

CONVERGE COVID-19 Working Groups for Public Health and Social Sciences Research

Research Agenda-Setting Paper

This paper was written to help advance convergence-oriented research in the hazards and disaster field. It highlights areas where additional research could contribute new knowledge to the response to and recovery from the pandemic and other disasters yet to come. Questions about the research topics and ethical and methodological issues highlighted here should be directed to the authors who contributed to this paper.

Working Group Name:

COVID-19 and Healthcare Workers in Bangladesh

Working Group Description:

The pandemic of COVID-19 continues to develop worldwide. Frontline health workers are at high risk of catching COVID-19, and grave concerns have emerged regarding their physical and mental well-being. This Working Group will investigate the potential social, physical, and mental health issues of medical staff, including physicians, nurses, healthcare workers, and medical assistants in various public-private health service centers such as clinics and hospitals in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also recommend policies and strategies for the government to strengthen the health system's response to a global pandemic.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. To investigate the social health and well-being of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has the quality of social relationships, including among social dyads, shifted during the pandemic? What is the role of social networks for communication during the pandemic? How is social participation being affected during the pandemic? What is the level and effect of social isolation, loneliness, social strain, and social support during the pandemic? Are there differences between different professional groups (e.g., doctors, nurses, medical assistants) in terms of social health and well-being?
2. To investigate the physical health and well-being of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do healthcare workers receive sufficient hygiene and personal protective equipment (PPE) for providing health services? Do healthcare workers eat a healthy diet during the COVID-19 pandemic? Do healthcare workers take part in any physical activity or exercise during the COVID-19 pandemic? Do healthcare workers have any new or ongoing non-mental health disability or impairments? Are there differences between different professional groups (e.g., doctors, nurses, medical assistants) in terms of physical health and well-being?

<p>3. To investigate the mental health and well-being of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are the mental, emotional, and psychological conditions of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic? ● What are the factors which caused stress, anger, anxiety, and other mental discomforts among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic? ● What are the individual coping strategies of healthcare workers to reduce stress and anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic? ● Which factors triggered stress and anxiety among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic? ● Are there differences between different professional groups (e.g., doctors, nurses, medical assistants) in terms of mental health and well-being?
<p>4. To examine existing policies and strategies and suggest policy recommendations to strengthen the health system's response to a pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the existing policies and strategies related to healthcare and response during a pandemic? ● What are the gaps and barriers in the existing policies and strategies to provide comprehensive healthcare and response during a pandemic? ● What policy revisions are essential to strengthening the health system's response to a pandemic like COVID-19?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

This Working Group will focus on urban and rural settings to explore comparative scenarios in metropolitan and rural areas. Therefore, the Working Group is planning to collect medical personnel information, including from physicians, nurses, healthcare workers, and medical assistants, in various public-private health service centers such as clinics and hospitals in four major districts of Bangladesh including Dhaka, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, and Narsingdi. We are targeting at least 300 healthcare workers in those districts.

After obtaining approval from relevant authorities from healthcare centers and other institutions like the National Research Ethics Committee (NREC), we will request the administrators of each selected institution to forward the link of our research package to all their healthcare workers within that particular institute. The current research would be carried out using a qualitative and quantitative approach to collect both primary and secondary data. Primary data would be gathered by focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and questionnaire surveys. The secondary information would also be obtained through desk research, literature review, reviewing scientific papers and media reports, etc.

We will use online survey data collection tools such as Kobo Toolbox, Survey Monkey, and Google Form to conduct questionnaire surveys. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting face to face interviews is currently impossible; therefore, we are planning to take advantage of the online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and telephonic interviews to lead the focus group discussions and key informant interviews. At the same time, we will try to collect face to face data if, in some cases, we fail to collect online-based data. This research project will be carried out in complete accordance with the standards of research ethics and, in particular, CONVERGE codes and practices.

Other Frameworks, Considerations for Collaboration, and/or Resources:

Our Working Group is also planning to conduct a similar study to assess the health and socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 pandemic among children and youth in different educational institutions.

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