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The Impact of COVID-19 on the Socioeconomic of Central Asia

BACHELOR THESIS

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Author: Nigina Khobilova

Supervisor: Ing. et Ing. William Nkomoki, Ph.D.

Declaration

I hereby declare that I have done this thesis entitled "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Socioeconomic of Central Asia" independently, all texts in this thesis are original, and all the sources have been quoted and acknowledged employing complete references and according to Citation rules of the FTA.

In Prague, 18.04.2024

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Nigina

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis provides a literature analysis that investigates the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on Central Asian regions. This study synthesizes the findings through a methodical examination of prior research, academic publications, and policy documents to offer insights into the various ways the pandemic has impacted the socio-economic landscape of the area. Different social and economic systems in Central Asian countries have been affected by the Covid-19 epidemic which has caused problems that have never been seen before. In the context of Central Asia, this literature review investigates the effects of the pandemic on the infrastructure supporting healthcare, employment dynamics, poverty levels, and basic services. Additionally, this review examines the governmental responses across the region, focusing on public health strategies, economic stimulus measures, and support systems put in place to mitigate the pandemic's impact. This thesis undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the available literature to identify significant trends, patterns, and areas of limited understanding about the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Central Asia. This literature analysis enhances our comprehension of the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in Central Asia and outlines how governmental responses have shaped the current outcomes. It establishes a basis for future research and policy formulation to address existing difficulties and enhance regional resilience.

Keywords: COVID-19, livelihood, food security, response, remittances, poverty, unemployment.

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List of abbreviations used in the Thesis.

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

WB World Bank

IMF International Monetary Fund

UN United Nations

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization

ILO International Labour Organization

IMI International Migration Initiative

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

ABD Asian Development Bank

EBRD European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

WHO World Health Organization

WFP World Food Programme

IMA International Trade Administration

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

WTO World Trade Organization

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

ECD: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

SARC Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

NBKR National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic

VAT Value Added Tax

CDC Centres for Disease

ECDC European Centre for Prevention and Disease Control

GDP Gross Domestic Product

SMEs Small and Medium-Sized Businesses

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 world pandemic has changed the world forever. Social standards, communication patterns, and behaviours are changing. Education, healthcare, entertainment, and business have all experienced a daily shift towards greater digitization and fewer in-person connections. Global politics and the global economy will also experience significant changes. Not surprisingly Central Asian states have also been a part of these global trends.

The Covid-19 epidemic had a severe influence on the economics of Central Asia. Regional expansion came to an abrupt halt in early 2020, with trade badly impacted by both supply and demand side difficulties. Consumption and investment decreased, increasing concerns about rising inequality across the regions. Vulnerable populations such as women, migrants, informal workers, and rural inhabitants were most affected.

By autumn 2020, Central Asia's economy was suffering more from the crisis than public health. Unlike certain OECD member countries, Central Asia managed to avoid excessive death and morbidity rates. Official data suggested comparatively low numbers of illnesses and fatalities across the region. Strict lockdown precautions seemed effective in preventing the virus's transmission compared to OECD countries and regional peers. However, by the end of October 2020, Kyrgyzstan reported a considerable spike in infections, leading to a disturbing rising trend in daily new cases. In terms of deaths per million inhabitants, Kyrgyzstan ranks 42nd globally, followed by Kazakhstan (61st), Afghanistan (86th), and Uzbekistan (109th) (Balakrishnan, 2020). Even though COVID-19 affects all civilizations and nations equally, each nation faces unique obstacles that can occasionally be very significant. Certain countries have a comparative advantage in certain circumstances and a disadvantage in others due to their circumstances. Governments are required to offer three types of solutions, regardless of the advantages or disadvantages of a given circumstance. To stop the disease from spreading, the first step is the immediate medical reaction. The second focuses on reducing the disease's impact, especially its social and economic ramifications. The third category addresses the pandemic's long-term or structural adaptation to its impacts, including its repercussions on the economy, society, and medical field (Gleason & Baizakova, 2020a).

2. Objective

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on the economies of Central Asia. The main objective study examines the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic activities of the countries in Central Asia.

2.1. Specific objectives:

I. To examine the effects of COVID-19 on livelihood activities of Central Asia.
II. To determine the response of the Central Asian countries to the effects of Covid-19.

3. Methodology

The objectives of the thesis were achieved through the analysis of secondary data resources, comprising institutional sources and scientific journals pertinent to the effects of COVID-19 on socio-economic aspects and government responses in Central Asia. Scientific databases, including Science Direct, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate, were consulted. Additionally, reports and statistical databases from reputable organizations such as UNDP, WB, IMF, UN, FAO, ILO, IMI, OECD, ABD, EBD, and WHO were utilized.

1) Focusing on: Impact of COVID-19 in Central Asia socioeconomics and government response.

- Tajikistan: Emphasis on migration and remittances
- Kyrgyzstan: Identifying the impact on food security.
- Kazakhstan: The effect of COVID-19 on poverty and unemployment.
- Uzbekistan: Investigate the effect on import through exports dynamics.
- Turkmenistan: Overview of the effect COVID-19.

2) Government Response to COVID-19 Impact

Evaluating the responses of Central Asian governments to the impacts, including migration, remittances, food security, poverty, unemployment, import/export, and socio-economic factors.

4. Literature review

4.1. Background of Covid-19

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first identified in Wuhan, China late in November 2019. It is currently the most widespread coronavirus and it's transmitted from human to human through severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) (Hao et al., 2022a). The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak that emerged at the end of 2019 has now swept the world for more than 2 years, causing immeasurable damage to the lives and economies of the world. It has drawn much attention to discovering how the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) originated and entered the human body (Anderson et al., 2020a). The current argument revolves around two contradictory theories: a scenario of laboratory spill over events and human contact with zoonotic diseases. The transmission, pathogenesis, possible hosts, as well as the genome and protein structure of SARS-CoV-2, play key roles in the COVID-19 pandemic. Scientists believe the coronavirus was originally transmitted to humans by animals rather than by a laboratory leak. In Huanan Seafood Market and other markets in Wuhan, China, the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention examined animal samples and environmental items. The findings showed that the western section of the Huanan Seafood Market, which features establishments that sell wild animals for sale, provided 94% of the SARC-CoV-2 nucleic acid-positive samples which were 31/33 cases. Numerous coronaviruses that are known to exist naturally host in bats. An elderly couple with pneumonia of unidentified origin was diagnosed on December 26, 2019, at the Hubei Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine. The following day, five more patients with comparable symptoms were discovered, which is most of these individuals had mentioned contact at the Huanan Seafood Market (Peng Zhou, 2020). However, there still needs more investigations to determine the source of the pandemic. Understanding how COVID-19 emerged is vital to developing global strategies for mitigating future outbreaks (Hao et al., 2022a). The virus has been identified as being highly infective and pathogenic, and its worldwide spread has been established. It was subsequently declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO).

