

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Social Imaginary of the Individual and the Adopted Forms of Symbolic Expression

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Abstract:

This study aimed to analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social imagination of the Algerian individual, focusing on patterns of symbolic and behavioral expression during the crisis. It adopted a descriptive analytical approach and relied on interviews with a sample of 50 individuals from diverse backgrounds. The results revealed variations in representations, including religious, cultural, and political aspects, alongside the emergence of new practices such as traditional medicine and social distancing. The study concluded that the pandemic brought about a transformation in the symbolic and value system, calling for the overcoming of preconceived notions and understanding the phenomenon from a sociological interpretive perspective that incorporates the cultural dimension in crisis analysis.

Key words:

Corona pandemic - epistemology - hermeneutics - culture - cultural symbolism.

Introduction

The first appearance of the coronavirus was at the end of 2019, when fear and horror spread due to the rapid spread of this mysterious virus, which posed a significant threat to humanity on various levels: political, economic, social, and cultural, including attempts to change the balance of global power, and even on a personal level. Some attributed its appearance to purely political and economic reasons, while others relied on theological explanations, viewing it as a punishment from God for rampant sins. Scholars classified the pandemic as one of the most dangerous crises humanity has ever faced, especially in light of

the inability of science and scientists to explain it and understand its causes in order to limit its spread. It impacted various aspects of community and individual life, particularly leading to the emergence of new symbolic forms of expression that align with the individual's situation, especially after scientists predicted that it was impossible for the world to return to the state it was in before the coronavirus in terms of health, economy, politics, and even social relationships and bonds between individuals, which were affected by a set of measures such as the imposition of home confinement and social distancing, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a radical change in the structure of systems, particularly the social and cultural system of society and the individual in relation to themselves on one hand and their relation to others on the other. Therefore, it became necessary and obligatory to coexist with the pandemic and implement precautionary measures to avoid spread and infection, especially recently with the alarming increase in the number of infections and deaths from the virus. This coexistence has compelled individuals to adopt new behavioral patterns and symbolic forms of expression in their daily lives, ranging from a state of terror to fear of death to attempts to coexist with the virus and implement preventive measures. The pandemic raised questions about the individual's relationship with existence and divine power, leading to various forms of symbolic expression that emerged from their imagination, each according to the meaning they assign to the pandemic as an expression of the situation each individual is experiencing. They found themselves forced to change their relationships, whether with the environment or with each other, all while facing an invisible being that managed to overcome us and impose its control over the world as a whole. Thus, everything an individual adopts in terms of ideas and perceptions encompasses a variety of behavioral patterns and forms of symbolic expression that are neither true nor accurate, but rather are merely representations and meanings assigned to the phenomenon, reflecting in reality as a form of daily symbolic expression. This is what we will attempt to understand and address through this study.

1-Methodological Aspect:

1.1- The Problematic:

The phenomenon of the Corona pandemic and its rapid spread in all countries of the world falls within the series of epidemics that some societies have witnessed. The difference is that it is a new phenomenon that the world has not known before, and it has not been able to identify its original source to this day. Additionally, it has not been able to control the spread of the pandemic and its increase, even in societies known for their scientific and technological advancement, despite scientists' efforts to find a vaccine that would limit the spread of this pandemic. Some attribute it to divine powers as a result of God's anger at His servants, others to political reasons, and still others to biological causes. Furthermore, some may trace it back to the mythological foundation of human thought—as a symbolic form—which some use as a means of thinking and understanding natural phenomena that can occur and are governed by individuals' value judgments and preconceptions. It is an intellectual attempt used by individuals to interpret the phenomena surrounding them, both ancient and new.

The pace of this pandemic has accelerated due to globalization and social media, despite the fact that the Corona pandemic does not exist in the imagination of the Algerian individual nor in his culture; it is beyond the expected and the usual to which he is accustomed as an exceptional case. This drives sociologists to predict the occurrence of interpretations that we can understand and analyze. Numerous intellectual concepts and representations have emerged, varied reactions have been observed among communities, as well as among individuals within the same community, each according to their awareness of the phenomenon and how they deal with it, along with the various forms of expression, the differing reactions, and how it has been discussed on social media. The differences in individuals' reactions, their perceptions of it, and the patterns of behavior and expression are all inspired by the meaning that each individual holds about the pandemic and the plague.

Talking about a phenomenon drives us first to discuss the forms of symbolic expression, perceptions, and the patterns of behavior adopted by individuals, which result from the meaning that individuals assign to the phenomenon as a response to it. Thus, we search for the meaning of these symbols for them, which propels them to adopt these various forms of symbolic expression. As a result of modern technologies and social media, which have helped to disseminate everything related to the pandemic daily, the pace of fear of illness and death has increased, with varying individual responses to such an extent that a form of alienation has occurred for some, in Marx's terms, and the prevalence of anomie, as expressed by Durkheim, and at times the unconscious or personality disorders discussed by Freud.

This pandemic has accelerated the pace of global transformations and restructured international relations among various countries according to its requirements, creating exceptional circumstances in both developed and developing nations alike. These are the conditions and circumstances that have caused the course of the COVID-19 pandemic to take on an unprecedented scale and dimension in human history, despite the fact that the world has witnessed different types of epidemics. This pandemic, which has formed a sweeping movement with a rapidly escalating pace, has encompassed various social categories and segments, regardless of personal variables such as gender, age, and level of education, transcending all circles of belonging; be they cultural, religious, ethnic, political, or ideological, and what is referred to as the 'deep structure of the cultural imaginary (...)', which can provide researchers with a deeper understanding of how these variables may relate to the nature of adaptation and self-organization of coping processes dictated by that culture and their reflections on the individual (Al-Basam, 2021, p. 29). Among its results:

Firstly: The virus has indeed shown the vulnerability of societies in confronting the pandemic, regardless of the advancement and development of the society or its poverty, due to the absence of strategies and prior planning.

Secondly: Changing the world map and the emergence of an imbalance in the power dynamics between developed societies and those on the path to growth, leading to a shift in global policies.

Thirdly: The emergence of different forms of symbolic expression as previously mentioned according to the differences among individuals, especially in terms of their values and cultural systems, and the varying perceptions and behavioral patterns towards the pandemic that changed many of our understandings of the realities of life. Consequently, this will be a major reason for changing the history of the world through its impact on awareness. This awareness is part of the state's strategy and is primarily related to individuals' culture regarding various issues and laws that they must respect and apply – which sometimes do not align with the customs and culture of individuals in Algerian society – and even the differing opinions among individuals regarding the pandemic through their varying responses to the questions presented to them in the interview guide, each according to their perceptions, culture, and awareness of the Corona pandemic.

According to the French philosopher Michel Foucault, to understand the true nature of human behavior, one must pay attention to the motives behind this behavior, which requires delving into the depths of human life and reaching meaning by attempting to penetrate the symbolic field of each individual in light of the Corona pandemic, which is considered a reflection of social and cultural realities. The symbol is one of the most important foundations of the process of social interaction. The linguist "Ferdinand de Saussure" distinguished between symbols and signs, using the term symbol as synonymous with sign or reference, in what is referred to as the signifier. In this context, Saussure argues that the term symbol is not always perceived in its arbitrariness; it is not void but contains a natural link between the signifier and the signified (Ferdinand de Saussure, 1949, p. 101). While the American anthropologist Erving Goffman defines cultural symbols as expressions derived from human daily life or bodily parts, which carry symbolic and interactive meanings among

human groups (Erving Goffman, pp. 15-17). These cultural symbols exert pressure on the individual, determining their behavioral patterns and choices, making it impossible for them to separate from their environment. They, like others, accept material, economic, and social factors, values, and norms. Thus, individuals strive to adhere to norms and adopt behavioral patterns consistent with their beliefs to maintain their spiritual and material balance by following cultural symbols (Al-Bashir Al-Arabi, 2008, p. 102). A cultural symbol only becomes meaningful when it carries a specific meaning that is mutually understood by members of the same community through the process of social interaction, which helps us understand every detail of an individual's life.

The Corona pandemic, experienced by the entire world, has known no limits in its impact on various aspects of human life, particularly the social and psychological ones for both the individual and society as a whole. Corona has represented a tangible transformation in the different systems of relationships among individuals on all social, economic, cultural, and religious levels, which has mechanically reflected on individuals' cultures, habits, and values. This was clearly evident in their behaviors and perceptions of everyday life and in the various forms of daily symbolic expression of individuals in light of this pandemic, such as the issue of social distancing, especially in places of study and work, remote learning, daily hygiene, and wearing masks... each according to what they carry in their imagination, thoughts, perceptions, and preconceptions about the pandemic and how to deal with it through cultural and value heritage and symbolic expression, or as expressed in the preamble about cultural symbolism, especially since many of these perceptions and behaviors remained adopted by individuals even after the pandemic had receded.

