AWARENESS ABOUT THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING COVID19 AMONG GENERAL PUBLIC OF CHENNAI - A QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

Media follows every step and multiple stories to provide the public with continuous updates. It has transformed and evolved to an effective communicating mode through radio television internet access it conveys a sense of unity and 80 to 90% of the people browse news for an average of 24 hours a week. It is recognised as a powerful source as it helps in shaping the things happening around the world and ourselves. Social media has an important role to play in every aspect like business, education and all other important information not only as an entertainment tool. Nowadays, some companies utilise social media platforms to advertise their products and sell them online. Educators use social media to communicate some useful stuff related to their subject and share their opinion. It also has a dark side to be discussed like the spread of misinformation. Even before the authorised announcement of Covid19, the use of mask and hand sanitizers was at a hike due to the panic caused by social media regarding the outbreak. A cross sectional survey was conducted to assess the knowledge of the public on social media on the pandemic COVID 19. The sample size chosen for the study was hundred people from the Chennai district. A questionnaire consisting of 15 questions were circulated through online and the data collected were statically analysed using SPSS software. Chi square test was used to analyse the significant difference between the gender and responses on knowledge and awareness based questions.It is clear that the majority of the population are aware about the role of social media during covid-19 and also the spread of misinformation through the same media platform. From the results obtained it can be concluded that the population involved in this study is aware about the role of social media during covid-19

Keywords: Social media; quarantine; misinformation; Covid19

1.INTRODUCTION:

The development of technology has rapidly improved over the years and social media has an important role in shaping the impact created by social media. It conveys information regarding politics,business, education, career, innovation.Media provides sufficient knowledge and awareness about the pandemic situation among pharmacists and recognises the risk factors to ensure prevention and control of diseases. It provides up to date information providing knowledge and awareness among the general public [1]. Media also has a role to play among researchers, scientists, public health experts and funding Agencies helping in better communication between them [2]. The recent outbreak of covid 19 snatched the attention of the media press and social media pages [3].

Previous studies suggest that social media is a source of entertainment and also a practical support. The dark side of social media is that it conveys fake news. The Facebook feed and WHO website and other sources nowadays are turning up to be a pandemic threatening[4]. Till date social media have been an important tool for communicating information during any pandemic situation including COVID-19. Google Scholar and other social media sites like Twitter display the coronavirus related contents for those who search for it[5]. Social media platforms are more assured to provide the users with proper signs and

symptoms to determine the most appropriate course of action[6]. The difference found out in the study was that other studies have been performed at a large scale so that it could make a large population aware about the impact of social media and hence they could stay informative and have prior knowledge about anything the media displays. They could stay away from the misinformation spread through social media. The Facebook preventive health tool provides individuals with proper guidelines about prevention and healthcare and show the users know where these services are available[7].Social media should be used to create awareness regarding any crisis,safety check and related things so as to enable frequent updates and sharing the news about the topic [9] .Doctors and Healthcare professionals strive to make the people aware about the prevention by providing daily updates regarding the active cases on websites and social media.

The aim of the study is to assess the role of social media during COVID 19. The fear and threat contribute to negative emotions which are increasing in people and so they rely on negative information about COVID-19 rather than informative content[10]. They also ignore the probabilities and scope of the pandemic.The mutual aid group among the public is a clear evidence that have become widespread in case of COVID-19[11].The crowdsourced ratings obtained on the social media may lead to useful identification of misinformation and as a source of trustworthiness 12 [12] . In the past five years many researches were conducted by our team on clinical trials [13] [14] [15] [16] [8,17] [18] animal studies[8] [19] [20] [21] [22] and also vitro studies [22,23] [24,25]. Now we are focused on conducting epidemiological surveys.The ideas for this survey emerged from the current interest in our community.

2.MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A cross sectional questionnaire survey was conducted among people in the region of Chennai. A set of 15 questions includes questions on knowledge and awareness on the role of social media during COVID19. The questions were uploaded in google forms. The people of age group between 25-45 years attended the survey. There were 100 responses to the survey. The duration of the study was about 7 days.The sampling method used is simple random sampling. All the responses were analysed through SPSS software. Descriptive statistical analysis was used for the distribution and frequency. Chi square test was used to analyse the significant difference between the gender and responses on knowledge and awareness based questions. The obtained results were represented in the form of bar graphs.

