Covid-19 and the Social Construction of Reality in Jordan

Taking Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann to the Realm of Social Power

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Abstract

Almost all nations are struggling to slow down the transmission of Covid-19 by restricting large gatherings and close social interactions. However, it is not expected that people will stop all social gatherings and interactions voluntarily. This situation requires the construction of a new social reality that compels people to abandon their traditional practices, particularly in countries such as Jordan that have a traditional social order and strong bonding social capital. Nevertheless, Jordan had the lowest rates of Covid-19 in the Middle East during the first four months of the pandemic, because its government used its power to impose restrictions and new regulations. However, the situation has become one of the worst cases in the entire world after the government eased its restrictions. The example of Jordan provides strong evidence that the social construction of reality sometimes requires coercive intervention. Thus, this article reconsiders and extends Berger and Luckmann's theory of social construction by examining it in the realm of social power. The theory includes three significant processes of social construction: *externalization*, *objectivation*, and *internalization* that should consider the concept of social power to extend the range of its powerful explanation.

Keywords

Covid-19 – coronavirus – sociological theory – Jordan

1 Introduction

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus infection Covid-19 originated from the Hunan seafood market in Wuhan city of China in December 2019, and within a few months it has turned into a global health emergency (Wang et al., 2020). It should be noted that the virus is socially constructed, because the very high transmissibility of the virus among people via close interaction is responsible for its worldwide spread.

Jordan is located in the eastern Mediterranean region, surrounded by Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Israel with its occupied Palestinian territory. Jordan moved toward modernization six decades ago. However, traditional features such as extended family, clans, and tribalism are still highly prevalent. 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 of Jordanians, with subsequent high rates of deaths. However, the total number of cases until Sept. 11, 2020 was only 2945, with 21 deaths (Worldometer, 2021). At that time, in contrast with other Middle East countries, Jordan had one of the lowest number of cases and deaths (detailed contrast will come later). The Covid situation was managed very effectively by the government of Jordan. The government imposed strict rules and restrictions that challenged the routine of everyday social life and redesigned the social construction of reality.

What has happened in Jordan in the era of Covid-19 raises major questions about the factors and dynamics that have constructed this social reality. Peter Berger and Luckmann's 1966 theory, *the social construction of reality*, continues to be one of the most cited theories in the research that focuses on social construction and establishing new realities (Stees, 2016; Sica, 2016; Weinberg, 2014; Harris, 2010). A good explanation is that the authors address both the dynamic process of how rules become established throughout the spontaneous routine activity, and the hard fact that, once established, institutionalized rules become taken for granted, legitimized, and hard to change (Hirsch and Boal, 2000).

The theory of Berger and Luckmann lacks a critical aspect in the social construction of reality by ignoring the role of power and powermongers. For this reason, Sica (2016) stated that: "Yet after Berger and Luckmann's book appeared, the knife of sociological analysis was dulled, as the sociology of knowledge steadily shrank into a small-bore branch of social psychology, with comforting emphasis upon micro-interactions in the 'everyday' world" (38).

Hence, the main goal of this article is to reconsider Berger and Luckmann's theory by showing how the social construction of reality in Jordan after

Covid-19, which prevented many deaths and infections at the beginning of the pandemic, was established by coercive power that reined in spontaneous and routine social activity, thereby controlling the sociocultural context of the virus, and how the scene has been changed dramatically after coercive power was eased, to be one of the worst situations of Covid-19 infections.

To achieve this goal, the article focuses on two points: first, the sociocultural reality of Jordan, and second, the social construction of reality in Jordan after Covid-19. The social construction contains three processes according to the theory of Berger and Luckmann: 1 – externalization of social reality, 2 – objectivation of social reality, and 3 – internalization of social reality.

2 Sociocultural Reality of Jordan: Favorable Sociocultural Context of Covid-19 Outbreak

Since the founding of Jordan in 1921, tribes, clans, and the extended family have played an important role in regulating everyday life. Therefore, the modernization of Jordanian society was and continues to be nominal. Although forms of the tribe and the clan have broken down due to the absence of the modes of production upon which they formerly thrived, these forms have continued to flourish on the level of the ideology, practices, relationships, and value systems that have permeated modern structures and institutions (Abu Ruman, 2000; Al Muhaisen, 2005).

This situation consecrated primary relationships across society that include kinship, intense face-to-face interactions, social closeness, and social commitments. Despite the predominance of the nuclear family for the last three decades, close ties among kin persist; the household into which one is born is the most important social group they will ever belong to, providing protection, shelter, food, income, status, and honor (Clark et al., 2010).