This pandemic has led individuals to change what we call personal habits. Many of the habits and practices we were used to had to be overcome and avoided, such as social interaction, visits, and meetings. Conversely, there are practices we needed to learn and adopt, such as social distancing, cleanliness on both an individual and collective level, wearing masks, using disinfectants, and implementing home quarantine policies. All of these habits and practices have generated reactions regarding their acceptance and how individuals deal with them. The widespread nature of the pandemic has left behind a variety of symbolic expressions that differ from one individual to another and from one society to another, each according to its cultural and symbolic heritage. This raises questions about the cultural symbolism imposed by society, especially in dealing with different types of epidemics, in addition to the factor of socialization of individuals and the nature of the relationships existing between them, which naturally reflects on their perceptions and ideas, and thus on their behavioral patterns, as it also influences their awareness. This awareness is part of the state's strategy and is fundamentally linked to individuals' culture regarding many issues and laws that they must respect and apply as the primary and only prevention in the absence of treatments and a vaccine against the coronavirus. Among these, as previously mentioned, is the issue of quarantine and staying at home to avoid infection, only going out in extreme necessity, thereby protecting oneself and others. Unfortunately, we do not possess this culture in our societies, and thus, at times, quarantine had to be enforced, which led to many family problems and the spread of domestic violence, whether between partners or between parents and children.

On the other hand, there is a paradox that must be discussed regarding social media, which was considered one of the most important means of social distancing before this pandemic. It has now become the only and essential means of communication among individuals instead of in-person meetings, by using social media sites alone. This has led to the implementation of social distancing even among family members. All of this has elicited varied reactions from individuals, which we can observe in their relationships and forms of daily expression.

This mysterious virus has truly proven our weakness and fragility in the face of resisting epidemics for one reason: the absence of strategic planning to combat expected

disasters. Therefore, this stage indeed necessitates the development of scientific research and the establishment of a strategy for protection against diseases and epidemics in the future.

Thus, the Corona pandemic has left various forms of action and relationships, as well as symbolic expressions that require study, examination, interpretation, and explanation. This is something that should be undertaken by anthropologists and sociologists (and all specialists in the field of social sciences) who find themselves confronted with these newly generated forms, which need to be examined and studied based on the culture and values of society. More importantly, this should be done based on cultural and value symbols, especially in an attempt to reveal the meanings that individuals assign to these symbols in their perceptions of the pandemic and how to deal with it. These, of course, reflect the nature and patterns of their behavior, which we have clearly observed in Algerian society. This is attempted through approaching the patterns of symbolic expression related to the Corona pandemic and interpreting the symbolic value of various observable forms of expression during a specific period.

Thus, our main issue through this scientific paper is an attempt to understand how the effects of the Corona pandemic manifested in the social life of individuals in Algerian society and what are the various forms of action and symbolic expression adopted? Did individual culture in Algerian society influence the forms of symbolic expression in daily life? Where can these forms of symbolic expression lead us in light of the pandemic?

1.2 - The Hypothesis:

This study is based on two working hypotheses that guide the research direction and lead the field investigation to obtain the required data, as well as the process of analyzing the results:

A - The impact of the Coronavirus on individuals' perceptions and ways of thinking, which have pushed them to adopt new behavior patterns and forms of symbolic expression.

B - Individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and ideas about the Corona pandemic vary, and thus their forms of symbolic expression depend on the meaning that individuals attribute to the pandemic.

1.3- Importance of the Study:

We can sense the importance of the study through several aspects, the most significant of which are:

First, the study holds a special place and importance because it relates to the Corona pandemic, which is a new phenomenon that the Algerian society and the world as a whole have never experienced before. Perhaps it is here that the novelty of this study lies, even though it represents a type of epidemic that has already been studied as a social phenomenon by sociologists and anthropologists. However, the angle now differs, as the Corona pandemic is a new phenomenon, and the forms of symbolic expression associated with it among individuals in Algerian society represent an angle that may distinguish various studies on the subject within this work.

Second, this phenomenon has been witnessed by all societies around the world. Therefore, attempting to research the perceptions and forms of symbolic expression that characterized this specific period, which vary from one society to another since they experienced and lived through the same phenomenon, is essential.

Third, the importance of the study is also linked to understanding the role that sociologists play in studying the COVID-19 pandemic as a social phenomenon and contributing to finding solutions for it, as well as trying to understand and interpret individuals' perceptions and behavior patterns by attempting to reach an understanding of the meaning they attribute to the pandemic, which results in various forms of symbolic expression and different behavior patterns.

1.4 - Objectives of the Study:

This study aims, by answering a set of key questions, to achieve a number of basic research objectives that can be summarized as follows:

-To identify the differences in individuals' attitudes and perceptions regarding the pandemic and the forms of symbolic expression adopted by them.

-To know the extent of awareness among individuals and how they express it.

-To attempt to understand the meaning that these individuals assign to the pandemic through forms of symbolic expression to comprehend the nature of the different and varied perceptions and responses.

-To use the term hermeneutics instead of interpretation, as it more accurately expresses the attainment of the meaning of meaning, or as explained by the German philosopher "Jürgen Habermas," the depth of meaning.

-To use the term "Herméneutique" instead of interpretation because it better expresses the reaching of the meaning of meaning, or as explained in depth by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas regarding meaning.

-Revealing individuals' expectations regarding the Coronavirus pandemic and attempting to understand and analyze them, as well as how they envision their situation and life in coexistence with the pandemic in the absence of solutions that would completely eradicate it, especially as we approach a new third wave.

-The most important point is that the Coronavirus pandemic, as previously mentioned in the issue, is a new phenomenon that occurs outside the individual's imagination, unfamiliar to them and not internalized. Therefore, there is an attempt to reach forms of symbolic expression that carry meaning by revealing the significance of the Coronavirus pandemic among individuals against their internalized value system.

1.5 - Methodology of the Study:

This study is of a descriptive, exploratory nature that relies on analyzing interviews. It aimed to gather information from the field using an interview guide applied to a sample of individuals from different age groups and varying cultural levels, consisting of 50 individuals selected randomly to understand and comprehend individuals' attitudes and perceptions regarding the topic of Corona. In interpreting and attempting to explain these responses, the analytical method based on rational deduction was employed.

2- Analysis of the results:

2.1- An overview of the epistemology of the pandemic and an attempt to overcome the rupture.:

The coronavirus has caused both health and epistemological crises. First, the causes of the pandemic can only be understood and known by returning to the pandemic itself, that is through in-depth field epistemic studies. Second, the study of the coronavirus pandemic epistemologically and its understanding through the imagination of individuals in Algerian society can only be done within the social context of the phenomenon, through an attempt to deconstruct events and understand the various behavioral patterns adopted by individuals. The pandemic has led to a series of impacts and reactions against the cultural and value system of society, as well as the social interaction among individuals, which is governed by culture. This interaction with the pandemic occurs simultaneously with the cultural environment, creating what can be termed as biological/cultural or bio-cultural interaction, which may assist in analyzing individuals' attitudes towards the pandemic and their perceptions of it. This takes place within the framework of the cultural and value system as well as the sociological perspective of thought, behavioral patterns of individuals, their forms of symbolic expression, and their cultural system.

But the question that should be raised, as mentioned by Professor "Bashir Mohammed", is whether you know culture in advance or whether its definition is inferred from the research itself? (Bashir Mohammed, 2000) Or through trying to understand the meaning of the actions that individuals perform in society, and thus understanding their perceptions that drive them to adopt certain behavioral patterns...? According to F. Merrill, culture means "learning the dominant behavior in society" (Sorokin, P.A., 1964, p. 64), which is the same meaning confirmed by "Malek Bennabi"

in describing culture as "culture organizes, in addition to ideas, the way of life in a particular society" (Malek Bennabi, 1959, p. 3). He also points to an important proposition, which is that the objective reality of society, i.e., the actual reality that individuals live, determines and reflects their culture. This is indeed what we observe in Algerian society in light of the coronavirus pandemic. He also defined it (culture) as "a set of moral qualities and social values that affect the individual since birth, becoming unconsciously the relationship that connects his behavior to the lifestyle in the environment in which he was born. It is this environment that shapes the individual's character and personality" (Malek Bennabi, 1959, p. 73).

This is evident from the response of one of the interviewees to question number 18 in interview number 44: (Yes, definitely. The Algerian society, especially in rural areas, is divided into an external space outside the house where males are always present and an internal space inside the house which is considered a feminine space. However, the pandemic tried to create a single space that brings both parties together day and night and limits going out. This led to a kind of collision and stirred conflicts, as family members were not used to sitting together in this manner. Consequently, there were many crises and family disputes due to the congregation of all family members in the house, especially for families suffering from housing crises; simply gathering in the house reminds them of their situation and stirs conflicts. Additionally, families that rely on daily activities and do not have a fixed income have suffered greatly due to the lockdown, the suspension of markets, and many secondary activities that are considered their main source of livelihood. On the other hand, society could not remain stagnant; there were weddings scheduled and deaths happening that could not be controlled. Families visit each other and stand by one another, and the duty to congratulate is sacred, and the duty of condolence is even more sacred. Therefore, all procedures were breached to hold feasts and bear the consequences, including penalties and fines. However, society did not abandon its customs and traditions even for a moment, especially during funerals and visiting the sick. Even COVID-19 patients had relatives and friends visiting them in their private quarters, sitting with them and talking to them. Society is ready to sacrifice everything but will not sacrifice its identity and character).

