

TITLE

COVID-19 Snapshot MOnitoring (COSMO): Monitoring knowledge, risk perceptions, preventive behaviours, and public trust in the current coronavirus outbreak in Portugal

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ABSTRACT

In the current pandemic outbreak of the newly coronavirus, it is of extreme importance monitoring the public perceptions of risk, protective behaviours, trust, knowledge and the recognition between truth and false information as well as to enable health authorities, the media, and health organizations to implement adequate and dynamic responses (WHO,2020).

The study is cross-sectional and the main objectives are i) to participate in an international multicenter study (COSMO) with the European Portuguese population ii) to analyze the relations between sociodemographic variables, risk perceptions, knowledge and preventive behaviors, and iii) to assess how misinformation and correct information are perceived iv) to identify if protective behaviours are misunderstanding v) to inform results to health authorities and media.

Problem

In a pandemic crisis like the one we currently live in, it is of utmost importance to emphasize how information is transmitted to the public considering that this is the main vehicle for perceiving, adopting appropriate behaviors and informed choices.

Research questions

The main research questions is as follow: which is the current status of knowledge, risk perceptions, adoption of preventive behaviors, the recognition between truth and false information and trust in authorities by the Portuguese population?

Study design

The study has a cross-sectional design.

The study has two main parts:

- i) Translation and linguistic adaptation of the COSMO European questionnaire into European Portuguese (completed)
- ii) Data collection with 15 minutes online questionnaire using Qualtrics (1st round completed)

Sample

The sample is by convenience recruited via social networks and a minimum of n=500 was initially established. No payment will be done to participants. Only completed data sets will be considered in the analysis.

Data collection started in December 2020.

Literature Review

Risk communication is a critical component in emergency planning for public response. It has been recognized that pandemic risk communication is a critical and strong component for an adequate planning response to public health emergencies (Ow Yong et al., 2020). This perceived risk influences protective behaviors (Chou et al., 2020). Risk perception relates to actual or intended health-protective behavior that can reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission rates (Niepel et al., 2020). Limited attention has also been done to how emergency risk communication is being performed by the media and health authorities. Exaggeration of risks often happens on social media, where especially highly emotional experiences can be socially spread through a conscious and unconscious pathway (Wheaton et al., 2020).

Partners and Aims

The following partners are responsible for this study:

- Instituto Universitário de Lisboa – ISCTE-IUL;
- Universidade Católica Portuguesa

Ethical Standards

The current study uses a monitoring questionnaire without any experimental conditions. The research contains insignificant risks as there is no other than minimal inconvenience during participation.

Ethical approvals were requested to both Universities boards involved. The study follows all required data protection standard and data is collected anonymously. Participants were volunteers, and no payment will be done. Informed consent is requested before starting the questionnaire

Variables measured

Variables will be assessed following the order as described below.

Demographics (Age, Gender, residence, education, profession)

- Awareness of and knowledge about the coronavirus
- Source of first information regarding the coronavirus
- Feeling of preparedness to avoid infection with the coronavirus
- Perceived self-efficacy
- Knowledge about effective preventive measures to avoid infection with the coronavirus
- Implementation of preventive measures to avoid infection with the coronavirus
- Risk perceptions regarding the disease (probability, susceptibility, severity)
- Affective measures (feeling of closeness, novelty, threat, fear, and worry regarding the disease)
- Perception of the outbreak as a media hype
- Trust regarding sources of information
- Sources of information used
- Trust in health organizations
- The primary source of official health information
- Perceptions of adequate policies to control the outbreak
- Panic buying behaviour

- Discriminatory behaviours
- Rumours regarding the coronavirus (qualitative data, open text fields)
- Adaptive questions: If certain communication measures have been taken
- Vaccine

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