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Editorial

Cyberpsychology research and COVID-19

Pandemics are not something new. Yet, it is the first time in history than mankind is facing a pandemic of this scale, with so many countries simultaneously and so strongly struck in such a short time. The COVID-19 pandemic is already claiming a heavy toll in terms of human lives, and will have considerable impact on the world economy. It might even represent a turning point for our ways of life. With now more than a billion people in isolation worldwide, and with an exponentially growing proportion of universities closing their gates, it is legitimate to ask ourselves what is our place as scholars and researchers in the field of cyberpsychology – and if and whether our work is actually needed at this moment.

The answer to this question is simple: yes, our work is greatly needed – today more than ever. A few years ago, an editorial in *Computers in Human Behavior* (Guitton, 2013) pinpointed the importance of virtual spaces to help understand human behavior in existential risk situations. What was then a mainly theoretical stance is now a reality. While information is central in dealing with the pandemic, it can also generate high levels of anxiety among the population. Fake news are more actual than even, and mitigating their propagation is potentially as important to preserve social peace as fighting the virus itself. With social isolation getting more and more drastic, social media and the Internet can allow us to maintain the social bounds necessary for people to stay united. Distance teaching can compensate the closing down of schools and universities. Telework can reduce some of the impacts of the crisis on economy. While technology (notably with the democratization of travelling) might have been one of the factors that made COVID-19 reach a pandemic status, technology – and particularly online technologies – will also be a key element for us to survive this crisis. Therefore, for all these reasons, cyberpsychology research should not stop. As researchers specializing in how technology impacts human behavior, it is our duty to stay active, and to work to help document all these aspects. It is our duty to help propose and find solutions to the problems elicited by this sanitary crisis.

We are however not blind. Obviously, we understand that this worldwide situation is unique, and has a major impact on researchers. Our authors are in their overwhelming majority working in higher education institutions – colleges, universities, research institutes. Many of us are facing massive and immediate switch of their teaching activities to distance modalities. Many of us are facing trouble to physically access their research facilities – when that is still possible. Many of us are facing hardship with students or postdoctoral fellows confined at home, or stuck abroad. Many of us have to deal with children at home, or are worrying about their relatives and friends. We understand all that, and we understand that it will slow down academic activities. As mentioned in a tweet dated from March 11, we will accommodate our authors who might need further delays to revise their papers. We will do our best to accommodate reviewers as well, and bear in mind the situations we are all facing. But we will try our best to keep things running.

Crises such as the one we are currently living unveil the true nature of people. Solidarity will be the keystone to limit loses. Not all of us are first-line health professionals, putting their life in line while fighting this invisible enemy. Yet, all of the readers of this journal are likely to be experts in one or other avatars of cyberpsychology. Sharing this theoretical or practical expertise we have to help our colleagues, our students, our organisations, or our governments is something we can all do to get past this crisis.

Declaration of competing interest

There is no conflict of interest with this paper.

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