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

 The results obtained are represented as graphs and discussed below. Based on the results obtained, it is evident that the majority of the population is aware about the role of social media during COVID-19.The dark side of social media , their impact in people's lives and their role in panicking people were also the questions asked and most of them were aware about that. Fig 1 represents that 80% of the respondents agreed that social media is a boon. A similar article suggests that apps are very helpful even for educators as they have good features so as to share their ideas and information through this platform[26]. Social media has become a significant part in today's generation which facilitates ease of communication and is easily available. The results of the similar article also shows that social media is a boon as it has the potential to deliver and promote information, and improves one's confidence to communicate online [27].

Fig 2 shows that 75% participants feel that social media is very helpful during the COVID-19 pandemic regarding the up to date information and knowledge. A similar article shows that it helps to improve skills[28]. Social media amplifies the information which is both harmful and beneficial especially at the time of a pandemic situation and it leads to the spread of information to friends and families through this network[29]. People's behaviour is highly influenced by the content displayed in social media and what they perceive out of it[30].

Fig 3 tells that the majority of the respondents have responded that the media conveys fake news and not only true facts every time. A similar article has also shown the same(4). Social media may lead to the spread of misinformation among the people which may cause mental health related problems[31]. Some studies suggest that the COVID19 outbreak has triggered the spread of rumours which includes useful information,misinformation,manipulated misinformation. It shows that people share every message regarding outbreaks on twitter without knowing whether it is the authorised information or a fake one. Due to the influence of fake information, the health authorities and policy makers are facing challenges in

conveying the true facts to the general public[32]. The fake news regarding COVID-19 is widely and rapidly spread on social media with dangerous consequences[33]. Few researchers are going on to understand the spread of fake news using social science[34].

Fig 4 tells that 90% responded that they are aware about the precautions to be taken for COVID-19. An article shows that social media is also very helpful and reaches all shades of people for better understanding and creating awareness among the general public[35].

Fig 5 represents 75% participants agreed that social media is a major source of information and is helpful to understand the current scenario. A similar article suggests that it is easily available across the world and people can access sitting in one place and acquire information across the world[36]. Social media has many positive effects and improves social skills by utilising the platforms available in social media to improve their skills. It improves self esteem and wellbeing of an individual as a result of positive feedback from social media[37]. Apart from the displaying of educational content, social media plays a crucial role in delivering information during quarantine[38].

Fig 6 tells that 60% responded that it does panic people and people also look for the number of cases which matters for them rather than the seriousness of COVID19. It increases fear and anxiety among the general public[39]. Fig 7 shows that 75% responded that the media usage has not started only after COVID-19 but its influence has started a way back before decades. A similar article also shows the same result[40]. Even before the outbreak of COVID19, social media had an impact on people to gather information and news. Many countries relied on social media to obtain information during quarantine[41]. Previous studies are used to explain the impact of social media to collect information regarding their interest[42]. Fig 8 shows that almost an equal result was obtained that the people think the government works in favour of the people . The results do not give a clear cut knowledge of people and they are not sure about the role of the government. Fig 9 explains that social media does not reach all shades of the people whilst they are available only for those who can afford to access it. In today's world, everything is available easily but even then the people below the poverty line face the same issue and they cannot access media easily. Fig 10 explains that 75% of the respondents agreed that people are dependent on social media nowadays and its impact in day to day life is increasing by all means. Its impact started way back and people are addicted to social media.

Fig 11 shows the association between gender and responses to the question (Does social media panic people).Female participants(22%) and male (20%) says that media panics people.Association between variable and was found to be statistically insignificant(p value = 0.582). Female participants had more differences of opinion on social media panics people than males.

Fig 12 shows the association between gender and responses to the question (Does social media always convey true facts). Female participants(21%) and male participants(23%) say that social media always conveys true facts.Association between variable and was found to be statistically insignificant(p value =0.809). Male participants had more differences of opinion on social media panics people than females.

Fig 13 shows the association between gender and responses to the question (Is social media helpful during COVID19). Female participants(28%) and male participants(26%) say that social media is helpful during COVID19.Association between variable and was found to be statistically insignificant(p value =0.520). Female participants had more differences of opinion on social media is helpful during COVID19 than males.

Fig 14 shows the association between gender and responses to the question (Is social media a major source of information). Female participants(40%) and male participants(33%) say that social media is a major source of information Association between variable and was found to be statistically significant(p value =0.41).Female participants had more differences of opinion on social media is a major source of information than males.

