



Article Title

Governance, technology and citizen behavior in pandemic: Lessons from COVID-19 in East Asia

Citation

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Abstract

Corona Virus (CODID-19) was first reported in Wuhan in December 2019, then spread in different parts of China, and gradually became a global pandemic in March 2020. While the death toll is still increasing, the epicenter of casualty has shifted from Asia to Europe, and that of the affected people has shifted to USA. This paper analyzes the responses in East Asian countries, in China, Japan and South Korea, and provides some commonalities and lessons. While countries have different governance mechanism, it was found that a few governance decisions in respective countries made a difference, along with strong community solidarity and community behavior. Extensive use of emerging technologies is made along with medical/health care treatment to make the response more effective and reduce the risk of the spread of the disease. Although the pandemic was a global one, its responses were local, depending on the local governance, socio-economic and cultural context.

Summary

While the world is still struggling with the pandemic, the number of confirmed cases and casualty is growing higher, the East Asian examples and analysis draw a few important lessons as follow:

Pandemic is global, but its response is local: In the growing inter-connected world, our movement is quite high and fast, and that possibly enhanced the spread of the virus globally very quickly, making it a global pandemic. However, different country showed differences in approaches in responses. Thus, although the medical treatment is universal, we need to keep in mind that the healthy emergency response measures are not universal. It is a combination of country's regulation, governance mechanism, link to science-based decision making, local governance as well as community behavior. Thus, learning from each other's experience is very important.

Use of technology: In the advanced stage of technological intervention, a pandemic response is not just a medical response anymore. It needs to link different types of technologies in an appropriate way. COVID-19 response in East Asia showed extensive use of emerging technologies (like big data, AI, drone, 5G, robotics, automated vehicle, block chain etc.) linked to medical technologies.

Risk assessment: A quick analysis has pointed out the need of converging the health response, emergency response and disaster risk reduction in the viewpoint of the Sendai Framework. They analyzed and concluded that current mechanisms and strategies for disaster resilience, as outlined in the SFDRR, can enhance responses to epidemics or global pandemics such as COVID-19. Some of the recommendations are as follow: recommendations concern knowledge and science provision in understanding disaster and health-related emergency risks, the extension of disaster risk governance to manage both disaster risks and potential health-emergencies, particularly for humanitarian coordination aspects; and the strengthening of community-level preparedness and response. A proper risk assessment is required taking into consideration of health risk, exposures, behaviors and policy framework.

Use of social media and sensitization on fake news: In different countries, with different level of social media penetration, the importance of distinction of proper news and fake news becomes more relevant. Importance of negative consequences of fake news is well understood in longer run, not only to fight this pandemic, but also for the longer-term recovery process.

Economic implications: The global economic impacts of the pandemic are yet to be understood, but there is a unanimous agreement of a global recession due to the pandemic. However, in different countries, sectorial impacts are already prominent, especially in tourism and hospitality sectors. MSMEs (Micro, small and medium enterprises) are possibly the hardest hit in all the countries need special economic revitalization package.

Socio-psychological impacts and lifestyle changes: Country wide or partial local down in cities have initiated a different work culture in East Asian countries, as well as in most of the other countries. Tele-work is becoming popular, online meetings, online classes in the universities are getting common, online education for school children becoming obvious. Thus, there has been a life-style change in many countries and communities, which may have relatively longer socio-psychological and behavioral implications.