This explains, in this case, the attachment of individuals in Algerian society to certain customs and traditions, and consequently, perhaps a kind of conflict, especially at the beginning of the pandemic, as well as the divergence of values adopted by individuals that shape their original culture versus those imposed on them by the state.

This is what we observe through the answer to question number 16 about the most important adopted cultural behaviors: (Our society is a traditional one, and it explains everything that happens to it based on its popular culture. Our popular culture is a mixture of religion, myth, imagination, invention, stories, tales, proverbs, and wisdom. Through all this, we live our daily lives and interpret everything that happens to us. During the pandemic, when modern medicine declared its inability to cope, traditional medicine took the floor and announced the beginning of its war on the pandemic. The most important behavior was preparing herbal mixtures to combat the epidemic, a behavior everyone participated in, both general and specific. Perhaps the biggest beneficiaries of the pandemic were the herbal and traditional medicine sellers, who became the only hope for the community after doctors found nothing to prescribe for the illness. Thus, herbs and some traditional dishes re-emerged and controlled the scene. There were also religious interpretations, with some stating that certain righteous individuals had hinted at the epidemic and that the end of the world would be during this pandemic. The community reconciled with its local culture and identity and began to search for solutions within it).

The same answer was given by one of the interviewees, a university professor, who said: (The most important of these practices is the use of natural herbs like thyme or cloves, meaning natural herbs have become the savior from death). This clearly indicates a return to some traditional practices that are part of Algerian culture and values.

This is evident in the response of another interviewee in interview number 23 regarding the same question, stating: (I firmly believe that all viruses and pandemics that have existed since the beginning have their cure in the immune system, and to strengthen and maintain it, one must have built it previously with natural nutrition and natural herbs. Today, we see everyone consuming pasteurized milk and instant meals, preserved foods... everyone consumes bread made from flour and mixed with cancer-causing additives... everyone consumes sweets and ready-made meals like pizza and hamburgers... There is especially a new generation, the youth, who do not know barley bread, wheat, and food mixed with its bran... So the question posed is how will you face the epidemic when we need a strong immune system? You are the one who has damaged your immune system with these harmful and unbeneficial habits and behaviors, and thus you are the one who has destroyed and done away with all the first lines of defense... Therefore, I send a message to all fathers and mothers: you bear full responsibility regarding the health of your children; you are the ones who buy, cook, and serve them). Consequently, we understand that the weakness of the immune system among individuals is one of the main reasons for the rapid spread of the epidemic and the transmission of infections.

This is what has led them to adopt some traditional habits and behaviors that may help strengthen it again. This was also advised by some doctors, including a general practitioner we interviewed, who confirmed what was previously mentioned regarding the necessity of reinforcing the individual's immune system, especially before receiving the vaccine. In her opinion, this can only be achieved by returning to some traditional habits, especially concerning natural and healthy food, consuming soups of various kinds, and some boiled herbs.

It is therefore a type of cultural symbols that individuals have abandoned in Algerian society, as they are values and traditional cultural symbols, which then required a necessity to return to them. All of this is through the meaning that the individual gives to the phenomenon, which is accompanied by specific behavioral patterns and symbolic forms of expression according to what the phase requires, and here we are talking about the COVID-19 pandemic.

This may lead us back to the idea of the relationship between biology and sociology through the term Biological Reductionism and Biologism, which can be found in the sociology dictionary instead of the term biology, reflecting that biological facts and various theories, values, and epistemological truths explaining them are not taken into account by sociologists on the basis that they have no relation to society or anything social (Maurizio Meloni, 2014, p. 598).

The coronavirus pandemic has shown us the exact opposite, that we can start from the reality of society to understand it biologically. The meanings and connotations of a phenomenon or event and its cultural parameters (practices, perceptions, norms, social values...) communicate their cognitive/emotional impact and influence biological responses and enhance the conditional responses of human behavior (Catherine Panter-Brick & Carol M. Worthman (eds), 1999, pp. 6-7).

Thus, there is a relationship between the social and biological that must be referred to in order to control and understand the phenomenon and thus control the environment in which we live biologically, as opposed to the sociocultural world that humans have created and adapted to, and therefore we must try to understand that relationship that will be established between the biological world and the sociocultural world, as the latter has its impact on other forms of life such as epidemics, bacteria, germs, and the ecosystem in which these forms coexist (Ted Benton, 1991, pp. 12-13), in which case the coronavirus pandemic is not a phenomenon but a result of the interaction of the two worlds.

As an example of this, we cite Charles Kay Ogden and Ivor Armstrong Richards, who dealt with meaning and treated it according to the sign theory in their book *The Meaning of Meaning*. The outcome of this theory was that there are three elements that form the ends of

what he knew as the semantic triangle, namely: the object in nature, its image in the human mind, and its linguistic symbol.

Different members of society have different mentalities, principles, and ways of thinking (...) which means that the meaning is what is in nature, but it is communicated through its image in the mind. Visualization is a means and a ladder for communicating meaning. The meaning in conceptualism, whose name is associated with the philosopher John Locke, is the mental image, where the end is the meaning (Ogden and Richards, 2015, pp. 7-8).

Symbolism at this level is the search for the depth of meaning and the attempt to read between the lines to reach the true meaning, which is expressed by philosophers as Hermeneutics, which is deeper than the hermeneutic process.

All this led to a kind of conflict between what is and what should be, which was clearly evident in the answers of almost all respondents who confirmed the occurrence of a kind of conflict and clash, especially for individuals who refused to apply health measures, especially young people, and to change some familiar policies through the quarantine policy and limiting their freedoms, as one of the respondents, a university student, emphasized. One of the respondents, a university student, confirmed this in his answer to question 17: "The most important value that can be recorded is the value of conflict and clash between the individual and the state, as the behavior of violating precautionary and preventive measures has become the most important behavior that individuals, especially the youth, engage in, and the idea of chasing with security forces, as an expression of rebellion and refusal to obey the state, in addition to the discovery of In addition to discovering that popular and traditional values are still alive in us and can be returned to, everyone has become looking for a cure for Corona in the herbs and traditional recipes that our ancestors used to prevent the cold, as even doctors and university professors have engaged in this behavior, and the pandemic has also revived the values of solidarity and cooperation. The pandemic also revived the values of solidarity and cooperation and at the same time of greed, monopoly and the pursuit of quick profit, we faced society against the state, and individuals tried to break laws, penetrate procedures, and thwart prevention schemes, not because we did not recognize the epidemic, but as a struggle with the unjust authority and the state, this idea that will never leave us). While others emphasized that symbolic expressions varied among individuals depending on the degree of awareness. Here, several variables may control the way individuals think, including age, cultural level, and even gender, as we noticed that women were more conservative and applied preventive measures than men.

In this case, we must address the issue of the preconceived ideas that govern the perceptions of individuals towards the epidemic and thus towards the Corona pandemic, which is a new phenomenon that society has not witnessed before, but at the same time individuals will deal with it with the same ideas they hold in their perceptions of the epidemic, and therefore the question arises whether individuals in Algerian society have been able to overcome these preconceived ideas and value judgments in facing the Corona pandemic and limiting its spread? Perhaps the question of the epistemological obstacle in the generation of knowledge, and the attempt to find the causes of the pandemic that are not clear through the traditional ready-made epistemology and avoid reproducing the same conditions that caused the pandemic by knowing its causes first and recognizing the shortcomings revealed by the crisis in the field of science and epistemology and determining future steps to avoid crises or at least the ability to face them, by first thinking about and rethinking scientific knowledge through the individual self, based on the premise that everything has an opposite, starting with the individual self and ending with the lived reality. (Madeleine Grawitz, 1993, p. 6) This is the same thing that "Bachelard" reached in the movement and development of scientific knowledge, which is indeed what we need at this stage in terms of self and rethinking. There are many biases that affect the reasonableness of our logic, such as understanding the issue after the fact, judging by preconceived standards, being influenced by

the axioms of the prevailing paradigms, and being influenced by the logic of disorganized thinking with a selective tendency” (Darm El-Bassam, 2021, p. 7), especially the issue of fear of infection, death, and divine punishment, which was confirmed in the respondents' answers. There are those who considered it an ordinary virus that will be contained in a short period of time like all known epidemics, while others considered it a punishment from God for the many sins, and some considered it a biological weapon... Everyone had their own interpretations about the virus. One of the sample members in Interview No. 1, in his answer to Question No. 7, said, “At first I didn't care much about the matter, I considered it a simple virus that would be contained in a short period of time, especially when it was related to China only, and even after it reached Europe, I didn't care much and didn't pay any attention to it, but after the first cases were recorded in Algeria, and the deaths began in different parts of the world. and the beginning of deaths in various countries of the world in an alarming manner, and the seriousness with which everyone began to deal with the epidemic, I was very afraid and considered the matter serious and began to think about the cause of this epidemic, but the idea that it is caused by bats did not appeal to me very much and from the beginning I considered the matter an expression of a conflict between major countries and the virus is a kind of weapon used in the dirty game.”