As public awareness of virus prevention was initially confused, SARS-CoV-2 had a great opportunity for spread and mutation around the world. Five main mutated strains, alpha, beta, gamma, delta, and omicron have emerged in this global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Increasing numbers of COVID-19 patients, continue to experience symptoms months after recovering from mild cases of COVID-19. Amongst these symptoms, several are related to neurological manifestations, including fatigue, anosmia, hypogeusia, headaches, and hypoxia. However, the involvement of the autonomic nervous system, expressed by dysautonomia, which can aggregate all these neurological symptoms has not been prominently reported (Barizien et al., 2021). In July 2020, the first was about the spike protein (S protein) mutation, D614G, which has already made headlines across the world (Figure 1). Two months later the alpha variant of the strain was found in the United Kingdom (Andersen et al., 2020). While the beta variant was discovered in December 2020 in South Africa. And then the gamma variant in January 2021 was found in Brazil, after the delta variant in the United Kingdom late in March 2021, and the omicron variant in November 2021 in Botswana. As of July 10, 2022, there have been over 551 million cases confirmed in more than 194 countries, in result over more than 6 million deaths, with the number of daily infections rising rapidly (Barizien et al., 2021).
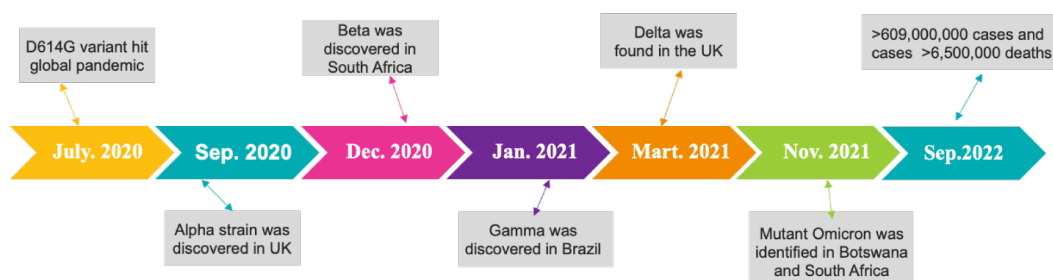

Figure 1: The appearance of mutant SARS-CoV-2
Source: (Hao et al., 2022b)

4.1.1. **The effect of Covid-19 worldwide**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a very personal experience with far-reaching consequences, as well as an unusual worldwide phenomenon. The International economy was rocked by the COVID-19 epidemic, which also brought about the worst economic crisis in almost a century. Inequality both inside and across nations dramatically increased because of the crisis (Gleason & Baizakova, 2020b). According to preliminary data, the crisis's economic aftermath will be just as unequal as it was at the beginning, taking far longer for developing nations and economically marginalized populations to fully recover from the loss of income and way of life brought on by the epidemic. The world economy grew in 2020 to an annualized pace of about -3.2% with a recovery of 5.9% anticipated in 2021. Global commerce is predicted to increase by 8.0% in 2021 after declining by 5.3% in 2020 (Gagnon et al., 2023). There was also an increase in global poverty, and disparities in income between and within nations significantly rose because of disproportionate reductions in income suffered by disadvantaged groups. In 2020, workers with just an elementary education had higher rates of temporary unemployment in 70% of all nations. Even though those who were younger, female, self-employed, or casual employees with less formal education had greater income losses. Women were more likely to work in industries more impacted by lockdown and social distancing measures, consequently, they were disproportionally impacted by income and job losses (ILO, 2020b). The overall consequences on the world economy are growing even if they are decreasing. Specifically, the extended duration of the health crisis is having an impact on the world economy that goes beyond conventional indicators and might have far-reaching and enduring effects. The economic projections consider the ongoing threats to a long-term global recovery presented by the comeback of infectious diseases as well as possible inflationary pressures brought on by accumulated demand from consumers driven by rising personal savings. Shortages on the supply side are a result of ongoing labor market disruptions, production and supply chain challenges, disturbance in the world energy markets, and shipping, and transportation restrictions that increase inflationary pressures (Ccsa, 2020a).

According to the reports, by mid-September 2021, the COVID-19 Delta variation had become the predominant strain of the virus worldwide.

This led to calls for extra health measures, including the reintroduction of travel restrictions, from various national leaders. By the end of August 2021, the European Centre for Prevention and Disease Control (ECDC) predicted that the variation could lead to a fast and significant increase in daily cases in all age groups and might be responsible for 90% of coronavirus infections over most of Europe (ECDC, 2021). According to the Centres for Disease Control (CDC), the delta variation was likewise increasing in proportion in all cases in the US, making up 97% of all cases as of late August 2021. Following their escape from the first waves of illnesses, cases were spreading quickly throughout Australia and New Zealand, prompting restrictions on travel and social gatherings. In June 2021, there was a reported increase in COVID-19 infections in Russia, which was attributed to the population's resistance to the Sputnik V vaccine, which was created in Russia (Susan Langthorp, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic had affected over 246.6 million individuals worldwide by November 1, 2021, the World Health Organization reported, with over 5 million deaths. According to US reports, the virus has killed over 740,000 people and diagnosed over 45.6 million Americans. At one point more than 80 nations had barred people from entering infected nations, commanded companies to close, told people to self-quarantine, and shut down schools for an estimated 1.5 billion students (Ccsa, 2020b).

4.1.2. COVID-19 number and vaccine from WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) has been instrumental in collecting and disseminating information regarding the spread and impact of the virus globally. This analysis draws upon the latest data compiled by the WHO in 2024, providing insights into the current state of the pandemic. Illustrates the cumulative total of reported COVID-19 cases and deaths by WHO region (Table 1) (WHO, 2024a). It is immediately apparent that Europe has borne a significant brunt of the caseload, with a staggering 279.2 million cases. However, when we turn our attention to the mortality figures, it is the Americas that have been the hardest hit, with deaths totalling 3 million. This discrepancy between cases and mortality rates across different WHO regions may be indicative of several factors, including healthcare system strengths, public health policies, and demographic differences.

Vaccination has been a pivotal factor in controlling the spread of COVID-19 and reducing mortality. Figure 2 depicts the percentage of the total population that has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Here, we can observe a stark contrast in vaccination rates across continents. While some regions boast rates approaching the upper threshold of the scale, others linger in the lower echelons, underscoring the challenge of vaccine inequity (CDC, 2024).

Furthermore, the role of booster doses cannot be overstated in the face of emerging variants and waning immunity. Figure 3 showcases the global coverage of booster vaccinations. The varying shades of blue across the continents reflect a world still grappling with uneven distribution and access to these essential boosters. The disparities in booster dose administration highlight the need for continued efforts to ensure equitable access to vaccine reinforcements, especially as the virus continues to evolve (The world Health Organization, 2024).

Table 1: Covid-19 cases and deaths reported to WHO
Source: (WHO 2024)

