

Knowledge of covid-19 symptoms and prevention among Pakistani adults

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Objective: To assess the awareness of Covid-19 knowledge about symptoms and prevention among Pakistani adults.

Methodology: The cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in March 2020 in Sargodha, Pakistan. Sample consisted of 200 male and female adults with age between 21-50 years. A self-constructed piloted structured questionnaire ($\alpha .76$) was used for data collection. SPSS 24 was used for data analysis.

Results: Of the 200 participant, 148 (74%) were male and 52(26%) female. 98 (49%) were between 21-35 years of age while 102 (51%) were between 35-50 years. Overall, 174 (87%)

participants knew about COVID-19; 170 (85 %) believed that the disease is dangerous for elderly or already sick people, and 134(67%) thought that they know about the symptoms. 144 (97%) male and 63 (33%) female were aware about the common symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough and tiredness.

Conclusion: It was found that 87% participants of the study had awareness regarding Covid-19, while 85% knew the severity of the disease and its common symptoms. (Rawal Med J 202;45:786-789).

Keywords: Pandemic, global health emergency, COVID 19.

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) originated in China in December, 2019.¹ WHO in February, 2020 declared it a global health emergency and on 11th march recognized a pandemic.^{2,3} Since then, millions are affected all over the world.⁴ COVID-19 is a highly infectious disease with symptoms of runny nose, nasal congestion, fever, cough, dyspnea, fatigue, diarrhea and myalgia.⁵ In severe cases, acute respiratory syndrome, coagulopathy or impairment in forming blood clots, metabolic acidosis or septic shocks may also develop.^{6,7}

Till now there is no specific treatment therefore, physicians are mainly relaying on antiviral drugs, steroids, plasma from recovered patients, psychological support and traditional Chinese medicines.^{5,8} In Pakistan, many people have lost their life.⁹ The Government is trying to promote awareness in people all across the country. Lock down has been implemented to restrict the mobility of people and they are advised to stay at home and to maintain social distance. But still incidents of non-serious attitude can be seen from time to time. Due to lack of precautionary measures numbers of cases are increasing. Present study was conducted to

assess the awareness of Covid-19, knowledge about symptoms and prevention among Pakistani adults.

METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in March 2020 in Sargodha, Pakistan. Convenience sampling technique was used and 200 adolescents and adults of both gender were included. Participants were contacted at various places including educational institutes, offices, or rural areas. Approval from institutional review committee was obtained. An informed consents were obtained from all of them.

A structured questionnaire was constructed by carefully reading the material available on the disease and validated by trying out among the participants. The questionnaire consisted of four sections including demographic details such gender, age, education, working status and locality, awareness about COVID-19 (12 questions), knowledge about symptoms of COVID-19 (9 questions), and preventive practices (9 questions). The questionnaire was given to the participants using two options – yes and no.

Statistical Analysis: Statistical analysis was

performed using SPSS version 24. Frequencies and percentages were computed for all variables. Chi-square test was used to find the association between the two groups (male and female) and their knowledge of COVID-19. $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

RESULTS

A total of 270 participants were contacted; 190(70%) male and 80(30%) female. Of them, 70 (26%) refused to participate. The final sample stood at 200(74%), and of them 148(74%) were males and 52(26%) were females. Age ranged between 21 to 50 years (Table 1). It was found that though people have many misconceptions and ambiguities about the disease and its symptoms they were aware of the preventive strategies as 83% reported that regularly cleaning and washing hands and avoiding touching face, eyes and mouth are important. 78% were in favor of wearing mask while 77% in social isolation. 71% participants considered lockdown necessary while 68 % were in view of avoiding going outside unnecessarily (Table 2).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants (n=200).

Category	Number	%
Gender		
Male	148	74%
Female	52	26%
Age		
21-35	98	49%
35-50	102	51%
Education		
Graduate	90	45%
Postgrad and above	94	47%
professional	16	8%
Employment		
Working	168	84%
Non-working	32	16%
Locality		
Urban	124	62%
Rural	76	38%

Table 2. Awareness of prevention practices among participants.

	Practice	Yes		No	
		Number	%	Number	%
1	Wearing mask	156	78%	44	23%
2	Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands	166	83%	34	17%
3	covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze	128	64%	72	36%
4	Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.	166	83%	34	17%
5	Social isolation is best when someone around you is having symptoms	154	77%	46	23%
6	Keep at least 1 meter distance when someone is coughing	110	55%	90	45%
7	Avoid going outside unnecessarily	136	68%	73	27%
8	Lock down is compulsory	142	71%	58	29%
9	Govt. should quarantine those having doubt of symptoms	108	54%	92	46%

Table 3. Knowledge about symptoms of COVID-19 among participants.

