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# Guest editorial: Introduction to the special issue: “social action and economic restructuring in the (post-) COVID-19 era”

Guest editorial

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The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed unprecedented health and economic crises worldwide, leading to radical shifts in many facets of daily life (Damette and Huynh, 2023) and economic activities (Zhao *et al.*, 2023). Two years after the outbreak, numerous countries transitioned to the “new normal,” coinciding with vigorous vaccination campaigns, even as record-breaking COVID-19 cases persisted (Van Nguyen *et al.*, 2022). This required individuals, businesses and communities to recalibrate to this new reality. Viewing the pandemic as a unique case study of a profound “shock” event influencing every economic sphere simultaneously, the papers in this special issue offer empirical insights to assist researchers, policymakers and economic organizations in gauging the ongoing scenario. Crucially, the exploration of how and to what extent the interplay between economic activities, individuals and communities has been reshaped in the post-COVID-19 era forms a central theme.

This special issue spans a wide array of topics, from the pandemic’s impact on financial systems (Dalwai, 2023) in both developed and developing economies to the nuanced intersections of religious beliefs and international trade. These concerns, while paramount currently, have enduring relevance. The contributions here not only assess contemporary challenges but also spotlight avenues for future research. Leading our collection is “*The COVID-19 pandemic and financial stability in Vietnam: evidence from the interbank market*” by Le *et al.* (2024). They investigate the pandemic’s effect on Vietnam’s financial health, using extensive daily data on the nation’s COVID-19 cases and sophisticated analysis techniques. The findings highlight the pandemic’s initial adverse effect, which diminishes over time, emphasizing the need for robust interventions to counter unparalleled health crises. Following this is an insightful study on the USA economy’s fiscal dynamics amidst the pandemic titled “*Debt to the Penny and US Dollar Index: a lead-lag relationship of the US economy under impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak*” by Nguyen *et al.* (2024). Their work reveals the negative shift in the relationship between public debt and currency strength due to the pandemic, offering vital perspectives for policymakers navigating fiscal challenges. Venturing into faith matters, “*Contagious crowds and rational faithfuls: a club theory approach*” by Animashaun (2024) investigates the surge in religious fervor during crises. This compelling paper delves into the amplification of religious participation as a means to mitigate the economic and health repercussions of the pandemic, emphasizing the vital role religious networks might play in health initiatives and societal stability. Furthering the discourse on technology and finance, we present papers that explore the adoption of digital banking during these challenging times and the elderly demographic’s receptiveness to digital payments. These works enhance our understanding of technological impacts on consumer behaviors and strategic adaptations during crises (Mat Aripin and Brougham, 2023). The paper “*Does social banking matter in times of crisis? Evidence from the COVID-19 pandemic: a combined SEM-neural network approach*” by Thongsri and Tripak (2024) examines factors influencing the intention to use social banking during the pandemic. It integrates two theories, the integrated technology acceptance model (TAM) and electronic word of mouth (eWOM), focusing on technology acceptance and consumer behavior,



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respectively. The authors employ a neural network model to show that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and trust are significant determinants of adopting social banking, building upon insights provided by the earlier papers. Moving on to technological advances in the finance sector, the paper “*Predicting elderly users’ intention of digital payments during COVID-19: an extension of the theory of planned behavior model*” by [Zhu et al. \(2024\)](#) constructs an extended theory of planned behavior model to forecast elderly individuals’ intention to use digital payment services under COVID-19 constraints. This research broadens our understanding of the elderly’s willingness to adopt digital payments and complements earlier contributions by emphasizing the influence of technology on consumer behavior and business strategies during the pandemic ([Sarwar et al., 2022](#)). Moreover, “*Benchmarking non-pharmacological policies from an efficient administration perspective: a panel DEA approach with strategic insights for the post-pandemic*” by [Nepomuceno et al. \(2024\)](#) offers an in-depth benchmarking of non-pharmacological policies, highlighting varied municipal responses to the pandemic. This study emphasizes the necessity for detailed analyses of strategies and outcomes, incorporating themes from previous papers, including the role of religious entities. Concluding our collection is “*How economic policy uncertainty affects foreign direct investment inflows: implications for the post-COVID-19 pandemic period*” by [Phan et al. \(2024\)](#). Their exploration augments the dialog on strategic financial management, aligning with themes from previous works. In essence, this special issue delivers a comprehensive examination of the COVID-19 pandemic’s economic aftermath. Each contribution enriches scholarly discourse and holds practical implications for business leaders, policymakers and academia. We express our deepest gratitude to all contributors and reviewers for their invaluable input and insights that have elevated the quality of this special issue. In particular, we are grateful to the Emerald team of the *International Journal of Social Economics*, and especially Editor-in-Chief James M Connelly, for the support, suggestions and encouragement provided throughout the process of creating this special issue. Our appreciation also extends to the institutions supporting our authors throughout this endeavor.

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