Region	Cases	Death
Europe	279.2 million	2.3 million
Western Pacific	208.4 million	420.7 thousand
Americas	193.4 million	3 million
South-East Asia	61.3 million	808.6 thousand
Eastern Mediterranean	23.4 million	351.9 thousand
Africa	9.6 million	175.5 thousand
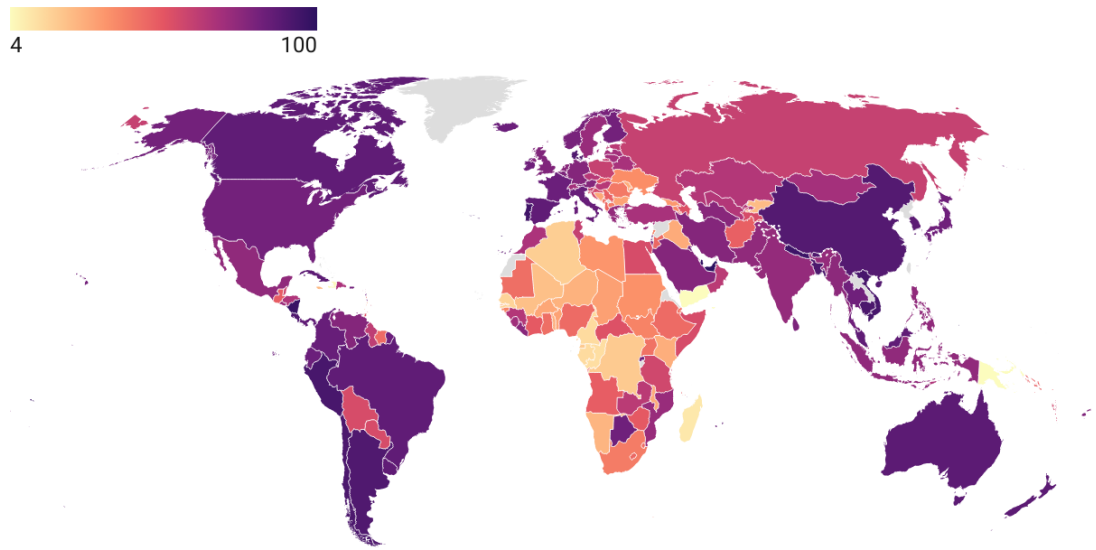
Figure 2: Map of percentage (min 4% max 100%) of total population vaccinated with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine
Source: (WHO, 2024)
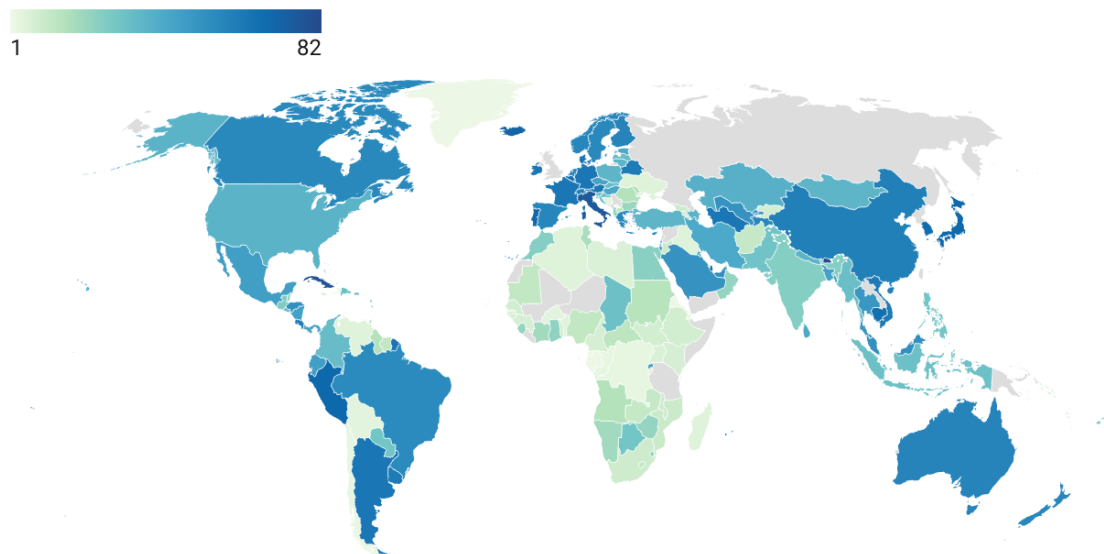
Figure 3: Percentage (min 1% max 84%) of total population with at least one booster dine of a COVID-19 vaccine
Source: (WHO, 2024)

4.1.3. **Covid-19: Prevention and control measures in the community**

World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency on January 30, 2020. In March 2020, they upgraded the classification to a pandemic to highlight the situation´s seriousness and encourage all nations to identify infections and prevent further transmission promptly (GÜNER et al., 2020). The method of transmission of COVID-19 is mostly caused by interactions between people, particularly by the dissemination of respiratory droplets generated by an infected individual while coughing or sneezing. These droplets have the potential to be deposited in the oral or nasal cavities of individuals nearby or perhaps be aspirated into the respiratory system (Nicola et al., 2020). Additional pathways have also been linked to the spread of coronaviruses, including direct contact with contaminated objects, and breathing in tiny airborne particles generated during some medical procedures. Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 has been observed in patients who do not have symptoms or are in the early stage of infection. Nevertheless, the degree to which this phenomenon takes place is still uncertain. The present approach to mitigate the transmission of cases involves implementing preventive measures. Timely screening diagnosis, isolation, and treatment are important to avert the additional transmission. Preventive technique prioritizes the isolation of the patient and throughout infection control, which includes implementing suitable measures during the diagnosis and administration of clinical care to affected individuals (GÜNER et al., 2020).

Several countries have developed a sequence of actions to prevent the spread of the virus and slow down the advancement of the pandemic. These include isolation of cases, encouraging hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and the use of homemade facemasks, and implementing social distancing measures such as closing schools and universities, banning large events and mass gatherings, restricting travel and public transportation, making the public aware of the need to stay at home, and even implementing total lockdown in which individuals are only allowed out to buy food or medicines or to seek healthcare (Table 2).

These measures have been introduced gradually in different ways, to a greater or lesser extent, in different countries and their results probably depend on socioeconomic and cultural aspects, the characteristics of their political and healthcare systems, and the operational procedures used in their implementation (Aquino et al., 2020). In the United States, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention updated its recommendation in early April to encourage individuals to use cloth face covering (homemade masks or bandanas), when in public situations where social distancing is difficult to accomplish, especially in locations with substantial community transmission. Individuals should be counselled to avoid contacting the eyes, nose, and mouth when removing the covering, practice hand hygiene after handing it, and launder it periodically (Kraemer et al., 2020).

The justification for the face covering is primarily to contain secretions of and avoid transmission from individuals who have asymptomatic or presymptomatic infections. The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also points out that the face cover recommendation does not include medical masks, which should be kept for healthcare professionals. Individuals who are caring for patients with suspected or documented COVID-19 at home should also wear a face cover when in the same room as a patient (if the patient cannot wear a face cover) (Barizien et al., 2021). Quarantine is one of the most successful methods of limiting infectious illness epidemics (Table 2). The public health practice was utilized regularly in fourteenth-century Italy, when ships from plague-affected ports arrived in Venice port, they were required to anchor and wait for 40 days (known as quaranta for 40) before disembarking their surviving passengers. This public health measure was extensively utilized throughout fourteenth-century Italy. The quarantine of humans is a restriction of activities or the separation of persons who are not ill but who may be exposed to an infectious agent or disease, to monitor their symptoms and quarantine the early diagnosis of cases. Quarantine is different from isolation, which is the separation of ill or contaminated patients from others to prevent the spread of infection or contamination (Dogan & Bayraktar, 2020). The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy demonstrated that the number of secondary cases rose proportionately to home size and that the pandemic could not be contained in the absence of stringent quarantine regulations.

The simulation indicates that three secondary cases will occur throughout the 14 days if a family consists of two individuals and a complete quarantine has been implemented: if the household consists of six people, this number rises to sixteen.

Table 2: COVID-19 prevention and control measures in the community Source: (GÜNER et al., 2020)

Quarantine	Other measures
Voluntary quarantine (self-quarantine)	**Avoiding crowding**
Mandatory quarantine ➢ **Private residence** ➢ **Hospital** ➢ **Public institution** ➢ **Other (cruise, ships)**	Hand hygiene
	Isolation
	Personal protective equipment
	School measures/closures
	Social distancing
	Workplace measures

Despite more than 2 months passing following the discovery of the first case in the US, the calls to stay at home sent out in 33 states and by many local governments were insufficient. On the other hand, while it was severely condemned the quarantine and strict measures implemented by China´s central government to persons from Wuhan meant that they were able to effectively control the number of cases in states outside of Hubei and that death rates were lower (Bruinen de Bruin et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO) advised that the contacts of patients with COVID-19 who have had laboratory confirmation should be isolated for 14 days following their last interaction with a patient. Within the context of quarantine, a contact is defined as an individual who has any involvement in any of the following activities beginning two days before and continuing for up to fourteen days following the patient's commencement of symptoms:

- Having face to face contact with a COVID-19 patient within 1 meter and for >15 min
- Providing direct care for patients with COVID-19 disease without using proper personal protective equipment

- Staying in the same close environment as a COVID-19 patient (including sharing a workplace, classroom, or household or being at the same gathering) for any amount of time
- Travelling near (that is within 1 m separation from) a COVID-19 patient in any kind of conveyance (The World Health Organization, 2024).