Fig 15 shows the association between gender and responses to the question (Does social media spread rumors regarding COVID19). Female participants(16%) and male participants(14%) say that social media spreads rumors regarding COVID19. Association between variable and was found to be statistically insignificant(p value =0.628).Male participants had more differences of opinion on spread of rumors regarding COVID19 through social media than females.
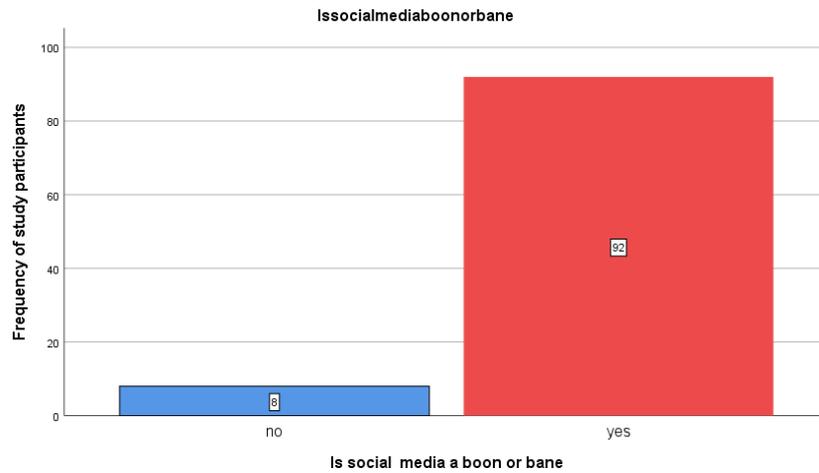
Fig 1 Bar graph represents the response to the question (Is social media boon or bane).Majority of the respondents(92%) said that social media is a boon while the rest 8% answered it as bane. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
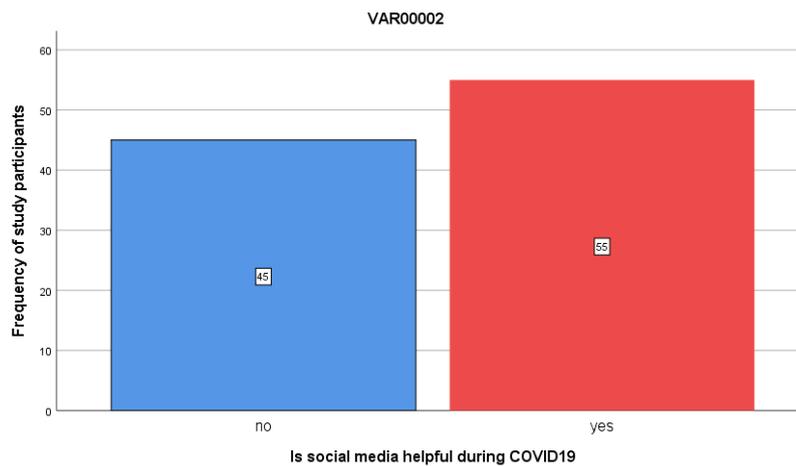

