

Infodemics: A Post Pandemic Perspective Of Covid-19

Saba Ahmed¹, Dr. Tariq Hussain², Ali Junaid Khan^{3*}, Muhammad Sibte-Ali⁴, Tusawar Iftikhar Ahmad⁵, Jawad Iqbal⁶

¹Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi.

²Assistant Professor The University of Lahore.

³Institute of Business, Management & Administrative Sciences The Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

⁴Ph.D. Scholar, School of Business, Zhengzhou University, Zhengzhou City, Henan Province 450001, China.

⁵Assistant Professor Department of Economics The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

⁶Institute of Business, Management & Administrative Sciences The Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

Abstract

Infodemic is the term used for information regarding pandemics and spreads faster than actual pandemics. This information can be real or fake, which makes people confused about how to respond to a pandemic. The purpose of this study is to identify such fables and infodemics that prevailed during and after the covid-19 pandemic. The descriptive methodology was used to describe the phenomenon, and the data came from various articles and reports. The study found many fables regarding precautions, treatment, and spread of covid-19. These fables affect the thinking of people regarding covid-19 and the way people live. There were also many consequences of these infodemics found, like their effects on the economy, psychology impacts on human life, and many other normal activities suffered. The study has various implications for government and health authorities to educate people properly so that these infodemics do not adversely affect human life and recommends that people avoid irrelevant information during pandemics and crises.

Keywords: Infodemics, Covid-19, Pandemic, Lock Down, Psychological Effects

1. Introduction

Infodemic is a combination of two terms that are information and epidemic, including excess information regarding any epidemic or disease. This information can be real or fake, as it is an exaggeration of the issue. It can not only hinder effective public health but also cause mistrust and confusion among people. Moreover, when facts and fears are combined, rumors become difficult to identify as facts. The term "infodemics" also elaborates on the spread of wrong information, specifically online, and it is more difficult to fight an infodemic than a pandemic.

The first case of novel coronavirus was reported in Wuhan, China in 2019 and spread to more than 213 countries by 2020. Total coronavirus cases of 30,730,571 and 957,172 deaths have been reported globally. It wreaked havoc on the world's health, economy, social life, and environment (Abdul-Fattah et al., 2021). According to economists, it will take time to recover the lost ground, and the infection curve is inversely correlated with the economic curve. Covi-19 shaped the shocks to the cost of production in each sector, affected the consumption demand, caused a loss in GDP, and shook the government expenditure. Covid-19 not only affects physical health but also mental health as it generates anxiety, depression, stress, and disturbance in sleep (Serafini et al., 2020). The reason is not only its contagious nature, but the news in the media and lockdown make it worse (Kendall-Tackett, 2020). The reasons that affect mental health are improper infrastructure, lack of awareness, and poor acquiescence with safety measures (Cowie & Myers, 2021) in developing countries especially.

Covid-19 not only affects physical health but also mental health as it generates anxiety, depression, stress, and disturbances in sleep, etc. The people who have seen the victims of mental disease implications due to COVID-19 are healthcare professionals. They have limited resources to cater to disease. Physically, they pretend to be brave, but internally they fight with fears of catching COVID-19. The reasons that affect mental health are improper infrastructure, lack of awareness, and poor acquiescence with safety measures in developing countries, especially. Infodemic generates more psychiatric disorders than the real pandemic among the people. Quarantine also sometimes brings such issues as when a normal person isolates himself/herself, it becomes quite difficult to cater to lonesome. Social distancing also causes issues such as boredom relief and mental relaxation when talking and meeting with loved ones.

In this regard, Infodemic generates more psychiatric disorders than the real pandemic among the people. As there are no proper authentic remedies and precautions for COVID-19, the disinformation on social media regarding COVID-19 makes it difficult for people to gain proper and valid information related to pandemics because infodemics spread faster than pandemics (WHO, 2020). Due to unreliable sources, people are not only affected physically, but their mental health has also been affected (Marshall, Bibby & Abbas 2020). People were informed to stay at home to decrease the pandemic, engaging people on social media, which showed more rumours and fake news related to the pandemic. There were over three billion posts and a hundred billion interactions related to COVID-19 on social media, including fake videos of cures, deaths, and remedies that spread fear among the people, which affected their mental health (Fleming 2020).

