

Media Influence on COVID-19 Risk Perception Among College Teachers: A Comparative Analysis of Social Media and Traditional Media

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic triggered extensive changes to global health care together with educational institutions and social economic frameworks requiring fast adaptations in different sectors. The pandemic severely impacted the experiences of college instructors because they had to handle remote instruction as well as maintain student participation amid changing health regulations. Researchers examined how university educators formed COVID-19 risk assessments and practiced preventive measures based on their intake of social media and conventional news broadcasts.*

Using a quantitative survey research model, 330 college teachers in Vijayawada were participated in the study. Using statistical techniques including Spearman's Correlation, the Mann-Whitney U Test, and the Kruskal-Wallis Test, the paper investigated the relationship between demographic elements, media trust, and risk perception. Data Analysed were participants' media consumption patterns, Risk perceptions in different media sources, and perceived vulnerability to COVID-19 .

The findings indicate that traditional news media had a stronger influence on COVID-19 risk perception than social media. Teachers who frequently consumed traditional media exhibited a more stable and science-driven understanding of COVID-19 risks, whereas social media exposure was associated with fluctuating perceptions and misinformation. A strong correlation was observed between trust in traditional news and higher risk perception, while social media engagement led to mixed responses, including increased anxiety and pandemic fatigue. The study also highlights that cross-referencing multiple media sources contributed to a more balanced risk assessment among teachers.

This research underscores the need for enhanced media literacy among educators to help them critically evaluate information during public health crises. Policymakers and educational institutions should focus on promoting credible health communication strategies to ensure informed decision-making among educators and the public..

Keywords: COVID-19, Risk Perception, Media Influence, Social Media ,Traditional Media, College Teachers, Public Health Communication