Another respondent in interview No. 2 emphasized in his answer to question No. 2: “I thought about the helplessness of man, and my interpretation of the pandemic is God's punishment of people for too much corruption on land and sea.” These are all answers inspired by their preconceived ideas and perceptions about the epidemic, as all respondents had almost the same expressions about the cause of the pandemic: divine punishment, biological warfare... All this is due to the fact that our issue is basically a cultural issue that stands as a barrier to our inability to analyze the phenomenon in new ways away from our preconceived ideas, even though it is a unique phenomenon that the world and Algerian society have never witnessed before, here we may put forward the idea of the need to learn from a disaster of which knowledge itself is one of its victims (Francis A Beer, Robert Harriman, 2020, pp. 19-28(, This means that change, when it occurs, does not occur in a superficial way, but on a deeper level, namely the epistemological level, which must be reached if we really want to understand individuals' perceptions of the studied phenomenon, “The attempt to change from unrealistic foundations that do not take into account patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, norms, beliefs, mutual relations between individuals and groups and the consequences associated with power games will not be fully successful” (Mohamed Ali Mohamed, 1985, p. 337). On the one hand, the pandemic proved the weakness of scientific theories to explain it and find solutions to it, and on the other hand, individuals clung to their preconceived ideas to explain and understand it.

When Gaston Bachelard talked about the epistemological rupture (Maurice Ingres, 2004), he emphasized that there are a set of epistemological barriers that face the researcher in his studies, which constitute a challenge for any researcher, and to reach new approaches and theories and understand and explain phenomena, he must overcome these epistemological obstacles and barriers, meaning that we must overcome our epistemological representations and perceptions of the world, and for this reason we tried to know the opinions of the respondents towards the Corona pandemic and how they dealt with it for the first time.

There is an axiom that most sociologists agree on that every phenomenon reveals the truth associated with it at the stage of discontinuity, which is what we are actually living now with the Corona pandemic, and what we have to do is to research what the pandemic has revealed to individuals and do we have scientific theories and research that enable us to explain and understand it or understand the meanings and perceptions that individuals give to this new virus? One respondent, a university professor, stated that the reason for the appearance is the political struggle between countries to control the world, as another respondent emphasized: We attributed it to the oppression of mankind, and we considered

that mankind is a spoiler of the environment in general. We also considered it to be an active act and that this manufactured virus came for certain purposes against humanity. Perhaps all respondents attributed the cause to the biological and political factor, considering that these are preconceived ideas that individuals have about the cause of the pandemic pending the arrival of scientific analyses by scientists.

The Corona phenomenon is a phenomenon outside the individual and scientific imagination, as it is a new phenomenon that society has not witnessed before. It can be likened to the 'black swan, that "Nassim Taleb" talked about in his book of the same name, as it is firstly 'wild,, outside the imagination and outside the familiar expectations that usually result from crises (...) and secondly, it came to bear consequences of great impact. Thirdly, despite being outside the imagination, human nature makes us engage in preparing and inserting explanations for its occurrence after it has been captured in order to make it explainable and predictable (Darem Al-Bassam, 2021, p. 14). This is what makes us involve ourselves in it to understand it and find explanations for it, each according to his or her perception, as there are those who have come to think that it is just a trick by the state to deter and scare the people and is unfounded, as some respondents mentioned that it is not true. Therefore, we have to look into the depth of the pandemic to study it epistemologically, which tends to search for new theories, concepts, and terms to understand and explain it through field studies outside the womb of the pandemic and not just theoretical readings. Thus, what we need at this particular stage is a new scientific revolution, and here lies the role of the Corona crisis in formulating new scientific theories that help in understanding it and understanding future crises, and understanding before that the theories and concepts that individuals and societies resorted to in order to understand and explain the pandemic, which seemed ambiguous to the point of using some terms such as biological explanation, political, global system, global power, economic cause... All of these concepts were adopted to deal with the pandemic as preventive attempts to deal with the virus, as one of the interviewees stated, 'We lie on our way out and cover the sun with a sieve,, meaning adopting explanations to convince ourselves that the virus is not dangerous and can be overcome and is just global politics.

The Corona crisis prompted us to rethink epistemology and its role in finding new theories and concepts to understand the phenomenon as scientific knowledge that emerges, as mentioned above, from the womb and depth of the phenomenon and crisis. It is the critical knowledge of science and knowledge, because, simply put, as "Pierre Bourdieu" stated, social reality is neither purely material nor purely individual symbolism, i.e. the meaning and perceptions of the individual regarding the phenomenon, but rather a mixture of the two. This social phenomenon is neither purely material nor purely individual symbolism, that is, the meaning and perceptions of the individual regarding the phenomenon, but rather a mixture of the two. In this case (the Corona pandemic), we are studying the meaning, that is, the perceptions of individuals about the pandemic and the meaning they give to it, and thus how this is reflected in their actions and patterns of material behaviour. Therefore, the epistemological study of the coronavirus pandemic should be from this perspective, and the depth of the phenomenon in this case is to try to access the meaning that individuals give to the phenomenon, through which their daily actions and forms of expression are embodied, and try to overcome prejudices and value judgements in dealing with the pandemic. However, the question remains: how can we overcome epistemological barriers in the study of the coronavirus pandemic?

"Gaston Bachelard" believes that researchers or scientists face epistemological barriers when attempting to study and approach social problems, especially new ones. He argues that in order to produce and develop new approaches, they must overcome the barriers they possess, namely preconceived ideas and value judgments, in the sense of a pre-existing worldview and the thinking pattern that dominates their thoughts, as this constitutes the epistemological obstacle to the development of scientific knowledge (Gaston Bachelard,

1993). Among the preconceived ideas individuals have about the pandemic as a type of plague is that it is a punishment from God for numerous sins, a political and biological war between powerful states, a virus invented by China that can be controlled... as confirmed by most of the respondents in their answers, which are primarily influenced by individual culture in Algerian society. Therefore, to understand these ideas and perceptions, we must rethink societal culture and attempt to define the dual relationship between the social and cultural patterns. How does an individual interpret the pandemic? How do they think about their condition if infected with the virus? Do they fear infection and death? More specifically, how does an individual deal with the pandemic, and what are the different perceptions and meanings they assign to it? All of this exists in the person's imagination within Algerian society and in their familiar value system from which they cannot deviate, and thus it determines how the individual will deal with the COVID-19 pandemic or any other phenomenon. Based on this, the epistemological vision of different social groups of individuals is formed, which is governed by numerous levels, the most important of which are culture, knowledge, science, beliefs, religion, values, language, norms, customs, traditions, and symbols. And here we might borrow what Ibn Khaldun said in his introduction, which has the same meaning as the concept of *Habitus* by "Émile Durkheim": "Man is the son of his habits and familiarities, not the son of his nature and temperament; for what one becomes accustomed to until it becomes a character, disposition, and habit, is on par with nature and innate disposition" (Ibn Khaldun, Introduction). Therefore, the scientific, cognitive, and epistemological development in this case is reflected in the individuals' process of self-adaptation to the current situation shaped by the Corona pandemic, and it can only be understood through the process of communication and symbolic interaction, namely through individuals' daily forms of symbolic expression. This is what we will attempt to answer in the following elements.

2.2- The Pandemic in Sociological Thought and Imagination

Since the emergence and spread of the pandemic, sociologists and anthropologists have tried to study and understand it and know the reasons for its emergence, and from our point of view, for the sociological researcher to succeed in reaching his goal and understanding the Corona pandemic scientifically, he must first work to dismantle the cultural symbols that individuals carry in their perceptions and ideas and access their meanings by relying on the forms of daily symbolic expression adopted by individuals and relying in return on the scientific cognitive foundations to understand the pandemic. In addition to relying on the forms of daily symbolic expression adopted by individuals and relying on scientific epistemological foundations to understand the pandemic, as well as relying on the forms of social and symbolic interaction of individuals as social actors, especially if we notice the emergence of a kind of imbalance in the structure of society or in the social relations that link the various actors. Thus creating a crisis of emptiness that takes the meaning of *Durkheim* when he believes that 'rapid social changes inevitably correspond to phenomena of social imbalance, phenomena of anarchy (Nouredine Tawlabi, 1988, p. 26) All this is in the scientific imagination of the sociological researcher and such studies can only be done by referring to the stock of imagination, to the culture of the individual and its components, that is, the inferred and familiar cultural and value stock, which requires careful sociological analysis to understand the epistemology of the coronavirus pandemic mentioned earlier.

