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:

The Avoidable Deaths Network and COVID-19

Working Group Description:

The Avoidable Deaths Network (ADN) is an open network for those who are eager to contribute theoretically and/or practically to reducing avoidable deaths from disasters. ADN is led by two co-presidents, four core members, and 17 regional coordinators who are a branch chief of their representative countries. Their backgrounds are diverse, including sociology, international relations, risk management, computer science, medicine and surgery, and geography. In addition, we have currently 83 affiliates, 31 organizational partners, and 24 volunteers/interns. Most of the volunteers/interns are from developing countries, such as Bangladesh, India, and Nigeria and they are graduate-level students or postdocs. The affiliates are also diverse; some of them are academics and others are practitioners, including those who work for NGOs and private companies. To make sense of the number of deaths from COVID-19, we have formed this special Working Group, which mainly focuses on understanding avoidable and unavoidable deaths in India under the ambit of ADN.

Priority Research Topics and Specific Research Questions:

Priority Research Topics	Potential Research Questions
1. Social Distancing: Cross-Cultural Perspectives from Bangladesh, India, Japan, and the UK As one of the preventable measures against COVID-19, social distancing has been introduced. People are currently implementing social distancing in their own ways. Social distancing is also applicable for other infectious diseases and there is a lot to learn from this preventable measure. Therefore, it is important to collect the different practical ways in which social distancing is being implemented. The aim of this research is to explore how social distancing is being defined, perceived, and practiced by national governments and households during the	• How do people and national governments define social distancing? • How are people implementing social distancing? • What are the challenges involved with practicing social distancing? • To what extent is social distancing diverse in the world? • Are there cross-culturally generalizable approaches to social distancing?

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COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh, India, Japan, and the UK.	
2. Avoidable Deaths COVID-19 Report: Odisha and India In developing countries, death records are often not accurate enough. It is paramount to keep recording the facts of the COVID-19 crisis in developing countries. The aim of this research is to perform a detailed investigation of the current number of avoidable deaths resulting from COVID-19, and the current number of unavoidable deaths from COVID-19 in India and Odisha. The number of deaths from COVID-19 is understood through the lens of the Avoidable Deaths Framework (ADF), one that understands that disaster deaths are both avoidable and unavoidable.	• What has been the number of avoidable deaths from COVID-19 in India? • What has been the number of unavoidable deaths from COVID-19 in India? • How can we analyze the number of avoidable deaths and unavoidable deaths from COVID-19?

Ethical / Methodological Considerations:

For the Social Distancing research study, we have decided to employ a web-based questionnaire and interviews with key informants. We plan to have at least 50 responses to the questionnaire survey and 5 interviews in each country (i.e. Bangladesh, India, Japan and the UK). The raw data from the survey will be shared in the group, and it will be converted to anonymous form when published. This study has already gotten ethical approval from the University of Leicester.

For the Avoidable Deaths COVID-19 Report, we are collecting all the data from media sources (i.e. newspaper articles) and official reports. The collection started in May 2020. We plan to collect the data until December 2020. All of the data is open to the public and there are no known ethical issues.

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

Repository of COVID-19 Information
In order to give the right direction to reliable information sources on COVID-19, a repository page has been set up on the ADN's website. This page is being kept updated. The repository can be accessed from the following link:
https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/repository-of-covid-19/

ADN's Art Project on 'Hope'
In addition to the research activities, ADN is hosting an Art Project on 'Hope' for the young. The ADN is looking for a new image to be featured in our next newsletter and as the cover picture of our Facebook page. ADN is looking for an image that represents hope against the COVID-19 pandemic. In these unprecedented times, it is important to stay hopeful and focus on the positives of life (e.g. your family, keeping people safe, working together, and etcetera).
The details of the art project can be accessed from the following link:
https://www.avoidable-deaths.net/ongoing-projects/

Contributors:

Project 1: Social Distancing

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Project 2: Avoidable Deaths from COVID-19 Report

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