4.1.4. **Covid-19 in Central Asia**

COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the countries of Central Asia, posing difficulties for their economy, cultures, and healthcare systems. As the virus spread around the world, Central Asian nations took several steps to stop its spread and reduce its effects. The ability of Central Asian countries' healthcare systems to contain the epidemic was one of their biggest problems. There was a scarcity of hospital beds, medical supplies, and qualified healthcare workers in several of the region's countries (Zhiltsov, 2020).Governments hurried to strengthen their healthcare systems by developing temporary hospitals, expanding the number of testing facilities, and purchasing necessary medical supplies. The pandemic's economic effect in Central Asia was a crucial component as well as travel bans, lockdowns, and interruptions to international supply chains all had a significant negative impact on the region's economy, which are mostly dependent on industries such as gas, oil, and tourism (Pomfret, 2019). Business close, unemployment increased, and poverty increased as the economy remained (UNDP, 2020). To mitigate the financial strain on their citizens, governments launched social assistance programs and stimulus packages. The epidemic significantly altered Central Asian culture's social structures. Widespread worry and confusion resulted from everyday life disruptions caused by lockdowns and social distancing efforts. Schools started offering online courses, and many people started working remotely as the new standard (Seitz & Rajabov, 2021).

Furthermore, the pandemic made already-existing socioeconomic disparities worse by disproportionately harming vulnerable populations including the elderly, migratory labourers, and residents of rural places. For millions of households in Central Asia, labor migration has been a major source of income.

The COVID-19 epidemic, however, caused disruptions to mitigatory patterns, as migrant workers' movement and employment possibilities were restricted by travel restrictions and border closures (Saidmamatov et al., 2021). Many migrants were forced to return home, placing more strain on already vulnerable social and economic structures, while others found themselves abandoned in their new countries with no means of support or income. For households who depend on remittances for necessities such as food, shelter, and education, the fall in these payments has had far-reaching effects (Ryazantsev et al., 2020).

Remittances normally make up a significant portion of GDP in nations like Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Poverty levels increased in combination with declining remittance inflows, increasing pre-existing vulnerabilities and opening socioeconomic gaps. In response, governments and international organizations have taken steps like cash transfers, social assistance programs, and financial support for migrants who are returning home to mitigate the impact of lower remittances (Yamada et al., 2022). The long-term implications of declining remittances on Central Asia's poverty, inequality, and social cohesiveness, however, continue to be an important concern. Despite these difficulties, the nations of Central Asia showed resiliency and flexibility in handling the epidemic. Strict containment measures, such as border closures, quarantine guidelines, and widespread vaccination programs, were put in place by governments to stop the virus's spread. A significant part was played by international collaboration and aid, with countries receiving bilateral aid from other countries as well as support from organizations like the World Health Organization (Roedyati M. A., 2022).

4.1.5. **Strategies to Reduce the Risk of COVID-19 in Central Asia**

In March 2020, following the initial occurrence of COVID-19 in Central Asia, specifically in Kazakhstan, the government promptly implemented efforts to restrict and mitigate the spread of the virus. Following the emergence of COVID-19 cases in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and later in Tajikistan, the governments promptly acted by implementing emergency measures (Table 3).

These measures granted law enforcement and medical authorities the authority to enforce a wide range of infection control measures aimed at safeguarding public health (Anderson et al., 2020). Restrictions on travel between borders were implemented. Stringent lockdown measures and shelter-in-place mandates were implemented in most prominent urban areas, accompanied by the enforcement of curfews. Regular commercial air travel was restricted or greatly reduced at international and numerous domestic airports. Stringent visa restrictions were enforced throughout all Central Asian nations and personal identification was required for movement within cities (Zhiltsov, 2020). The initial measures taken to restrict the infection were very effective in limiting the initial transmission of COVID-19. However, the government promptly faced an extensive variety of social and economic challenges triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020). The abrupt cessation of customary income and livelihoods for numerous individuals, the disturbance of commercial supply networks, the sharp decline in commodities prices and specifically for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the lack of migrant labor prospects and remittances, collectively resulted in a widespread economic catastrophe across the region due to the impact of Covid-19. The epidemic called for immediate steps on the part of all governments in the region and focused attention on resolving the long-term social, economic, and even regional political consequences (Gleason & Baizakova, 2020a). The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that the governments of the Central Asian republics, by all comparison criteria, should be given excellent honours concerning their actions to control the spread of the SARS virus in the initial phase. The spread of the virus was greatly prevented by measures adopted. Initial containment efforts can flatten the dispersion curve by limiting the initial spread, but long-term containment grows more difficult when the numbers of infected people are bigger and additional infections develop from outside sources. Subsequent World Health Organization data reveals rises, particularly in Kyrgyzstan (Ibbotson, 2020).

Russian Federation's Ministry of Health emergency website "Stopkoronavirus" (in the Russian language) is given daily on the spread of Covid-19 in the Russian Federation. The findings relate to the rapid rise of the virus. Central Asia and other neighbouring countries are experiencing a mounting threat from Covid-19.

Country	Date of first Covid-19 report	Cases (1 May 2020)	Deaths (1 May 2020)	Population (million)	Territory Square kilo-meters
Kazakhstan	15 March 2020	3551	25	18.5	2,724,900
Kyrgyzstan	19 March 2020	756	8	6.5	199,951
Tajikistan	1 May 2020	15	0	9.2	143.100
Turkmenistan	None reported	0	0	5.9	491.210
Uzbekistan	16 March 2020	2046	9	33.5	448.978

Table 3: Report cases in Central Asian States to WHO in the initial 45 days of Covid-19
Source: (The world Health Organization, 2024)

The governments of Central Asia moved quickly and decisively to stop the COVID-19 virus from spreading during the first two months of the pandemic. But due to the pandemic's aftereffects, the abrupt shift in the migrant labour and remittances, the collapse of commodity prices, the disruption of commercial supply chains, the cessation of normal earning and livelihoods, and other factors, Central Asia is currently experiencing a new social and economic crisis. Social and economic change at this level entails political implications (Pomfret, 2019).

4.2. The effect of Covid-19 on socioeconomic of Central Asian countries

The region of Central Asia, which includes Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, is notable for its varied landscapes, rich cultural legacy, and geopolitical significance (Chukubayev & Savchuk, 2017). However, the socioeconomic situation there reflects a combination of problems and opportunities driven by geopolitical dynamics, natural resource endowments, and historical legacies. The main economic activities in Central Asia are industry, natural resource extraction, and agriculture. Rich in mineral resources like oil, gas, and minerals, the region has historically relied primarily on extractive industries for economic growth and government revenue (UNDP, 2020).

