

Assessment of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Towards COVID-19 in the Population of North Karnataka Region: A Cross Sectional Study

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Abstract

Introduction

World health organization (WHO) office of Republic of China reported pneumonia cases of unknown etiology. It was a new strain discovered on Dec 31st 2019 in Wuhan, China. On January 7, 2020 the causative agent was identified as a new corona virus which has not been previously detected in humans, later the name of the disease is accepted as COVID -19 and then was termed as syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) by international committee on taxonomy of viruses (ICTV). [1,2]

COVID-19 can live in air for long time and

infected individuals with and without symptoms can both spread the disease, hence the transmission of the disease is unclear.[3]

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) emerged in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. Since then, it has spread to countries all over the world and has been declared as a global pandemic by WHO. [4] India currently has the largest number of confirmed cases in Asia. As of 12th June 2021 India has the second highest number of confirmed cases in the world after US with 176 million reported cases of covid 19 infection. The first case of COVID-19 pandemic in the Indian state

Karnataka was confirmed on 8 March 2020. As of now; 12th June 2021 Karnataka have 27, 47, 539 confirmed cases and 32, 644 deaths [5]

The disease caused by corona virus in humans can range from simple cold to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). It is mainly transmitted through droplets produced by infected individual's coughing and sneezing after they come into contact with the hands of other people. Viruses can be detected in respiratory secretions of an asymptomatic individuals.[6,7]

On 24th march 2020 the Government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days, as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19 infection, thus minimizing the overburden to country's health care system. Citizens were forbidden from non-essential activities outside the homes and were allowed to take oneself out only to seek any medical emergency or to buy essentials. Lockdown also restrained all national and international flights till next orders from Gov of India. As soon as the nationwide lockdown was announced by the prime minister of India, an overwhelming terror, anxiety and panic was found among the population. But the hardest hit was for informal workers, who make up the bulk of India's workforce, from the domestic helps to street vendors to construction workers. They were suddenly left out of work. Public rushed to grocery stores to buy food items, public transportation hubs were crowded, but due to restrictions on public transportation many of them began walking them homes certainly rising the risk of infection to spread on other parts of the country. Due to this, lockdown measures were perceived as necessity to curb the spread of the virus as rapid human to human transmission occurred. Due to obscurity of this novel virus there is lot of confusion and misunderstanding

about itself, how it can spread and necessary precautions that should be taken to prevent infection.[8]

In addition to government, citizens play an important role in pandemic control. Citizens must comply with the policies implemented by the government, demonstrated awareness through psychological conceptualization, perception, judgment, and imagination. Then they are able to develop appropriate awareness, attitude and can take appropriate action.[9]

Knowledge, attitude and practice towards COVID- 19 plays an important role in determining a society's readiness to accept behavioral changes measures from health authorities. This study may provide baseline information which may be required to change misconceptions about the virus.[10] After the outbreak from the pandemic, the knowledge and attitudes of people are associated with levels of panic and emotions, which could further complicate the measures to maintain the spread of the disease. Thus, assessing the knowledge, attitude and practice related to COVID- 19 among general public in north Karnataka region would be helpful to provide better insight to poor knowledge about the disease and the development of preventive strategies and health promotion programs. This survey also gives a general picture of North Karnataka region's COVID- 19 prevention practices and this can better prepare the government to address future health crises involving infectious diseases. Thus, results of this study play a crucial role to inform future efforts focusing with pandemic control measures.

Materials and Methods

A survey is most appropriate as it allows large populations to be assessed with relative ease. In this study, by utilizing quantitative approach a cross sectional survey was done to gather information on

COVID- 19 from north Karnataka region. The following data collection was performed using online questionnaire-based survey using Google form and the call for the participation was made through social media.

Sample Recruitment procedure

This cross-sectional survey was conducted in the month of January 2021 with a sample size of 200 people from north Karnataka region. As it was not feasible to conduct a systemic throughout the region survey during this period, the researchers figured out to use an online survey using Google form. An offline paper-based sample collection was also done where the participants were asked to fill the details and proceed with responding to the questionnaire. A standardized elucidation about the survey was given to the participants preceding link. Questionnaires were designed in English language as well as in local language.

