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Navigating international PhD research in the pandemic

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic since early 2020 has resulted in different challenges in PhD studies. Empirical studies have been conducted to examine the impact of the challenges on PhD students including research on wellness of pharmacy PhD students in the USA (Imeri et al 2021), enforced isolation and questioned doctoral training model in Latin America (Velho 2020), and increased stress experienced by PhD researchers in the USA (Doyle et al 2021). There is scant literature, though, about doing PhD research away from the university where the PhD study is based in the global pandemic.

This paper will address this literature gap by navigating a PhD fieldwork in the pandemic China. It will first examine key challenges in doing PhD fieldwork in the pandemic China and how these are integrated with the Covid-19 policies and regulations at different levels nationally, locally and institutionally. The empirical experience of PhD fieldwork in China will be followed by exploration of communications and supervisions between the PhD student and the PhD supervision team who are based in a UK university. Such a navigation of international PhD research and supervision in different parts of the world will further address issues around 'local' and 'global' (Giddens, 1990, Robertson 1995, Beck 2000), therefore revisiting theoretical debates on globalisation theory.

Keywords: PhD fieldwork, PhD supervision, pandemic, China, UK