However, this dependency has left economies exposed to volatility in commodity prices and global market dynamics (Batmunkh et al., 2022). Agriculture maintains an important component to Central Asia's economy, employing a considerable number of people and supporting livelihoods, particularly in rural areas. The region's lush lands facilitate the development of products such as cotton, wheat, and fruits, contributing to food security and export revenues (Hamidov et al., 2016). The energy resources of Central Asia, especially its natural gas, and oil reserves, are crucial in determining the geopolitical dynamics and regional economies of the region. Countries like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are important energy exporters and have essential pipeline networks connecting them to global markets. However, relying on energy exports exposes nations to volatility in global energy costs and geopolitical threats (Asian Development Bank, 2010).
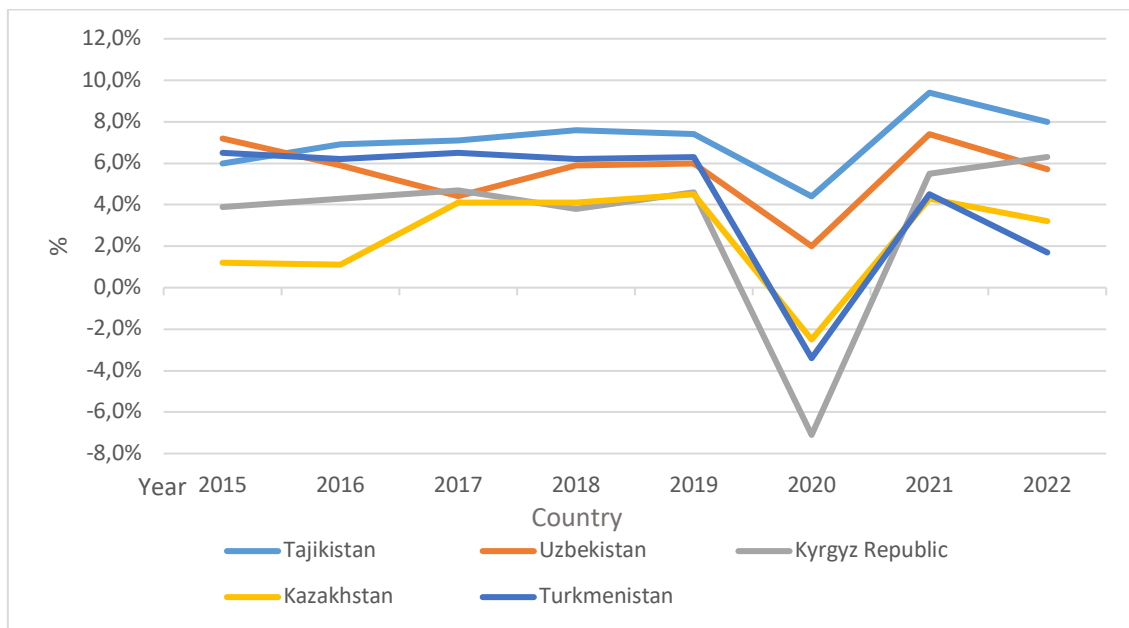

Figure 4: GDP annual growth (%) of Central Asian country
Source: (World Bank, 2024)

4.2.1. **Tajikistan**

Tajikistan has shown significant economic success during the past ten years, with an average growth rate of above 7.1%. The combination of significant economic expansion and increased salaries contributed to a significant decline in poverty rates dropping from 32% of the population in 2009 to an expected 12.4% in 2022.

Based on the international poverty threshold of $3.65 per day (Salahodjaev & Malikova, 2021).Tajikistan has made great strides, but because of its substantial reliance on remittances from migrants, its exported-oriented economy, and the potential for financial crisis, it is still susceptible to external shocks. Remittances from employees make up one-third of the GDP each year. Not to mention, the private sector is small, making up only 15% of all investments, 30% of industrial production, and only 13% of formal jobs (Murodova, 2018). During COVID-19 in the first nine months of 2020, real GDP growth decreased to 4.2 % annually from 7.2 % the previous year (Figure 4). Limitations on domestic and international labor mobility and economic activity led to a decline in investments, a weakening of consumer demand, and a decrease in migrant remittances (Murakami, 2022). The domestic gold market crashed deposit exporters benefiting from a record-breaking worldwide demand for the metal, indicating a more serious COVID-19 effect on domestic employment and earnings. A growing share of the population reported reducing their food consumption, and the inability of previously returned migrants to travel abroad led to a significant increase in the unemployment rate. The demand on the healthcare system to handle an unexpected surge of patients is unprecedented (Eurasian Development Bank, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

Remittances and migration patterns in Tajikistan, a nation largely dependent on revenue from migrant workers overseas, have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the interruptions in worldwide migratory movements caused by the pandemic, remittances, which have historically been very important to Tajikistan's economy, saw a dramatic fall (Kpodar et al., 2021). Remittance inflows significantly decreased in the early months of the pandemic because of several Tajik migrant workers experiencing job losses, pay cutbacks, and travel restrictions in their destination countries (Ryazantsev et al., 2022b). Remittances revenue dropped precipitously in April 2020 with over 61% of recipient families reporting a fall (Figure 5).

This was the largest percentage ever seen in Tajikistan, underscoring the pandemic severe effects on the remittance-dependent economy of the nation (Yamada et al., 2022). The impact of the remittance reduction on Tajikistan's economy and society has been extensive. Socioeconomic gaps already present have been caused by the drive into poverty of many families who depend on remittance money to satisfy their basic requirements.

Local economies have also been impacted by the loss of remittance revenue, especially in rural regions where migrant workers are sometimes the main source of income (United Nations Network on Migration, 2021). Apart from its effect on remittances, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused disturbances in Tajikistan's migratory patterns. To escape the difficulties, they confront outside, many Tajik migrants have returned home as a result of border closures, travel restrictions, and economic uncertainty. The flood of returning migrants has increased demands on social services and local communities, worsening the socioeconomic effects of the epidemic(Ryazantsev & Vazirov, 2020).
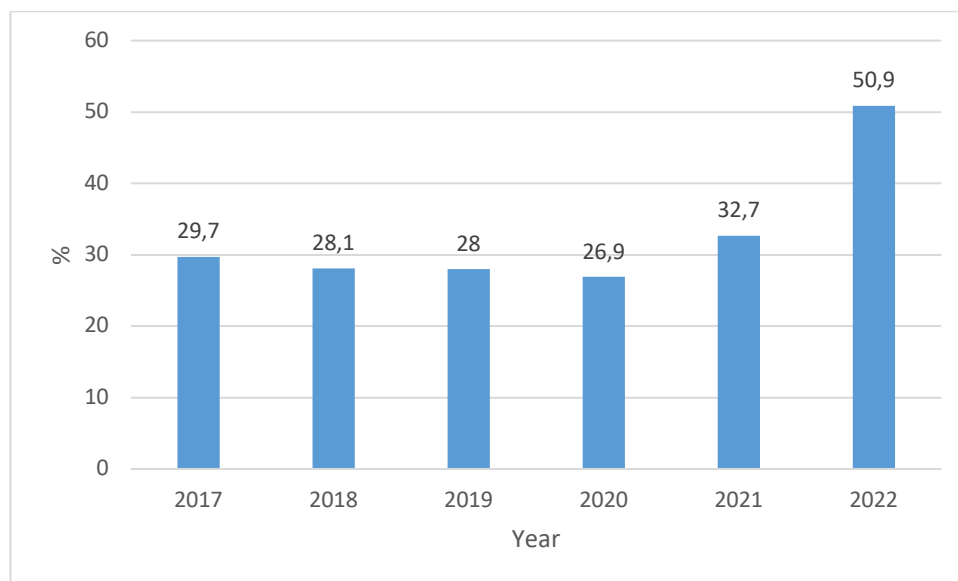

Figure 5: Received remittances, (% of GDP) – Tajikistan
Source: (World Bank, 2024)

4.2.2. **Kyrgyzstan**

The Kyrgyz Republic is a landlocked, lower-middle-income Central Asian country with enormous natural resources and the potential to expand its hydroelectricity, agriculture, and tourist industries (UN, 2011). Before the COVID-19 outbreak, the Kyrgyz Republic was making progress toward macroeconomic stability. Over the previous ten years, real GDP growth averaged 4%, average inflation was low at 1.1%, and the budget deficit was decreased to 0.5 % of GDP in 2019 (Zheirenova et al., 2023). Since the Kyrgyz economy is mostly dependent on remittances (which account for 27% of GDP) and gold exports (which account for 9% of GDP,) it has remained susceptible to foreign shocks. These weaknesses have led to unstable economic growth in conjunction with political instability. As a result, there has been insufficient progress towards improving living conditions and reducing poverty. Import spending for investment contributed to a substantial current account deficit (12 % of GDP) (Dzushupov et al., 2021). Economic growth in the Kyrgyz Republic decreased from 6.3% in 2022 to 3.9% in H1 2023. Due to a decline in gold production and a downturn in the agriculture sector, GDP growth was expected to decrease to 3.5 % in 2023 (Zheirenova et al., 2023).

