

Role of Social Factors in Mass-gathering Health

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Abstract

Mass gatherings (MGs) are crowded events that attract enough people to exceed the capacity of routine health and public safety measures. WHO defines MGs as ‘events attended by a sufficient number of people to strain the planning and response resources of a community, state or nation. MGs pose serious health risks for attendees, organisers and citizens of the venue city. For effective public health management for all the stakeholders engaged in MGs, the role of psycho-social factors in managing the health-related behaviour of attendees needs to be investigated. Previous research suggests that health risk perception plays a crucial role in shaping individuals’ responses to hygiene, sanitation and crowd dynamics. These responses shape health-related behaviour in special reference to infectious diseases. This paper explored the general health-related behaviour among the attendees of one of India's largest religious mass gatherings held post-COVID outbreak- The Kumbh Mela 2021. It examined the role of shared identity among attendees and its impact on health-related behaviour through perceived risk perception within the special context of Kumbh Mela. A multivariate analysis of a survey study of attendees of Kumbh Mela (N=400) showed that shared social identification leads to better-perceived health and well-being through undermining health risk perceptions in mass gatherings. These findings have important implications for understanding how crowd dynamics may aggravate health risk behaviours in mass gatherings. The present research should contribute to efforts to understand the nature and scope of social identity processes in aggravating and mitigating health behaviour in mass gatherings.

Keywords

Mass-gathering Health, Social Identity, Kumbh Mela and Health Risk Perception.

Acknowledgements

The research is funded by IIM Indore under the seed money project.

Biography

Shruti Tewari is an Associate Professor in Humanities & Social Sciences. She is a trained social psychologist, a PhD from Allahabad University, India. Prior to joining IIM Indore, she worked as a Research Director in an Indo-British Collaborative project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, United Kingdom. She teaches courses on Group Dynamics, Organizational Behaviour, Social Cognition, Ethics, CSR and Behavioural analytics using Neurosciences including Neuro HR and Neuromarketing across various programmes at IIM Indore. She has published extensively in international journals and received recognition from national and international institutions for her social cognitive research on social identity, group processes, health, and well-being. She has received research grants from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science & Technology, Govt. of India and Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. She also worked in various governmental consultancy projects focusing on behavioural change communication. She has contributed her services at various administrative positions such as Chair, Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) and Chair, Integrated Programme in Management (IPM).

