

Seminar

Psychological distress following the Great East Japan Earthquake: a six-year longitudinal prospective study

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Date : 28 September 2018 (Friday)
Time : 2:30 – 3:30 pm
Venue : Room Y7302, SS Multi-function Room
Yeung Kin Man Academic Building, City University of Hong Kong
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Abstract

Significant natural disasters (such as the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami and nuclear leakage) have been associated with increased psychological distress. Less clear however is the longer-term trajectory of recovery and potential contributing factors. We analyse data collected annually by Miyagi Prefecture between 2011 and 2016 amongst those living in private housing (6 years), and residents of prefabricated housing (5 years: total 160 623 responses), plus 2,599 respondents linked through waves. Dependent variables included psychological distress and independent variables history of location, psychiatric disorders, employment status and social support.

Across cohorts, multivariate models show decreasing levels of distress over time, with distress higher amongst those from Fukushima, living in prefabricated housing, female, and unemployed. Distress was also greater amongst those with no family or social support and psychiatric disease history. Linked data replicated findings for time, sex, employment, psychiatric status and support, including a latent effect of initial support over time, with initial support from the spouse and friends the most protective of psychological health at each wave. A three-way age x wave x employment interaction indicated those who are younger and without employment are the most distressed while multilevel analyses (time, individual factors and city) suggest a modest interaction between city-level employment and study wave, with the positive association between city unemployment and distress stronger in the final waves. Our findings suggest that while burden of distress has decreased over time, specific populations continue to be at risk, and require targeted psychological intervention and support.

Biographical Sketch

Robin Goodwin is Professor in Psychology and Head of Psychology Department, University of Warwick. His research focuses on the impact of large-scale societal transitions and threats on our relationships with others and our everyday psychological processes. He has a particular interest in the ways in which individual differences combine with group and cultural variations in informing responses to change and threats. Recent projects include a Leverhulme Trust sponsored six-wave prospective study of refugees from the Great East Japan Earthquake (with Tohoku University), an investigation of the impact of the 2015 terror attacks in Paris on interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and the wider Muslim community, and a cross-cultural investigation on the relationship between the everyday social interactions of poultry farmers and the spread of avian influenza in India and China (with Shiv Nadar and Fudan Universities).

All Are Welcome