

RELYING ON MEDIA COVERAGE FOR HEALTH INFORMATION DURING COVID-19: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a great impact on the world, affecting all countries and requiring the enforcement of lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus. The phenomenon has caused fear and concern among individuals. Consequently, people are spending more time on traditional media compared to social media to seek health information during the pandemic. Few studies have systematically reviewed the use and impacts of social and traditional media for health information purposes during the COVID-19 outbreak. Hence, this study examined the topic by integrating multiple research designs based on the publication standard involving the established guidelines and protocol for a review. Articles were chosen using two prominent databases, Scopus and Science Direct. The thematic analysis has yielded four major themes: a) information source, b) type of information, c) psychological impact, and d) health literacy, which are divided into eight secondary themes. The study also makes several significant contributions for practical reasons and by enhancing the body of knowledge. The results highlighted certain vital issues: the preferred media source for health information during the pandemic, information types that individuals seek, the psychological impacts of information overload from social and traditional media, and future studies should investigate the relationship between health literacy levels and health outcomes.

Keywords: COVID-19, health information, media, health literacy, systematic literature review
Introduction

Health is the most precious gift granted to all living beings. Besides monitoring their physical and mental health, people must practice a balanced diet and lead a healthy lifestyle to remain in good health (de Ridder et al., 2017). Meanwhile, sedentary behaviour and consuming an unbalanced diet characterize an unhealthy lifestyle, creating major risk factors for non-communicable diseases (Mazlan et al., 2021). Individuals are required to seek for health knowledge to become health literate. Health literacy is the ability to use health information for individual benefits, instead of simply understanding it (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Additionally, healthy literacy focuses on taking well-informed decisions by employing the knowledge obtained (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021). Health knowledge is available through various sources, including interpersonal interactions

with medical experts, health consultants, practitioners, and family members.

The advancement of information communication technology (ICT) and Internet accessibility enable individuals to find health-related information. Individuals depend on = social network sites (SNS), such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn for the health-related information. Eventually, individuals seek, comprehend, and practice health-related knowledge; thus, they would be considered health literate (Liu et al., 2020). Nonetheless, individuals should be cautious about and attentive to the health-related information they seek, as most health-related information today comes from online sources. Besides, seeking health information online has become more common, particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdowns. Individuals who have access to the internet

seek health information online. The practice can be seen among all especially adolescent.

One principal issue faced by the online community in seeking health-related information is assessing the validity and authenticity of the information obtained. People often receive rumours, fake news, or news that is not genuine. Hence, scholars have studied how people have sought health information using traditional or new media during the current pandemic. Although many studies have highlighted the trend of seeking health information, insufficient systemic reviews of existing studies have been conducted. Robinson and Lowe (2015) stated the importance of systematic reviews, whereby traditional literature reviews contain several concerns: they are rarely complete, predisposed to reviewer bias and differ in terms of quality.

Hence, this study identifies the trend in using traditional and social media and the issues arising from seeking health information during the COVID-19 outbreak. The study also enhances the literature by building a systematic literature review which chooses, categorizes, and critically evaluates previous studies to respond to the constructed questions (Dewey & Drahota, 2016). The systematic literature review involves an established and transparent process by examining the respective databases. It is a comparable process that can be duplicated and reproduced by other researchers. Besides, the systematic literature review process provides extensive explanations of the review process, the use of keywords, and article selection, so that others can reproduce or validate the analysis or study the generality.

Methods

This section examines the technique used to retrieve studies that refer to people's tendency to seek health information and knowledge. The reviewers used the established guidelines and protocol for a review. These included finding relevant databases (Scopus and Science Direct) to perform the systematic review, devising the eligibility and exclusion criteria, formulating the phases of the review process (identification, screening, eligibility), as well as extracting and analysing the data.

Table 1. Keywords used for the two databases

Database	Keywords
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("social media" OR "social network*" OR "social site*") AND ("covid 2019" OR "COVID-19" OR "corona-19" OR "n-cov" OR "novel coronavirus" OR "sars-cov") AND ("health communication" OR "health information") AND ("seeking behaviour" OR "seeking behaviour")
Science Direct	Title, abstract, keywords: social media AND COVID-19 AND health communication

2.1 The review protocol and established guidelines

The review protocols employed by scholars to complete systematic literature reviews in the health-related field include those of the Joanna Briggs Institute, the Best Evidence Medical Education (BEME) Collaboration, and the Campbell Collaboration. Meanwhile, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) can be utilised in non-health studies, in fields such as arts and humanities, engineering, computer science, and architecture (Moher et al., 2009). Additionally, scholars in other fields like social sciences and supply chain management have established guidelines to support systematic literature reviews (Durach et al., 2017).

