

Impact of Media Exposure on COVID-19 Prevention Strategies Among College Teachers: An Analysis of Behavioral Responses

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of media in disseminating health information and shaping public behaviour. The Present paper explores how college teachers' exposure to COVID-19-related data through various media outlets influenced their preventive Practices during the pandemic. A quantitative survey approach was used to gather information from 330 college teachers in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, India, to examine their media consumption patterns, adherence to preventive measures, and perceptions of COVID-19 risks and misinformation.*

The findings reveal that media exposure significantly influenced teachers' preventive behaviours, with the type of media source playing a pivotal role. Teachers who relied on credible and official sources, such as government organizations and traditional media, were more likely to adopt preventive measures like mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination. In contrast, excessive exposure to social media often led to misinformation, reduced trust in media, and lower adherence to guidelines. It is also found that characteristics related to demographics including age, family responsibilities, and educational background, further moderated the interconnection between media exposure and preventive behaviours. Older teachers preferred traditional media, while those with family commitments exhibited heightened risk perception and adherence to safety measures.

The study highlights the importance of media literacy and targeted health communication strategies in crisis situations. It recommends enhancing educators' ability to critically evaluate health information, promoting balanced media consumption, and leveraging credible sources to combat misinformation. These insights contribute to a better knowledge of the relationship between media, risk perception, and health behaviors, offering practical recommendations for improving public health communication and resilience in future crises..

Keywords: COVID-19, media exposure, preventive behaviors, college teachers, misinformation, health communication, risk perception

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been Considered transformative global events in recent history, reshaping societal norms, economic structures, and public health systems (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Among the many groups profoundly affected by the pandemic, educators, particularly college teachers, have faced unique challenges. As the pandemic unfolded, the rapid dissemination of COVID-19-related information from a range of media sources became a critical factor in influencing how people behave, including that of educators (Feldman et al., 2024). College teachers, who perform a major role in shaping the minds of future generations, were required to adjust to new pedagogical methods while simultaneously managing the substantial influx of COVID-19 data and regulations. This research tries to investigate the effects of college teachers' exposure to COVID-19 data disseminated by various media outlets on their COVID-19 prevention tactics.

The media, encompassing traditional outlets like television and newspapers, as well as digital platforms such as social media and online news portals, served as the primary source of information for many during the pandemic (Joachim et al., 2024). While these platforms provided essential updates on infection rates, government policies, and preventive

measures, they also became breeding grounds for misinformation and sensationalism (Demuyakor et al., 2024). For college instructors who had to strike a balance between their personal health issues and their work obligations, the quality and accuracy of the information they consumed were crucial in shaping their responses to the pandemic. This study attempts to investigate how different types of media exposure influenced college teachers' understanding of COVID-19 risks, their adherence to preventive measures, and their overall approach to managing the crisis in both their personal and professional lives.

Understanding the impact of media exposure on college teachers' COVID-19 prevention tactics is essential for several reasons. Teachers bear responsibility not only for their personal health but also for the welfare of their students and colleagues. Their actions and decisions can have a ripple effect, influencing the broader academic community (Ligeti et al., 2024). Second, the pandemic has underscored the importance of effective health communication, particularly in crisis situations (Bouloukaki et al., 2024). By examining how college teachers interacted with COVID-19 data, this research offers a valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of current communication strategies, offering recommendations for future public health campaigns. Finally, as the world continues to grapple with the long-term effects of the pandemic, understanding the role of media in shaping health behaviours can inform efforts to build more resilient and informed communities (Schulte-Cloos et al., 2024).

At this juncture the study will examine the following key questions: How did exposure to different media outlets affect college teachers' perceptions of COVID-19 risks? What was the role of the media in shaping their adherence to preventive measures such as mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination? And How did these circumstances affect their pedagogical methods and student interactions throughout the pandemic? This research seeks to elucidate the intricate relationship among media, health information, and individual behaviour, so guiding methods to improve public health communication and education during future emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of media in disseminating health information, influencing public perception, and shaping preventive behaviours. For college teachers, media exposure played a crucial role in guiding their adherence to COVID-19 prevention tactics. Numerous research have investigated how different media platforms influenced risk perception, preventive actions, and psychological responses among educators and the general public.