Fig 2 Bar graph represents the response to the question(ls social media is helpful during Covid19). Majority of the respondents(55%) responded that social media is helpful during Covid19 while the rest 45% said that social media is not helpful during Covid19. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
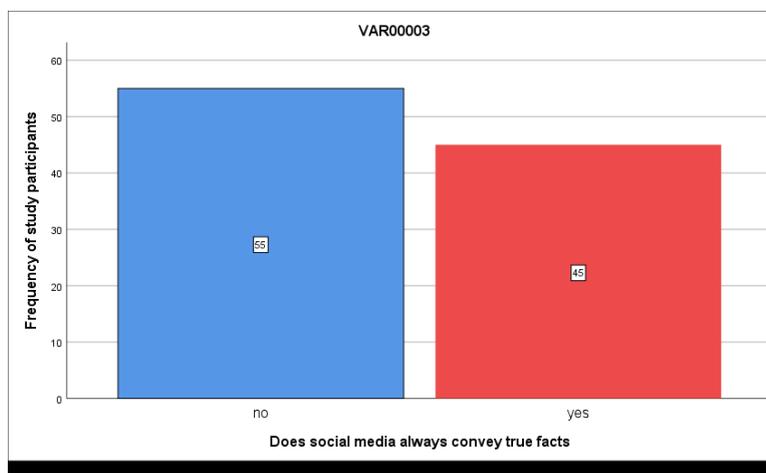
Fig 3 Bar graph represents the response to the question(Does social media always convey true facts). Majority of the respondents (55%) responded that the media always conveys true facts while the rest 45% disagreed. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
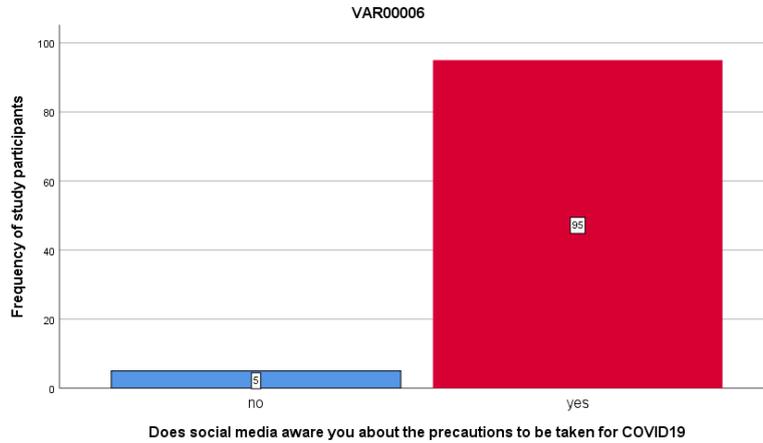

Fig 4 Bar graph represents the response of the public to the question (Does social media aware you about the precautions to be taken during Covid19). Majority of the respondents (95%) responded that social media do aware the public regarding the precautions to be taken for Covid19 while the rest 5% oppose the statement. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
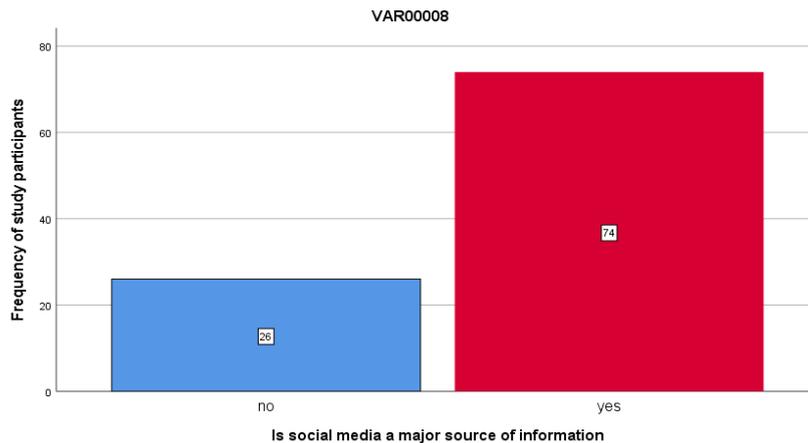

Fig 5 Bar graph represents the response of the public to the question (Is social media a major source of information). Majority of the respondents(74%) agreed that social media is a major source of information while the rest 26% disagreed that social media is not a major source of information. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
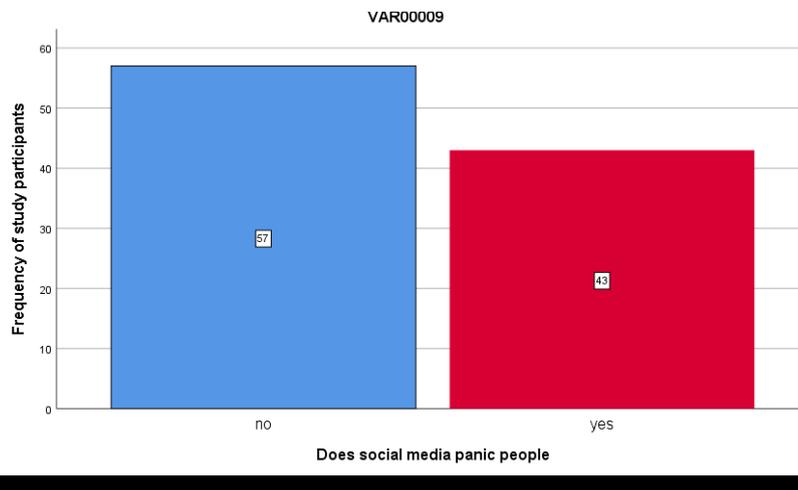
Fig 6 Bar graph represents the response of the public to the question(Does social media panic people). Majority of the respondents (43%) agreed that social media do panic people) while the rest 57% disagreed with the statement. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
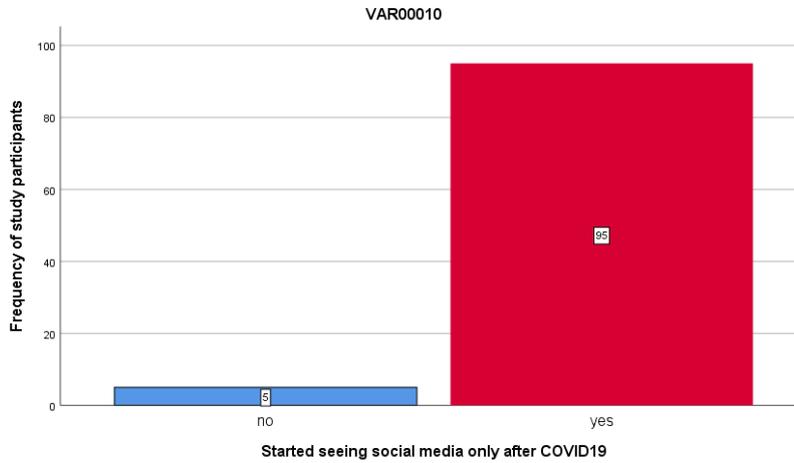

