which all the societies identically attempted to generate and which had been instilled and nurtured for a long time in Thai society.

2 . Others-oriented consciousness was involved with relationship between members in any society. It was referred to sympathy, generosity, harmony, etc. It was also something that most Thai people were nurtured from a traditional basis of Thai cultures and it was not difficult to create.

3 . Social or public consciousness was a conscious mind that recognized importance of association or relationship of people in the group. The public consciousness on economy, politics, environment, health, etc., was basically anything that did not occur in Thai people, but it should be urgently developed.

Factors Leading to Public Mind

The public consciousness or social consciousness was based on the influence of the following internal and external factors (Paiboon Wattanasiritham and Sangkhom Sanchon. 2000: 13):

1. External factors were related to the state of human relationship. The social state was a profound condition effective to various aspects of human conscience. It consisted of different forms of conscience because it was gradually nurtured, trained and accumulated in the section of human perception under social surroundings, starting from parents, relatives, cousins, friends, teachers, mass media, ordinary people, to organizations, traditions and cultures, beliefs, laws and regulations, religions and surroundings of mass communication. Besides, it was also generated in the section controlling human conscience. It was involved with a person's experience influencing human conscience, consisting of going to school, working, watching dramas, listening to conversations, perceiving current events and driving through traffic jams.

2. Internal factors were involved with an individual's analytical thinking in consideration of values and blisses, which were effective to a person's behaviour and practice, especially mental performance, in order to discipline oneself. In addition, it was given rise from perception from learning, looking, and thinking and taken to consider whichever conscience was required to train and accumulate.

However, it was unable to make a conclusion that human consciousness arose only from internal or external factors because

everything was interrelated. Naturally appeared and touched a person's emotion, consciousness from external factors became heedlessly natural consciousness. Nevertheless, consciousness from internal factors was derived from a person's intentional selection, generated by oneself from internal and external factors, and interrelated simultaneously. So, the development of human consciousness had to be performed from internal and external factors.

Public Mind against Covid-19

From the above all, public mind or public consciousness was very closely related to all actions based on public responsibility without particularism. And under the crisis of covid-19 pandemic, it was believed that public-mindedness would be able to deal with such a crisis, which was regarded as one of the most destructive disasters. If people in the country were packed with public consciousness, all the existing problems could be managed and controlled because everybody put public interest before their advantages.

According to the Covid-19 outbreak, an individual should perform themselves upon their public-mindedness by (1) closely realizing, monitoring and not being worried about the Covid-19 situation, (2) rigidly performing themselves on public health instructions, (3) avoiding close contact with other people or crowds, (4) wearing gloves and a mask amidst the crowds, and (5) staying home when he/she felt sick except to receive medical care.

In case of at-risk persons with public-mindedness, they should participate in coronavirus prevention by (1) informing themselves to authorities without concealing, uncovering or avoiding the quarantine, (2) not meeting anybody during self-quarantine and, (3) in any case, being ready to coordinate with public health officials.

With public consciousness, the persons infected with the Covid-19 disease should be treated in the hospital, follow instructions of doctors and nurses, and be careful to meet with other persons for prevention of virus spread. In terms of doctors, nurses and public health officials, under public-mindedness, all patients should be treated in accordance with the principle of human right without discrimination, be

careful and take care of themselves hygienically, and follow news and publish simple and direct information.

Based on public consciousness, the mass media should closely keep up on current events of covid-19, inform the situations in reality and not give any report that would make audience panic. The involved state agencies should coordinate with all related public and private agencies, prepare to deal with various events in emergency, and not do anything that would panic the people. The government should monitor and assess Covid-19 situation, establish an ad hoc committee to analyze and find the ways to solve critical problems, and coordinate with at-risk countries to prevent from the coronavirus spread.

Summary

Apart from coordination of all sections in the society, based on public-mindedness, it was believed that humans around the world strive and pass Covid-19 crisis rapidly without enormous loss of life. In addition, humankind had a new norm to deal with various risks of destructive disasters as a result of public-mind- based cooperation. If all parties recognized and understood dangers from disasters and did want the public to obtain severe effects, their simultaneous participation would assist to do with several crises at a higher rate.

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