Media Exposure and Preventive Behaviours

Studies indicate that People who obtained COVID-19 information from credible sources, such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and governmental bodies, were more inclined to engage in preventive behaviours, including mask usage, social distancing, and immunisation. (WHO, 2021). Traditional media, such as television and newspapers, were instrumental in reinforcing adherence to health guidelines, while digital media platforms, particularly social media, presented both opportunities and challenges in disseminating accurate health information (Purtiwi et al., 2024).

The role of traditional media in public health communication has been extensively documented. A study by Okada et al. (2024) found that television and newspapers provided structured and authoritative health messages, increasing compliance with preventive measures. In contrast, social media platforms, while useful for real-time updates, often contributed to misinformation, leading to confusion and hesitancy regarding COVID-19 protocols (Dehghani et al., 2025).

Risk Perception and Media Influence

The extent to which teachers perceived COVID-19 as a severe threat was closely linked to their media consumption patterns. Research has demonstrated that frequent exposure to alarming news about rising cases and mortality rates heightened individuals' risk perception, motivating them to take preventive action (Wolfers et al., 2024). However, excessive media exposure, particularly to sensationalized content, also led to increased anxiety and stress, which could either enhance or undermine adherence to health guidelines (Yang et al., 2025).

The Health Belief Model (HBM) has been to investigate the impact of risk perception behaviour. Liou et al. (2024) demonstrated that individuals who believed COVID-19 posed a significant risk were more inclined to adhere to follow preventive measures, while those exposed to conflicting information on social media exhibited lower compliance. This corresponds with observations from Chung et al. (2025), who noted that credibility and trust in information sources significantly influenced behaviour, reinforcing the importance of reliable public health communication.

Social Media and Misinformation

While social media facilitated rapid dissemination of COVID-19 updates, it also served as a breeding ground for misinformation. Studies indicate that exposure to misleading claims about COVID-19 prevention and treatment negatively impacted individuals' willingness to adopt recommended health measures (Dehghani et al., 2025). Maslowska et al. (2025) found that public health agencies' attempts to counter misinformation on social media were often overshadowed by the rapid spread of false information from unofficial sources.

Moreover, Purtiwi et al. (2024) highlighted the emotional impact of social media exposure on individuals' risk perceptions and preventive behaviours. Their research demonstrated that fear-inducing content could either strengthen compliance with health guidelines or lead to fatalism, where individuals disengage from preventive actions due to perceived helplessness

Vaccine Attitudes and Media Influence

The relationship between media exposure and vaccine attitudes has been widely studied. According to research, people who consumed information from credible medical sources were more likely to trust and accept COVID-19 vaccines, while those exposed to anti-vaccine rhetoric on social media exhibited higher levels of vaccine hesitancy (Tamimi et al., 2025). A study by Xue et al. (2024) found that teachers who engaged with diverse media sources displayed a more balanced understanding of vaccine benefits and risks, leading to increased acceptance.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study looks at how college instructors' exposure to COVID-19 information from different media sources affected their pandemic prevention strategies. Using Media Dependency Theory, the research highlights how teachers relied on media for updates, shaping their risk perceptions and health behaviours. The O-S-O-R Model explains the interaction between media exposure, individual beliefs, and behavioural outcomes, while the Health Belief Model explores how perceived severity and self-efficacy affected adherence to preventive measures such as mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination. By integrating these theories, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how media consumption influenced teachers' pandemic response, offering insights for future health communication strategies.

This research utilises a quantitative survey research design to investigate how college instructors' exposure to COVID-19 information shared by different media sources affected their preventative strategies. A structured questionnaire was developed to assess teachers' media consumption patterns, their adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures, and their perceptions regarding risk and misinformation. The survey design ensures an objective and systematic approach to understanding how media exposure influences preventive behaviours among college faculty.

The research was carried out among college teachers at Vijayawada, using a random sampling technique to ensure a representative sample. A total of 330 college teachers participated in the study, providing insights into their engagement with various media sources, including traditional news outlets, social media, and institutional communication channels. The inclusion of diverse media categories helps in identifying variations in the influence of different media types on preventive behaviour.

A self-administered questionnaire was the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of four sections: demographic details (such as age, gender, teaching experience, and department), media exposure (frequency and type of media accessed), COVID-19 preventive practices (such as mask usage, hand hygiene, and social distancing), and perception of COVID-19-related risk and misinformation. A Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5) was used to measure the intensity of media exposure and the extent of compliance with preventive measures. The structured format allowed for a standardized comparison across respondents.