Fig 7 Bar graph represents the response of the public to the question(Started seeing social media only after Covid19. Majority of the respondents (95%) responded that they did not start seeing social media after COVID19 but its impact started way back and 5% oppose the statement. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
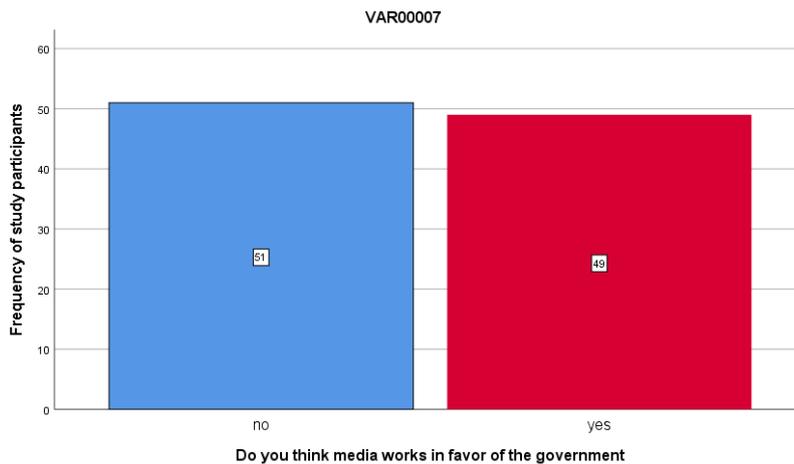

Fig 8 Bar graph represents the response of the public (Do you think the media works in favour of the government. Majority of the respondents (49%) agreed that the media works in favor of the government while the rest 51% disagreed . X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
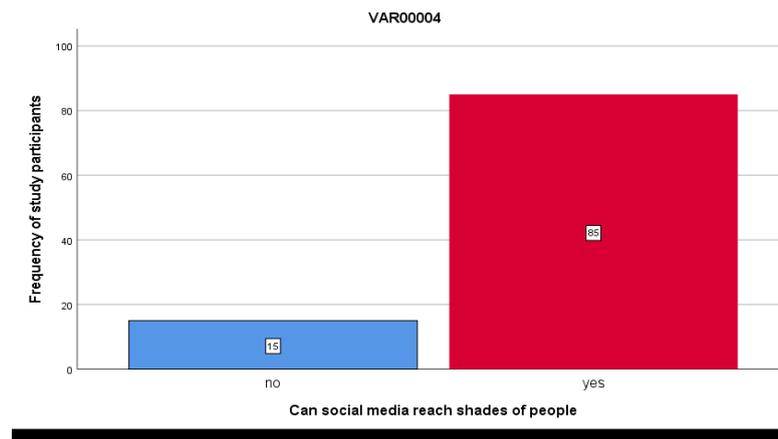
Fig 9 Bar graph represents the response of the public(Can social media reach all shades of people). Majority of the respondents (84%) agreed that social media can reach all shades of people while the rest 16% disagreed with the statement. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
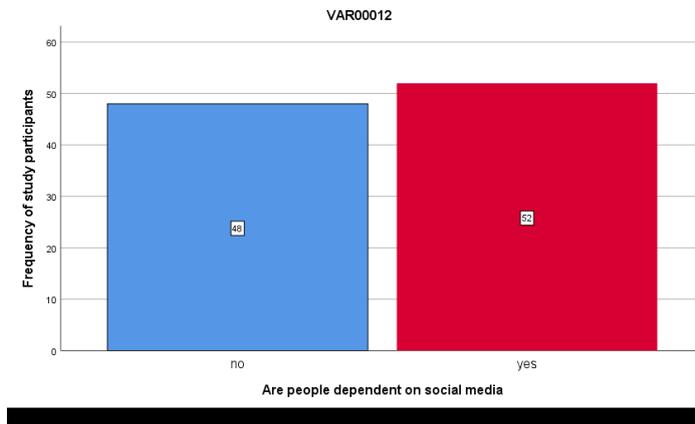