	Question	Correct answer (Male)	Correct answer (Female)	p
1	common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough	144 (97%)	33 (63%)	.000
2	Some people may have aches and pains,	90 (61%)	17 (33%)	.000
3	Some people may have nasal congestion	65 (44%)	14 (27%)	.030
4	Runny nose is also a symptom	84 (57%)	15 (29%)	.000
5	Sore throat is also a symptom	78 (53%)	29 (55%)	.702
6	Some people may have Diarrhea	58 (39%)	12 (24%)	.054
7	High fever (Temperature)	138 (93%)	43 (97%)	.050
8	Most people recover from the disease without special treatment.	96 (65%)	41 (79%)	.060
9	Coughing	132 (89%)	42 (80%)	.120

Table 4. Awareness of COVID-19 among participants (n=200).

No	Item	Yes		No/don't know	
		Number	%	Number	%
1	Do you hear about Coronavirus	174	87%	26	13 %
2	Is there any medicine for COVID-19	86	43%	224	57%
3	Are antibiotic effective for this?	102	51%	98	49%
4	Is there any vaccine for it	46	23%	154	73%
5	Do you know about its symptoms?	134	67 %	66	33%
6	What do you think it's a minor flu like problem?	110	55%	90	45%
7	it can only survive in cold weather	152	76%	48	24%
8	It is not life threatening?	104	52%	96	48%
9	Is it dangerous for elderly or already sick people?	170	85%	30	15%
10	Is it dangerous for people of all ages?	64	32%	146	68%
11	Is drinking hot water is effective	94	47 %	116	63%
12	Eating ginger is the cure for COVID	134	67%	66	33%

Out of 200 participants 87% reported that they had heard about corona virus and 67% confirmed that they know about the symptoms of the COVID-19. 55% believed that this is not a serious problem and just like a mild flue in nature. 76% participants were of the opinion that the virus can only survive in cold weather. 85% were sure that the disease was alarming for elderly only while 32% considered it life threatening for all age groups (Table 3). 67 % participants have given their view in favor of eating ginger to treat the COVID-19 symptoms, while 68 % reporting that drinking hot water has no effects on the symptoms (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

In this study it was observed that male participants were more aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 as compared to females. One reason of this difference might be our traditional gender roles. In patriarchal Pakistani society, men are considered as the figure

head who are responsible for the decision making about family while women are considered to be focused more on household and taking care of family and home.¹⁰ Men have more social interaction as they have to go outside to earn for the family so they get more opportunity to interact and discuss current news and update their knowledge.

Though this social mobility increases their knowledge but also make them more vulnerable as they have to go out of home more frequently to meet the different needs of their family as recently reported by government of Sindh, that during the pandemic 68.3% male and 31.7% females were affected by the coronavirus.¹¹ Another reason of males being more knowledgeable about symptoms of COVID-19 could be that they spend more time on watching news channels as compared to females.¹² It was reported that 31% male TV viewers watch news channels as compared to 22% female viewers.

It was further recounted that in cable or satellite TV viewers, males dominated the viewership by 11% as 29% males watch news channels whereas female viewers are only 18% of the sample. The main reason for having good awareness about the preventive strategies is likely to be news channels and media coverage. Government is also trying to spread awareness about the disease and emphasizing to stay home and maintain social distance and 65% Pakistani reported satisfied with the performance of the govt.¹³

One main area in which health authorities need to pay attention is to educate people about the seriousness of the disease and its symptoms as still 62% Pakistanis believe that the threat of coronavirus has been exaggerated. This is largely based on some conspiracy theories that circulate through misinformation and digital fake news. As COVID-19 is spreading very rapidly all around the world and causing serious health issues, there is a dire need to make public aware of the precautionary measure so that they can save themselves from this dangerous disease.

The strength of the study that it's the first in its nature which made an effort to cover all the possible extents related to the awareness, knowledge of symptoms and prevention about COVID-19. These are the basic information which must be in the

knowledge of general public. Nonetheless, the research had certain limitations as it was conducted on a small sample which was drawn using convenience sample which might diminish the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

It was found that 87% participants of the study had awareness regarding Covid-19, while 85% knew the severity of the disease and its common symptoms.

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