

Technical Report

MESSAGE FATIGUE OF COVID-19

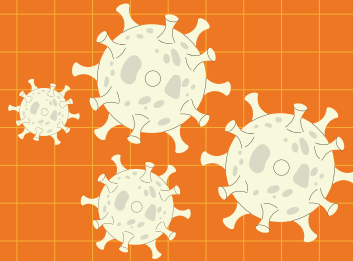
Among Adults in Malaysia:
An Online Survey

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NMRR-20-2434-57105



INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH
MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA
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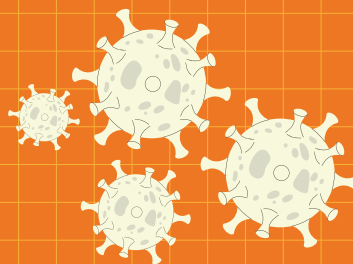
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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

NSC	National Security Council
ANOVA	One-way Analysis of Variance
MOH	Ministry of Health
WHO	World Health Organization
NMRR	National Medical Research Registry
PRT	Psychological Reactance Theory
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
MREC	Medical Review & Ethics Committees

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Message fatigue is a significant issue that must be explored in the context of pandemic fatigue. Message fatigue is the term used to describe the feeling of exhaustion that develops after hearing numerous comparable messages over an extended period. Additionally, message fatigue is defined by a combination of the following four dimensions: a) perceived overexposure, or the perception of being exposed to a class of messages at a higher frequency than desired; b) perceived redundancy, or the perception that the messages are repetitive and overlapping; c) exhaustion, or a sense of being burned out on the messages; and d) tedium, or a lack of enthusiasm for the messages.

The primary objective of this study is to determine the level of COVID-19 message fatigue among Malaysian adults. This includes the following: a) identifying the source of COVID-19-related messages; b) assessing the level of COVID-19 message fatigue; c) assessing the effect of sociodemographic characteristics on COVID-19 message fatigue; d) assessing COVID-19 preventive behaviour among Malaysian adults; and e) assessing the relationship between message fatigue and preventive behaviour.

The sample size for this study is 2,746 people. The data was acquired using a Google Form to perform an online survey. Malaysians aged 18 years or older at the time of consent and residing in Malaysia at the time of the study are eligible to participate. The instrument (17 items) is based on So, Kim, and Cohen (2017) and has a high reliability of 0.76 to 0.94. The preventive behaviour measures were developed from a study by Norbaidurah Ithnain et al. (2020). The early instruments had high dependability of 0.84 and were composed of nine components. All statistical analyses were carried out on a Windows computer using the SPSS statistics package version 20.0. (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The Medical Research & Ethics Committees (MREC) provided ethical approval for this project (NMRR-20-2434-57105) (IIR).

The online survey received 2943 respondents. The first finding indicates that the majority of participants learn about COVID-19 from the Ministry of Health's (MOH) and National Security Council's (NSC) social media platforms, and official government websites. The social media of the Ministry of Health, in particular, were the most reliable source of information regarding COVID-19 messages. The second finding indicated that more than half of participants experienced message fatigue due to overexposure and redundancy. They observed repetitive and overlapping COVID-19 information, and between 30% and 90% of respondents indicated perceived overexposure to COVID-19-related messages. The percentage of redundancy answers is between 50% and 70%, with the majority perceiving that COVID-19 messages are predictive, sound identical, repetitive, and do not provide the most up-to-date information. However, participants' responses to another subscale of message fatigue, tiredness and tedium, show they are not exhausted. The third finding reveals that gender, occupation type, marital status, and race significantly differ on message fatigue score. The fourth finding established that the vast majority of participants followed SOP rules. Additionally, participants took precautions by avoiding contact with people who were sick. However, physical distance, staying at home, and handwashing regularly were less popular. Only about half of the participants consistently avoided crowded places, close-contact settings, and constrained close quarters when avoiding the three 3C's. Additionally, this study discovered that participants who experienced higher message fatigue were less likely to adhere to COVID-19 preventive behaviours. Aside from that, the vast majority of people (86.0%) indicated an openness to vaccination.

It is suggested that COVID-19-related health messages need to be developed and produced using clear and understandable information, listening to public concerns, being socially and culturally sensitive, and communicating via creative and innovative communication channels targeted at segmented groups, particularly regarding perceived redundancy and overexposure. Due to the convenience sampling used in this study, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the Malaysian population. The focus of future interventions and guidelines should be on long-term behaviour change. COVID-19-related health messages should be based on simple, comprehensible information that is current, relevant to public concern, and delivered via creative and innovative communication methods aimed at segmented groups.





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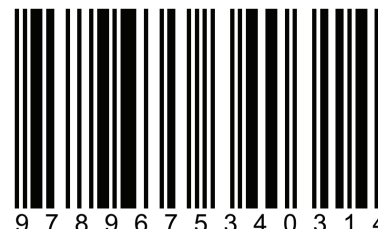
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