Fig 10 Bar chart shows the response of the public(Are people dependent on social media). Majority of the respondents (52%) agreed that people are dependent on social media while the rest 48% disagreed with the statement. X axis represents the options given and Y axis represents the number of responses
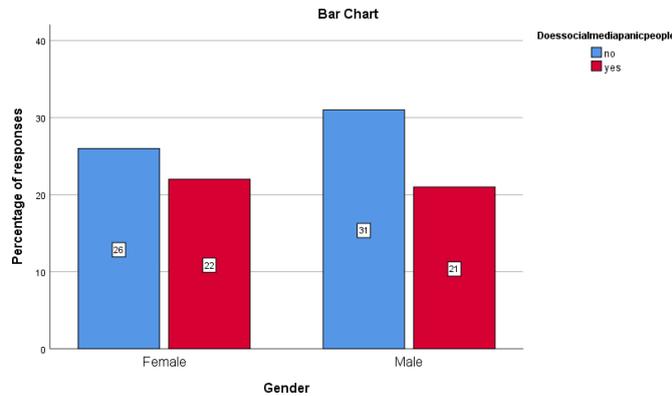

Figure 11 Bar graph represents the association between gender and responses to the question (Does social media panic people). X axis denotes gender and Y axis denotes percentage of responses. Red denotes the number of participants who say social media do panic people and blue denotes no. 31% of male and 26% of females said that social media doesn't panic people. Chi square test was used to find association between variables and was found to be statistically not significant. Pearson chi square value is 0.032, p value is 0.582 and df is 1.Male participants had more differences of opinion on media panics people than females.

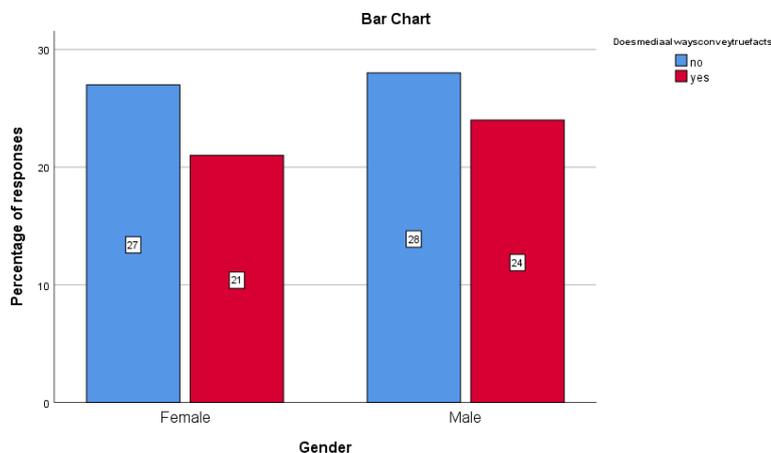Fig 12 Bar graph represents the association between gender and responses to the question (Does social media always convey true facts?). X axis denotes gender and Y axis denotes percentage of responses. Red denotes number of participants who says social media always conveys true facts and blue denotes no. number of participants says that social media does not convey true facts always.28%male and 27% female

