Editorial

Special Issue 2020: "Impact of COVID-19 on Societies Around the Globe"

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Our world has never been the same following the devastating effect of the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) since December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Now as a global pandemic, the COVID-19 disease has challenged and altered social, economic, educational, political, and health systems worldwide (World Health Organization, 2020). As of the end of July 2020, there were over 17 million confirmed cases and over 685,000 confirmed deaths globally (Worldometers, 2020). The focus of this special issue is to address the impression COVID-19 disease has on societies worldwide. The four papers included in this special issue present diverse perspectives of the pandemic. The papers are structured as follows:

In the first contribution, the author analysed public attitudes in São Paulo, Brazil's hardest-hit city, using Twitter as the preferred platform for text mining. With more people staying at home since the COVID-19 outbreak, there has been a rising number of digitally active users vocal about government responses to the pandemic, especially regarding lockdown measures. User-generated content on social networking sites (SNS) has served as a valuable source of information for exploring public attitudes toward the pandemic, as SNS users often reveal their perceptions of government actions through these platforms. SNS have allowed for large-scale data collection from citizens within a specific timeframe and location, making information readily available in real-time.

In the second paper, the authors analysed the Kenyan situation in implementing and adhering to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendations to enhance learning in all levels of education. They also evaluated the challenges and possible remedies for future actions. The paper was largely based on library research and secondary sources to draw practical inferences for both education research and policy.

The third contribution briefly examined the initial, existing, and possible future effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though researchers and experts are working hard to estimate the impact of this pandemic on the global economy, it is noted by the author to perfectly project its long term effect. Also, the paper cautions against the over-dependence of retrospective estimations of other serious global health disasters like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) to draw COVID-19's long term effects on the global economy as it could lead to an underestimation of the damaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, the fourth paper examined the scope of misinformation in the COVID-19 era as disseminated by peer-reviewed journals and the nature of poor publishing ethics during the pandemic. The paper cites the case of retraction of a pseudo-scientific paper on 5G that asserts that

5G induces COVID-19 in skin cells. The author suggests that COVID-19-related misinformation might similarly arise from poorly vetted literature with the continued failure of implementing an open data (OD) policy being one of the major reasons behind this misconduct. The author further provides some key recommendations to reduce the misinformation in the COVID-19 infodemic.

References

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