

(Dis)information and the legitimation of new technologies in the COVID-19 pandemic

– ELSI with a focus on a health justice perspective

Impulse for the Workshop: Iterations of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Themes and Problem Spaces in Turkey, Iran and Germany, 25.6.2020, online

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Research group
“Life, Innovation, Health, and
Technology” (light)

Measures imposed by politicians in the coronavirus pandemic to slow down the spread of the virus and relieve the burden on the health system are regarded by some citizens as excessive, partly inspired by sceptics and conspiracy theorists who spread 'fake news' and pseudoscientific untruths. Since pandemics can only be managed by society as a whole, it is important to investigate (non-) compliancy with behaviour rules (wearing masks etc.) and (non-)trust in expert knowledge and political decisions and how this is influenced by 'fake news' and social information channels. For this, KIT-ITAS will conduct an online survey/interview study of citizens to compare perceptions, foundations for decisions for action of citizens as well as their assessments of the normative appropriateness/ legitimation of measures enacted by the state in the pandemic. A special focus will be on the analysis of ELSI of tracking apps as a technological measure to control the spread of the disease and mitigate negative social and financial effects of lockdowns. Fake news may also shape the acceptance, fears and hopes of citizens about these tools. The focus in terms of perspectives will be the ethical, looking at trade-offs of different technological and non-technological measures to fight the pandemic with regard to social/health justice. Theoretical/literature work will be combined with empirical results/views from citizens on this issue. It is hypothesized that Fake News/Information shapes attitudes towards new technologies, which in turn has an ethical impact; additionally, there may also be a direct influence of Fake News/Information on normative attitudes of citizens, e.g. a general mistrust leading to a diminished sense of solidarity (like sharing data via tracking apps as a member of a non-risk group in order to protect risk groups). Cross-national and -cultural comparisons of citizens' views on legitimation of political measures and the use of new technologies, normative attitudes and the impact of social communication strategies and (dis/mis-)information/Fake News on these two aspects may provide additional insights for coping with the current and future pandemic(s).

Overview of the talk

- TA and Covid19
- Overview of topics for a potential DFG project proposal, focus on ethical perspective

- 3 Topics, 2 of them in more detail
 - (Dis)information and fake News
 - **(Contact) tracing apps**
 - **Public health ethics/distributional justice**

- What to learn from a comparison of Turkey/Iran/Ger, or how to fulfill the requirement to **generate generalisable results for DFG** ?
- Questions for thought/discussion

TA topics in the Covid19 pandemic

- What are we as TA researchers interested in?
 - **New technologies** to assess (role/effect, legitimation, perceptions of the public, side-effects)
 - Effects of the crisis on politicians and **citizens views on science** and scientists and the role of scientific expertise for political decision making; role of and effect on democracy

- What is our relevant expertise?
 - Scenario thinking/research
 - System thinking and **interdisciplinarity**
 - **Assessing context, effects and side-effects of technology** (Ethical, Legal, **Societal Implications**)

Our research topics for the DFG proposal

- Topic I How do fake news/media coverage influence citizens attitudes towards (scientifically legitimated) measures (like wearing protective masks, tracing apps, ...)?
- Topic II Which hopes and concerns do citizens have with regard to tracing apps, what are potential (unintended) effects and ethical/legal implications?
- Topic III Public health ethics perspective on tracing apps and other (non-technological) measures (social/distributional justice)

(Dis)inform
ation (Fake
news)

Attitudes
towards
technology
(Tracing
app)

Health
ethics of
measures and
technology
(social justice)

Fake News and (dis)information

- When and based on which premises do citizens **trust** or mistrust **expert knowledge** or in 'fake news'?
- How do citizens **evaluate the decisions** made by the federal and state governments and engage in preventative measures accordingly?

- German community in Turkey, Turkish community in Germany?
 - Turkish/Iranian communities in Germany shifting more to digital spaces?
 - Mixing with Iranian communities in Iran/Turkey and their discussions?
 - influenced also by the perceptions of risk and legitimation of their Iranian/turkish compatriots?

- Interviews with different age groups, educational backgrounds, gender, cultural backgrounds (e.g. Syrian refugees), ..

TA of new technologies in the COVID19 pandemic

- **Experiences with tracing Apps** and related technology worldwide
- **Discussion of ELSI** (Ethical, Legal, Social Implications):
 - Ethical framings: **freedom/privacy vs. safety/health, solidarity** with the risk groups/distributional justice
 - Social aspects: acceptance and distribution in different groups, **negative side-effects: overreliance/change of behaviour?**, context/embedding in society: taking actions according to app status, clarity, trust, possibility (<> Fake News)
 - Legal: legitimation/restrictions by law



Corona-Datenspende

Robert Koch-Institut Gesundheit & Fitness

★★★★★ 11.347

USK ab 0 Jahren

Zur Wunschliste hinzufügen

Installieren

Helfen Sie mit - gemeinsam vor Corona schützen!