Study Instrument

The survey instrument is an adaptation of the questionnaire collected from previous researches based on knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) towards COVID 19. The survey was presented in English and Kannada language. The questionnaire included three main themes 1) knowledge about COVID 19, 2) Attitude towards COVID 19, and 3) Practices relevant to COVID 19.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was done using SPSS, descriptive analysis was done using mean and standard deviation to present overall score.

Results

The total sample collected of participants for this study were 200 (N) with an overall response rate is 100%. Sample collected through RCT all over the north Karnataka region. This study was categorized into knowledge, Attitude and Practice towards COVID-19.

Assessment of knowledge

Demonstrated knowledge of COVID-19 was assessed through 08 open ended questions asking participants regarding first outbreak of coronavirus and the causative agent of the disease and also about the symptoms concern with covid infection and its transmission and regarding the age groups which are prone to get infected, also about the availability of vaccine in the country. They were also queried about their knowledge regarding covid helpline number.

Overall knowledge regarding covid 19 symptoms and high risk groups was quite accurate. Around 87.3% of the participants were aware that fever, tiredness, dry cough and breathlessness are symptoms for covid 19 infection and a fewer members had misconception concerning the symptoms. 80.9% of the participants identified medically compromised people as the most at risk group for severe symptoms.

Participant's response as for causative agent of COVID-19 infection was precise with 82.35% of the people responded COVID-19 as a viral infection. As far the awareness about the transmission of the disease 81.4% of the participant's choose that the spread of covid 19 is due the droplets expelled by the infected person and 77.1% of them agreed that it also spreads by being in contact with the infected external surfaces. 91.1% of the population was aware of COVID-19 helpline numbers generated by govt of India.(table 1)

Table 1: Distribution of study participants based on Knowledge regarding the covid 19

Knowledge regarding the covid 19		Frequency percentage
First outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic was identified in	America	8(4)
	China	192(96)
	Italy	0(0)
	India	0(0)
Is coronavirus an infectious disease caused by virus	Yes	165(82.35)
	No	25(11.76)
	Don't know	10(4.9)
People with coronavirus disease/COVID-19 have fever, tiredness, dry cough and shortness of breath as its symptoms.	Yes	174(87.3)
	No	12(5.9)
	Don't know	12(5.9)
The coronavirus spreads when you breathe in the respiratory droplets that are coughed out or exhaled by an infected person.	Yes	163(81.4)
	No	16(7.8)
	Don't know	21(10.8)
You can catch the coronavirus if you touch your face, eyes, nose and mouth after touching objects and surfaces where coronavirus is present.	Yes	154(77.1)
	No	19(9.5)
	Don't know	27(13.3)
Medically compromised people are more likely to develop serious COVID-19 symptoms and can even die.	Yes	162(80.9)
	No	15(7.6)
	Don't know	20 (10)
At present there is no vaccine or effective treatment for coronavirus disease/COVID-19.	Yes	154(77.1)
	No	27(13.3)
	I Don't know	19(9.5)

Assessment of Practice

Significant practices carried out by the population of north Karnataka region towards covid 19 was judged / determined using five questionnaires enquiring on, 1) Whether they strictly followed the rules set during nationwide lockdown, 2) Maintaining social distance, 3) their response to covid symptoms, 4) Wearing face masks, 5) Cautiousness to remain healthy and to boost one's immunity.

