Analysis of the Causes of Moral Injury in the outbreak of 2019-nCoV

AKM Mohsin1\*, Lei Hongzhen2, Afroja Hossain Sume3, Mohammod Hridoy Hussain4

*1International Business School, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an-710062, Shaanxi, China*

*2International Business School, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an-710062, Shaanxi, China*

*3School of Philosophy and ‍‍Government, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi’an-710062, Shaanxi, China*

*4Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering, University of Development Alternative, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh.*

**Corresponding Author:**

AKM Mohsin, International School of Business, Shaanxi Normal University, South Chang’an Road, Yanta District, Xi'an 710062, China.

Tel: +86-29-85303761

E-mail: [mohsin@snnu.edu.cn](mailto:mohsin@snnu.edu.cn)

Secondary Email: mohsinakm90@gmail.com

**ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8730-6189**

**Abstract**

The nCoV-19 virus outbreak was declared a pandemic by the WHO on 12 March 2020. while the infection mortality rate isn't completely understood, it seems to be significantly beyond that of other recent pandemics (e.g. H1N1 pandemic). The moral injury in the situation of disaster and epidemic easily shakes the moral psychology of individual society and brings negative moral influence to fight against the epidemic. Moral injury is a multi-scientific concept involving psychology, culture, and religion. In the outbreak of novel coronavirus pneumonia, immoral behaviors and events such as sitting on the ground, violence, injury, and illness, have also caused different degrees of impact on the moral standards of individuals, confusing moral cognition, the collapse of moral emotion and weakening of moral toughness, resulting in varying degrees of moral injury. If there is no national health, there will be no well-off society for all. Based on this, the public needs to pay close attention to the moral health of the whole people and effectively avoid the occurrence of moral injury.

**Keywords**: nCoV-19 Outbreak, Moral injury, Moral Cognition, Moral Resilience, Moral Emotion.

1. **Introduction**

            Covid-19 epidemic outbreaks our wills unite like a fortress. However, in this Sniper War, there are also some discordant voices with the epidemic, which have caused different degrees of moral injury to the people of the country and the anti-epidemic warriors fighting in the front line. For example, when information explodes, some people transfer posts and comments everywhere regardless of the truth or falsehood; some people even don't have good intentions, believe in rumors, make rumors and spread them All these phenomena have bruised people's will and determination in struggle and caused the moral injury in different levels such as moral cognition and moral emotion to the world. Moral injury is the inclination or subversion of the self-moral matrix, which is caused by anti-moral behavior or phenomenon. The injury sources are mostly the injury events with moral and ethical implications, including atrocities in the war, killing or witnessing the killing, inability to protect the weak and the victims, etc. Such incidents may violate the moral laws, spiritual pursuits and value beliefs deeply believed in, and then cause physiological, psychological and social symptoms. Different from traditional psychological injury and physiological injury, moral injury is a multi-disciplinary concept involving moral science, sociology, psychology, and clinical medicine. For example, culturology regards moral injury as the Achilles heel of soldiers on the battlefield (accompanied by war, any well-trained soldier will suffer from human pain) and the Trojan horse in the hearts of retired soldiers (when soldiers arrive at the "safe place" - retired home, there is a possibility of an outbreak). Through the study of Homer epic, Shane believes that moral injury is "the betrayal of justice by the legal authority in the high-risk situation". **2** Psychology defines moral injury as: "injury caused by participation, failure to stop, cruel witnessing and hearing against deeply rooted moral beliefs and expectations " **3** moral injury makes people reexamine the moral factors in war and reality. Although it originated from military practice, it is not limited to military practice. It has social value and universal significance that cannot be ignored. For example, violence in society, sudden disaster and epidemic, abuse in the family, lack of justice within the unit, betrayal of personal affection and friendship, and negligence of high-risk occupations (such as doctors and police) in work all-cause moral injury Realistic incentives. There are specific moral situations in which morality and moral injury occur. In different moral circumstances, people's moral choices and moral behaviors are not the same, resulting in different injury factors, and the types and manifestations of injury will also show unique characteristics. If we don't know the injury clearly and deal with it improperly, it will cause more long-term injury than physiology and psychology. The study reveals that moral injury at this stage has been carried out in military personnel and veterans**7**. However, several potential risk factors for moral injury have been identified**8**that may apply to other professions during the nCoV-19 Pandemic (Table 1):

