

**SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION USE DURING PANDEMICS: STUDY WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

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INTRODUCTION

- In the digital era, the internet is a great source of health information which has the ability to influence its users. More than a decade ago, social media and network services emerged to enable the emergence of real-time and dynamic communications between patients and healthcare workers which is considered to be a vital public health development. Though, the information discovered on internet often lacks scientific precision, as anybody may upload content. This factor is a great concern to government and users.
- The beginning of 2020 marked the emergence of the outbreak of COVID-19 that turned into an international pandemic. As a result, social media is both an indispensable source of vital information and a fertile ground for dangerous rumours all over the world. Inaccurate information is also common in other recent large-scale outbreaks. World Health Organization has stated that critical measures be required to be taken to address coronavirus infodemic.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

➤ To study the use of social media information during covid-19 outbreak.

- **Specific Objective:**

1. To understand the knowledge level of the participants regarding source of information on covid-19.
2. To identify the source of information mostly preferred for covid-19.
3. To assess the acceptability of the social media among the study population.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- Social media can basically empower a community from structural, psychological, and resource empowerment process and help achieve group participation, shared identification, and collective control in the **community (Carmen Mei Ling Leong, Peter Ractham, Shan L.Pan and Laddawan Kaewkitipong, 2015)**. In today's scenario, social media should be responsibly utilized to disseminate constant, consistent, and reliable information to bring about clarity and awareness eliminating confusion and panic. As a best and fastest way to share news, social media takes Covid-19 news from individual states, nation, and parts of the world to everyone who can gain access to it.

MISINFORMATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- A study on the effects of fake news on consumer trust in social media marketing was carried out by **Tomi Pesonen (2018)**. The main purpose of his study was to find out, how fake news has an effect on the consumer trust in social media marketing, The procedure that the researcher used to arrive at the conclusion was quantitative methodology. The results proved that there has been seen a moderate rise in consumer distrust in social media marketing platforms compared to other places. Users feel that companies like Facebook should take certain responsibility and work with those sites that are responsible for the spread and in fighting fake news.

METHODOLOGY

- **Study design** : Cross-sectional study
- **Sampling technique** : Non-probability sampling (Snowball technique)
- **Method of data collection** : Primary data was collected in the form of questionnaire during the outbreak of COVID-19 for assessing the knowledge level of study participants on COVID-19 and source of information preferred by them, assessing the acceptability and reliability of the source of information, assessing the type of social media platform spreading most of the information as well as misinformation, assessing the role of the social media in spreading misinformation in the society and the behaviour of the study participants towards the spread of misinformation through social media platforms.

FINDINGS

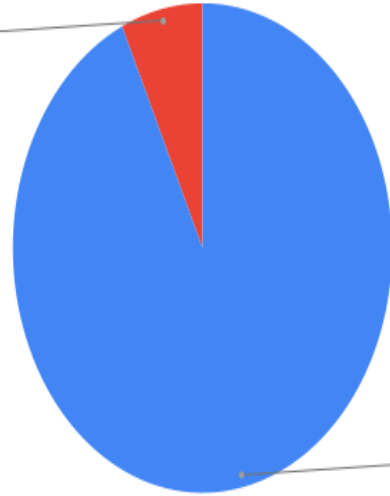
Demographic

- Age of the respondents participated in the were 57% (18-25) and 38.3% (26-30).
- Gender of the respondents participated were 45.7 % Male and 54.3% Female.
- 54.3 % of the respondents of the study are employed 27.9% comprises of students 17.8 % are not working.
- Only 14.7 % of the respondents are medical doctor and 9.3 % are nurse, 3.1 % pharmacist whereas 38.8% are anyway related to medical profession and rest of the population that comprises 34.1% are not medical profession.
- 38.8% of the respondent's household income is more than 50000 per month and 27.1% has household income between 30000 – 50000 per month whereas 30.2 % has between 10000 – 30000 per month and only 3.9 % of respondents have household income less than 10000.
- 83.7% of the respondents live in urban area and whereas 16.3% live in rural areas.
- 69 % of respondents live in their own houses whereas 24 % live in rented houses and 3.9% live in Pg. 's 3.1 % live in hostel.
- 79.8 % live with their family, 10.9 % live alone and 9.3 % live (friends or colleagues)