The word "infodemic" is not new as it was first coined in 2003 by an American journalist. It is a mixture of pandemic and information when facts are mixed up with fears, rumors, and speculations. This word was used to convey information regarding bird flu. Since last year, this word has been used for the pandemic COVID-19. Since last year, there have been no proper authentic remedies and precautions for COVID-19 as there are many errors and disinformation on social media regarding COVID-19. Infodemic made it difficult for people to gain proper and valid information related to the pandemic. Due to unreliable sources, people are not only affected physically, but their mental health has also been affected (Junaid, Ali & Nazim, 2020).

Unfortunately, in the modern century, people were informed to stay at home so that the number of patients could decrease and this pandemic could be controlled. People follow the instructions and avoid visiting outside, but on social media, there was a great hustle regarding the pandemic, which created more rumours and fake news related to the pandemic. There were over three billion posts and a hundred billion interactions related to COVID-19 on social media. There were also many fake videos of curing, deaths, remedies, etc. that spread the danger among the people, which affected their mental health (Fleming, 2020). Therefore, this paper discussed some fables and infodemics regarding COVID-19 and the consequences of these infodemics on the economy and human life.

2 Some Infodemics Regarding COVID-19

2.1 COVID-19 Treatment with Hydroxychloroquine

Hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine do not cure COVID-19 until these treatments are used for the cure of malaria. According to current data, it has been seen that this does not reduce the death rate and does not help the inadequate time of disease (Ahikari et al., 2020). These are generally used for malaria and autoimmune ailments.

2.2 COVID-19 Cannot Be Preserved by Water or Mineral Appendages

Zinc, vitamin D, vitamin C, and micronutrients are very essential for the immune system of the body. They play a very important role in health endorsing and the security of nourishment. There is now guidance regarding nutrients that have been provided for the treatment of COVID-19.

2.3 Using a Mask While Exercising

People should avoid wearing the mask during exercises because it decreases the breathing power and, due to sweat, the mask can be wet, which creates a disturbance in the breath. But social distance should be kept in mind during exercise.

2.4 Possibility of Shoes Spreading COVID-19

The chances of shoes spreading COVID-19 are very low, as shoes spread fewer viruses. But in homes where there are infants and small crawling kids, they should be careful while using the shoes. It would be better to change the shoes before going outside the house. And surfaces should be cleaned with germ-free liquid to prevent the kids from getting the virus.

2.5 COVID-19 Caused by Virus, Not Bacteria

Coronavirus comes from a family of viruses called coroniviridae. People think that it is bacteria and they start to take antibiotics, but it is harmful in viral diseases as it occurs due to a virus and not bacteria (Hasan & Alraisi, 2021).

2.6 Prolonged Mask Use

Prolonged usage of a mask is also very harmful to normal breathing. It is unpleasant, but it cannot result in an oxygen deficiency. We should not reuse the disposable mask as medical masks are more comfortable for breathing. Medical masks are known as surgical masks that have a portion that allows you to breathe easily.

2.7 People Cure COVID-19 on Their Own

Most people who are at the early stage of disease or moderate cure will soon be If someone diagnoses the symptoms, they must call the helpline and must check themselves. Although some home remedies, such as natural spices, leaves, and anti-inflammatory products, helped to reduce the coronavirus's impact (Orisakwe, Orish, & Nwanaforo, 2020). But it is also very harmful to avoid going to the doctor in this regard if the disease persists.

2.8 Detection of Thermal Scanners

Thermal scanners are useful in the detection of body temperature, but they cannot diagnose the disease COVID-19. There are many reasons for fever, but it is best to call the health care centre for an immediate cure.

2.9 COVID-19 Drug or Treatment

There are many drugs in rumours that can cure COVID-19. Also, there is a rumour about hydroxychloroquine, but this is not authentic and verified by any scientist. So, it is better to avoid such news and not follow such fictitious instructions.

2.10 Social Media Treatments, Especially in Third-World Countries

There are many fake and wrong instructions being given on social media, especially in third world countries. People who are illiterate or overly frightened become victims of these kinds of wrong decisions. For example, there is fake news about eating garlic and some bushes, but these are all baseless.

