



The Impact of The **Media Infodemic** on Health Behaviors and Choices Among Adults In The UAE

Presenter: *Rawan Adel Alfaraji*

Research Supervisors: *Dr. Ibrahim Eltayeb & Dr. Amal Hussein*

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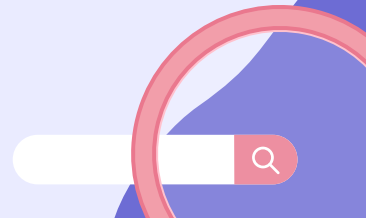
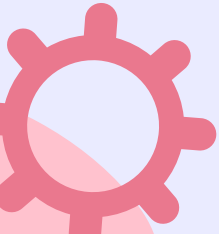
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01

Background



Background



An "infodemic" refers to an excessive and often inaccurate flow of information, rapidly disseminating and causing confusion and potential harm, notably during public health crises like the **COVID-19 pandemic**.



While media, especially social platforms, can positively influence health behaviors, infodemics **pose risks due to misinformation**.

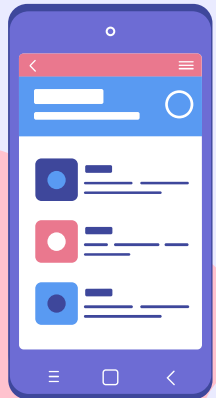


Existing studies mainly concentrate on the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving a gap in understanding the general health-related behavioral changes.



Aim

This study aims to describe the impact of the media infodemic on the health behaviors and choices among adults in the UAE.



Methods

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Study design | Quantitative cross-sectional study |
| Sampling | <p>510 participants aged 18-65 who were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling method, between February and March 2023.</p> <p>Target population: All adults in the UAE</p> <p>Accessible population: Adults living in the UAE with access to social media.</p> <p>Inclusion criteria: Any individual between 18 and 65 years of age with access to the internet and news, resides in the UAE, and can speak either Arabic or English is eligible to be included in the study sample.</p> <p>Exclusion criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Individuals who did not complete the questionnaire● Individuals with mobility impairments will be excluded from this sample |

Methods

Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a 31-item **piloted, self-administered, online questionnaire** consisting of three sections:

1. Socio-demographic information
2. Media infodemic exposure
3. Health behaviors & choices in 3 categories: *Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Medication/supplement use*

Statistical Analysis

- SPSS 29 was used for the analysis.
- The **Health Behaviors & Choices (HBC) score** was automatically computed by counting the number of affected health behaviors and choices.
- Kruskal-Wallis H, Mann-Whitney U, and Chi-square tests were used.
- Frequencies(%) and medians were reported.
- Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.



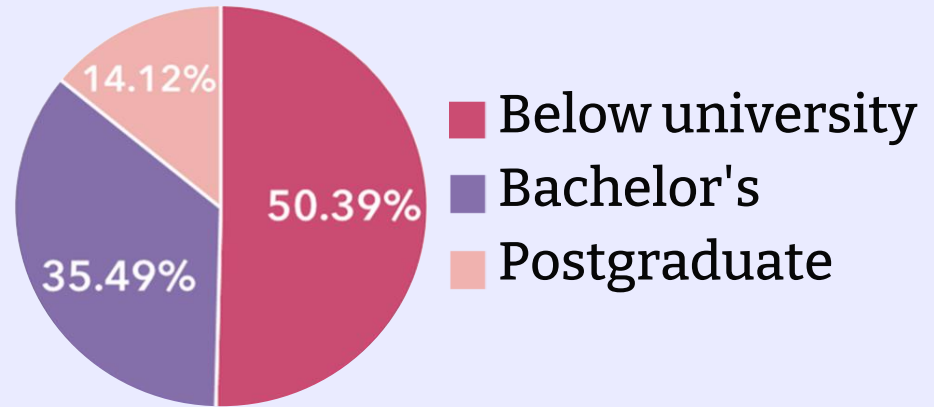
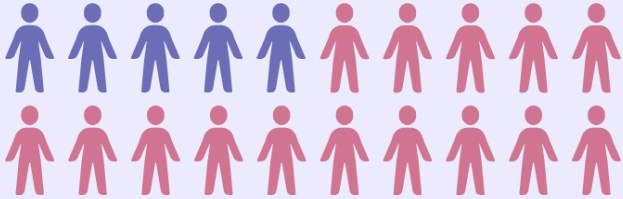
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Results