KNOWLEDGE LEVEL

9) Are you aware of the severity of the covid-19 or novel corona virus outbreak?

b) No
7.0%



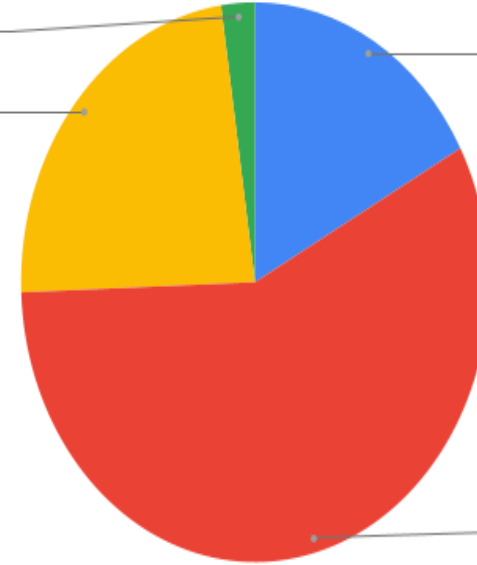
a) Yes
93.0%

10) How would you rate your knowledge level on covid-19

b) Poor
2.3%

e) Very Good
23.3%

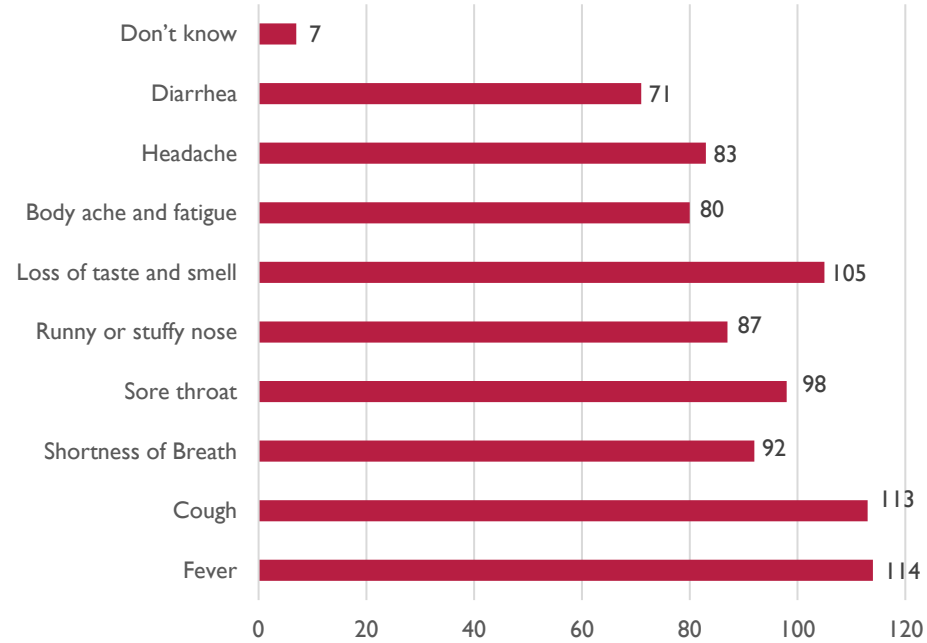
c) Average
17.1%



d) Good
57.4%

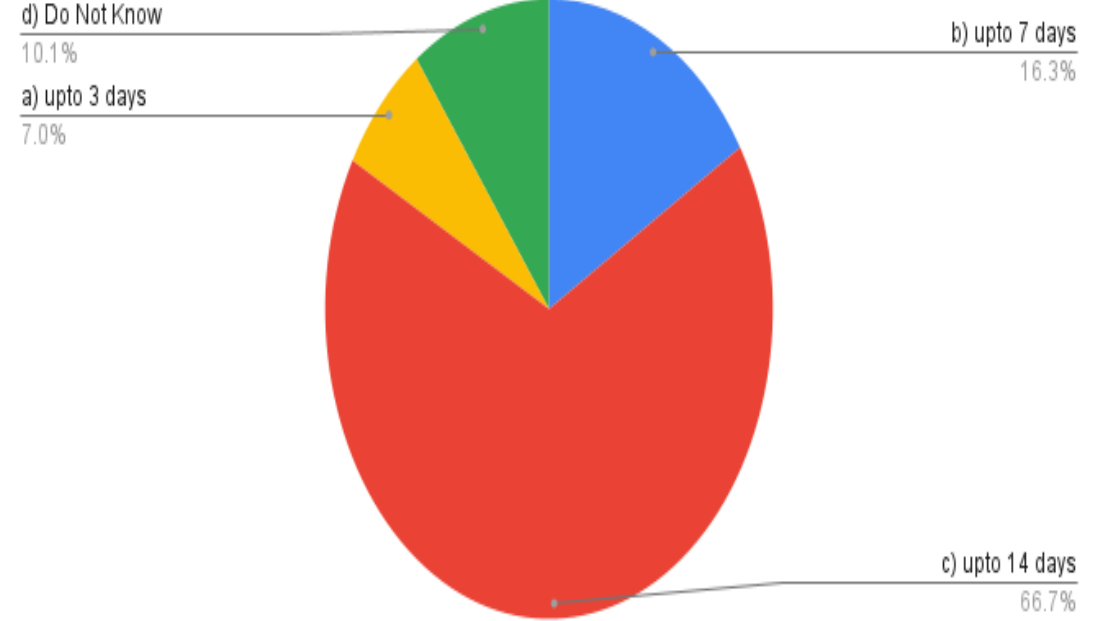
- Diagram shows that 93% of the respondents aware of the severity of COVID-19 outbreak.
- 23.3% of the respondents rate themselves very good at knowledge level on COVID-19 and related information 57.4 % rated them good whereas 17.1% rated average and 2.3% as poor.