**Table:1 Potential Risk Factors of Moral Injury**

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| --- | --- |
| SL. | Items |
| 1. | Increased risk of moral injury if the PMIE happens at the same time as exposure to other stressful events (e.g. death of a loved one); |
| 2. | Increased risk of moral injury if a vulnerable person (e.g., child, woman, elderly) suffers life loss; |
| 3. | Increased risk of moral injury when there is a lack of social support. |
| 4. | Increased risk of moral injury if staff feel unconscious or unprepared for emotional / psychological consequences |
| 5. | Increased risk of moral injury when members are considered not to take responsibility for the event(s) and are unsupportive of personnel; |

During the outbreak of the new type of coronary pneumonia, when people all over the country unite as one, some people exposed abnormal emotions and mentality to varying degrees, such as escape, blame, abuse, panic, ridicule, indifference, watching, even gloating, etc. These symptoms exist in groups as well as in individuals. The factors that cause these negative emotions and mentality are external immoral phenomena and behaviors. These immoral events impact the individual or social value system, resulting in moral injury. If there are too many negative emotions, it will hurt morale or cause social panic. Therefore, we should recognize and avoid them as soon as possible. Specifically speaking, from the perspective of moral psychology, the occurrence factors and mechanism of moral injury symptoms such as abuse, panic, indifference can be understood from three aspects.

1. **Moral Injury Caused by The Imbalance of Moral Cognition**

Any behavior is the behavior under the control of certain thoughts and ideas. The occurrence of moral behavior depends on moral cognition. The so-called moral cognition is the subject's understanding, judgment and analysis of the facts and experiences of experience under the influence of external moral stimulation. Precise moral cognition is conducive to the realization of the moral self of the subject and produces the right behavioral tendency. The wrong cognition will make the subject doubt himself and lose his value, lead to wrong moral choice and behavior, and then lead to moral injury. In the epidemic situation, due to the reversal of value rules such as truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and the failure of self-expectation and expectation of others, the subject will have cognitive imbalance.

* 1. . *Cognitive Imbalance Caused by Confusion of Value Judgment*

As the ideology of society, morality is produced by adjusting people's interests. From the view of the essence of morality, it is the regulation of behavior with interest relationship. Therefore, moral cognition is based on the establishment of value relations between man and nature and between man and society through the agreement of interest relations. Moral cognition reflects a value system of good and evil, true and false. Under the background of epidemic situation, the true and false information is flying all over the world. Some people are not kind enough to fear that the world will not be disordered, to make rumors and spread rumors, and to discredit the anti-epidemic heroes without any reason; to exaggerate the facts, and to blame the society and the government endlessly. When the public is faced with these information, it is easy to fall into the cognitive dilemma of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, unable to distinguish the truth, and then cause inner panic, the value system is severely damaged, and then it may question everything, deny everything, cause trust crisis and cognitive imbalance. When encountering the stimulation of new information again, it is impossible to make correct moral judgment and analysis, and it is impossible to produce correct moral behavior tendency.