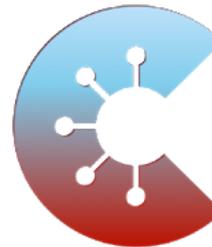
einfache Datenspende - in nur 3 Schritten



für alle mit Fitnessarmband oder Smartwatch



privacy geprüft 100% sicher 100% pseudonym



Corona-Warn-App

Robert Koch-Institut Gesundheit & Fitness

★★★★★ 45.114

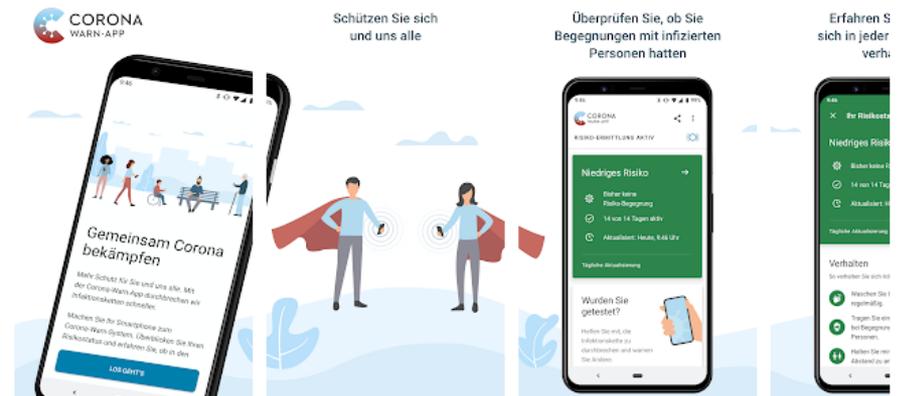
USK ab 0 Jahren

Zur Wunschliste hinzufügen

Installieren

Corona Warn-App:

- High data protection level
- High self responsibility/features and app are non-obligatory
- Usefulness dependent on the health authorities' work with the data



The contact tracing App in Germany (Corona Warn-App)

Attitudes of citizens

- Quantitative surveys (COSMO Studie, Uni Erfurt)
- Correlation e.g. with trust in the health care system
- 60 to 50% would download it; up to today 10 Mio. downloads

What is missing?

- Expectations and experiences, e.g. privacy fears and hopes for sooner end of restrictions/Reasons for use non-use?
- Knowledge about the app? (reference to media reports)
- Ethical obligation to use/right not to use the App?

- More in depth qualitative telephone interviews/online survey needed



Individual Ethics

- Compulsively shopping for food, masks and other goods
- Disregarding travel restrictions
- Discriminating and stigmatizing individuals



Public Health Ethics

- Disruption of social norms with health measures (e.g. social distancing)
- Using drugs with incomplete evidence of safety and effectiveness
- Impact of public health measures on economy, work, education and rights



Global Health Ethics

- Planning immunisation (allocating drugs and vaccines equitably)
- Time and method of response against COVID-19
- Stigmatization of other countries by border police



Research Ethics

- Testing vaccines and drugs in an expedited way
- Coordinated and transparent reporting of epidemiological data
- Sharing data and knowledge across borders



Clinical Ethics

- Allocation of limited resources (e.g. drugs and treatment)
- Giving medical precedence to certain patients (e.g. doctors)



Technology Ethics

- Using mobile data to track movements of infected people and contacts
- Mis-information spreading via social media
- Allocating intellectual property rights of vaccines, drugs and testing

Public health ethics/distributional justice

How does new technology (tracing apps), compared with other measures, have an influence on distributional justice in health care?

- Distribution of direct/indirect, short/long term health risks:
Increasing **inequalities through lockdowns and pandemic**

- Increased risk of infection for
 - ✓ socioeconomically weaker parts of the population
 - ✓ ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities

- Higher burden for the same groups through measures during the pandemic, leading to further increased long term health risks

Citizens views on ethical questions

■ Tracing apps and their relation to justice and solidarity

→ Surveillance, privacy risks, time spent to download and battery

→ High benefit, closing inequality gap, for risk groups and the losers of lockdowns? Equal access to the app?

■ Need for **triage** in overcrowded hospitals?

→ Criteria?

■ **Distribution of vaccines** (globally, vulnerable first)

→ Construction of vulnerability in the media?

■ Mixture of descriptive and theoretical/normative ethics

What do citizens think (especially risk groups, elderly)? With reference to which information or moral arguments? E.g. mentioning solidarity/public good

Questions for discussion

- What role do **tracing apps** play in Turkey and Iran (comparison with Germany possible/fruitful?)
- What is the state of the **ethical/distributional justice** discussions in Turkey and Iran?
- What is known about spreaders and antagonists of **fake news** in Turkey/Iran, what might be the differences to Germany?
- In which (other) respects is a **comparison of Turkey/Iran/Germany** interesting?
- What would be the **specific research questions** with regard to a intercultural/international comparison?
- How can we produce **generalisable** results? E.g., how can we analyse the universal factors (religious belief, opinion makers, social media, technology acceptance, trust in science, etc....) which influence risk behaviour/compliance with measures in a pandemic?
- More focus (in depth research)

Learning from Turkey and Iran/Universal conclusions for pandemic „management“

■ Compare

- Legitimation mechanisms/**role of scientific evidence**
- Attitudes of citizens towards technologies (and **use/framing of technologies by governments**)
- **Information sources**, risk communication strategies
- in different nations/cultures
-and understand the interaction of these factors

■ In order to draw conclusions for

- **Risk communication** (by the state/official agencies vs. stakeholders influencing the public via social media/fake news)
- **Legitimation/acceptability** of measures (ethical, legal, societal)
- Make active **citizen participation** possible
-to build, ultimately, trustworthiness and trust

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