11) Which of the following can be symptoms of the novel corona virus or covid-19? (You can choose more than one option)



- 65-90 % of the respondents were aware of the most common symptoms of COVID-19 whereas 45 -70% were aware of the less common symptoms of COVID-19

12) What is the maximum incubation period (i.e the time from viral infection to developing symptoms of illness) of the novel corona virus ?



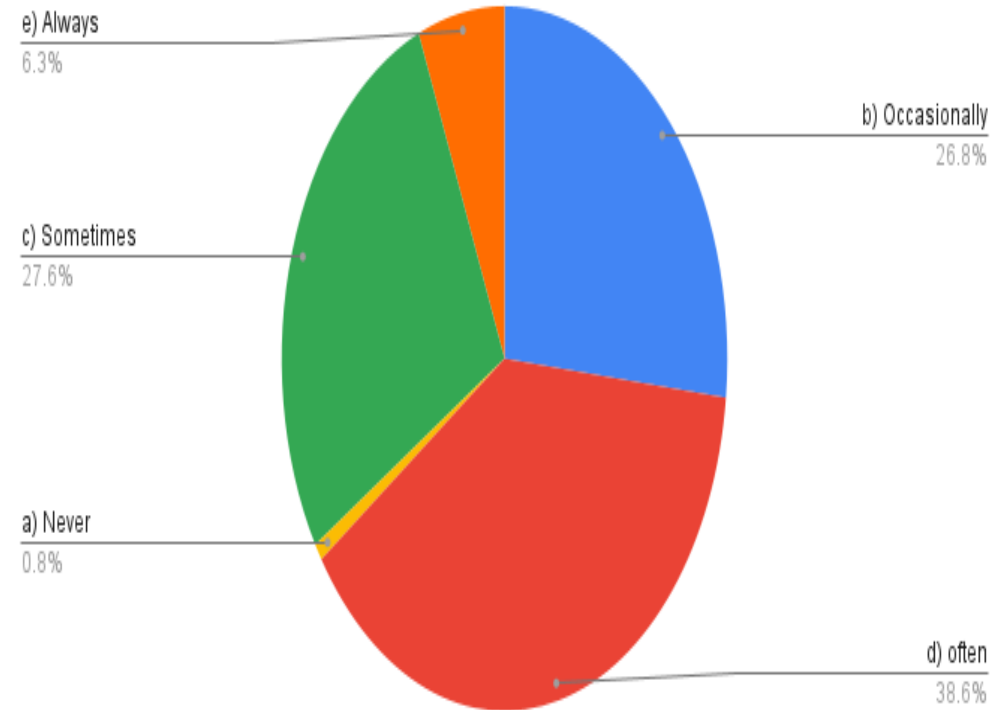
- 66.7 % of the respondents were aware of the maximum incubation period of the novel coronavirus infection