As the nationwide lockdown was announced, all kind of movements were restricted, for the first question; around 58% of the population stayed at their homes during movement control order and 42% moved out to buy essential, and 62.9% participants reported that they had consciously maintained the social distancing and avoided crowded places during nationwide lockdown. For the third question, when enquired about wearing face mask or protective covers in public places the

population responded liberally (84.8%) as they followed the self-protecting protocol and 12.4% of the population was impolite with respect to the preventive protocols. For the fourth question, when the participants were queried about their immediate course of action after acquiring covid symptoms, 44.8% of the participants would seek immediate medical attention, 29.5% among them will self-isolate themselves for 14days and only 2.9% among them would like the share about their illness with others. Lastly for the fourth question, 10.2% of the participants will exercise to remain healthy as well as to boost immunity, 11% of the participants choose to stay hydrated, 6.6% among them responded that avoiding close contact with the infected individual will aid them to remain healthy and immune whereas 60.2% of the population choose to follow all the above mentioned precautionary measures to stay healthy.(Table 2)

Table 2: Distribution of study participant based on practices during covid 19

Practices During Covid 19		Frequency Percentage
Have you left your home since nationwide lockdown was announced in India	Yes	116(58)
	No	84(42)
If you had left your home, did you consciously maintain a distance of at least 1 m from others	Yes	126(62.9)
	No	50(24.8)
Did you wear a facemask while going outside?	Yes	170(84.8)
	No	25(12.4)
	Not answered	5(2.9)
Behaviours you would do if you had symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) of COVID-19	Go to Hospital	90(44.8)
	call help line number	14(6.7)
	stay at home more/ self-isolate for at least 14 days	59(29.5)
	inform people about your illness	6(2.9)
	none of the above	27(13.3)
	No answer	6(2.9)
What should you do to remain healthy and boost your immune system?	Exercise	20(10.2)
	Drink plenty of water/ hot wate	22(11)
	Take vitamins	13(6.6)
	Avoid contact with sick people	13(6.6)
	Practice good hygiene	10(5.2)
	All of the Above	122(60.6)

Assessment of Attitude

To form an opinion regarding population's attitude toward COVID-19 infection, participants were asked seven questions enquiring 1) Do adults with good immunity need not to take precautionary measures , 2) Maintaining personal hygiene, 3) Role of social distancing in prevention of infection, 4) Whether implementation of nationwide lockdown was effective in controlling the spread of disease, 5) the fears and concerns about COVID-19, 6) Their immediate response for a suspected individual, 7) Public satisfaction with preventive measures tackled by government of India.

As the population was well aware that elderly or medically compromised individuals are more prone to covid 19 infection, but when enquired that does adults with good immunity are less susceptible to covid 19 disease and hence need not to be cautious there were

mixed responses from the participants 48.6% of the participants believe this whereas 43.8% disagreed with the same. Around 84.8% of the participants acknowledge that thorough washing of hands with cleansers and use of hand sanitizers are effective in preventing disease. Participants were acutely aware about the significance of maintaining social distance and eschewing from crowded places, majority of the participants that is to say 76.2% responded social distancing as a preventive act toward the mushrooming of COVID-19.

Around 62.9% of the participants think nationwide lockdown was efficacious in suppressing COVID-19 infection and only 9.5% found it ineffectual. All the participants had heard of the covid 19, and most of them considered potential threat to be high. Few fears and concerns that were found among the population

were specified and 14.3% of the participants were anxious regarding death due to covid 19 infections, 9.5% of the participants were worried as the disease have no known current cure, a small percent of the participants i.e. 6.7% were concerned about losing their jobs during nationwide lockdown, and all the above fears and concerns were ranked highest by the participants (64.76%).

When participants were enquired regarding their immediate response for a suspected individual, 39%

among them advised the individual to visit a doctor where as 19% of the participants would like to call the help line number and 18% of them would suggest him home quarantine. The final attitude question asked whether the participants agree that the Indian government was handling the covid 19 health crisis well. A large percentage of the participants agreed with the statement (62.9%). Rate of disagreement was 22.8% and 25.7% of the participants stayed unbiased with the statement. (Table 3)

Table 3: Distribution of study participant based on attitude regarding the Covid 19

