



“Impact of Media on public related to Covid-19 pandemic an Online Survey”

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ABSTRACT

Background: Media played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing information, creating awareness, and influencing public behavior. At the same time, excessive exposure to media reports and misinformation had the potential to cause fear, anxiety, and psychological distress among the public.

Objectives: To assess the impact of Media on public related to Covid-19 pandemic by using structured rating scale and to determine the association between public opinion and their selected socio-demographic variables.

Materials and methods: A descriptive survey was conducted to assess the impact of media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a non probability snowball sampling technique 300 participants were included. Data were collected using a structured Google form questionnaire with a rating scale. The questionnaire consists of socio-demographic variables and items related to the positive and negative impacts of media during COVID-19.

Results: The results of the study revealed that majority of participants reported positive impact of media. About 91.6% stated that media increased awareness regarding COVID-19 preventive measures, 86.6% received timely updates, 84% encouraged hand hygiene, mask usage and social distance, 77.3 % gained better knowledge about vaccination and 76.6 % felt that media helped them stay socially connected during lockdown periods and also identified several negative impact of media. Approximately 67% experienced fear and anxiety, 61% experienced panic through continuous updates, 59.3% leads to stress due to excessive exposure to news, 58.3% felt spread misinformation or fake news and 56.3% are negatively affected their mental well-being and the overall impact of media during Covid-19 shows that majority 64% of participants had positive impact and 36% of them had negative impact.

Conclusion: Hence the study concluded that media played a significant role during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing timely information, increasing public awareness, and promoting preventive health practices.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of our daily lives. Media is playing an important role in the COVID-19 response. During the 1918-19“Spanish” influenza pandemic, people did not have the same sources of communication we now have in the 21st century to quickly share news and information¹. Delivering fast and reliable information is crucial to decrease the transmission of highly contagious infections, not only for healthcare workers but also for the general population². These days, people are overwhelmed by the information they receive on their smartphones through channels such as Face book, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram. The biggest problem is in determining which news to trust. We are living not just in a pandemic, but also in an “infodemic” where fake news is becoming more common. These messages and texts always start the same way: they feature a physician, nurse, surgeon, or other authority figure who shares advice—such as holding your breath as a COVID-19 confirmation test, or taking vitamins to decrease the possibility of infection³. Governments and healthcare authorities should use social media to spread updates, news, and scientific discoveries about COVID-19. Information to be spread can include who should be tested, when they should be tested, and where they would go to get medical care.⁴ Social media platforms can also provide helpful direction during this crisis. Facebook, for example, redirects users to World Health Organization (WHO) websites where trustworthy information can be obtained. Furthermore, social media can be used for education.⁵

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Based on the objectives of the study Google forms were prepared by using structured rating scale. After obtaining an ethical clearance from institutional ethical committees, through non probability snowball sampling technique 300 participants who are exposed to mass media during Covid-19 pandemic were included. Data were collected using structured Google form questionnaire with a rating scale.

The questionnaire consists of socio-demographic variables and items related to the positive and negative impacts of media during COVID-19.

RESULTS

I. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Table-1: Socio demographic variables of participants related to impact of media on Covid-19 pandemic
N=300

Variables	Impact of media on Covid-19 pandemic	
	f	%
Age		
a. 18-30 years	126	42
b. 31-45 years	99	33
c. >35 years	75	25
Gender		
a. Male	141	47
b. Female	159	53
Educational Qualification		
a. Secondary school	48	16
b. PUC	57	19
c. Diploma	32	10.6
d. Graduate	103	34.4
e. Post Graduate	49	16.4
f. Doctorate	11	3.6
Occupation		
Students	98	32.6
Private Employees	73	24.3
Govt. Employees	46	15.4
Self Employees	31	10.3
Un employed	52	17.4

With regard to socio-demographic variables majority 42% of the participants were in the age group of 18-30 years, 53% of them were females, 34.4% were graduates and 32.6 of them are students.

II. To assess the impact of Media on public related to Covid-19 pandemic by using structured rating scale.

After obtaining socio-demographic data, the participants were assess the impact of Media on public related to Covid-19 pandemic by using structured rating scale and presented in table-2, table-3 and table-4.

