

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

A Cross-Sectional Study on Impact of Social Networking Platform on Health Seeking Behaviour among Urban Slum Dwellers in North Chennai

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ABSTRACT

Background: Major social networking platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, have become popular means through which people share health-related information. The authenticity of these messages was often left unchecked. **Aim:** To estimate the prevalence of social networking platform usage and to access the impact caused by social networking platform on health seeking behavior.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey was done among people who were using social networking platform (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter) residing at Naravarikuppam between September 2019- November 2019 were included. A pretested questionnaire was designed to assess the type of social media platforms people used and whether information received on these platforms influenced their health care decisions.

Results: We observed 30% of the study population are using social media and 28.7% are using whatsapp, 18.7% are using facebook, 2% are using twitter. Among the study population who are using social media 88.9% are receiving health related message through whatsapp and 48.9% are receiving through facebook. There is no much impact of social media on health seeking behaviour.

Conclusion: Newer technologies continue to evolve rapidly, we must be equipped to face the challenges it brings with it. People should be educated to review all health related message skeptically as the interpretation of message on social media may be difficult, confusing and may not be fully comprehended.

Keywords: Social media, health related information, health seeking behaviour

INTRODUCTION

With the development of Information and Communication technology over the past few years, Online health information seeking behaviour (HISB) has become a global trend.^[1] There has been a continuous increase in online health information seeking activities lately and major social networking platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, have become popular means through which people share health-related information, irrespective of whether messages disseminated through these channels are authentic.^[1,2] Health related information shared online

through social networking platforms includes “anything regarding the symptoms, diagnoses, and treatments of different diseases or simply general information about weight loss, healthy diets or wellness tips”^[3].

Though Online health information seeking behaviour is thought to have a positive influence on health as quoted by some researchers as it may help them to adhere with their treatment.^[2,4]

While the information they seek through online may vary from one person to another and so the health information that may be shared through social networking platforms.^[5]

In Present world, where most of the people are using social networking platform due to the advancement in information and communication technologies, while the usage of social networking platforms still low among rural when compared to urban people ,information on urban slum dwellers is not adequate. In the preview of the same and that there may exist some significant relation between usage of social networking platform and Health seeking behaviour, we aim to estimate the prevalence of social networking platform usage among people residing at urban slum in North Chennai and also its impact on their Health Seeking Behaviour.

Objective

To estimate the prevalence of Social Networking Platform usage among Urban Slum Dwellers and access the impact caused by Social Networking Platform on Health seeking Behaviour of Urban Slum Dwellers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design: Community Based Cross Sectional Study

Setting: Persons Above 18 Yrs. Of Age Residing at North Chennai.

Study Period: 3 Months (September 2019- November 2019)

Sample Size: Based on the Prevalance (p-42.6%) from the study by Rahila Iftikhar et al., relative precicion of 20%.Final required Sample was 129,rounded off to 150

Sampling Method Person above 18 yrs residing at North Chennai by Systematic Random Sampling

Inclusion Criteria

- Person above 18 yrs. of age residing at North Chennai.
- Persons who are willing to participate in the study.

Exclusion

- Persons who were not present in the house during 2 consecutive visits.

Study Tool and Data Collection: Pre-tested Semi Structured Questionnaire was used.

Ethical Consideration

The Study was approved by Institutional Ethical Committee. Informed Consent were obtained from each Study Participant.

Statistical Analysis

Data collected were entered in Microsoft Excel computer program and analysed using SPSS Software version16. Mean, Standard Deviation were used for continuous variable and frequency distribution used for categorical variable. Chi-Square test used for association. p value of less than 0.05 were considered stastically significant.

Operational Definitions

1.Social Networking involves using online social media platforms to connect with new and existing friends, family, colleagues, and businesses. Individuals can use social networking to announce and discuss their interests and concerns with others who may support or interact with them. Here only Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter were considered for the study.^[6]

2.Health or care seeking behaviour has been defined as any action undertaken by individuals who perceive themselves to have a health problem or to be ill for the purpose of finding an appropriate remedy.^[7]

RESULT

In our study on “Impact of Social Networking platform on Health Seeking Behaviour among Urban Slum Dwellers” , mean age of the study participants was 45.8±14.4 years. Proportion of Male (49%) and female participants (51%) in this study was comparatively equal while the usage of social networking platform was slightly higher among males (35.6%) when compared to female (24.7%) .Social Networking platform usage was highest among Graduates(80%) and among participants belonging to Socio-economic group of Upper class.(Table 1). There was statistically significant association of social networking platform usage with age, education and socio economic category.

In this study, Social networking platform usage was only 30% (45 study participants out of 150) and of which most of them used WhatsApp(58%) followed by Facebook (38%) and twitter(7%) . Nearly 58% of the those who were using social networking platform were using more than one social networking platform(Figure 1,2 &3).

Health related messages or information were mostly received by WhatsApp(64%) followed by Facebook(36%) among those who were using social networking platform. 48% of those who were using social networking platform said that they would not take decisions based on social networking platform while 4% of social networking platform users had said that they had started or stopped treatment based on health related messages or information received on these platforms. Around 28% of these platform users have mentioned that they would verify the credibility of the information received on social networking platform mainly through google (60%) (Figure 4,5,6,7,8).