*2.2. Cognitive Imbalance Caused by The Deviation of Self-Realization*

There are specific reasons for everyone to initiate moral behavior, and there is an ultimate reason behind these specific reasons. The reason is self-actualization. Self-realization involves the stimulation of an ideal goal, the reflection of life value, the happiness and happiness between people, etc. Therefore, people have the need for self-realization. If they deviate from the direction of self-realization or fail to achieve their goals, they will be injured. The role of cognition in self-realization is to provide self-schema and point out the direction for self-realization. The theory of self-schema is put forward by Marcos. He thinks that self-schema is the cognitive structure of self and the cognitive generalization of self. It comes from past experience and organizes and guides the information processing related to self in individual social experience. The reason why an individual form a certain self-schema is that this domain has an important significance to the individual [3]. Self-schema exists in the individual, which is responsible for the selection, organization, and processing of information, and has two effects on the individual's moral psychology and moral behavior. First, one can control one's attitude towards what happened to one's own body; second, self-schema connects past events and experiences, which can return and test everything in the past before the individual continues to act. If in the past individuals have moral abilities or achievements, when facing new moral situations, they will have a hundred times confidence in new moral choices and behaviors after searching for the self-schema. The content of self-schema includes actual self, ideal self and should self. The ideal self is the goal that the individual desires to become, which expresses the individual's dream and ambition. Should be the self is an individual's expectation for his future according to the actual norms and other evaluation standards. In a specific moral situation, when different moral self-directions are inconsistent, it will lead to negative cognition and moral injury. For example, when the actual self is inconsistent with the ought to self, it will cause moral injury, and when they ought to self is inconsistent with the actual self, it will also cause moral injury. Under the background of the epidemic situation, the medical staff in the front line of the anti-epidemic often face a moral dilemma. When witnessing a large number of patients and deaths, it is easy for individuals to doubt themselves, attribute the results to themselves, and think that they have not done their due duty to carry out the treatment. These phenomena violate the mission of practitioners, that is, they should be themselves, and they also violate the medical practice of saving the dead, helping the wounded and curing the sick the original intention is the ideal self. Based on this, the front-line medical staff is not only physiologically overloaded but also prone to moral overload and moral injury.

*2.3. Cognitive imbalance caused by the failure of moral expectation of others*

Everyone has to contact all kinds of people in real life. In other-oriented society, others are extremely important to everyone. We need to rely on others to conduct behavior orientation, and even rely on others to evaluate ourselves. The existence of others will inevitably interfere with our moral cognition and judgment. Because, people in contact with others will form a moral relationship, and they will expand their moral expectations of others in their hearts. We hope that others will give us equal moral feedback. In different moral situations, it is easy to lose the moral expectation of others. Because some of them are touchable, some are not. Therefore, the failure of other people's moral expectations will lead to moral injury. At present, the shortage of masks, protective clothing, and other materials has become a common phenomenon in various regions. On February 2, a notice of emergency disposal and requisition issued by Dali City, Yunnan Province, China, showed that wholesale of 9 masks to Chongqing was expropriated by Dali municipal government. On February 3rd, the novel coronavirus pneumonia prevention and control team of Chongqing was issued to Dali health and health. According to the letter on request for release of temporarily held materials issued by the Bureau, Chongqing sent a letter to ask for the materials after Dali withheld them, but now the masks have been distributed and cannot be returned. The epidemic situation in Dali is not as serious as that in Chongqing. However, this practice of ignoring other administrative regions for the needs of their own administrative regions, especially in areas with the severe epidemic situation, is not only unreasonable but also seriously affects the circulation of regional materials, which has attracted the public's criticism and anger. It can be said that the operation of Dali failed to meet the moral expectations of the world. In addition, when the epidemic strikes, patients and doctors are the community of anti-epidemic, so they should focus on "disease". Those doctors and nurses who are at the forefront of the fight against the epidemic, they are enemies of the virus, but some of them are always enemies of them; they should have been caressed by the warmth of "responding to the good with good", but some of the "kiss me with good, and I will repay them with evil". This kind of moral phenomenon will lead to some doctors' moral torture and lose the moral expectation of others, and then easily lead to the elimination of mission responsibility.

1. **Moral injury caused by the collapse of moral emotion**

Moral emotion is based on certain moral cognition. It is an emotional attitude experience of love, hate, likes and dislikes to moral relations and moral behaviors. The content of moral emotion is very rich. The occurrence of external moral events has impacted the value system of the society or individual, caused the infection and outbreak of emotions, and caused the sense of injustice, hatred, regret, and shame, and the collapse of moral emotions, thus resulting in moral injury.