Table-2: Positive Impact of Media during COVID-19
N=300

Positive Impact	frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Encouraged hand hygiene, mask usage and social distance	252	84
Provided timely updates on COVID-19	260	86.6
Helped maintain social connections during lockdown	230	76.6
Increased awareness about COVID-19 prevention	275	91.6
Improved knowledge regarding vaccination	232	77.3

The above table shows that majority of participants 91.6% reported that media increased awareness regarding COVID-19 preventive measures. 86.6% received timely updates, 84% encouraged hand hygiene, mask usage and social distance, while 77.3 % gained better knowledge about vaccination and the remaining 76.6 % felt that media helped them stay socially connected during lockdown periods.

Table-3: Negative Impact of Media during COVID-19
N=300

Negative Impact	frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Increased fear and anxiety	201	67
Caused stress due to excessive exposure to news	178	59.3
Spread misinformation or fake news	175	58.3

Created through continuous updates	panic	183	61
Negatively mental well-being	affected	169	56.3

The above table shows that majority of participants 67% reported that media increased fear and anxiety, 61% experienced panic through continuous updates, 59.3% leads to stress due to excessive exposure to news, 58.3% felt Spread misinformation or fake news and 56.3are negatively affected their mental well-being.

Table-4: The overall Impact of Media during COVID-19
N=300

Impact of Media during COVID-19	frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Positive Impact	192	64
Negative Impact	108	36

With regard to overall impact of media during Covid-19 shows that majority 64% of participants had positive impact and 36% of them had negative impact.

III. To determine the association between public opinion and their selected socio-demographic variables.

A Chi square test was computed to find an association between public opinion and their selected socio-demographic variables like age, gender, educational qualification and occupation.

With regard to association between impact of media on covid-19 among public opinion with selected socio demographic variables showed that there was a statistical association related to **age** ($\chi^2 = 8.54$, $p = 0.014$), **educational qualification** ($\chi^2 = 10.26$, $p = 0.016$), **occupation** ($\chi^2 = 12.45$, $p = 0.006$). Except **gender** ($p = 0.128$) showed that there is no statistical significance at 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

The study to assess the impact of media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using descriptive survey research design through non probability snowball sampling technique 300 participants were included. The positive impact of media showed that majority of participants 91.6% reported that media increased awareness regarding COVID-19 preventive measures. 86.6% received timely updates, 84% encouraged hand hygiene, mask usage and social distance, while 77.3 % gained better knowledge about vaccination and the remaining 76.6 % felt that media helped them stay socially connected during lockdown periods and even there is a negative impact of media 67% reported that media increased fear and anxiety, 61% experienced panic through continuous updates, 59.3% leads to stress due to excessive exposure to news, 58.3% felt Spread misinformation or fake news and 56.3are negatively affected their mental well-being and the overall impact of media during Covid-19 shows that majority 64% of participants had positive impact and 36% of them had negative impact.

CONCLUSION

A descriptive survey was conducted to assess the impact of media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a non probability snowball sampling technique 300 participants were included. Data were collected using a structured Google form questionnaire with a rating scale. The questionnaire consists of socio-demographic variables and items related to the positive and negative impacts of media during COVID-19. The results of the study revealed that majority of participants reported positive impact of media. About 91.6% stated that media increased awareness regarding COVID-19 preventive measures. 86.6% received timely updates, 84% encouraged hand hygiene, mask usage and social distance, while 77.3 % gained better knowledge about vaccination and the remaining 76.6 % felt that media helped them stay socially connected during lockdown periods and also identified several negative impact of media. Approximately 67% experienced fear and anxiety, 61% experienced panic through continuous updates, 59.3% leads to stress due to excessive exposure to news, 58.3% felt spread misinformation or fake news and 56.3% are negatively affected their mental well-being and the overall impact of media during Covid-19 shows that majority 64% of participants had positive impact and 36% of them had negative impact. Hence the study concluded that media played a significant role during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing timely information, increasing public awareness, and promoting preventive health practices.

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