Demographics

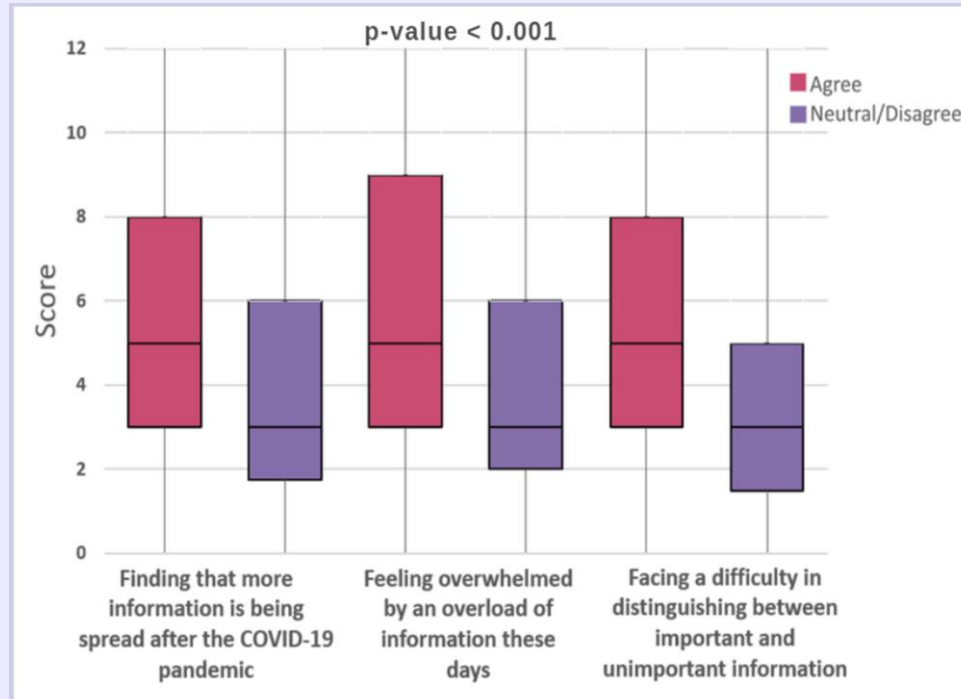
Out of the 510 participants, 62.4% (n=318) were **18-24 years old**.

74.9% (n=379) were **females**.



