

## Influence of Social Media on Knowledge Regarding Prevention of COVID 19 among Public Attending Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram

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### Abstract

Public awareness and prevention of COVID 19 infection play important roles in disease control; a lack of reasonable knowledge of infectious disease leads to low detection rates. The objective of the study was to assess knowledge regarding prevention of COVID 19 virus infection and to find out the association between use of social media and knowledge of public regarding prevention of novel corona virus. The research approach adopted for the study was quantitative approach and design was cross sectional design. The study setting was outpatient block of Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram. Sample size was 110. Tool used was structured questionnaire. 58.2% had good knowledge and 46 participants 41.8% had poor knowledge. The study showed no association between use of social media and knowledge of public regarding prevention of novel corona virus.

**Keywords:** Social media; Novel corona virus; Knowledge; Prevention of novel corona virus.

### Introduction

Infection with corona virus disease (COVID-19) has become a severe public health issue worldwide. In March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID 19 can be characterized as a pandemic. Therefore, it is of utmost important to prevent further spread of pandemic in public and health care settings. Public awareness and prevention of COVID 19 infection play important roles in disease control; a lack of reasonable knowledge of infectious disease leads to low detection rates. To raise public awareness, social media platforms are considered to be effective

tools that contribute to the real time dissemination of information about current status of the disease and give appropriate advice to the public on how to avoid being infected. Examining social media in health contexts including public health communication, promotion and surveillance limited insight has been provided into how the utility of social media may vary depending on the particular public health objectives governing an intervention. The extent to which social media platforms contribute to enhancing public health awareness and prevention during epidemic disease transmission is unknown. Social media is an important element in disaster and health

crises related communication.<sup>1</sup> Widespread public engagement with social media platforms creates an effective ready made path to their application in the health care field. Social media platforms include a wide variety of networking sites. These platforms and many others can be used to create and publish knowledge and information about potential health and disease risks and interventions as well as healthy lifestyles and effective health policies and strategies.<sup>2</sup> In addition to being a global threat, COVID-19 is referred to as an infodemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the usage of social media by the world's general population, celebrities, world leaders and professionals alike. Social media platforms are amongst the most widely used sources of information in the World. The easy and inexpensive access to the internet and a large number of registered users in these platforms make them one of the easiest and most effective ways to disseminate information. Social media has been used by news outlets organizations and the general public to spread both valid information and misinformation about the pandemic.<sup>3,4</sup> Social media communications present different attitudes towards news media reporting. A number of comments suspected the real purpose and authenticity of media coverage and criticized the over attention of epidemic reports rather than rational cognition. There are also comments criticized the spread of fake news and exaggerating reports by different media. In addition, people also warned that communication and social media might cause misleading information, and more accurate information should be accured from official sources.<sup>3</sup>

## Methodology

The objectives of the study were to assess the knowledge regarding prevention of COVID 19 infection and to find out the association between use of social media and knowledge of public regarding prevention of novel corona virus. The research approach was quantitative research approach and design adopted cross sectional survey. Setting of the study was outpatient block of Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram. The sample consisted of 110 individuals attending the medical college hospital and were willing to give consent to participated in the study. Persons with psychiatric illness and who are critically ill

were excluded from the study. Health care workers also excluded. The tool for data collection was semi structured questionnaire. It has three parts demographic details, assessment of awareness regarding prevention of COVID-19 and role of social media on prevention of COVID-19.

## Results

The baseline data of the study participants depicted in Table 1. Among the 110 participants 61 (55.5%) were females and 49 (44.5%) were males. 76 (69.1%) were between the age group of 21-40 years. 64 (58.2%) were educated up to school level 34 (30.9%) were graduated, 8 (7.3%) were diploma holders and 4 (3.6%) were professionals. Out of 110 participants, 47 (42.7%) were employed, 47 (42.7%) were unemployed and 16 (14.6%) were students. Out of 110 participants, 98 (89.1%) had no history of corona virus infection and 12 (10.9%) had history of corona virus infection. 95 (86.4%) had no family history of corona virus infection and 15 (13.6%) had family history of corona virus infection.

**Table 1:** Baseline data of the study participants (n =110)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	49	44.5%
Female	61	55.5%
<b>Age group in years</b>		
<20	12	10.9%
21-40	76	69.1%
41-60	22	20%
<b>Education</b>		
School	64	58.2%
College	34	30.9%
Professional	4	3.6%
Others	8	7.3%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Employed	47	42.7%
Unemployed	47	42.7%
Student	16	14.6%
<b>COVID 19 infection</b>		
Yes	12	10.9%
No	98	89.1%
<b>Family history of COVID-19 infection</b>		
Yes	15	13.6%
No	95	86.4%

The primary objective of the study was to assess the knowledge regarding COVID 19 infection and the Fig. 1 shows the knowledge of the participants.

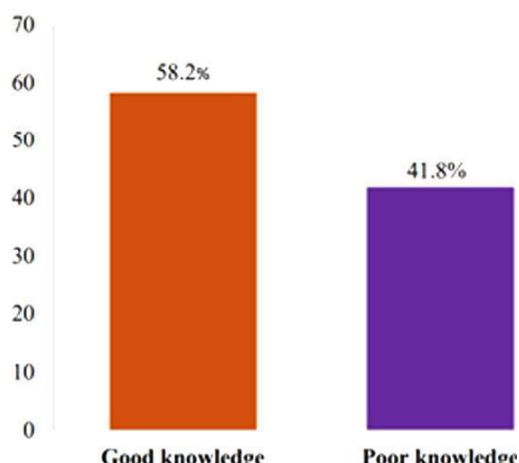


Fig. 1: Distribution of participants based on level of knowledge on prevention of COVID-19.

Table 2: Influence of social media on knowledge regarding prevention of COVID-19

Variable	Good Knowledge	Poor Knowledge	$\chi^2$
<b>Source of Information</b>			
Television	13	13	1.69
Newspaper	2	2	
Mobilephone	15	12	
All of the above	34	19	
<b>Level of knowledge Gained from Social Media as Perceived by the Participant</b>			
Yes	55	43	4.41
No	1	2	
Little bit	8	1	
<b>Type of Social Media</b>			
Facebook	17	19	5.13
WhatsApp	36	22	
Instagram	6	1	
Nil	5	4	

Table 2 shows the association between social media influence and COVID 19 knowledge. Out of 110 participants, 48 (43.6%) believed that they got >75% of information regarding COVID-19 through social media, 35 (31.8%) believed that they got 100% of information, 17 (15.5%) believed that they got 50-75% of information and 10 (9.1%) believed that they got >50% of information regarding novel corona virus. 3.6% of the participants revealed that they got information on preventive measures of COVID-19 from newspaper, 23.6% got information from Television, 24.6% got information from mobilephone and 48.2 % got information from all sources of regarding the preventive measures of

COVID-19. But this could not find any association between influence of social media on knowledge regarding prevention of COVID-19

### Discussion

A cross sectional study to assess the knowledge of the general people regarding the COVID-19 preventive measures was conducted among general people in Bangladesh with 436 participants in April 2020. The study reveals that only 21.6% of people had good knowledge regarding COVID-19 prevention.<sup>5</sup> But present study showed higher proportion of knowledge 58.2%. 4A study conducted in Lisbon, Portugal on “the impact and role of mass media during the pandemic, it was found that mass media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves. But the present study could not find any association between mass media and knowledge regarding COVID 19

### Summary

The knowledge level of the general people attending the setting was high but the study shows that there is no significant association between use of social media and knowledge of public regarding prevention of novel corona virus. Therefore more measures has to be implemented at government level to improve the knowledge.

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