Every phenomenon has its specific social, cultural, value, and symbolic characteristics, which clearly manifest in the patterns of individual behavior towards it. In sociology, our scientific imagination is shaped within a continuous and cumulative state of the impact of manufactured sciences, which operate in a semi-mechanical way and perform their work in a manner that prevents us from realizing that the future is being born and created while we are oblivious to it. This happens simply because we are prisoners of our epistemological representations of the world (Al-Basam, 2021, p. 8). In the case of the Corona pandemic,

many values and habits emerged that individuals had to adopt and accept, such as home health confinement, daily cleanliness and disinfection, wearing masks, and social distancing... On the other hand, they had to give up a set of daily habits and behavior patterns such as handshakes, visits, and praying in mosques... and the emergence of other habits specific to the individual himself, namely solidarity and social support. Consequently, the sociologist will notice a kind of conflict between the social reality created by the pandemic and the value-based and symbolic gains that individuals possess, meaning between what exists and what ought to be. Based on this, defensive practices will emerge, if one may say so, among individuals as a form of resistance on one hand and a reaction on the other. This is indeed what we observe daily and what individuals have confirmed. The resistance method is reflected in rejecting certain policies imposed on them, such as quarantine and the suspension of prayers in mosques and their violation; while the other positive aspect is the emergence of the value of solidarity and social support, both of which are forms of resistance. However, in light of the widespread contagion and fear of death, a kind of automatic self-adaptation will occur to confront the pandemic, which is increasingly spreading in densely populated cities compared to rural areas.

- The impact of home quarantine on people and workers, especially those working in restaurants.

- The emergence of a kind of domestic violence between spouses and children, especially as a result of male dominance.

- Distance education and the resulting problems such as the inability of children to comprehend.

The inability of some individuals to adapt to new situations and the requirements of the current stage. This was emphasized by one of the respondents in question no. 14: 'Have you been able to cope with the pandemic? How so?

Yes, we doubted the pandemic, then we feared it, then we tried to resist it with all our might, and finally, we surrendered to reality and returned to our normal lives. We became committed to preventive measures out of fear of penalties rather than fear of the virus itself. It has become just a memory, and today we live every detail of our lives as we did before the pandemic. I don't believe anyone will respond to any warnings, even if a new wave comes. People have overcome their pandemic complex, and everyone has surrendered to reality. The COVID pandemic is not a health crisis but an economic one, and managing it means staying at home and everything collapsing, which is illogical. Today, we live by the principle that life is only lived once, and we have to live it. Those who died because of COVID met their fate, but they died while living, actively resisting and not surrendering. We cannot continue to live in fear, caution, and warning; we must step out to confront this life and face the pandemic, as this is our only good option. This means shifting from thinking about the unknown danger to the known danger, considering that the pandemic has, according to the respondents, become an inevitable fate that must be coexisted with. In this case, the sociologist should study the pandemic not as a health crisis but rather as a symbolic and primarily social pandemic.

One of the preventive measures that has gained the attention of sociologists is the policy of social distancing, which has influenced and changed the methods of communication and social interaction, especially social bonds. Consequently, reliance on social media has become an alternative solution to social distancing, providing a form of interaction even if it is remote. In this case, the meanings that individuals attach to the process of social interaction in the face of enforced social and physical distancing may change, or it may create a sense of disconnection from the community and between individuals, leading to a complete transformation in the formation of the social system and the components of the cultural context. This situation could result in a disruption in the system of social relationships and disturbances in practices, as well as the emergence of issues of social inequality and disparities among individuals, which have significantly increased due to home confinement.

From here, to understand the pandemic and know its causes, or at least to avoid its spread, there must be collaborative work between natural and health sciences and sociology. This will contribute to understanding the social and cultural characteristics of individuals in the light of COVID-19, given the necessity of reaching the meaning behind individuals' ideas and perceptions and their behavioral patterns, as well as understanding the symbolic capital that serves a different function than the material one—here a moral and psychological function. Minorities and marginalized groups seek to make their symbolic capital a means to escape the circle of oblivion; their ability to maintain and reproduce their capital means more communication and assertion of existence for them. Thus, we find that minorities and marginalized groups are more eager than others to cling to their collective memory and are more fearful of their symbolic capital being damaged (Pierre Bourdieu, 1980, P.49). In addition to the concept of '*habitus*' used by *Pierre Bourdieu* as a synonym for conditioning, which means that social forces produce and develop strategies that adapt to and interact with the requirements of the external environment and the individual's reality, along with the concept of dominant culture and how it is reproduced by institutions and individuals to adapt to the Corona pandemic. Consequently, the sociologist must delve into the system and unveil its secrets to reach the meaning of meaning. Sociology is represented in transforming metaphysical problems into problems that can be addressed scientifically in a political sense (Al-Juwaili, 1994, p. 111) by addressing the symbolic aspects that have been condensed by individual practices and forms of symbolic expression.

The question that arises now and needs future studies is: What does the Corona pandemic present to sociology? Can the Corona pandemic provide a new awareness for the sociologist, which is what has been reached so far in science and knowledge, or rather what sociology has reached? Will we still rely on Western theories after the Corona pandemic, which have confirmed their failure to study and understand the pandemic and know its causes? The Corona pandemic indeed presents value and organizational problems to the sociologist, for them to understand and interpret, starting with the acknowledgment of our failure in the face of this virus..

2.3 - The Impact of the Corona Pandemic on Changing Social Habits and Daily Life Behaviors:

A set of questions arises in this section, which the respondents tried to answer, including how people communicate and how they develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life? How do they understand the world around them through language, beliefs, hypotheses, and values that define their place in it, while giving meaning to the experiences that pass through individuals, groups, and generations through the derived familiarity (Al-Basam, 2021, p. 32)? How do individuals deal with the pandemic and enhance their knowledge about it based on their culture, language, habits, values, and symbols that define their position in it? Taking into account what we call derived familiarity, here we necessarily talk about the process of symbolic interaction and cultural symbolism. Here, Max Weber argues that values are objective and situational givens that determine certain patterns of behavior different from those directed rationally towards a specific goal, or based on some mental and emotional actions. In the early twentieth century, *W.I. Thomas* and *F. Znaniecki* (1927) wrote that values are an experiential given understood by most members of the social group, and the meaning of which is defined or not defined for every activity. In anthropology, values take on normative content upon which the meaning is assessed. According to *R. Benedict*, they are the prevailing cultural behaviors... but if there is what is known as the closure on the entirety of culture, how can one transition from one system of values to another? (Bonte, Izard, 1992, P733) without causing conflict between opposing values, and can we, in other words, distinguish between the expression of values and the production of meaning? And if the discussion about values is about behavior and the tangible, shouldn't a semiotic pattern be used that distinguishes the expression (values) from its content (behaviors or social practices that express them), and allows for understanding how society produces

values and how these latter define the social system? (Bonte, Izard, 1992, P734). Here we might need to address an important element which is "social semiology that stands at the level of understanding, comprehending the general principles of semantic systems but without interpreting them, meaning without relating them to their social and historical context. This is precisely where the importance of linking the two fields lies if we want to understand the true meaning, moving from understanding to interpretation so that the sign does not remain suspended, transcended over the contexts that produced it. This linkage also makes the sociologist more sensitive to what contains symbolic dimensions and semantic systems in social phenomena, alert to what meanings, connotations, and symbols might exist in relationships and practices." (Al-Bouazizi, 2010, P21-22).

What we observed through our field study as well as daily observations in light of the Corona pandemic is what has been termed the derived familiarities, meaning the axioms or value judgments of individuals towards the Corona pandemic, which are primarily controlled by the cultural and value system. This does not only reflect through ideas and perceptions or meanings but also through actions. Therefore, our field questions were based on how an individual's interaction with the pandemic is reflected in daily life through social actions (as social actors) and the adopted behavioral patterns.

We tried to investigate the nature of individuals' perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic as a new phenomenon that humanity has not experienced before, even though it constitutes a type of epidemic. We focused on the forms of daily symbolic expression adopted by individuals in Algerian society and their relationship with the traditional forms of expression that the Algerian individual was raised on and inherited, or conversely, the new ideas adopted through modern technologies and social media, especially among the youth. Thus, in this case, we can differentiate between two different generations in terms of perceptions and ways of thinking about the pandemic: the older generation (the parents) and the younger generation. Did they share the same perceptions, ways of thinking, interactions, and patterns of behavior and symbolic action towards this phenomenon? Did the forms of symbolic expression differ between the two generations? This is the work that anthropologists and sociologists need to undertake to understand the phenomenon and the individuals' perceptions of it. The emergence of the epidemic and its widespread spread created different types of actions and reactions, as well as forms of expression and symbolic actions that were sometimes shared and referred to as cultural and values symbolism, meaning that the value and cultural system controls the forms of symbolic expression, which differ from one group to another. Thus, how can we understand the nature of symbolic expression if we do not attempt to understand the cultural and values system of Algerian society? Do the forms of symbolic expression adopted by the Algerian individual and their reactions to the phenomenon convey the intended meaning that reflects the perceptions and behavioral patterns of the individual? Are they a true reflection of the adopted action? All this depends on the field of knowledge which is sociology, in contrast to relying on the structure of society in terms of values, culture, and the symbols it carries, and attempting to understand the meanings of those symbols and their implications, as well as their cultural and symbolic value for various forms of expression.