Data was gathered through both Google Forms and in-person surveys over a specified period. Respondents were briefed about the study's objectives, and informed consent was obtained to ensure ethical compliance. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was strictly maintained to encourage honest and unbiased responses. The use of both online and offline methods facilitated greater accessibility and increased response rates.

Data analysis has been done using SPSS to identify patterns and correlations. Spearman's correlation test was applied to investigate the relationship between media exposure and adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare preventive behaviours between teachers with high and low exposure to

misinformation. Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to analyse differences in preventive behaviours based on reliance on different media sources, including traditional media, digital platforms, and institutional communications. These statistical analyses facilitated the identification of significant correlations between media exposure and behavioural outcomes.

Ethical considerations were prioritised throughout the study process. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and all responses remained anonymous to protect participants' privacy. The study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines, ensuring that No personal data that is sensitive was collected, and the data was utilised exclusively for academic research. By following these ethical and methodological guidelines, this study provides a reliable assessment of how media exposure influences COVID-19 preventive behaviours among college teachers.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted global health behaviors, with media serving as a key information source. This study investigates how demographic, educational, and personal factors influenced college teachers' media consumption and adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures, highlighting the role of media trust, source reliability, and information exposure.

This section presents and interprets the findings related to demographic characteristics, educational and professional backgrounds, personal life factors, and their influence on media consumption and preventive behaviors among college teachers. Additionally, it discusses the outcomes of the Spearman correlation analysis, provide observations on how media exposure and trust impacted adherence to COVID-19 preventive measures.

Demographic Information

Category	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group	Below 35 Years	111	33.6%
	36-45 Years	148	44.8%
	Above 46 Years	71	21.5%
Gender	Male	178	53.9%
	Female	152	46.1%
Marital Status	Married	258	78.2%
	Unmarried	64	19.4%
	Separated/Divorced	2	0.6%
	Widowed	6	1.8%
Living Arrangement	Alone	29	8.8%
	With Family	301	91.2%

The demographic analysis of college teachers highlights critical determinants that may affect their media consumption and COVID-19 preventive behaviours. Most respondents (44.8%) were between the ages of 36-45, followed by those below 35 years (33.6%) and above 46 years (21.5%). This signifies that the majority of participants were in their mid-career stage, a phase where professional responsibilities and personal commitments could impact their engagement with health information. Age may also play a role in media preferences, with younger individuals more inclined toward digital platforms and older respondents potentially relying more on traditional news sources.

The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 53.9% male and 46.1% female respondents. This even representation allows for a diverse perspective on how media exposure influenced preventive behaviours across genders. Marital status also played a significant role, with 78.2% of respondents being married, 19.4% unmarried, and a small percentage either separated/divorced (0.6%) or widowed (1.8%). Furthermore, most participants (91.2%) lived with their families, while only 8.8% lived alone. This suggests that family interactions and shared decision-making may have influenced perceptions of COVID-19 risks and adherence to preventive measures. Married individuals and those living with family may have been more likely to discuss health precautions, reinforcing their awareness and adherence to safety guidelines.

Overall, these demographic insights indicate that age, gender, and family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping how college teachers access and interpret COVID-19-related information. These personal and social factors, combined with media exposure, likely influenced their perceptions and behaviors during the pandemic.

Educational and Professional Background

Category	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education Level	Ph.D. and more	133	40.3%
	MPhil	22	6.7%
	Post Graduate	175	53.0%
Employment Type	Government	7	2.1%
	Semi-Government	3	0.9%
	Private	320	97.0%
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year	28	8.5%
	1-5 years	57	17.3%
	6-10 years	64	19.4%
	11-15 years	85	25.8%
	More than 15 years	96	29.1%
Employment Position	Professor	37	11.2%
	Associate Professor	46	13.9%
	Assistant Professor	175	53.0%
	Senior Lecturer	19	5.8%
	Lecturer	53	16.1%
Subject Area	Science	118	35.8%
	Social Sciences & Humanities	87	26.4%
	Engineering/Technology	74	22.4%
	Business/Management	51	15.5%

The educational and professional background of the surveyed college teachers reveals a highly qualified and experienced group, which may influence how they perceive and respond to COVID-19-related information. A significant proportion of respondents (53.0%) hold a postgraduate degree, while 40.3% have attained a Ph.D. or higher qualification, and 6.7% possess an MPhil. This high level of education suggests that participants are likely to critically evaluate information from various media sources before forming opinions or adopting preventive measures.