The established guidelines and review protocol designed for systematic literature reviews in social science and management were used to guide this study (Shaffril et al., 2020; Kraus et al., 2020). The established guidelines ensure that the researchers offer valid and accurate information in a comprehensive manner. Based on the review protocol, the researcher initiated the systematic literature review by designing suitable research questions (RQ). Next, the systematic searching strategy was completed, which involved identification, screening, and eligibility. Lastly, data analysis and validation were performed.

2.2 Research question construction

The construction of the research questions (RQ) involves using Research Question

Development Tools (RQDT) such as PICO (Population or Problem, Intervention, Comparison or Control, Outcome), PICO (Population or Problem, Interest, Context), SPIDER (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research Type), and SPICE (Setting, Perspective, Intervention, Comparison, Evaluation). In this study, the researcher utilized PICO, a tool that assisted the development of suitable research questions (RQ) for the review. Based on PICO, the study finalized three main aspects: health information and knowledge (Problem), media users (Interest), and across the globe (Context), which helped to formulate two research questions (RQ). Two of these were constructed. (1) which media source is preferable for seeking health information during the COVID-19 outbreak? (2) what types of health information have individuals discovered during the COVID-19 outbreak? The method determined how far the current studies have progressed toward clarifying the tendency to seek health information and knowledge during the pandemic. The method also identified relations, gaps, and literature

contradictions, as well as why researchers keep exploring the research area. In conclusion, the method helped to formulate the research question (RQ)s, theories, and directions for future research (Shaffril et al., 2020).

2.3 Systematic searching strategies

In the systematic searching strategies, three main processes were involved as shown in Figure 1: identification, screening and eligibility.

2.3.1 Identification

The first step of systematic searching strategies was identification, which involved searching for any synonyms for, variations of, and terms associated with the main keywords: health communication, health information, social media, social network, social site, COVID-19, COVID 2019, Corona-19, n-cov, novel coronavirus, and sars-cov. Searching for synonyms, associated terms, and variations provided various selections, which the chosen databases used to search for more related articles to review.