These strong relationships do not end with marriage for either spouse. The rules and ties of the natal family are reproduced through several mechanisms: young men tend to live close to their natal family after marriage; they keep in touch with the natal family, specifically on Friday, the Muslim holy day, which is a day of gatherings and community; and 31% of young men marry within their kinship group (National Council for Family Affairs, 2018). It should be noted that this concentration on family ties and extended family relationships makes Jordanian society a very cohesive network, with implications for everything from marriage to politics. This situation is prevalent across the country including cities neighborhood, villages, and camps. Therefore, hundreds,

sometimes thousands of people attend and participate in burials, during which they interact and gather closely, and after burial each attendee usually will hug and kiss the bereaved. Afterwards people file into the hall (Diwan) of the grieving family's home, which is usually open for three days to all family members, extended family, friends, and neighbors to visit when possible. Non-family members attend for a period on one of the days. Furthermore, in weddings parties, the bride and groom invite many relatives, friends, and neighbors. On this occasion Jordanians engage in full body interaction, which consists of shaking hands, hugging, being closely seated, dancing together, and congratulating the bride and the groom with handshakes or hugs.

Research about social capital in Jordan reveals that the close-knit network to which people belong provides them with all they need, such as money, security, status, reputation, and support in crises, which is why they continue to meet and gather (Al Hourani, 2012, Tweissi, 2013). During daily interactions, Jordanians express intimacy through some form of bodily interaction such as touching, physical closeness, shaking hands, hugging, and talking in close quarters.

These strong ties and physical proximity appear in most of the traditions observed by Jordanians such as at weddings, funerals, private and public lunches or dinners, neighborly visits, and family gatherings. Additionally, crowds gather at the small groceries, cafeterias, and bakeries that are ubiquitous. Furthermore, Jordanians tend to live in apartment buildings of eight to twelve apartments, with each apartment containing an average of six persons. Residents of these buildings constitute an interactive network, sharing stairs and elevators, exchanging tools and food, as well as visiting each other often.

In these settings, Jordanians believe that their loved ones cannot transmit the virus. Jordanians are fatalistic and believe, based on their faith, that all events are predetermined and therefore inevitable, because if Allah wanted them to be infected by Covid-19, nothing could protect them. This conviction explains why, from the start of the pandemic, Jordanians were certain that they were safe from it.

These examples show that the nature of social life in Jordan makes it easy for Covid-19 to spread. As WHO has recommended, social distancing is a powerful strategy to reduce the risk of spread (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020). Social distancing is practiced by keeping distance from others and reducing the overall number of people one comes in contact with. Thus, the tenets of social distancing are difficult to observe against the sociocultural context in Jordan, which is marked by physically close and intense interactions and relationships.

3 Externalization: Creation of Coronavirus Reality

For Berger and Luckmann (1966), externalization means that human beings can create their social world. They can also recreate their social world within all aspects of social activity. From this point of view, they say that: "social order is a human product, or, more precisely, an ongoing human production" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, 69).

Because this process of creating one's social world is shared by social actors who exist in a certain social context, the reality of everyday life further presents itself as an intersubjective world (Berger, 1990). The idea of intersubjectivity means that social reality is external and represents an emergent ongoing structure. Furthermore, externalization shows that human beings can control their environment and make a positive intervention that provides a stable environment (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Externalization of a new social reality does not always go as smoothly as suggested by Berger and Luckmann's theory. As soon as news about Coronavirus spread across the world, the governments of different countries banned all types of religious, cultural, social, scientific, athletic, and political mass gathering events (Chakraborty and Maity, 2020). Likewise, in Jordan, keeping people safe required the government of Jordan to use its maximum power to establish the new reality and guidelines necessitated by the outbreak of Covid-19.

The first case in Jordan was identified on March 2nd of 2020 in a student who had come from Italy. But the first case that caused the outbreak of the virus was of a man who traveled from Spain to attend his daughter's wedding on March 13th in Irbid, a city in northern Jordan. Nobody other than the man himself knew that he was infected. Despite that, he attended the wedding, which included more than 350 attendees (CNN Arabia, 2020). As a result, the man infected 85 persons and caused one death. This situation exemplifies the fact that bonding social capital is very strong and extensive in Jordan. Furthermore, this situation shows that based on judgment and religious beliefs, Jordanians had denied the probability of being infected by the virus, behaving as if the Coronavirus would never affect them.