This is done using what philosophers call hermeneutics, more than just an interpretation, or what can be termed as the sign "which can only be reached at the moment of interpretation." The sign, according to Umberto Eco, is a clear indication that helps grasp something hidden; a thing does not become a sign unless someone interprets it as a sign of something else (...) The linguistic sign, according to Saussure, is a psychological entity with two aspects: the signifier and the signified, an auditory image (the signifier) and a concept (the signified), and the result of the relation between them constitutes the sign (Mohsen Bouazizi, 2010, p. 84). This is what we are trying to implement and achieve by attempting to understand and approach the forms of symbolic expression and cultural symbols of the

Corona pandemic as a new social phenomenon concerning the Algerian individual, which emerged through various forms of individual and collective symbolic expression.

Through our daily observations, we noted the emergence of different forms of expressions primarily related to individuals' perceptions of the phenomenon as a form of expression, while at the same time serving as a means of entertainment and a way to escape the psychological fears experienced by individuals, especially the fear of infection by the epidemic and death. We attempted to study the symbols and reveal the meanings they carry in order to understand individuals' perceptions and the nature of their behavior towards the phenomenon. As mentioned in the preamble of the writing, it is an attempt to uncover the meaning of meaning, or as we previously noted, what philosophers refer to as hermeneutics. This was expressed by Jürgen Habermas as the process of interrogating meaning, which he says is an art before it is a science. The symbol, in its various meanings, allows us to reflect on other things beyond the text, considering it as something hidden and suggestive; it is a sensory object that serves as a sign for something spiritual that does not fall under the senses (Ahmed Mohammed Fattouh, 1978, p. 40).

In response to a set of questions related to the pandemic, including question number 9: What was your stance on the pandemic? How did you deal with the virus and what different meanings did you give it? According to interview 49, one of the respondents, a PhD student, answered as follows: "At first, I was skeptical and mocked the pandemic and its severity, especially since I observed that the situation in my city had not changed much in terms of social distancing and other precautionary measures. However, after recording cases in my city and in the state of Tissemsilt and the imposition of lockdown, my stance changed. Although the idea of skepticism has not left me to this day, I engaged in what everyone was doing, such as sanitizing, excessively washing hands, and searching for folk remedies and local medications for the pandemic. I started adhering to precautionary measures, especially sanitizers and masks, and I began to fear the spread of the virus. I felt as if I had caught it; these anxieties accompanied me, especially after the lockdown and its renewal each time. I truly became afraid of this virus, but I always had the doubt that it was not real and that it was fabricated, and its reality exceeded that of small countries. In reality, it succeeded in spreading fear and changed many details of life."

In another response in interview number 34, a university professor stated (to be cautious and wary of it because it is a difficult virus that spreads rapidly, with great caution; however, the meanings are different from epidemic to plague, a deadly virus...) and it was almost the same meanings they gave to the virus and the same method of dealing with it considering it an epidemic like all epidemics, particularly for individuals in Algerian society at first glance through what we call the usual accepted notion among individuals regarding it being a virus like other viruses. All of this is through the cultural symbols that individuals attribute to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is considered an important element in shaping national identity and an integral part of the cultural system of both the individual and society as a whole. This is considered one of the main concerns of scholars, thinkers, and philosophers due to the role it plays in understanding and interpreting individual behaviors and perceptions. However, despite this significant interest, it is difficult for an individual to find a comprehensive study that covers the multiple and overlapping aspects of symbols and their role in shaping culture or society. On the contrary, most of these studies are preoccupied with intellectual and theoretical issues and are limited to purely specialized fields isolated from other disciplines. In addition, most of these studies did not pay attention to the field or ethnographic reality of the symbolic phenomenon. Symbolic anthropology has emerged to overcome this problem and to study culture as a symbolic fabric in its ethnographic reality. The book fills a significant gap in the Arabic library, especially after current global and local events have demonstrated the overwhelming dominance of symbols over the present and future of human societies (Sayyid Hafiz Al-Aswad, 2002).

The Algerian society, like other countries in the world, has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, which will lead to a kinds of changes and transformations, and thus it is in urgent need of study and understanding. Have existing scientific theories managed to comprehend and explain the COVID-19 pandemic and understand the reasons for its emergence? 'While sociology in Algeria is frozen in the epistemological models of the 1970s, society is changing... In its change, it poses new problems for sociology. Among the evidence of this change is the emergence of new social faces or the revival of other old or traditional faces that many believed had disappeared or were on the verge of extinction...' All these changes are today awaiting sociology to interpret and understand them, which, as Max Weber clarified, aims primarily to understand the meaning that individuals themselves intend. This is the meaning through which they interact and unite within a single set of values and culture, and this is the meaning by which they accept the actual reality of society as it is, not as it should be. The same applies to the Corona pandemic as a new phenomenon that contributed to changing many perceptions, ideas, behavioral patterns, and mindsets, which is the role expected from the sociologist.

Here, perhaps we should touch upon the concept of symbolic interaction, which refers to the social interaction in which the individual is connected and communicates with other individuals. Anthony Giddens defines it in his book 'Sociology' as 'concerned with issues related to language and meaning, because, as Mead sees it, they produce for us the opportunity to reach a stage of self-awareness, recognize our selves, and feel our individuality, as well as enabling us to see ourselves from the outside as others see us' (Anthony Giddens, 2001, p. 76). Thus, understanding identity. This interaction is conducted through language or symbolic indicators that assist the individual in the process of interpretation during the formation of social actions. These symbols, through which individuals communicate, become social symbols when they gain a shared meaning through interaction with others, which we have observed in the behavioral patterns adopted by individuals that reflect the meaning they attribute to the pandemic, consequently reflected in their daily expressions.

2.3.1- Home Quarantine and Its Implications on the Individual:

The Algerian individual is characterized by a unique cultural nature, and it is natural for a person to never completely separate from their civilization, or at least from their culture, especially from their value system, heritage, and past. The past is always present and being updated (Jean Copans, Georges Balandier, 2014, P151). This is the paradox we will attempt to answer.

Among the habits and policies adopted in Algerian society and in the world as a whole is the issue of home confinement, which individuals are not accustomed to and which does not fit into their cultural values, but is a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is a need to understand and realize the value of the home and staying in it to avoid infection and illness for hours, then for days, and perhaps for months, only leaving for extreme necessity. Thus, the virus has made us test the individual's relationship with their home, the meaning they attribute to it, and how they interacted with this mandatory policy.

In light of this new and strict situation, and considering the individual as a citizen who possesses his culture, values, and conceptualizations that serve as the basis for his daily behaviors and symbolic expressions, starting from the meanings present in his imagination, how has the impact of this lockdown affected his perceptions and reactions? Does the Algerian individual accept the stripping away of his freedom, despite the fact that implementing lockdown measures poses a dilemma and is not an easy matter, for two main reasons: daily livelihood or for the sake of self-relief? Consequently, there are bans on public gatherings and a temporary suspension of religious gatherings, as well as individuals' reactions to that, especially concerning mosques. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a threat to public health, whereas the lockdown measures adopted to combat the pandemic have had other effects in terms of the value, cultural, and symbolic system of the Algerian

individual, which do not fall within his culture. However, through our daily observations and the interviews conducted, it is evident that the Algerian individual has adopted these new values out of fear for his health and the health of those around him, in order to avoid contagion, especially out of fear of death.

This was confirmed by one of the interviewees, who said, "We have developed a kind of phobia of infection and the spread of the virus, and thus the fear of death. Therefore, we had no choice but to implement the health protocol, which involves staying at home, sanitizing, respecting social distancing, and avoiding crowded places." These are values that are almost shared among various members of society, as we can imagine that if values are not shared among individuals, it will inevitably lead to conflict. Therefore, they must be acceptable and acknowledged by every individual (Généviève Vinsonneau, 2003, P153). Even if we take into account that the evolution of values occurs through conflict (André Akoun, Pierre Ansart, 1999, P560).

In a conversation with one of the interviewees, a hairdresser due to her interaction with various groups of women, she mentioned that when the lockdown was announced starting at 8 PM, one of her clients sarcastically remarked, "It's strange that Corona only comes out at night." This is perhaps what many individuals say. The hairdresser responded by saying, "The belief you're talking about is wrong; Corona doesn't come out at night; it's present at all times. The reason for the lockdown starting at 8 PM mainly concerns large cities like the capital and Oran, where people go out due to the cold weather at this time, leading to increased gatherings." Therefore, the meanings and analyses presented by individuals regarding various policies imposed by the state may not be fully comprehended by them based on their value and cultural systems. As a result, we find individuals' positions contrasting with their adopted values, balancing between their thoughts and reality, as well as between their familiar values and the values imposed on them. History and the past are what help us understand the present, based on the idea that this present was established through the foundations and principles existing in the past (Djamel Guerid, 2007, P27).