13) Which of the following are effective measures to prevent the spread and infection of the novel corona virus? (You can choose more than one option)



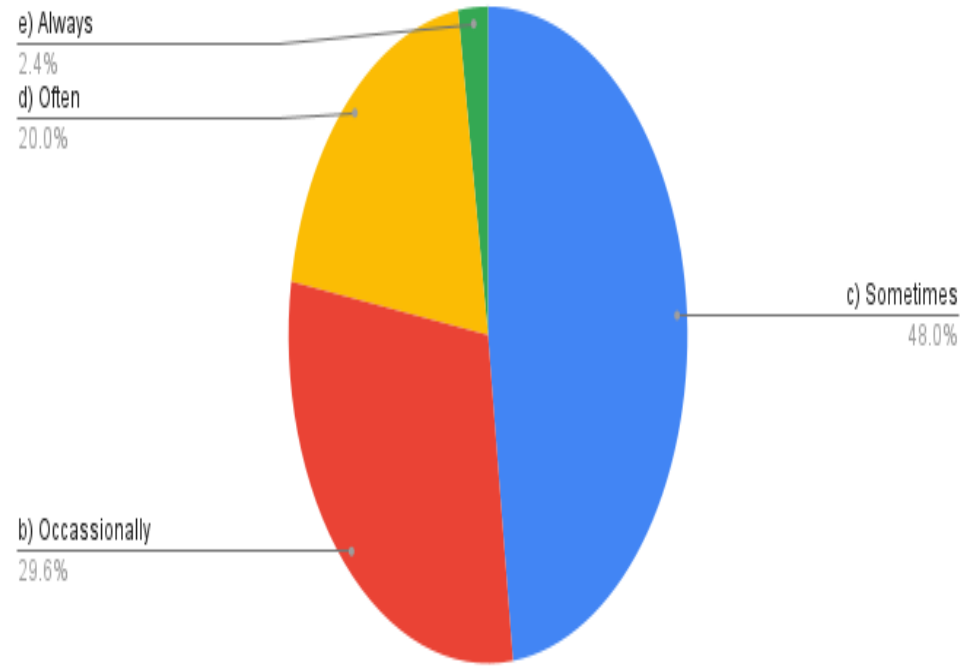
- 70-90 % of the respondents were aware of the preventive measures.

14) How often do you look for information on novel corona virus ?