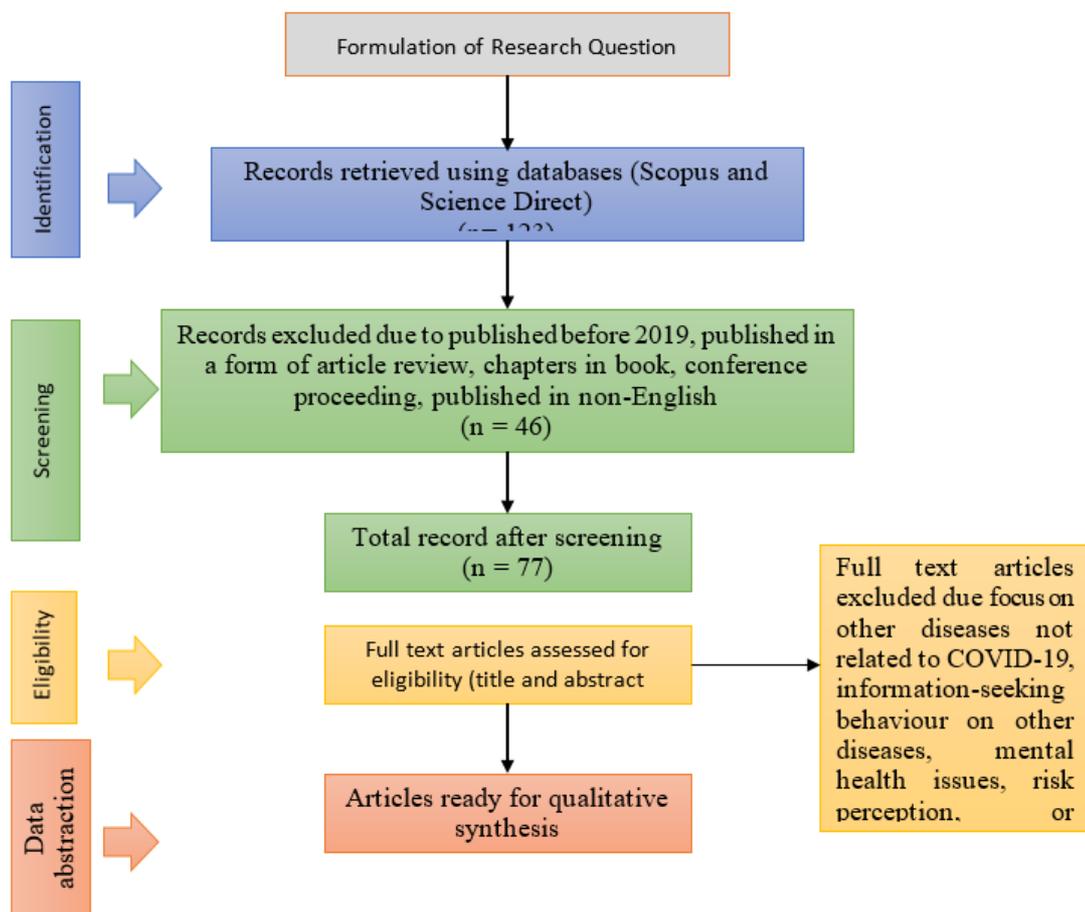


Figure 1: Systematic searching strategy

Subsequently, the research questions (RQ) formulated earlier were able to generate keywords (Okoli, 2015). Various sources were utilized in the identification process, namely an online thesaurus and the keywords suggested by Scopus and Science Direct keywords employed in previous studies. Table 2 shows that the researchers enhanced the current set of keywords and established a full search string based on the functions in the two databases (Scopus and Science Direct): the Boolean operator, truncation, wild card, phrase searching, and field code function. Notably, the databases are the largest abstract and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature. They deliver a thorough overview of the world's research output in arts, education, social sciences, and science-based studies (Scopus, 2021; Science Direct, 2021). Ultimately, the searching process using the databases (Scopus and Science Direct) produced 123 articles.

2.3.2 Screening

The researcher screened 123 studies by filtering the criteria for article selection, which was completed based on the database sorting functions. Referring to Kitchenham and Charters (2007), the selection criteria were linked to the research question (RQ). Determining a range of periods is vital to enabling researchers to perform a review as it is impossible to review all the currently published articles (Okoli, 2015). Additionally, researchers could use the concept of study maturity developed by Kraus et al. (2020) to determine the best publication range to use in a review.

The publication timeline selected for this review was 2019 to 2021, with the inclusion criterion influenced by the pandemic, which first occurred in 2019. Besides, the study included articles containing empirical data and published journals. Nevertheless, systematic literature review articles were excluded as the study is a systematic literature review. The current study only included articles regarding health information sought using traditional and social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chosen articles were published in English to avoid misunderstanding. In all, 46 articles were disqualified as they did not suit the inclusion criteria. The outstanding 77 articles were utilised in the next step, eligibility.

Table 2. The criteria used for the study in determining the article selection

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Year	2019-2021	Before 2019
Type of document	Journal article	Review article, book chapter, conference proceeding, report
Language use	English only	Other than English
Subject of study	Media user	General population

Note. This table demonstrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria of article selection. Four criteria determining the article selection.

2.3.3 Eligibility

The next step in the systematic searching strategy was eligibility. The articles were retrieved and monitored to ensure they were consistent with the criteria. This step was completed by analysing the titles and abstracts of the articles. Thereafter, 50 studies were dismissed as they were unrelated to COVID-19; otherwise, they referred to information-seeking behaviour on other diseases, mental health issues, risk perception, or compliance with preventive measures and food safety issues. After the title and abstract screening, 27 articles were shortlisted and included for the review.