The Kyrgyz Republic has been extensively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and was one of the hardest-hit countries in the region. The human cost of lives lost is unfathomable, but the impact on the economy has also been substantial. The pandemic resulted in a reduction of output by 8.6 % in 2020, a major loss of jobs, and an increase in poverty (Figure 4). The labor-intensive sectors of the economy were hurt the hardest (UNICEF, 2022). Tourism decreased by roughly 80 % (Saidmamatov et al., 2021). There were also notable effects on trade, building, and transportation. On the other hand, agriculture which is primarily family-operated and does not need considerable human interaction in closed, contexts expanded by around 1% in 2020. Inflation soared from 3 % in 2019 to around 10% in 2020, mostly owing to the weakening of the currency and rising imported food prices (Pomfret, 2021). Public debt climbed by 16% points of GDP to 68 % in 2020, indicating reduced output, an increased deficit in the budget, and a weaker currency. According to World Bank estimates, poverty soared from 20 % to 31 % as wages decreased and unemployment rose (IMF, 2021).

The March-May 2020, which included border closures to contain the spread of COVID-19, severely reduced household incomes and corporate profits.

Political unrest affected the nation's investment climate in October 2020. As a result, real GDP dropped by 8.6 in 2020, even after lockdown restrictions decreased later in the year. December's 12-month inflation increased to 9.7% from 3.1% a year earlier, mostly due to a 19% decline in the value of the $US. According to estimates, the current account was 4% above GDP in 2020, despite a 30% fall in imports and strong export revenue declines that were only slightly below the export of gold (Zheirenova et al., 2023).

During the COVID-19 pandemic food supply in Kyrgyzstan has been significantly impacted, resulting in shortages and price variations in local markets. Food insecurity among vulnerable groups has increased because of border closures, travel restrictions, and transportation delays that have impacted the distribution of food supplies. Farmers and food producers have also been impacted by market closures and limitations on economic activities, which have limited their access to markets and intensified food poverty in rural regions (WFP, 2023).

The pandemic's economic effects have made Kyrgyzstan's food insecurity situation worse. Economic downturns, job losses, and income decreases have reduced people's purchasing power, making it harder for them to purchase quality food. Due to their difficulties in obtaining food and other necessities, vulnerable populations such as low-income households, unemployed people, and marginalized communities have been disproportionately affected. The decline in the value of the national currency as a result of Kyrgyzstan's heavy reliance on imported food, roughly 47% for wheat, 37% for sugar, and 84% for vegetable oil which is one of the primary causes of the country's food price spike (IFPRI, 2020). Even though the Kyrgyz Republic's National Bank (NBKR) has already sold USD 379.5 million in foreign exchange reserves since March, the Kyrgyz Som lost 21.2% of its value concerning the $US by February 2021 compared to the previous year (pre-COVID estimate), following an extended period so stability. Due to the economic crisis, the number of people receiving the stipend grew by 7% between January and November 2020, from 96,080 to 102,504 homes with children.

4.2.3. **Kazakhstan**

The Kazakhstan GDP growth rate of 4.1% in 2017 and maintained a similar rate in the first three quarters of 2018. This increase was primarily fuelled by the expansion of oil output and the presence of favorable commodity prices (Absadykov, 2020). The growth was driven by a faster increase in gross fixed capital formation by 5.3 %, a rise in exports by 8.9%, and a rebound in private consumption by 4.5 % in H1 2018 facilitated by higher real wages. The growth rate of oil production was 10.5 % in 2017 and increased to 6.6 % year-on-year in the first quarters of 2018. In 2019 the GDP was 4.0 %, like GDP growth in 2018. Increased social spending contributed to higher household earnings and in combination with organization assistance to alleviate the financial strain on low-income families, maintained a steady rise in actual consumption (Yermanovna, 2020). Furthermore, investments in residential properties supported business investment and mitigated the decrease in net exports. Due to its plentiful reserves of oil natural gas, and minerals, the economy of this region has become heavily reliant on these natural resources. Kazakhstan has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in substantial economic difficulties in the country (Haruna et al., 2022).

The nation's economy which heavily depends on oil and minerals, encountered unprecedented difficulties due to decline in a worldwide demand. The pandemic had a significant impact on Kazakhstan's economic trajectory (Hasanov et al., 2023). Following a period of consistent expansion at a pace of 4.5% in 2019, the country's GDP experienced a decline of 2.6% in 2020 because of the global economic downturn which caused by the pandemic. The decrease was mainly caused by a decrease in worldwide demand for oil and commodities, which are essential to Kazakhstan's economic framework (Absadykov, 2020). Nevertheless, in 2021, there was a significant recovery as the GDP experienced a growth rate of 4.0%. this was mostly driven by an increase in commodity prices and a revival of global economic activities. In 2022, the recovery persisted and resulted in a growth rate of around 3.5% (Figure 4). Although there have been improvements, the recovery is still vulnerable to external disturbances such as unpredictable fluctuations in oil prices and changes in the global economic situation (Haruna et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Kazakhstan's healthcare system, highlighting both strengths and key areas requiring development.

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The consequences ranged from overflowing healthcare facilities to spurring improvements in health policy. At the peak of the epidemic, Kazakhstan's healthcare facilities were overwhelmed by the spike in COVID-19 patients, which led to shortages of hospital beds and crucial medical equipment. The critical care units in hardest-hit areas were operating at maximum capacity, which pressured the healthcare system and reduced the availability of care for non-COVID-19 related health conditions (Maukayeva, 2020). The pandemic also aggravated the pre-existing lack of medical workers in Kazakhstan. Many healthcare personnel faced burnout owing to the increased workload and risk of infection. The focus on COVID-19 resulted in major disruptions in ordinary healthcare services, including elective procedures and chronic illness treatment.

This has long-term ramifications for public health, potentially leading to increased morbidity and mortality from non-COVID-19 illness (Battakova et al., 2023).

4.2.4. Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, the primary economic sector are agriculture services and industry, which together account for around one – third of GDP. Commodity exports, including golds, cotton, uranium, and natural gas, are essential to the economy (IMF, 2021a). Traditional elements such as retail trade and transportation dominate the service market. Overall, despite changes in the mix of exports, the nation has not yet undergone a swift of profound structural shifts and a sample opportunity to enhance its economic complexity and export sophistication. According to the official household survey, the average yearly per capita income in 2018 was Sum 8.7 million or about $1,078 at the average market exchange rate (Shahparan et al., 2024). From 27.5 % of the population, the poverty rate has significantly decreased. This relatively strong output performance was influenced by the rise in the price of cotton globally, which was Uzbekistan's primary export good at the time (USDA, 2022). Between 1997 and 2003, the real GDP grew at an average rate of 4.4%. Beginning in 2004, the Uzbek economy increased at annual rates by more than 7.0% until 2015. The driving element behind this rapid economic expansion was the spike in global commodity prices.