VARIABLE		SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORM (PRESENT) N=45	SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORM (ABSENT) N=105	CHI-SQUARE TEST	p Value
AGE (45.8±14.4)	18-29 Years	18(81.8)	4(18.2)	45.450	0.000
	30-39 Years	13(44.8)	16(55.2)		
	40-49 Years	8(10.5)	27(77.1)		
	50-59 Years	4(11.8)	30(88.2)		
	>60 Years	2(6.6)	28(93.3)		
GENDER	FEMALE	19(24.7)	58(75.3)	2.136	0.100
	MALE	26(35.6)	47(64.4)		
EDUCATION	1 ST TO 5 TH STD	3(6.8)	41(93.1)	51.7	0.000
	6 TH TO 10 TH	12(20.3)	47(79.7)		
	11 TH TO 12 TH	6(35.3)	11(64.7)		
	GRADUATE	24(80)	6(20)		
SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS	UPPER-CLASS	14(42.4)	19(57.6)	14.74	0.005
	UPPER-MIDDLE	26(38.8)	41(61.2)		
	MIDDLE-CLASS	5(10)	45(90)		

Table1: Socio-Demographic Predictors of Social Networking Platform Usage among Study Population

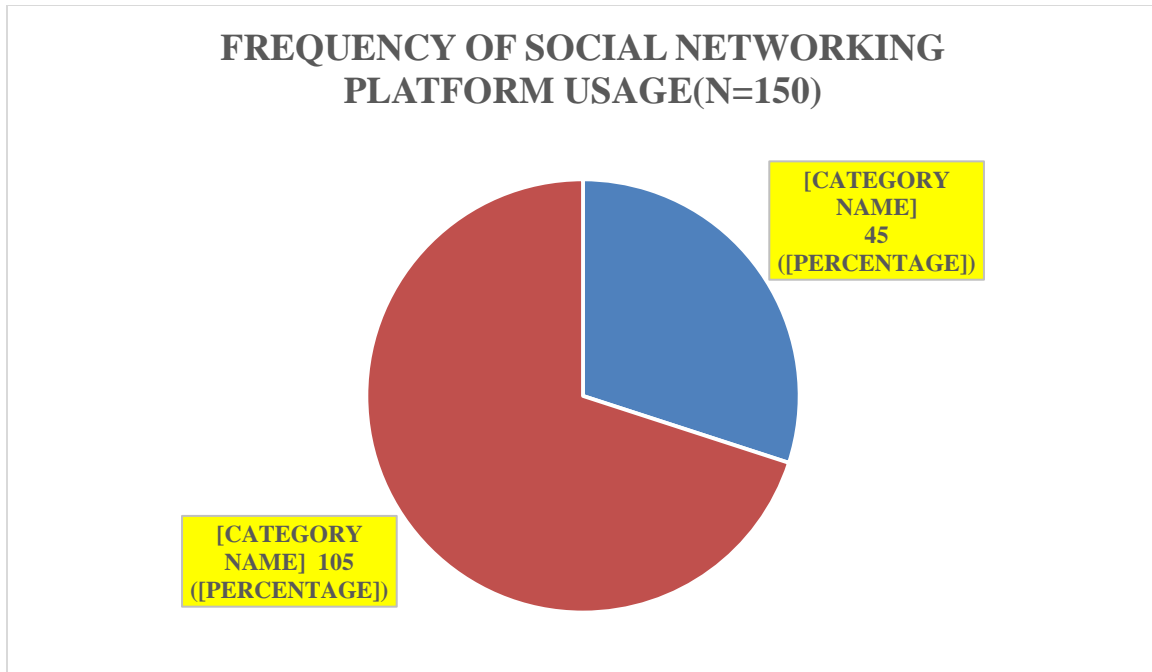


Figure1: Prevalence of social networking platform usage among study population(N=150)

Among the study participants only 45(30%) were using the social networking platform

Table 2: Usage of Social networking platforms and its implication on their health (N=45)

Variables	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Social networking platforms		
Whatsapp	26	58
Facebook	17	38
Twitter	2	4
No of Social Networking platform used		
Any 1	23	51
Any 2	19	42
All	3	7
Health related messages received through platform		
Whatsapp	29	64
Facebook	16	36
Does it influence on the decision making on the health care of the individual		
Never	22	49
Sometimes	13	29
Always	2	4
Not reported	8	18

Impact of social platform on starting /stopping a treatment without physicians knowledge		
Yes	2	4.4
No	43	95.6
Credibility check by people on the health related messages received on these platforms		
Always		
Sometimes	2	4
Never	8	18
	35	78
Source of verification used to check the health related messages		
Google	27	60
Others	18	40

Whatsapp was the most commonly used platform 26(58%).Among the study participants (23) 51% are using any one of this platform. Health related messages are received through Whatapp 29(64%).Among majority of the participants it doesn't have an impact on their decision making related to health 22(49%).Only 2(4.4%) of the study participants stated that they stopped the treatment without the physicians knowledge due to the social networking impact. Most of our study participants are not checking the credibility of the health related messages 35(78%).The source of checking the info was Google for most of the study participants 27(60%).

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Social networking platform usage were more among younger generation, male population, graduates and those belonging to upper class which was similar to the other studies done previously.^[1,5]The Prevalence of Social networking platform usage is more among younger age groups(18-35) and among the upper socio-economic status and all almost everyone is receiving health related message on social networking platform.

The study population is being influenced by WhatsApp than other social networking platform but the impact of social networking platform on health seeking behaviour is comparatively less.

As the technology continue to evolve, we must equipped to face the challenges it brings with it. People should be educated to review all health related message sceptically as the interpretation of message on social networking platform may be difficult, confusing and may not be fully comprehended

Limitation

As this is preliminary study with small study size and the study was done before pandemic with increased usage during pandemic lockdown, for further conclusion study should be done in depth with large sample size.

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Conflict Of Interest: Nil

Authors Contribution: All the authors contributed to the study.

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