Unlike the community, which remains traditional, the government of Jordan is rational and advanced. The government launched many programs to deal with infections among arrivals to the country, in addition to designating hospitals to receive infected persons. After the infections at the wedding party, the government imposed tough restrictions to limit the flow of the bonding social capital that constituted a favorable environment for the spread of the Coronavirus. These restrictions started with announcing a lockdown on March

17th, followed by a comprehensive curfew that kept large social gatherings to a minimum.

During the curfew, Jordanian government employed preventive measures that restricted travel outside of the country. These measures started with banning travelers from specific countries such as China, South Korea, and Italy to enter Jordan. Jordanian travelers were obligated to a 14-day quarantine upon their return. Furthermore, beginning on the 17th of March 2020 any persons holding religious or social events would be severely fined. A critical decision was additionally announced that suspended all public and private sector work, except those who worked in the health sector or were essential needs providers such as grocery stores and pharmacies (Al-Tammemi, 2020).

It should be noted that the government used its power to control the situation; its most powerful tool is the Jordanian army that is highly respected and obeyed by all Jordanians. Those who violated the curfew were arrested and fined.

Along with the government's field work, much has been done by the formal and private mass media. Mass media has worked on many fronts; the police, army, and epidemics committee and the Ministry of Health have all worked very hard, convincing people that the effects of the virus are serious by hosting specialist physicians, and informing people how to stay safe by practicing social distancing, wearing masks and gloves, and frequently sanitizing and washing hands.

There has been a real confrontation between bonding social capital and the social urges of the population versus the rationality of government and its apparatus. The left side of the model in Figure 1 shows that power, rationality, and information-based policies are the most important mechanisms for creating a new social reality. The right side of the model shows that the new reality is maintained by using power to enforce these new regulations of social reality. The main idea is 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 not able to escape from their social relationship networks, which overburden them with commitments and obligations. In order to take voluntary preventive action to break down the vicious circle of practicing the old habits, people need to be very rational and must have a strong social conscious.

Given there were no new cases, after May 1st, 2020, the government lifted its national curfew and lockdown, allowing people resume normal life aside from still having to maintain social distancing and mask policies. Between May and August of 2020, Jordan witnessed few new cases. In June of 2020, the Minister

FIGURE 1 Externalization of Covid-19 New Reality

of Health announced there was no novel Coronavirus in Jordan and no more internal transmission of the virus within Jordan (Al Bayan, 2020).

4 Jordan's Success in the Regional Context

In comparison with nearby countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon towards the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak, one can see that Jordan had a privileged situation. However, we must take in account that these countries have poor political and economic situation.

While Jordan registered about 127 cases but no deaths on March 23rd, 2020, these countries were concerned about the virus due to regular contacts with the people of Iran. In Iran, 23,000 cases of infection have been reported and more than 1,800 persons have died. All of these countries declared national emergencies by mid-March, but did not act as swiftly to ban border entries. (Arab Center Washington DC, March 24, 2020).

As well, comparing Jordan situation with nearby countries such as Israel, reveals that Jordan has a privileged situation. Israel registered the first case of on Covid-19 on February 2nd, 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 21st, 2020 the total number of infected cases in Jordan was 425, and 136 cases in recovery, 282 cases were recovered, and 7 deaths. Although Saudi Arabia employed lockdowns and curfews, on 24 April 2020 Saudi Arabia which shares its northern borders with Jordan reached a total number of cases 13,930 with 121 deaths (Arab News, 24 April 2020). It should be noted that Saudi Arabia

has a strong national security forces and economy, even it has the same social and cultural characteristics such as Jordan. However, I would argue that the preventive procedures that implemented by Jordanian government was more acute regardless the heavy impact on economy.

Four factors lie behind Jordan's success in controlling Covid-19 when compared to other countries. These factors underscore the interaction between government policy orientations and the culture and attitudes of Jordanians. The first of these factors was the swift, aggressive, and rigorous implementation of concrete measures in the areas of education, travel, worships, and gatherings. This contrasts sharply with response measures in neighboring countries. According to Santucci (2020):

Data compiled by Oxford University Blavatnik's School of Government rendered 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. In comparison, scores for bordering Iraq and Lebanon floated around 80 percent.