More recently, the GDP growth rate showed 5.1% in 2018 and 4.5% in 2017 due to a combination of falling commodity prices and a sharp decline in exports to Kazakhstan and the People's Republic of China (Figure 4) (Ganiev & Yusupov, 2021). Despite having a closed economy, Uzbekistan's economic prosperity nevertheless depends on the price of commodities globally. The major effects of the COVID-19 epidemic were a fall in remittances received, a decrease in demand for exports, and a decrease in income for those who were working as a result of self-isolation measures. During the process of creating the state budget for 2020, the Ministry of Finance identified fifteen bankrupt entities, the majority of which were private corporations and small enterprises.

Those small businesses do not have the resource to pay their staff member (Umarov, 2020). The epidemic had a detrimental effect on Uzbekistan's international economies activities as well. Uzbekistan's commerce suffered because of third country counter pandemic actions, including as domestic lockdowns and border restrictions. Uzbekistan's place in global value chains was also affected by the epidemic since there was a noticeable change in the processing phases.

The services sector was impacted by the lockdown and movement limitations, as would be expected. Goods exports totalled $ 17.6 billion in 2019 and decreased to $ 14.56 billion in 2020. Additionally, imports fell from $23.66 billion in 2019 to $22,68 billion in 2020 (Figure 6) (ADB, 2020). Uzbek businesses made clear that cash flow was the area where COVID-19 had the biggest effect on them. In addition to restricting access to raw materials, supply chain disruptions drove increased input costs for businesses.

More than 70% of businesses assert that a decline in demand resulted in orders being lost. Related to this, the pandemic-induced interruptions to the value chain and stoppage of operations resulted in a notable decline in revenue for many Uzbek businesses in the first half of 2020, with an average 9.6% loss in revenue across all sectors compared to the same period in 2019 (Eshov et al., 2021). In the first half of 2021, revenue decreased at a rate of -3.5% on average, less than in 2020. This reduced effect demonstrated the simplicity with which the limits may be applied internationally, especially now that the transportation channels have reopened, as well as some global recovery (Mukhtarova et al., 2021). The Uzbek government has implemented several steps to assist the business community since the start of the pandemic, including a quarterly VAT payment, a 30% decrease in the required prepayment for gas and electricity, a ban on bankruptcy, and more.

These are connected to the noteworthy advancements the nation has made in recent years in carrying out ambitious economic changes. The primary goal of the first reform phase was to enhance macroeconomic management overall through the liberalization of trade, prices, and foreign exchange rates as well as significant advancements in the frameworks for monetary and fiscal poverty (World Bank, 2020).
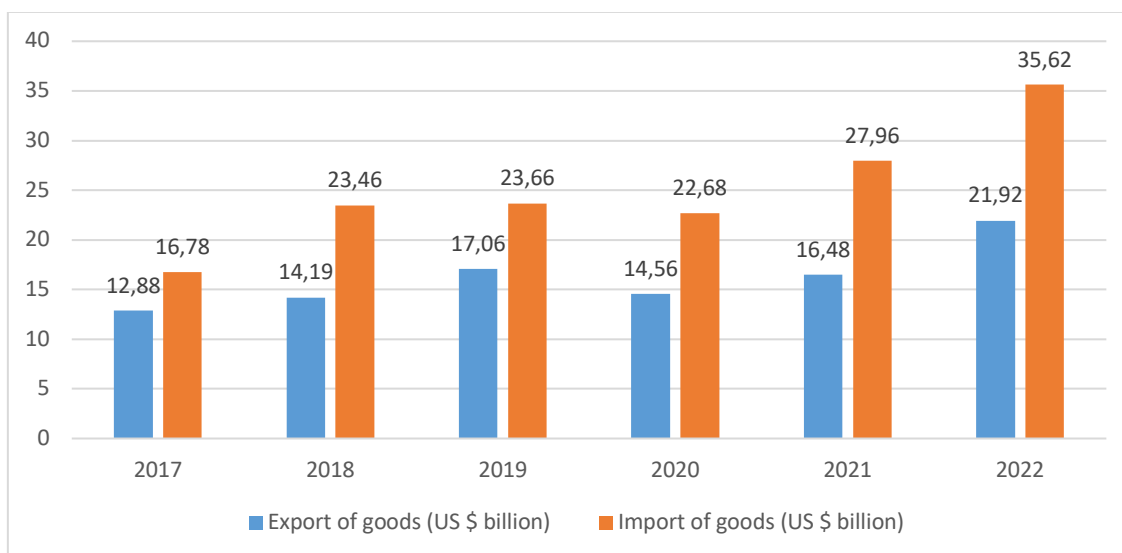

Figure 6: Export and Import of goods (current US $ billion)
Source: (World Bank, 2024)

4.2.5. **Turkmenistan**

Turkmenistan is well known for having a substantial natural gas reserve. Turkmenistan's economy was largely dependent on the energy industry before the COVID-19 epidemic, especially on natural gas exports, which account for a significant portion of the country's GDP (Samir, 2017). Turkmenistan's economy was rather steady, with yearly GDP growth rates that generally varied according to the state of the world energy market. Services made up 20% of GDP in 2019, manufacturing was at 20% other industrial activity was at 69%, and agriculture was at 11%. When examining the GDP by spending in 2020 net export made up 31% government consumption 10%, fixed investment 47%, and private consumption 12% of GDP (WTO, 2023).Factories and agricultural raw materials accounted for 10% of total merchandise exports in 2000, while manufactured goods made up 7%, mineral fuels 81%, food 0%, ores and metals 0%, and other categories 2%. During that time, 80% of all merchandise imports were made up of manufactured goods, 1% was made up of minerals fuels, 12% was made up of food, 1% was made up of ores and metals. The remaining 6% was made up of other items.

In 2020, total exports were valued at USD 6 billion, and total imports were valued at USD 3 billion (IMA, 2023).

Turkmenistan has seen significant socio-economic repercussions from the COVID-19 pandemic in several areas. As the foundation of the economy, the energy industry saw a decline in international markets, which resulted in lower export earnings and put pressure on the public budget and the stability of the economy. The economic downturns led to a loss of income and jobs, especially for individuals in the service and construction industries as well as informal laborers (UNICEF, 2020). Food security and rural incomes have been impacted by supply chain disruptions and mobility limitations, which also had a significant negative impact on agricultural output and market access. Public health measures were damaged by the government's poor handling of the pandemic response, which made access to healthcare worse and damaged public confidence (UN, 2022). Closing schools and switching to remote learning caused a major disruption to education and social services. Furthermore, the public's trust has been damaged, and effective crisis management and international corporations have been hampered by the lack of clear communication and transparent data regarding the pandemic's scope (UNDP, 2022). In the first three quarters of 2020, officially reported real GDP growth decreased from 6.3% to 5.8% year over year. According to official data, the first three quarters of 2020 saw a 19.4% year-over-year growth in retail trade turnover (EBRD, 2021).

4.3. The responses of government

4.3.1. Tajikistan's response to migration and economic during the COVID-19

Tajikistan's vital migration-driven economy was negatively impacted by major interruptions in worldwide travel during the COVID-19 epidemic. By improving health screening at entrance points, the government managed to save return to its sizable expatriate community, particularly those from Russia (Roedyati, 2022). The provision of critical health services and information to returning migrants through cooperation with neighbouring nations and international health organizations was vital in controlling the spread of the virus caused by frequent cross-border travel (UNDP, 2020).
The pandemic's effects on the economy led the Tajik government to implement several corrective measures. Notably, the economy recovered strongly from a downturn in 2020, expanding by 8.7% in the first half of 2021 because of a spike in exports, private investments, and consumer spending. The commencement of flights to Russia greatly increased remittances, which are essential for household spending.