said that social media does not convey true facts always. Chi square test was used to find association between variables and was found to be statistically not significant. Pearson chi square value is 0.058, p value is 0.809 and df is 1. Male participants had more differences of opinion on media conveying true facts than females.
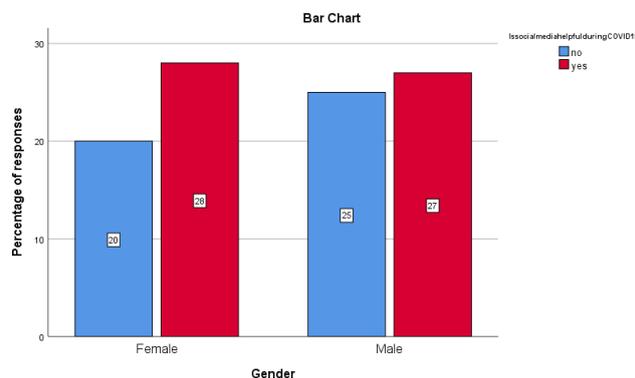

Fig 13 Bar graph represents the association between gender and responses to the question (Is social media helpful during COVID19?). X axis denotes gender and Y axis denotes percentage of responses. Red denotes number of participants says that social media is helpful during Covid19 and blue denotes no. 27% male and 28% female agreed that social media is a helpful during COVID19. Chi square test was used to find association between variables and was found to be statistically not significant. Pearson chi square value is 0.414, p value is 0.520 and df is 1. Female participants had more differences of opinion on social media is helpful during COVID19 than males.
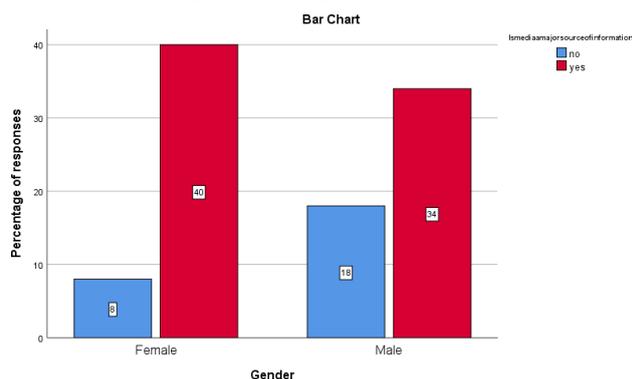

Fig 14 Bar graph represents the association between gender and responses to the question (Is social media a major source of information).X axis denotes gender and Y axis denotes percentage of responses. Red denotes number of participants says that social media is a major source of information and blue denotes no. 34% male and 40% female said that social media is a major source of information. Chi square test was used to find association between variables and was found to be statistically significant. Pearson chi square value is 4.179, p value is 0.41 and df is 1. Female participants had more differences of opinion on social media is helpful during Covid19 than males.
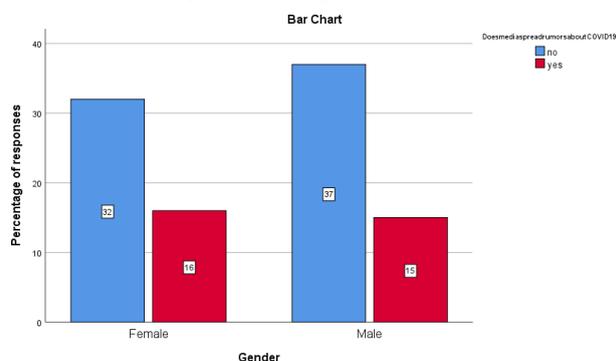

Fig 15 Bar graph represents the association between gender and responses to the question (Does social media spread rumors regarding Covid19?). X axis denotes gender and Y axis denotes percentage of responses. Red denotes number of participants says that social media spreads rumors regarding Covid19 and blue denotes no. 15% male and 16% female agreed that social media spreads rumors regarding

COVID19. Chi square test was used to find association between variables and was found to be statistically not significant. Pearson chi square value is 0.235, p value is 0.628 and df is 1. Male participants had more differences of opinion on the spread of rumors by social media during Covid19 than females.

4. CONCLUSION:

The study concludes that the population is much aware about the role of social media during covid 19. The limitation is that this study involves only a small population. This study must be conducted in under sections of the society so that a large population of people would be aware of the situation which will help them to get rid of the disease with proper precautions to be followed. The upcoming studies could be emphasized to prevent fake news from spreading to some extent and improve the knowledge and awareness among the general public so that they stay informative. It could reach the inaccessible areas and eradicate the pandemic situation with a good knowledge.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST: Nil

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