The second factor was the high level of coordination among the relevant institutions operating under the umbrella of the National Center for Security and Crisis Management (NCSCM). Established in 2015 under the Royal Court, the NCSCM was charged with coordinating and unifying efforts by national institutions during national crises (NCSCM, 2021). The NCSCM was the central source of information for Jordanians regarding new cases, recoveries, deaths, total cases, governmental plans and procedures, health protection measures, etc. This high level of coordination and the ready availability of pandemic-related information prevented any contradictions in the level of the collective consciousness that guided Jordanians at the beginning of the pandemic. The centralization of decision-making and the flow of information in addition to the transparency and clarity of government's procedures led to a high level of public's compliance with the measures and boosted the public's trust in government. A nation-wide poll conducted in 2020 by the University of Jordan's Strategic Studies Centre indicated that 92 percent of those surveyed from the general public and 94 percent of leaders surveyed believed that the government had succeeded in controlling Covid-19 (The Jordan Times, Jun 24 2020). Furthermore, collaboration between the government and social networks such as Facebook played a pivotal role in enhancing awareness, disseminating information and knowledge, and conveying health and safety recommendations to the public (Al-Tammemi, 2020).

The third factor was that Jordan implemented stringent travel measures to control Covid-19. The country had to do this because its geographical location

makes it a hub for regional and international travel connections in the region. Had such travel measures come late, as was the case in some countries in the region, Jordan would have had a serious economic crisis that would have resulted from the spread of Covid-19. Jordan also implemented stringent measures on the gatherings and movement of refugees in the country. In contrast to neighboring countries, Jordan has a sizable number of refugees, particularly Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Most of these refugees live outside refugee camps, about half a million Iraqi and 1.6 million Syrian. 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. Thus, the government found it necessary to carry out stringent measures on controlling the movement and gatherings of refugees while at the same time providing them with daily necessities.

The fourth factor was the unprecedented coordination among state security agencies that were supervised and monitored by King Abdulla. The involvement of the King himself coupled with this coordination imparted a sense of urgency and seriousness in the battle against Covid-19.

The initial efforts and measures taken by the Jordanian Government to control Covid-19 were considered the most stringent in the whole region. In view of these efforts, Jordan succeeded in controlling the spread of the disease. However, this success would not have been achieved without the positive attitudes and responses of the Jordanians. In the cultural context of the Middle East, Jordanians are well known for their magnanimity and moral commitments. These values motivated them to reciprocate the efforts of the government with compliance with health regulations and with respect for the good of all. Furthermore, Jordanians have internalized the symbolic significant meaning of the country's Defense Law. They know very well that the issuance of those regulations signifies that Covid-19 poses an existential threat to national security or public safety and that, therefore, they had to cooperate with the government by complying with those regulations.

However, numbers of infected people jumped from 0 to over 40 new cases per day in early August, particularly in areas where strong social ties are the norm. On August 10th, the Minister of Health stated that some Jordanians avoided being tested for Coronavirus and that others sprayed alcohol into their noses in order to test negative. This is why the government-imposed Defense Order 11 that compels citizens to wear masks and practice social distancing in all public places, with additional fines imposed on violators (RT Online, 2020).

This situation shows that there is a "gap of consciousness" between government and community. This gap shows that using power to control behavior

is not sufficient to create new practices that continue to be adhered to voluntarily over time. This is even more evident if government orders were only imposed for a short time, as was the case in Jordan.

One of the most sophisticated and distinctive characteristics that shows the effect of social ties expanding across the country is that the infected people in the north of Jordan have infected other people in the south, or an infected person who came from outside Jordan has infected many people in many regions within a short period of time. This situation made the work of the National Committee for Epidemics very hard.

5 Objectivation: Recognizing the Rules and Effects

The second process of the construction of social reality is objectivation. Objectivation is “the process by which the externalized products of human activity attain the character of objectivity” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 78). Through this process “the product acts back upon the producer”.

At this moment, the new social reality confronts the individual as undeniable fact. Regardless of whether or not the individual likes it, the new reality exists and is resistant to any attempts to change or evade it. Since social reality is external, objective individuals cannot understand it except by learning about it. This means that the new social reality has its own emergent features, indicators, and information (Latour, 2005). Furthermore, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) point out, the new social reality “has coercive power over individual, both in itself, by sheer force of its facticity, and through the control mechanisms that are usually attached to it” (78).

Alongside lockdown and curfew that are imposed by the government, Jordanians started seeing and hearing about infected people who were admitted to hospitals and were seriously ill. This reality convinced the large majority of people that Coronavirus is both real and very dangerous. Jordan registered the first Coronavirus death on March 27th of 2020 in an 80-year-old woman (Royanews, 2020). On March 29th of 2020, the second death was registered as a man aged 70 (CNN Arabic, 2020). The rising deaths have made the virus real in the minds of the Jordanian public.