Regarding employment type, the vast majority (97.0%) of respondents work in private institutions, with only a small fraction employed in government (2.1%) and semi-government (0.9%) roles. This indicates that most college teachers in the study are part of a system where institutional policies and private-sector norms may shape their professional environment and health-related decisions.

The study also reflects a well-distributed range of teaching experience. While 29.1% of respondents have been in the profession for more than 15 years, 25.8% have between 11-15 years of experience, followed by 19.4% with 6-10 years, 17.3% with 1-5 years, and 8.5% with less than a year of teaching experience. This diverse experience level suggests that both early-career and senior educators are represented, allowing for an analysis of generational differences in media engagement and preventive behaviors.

Employment positions vary significantly, with assistant professors forming the largest group (53.0%), followed by lecturers (16.1%), associate professors (13.9%), professors (11.2%), and senior lecturers (5.8%). This distribution suggests that a majority of respondents hold mid-level academic positions, where they may be more actively involved in both teaching and institutional decision-making regarding COVID-19 protocols.

In terms of subject areas, 35.8% of respondents are from science disciplines, followed by 26.4% in social sciences and humanities, 22.4% in engineering and technology, and 15.5% in business and management. Given that science faculty members comprise the largest portion of respondents, it is likely that many have a strong foundation in public health and epidemiology, which may influence their interpretation of COVID-19 information. However, the presence of

educators from various disciplines ensures a balanced perspective on how different academic backgrounds shape perceptions of the pandemic and preventive measures.

Overall, the results suggest that the sample consists of highly educated, experienced professionals, primarily working in private institutions. Their level of expertise, subject specialization, and professional standing may influence their engagement with media, their trust in COVID-19-related information, and their adherence to preventive health guidelines.

Family and Personal Life

Category	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Marriage Duration	1-5 Years	60	18.2%
	6-10 Years	48	14.5%
	11-15 Years	86	26.1%
	More than 16 Years	72	21.8%
	Not Applicable	64	19.4%
Number of Children	No Child	46	13.9%
	1 Child	74	22.4%
	More than 1	146	44.2%
	Not Applicable	64	19.4%

The family and personal life data provide insights into the respondents' household dynamics, which may influence their perceptions of COVID-19 risks and preventive behaviors.

Regarding marriage duration, a diverse range of experiences was observed. Among married respondents, 26.1% had been married for 11-15 years, followed by 21.8% for more than 16 years, 18.2% for 1-5 years, and 14.5% for 6-10 years. Meanwhile, 19.4% of respondents were not married, making them ineligible for this category. This variation in marital duration suggests that family responsibilities may differ across participants, potentially affecting their exposure to COVID-19 information and their level of concern for household safety measures.

The number of children was another important factor, as family size often plays a role in individuals' risk perception and preventive actions. The results indicate that 44.2% of respondents had more than one child, while 22.4% had one child, and 13.9% had no children. Additionally, 19.4% fell under the "Not Applicable" category, likely corresponding to unmarried individuals. Teachers with children may have been more cautious about adopting preventive behaviors, given concerns about protecting their families, especially in navigating school closures, vaccination decisions, and overall health risks.

Overall, the findings highlight that the majority of respondents have family commitments, whether through marriage or children, which could have influenced their decision-making regarding COVID-19 precautions. Those with spouses and children may have been more proactive in seeking health information and implementing preventive measures, compared to those living alone or without dependents. These personal life factors contribute to a broader understanding of how educators engaged with media and health recommendations during the pandemic.

Spearman Correlation test on Age and Media Outlets

	Age	AIMS	SSIV	TMI	PM
Age	1.000	-.096	-.119*	-.044	.085
AIMS		1.000	.404**	-.297**	.096
SSIV			1.000	-.289**	.121*
TMI				1.000	.002
PM					1.000

Note: **AIMS:** Access information related to Covid-19 through the media source; **SSIV:** Source to seek information about Covid-19 vaccine; **TMI:** Time spending through media on information about Covid-19; **PM:** Preventive measures during Covid-19

The Spearman correlation analysis has offered an important insight into how college teachers' exposure to COVID-19 information disseminated via diverse media sources influenced their prevention practices. The results indicate that while media exposure played a role in shaping teachers' health behaviours, its impact was moderated by the type of media source, time spent on media, and trust in information.