2.11 Capturing COVID-19 Does Not Mean It Will Live Forever

Most people get cured of the disease when they go to the doctor or are concerned with the doctor at an early stage of the disease. So, one should not understand that this disease lasts forever. One should not take it too seriously or too lightly, as both cause extreme cases.

2.12 COVID-19 Does Not Spread in Hot and Humid Climates

It is a rumour that COVID-19 cannot spread in hot and humid temperatures. One can save itself by keeping a 6 foot distance and by washing their hands as many times as possible. From this virus, it will be eliminated and vanish from the hands, so they will not attack the inside of the body, and when one touches their eyes and nose, it will not be harmful.

2.13 Holding One's Breath For Ten Seconds Does Not Prove That One Is Free Of Covid-19.

Holding breath for ten seconds or more without coughing doesn't mean that one is free from the disease, but it can be dangerous in pranking like this. The common indications of COVID-19 are high fever, dry cough, and tiredness. One can only find it through proper medical tests.

2.14 Pneumonia Vaccines Are Ineffective Against COVID-19

Pneumococcal vaccine and Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib) vaccine are useful for pneumonia and colds, but these types of vaccines are not healthy for the coronavirus. These are ineffective against the COVID-19 virus. This new coronavirus demands its disease as no substitute vaccine can work for its cure. Scientists are doing their best to develop a vaccine for the coronavirus and WHO is helping and supporting them in this regard. The vaccination process is very important and helpful in respiratory diseases and is highly suggested by doctors for protection from the virus.

2.15 An Adult Is More Likely to Be a Victim Than a Child

Older people and younger people alike can be the victims of COVID-19. But the older ones can be serious or become more victims as compared with the younger ones because they have diseases like asthma, diabetes, and other heart diseases. But WHO advises and enlists the ways one can save themselves, whether young or old. Following these kinds of instructions, like caring about hygiene, can minimise the chances of the spread of COVID-19.

2.16: Antibiotics Can Not Prevent or Treat COVID-19

Diseases that spread due to bacteria, antibiotics can only fight against them, but they are not fruitful in the elimination of COVID-19. Covid-19 is caused by a virus. That's why antibiotics cannot be helpful. But there is a chance of taking antibiotics when admitted to the hospital as coinfection is possible.

3. Consequences of infodemics

3.1 Psychological Consequences

The pandemic of coronavirus is an epidemiological and psychological crisis. The enormity of living in isolation changed lives completely and influenced the mental health of people due to grief over loved ones, jobless situations, and financial hardships. It is very crucial to seek social support and connection with others, specifically in this time of physical distancing. Furthermore, misleading posts related to hygiene, cleaning, disinfection, and food on social media cause unrest. Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) has been observed due to the use of chemical cleaning products and disinfectants that exaggerate the hygiene obsession. The increase in the use of masks, gloves, and social isolation affects trust and psychological health among people. Thoughts and overthinking regarding pandemics, restricted communication, mobility, and freedom spread anxiety and unrest among people (Sandesh et al., 2020).

3.2 Economic Impacts

The pandemic not only confined the people to their homes but also brought a jobless phase into their lives, which affected their economic lives badly (Chudik et al., 2020). This includes temporary unemployment, online schooling, and a lack of physical contact with family, friends, and loved ones. Adapting to this new lifestyle leads to unaccepting behaviour that ultimately affects mental health.

3.3 Lockdown Effect

One of the important public health measures implemented during the COVID-19 epidemic is an extension of lockdown. Only the infected did not spread as many psychological problems in the case where quarantine was not for the entire population (Dubey et al., 2020) as when there was complete lockdown for all. The condition of facing lockdown problems for all populations leads to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This mental problem has been observed four times more in children than in adults who have been quarantined (OECD, 2020).

3.4 Loneliness

The well-being of children and young people has been affected to a greater extent by loneliness. Mental health has been badly affected due to loneliness caused by the lockdown. Loneliness is more prevalent among those aged 18-24, and according to a survey, fifty percent of these intervals have experienced lockdown loneliness.