Two main factors have played a central role in establishing the reality of Coronavirus, which in turn led to an increase in Jordanians obeying the orders and regulations of the government: First, 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 development of specific mechanisms of social control is very necessary for objectivation. Hence, it should be noted that Jordan has applied one of the world's strictest lockdowns. Markets, factories, restaurants, and mosques were closed for two and a half months (The National, 2020) and movement between cities and governorates was banned for a long time. About 1657 Jordanians were arrested for violating curfew (Euronews, 2020). These arrests sent a message to all citizens that their government was serious in its regulations, and thus most Jordanians felt compelled to follow the rules.

Second, the Minister of Health has played a special role in influencing people's awareness and emotions. He has presented himself as a charismatic leader capable of keeping his country safe. In the battle against Covid-19, the cooperative attitude of the Jordanian people and their enthusiasm were evident also in the popularity of the Health Minister. Local football stars stated that the charisma of Sa'ad Jaber the Minister of Health had overshadowed their football stardom. His gentle manner and direct speech to the citizens found their way to their hearts. When he appeared in public domains, people would rush to take selfie photos with him. Jordanians circulated his photos through the social media. People waited eagerly for his daily evening TV appearance (Al Ghad, 2020). The minister's popularity in Jordan travelled beyond the country's borders. Thus, on April 15, 2020, the American Newspaper CS Monitor carried on its front page the following headline: "From healing hearts to stealing hearts: Jordan's 'Dr. Fauci.'" A passage then reads:

Each day, Jordanians under coronavirus lockdown turn to one man to get the facts – and soon. While Americans have Anthony Fauci, Jordanians have a "nation's doctor" of their own: Health Minister Saad Jaber. While Dr. Fauci is on bumper stickers and bobbleheads, this Jordanian physician is the subject of love ballads, poetry, and portraits.

LUCK, 2020

He has showed deep fidelity in his job by providing people with real information and by his field work. He was able to convince people about the dangers of Coronavirus and the importance of following the government's directions and regulations.

Furthermore, King Abdulla has played a significant role by heading many virtual meetings to monitor the situation and to ensure that the government procedures are being implemented properly. Through these meetings the king has told Jordanians to observe social distancing and other government regulations (Kingabdulla, 2020).

In his address to the Jordanian people on March 23rd, 2020 King Abdulla said, "My brothers and sisters, my family, my people, and my source of fortitude each and every one of you is a soldier of this nation, each in your own post." (Al Sharafat, 2020). The King's address was designed to prepare Jordanians for the stringent health measures that would subsequently be implemented. It was also to legitimize those measures. In consequence, Jordanians expressed their respect for the King's orientation. This respect was evidenced by their cooperation and by meeting soldiers, sent around the country to combat Covid-19, with roses.

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.

Moreover, stigma has played a significant role in the emergent features of the new reality. In the context of the traditional social capital networks, infection with Covid-19 has become a stigma. Infected people want to hide their illness because it has been stigmatized. This situation created a real barrier against Jordan's National Epidemics Committee revealing new cases, and uninfected persons tended to follow the prevention regulations strictly to avoid being stigmatized more than to avoid contracting Covid-19 itself. The effects of stigma show that the new reality of Covid-19 impacts the people, and governments are realizing and harnessing this coercive power in the interests of public health.

Thus, Figure 2 shows that this process starts from recognizing the effects of Covid-19 based on power of government regulations, mass media, and stigmatization. Government regulations were imposed by coercion and people who violated these regulations were sanctioned. Mass media played a central role in the objectification process by providing real-time information about new cases and deaths from Covid-19, in addition to providing people with information about the new regulations set in place by the government. Stigmatization shows its effectiveness in that people infected with Covid-19 feel ashamed in their current cultural context.

FIGURE 2 Power and Objectivation of Covid-19 Reality

6 Internalization: Reproduction and Legitimization of the New Reality

Internalization occurs when people acquire and accept the knowledge of the objectivated structures that they have produced. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain: “This is the knowledge that is learned in the course of socialization and that mediates the internalization within individual consciousness of the objectivated structures of the social world” (83).

The process of socialization means that people cope with the expectations of existing reality and reproduce it. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain: “Knowledge about society is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality” (84).

