

BOOK CHAPTER | Pandemic-Induced Anti-Social Traits

Online Community Feedbacks and User Behaviours in a Pandemic Era

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Abstract

The covid-19 pandemic enforced several lifestyle modifications including discouraging physical human interactions thereby forcing many into social media usage (Srivastava et al., 2021). Hence, people embraced social media for several varying reasons such as keeping abreast of happenings, relieving idleness and boredom, getting safety tips and directives, keeping in touch with loved ones, preserving their businesses, and for overcoming the fear of being disconnected with the outside world. This chapter examined the feedbacks from online activities during the COVID-19 Era and posited that the pandemic greatly influenced deviant and other behaviours during lockdowns.

Keywords: COVID-19, behaviours, Health, pandemic, Community, Infodemic

Introduction

While the internet remains a major tool that emerged for the purpose of information dissemination, the media determines what information is made available and influences people's impressions about issues (Savrum & Leon, 2015); and so many also take advantage of its anonymity to spread false and unverified information (Obi-Ani et al., 2020) instilling fear on the vulnerable population (Nigeria Center for Disease Control [NCDC], 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Studies have found that several anti-social traits have direct correlation with lower compliance to covid-19 restrictions (Miguel et al., 2021). Similarly, compliance with covid-19 mitigation practices and behaviours have been found to vary greatly among people and have also been linked to personality traits (Carvalho et al., 2020; Miguel et al., 2021; O'Connell et al., 2021; Oosterhoff & Palmer, 2020).

Earlier studies by Ross et al. (2009) and Zywica & Danowski (2008) showed these three personality dimensions: extraversion, neuroticism and openness to experience, to be consistently related with social media use, with the strongest being openness to experience and extraversion ($r=0.35$, $p<0.001$).

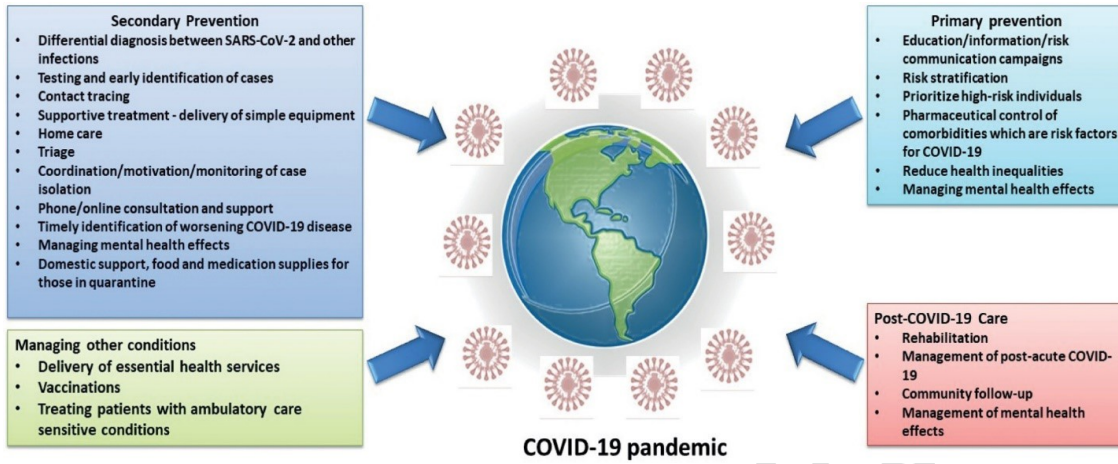


Fig 1: Online Community During Covid Lockdowns
 Source: Konstantinos et al 2021

Also, according to Correa et al. (2014), emotional stability and social media use were found to be inversely related. This implied that those who were more emotionally stable had lesser tendency of relying on and/or swallowing social media information ‘hook-line-and-sinker’, while those who were more neurotic relied more on social media. In a study by Obi-Ani et al. (2020) which investigated the pros and cons of social media towards curtailing the spread of corona virus in Nigeria, it was found that religious practices significantly influenced spread of false preventive measures of Covid-19 in Nigeria ($p=0.031$). This study also recommended the need to properly regulate the use of social media using newer technologies as these technologies were also found to significantly influence the spread of information, whether true or false ($p=0.04$).

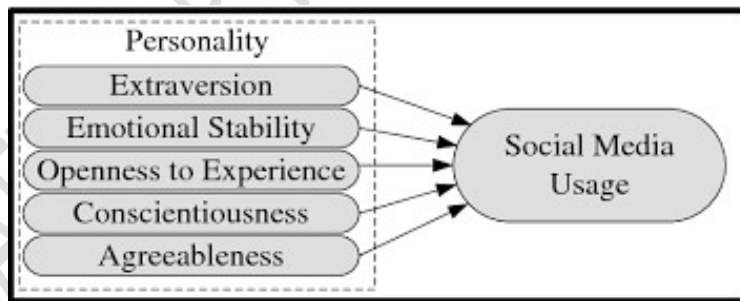


Fig 2: Social Media and Emotional Stability
 Source: Ricardo (2016)

COVID-19 Hesitancy Induced Antisocial Behaviours

Some other antisocial behaviours embraced by the online community due to the covid-19 hesitancy included resistance to medical breakthrough (covid-19 vaccines), resistance to new technology (the 5G wireless technology), defamation of character by accusing prominent individuals, religious leaders, and the government of conspiracy and malicious intentions (Correa et al., 2014; Obi-Ani et al., 2020), and also spread of false information which instigated violence among the populace, as seen in the vandalism of government property, looting of goods in stores and warehouses, and robbery witnessed during the covid-19 lockdown period.

In summary, as much as the online community was very efficient in trying to curtail the spread of covid-19, it has remained a fertile ground for fueling discord amongst the populace.

Key Terms and Definitions (Correa et al., 2014)

1. **Emotional Stability:** Personality trait associated with varying levels of anxiety, instability, and excitability; the reverse of which is called **Neuroticism**.
2. **Extraversion:** Personality trait indicating the tendency to be active, assertive, lively and sociable; the reverse of which is called **Introversion** –indicating the tendency to be shy and passive.
3. **Openness to New Experiences:** Personality trait associated with different levels of open-mindedness, creativity, curiosity, imagination and complexity.
4. **Personality:** Stable psychological feature which sums up a wide range of an individual's attitudes and behaviours.
5. **Social Media Use:** Consumption of digital media or internet for purposes like chatting, instant messaging, and social networking, rather than for informational purposes.

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