The government plans included raising money for the social and infrastructure sectors in 2020 and 2021, implementing expansive fiscal policies in 2020 and 2021, and working to contain inflation, which surged early in the year as a result of rising global demand (Gleason & Baizakova, 2020b). The government implemented some tax relief measures, including temporary tax vacations and targeted assistance for preserving supplies throughout the pandemic. These steps were taken to maintain economic stability and lessen the negative effects on the private sector (Asian Development Bank, 2023).

4.3.2. **Kyrgyzstan's response to food security and poverty during the COVID-19**

To tackle the issues of food security and poverty during the pandemic, the Kyrgyz Republic's government executed a sequence of interrelated tactics, which are: stabilization of currency and prices, emergency food help, and expansion of social protection program. The Kyrgyz National Bank sold $379.5 million in foreign exchange reserves in a determined move to stabilize the country's currency. The goal of this effort was to ensure the affordability of essential imported food goods such as wheat, sugar, and vegetable oil by limiting price inflation (IMF, 2021b). The government launched a "shock response", in response to the rising rate of food insecurity by providing one-time food help packages to vulnerable populations, including low-income families, people with disabilities, and the unemployed. Furthermore, to combat poverty, the government increased the number of households who qualify for governments stipends by a considerable margin (UNDP, 2020).Also, the government handled over 500,000 applications for food aid through the Ministry of Labor and Social Development, illustrating the scopes of its attempts to reduce poverty by providing for the most vulnerable groups fundamental necessities. In addition to stabilizing the current state of the economy and food security, these actions also attempted to build a long-term support network for people most impacted by the pandemic's effects (WFP, 2021).

4.3.3. **Kazakhstan's response to healthcare during the COVID-19**

The Kazakh government strengthened its healthcare system with a comprehensive plan in response to the pandemic outbreak. Building healthcare capacity was the main goal, entailing staffing upsizing and facility expansion to manage the spike in patients. The World Health Organization's (WHO) guidelines were modified to fit local conditions, guaranteeing that health precautions were appropriate and successful, and healthcare workers received continuous training. Strong channels of communication were established by the governments to address public issues and disseminate information.

To give the public rapid and reliable health information, they included a call centre open around the clock and open participation on social media (WHO, 2024b). Additionally, through international partnership, Kazakhstan improved its response to healthcare issues and was able to obtain more funds, resources, and knowledge from international organizations such as the WHO. The comprehensive strategy assisted Kazakhstan in lessening the pandemic's effects and preserving the robustness of its healthcare system (Battakova et al., 2023).

4.3.4. **Uzbekistan's response trade during the COVID-19**

The Uzbek government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic's socioeconomic effects by putting in place a comprehensive plan that included financial assistance, economic stimulus packages, and cooperation with foreign groups (Ganiev & Yusupov, 2021). Important action included providing immediate financial support to populations and industries that were at risk, implementing a significant economic stimulus program to increase consumer demand and liquidity, and forming strategic alliances with organizations like the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations to develop policies for economic recovery and stability.

These initiatives attempted to promote long-term socioeconomic resilience while lessening the pandemic's immediate economic effects (Ahmed et al., 2021). The Uzbek government devised a well-coordinated plan to ensure the sustainability of its export and import operations amidst the COVID-19 outbreak. To avoid shortages, this tactic involved expediting and giving priority to the importation of necessities like food and medical supplies at customs (ADB, 2020). Despite significant interruptions, the government offered exporters financial incentives, streamlined regulatory processes, and provided logistical support to help them continue to be present in global markets.

Furthermore, steps were taken to maintain the integrity of crucial infrastructure and stabilize logistic chains, both of which were essential to the seamless functioning of imports and exports. During the pandemic, these initiatives were essential to maintaining the cross-border flow of products and bolstering the economy(ILO, 2020a).

4.3.5. **Turkmenistan's response to socio-economic during the COVID-19**

Turkmenistan has put into action a comprehensive strategy to deal with the socioeconomic effects of COVID-29, which addresses several crucial areas. To guarantee that the population's healthcare demands are satisfied, particularly during the pandemic, the government is improving the standard and accessibility of vital health services.

To ensure that vulnerable populations receive the help they need to weather the crisis, efforts are being made to provide social protection and essential services. Action is being done to safeguard employment and assist small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), who are experiencing difficulties because of the pandemic (Ibbotson, 2020).This covers programs aimed at preserving jobs and supporting failing companies. To lessen the pandemic's overall economic impact, multilateral cooperation and macroeconomic stimulus plans are being used. International collaboration helps to stabilize the economy and promote recovery, which supports these efforts. To preserve social peace and improve community resilience, social cohesion activities have been put in place. During these difficult times, these initiatives seek to promote solidarity and unity among the populace (UNDP, 2022).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the thesis "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Socioeconomic of Central Asia" has highlighted the profound and varied effects of the COVID-19 pandemic across the region. Through meticulous analysis, it has been demonstrated that Central Asia, while uniquely challenged by its geographical and political contexts, has experienced significant disruptions in health, economic stability, and social fabric due to the pandemic.

The socio-economic impacts have been particularly stark, with severe disruptions in trade, increases in poverty rates, and challenges to food security. The thesis thoroughly outlines how vulnerable populations, including migrants and informal workers, have faced the brunt of these challenges, exacerbating existing inequalities and introducing new socio-economic difficulties.

Moreover, the response strategies employed by Central Asian governments have been pivotal. From stringent lockdowns and travel restrictions to economic stimulus packages and health infrastructure enhancements, these measures have been crucial in mitigating the immediate impacts of the pandemic. However, the effectiveness of these responses has varied, with some successes and notable areas needing improvement, especially in public health communication and economic recovery planning.

Future research could benefit from focusing on long-term strategies to enhance resilience against similar global crises, emphasizing sustainable economic practices, robust healthcare systems, and strengthened social safety nets. Additionally, further exploration into the effectiveness of pandemic response measures can provide insights into preparing more robust systems for public health management and economic recovery.

This analysis not only contributes to a better understanding of the pandemic's impact on Central Asia but also lays the groundwork for policymakers to devise more informed strategies that address both immediate needs and long-term socio-economic stability in the face of global challenges.

6. Recommendation

Following the insights gathered from the thesis on the impact of COVID-19 on Central Asia, it's clear that strategic initiatives must be undertaken to safeguard and stimulate the region's socio-economic development:

Enhance Healthcare Systems: It is essential to upgrade medical facilities and services across Central Asia, with an emphasis on increasing the reach of telemedicine to ensure accessible healthcare in all areas, including remote ones.

Diversify Economies: The region should broaden its economic base beyond traditional sectors like oil and gas by fostering growth in technology, tourism, and sustainable agriculture. This approach will provide more reliable employment and lessen the impacts of global market fluctuations.

Education and Skill Development: Central Asia needs to advance education and training with a focus on digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and emerging sectors, preparing the youth and unemployed for future opportunities.

Robust Social Support Systems: Building stronger safety nets is crucial for protecting vulnerable populations during economic shocks. This could encompass improved unemployment benefits and emergency aid.

Regional Collaboration: Enhancing cooperation within the region can lead to more effective crisis management, economic cooperation, and resource sharing, complemented by support from global organizations.

Public Health Education: Ongoing public health campaigns are crucial to raise awareness about preventive measures and overall health wellness, helping to manage health crises more effectively.

By implementing these focused strategies, Central Asia can not only navigate the post-pandemic recovery more effectively but also lay down the groundwork for long-term resilience and growth.

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