The internalized knowledge keeps people acquainted with meanings and control of the social world that implies legitimized procedures. Berger and Luckmann (1966) compare internalization with “educational process” (87), which develops a corresponding canopy of legitimations. These legitimations are necessary to protect and reproduce the new social order. Moreover, accepting, reproducing, and protecting the new order means that the established sanctions that developed with its regulations are also acceptable and legitimized.

Regarding Covid-19 in Jordan, Jordanians have shown an adaptive response and internalization of the new reality of Coronavirus. Weddings are very important social occasions in Jordanian culture and are preceded by many preparations and great effort. This event has changed greatly over this period of time: it has become more intimate and is attended only by the immediate families of the bride and groom, with friends, neighbors, and more distant relatives now being excluded.

Other traditional events at which people used to gather was during condolence visits and burials. These occasions also are now restricted to members of the immediate family. Despite the fact that condolence visits and burials are longstanding traditions based on collective participation and cooperation, people now express their sympathy through social media.

Restrictions have been implemented in other social areas as well. Jordanians pray in mosques by keeping social distance even on Friday prayers, which are attended by the large majority of Muslims in Jordan. In addition, group visits and banquets among relatives and friends have been reduced to the minimum. In the markets and malls, at formal and informal gatherings, Jordanians are following social distancing regulations and wearing masks – not shaking hands, hugging, or kissing as before.

Covid-19 has had many ramifications in terms of its direct and indirect economic effects on people resulting from the comprehensive lockdown (Evans, 2020). However, it should be noted that Coronavirus has reduced the financial burdens that people have long suffered from and has freed them from burdensome social commitments. Because this has coincided with Jordanians' preferences, they have internalized the norms of this new reality and will continue to carry it out even once this epidemic is over.

The theory of Berger and Luckmann overlooked an important question regarding internalization process: why do agents internalize the externalized and objectified reality? In this case, many reasons have to do with the cultural and social context in addition to the interests of people. Moreover, there was a dialectical integration between people's awareness, responsibility, interests, and the external restrictions of government.

As mentioned previously, the Jordanian government achieved total control over the country through the spread of armed forces (Al-Tammemi, 2020). This strategy was very important as decision makers realized that Jordanians respect, trust, love, and feel secure in the army's presence. The army played a very important role in controlling the movement of people and providing them with services. It should be noted that the positive relationship between

the army and the general population stems from a time in the country's history where the military was the largest institution that hired people, granting them ranks of honor. Hence, military is still regarded as the trusted guardian of society.

At the same time, King Abdulla II urged people to follow the regulations of government, describing them as soldiers each in his own post. King Abdulla's speech was very important at that time because it showed to people that the situation is dangerous, and they must be responsible by assenting to the restrictions. After that, it became very urgent for Jordanians to meet the expectations of the king to show their loyalty and belonging.

Furthermore, Jordanians were frightened by the virus and becoming infected. The images and videos that came from Wuhan were horrible, and there was much contradicting and misleading information about the nature of the virus, how people could protect themselves from infection, and how to treat themselves if they were infected. This uncertainty convinced people that the procedures of the government were necessary and that they had to obey the regulations. A study conducted during curfew found that, "59.9 of respondents expressed great trust in the ability of government to handle the outbreak, [and as many] as 94.9% agreed that lockdown was necessary to prevent the spread of the virus" (Abdel Jalil, et al. 2020).

Moreover, Jordanians thought that the curfew period would not be long, and that regulations would be removed as soon as the virus was put to an end. There was an ambiguity with the spread period of the virus, however, people thought that virus will last for a short time. This situation coincided with the promises of government to meet all needs and demands of people, including their daily needs such as drinking water, bread, oil, and medicine.

A survey conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies in the University of Jordan showed that 91% of Jordanians are satisfied with all that the government has done to deal with Covid-19. About 92% of Jordanians supported the decision of defense law and curfew, specifically restricting movement between governorates, and 85% of Jordanians thought that the government handled the crisis well. About 78% of Jordanians thought that mass media covered the crisis honestly and professionally (Center for Strategic Studies, 2020).

These findings show that Jordanians approve of the policies put in place to deal with the new reality of Covid-19. The survey was conducted on March 29th, 2020 when the government used its maximum power to control Covid-19. This shows the role of power in internalizing and legitimizing the new reality, an aspect that was overlooked by Berger and Luckmann's theory.

