

Infodemic Exposure and People's Reliance on COVID-19 Information Sources: Cross-sectional study in ten countries

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between the reliance on different information sources and infodemic exposure in the early phases of the pandemic. The aim is to identify the sources that create less infodemic. We analyze high-quality secondary data from two studies using a 10-country sample: the US, UK, Canada, Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Africa, and South Korea. Study 1 analyzes infodemic exposure through an analysis of 3,723,920 COVID-19 tweets. Likewise, study 2 analyzes reliance on COVID-19 information sources by surveying 10,000 respondents. This research provides perspectives and implications for the infodemic debunking to the government departments, public health organizations, and media industries by analyzing the correlations between these two studies. We found that people who rely on national government information sources about COVID-19 tend to be less exposed to the infodemic. Findings also suggest a correlation between the countries with higher COVID-19 confirmed cases and people's reliance on the national government information sources. We found that people from countries with more unverified bots tweeting about COVID-19 tend to rely less on family and friends and social media as sources. Evidence also suggests that the most trusted spokespeople are scientists and health professionals rather than politicians. Finally, we observed 70% of the sample's countries slightly reduced their risk of exposure to the infodemic within 12 months of the pandemic's start.

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