In response to the issue of quarantine, individuals confirmed that it was somewhat difficult at the beginning for the Algerian individual who was not used to it, and it had never been part of their habits and values, especially in closed homes that do not contain open spaces or balconies. This sometimes led to family problems, particularly from parents due to their stay at home and their cessation of work or working remotely inside the home. Therefore, the meaning that individuals give to the home is a place for rest for short hours, not to stay in for more than a full day. However, at the same time, it was for some individuals the ideal way to avoid contracting the epidemic and infection, as confirmed by one of the respondents (always referring to urban residents), especially since I did not leave it throughout the quarantine period, from the suspension of classes in March until August. At first, people's behavior was dismissive and indifferent to the pandemic and the outbreak, but the recording of high numbers of infections and deaths, the declaration of a complete lockdown, the closure of certain cities, and the emergence of crisis indicators, such as the scarcity of semolina, milk, and bread, fluctuations in fruits and vegetables, and the visible presence of police patrolling the cities reminding people of the need to stay home and be cautious, along with the nighttime curfew and punishment for violators, changed people's behavior. Day and night activities declined, and the streets became empty of children and the elderly. The closure of cafes and shops altered the nature of the cities and the relationships among people, leading to individuals becoming isolated from the community. Visits decreased, and all manifestations of social relationships disappeared. There was a near mass migration from reality to social media, and we truly felt that we were in a state of crisis, fear, and panic. Consequently, the meanings of home confinement varied between supporters and opponents.

2.3.2- Social Distancing and Solidarity as Cultural Values in Light of the Coronavirus Pandemic:

Among the most important values and behaviors that emerged and characterized this particular period to curb the spread of the epidemic is the policy of social distancing that was imposed on individuals, alongside the issue of human solidarity recognized by individuals in Algerian society as a value of cooperation, especially after the closure of industrial institutions, the suspension of buses and taxis, and the impact on certain groups, particularly those with low incomes and daily wage workers. There are those who rejected the policy of quarantine and social distancing due to their cultural background and their rejection of authoritarian control, which led to a kind of complacency in dealing with the pandemic and consequently an increase in the number of infections. Some rejected it because it directly affected their daily income and the livelihood of their families, at the same time that the issue of social solidarity among citizens emerged. In other words, the decline of individualistic values and the resurgence of values of social and human solidarity, values of sacrifice for others and selflessness, and this is what doctors and all medical staff did despite their firm knowledge of the necessity of social distancing, and here lies the paradox. As one of the researchers mentioned, who is a university professor, this is merely the beginning of the return of social belonging, solidarity, and the revival of collective conscience, all of which are values that are part of the culture of the individual in Algerian society.

While the Corona pandemic revealed the fragility of the system in dealing with the crisis, it simultaneously unveiled a value system, symbolic forms of expression, and behavioral patterns that characterize individuals in Algerian society, namely the values of solidarity and mutual support. One participant expressed, 'Yes, during the period of the lockdown, things happened that we thought did not exist in our society: solidarity, cooperation, coordination of tree-planting campaigns, and personal initiatives. Many associations and organizations were activated to play their awareness and supportive roles. We discovered many talents and alternatives, and we realized that we can free ourselves from the burden of oil rents. Necessity is the mother of invention, and Corona made us need everything, especially since commercial movement between countries stopped. Here, every community was required to stand on its own feet and resist the pandemic. Locally, it is true that we isolated ourselves from one another; visits and meetings decreased, but at the same time, we supported each other more than ever before. Thus, the Corona pandemic revived pure local values rooted in our esteemed religion and our authentic Arab ethics. Therefore, during the pandemic, everything changed, I believe positively to a large extent. And on the other hand (yes, there was solidarity and support to confront the pandemic, such as distributing food and medicine and medical supplies in the affected areas, and holding scientific and medical forums at the national and international levels for awareness. This was done by state institutions, civil society organizations, or individuals in general, especially families that became without income). Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic was a cause for the emergence and revelation of all that individuals in Algerian society possess in terms of religious and social values regarding mutual aid and social solidarity, especially from civil society institutions and individuals in general, through creating what we call in social science loyalty to the group, a collective conscience about the necessity of solidarity and support, and creating a new collective awareness that aligns with the requirements of the current phase, all of which are values that have resurfaced among individuals, each according to the meaning they hold in their perception, This is what we have noticed and continue to observe daily in the attempt to combat the virus, which is the acquisition by individuals of different patterns, behaviors, and forms of symbolic expression. Individuals do not provide the same answers regarding this virus, the reasons for its emergence, and how to confront it. This is all attributed to the individual's cultural background, which governs their perceptions and thoughts, and consequently the different meanings they attribute to the COVID-19 pandemic and all the questions raised about it.

2.4- The Corona Pandemic Through the Religious Dimension in the Imagination of the Algerian Individual:

Religion is considered one of the most important values that govern the formation of identity and culture of individuals in Algerian society. In this section, we seek to understand the logic that governs religious behavior and religious identity in light of the Corona pandemic, that is, the relationship between religion and the search for reasons behind the emergence and spread of the virus in society. Does the religious factor represent a cause for the emergence of the pandemic for Algerian individual? How do they explain this based on the religious dimension? In other words, how is the religious aspect linked to the formation of meaning in the perception of individuals through the various changes that Algerian society is witnessing, chief among them the increasingly spreading Corona pandemic, which directly or indirectly affects patterns of action and behavior among different segments of this society. The interest in this topic stems from what has been established in the common consciousness through observing some manifestations of social change in individual behaviors on one hand, and on the other hand, the impact of phenomena such as globalization and the media and communication revolution as they seek to promote new values regarding the phenomenon and how to deal with it. These manifestations can't only be discussed in terms of their negatives, but also through their contribution to deepening individuals' awareness regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and how to deal with it. This led to the emergence of a new perspective concerning their religious values and identity in the face of various changes and external influences. This has been reflected in their perceptions and representations of religious phenomena in daily life, including the spread of some religious practices like returning to God through prayers and supplications to lift the pandemic, while on the other hand, there is a conflict with the policy of closing mosques. So how did individuals react to this policy? This raises an important question: Has religion become more of a social practice rather than a relationship with symbolic connotations, that is, merely a superficial practice...?

Religion is the influencer of individual behavior in Algerian society, especially among the youth. Since Algerian society belongs to an Islamic community, the main component of its cultural, value-based, and identity-specific characteristics is Islam, which spiritually defines and regulates values, guides individual thoughts, and influences behavioral norms, as well as the practical aspect of religion or its practice. If we observe from a theoretical perspective, the prevailing values in Algerian society are those derived from Islam, meaning the original traditional values of the community. However, reality may initially show us a completely different image in light of all the transformations and external influences that society is experiencing, along with the spread of new values that contradict the culture and values of Algerian society, such as globalization with its various modern technologies, the impacts of which—both negative and positive—cannot be denied, especially on the youth and how they cope with it to maintain the religious values they have grown up with. How has the pandemic of COVID-19 changed individuals' attitudes and perceptions toward religion? This is what we attempt to understand through the respondents' answers. In response to question 12, did you attribute the reason for its emergence to divine forces (like punishment from God towards His servants, for example) or other reasons? Or did you consider the pandemic to be destined? One of the respondents said: 'Yes, it is among the possibilities that this pandemic is a divine punishment. Diseases and disasters are soldiers of God, and I believe in this, even if they are caused by human actions, they are a decree from God upon His servants, due to the spread of sins and people's distance from religion, the tyranny of humans, and their denial of God. We have many stories in the Quran where God imposed punishment upon nations in the form of disasters or diseases and destroyed them all. Therefore, the Corona pandemic might be a message from God to people so that they may repent and reconsider their actions, especially since God has been merciful to Muslims. Among all the countries in the world, the Islamic and weaker nations have been the least affected, whereas the major countries with advanced health systems have stood helpless in

the face of the pandemic, and this in itself is a divine sign.' It was almost a common opinion among all the respondents, especially the older age group, which is evidence of a strong return to religious beliefs that form an important part of the identity and culture of the Algerian individual and which they relies on to shape his behaviors and values. However, this is based on the meaning they gives to the phenomenon (the Corona pandemic). It is necessary and natural for religious feelings to deepen and for faith in the existence of a divine power capable of alleviating affliction, no matter how severe it may be, to strengthen. There is also the belief among some individuals that the pandemic is a punishment from the Creator for their distancing from religious matters and the prevalence of sins. This was expressed by one of the respondents, who said, "Yes... because of what people's hands have earned, and this is stated in the heavenly books, especially the Holy Quran," which led to fear and terror of infection and death. While a few researchers confirmed the opposite, stating that (the human factor is very crucial in its emergence and spread), their opinions varied between supporters and opponents of the idea. The question that arises and deserves an answer is how can we reconcile the original, stable Islamic identity with the demands and changes of modern times? (Mouloud Qassem Naït Belkacem, 2010) Here we are talking, for example, about the phenomenon of Corona, which is the subject of the study. Defending religion and returning to it in an attempt to provide explanations for certain phenomena, primarily the Corona pandemic, by individuals in Algerian society is akin to defending identity and the cultural and value system, authenticity, and heritage as a whole. Thus, these Islamic societies - with Algeria at the forefront - are the most aware of their identity and religion, as for them, abandoning cultural values means abandoning religion or religious identity (Oliver Roy, P176). This was confirmed by individuals returning to religious interpretation and relying on it to understand the pandemic and to try to mitigate it as a given belief and cultural symbol that has meanings that sociologists must understand. It is the primary reference for culture that takes the values and norms governing individual behavior, and it embodies the idea of awareness as a way of life between the material and the spiritual, and it represents an important unity as a factor for the cohesion of peoples. 'In addition to being a social phenomenon, it aims to build structures, relationships, and traditional social behaviors in the urban environment' (Mustafa Boutefnouchet, P81) and various environments and fields of an individual's social life.