*3.1. Grievance*

When a person or a group of people are labeled as bad and bear the stigma, and he is aware of his "identity". In the process of moral attribution, if he thinks that he has no responsibility, and other people or society should be responsible for his label identity, then he is easy to feel wronged. He often asks: Why me? Why is it so unfair to me? Under the control of the sense of grievance, the individual is easy to go to extremes, make abnormal behaviors, and become a heterogeneous society. In the face of the situation, some patients tore the doctor's protective clothing, coughed and spat at the medical staff maliciously, and some patients concealed their illness and fled Hubei. These are feelings of injustice.

*3.2. Sense of hatred*

When individuals think that others or society should be responsible for their own label identity, they may also inspire a stronger emotion than the sense of grievance, that is, hatred. Hatred refers to the strong dissatisfaction and angry moral emotion state to the society or individual caused by the bad stimulation of personal self-esteem. For example, when a race is labeled as an inferior race, the members of that race will have a deep hatred for the so-called superior race because of the humiliation of their self-esteem, and they will no longer have happiness in their lives. What they think is revenge. For another example, in the outbreak of violent medical injuries, the family members of the patients spread their hatred on the doctors, which not only caused many injuries but also caused serious occupational exposure. In the face of this group of lifeguards, why do some people even swing their fists and raise their sharp knives? Although the distribution and distribution of medical resources are not balanced, doctors are not the "air dispensers" for patients. It can be said that the most terrible thing now is not the virus, but the "evil" of human nature.

*3.3. Regret*

If a person thinks that he should be responsible for his previous choices and actions and that the reasons are controllable, he will feel remorse. In the epidemic situation, the problem of selection has become a problem that individuals often face. The uncertainty of selection, the adverse consequences caused by selection, will make people have a strong sense of ambiguity, regret, and injury. For example, if a family is infected with coronavirus at the same time and saves the elderly first or the young first, this is a moral dilemma that family members and doctors often face. Different choices will lead to different results. A choice for a while may lead to lifelong regret. The individual is constantly entangled by the counterfactual thinking in the mind, and the "if at that time Will... " "If That's good. "This kind of typical discourse under the control of counterfactual thinking.

1. **Moral injury caused by the weakness of moral toughness**

Toughness, originally defined by physics, represents the ability of a material to absorb energy during plastic deformation and fracture. In the field of morality, it refers to an individual's effective response and adaptation in the face of moral adversity or distress, which not only means that an individual can recover his original state after moral injury, but also can be tenacious and persistent under the threat of pressure, and more importantly, the individual's growth and rebirth after setbacks. There are not only good factors but also evil agitation in human's moral psychological processes. There is not only past introspection but also future design. There are not only momentary moral impulses but also consistent moral behavior. Moral resilience is the ability of people to adjust their behavior and overcome difficulties when they make moral choices and actions according to moral principles. It is also the determination and will to fulfill their moral obligations. When in a moral dilemma, a resilient person can stick to the moral standards in his heart and not be moved by the outside world. Even if he is hurt, he can quickly return to the original normal moral state. Moral resilience is the fusion of emotion and belief, the coordination of choice and action, and the complementation of troubleshooting and anti-confusion. If the emotion collapses, the faith shakes or cannot resist the external temptation and overcome the external difficulties, the moral toughness will be weak, and it is easy to have moral injury under the stimulation of moral events. Due to the mechanism of moral toughness, different individuals have different types of ductile collapse, which leads to moral injury.

1. **Conclusion**

"Ten thousand people wield bows and shoot one move in all, and all the moves are successful.". The epidemic prevention and control are in a critical period, and the moral health of every person cannot be ignored. At the same time, we should strengthen the moral epidemic prevention timely and effectively, analyze the pathogenic factors of moral injury, resist effectively, improve moral resilience and resolve moral risks. I believe that with the joint efforts of all of you, this sniper battle will soon usher in a moment of overall victory.

1. **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

1. **Author Contribution**

AM and LH designed the study and compiled the manuscript, AM and AS performed the theoretical analysis, MH carried out the final formatting and manuscript proofread. All authors have read the manuscript and agree to the submission.

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