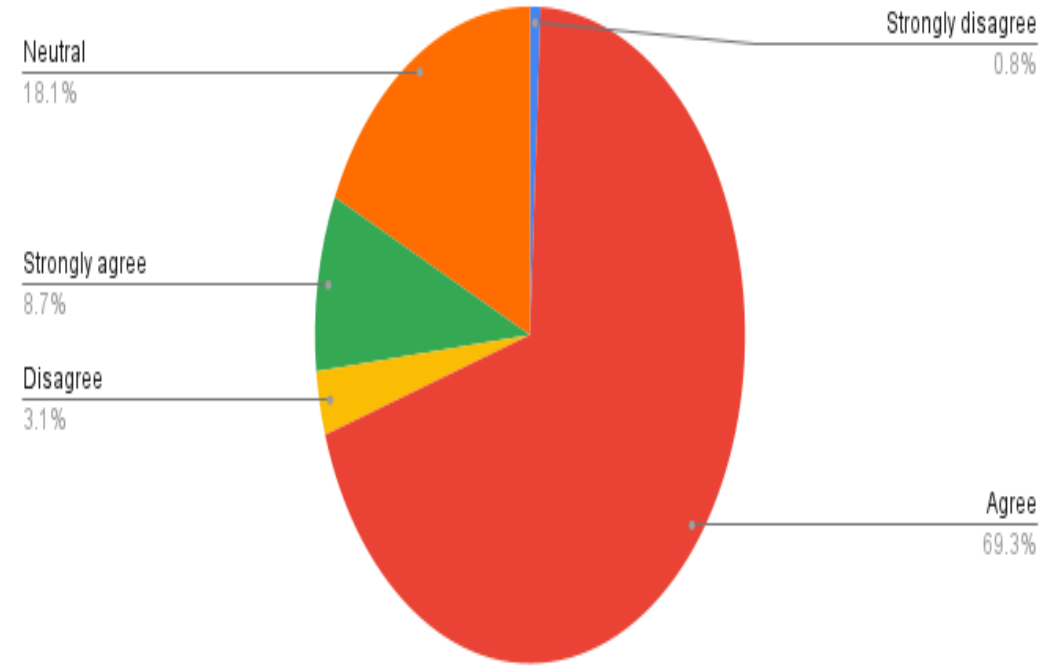


- 38.6% of the respondents often or always look for information whereas 26.8-27.6 % look for information occasionally or sometimes and 0.8 % never look for information.

15) How often do you use the following source of information to stay informed about the novel corona virus? (example social media, What's