FIGURE 3 Power Internalization and Legitimizing Social Reality

7 Cases Explosion: Bonding Social Capital Challenging Using Power

As mentioned earlier, as soon as the government lifted its restrictions, the number of new Covid cases soared; this means that using the power of the government to create a new reality is a positive and desirable move. However, internalization of new rules, awareness, and responsibility is very necessary for sustainable mitigating of Covid-19.

The main goal of the lockdown and curfew was to mitigate the spread of the virus. This is because Jordan has a poor economy, and the country lacked effective antiviral medications and vaccines. Hence, the sudden and quick increase in cases and deaths will bring chaos and cause a collapse in society. The government realized it would not be able to maintain its privileged situation, however, this was just a stage of the long-term strategy to prepare the infrastructure and essential services to confront the pandemic.

Despite that Jordan reached zero new Covid-19 cases by May of 2020, it reached one of the highest rates of new cases six months later. Why did this happen? The economic, social and psychological effects associated with curfew and lockdown were challenging to the people and the government.

All measures of restricting social gatherings and face to face interactions employed by government were challenging to the flow of the bonding social capital. This situation maximized the feelings of boredom, anxiety, frustration, and worry due to loss of usual social routine and activity (Abdel Jalil, 2020). Hence, as expected, after the government facilitated movement to Jordanians, they were eager to restore their daily social life to how it was pre-lockdown. It should also be noted that not all districts and regions were under direct control and oversight of government. Inhabitants of small villages and deserts were living their normal social lives the entirety of the lockdown, also meaning the government did not necessarily have accurate numbers of Covid-19

cases. Samrah et al. (2020) concluded that “the strict outbreak response measures applied at early stages probably contributed to the lenient nature of this outbreak” (p. 4).

Covid-19 caused large-scale effects on the Jordanian economy (Al Sufy and Abu Afifa, 2020). Curfew had a significant impact on livelihoods, businesses, and the economics of everyday life, causing great pressure on families’ budgets and basic needs. These struggles pushed the government to ease lockdown measures and open the economy. Jordanians gave work an extreme priority, even at the expense of safety, given the negative economic impacts caused by the country’s restrictions. An online survey of 12,084 respondents conducted by UNDP about the impact of curfew on households across Jordan showed that only 6.8% reported that they were still employed, (58.6%) of respondents lost their entire income, and (72.5%) of respondents faced difficulties regarding covering basic needs (rent, food, heating, and medicine) (UNDP, May, 2020).

These findings indicate that government was unable to balance peoples’ needs while mitigating the Covid-19 outbreak, lowering people’s expectations, and made them desperate and bored. Jordanians recognized that Covid-19 will have long-term impact on their livelihoods, requiring them to manage their individual situations.

On one hand, the government started reducing the restrictions they imposed, opening borders with necessary regulations to keep people safe. The government employed partial curfews which were less in mitigating the spread of the virus spread, and parliament elections facilitated gatherings, showing irresponsibility from both the candidates and the electors. On the other hand, people thought that they are safe and the situation under control. Hence, they started violating regulations and having less motivation for protecting themselves. This situation caused the doubling of new cases every two weeks until the total number became 143,000 on November 16th of 2020 (Sky News, Nov. 16, 2020).

During the curfew, the Jordanian government employed preventive measures that restricted movement throughout and outside the country. These measures started with banning travelers from specific countries to enter Jordan including China, South Korea, and Italy. Jordanian travelers were obligated to a 14 day quarantine. Furthermore, on the 17th of March 2020 religious, and social events were banned with extreme fines. In addition, a critical discussion announced that suspended all public and private sectors except those who work in health sector and essential needs providers such as food, water, and pharmacies (Al-Tammemi, 2020).

TABLE 1 Total Monthly New Cases and Deaths in Jordan 2020–2021

Monthly moving average	Monthly new cases 2020	Monthly new cases 2021	Monthly deaths 2020	Monthly deaths 2021
Jan 31	0	326855	0	4316
Feb 31	0	391090	0	4701
March 2	1	402282	0	4739
March 31	274		5	
April 30	453		8	
May 31	739		9	
Jun 30	1132		9	
Jul 31	1191		11	
Aug 31	2034		15	
Sep 30	11825		61	
Oct 31	72607		829	
Nov 30	219430		2751	
Dec 31	294494		3834	

SOURCE: DEVELOPED BY THE AUTHOR ACCORDING THE WORLDOMETERS WEBSITE, [HTTPS://WWW.WORLDOMETERS.INFO/CORONAVIRUS/COUNTRY/JORDAN/](https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/jordan/)

It seems the situation has gotten out of control and the government could not do anything. The latest shocking event was an oxygen outage at Al-Salt hospital that killed seven Covid-19 patients. This event showed that the government has lost sight of how to manage the crisis. The resignation of the Minister of Health and the Chief of Hospital shows the dire situation that has yet to be resolved (Al Arabiya News, March 13, 2021).