Attitude regarding the covid 19	Frequency percentage	
Young adults have good immunity and hence do not need to take precautions to protect against coronavirus	Yes	97(48.6)
	No	88(43.8)
	I Don't know	15(7.62)
Regularly and thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water or cleaning them with an alcohol-based hand rub can protect against coronavirus.	Yes	170(84.8)
	No	13(6.7)
	I Don't know	17(8.8)
Avoiding crowded places and maintaining a minimum distance of 1 m from others can prevent spread of coronavirus.	Yes	152(76.2)
	No	21(10.5)
	I Don't know	27(13.3)
Do you think lockdown was helpful in controlling the coronavirus disease/COVID-19 in India?	Yes	126(62.9)
	No	19(9.5)
	I Don't know	53(26.7)
	No answer	2(0.9)
Fears and concerns regarding COVID-19	DEATH	29(14.3)
	There is no cure of treatment	19(9.5)
	Loss of jobs, incomes, closing business	13(6.7)
	Food shortage	2(1)
	I may infect others	4(1.9)
	All the above	130(64.76)
What will be your immediate response for suspected case?	Call help line number	38(19)
	refer him to a doctor	78(39)
	advice him/her for self-quarantine	36(18)
	don't know	40(20)
	No answer	8(4)
Are you happy with preventive and treatment measures taken by Government during COVID-19	Yes	126(62.9)
	No	23(22.8)
	I Don't Know	51(25.7)

Discussion

COVID 19 is relatively new virus that had has devastating effects within the short period of time since its initial outbreak in China in December 2019. The virus has had a cascading effect worldwide. Due to its inconclusive latency period (ranging from day 1 to day 14) and delayed appearance of the symptoms, the COVID-19 outbreak escalated rapidly and has been declared as global health emergency on 30th January. [11] The novelty of this disease, along with the uncertainties, make it critical for the health care authorities to plan appropriate strategies to prepare and manage the public. Admittedly, COVID-19 has been a teething public health problem around the world. Scientists are working diligently to explore different vaccines and treatment options. [4] Similar to other disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic has generated anxiety, fear, and depression among the public. [12] The identification and isolation of a suspected case is the most important step in curbing the spread of COVID-19. Outbreaks are situations that threaten public health and can be prevented with the community compliance against the recommendation of ministries and health institution. [4] Hence this study attempted to evaluate the attitudes, knowledge and anxiety states of the individual at the first period of the COVID-19 outbreaks. Almost all participants reported that they and their households are already practising risk reduction behaviours including increased hand washing with soap where possible, use of hand sanitizer more and staying at homes. In all epidemics and pandemics, it is essential to create awareness in public for effective prevention of disease spread. While our survey revealed high levels of knowledge of primary COVID-19 symptoms, namely fever, dry cough, difficulty in breathing were accurately identified as a key symptoms that signifies critical

illness and potential need for hospitalization. [13] Although they had good amount of knowledge about COVID-19 transmission ways, symptoms and the importance of hand washing; majority of the population has no idea about treatment and immunization. This study draws attention to very few participants regarding COVID-19 carries the risk of death at any age. Also, in this study it is observed that the frequency of going out and meeting with relatives decreased and the hand washing frequency increased. When the sources of the participant's access to information about COVID-19 infection were evaluated, it was seen that almost all of them obtained information on the internet and social media, and that was followed by television. Our work was a web-based work and all of the participants were people using social media. Also, the people with good immunity and low anxiety levels state that they adhere less to measures, and individuals with high anxiety levels stated that their close environment did not take precautions. [14] According to the report published on 12th June 2021, there have been 176 million confirmed cases in India. [15]

