

Editorial: ASEAN Social Work Journal Vol. 11, No. 1, June 2023

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Previously, the journal Volume one to nine was published in two versions: printed and online versions uploaded to the ASEAN Social Work Consortium (ASWC) website. Starting from Vol. 10, No. 1, June 2022, we also applied an Open Journal System (OJS), hoping readers and the spread of authors' research would be much broader.

Today, ASEAN Member States have entered a recovery process era of the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 had caused many miseries to humanity worldwide, including the ASEAN nations. High rate of death and poverty occurred in all countries. Social relations changed drastically. The interaction among people was minimal: people were forbidden to gather by the government. Shopping centers and restaurants were deserted, resulting in massive layoffs. People were forced to work from home. At that time, the term WFH (Work From Home) was prevalent, and WFO (Work From Office) was almost not enforced. Because many people stayed home and worked from home, the traffic was not as crowded as usual; the air was cleaner because motorized vehicles were parked at home. Interestingly, one of the insects, the dragonflies, appeared. This was viewed as an indicator that the air pollution level was relatively low. At that time, especially when the Delta variant of Covid-19 was spreading, which was known to be malignant, many infected people had to use ventilators, and hospital beds were fully occupied. Even though the patients were admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and used ventilators, many were not helped and died.

As communal bond was still strong, the neighbors, individually or coordinately in the neighborhood, provided food to the neighbors who were infected by Covid-19. Because people were being socialized that Covid-19 was quickly contagious, the food given was hung on the fence, so there was no interaction with sufferers. To prevent exposure to Covid-19, the community strengthened the body's immunity, including by sunbathing at 10 am (although not all ASEAN women wanted to do it because they were afraid of having dark skin; some perceived that the ideal skin color was fair skin); taking vitamins or herbs, for example, the decoction of a mixture of red ginger, turmeric, curcuma, and lemongrass. Besides modern medicines from doctors, green coconut water mixed with lime juice were also believed to cure Covid-19.

The restrictions imposed by the government to prevent the spread of Covid-19 might be challenging for ASEAN people, who tended to get along with strong community ties. It also affected religious rituals. In Islamic teachings, praying in a congregation is better than praying individually, but because they were worried about the possibility of contracting Covid-19, they tended to pray individually. Likewise, adherents of Christianity were prohibited from worshiping at churches; The community was provided the online mass services. Thus, Covid-19 had dramatically changed how people socialized, interacted, and performed religious rituals.

Apart from negative impacts of Covid-19, the positive impacts had been identified. People who were forced to stay at home needed to buy food, so many home-based culinary businesses sprung up. They provided delivery services or online ordering, where food was delivered by *gojek* (motorcycle services), which was ordered through an application. The restaurants also provided go-food services through applications. Humans are creative creatures. When they could not leave the house, this was seen as a business opportunity. In Indonesia, for example, the term "*mager*" was well known among young people, which meant "lazy to move"; whatever food you wanted, you just used your smart phone for ordering food with delivery services. Apart from the culinary business, some start-ups sold various goods, including clothes, furniture, groceries, etc. Also, more and more had podcasts and blogs. These all created new jobs. Then, in line with the betterment of pandemic conditions, shopping centers and restaurants are starting back to have many visitors, and the recruitment of new employees or recalling old employees, who have been furloughed, has occurred significantly.

Digitalization has become an increasingly important issue since Covid-19 spread worldwide, including in the ASEAN region. As a result of digitalization, social change has occurred massively. Social Workers, as agents of change, provide support to individuals, groups, and communities going through the

changes. In carrying out the practice, Social Workers also have made changes. If initially, most of the assistance to clients was carried out face-to-face, since the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, more and more services had been done by telephone and online. Social Work is one of the professions that would survive under the onslaught of advances in technology, information, and communication. In essence, humans are social creatures, so human touch and social interaction are still needed. Even though Social Workers have implemented sophisticated digitalization, in practice they still combine it with direct interaction with clients. Moreover, digitalization causes dehumanization: it will alienate humans, and social relations will become more abstract, so humans can experience mental degradation. It is the situation where the role of Social Workers will be increasingly needed in ASEAN region. Initially, Social Workers in non-Western countries mainly helped communities with poverty problems; in the future, Social Workers in these countries will likely practice more and more with individuals, families, and groups, similar to Social Workers in Western Countries. The Social Workers should train people to adapt to changes, including new roles. Concerning poor community, the Social Workers should empower the people by emphasizing innovation and digitalization, for example, online marketing strategies and e-commerce. Thus, Social Workers, as agents of change, not only make changes to their practice methods, but especially bring changes to clients so that they can adapt and carry out new social roles in a changing society. It is one of the challenges for ASEAN Social Workers.

Thank you

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