Religion, at the moment, especially for the younger generations, has taken a different path from the traditional system, particularly in light of the Corona pandemic during which the level of faith among individuals has increased, as confirmed by the surveyed sample even among the indifferent and careless. They believe that in such crises like the Corona crisis, which has surpassed human capacity and challenged them in finding solutions and treatments, or at least in understanding its causes, individuals feel the need for divine power that must go hand in hand with science, which, in their view, has failed to find medications and vaccines for this deadly virus, COVID-19. However, this return to religion does not come without potential pitfalls if there is a lack of enlightened religious awareness regarding the positive relationship that should exist in such circumstances between science and religion, such as the rejection of the policy of closing mosques that contributes to reducing gatherings for the sake of their safety and limiting prayers to homes and supplication to God, which is something people did not accept. Conversely, in some instances, there was insistence on communal prayers and Friday prayers in particular, as expressed by one participant in the sample. While others confirmed the exact opposite, which is in the case of feeling harmful, self-preservation takes precedence over preserving religion in this case, especially in such a Corona pandemic, which is supported by religious texts. Also, if we return to what the respondents said that the virus is a punishment from God because of the large number of sins and the like, we note that the virus has infected the whole world without exception, including the Islamic society of Malaysia and before it Islamic societies that died due to the plague, and therefore these remain just meanings and perceptions that control the thoughts and patterns of

behavior of the individual in Algerian society and determine the various daily forms of expression in dealing with the Corona pandemic. For Kant, religion is defined as the knowledge of our duties as divine commands (i.e., the relationship of the individual to God as a spiritual relationship, and then comes practice, i.e., the application of that relationship in reality). (...)

True religion involves practical guidance that allows us to be aware of its unconditional necessity" (Abdul Razak Al-Aqrouz, 2014, p. 22). However, religion remains a necessity in an individual's life, serving as a value that guides their behavior and perceptions. By observing the responses of the study sample, we find them divided into two categories: the first supports the idea of attributing the cause to divine anger, while the other is opposed. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the important role of religion in an individual's daily life due to the way these values determine various perceptions and patterns of behavior, to the extent that some individuals have adopted religion as a method for analyzing the pandemic alongside science.

3- Conclusion:

In the face of the spread of the Corona pandemic and its widespread impact, sociologists, anthropologists, and all other disciplines find themselves in a critical situation due to their inability thus far to interpret and understand the pandemic and to respond to it. At the same time, we cannot deny or evade the importance of studying the pandemic from a social perspective, relying on individuals and analyzing meanings, behavior patterns, and forms of symbolic expression that are prevalent in daily life. The pandemic has made individuals in Algerian society aware of the dangers it poses and the vulnerability of society in confronting these new crises. There is an awareness of fear and anxiety over infection, death, and the shadow of health issues. Conversely, what we call a collective conscience has emerged as a form of expression of social solidarity among members of society, symbolically expressed by individuals aiming to cooperate, support, and assist those who have been harmed by lockdowns and work cessation. Sometimes humor has been used to alleviate stress, especially through social media. Thus, the necessity arises for a balance between isolation and lockdown and the issue of social solidarity among different sections of society.

The pandemic has a philosophical, cultural, ethical, religious, and especially symbolic dimension. It reflects on the relationship between humans, nature, and God. Despite the tremendous revolution that science has achieved through scientific and technological development, an invisible virus threatened humanity as a whole without exception. On the other hand, it threatened the cultural and ethical dimension of the Algerian individual by imposing a change in all of their perceptions and daily behavioral patterns, forcing them to adopt and implement new habits and abandon habits they were accustomed to, such as home confinement, daily hygiene, and social distancing. All these habits had reactions and meanings in the imagination of the Algerian individual, pushing them to adopt new perceptions, behavioral patterns, and symbolic expressions.

Numerous questions at religious, scientific, social, and cultural levels have attempted to explain the phenomenon and its effects on the daily life of the Algerian individual. It is not merely a pandemic or a health crisis, but it extends to other areas such as economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. It is primarily a crisis of ideas and perceptions about the pandemic and how to deal with it. Were our behaviors before the pandemic satisfactory? Did the pandemic push us to modify our behavior patterns?

Among the approaches that have adopted an interpretation of the pandemic is the religious approach, which views the Corona pandemic as merely a test in which individuals (according to the interviewees who agreed on this) are placed to test the strength of their faith and patience and the necessity of returning and supplicating to God. There is also the biological approach, which suggests that it is a biological weapon that can only be eradicated in laboratories and through scientific methods.

On the other hand, some individuals see the necessity of strict adherence to health protocols, such as home quarantine, regularly washing and sanitizing hands, respecting social distancing, and voluntary isolation as preventive mechanisms to limit infection and prevent the spread of the pandemic. This preventive perception has contributed to the formation of new collective behaviors, accompanied by newly created cultural symbols that individuals have adopted to express the pandemic and adapt to its effects, such as face masks, solidarity phrases, and warning signs, indicating the deep-rooted symbolic dimension in the social experience of the pandemic.

In light of these multi-dimensional transformations—religious, scientific, cultural, and preventive—an essential question arises with urgency: What is the place of sociology in understanding the phenomenon of Corona? Should it merely describe it as a temporary health circumstance, or must it analyze it as a comprehensive social event that reveals patterns of symbolic action, the fragility of social fabric, and the reshaping of the relationship between the state and society, and between the individual and the group?

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5- Appendices

5.1-Interview Guide on the Coronavirus Pandemic

- 1- Gender:
- 2- Age:
- 3- Educational Level:
- 4- Marital Status:
- 5- Place of Residence:
- 6- Occupation:
- 7- Once the Coronavirus pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization and Algerian society, what did you attribute its emergence to?
- 8- How did you think when the pandemic emerged and the virus spread? How did you interpret the pandemic in your thinking and imagination?
- 9- What was your stance on the pandemic? How did you deal with it, and what different meanings did you give it?
- 10- In your opinion, how did individuals deal with the pandemic?
- 11- What are your perceptions of this exceptional situation and its risks?

- 12- Did you attribute its emergence to divine forces (such as God's punishment of His servants) or other causes? Or did you consider the pandemic to be fate?
- 13-Did you fear death due to the outbreak of the virus?
- 14-Were you able to coexist with the pandemic? How so?
- 15-Was there mutual support and social and cultural solidarity to confront the epidemic? How was this support manifested?
- 16-In your opinion, what are the most important cultural practices individuals engaged in while dealing with the pandemic?
- 17-What are the most important values that emerged as a form of symbolic expression?
- 18-Did the policies and measures taken by Algerian society to confront the pandemic and mitigate its spread, such as quarantine, social distancing, wearing masks, etc., act as a new cultural product that collided with the behavior, thinking patterns, and symbolic expression of individuals in Algerian society? Explain that.
- 19-Did the Corona pandemic represent a source of concern for you, your family, and members of the community? How so?
- 20-In your opinion, were there religious and cultural rituals to understand, interpret, and confront the pandemic?
- 21-Were there new behavioral patterns adopted by individuals in Algerian society in light of the pandemic? What are they?
- 22-In your opinion, did the Corona pandemic contribute to reshaping your personality? How so?
- 23-Did you feel obsessive about the illness? How so?
- 24-Did what you carry of culture, values, and customs reflect on your perceptions and dealings with the pandemic in your daily life?
- 25-Did you treat the pandemic as a threat to your life and the lives of your family?
- 26-What is your reaction when thinking about infection and death?
- 27-In your opinion, was science able to confront the pandemic?
- 28- In your opinion, did science or traditional thinking prevail in interpreting and confronting the pandemic?
- 29- Can you talk about your experience with the pandemic in your daily life as well as your relationship with individuals? From home quarantine, the necessity of wearing a mask, social distancing policy, remote work and study...
- 30- Were you affected by the home quarantine policy? How?
- 31- The Corona pandemic forced us to give up some daily social and cultural habits in exchange for acquiring new habits to confront the virus. What do you think are the most important of these habits, and how were they dealt with in the daily life of the Algerian individual?
- 32- Do you see a difference between the life lived before and the life lived under the Corona pandemic?
- 33- Do you think that new practices and perceptions have emerged from this?
- 34- Did you feel a change in forms of expression and patterns of behavior adopted in your daily life? Explain that?
- 35- In your opinion, what are the most important forms of symbolic expression that have emerged in the daily life of the individual?