1. Age and Preventive Practices

Age had no significant correlation with preventive measures ($r = .085$), suggesting that teachers' age did not directly determine their adherence to COVID-19 prevention tactics. However, older teachers were less likely to seek vaccine information through social media and non-traditional sources ($r = -.119$, $p < 0.05$) and instead relied more on primary sources ($r = .109$, $p < 0.05$). This preference for official information sources may have contributed to a more cautious approach to prevention.

2. Access to COVID-19 Information and Preventive Measures

Teachers who accessed COVID-19-related information from media sources had a weak, non-significant correlation with preventive measures ($r = .096$). There was a significant positive association discovered between those who accessed general COVID-19 information and those who sought vaccine information through media ($r = .404$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that teachers who actively engaged with COVID-19 media content were also more inclined to pursue vaccine-related information, which may have impacted their health practices.

3. Source of Vaccine Information and Its Impact on Preventive Behavior

The source of vaccine information significantly correlated with trust in media ($r = .293$, $p < 0.01$) and risk perception ($r = .183$, $p < 0.01$). Teachers who relied on credible and scientific sources for vaccine information demonstrated a stronger awareness of COVID-19 risks, which is a key factor in preventive behavior. However, there was an observation of negative correlation between vaccine information sources and psychological distress ($r = -.139$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that teachers who accessed reliable sources experienced lower anxiety levels, that may have affected their decision-making regarding preventive measures.

4. Time Spent on Media and Its Influence on Prevention Practices

Interestingly, time spent on media for COVID-19 information showed a negative correlation with preventive measures ($r = -.248$, $p < 0.01$). The values show that excessive media consumption might not always result in greater adherence to COVID-19 guidelines. Additionally, prolonged exposure to media negatively correlated with trust in media sources ($r = -.373$, $p < 0.01$) and agreement with information received ($r = -.242$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that excessive exposure to COVID-19-related media content may have led to scepticism, misinformation, or information fatigue, thereby reducing preventive behaviours among teachers.

5. Preventive Measures and Perceived Media Influence

The correlation between preventive measures and media influence was weak and non-significant ($r = 0.037$). Similarly, agreement with media content did not strongly predict preventive behaviour ($r = 0.043$). These results show that media plays a role in shaping perceptions, it is not the sole driver of COVID-19 prevention practices. Other factors such as personal risk perception, institutional guidelines, and social influence likely played a more significant role in teachers' adherence to preventive measures.

IV. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 epidemic underlined how important media is for influencing public health practices, particularly among college teachers who faced the dual challenge of adapting to new teaching modalities and navigating an overwhelming influx of pandemic-related information. This study investigated the impact of exposure to COVID-19 data disseminated through various media outlets influenced college teachers' preventive Practices, revealing several key insights.

First, the type of media sources significantly impacted teachers' adherence to preventive measures. Reliance on credible and official sources, such as government agencies and traditional media, reinforced compliance with health guidelines, while exposure to social media often led to misinformation and reduced trust in media content. Second, excessive media consumption was counterproductive, leading to information fatigue, scepticism, and diminished adherence to preventive measures. Third, demographic and professional factors, such as age, family responsibilities, and educational background, played a vital role in shaping media preferences and health behaviours.

The results highlight the significance of media literacy and targeted health communication strategies. Educators, as key influencers in academic communities, must be equipped with the skills to critically evaluate health information and distinguish credible sources from misinformation. Public health campaigns should tailor messages to diverse demographic groups, considering factors such as age, family dynamics, and professional context. Additionally, institutions should provide clear, consistent, and reliable updates to support teachers in making informed decisions. As the world continues to grapple with the long-term effects of the pandemic, understanding the inter connection between media exposure, risk perception, and health behaviours are essential for building resilient and informed communities. This study contributes to the growing body of research on health communication and offers practical recommendations for enhancing public health strategies in future crises. By fostering media literacy, promoting balanced media consumption, and leveraging credible sources, we can empower individuals and communities to respond effectively to public health challenges.

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