2.4 Data extraction and analysis

The study was guided based on an integrative review that enabled various research designs (quantitative, qualitative, mixed method) to be integrated. The best way to synthesize integrative data is to use qualitative or mixed-method techniques, which allows iterative comparisons to be made across the primary data sources (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). Therefore, this study selected the qualitative technique by reviewing 27 articles thoroughly, particularly their abstracts, results, and discussions. Any data from the reviewed studies which could respond the research questions were abstracted and arranged in a table. This step is known as data extraction. Subsequently, thematic analysis was conducted, which involved identifying themes and sub-themes by observing the patterns and themes; clustering and counting them; and noting similarities and relationships within the abstracted data.

RESULTS

3.1 Description of the Selected Articles

The study obtained 27 articles, from which four themes were developed based on the thematic analysis: information source, information type, psychological impacts (anxiety and depression), and health literacy. Further thematic analysis resulted in eight sub-themes. From the 27 selected articles, 24 studies applied quantitative research designs and three applied qualitative research designs.

3.2 *The Themes and Sub-Themes*

Four themes were developed: (a) information source, (b) information type, (c) psychological impacts, and (d) health literacy. These were further developed into eight sub-themes.

3.3 *Information source*

3.3.1 *Traditional media*

Most people used traditional media as their primary source of information during the COVID-19 pandemic, including TV, radio, and newspapers. The mainstream media sources for COVID-19 information included popular media platform such as CNN, Fox News, and other local or national networks (Ali et al., 2020; Tamiru et al., 2020).

Notably, the majority of people used traditional media, which were often considered the most credible sources (Fernandez-Torres et al., 2021; Tamiru et al., 2020). People tended to believe that TV was the medium that informed citizens the most (Soroya et al., 2021). Thus, information scanning was found to be more prevalent than information seeking. People communicated news about COVID-19 for several reasons: exchanging knowledge, achieving the need for social attachment, mobilizing resources, and participating in critical dialogue (Tang & Zou, 2021). Conversely, Falcon and Sapienza (2020) revealed that traditional media was not as reliable as the Internet and social media.

3.3.2 *New media*

Besides using traditional media, most people met their need for information via the Internet (Woods et al., 2021). Besides, the online press was regarded as the most credible source (Fernandez-Torres et al., 2021). Mobile devices, such as cell phones, were preferred when accessing information or using apps based on user-generated content and official news sources to search for news (Tang & Zou,

2021). Many female users sought health information and helped their parents or older adults at home. Generally, the type of information sought most frequently related to access to medical treatment, the management of self-quarantine, and offline to online support (Zhao et al., 2020). Official websites were frequently used, such as the Civil Protection website, and scientists considered these reliable as information sources (Falcon & Sapienza, 2020; Ali et al., 2020). Additionally, official websites provided a positive assessment of the information on COVID-19 from the central government, along with access to the institutional websites (Fernandez-Torres et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2020). A further finding was that trusting government websites was more prevalent among younger males than older males.

3.3.3 *Information from individuals*

In seeking health information, individuals visited physicians or other treatment staff. They also asked family members questions, watched satellite channels, and attended workshops and meetings on health (Jalilian et al., 2021). Although family physicians were generally deemed trustworthy, they were rarely regarded as information sources (Falcone & Sapienza, 2020).

3.4 *Types of Information*

3.4.1 *COVID-19 related information*

Other key types of information people sought from the media related to COVID-19 and its vaccines. Generally, this information was easy to find, determining its reliability and establishing the relevance of information about COVID-19 or related topics (Patil et al., 2021). Besides, many participants reported obtaining COVID-19 vaccine information mostly from local TV, followed by social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Tiktok (Pitch et al., 2021). Summarily, people informed that the COVID-19 vaccine information they had obtained was favourable. Meanwhile, a quarter of them reported the information as being neither positive nor negative, while several mainly reported negative information about the vaccine or that no vaccine-related information was found on any channel (Piltch-Loeb et al., 2021). Social media users channels elucidated the attitude to the vaccine was relatively positive. It was observed that the highest level of trust in vaccine information was placed in

national newspapers and radio (Piltch-Loeb et al., 2021).

Another point to consider was the individuals' personal and social responsibility, which could lead to preventive behaviour and behavioural improvement. Generally, COVID-19 information consumption using social media affected personal responsibility in a significant way, with people displaying more preventive behaviours and behavioural improvement after receiving health information (Liu, 2021; Jalilian et al., 2021). The majority of the participants also reported taking preventive action against COVID-19, mainly through handwashing, while many claimed they practiced stronger preventive behaviours (Nazione et al., 2021). Besides, individuals practiced social responsibility the most when they supported health protection measures against the COVID-19, as well as when they rejected the fake information and rumours circulating across Internet platforms (Almomani & Al-Quran, 2020).