8 Conclusion

The main objective of this article is to revive the social construction of reality of Berger and Luckmann by showing the significance of synthesizing its premises with the conception of power. The theory overlooks power in social life and focuses on its social construction as a streamlined routine activity that is based on equal contribution and participation by agents. Thus, the main three processes of the theory (Externalization, Objectivation, and Internalization) seem unrealistic. To prove this argument, I used the Covid-19 crisis in Jordan

to show how power played a central role in the social construction of the new reality after the Covid-19 pandemic broke out.

Routine activities in Jordan are deeply rooted in wide networks of close social relationships and bonding social capital. This makes it challenging to implement the social distancing regulation that is essential to reduce the spread of Covid-19. Because it is traditional for Jordanians to interact face to face and in close quarters, the outbreak of Covid-19 and the large numbers of infections and deaths was to be expected. As soon as Jordan saw its first case the government imposed a comprehensive lockdown and curfew to stop routine social activity.

The case of Jordan highlights the fact that the social construction of reality does not necessarily come easily and spontaneously in the setting of routine activity. Thus, the coercive power of government affected the processes of social construction of reality: First, the externalization of reality achieved by generating social distancing that includes blocking all gatherings that were essential parts of social traditions such as visits, ceremonies, wedding parties, burials, shaking hands, and imposing new restrictions including wearing masks and gloves, and maintaining social distance during interactions. Because this new reality required challenging societal norms, it became evident that some changes could not be implemented without using the power of the government.

Second, the power of government made the new reality objective by showing people the deleterious effects of Covid-19. Government began utilizing mass media to publish and spread information such as the number of the new cases and deaths, and new sanctions and punishments against those who violated the new regulations. This way, people recognized their new reality, one that was coercive and challenged them. In other words, the power of government created the indicators of the new reality that compelled people to adapt. This situation shows that objectivation does not always occur spontaneously but can occur intentionally and rationally.

Third, Jordanians internalized the rules and regulations of the new reality, and thus it was legitimized. Internalization of the new regulations created a new normal reality that replaced the old traditions. Jordanians did not have any other choice but to follow the new regulations. They internalized the rules and regulations imposed by the government, knowing that they could not challenge reality.

The theory of Berger and Luckmann draws attention to the fact that Covid-19 is an objective human product, and it can be curbed by human will. Hence, synthesizing the theory of social construction of reality with the concept of

power is realistic and interpretative. Furthermore, using the concept of power in the social construction of reality synthesizes interactions that occur on the micro level with those that occur on the macro level. A powerful agent can externalize and objectify new regulations and compel the weaker party to internalize them, whether the relationship is between spouses or between state and society. However, it is very clear that sustainability and maintenance of a newly created reality by means of power needs time, rules, and sanctions.

Alongside these three requirements for maintaining a new reality, a construction of consciousness of what is externalized is very important to let social action proceed voluntarily and then legitimize the externalized reality. At any point if people do not recognize and accept the changes voluntarily, these changes will not be maintained. This is how after the government of Jordan removed lockdown and curfew, the scene of Covid-19 in Jordan became one of the worst cases across the world. This means the latent dialectical process between externalization and internalization did not complete, as the large majority of people do not have enough awareness and responsibility that required to maintain safe living. Nevertheless, consciousness could be externalized and then internalized by using power to influence people who remain unaware of what is in their own best interest, as well as for the preservation of the public good. Sometimes societies need such coercive intervention for the good of the whole. In Jordan, people who deny the existence of Covid-19 and its effects are threatening the health of the rest of society, specifically, where bonding social capital is very strong. Hence, the perspective of using power could be used in Covid-19 like crises to achieve the social construction of a new reality.

There is the positive side of intervention, as power is used for the greater good of society. However, the dark side of power intervention in the social construction of reality cannot be ignored. Power relationships create and recreate realities that imply exploitation, deprivation, false consciousness, subordination, and oppression. Thus, the question of who created them and how this was done, as well as to what end or purpose, becomes crucial.

Whether the consequences of power were positive or negative, with the help of the three processes of 'externalization,' 'objectivation,' and 'internalization,' social power is essential to the theoretical foundation on which Berger and Luckmann have based their approach.

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