DOES MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE COVID-19 MESSAGE FATIGUE?

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INTRODUCTION

- COVID-19 prevention messages are vital for disease mitigation measures during this pandemic. However, the continual and repetitive nature of COVID-19 messaging may generate fatigue.
- So et al., (2017) define message fatigue as a state of exhaustionand boredom after prolonged and repeated exposure to similar messages over time.
- Related to message fatigue or "an expected and natural response to a prolonger public health crisis", has shown to express itself as hopelessness and decreased motivation to engage in preventive behaviors against COVID-19 (WHO 2020).
- Therefore, this study assessed the COVID-19 message fatigue among Malaysian adults.

MATERIALS / METHODS

Study design

An online cross-sectional study

Study population

Malaysian citizen, 18 years and above

Sampling technique

Convenience snowballing sampling technique (distributed by email, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms.

Data collection duration

March - April 2021

Study instruments

- Using a modified Message Fatigue Scale. original version was developed by So et al. (2017) and has been successfully applied in different health contexts, including safe sex, anti-obesity (So et al., 2017), and COVID-19 prevention messages (Ball and Wozniak, 2021).
- The scale consisted of 17 items with four main dimensions: overexposure, redundancy, exhaustion, and tedium. All items were measured on seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree then collated into three categories; agree, unsure and disagree.

RESULTS

Demography

Total participants: **2943**

29.6% 60.3% 74.0% 34.7%

From Selangor

Malay **Female**

Ages between 36 and 45 years old

Message Fatigue

Table 1: Mean score of message fatigue by dimension

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Message Fatigue	69.3	22.4
Over Exposure	25.2	6.1
Redundancy	17.2	5.9
Exhaustion	14.1	7.6
Tedium	12.6	7.1

Perceived Over Exposure

Perception that one has been exposed to a class of messages beyond desired.

I have **heard enough** about how important it is to practice preventive behaviours to avoid COVID-19.

78.8%

There are **simply too many** health messages about COVID-19 nowadays.



I have lost track of the amount of times I have heard that COVID-19 is a serious problem.



At this point, I have heard about problems related to COVID-19 more than needed.

The importance of maintaining a preventive behaviour on COVID-19 is **overtaught**.

Perceived Redundancy

Perception that the messages are repetitive and overlapping.

I can predict things to be conveyed by the COVID-19 message

Messages about COVID-19 are all beginning to 60.9% sound the same to me.

After receiving them for months, messages about 59.3% COVID-19 seem repetitive

COVID-19 related messages rarely provide 25.8% latest information

Exhaustion

A feeling of being burned out with the messages.

I am **burned out** from hearing that COVID-19 is a serious problem. COVID-19 related messages 37.8% make me want to sigh

I am sick of hearing about the consequences of COVID-19

I am tired of hearing about the importance of 33.0% maintaining preventive behaviour against COVID-19

Tedium

Lack of enthusiasm towards the message.

30.1% I find messages about COVID-19 to be **dull**.

29.8% COVID-19 related messages are **tedious**.

Health messages about COVID-19 prevention 27.1% are boring.

23.8% COVID-19 messages make me want to yawn.

DISCUSSION

- When comparing the dimension of message fatigue, overexposure showed the highest score, followed by redundancy, exhaustion and tedium (Table 1)
- In terms of responses by items, the majority of participants had heard enough about COVID-19 (90.9%), perceived too many COVID-19 messages (78.8%) and lost track of the number of times they heard about COVID-19 (74.5%).
- Some of them also agreed that COVID-19 messages are predictive (69.9%), sound identical (60.9%), and repetitive (59.3%).
- On the other hand, feeling tired from hearing about COVID-19, the consequences, and the importance of sustaining preventive behaviour were reported in 42.6%, 36.1%, and 33.0% of participants.
- The results also showed that about 27.1% agreed that COVID-19 preventive messages are boring.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that COVID-19 message fatigue occurs, as people have grown tired or fatigued of receiving statistical data, being bombarded with repeated messages, and changing SOP's.

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