3.4.2 False news

Seeking health information using traditional or new media requires vigilance on the nature of the information is sought. Specifically, the influx of false news on the Internet and social media platforms worsened. False or unverified news reached users in numerous ways, most obviously via WhatsApp, followed by social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Regarding the fake news received, most people stated that the information mainly concerned how to avoid infection, followed by content on home methods and whether a person was infected by COVID-19 (Fernandez-Torres et al., 2021).

3.5 Psychological impacts

3.5.1 Anxiety

Al-Amad and Hussein (2021) reported that the majority of dental healthcare workers had moderate to severe anxiety. This was attributed to their frequent social media use. The platform used most often was WhatsApp, followed by Instagram and Facebook, whereas the least used platform was Tiktok. It was observed that suffering from information anxiety was associated with high levels of social media exposure. This later significantly predicted information avoidance (Soroya et al., 2021). Similarly, students also suffered from psychological impacts, such as anxiety

and depression, due to their dissatisfaction with remote learning and need to go back to campus as they felt demotivated and incompetent when using self-directed, online learning. Hence, proper interventions and mechanisms were recommended to be planned and prioritized to resolve students' mental distress (De Gagne et al., 2021).

People were highly interested in COVID-19 knowledge as they faced ambiguity, anxiety, and feelings of being overwhelmed. Several crucial moments caused people to be aware that the outbreak was threatening them. Most people demonstrated high levels of understanding that misinformation was widespread in news channels and social media sites, taking steps to verify the accuracy of information (Lupton & Lewis, 2021). Additionally, few participants frequently wrote posts related to information on COVID-19, while the majority frequently verified the accuracy of the information received on social media (Al-Amad & Hussein, 2021). Hence, most supported health protection measures against COVID-19 while rejecting the fake information and rumors circulating across the Internet platforms (Almomani & Al-Quran, 2020). Unfortunately, one-third of the participants stated that most of the information received on social media involved rumors, with females showing higher levels of anxiety than males (Al-Amad & Hussein, 2021).

3.5.2 Depression

Another important potential impact on individuals was depression. Significant associations were discovered between probable depression and certain demographic characteristics like marital status, education level, profession type, income level, and undergoing influenza-like symptoms. Notably, older participants and people earning income higher than USD 7,701 were less likely to feel depressed. Additionally, several differences were observed between those who suffered from depression and the regularity of reusing face masks, exposure to disease, perceived severity, cues to action on taking precautionary measures against the infection, knowledge of the COVID-19 outbreak, and self-efficacy to wear masks properly. In other words, participants with a higher frequency of reusing masks, wearing face masks for self-protection, believing that

they were more susceptible to the disease, and perceiving a high severity of the COVID-19 illness were more likely to inform depressive symptoms (Bressington et al., 2020).

3.5.3 Social attachment

Social attachment during the pandemic was crucial, as it affected an individual's mental health condition. Eventually, people who had contacted an affected person had to be immediately quarantined for 14 days. This was considered an efficient way to curb the spreading of the virus (Azlan et al., 2020). During isolation, people could not meet with one another. Hence, they tended to share physical activity experiences through social media. This positively affected social attachment, forming positive self-presentation and positive feedback (Zuo et al., 2021). Moreover, some people shared knowledge about COVID-19 for various reasons: to exchange knowledge, fulfil the need for social relationship, mobilize resources, and engage in critical dialogue. This knowledge tended to be shared with close family members via face-to-face discussion, personal texting, or conversing via social media. Hence, these activities were able to safeguard mental health (Tang & Zou, 2021).

3.6 Health literacy

3.6.1 Knowledge level

Health literacy is attributed to various demographic characteristics, namely gender, age, social media use, the readiness to obtain the COVID-19 vaccine, the frequency of access to the Net for COVID-19 information and having adequate knowledge of COVID-19

(Abdulai et al., 2021). Generally, females were twice as likely as males to possess adequate health literacy. However, more male than female students reported significantly higher levels of digital health literacy in the dimensions of adding up self-generated content and evaluating reliability (Rosario et al., 2020).