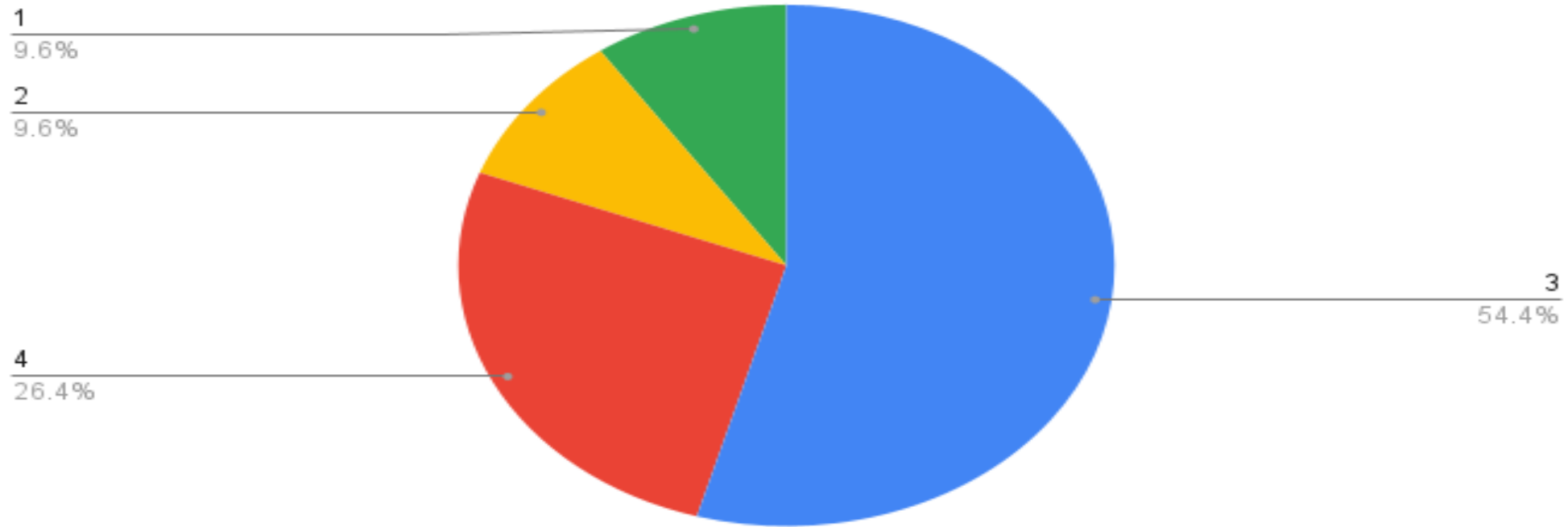


16) Do you agree social media (What's App, Facebook, etc.) plays an important role in circulating vital information on novel corona virus?



- 48 % of the respondents use the social media, what sup and other as a source of information to stay informed regarding coronavirus whereas 29.6 % occasionally use and 20 % often use.
- 8.7% strongly agree and 69.3% agree that social media plays an important role in circulating vital information on novel coronavirus whereas 3.1 % to 0.8 % of the respondents disagree

17) How reliable according to you is social media in terms of authenticity of information on novel corona virus?



- 26.4 %thinks that social media is reliable 54.4 % holds a neutral opinion whereas 9.6% consider social media asnon reliabiabile in terms of authenticity of information

DISCUSSIONS

Knowledge level of the study population regarding the information on COVID-19 outbreak

- According to study findings most of the respondents have above average knowledge level regarding the symptoms, measures, and incubation period of novel corona virus. 93% of the respondents were aware of the most common symptoms of COVID-19 whereas 44-77.8% were aware of the less common symptoms of COVID-19. 10-27% of the respondents had misconception regarding the preventive measures of novel corona virus infection and 1.3% were not aware of the preventive measures.

DISCUSSIONS

Most Preferred source of information for COVID-19

- The study shows that the most preferred source of information is Digital News 30% and social media 24% whereas least preferred source is Traditional News with 16% whereas In contrast to the study another "study among Bangaloreans: Propagation of Fake News in Social Media" states that 44% of the people still believe in traditional news like paper and magazine, 32% in digital sources, 22% on social media and 02% through others.

DISCUSSIONS

Assessing the acceptability, and reliability of social media for novel corona virus misinformation

- According to this study 69.3% agree that social media plays a important role in circulating vital information on novel corona virus. 26.4 % of the respondents consider social media as reliable and 54.4 % holds a neutral opinion whereas 9.6 % consider social media as non-reliable in terms of authenticity of information. Whereas A descriptive study “(A study on validity and reliability in assessment of vulnerability of social networks)” was conducted with the intention of measuring the vulnerability of information on social media states that "Nowadays the importance of social networks is undeniable, and they will continue to be valid in an intermediate future."

SUGGESTIONS

1. To enhance knowledge level of the people

- Based on the findings of the study even though the knowledge of the population is above average it is essential to create awareness and update people to enhance their knowledge and understanding about the current situation of pandemic.

2. To Promote different sources of information among people

- Promoting different sources of information by disseminating reliable information through authorized public health organization will ensure acceptability among people. Ease of accessibility to different sources of information will further increase the usage of the sources of information among the people.

3. To ensure acceptability among the people

- A communications strategy with toolkits would require to be established immediately as a contribution to the instant needs for a public health response and vital foundation for improving frameworks for response in the aspect of future global outbreaks. This is especially significant for countries that are lacking well developed media listening techniques or are in need of more efficient yet "controlled transparency" regarding the epidemic, and for populations that are more vulnerable during the outbreak due to lack of information. The impact of organizing a toolkit would improve efforts to empower the public and enable them to develop more informed consumers.

CONCLUSION

- This study analyses the implications of social media information among the population regarding COVID-19 as well as misinformation for global health risk communication. We describe information and misinformation, define the pathways through which to create awareness and update people to enhance their knowledge and understanding about the current situation of pandemic and present an agenda for further research to understand and address this problem.

THANK YOU