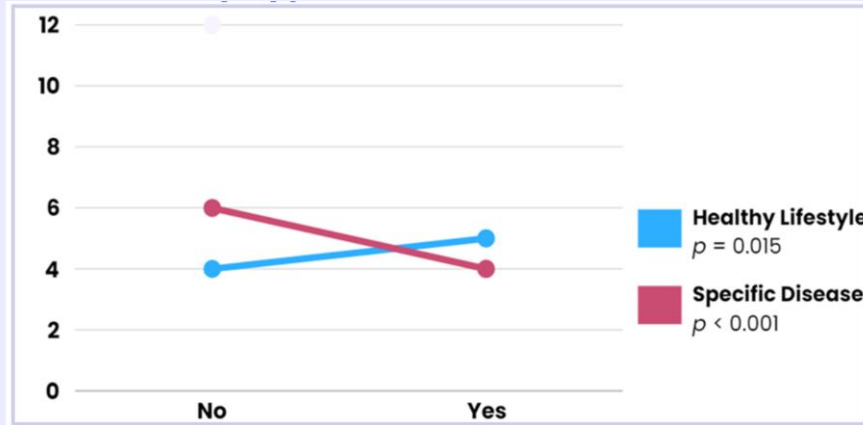
Effect of Infodemic exposure

Figure 2: **Participants' HBC Scores By Infodemic Exposure.**



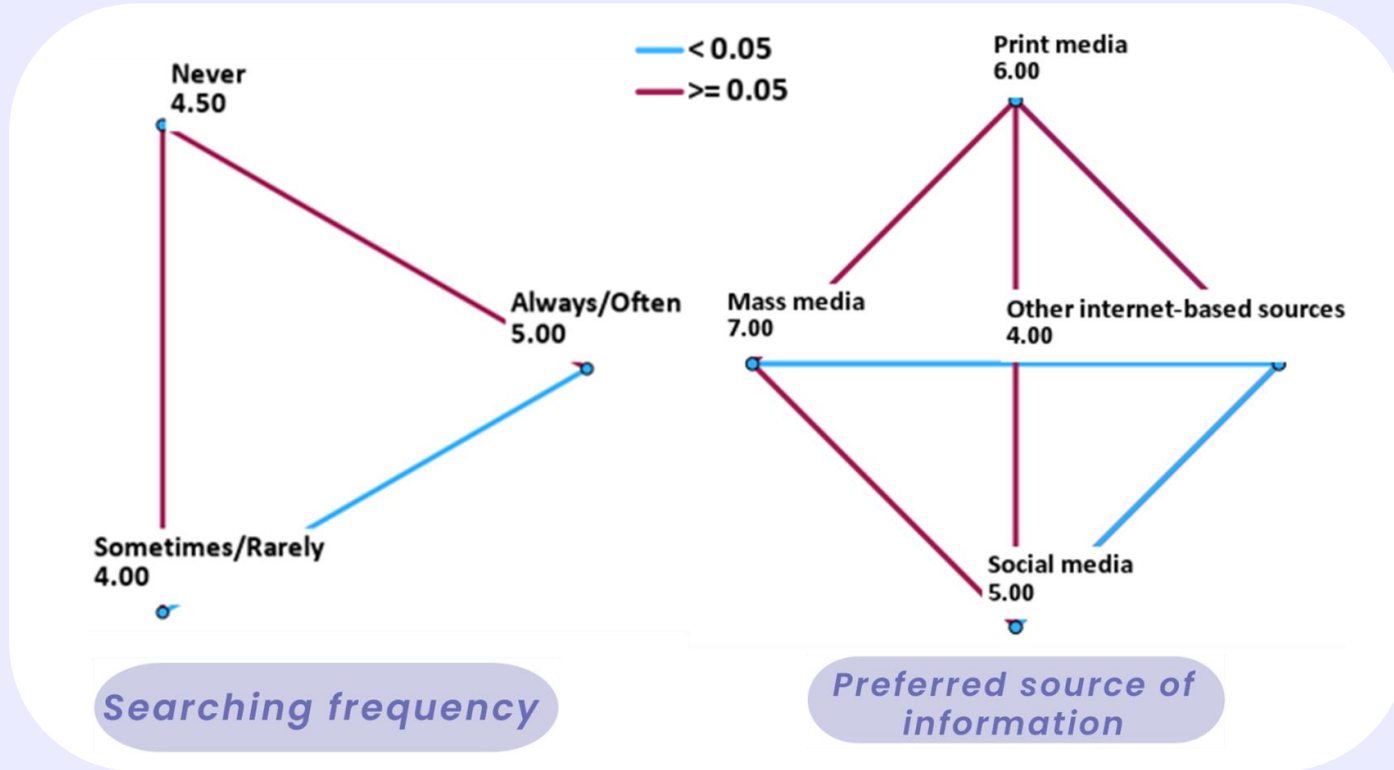
Effect of Infodemic exposure

Figure 1: HBC Score By Type of Information Searched For.





Effect of Infodemic exposure


Figure 3: **Pairwise Comparisons Showing HBC Score By Other Factors.**



Demographics

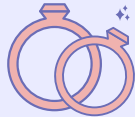
 Students scored lower than Housewives ($p=0.005$), Unemployed/Retired ($p=0.024$), and Employed ($p<0.001$).

 Mass media preference was highest among females ($p=0.001$), those aged 45-65 ($p<0.001$), and housewives ($p<0.001$).

 Proportions of those reporting feeling overwhelmed by information overload was highest among:



between 35-44
($p<0.001$)



married
($p<0.001$)



postgraduate
($p=0.006$)



Unemployed/
Retired ($p=0.006$)



Increased information spread post-COVID-19 was mainly perceived by those with education below university level compared to others ($p=0.018$).



04

Discussion



Discussion



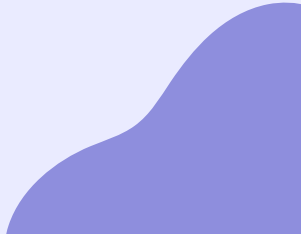
The number of affected health behaviors were significantly higher in mass media users and those seeking healthy lifestyles, whereas disease-focused searches were associated with lower HBC scores, which aligns with existing literature emphasizing **the role of information-seeking behaviors in shaping health choices**.



Greater perception of information overload was associated with more pronounced behavioral changes, underlining **the psychological impact of information overabundance**.



Age, education level, marital, and employment statuses also contribute to higher HBC scores, reinforcing **the importance of targeted health campaigns across demographics**.



Limitations



Convenience sampling method used in the study *may not reflect the UAE population accurately.*



Self-reported data may be subject to *recall bias* and *response bias.*



05



Conclusion



Conclusions

The media infodemic **significantly impacts health behaviors and choices among UAE adults**, as revealed by source preferences and information types influencing the number of behaviors and choices affected.

Perceiving increased information spread post-COVID-19, feeling overwhelmed, and facing challenges in information discernment increase the HBC score, **emphasizing the urgency to improve the quality of health-related information in the media, and raising people's digital and health literacy.**





Thank You

Any questions?

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References

Borges do Nascimento, I. J., Beatriz Pizarro, A., Almeida, J., Azzopardi-Muscat, N., André Gonçalves, M., Björklund, M., & Novillo-Ortiz, D. (2022). Infodemics and health misinformation: a systematic review of reviews. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 100(9), 544–561. <https://doi.org/10.2471/blt.21.287654>

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