

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:

Global Researchers' Network for COVID-19 – Research Agenda II

Working Group Description:

The Global Researchers' Network for COVID-19 focuses on identifying dynamic mechanisms that generated a global pandemic in spreading a virus across communities, organizations, jurisdictions, sectors, and nations. It seeks to understand factors that build collective cognition of risk among whole communities, enabling coordinated action to control a pandemic. It also seeks to explore factors that inhibit such action. The group proposes to investigate information flows that support collective decision processes.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. Global Network, COVID-19: Searching for Comparison to Achieve Enduring Research Results- Canada, India, Portugal, and United States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did each country deal with the public health emergency? • How is each country managing the end of “lockdown” and recovery? • How is each country preparing for the next crisis?
2. Emergency Management and Public Health in Canada and the United States.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are rights and entitlements different in the United States and Canadian Systems? • How do these differences impact the national approach in response to COVID-19? • What existing emergency management and public health mechanisms are being used at sub-national levels? • Where and how are municipalities operating independently of states or provinces? • How could grassroots voices be heard in decision-making processes of improving public health and emergency management system?
3. Defining Essential Services in a Pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do definitions of essential services in the COVID-19 pandemic differ between contexts (provinces, territories, states, between states and provinces)? • What options are provided for non-essential services to continue operations? • What effect does the definition of essential services have on continuity of operation for businesses? • What types of support were provided to maintain the well-being of essential workers?

<p>4. Enhancing Frontline Healthcare Professionals' Well-Being: Balancing Patient Health, Personal Risk, and Family Responsibilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific challenges do healthcare workers face in COVID-19? • What recommendations could inform evidence-based emergency planning for pandemics?
<p>5. Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on India's Reverse Internal Migrant Workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact did the COVID-19 lockdown have on India's internal migrant workers? • What structural and social factors led to a disproportionate impact on India's reverse internal migrant workers? • Which individual, community, and societal enablers assisted the reverse internal migrant workers in responding to the crisis? • What short-term and long-term issues need to be addressed to assist India's reverse internal migrant workers recover from COVID-19 impact?
<p>6. Emergency Management Roles in a Pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are federal, provincial/ state, and local emergency management organizations responding to the pandemic? • What roles and responsibilities do EM agencies have in the pandemic and how do these roles compare to established plans? • What is the relationship between emergency management officials and public health officials at different levels of government?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

Ethical Considerations:

Conducting research with international partners creates specific obligations for hazards researchers. They include:

1. Work directly with partners in the nations being studied, not just conduct external reviews and extract information from them;
2. Ensure that interviews are conducted in a trauma-informed manner and that secondary data are used when possible;
3. Provide useful products in return to those emergency managers who are willing to participate in research studies, such as summary data they can use to support their own efforts; and
4. Build cultural competence so we can conduct research in the communities that share different cultural and social backgrounds than our original ones.

Methodological Considerations:

Certain social science research methods will be difficult to execute in pandemic conditions:

1. Semi-structured interviews with key actors and decision makers;
2. Field visits to areas severely affected;
3. Access to frontline personnel who are engaged in response operations; and
4. Access to valid data from agencies engaged in response operations.

Additional Considerations:

Key variables regarding the operational context of the pandemic are important, but difficult to measure:

1. Differential impact of pandemic on developing countries;
2. Differential impact of pandemic on vulnerable populations: e.g. migrant workers, frontline health workers, international students, homeless;
3. Extent to which emergency management laws, policies, procedures are compatible, conflict with public health requirements, policies.

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

1. Amartya Sen: Working Group II has chosen to align ourselves with Amartya Sen's conceptual framework that views human and economic development as derivative of essential freedoms, entitlements and rights. This poses an alternative to the economic reductionism (traditional economic theory) we see being applied to the analysis of the impacts of COVID-19. We reject the notion of self-interested utility maximization, and instead adopt Sen's notion of capabilities as the basis for the comparative analysis of different countries, cultures and communities. We also adopt the ethical framing in the *Power, Prestige & Forgotten Values* disaster studies manifesto, which calls us to engage in more respectful, reciprocal and genuine relationships between "local" and "external" researchers conducting disaster studies.
2. Working Group II is interested in joining the members of Working Group I to develop an edited book, *Countries in Crisis: Comparing Covid-19 Responses across the World*. The proposal is listed under Research Topics for Working Group I.
3. Working Group II is exploring external sources for research funding to conduct research and is preparing a Letter of Intent for the Russell Sage Foundation.

Contributors:

Working Group Lead:

Louise Comfort, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh

Other Contributors:

Kailash Gupta, The International Emergency Management Society - India Chapter, Jaipur
Alessandra Jerolleman, Department of Emergency Management, Jacksonville State University
Laura Olson, Department of Emergency Management, Jacksonville State University
Jean Slick, Department of Disaster and Emergency Management, Royal Roads University
Delta Sousa e Silva, National Laboratory for Civil Engineering, Instituto Superior Tecnico
Haorui Wu, School of Social Work, Dalhousie University

This COVID-19 Working Group effort was supported by the National Science Foundation-funded Social Science Extreme Events Research (SSEER) network and the CONVERGE facility at the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado Boulder (NSF Award #1841338). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF, SSEER, or CONVERGE.