

Publication

Ethical Reasoning During a Pandemic: Results of a Five Country European Study.

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Introduction:: There has been no work that identifies the hidden or implicit normative assumptions on which participants base their views during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their reasoning and how they reach moral or ethical judgements. Our analysis focused on participants' moral values, ethical reasoning and normative positions around the transmission of SARS-CoV-2.; **Methods::** We analyzed data from 177 semi-structured interviews across five European countries (Germany, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) conducted in April 2020.; **Results::** Findings are structured in four themes: ethical contention in the context of normative uncertainty; patterns of ethical deliberation when contemplating restrictions and measures to reduce viral transmission; moral judgements regarding "good" and "bad" people; using existing structures of meaning for moral reasoning and ethical judgement.; **Discussion::** Moral tools are an integral part of people's reaction to and experience of a pandemic. 'Moral preparedness' for the next phases of this pandemic and for future pandemics will require an understanding of the moral values and normative concepts citizens use in their own decision-making. Three important elements of this preparedness are: conceptual clarity over what responsibility or respect mean in practice; better understanding of collective mindsets and how to encourage them; and a situated, rather than universalist, approach to the development of normative standards.

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