The experts had warned of the onset of a second wave of COVID-19 in Karnataka November 2020 itself. As predicted earlier the second wave of COVID-19 was observed in the month end of April 2021 with a catastrophic effect in society and have challenged health care administration of the country, with reporting the highest number of positive cases on 20th may 2021; cumulatively 23, 35, 524 have been confirmed in the state. [16]. The mutant strain of the virus definitely had a role to play. There are multiple mutants and all of them seems to be more infectious and tends to spread more rapidly than the original ones. The second wave has been unprecedented, and it's massive. There has been no evidence-based specific treatment for COVID-19 and

management of COVID-19 has been largely supported. [17]. At times of writing this article there were two government approved vaccines available in India. Immunization saves millions of lives and is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions. India began administration of COVID-19 vaccines on 16th January 2021. [18]. Thus, more information should be offered regarding the availability of vaccines and their effectiveness. The current approach to COVID-19 is to control the source of infection, use infection prevention and control measures to lower the risk of transmission and provide early diagnosis, isolation and supportive care for affected patients. [17]. The present study found that a large majority of participant held positive attitudes toward overcoming COVID-19 and majority of the population is confident that the Govt of India would be able to win its battle against the virus and that the Indian Govt is handling the crisis very well. Participants reported receiving information on COVID-19 from a wide variety of sources through various channels such social media, followed by awareness campaign and television; overall government messages were the most widely cited.

Conclusion

An abridgement, of the present study shows that the people of north Karnataka region have an acceptable amount of knowledge and are generally positive in their outlook on overcoming the pandemic. The residents of north Karnataka region are practicing proper precautionary measures against COVID-19. As the COVID-19 pandemic has had global negative impact on economic, social, political, and health administration and to gradually erode this negative effects, further comprehensive improvements in public awareness about COVID-19 should be considered. Even so, consistent

messaging from government and health care authorities are key to public knowledge and understanding of COVID-19.

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- Question Aries**
1. **First outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic was identified in**
 - A. America
 - B. China
 - C. Italy
 - D. India
 2. **Is coronavirus an infectious disease caused by virus**
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. I don't know
 3. **People with coronavirus disease/COVID-19 have fever, tiredness, dry cough and shortness of breath as its symptoms.**
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. I Don't know

4. The coronavirus spreads when you breath in the respiratory droplets that are coughed out or exhaled by an infected person.
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
5. You can catch the coronavirus if you touch your face, eyes, nose and mouth after touching objects and surfaces where coronavirus is present.
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
6. Medically compromised people are more likely to develop serious COVID-19 symptoms and can even die.
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
7. Young adults have good immunity and hence do not need to take precautions to protect against Coronavirus
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
8. At present there is no vaccine or effective treatment for coronavirus disease/COVID-19.
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
9. Regularly and thoroughly washing your hands with soap and water or cleaning them with an alcohol-based hand rub can protect against coronavirus.
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
10. Avoiding crowded places and maintaining a minimum distance of 1 m from others can prevent spread of coronavirus.
- A. Yes
B. No
C. Don't know
11. What is COVID-19 emergency / helpline number
- A. 011-23978046
B. 1075
C. 8110
D. Don't know
12. Do you think lockdown was helpful in controlling the coronavirus disease/COVID-19 in India
- A. Yes
B. No
C. I Don't know
13. Fears and concerns regarding COVID-19
- A. DEATH
B. There is no cure of treatment
C. Loss of jobs, incomes, closing business
D. Food shortage
E. I may infect others
F. All the above
14. Have you left your home since nationwide lockdown was announced in India
- A. Yes
B. No
C. If yes, reason:
15. If you had left your home, did you consciously maintain a distance of at least 1 m from others
- A. Yes
B. No
16. Did you wear a facemask while going outside
- A. Yes
B. No

17. Behaviors you would do if you had symptoms

(fever, cough, shortness of breath) of COVID-19

- A. Go to Hospital
- B. call help line number
- C. stay at home more/ self isolate for at least 14 days
- D. inform people about your illness
- E. none of the above

18. What should you do to remain healthy and boost your immune system? (Check all that apply)

- A. Exercise
- B. Drink plenty of water/ hot water
- C. Take vitamins
- D. Avoid contact with sick people
- E. Practice good hygiene
- F. All of the Above

19. What will be your immediate response for suspected case?

- A. Call help line number
- B. Refer him to a doctor
- C. Advice him/her for self quarantine
- D. Don't know

20. Are you happy with preventive and treatment measures taken by Government during COVID - 19

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. I Don't Know