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ASSESSING THE PUBLIC ON PREPAREDNESS, AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN SRI LANKA

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BACKGROUND

Coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) was declared a “pandemic” by the World Health Organization (WHO) in early March 2020. Globally, extraordinary measures are being taken to combat the formidable spread of the ongoing outbreak. Sri Lanka followed a unique prevention strategy. The new regulations caused major disruptions of lives and income of the Sri Lankan people. Since there is, lack of studies that focuses on awareness of the Sri Lankan public it is important to understand the efficacy levels and attitudes of the public to flatten the epidemic curve and eradicate the virus efficiently.

Purpose of the study:

To investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of the general population toward COVID-19 and to analyze level of awareness and preparedness to fight against COVID-19 among the public in Sri Lanka.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A questionnaire was composed and distributed through different social media platforms and the received data was analyzed using the software package (StatSoft Inc.), IBM SPSS Statistics v22.0.

RESULTS

Among 88 respondents the majority were female (54.5%) and 45.5 % were male. All of the participants had a good general idea on awareness and displayed considerable knowledge of the disease and showed good preparedness for the prevention and control of COVID 19. The survey also showed that the restrictions affected people in different ways but the average showed that it only affected slightly when it came to most of the measures. According to Spearman's, there was negative correlation between age and transition of school/ universities to distant learning. (Correla-

tion coefficient -0.426 and $p=0.000$ and being unable to travel between countries (correlation coefficient -0.412, $p=0.000$). According to Kruskal Walls analysis we found that there was a significant difference between age and how they heard about COVID 19 for the first time. ($p=0.000$) / According to Mann Whitney analysis, we found that Gender and the sources they rely on to get information had significant differences for Social media, newspapers and radio. ($p=0.002$)

DISCUSSION

The majority had a good general level of awareness, preparedness and practice toward the virus. However, according to the respondents an average knowledge was detected in various aspects such as transmission of the disease, complications, most vulnerable people, preventive measures and treatment methods. People of different educational backgrounds participated in the survey. The majority are graduates and they possessed an adequate knowledge about the infection.

CONCLUSION

The preventive measures followed by the public varies according the place of stay and their occupation. There was a difference between males and females when it comes to following different preventive measures. They were also much affected due the preventive measures in various ways individually as proven by results. Even though social media plays a major role nowadays, most Sri Lankans still rely on television to get information on COVID 19. Our findings suggest that the public contribute in an appreciable way towards eradication of the virus and they are well prepared to fight against COVID 19. Health authorities and the government have done a tremendous job educating the public. Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to invest in various COVID 19 prevention efforts, including innovative strategies based on local evidences.

Keywords:

Preventive, measures, public, awareness