3.5 Worries About Education

Parents and young ones got worried about education as there was a setup of online classes, but in the emerging economies, it was a big problem to educate the children (Aylie, Mekonen & Mekuria, 2020). There was also a problem in teaching online as the number of pupils remained non-serious concerning their education, which was a great loss for some of them according to their future. Many of them wanted to return or rejoin the school to continue their studies and enjoy the enjoyable aspects while conserving social distancing with their friends.

Many factors become roadblocks in the delivery of education to students. According to the situation of the lockdown, the curriculum has been shortened to make the learners able to understand the context easily. But it has also been observed that half of the parents were engaged with the studies of their children. Many of them tried to give them classes on their own or teach them according to their own methodology, without regard to the educational institutes.

3.6 Worries About Home Life Financial Security and the Future

The situation of lockdown brought too many problems, but the major problem was the financial problem that created too much difficulty for people from all over the world. When there was sudden news of lockdown, people got worried about their basic needs. Almost every job got stuck till the wait for things to normalise (Chakraborty & Maity (2020).

3.7 Impacts Within The Family Context

A significant impact of quarantine or lockdown is the impact on the relational family context that involves the children and young people who are isolating themselves. Sometimes isolating oneself brings traumatic events that become the cause of disruption and misunderstanding in the family, which ultimately causes mental health problems.

3 Conclusion

Fear is normal in the situation of a pandemic because of uncertainty. Sometimes fear is expressed in a way that indulges a person in depression or causes anxiety (Prati & Mancini, 2021). To get rid of such a type of situation, one should have to be calm and relaxed and not be a reason for discrimination, as being isolated is a big fear in itself. When it gets mixed up with rejection and being unacceptable by the community, it becomes very harsh and hurting for victims. Do not classify based on pandemic rumours or fear of covid-19. Social workers also need help in the sense of not leaving them alone in this hour of need. They need our appreciation and also deserve respect. They should not be discriminated against by anyone. The covid-19 virus has been spread all over the world. It cannot be attributed to a specific group. It has affected many people from many countries. People should follow the instructions given by the government and not believe the fables that are spread on social media and electronic media. One should authenticate the information before adopting and spreading it.

4 Recommendation

1. People should carefully use social media.
2. They should follow reliable and authentic sources and not blindly trust the posts regarding any pandemic. Otherwise, such erroneous and phoney updates can cause depression and anxiety among them.
3. They can listen to music and read books to keep them busy during their stay at home. They should try to get through this difficult time more comfortably, stress-free, and quickly with their whole family.
4. One should follow the recommendations and advice given by national and local authorities.
5. To follow trusted news outlets, only listen to local and national TV news and radio, and stay up to date on the latest WHO instructions on social media.
6. Keeping with the daily routine, make up a new one as often as possible. Some of these are as follows:
 - Get up every day and go to bed at the same time.
 - Wash your hands as many times as possible to maintain personal hygiene.
 - Take care of your diet and eat healthy meals three times a day.
 - Exercise on a daily basis.
 - Set a proper time for resting and working.
 - Make time to relax and enjoy oneself.
7. Reduce watching or listening to the newsfeed as these are more stressful and cause anxiety. Seek the specific time to gain authentic information regarding the updates on the pandemic.
8. If physical movement is restricted, keep in touch with people via social media or cell phone so that one does not become anxious about being separated from loved ones.
9. Take care of your screen time by analysing how much time one spends on screen and how much of this screen activity is beneficial to one's health. So, healthy screen activities can lead to healthy mental health.

10. Video games can play a vital role in relaxing the mind and calming anxiety. It can be tempting and joyful to spend much more time on them as one has to spend a very long time at home. But one should also balance online activities with offline activities.

5 Directions for Future Research

A few future directions have been advised to the general public and government to deal with unexpected pandemic situations and to ensure physical and psychological health. Future research should focus on providing a framework for healthcare officials, government officials, and policymakers to disseminate verified information to the general public and prepare them to deal with emotional and physical threats. Future research should also address the fact that healthcare workers are at high risk of infection and psychological ailments. So, the government should take steps to make sure that people's mental health is checked on a regular basis.

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