In addition, higher digital health literacy was discovered among users of LinkedIn and Tumblr. Similarly, higher digital health literacy was considerably correlated with a greater willingness to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine, believing that COVID-19 would likely be contracted, and believing that infection would severely affect life (Patil et al., 2021). Meanwhile, people with low health literacy tended to be first-year students and YouTube users (Abdulai et al., 2021).

Public health communication is crucial. Most participants showed a basic level of COVID-19 knowledge. Higher scores on knowledge of COVID-19 were found among females, those above 50, those living in Central Malaysia, and the higher income category. Regarding occupation and income level, the average knowledge score of students was significantly lower than those of other occupation categories and those earning lower than RM 3,000 monthly. Moreover, most participants reach agreement that COVID-19 would effectively be controlled, with the attitude significantly associated with age group, state, and employment type (Azlan et al., 2020).

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes

Research	Research design/ theme	Information sources			Information types		Psychological Impacts		Health literacy
	Sub-theme	TM	OW	I	C&V	FN	AN	DP	KL
Zuo et al. (2021)	Quantitative							√	
Al-Amad, Hussein (2021)	Quantitative						√	√	
Lupton and Lewis (2021)	Qualitative						√	√	
Liu (2021)	Quantitative			√					
Piltch et al. (2021)	Quantitative	√			√				
Mir et al. (2021)	Qualitative						√	√	
Patil et al. (2021)	Quantitative				√				√

Research	Research design/ theme	Information sources			Information types		Psychological Impacts		Health literacy
Soroya et al. (2021)	Quantitative	√					√	√	
De Gagne et al. (2021)	Qualitative						√	√	
Fernandez-Torres wt al., (2021)	Quantitative	√	√						
Tang and Zou (2021)	Quantitative	√	√						
Abdulai et al. (2021)	Quantitative								√
Jalilian et al. (2021)	Quantitative				√				
Woods et al. (2021)	Quantitative		√						
Nazione et al. (2021)	Quantitative				√				
Jokic-Begic et al. (2020)	Quantitative		√						
Rosario et al. (2020)	Quantitative								√
Vai et al. (2020)	Quantitative	√	√						
Kebede et al. (2020)	Quantitative	√	√						
Bressington et al. (2020)	Quantitative						√	√	
Falcone and Sapienza (2020)	Quantitative	√	√	√					
Zhao et al. (2020)	Quantitative		√						
Li and Liu (2020)	Quantitative		√						
Ali et al. (2020)	Quantitative	√	√						
Almomani and Waael (2020)	Quantitative				√		√	√	
Azlan et al. (2020)	Quantitative								√
Tamiru et al. (2020)	Quantitative	√							

Information sources	Information types	Psychological Impacts	Health Literacy
TM = Traditional media OW = Official website I = Individual	C&V = Coronavirus & vaccine FN = False news	AN = Anxiety DP = Depression	KL = Knowledge level

Discussion

The section discusses the thematic analyses that were developed into four themes and eight sub-themes. Sources of information formed the central theme discussed throughout the literature. Notably, most people preferred to seek health information from traditional media, compared to the

Internet and other individuals. Preferences for choosing the medium with which to find information related to demographic features such as age, gender, educational background, income level, and occupation type. Most elderly people preferred traditional media when seeking health-related information (Nimrod, 2015) whereas adolescents preferred

to do so using the Internet and social media (Goodyear et al., 2018). Similarly, education and income levels affected people's understanding of and behaviour toward health-related information seeking (Abdullah et al., 2020; Azlan et al., 2020). Those with low education levels may have difficulty in understanding medical terms, medical data, medication prescription requirements, and basic health theories (Bostock & Steptoe, 2012). Hence, education levels are frequently used as a measurement for literacy skills, and it has been reported that people with at least a high school diploma often seek out and apply health knowledge (Feinberg et al., 2016).

Additionally, most people believed the information broadcast by the local television stations, compared to that found on social media. The information portrayed on local television stations mostly contained positive messages about COVID-19 vaccine acceptance, treatment for COVID-19, updates on COVID-19 cases, and other updates related to COVID-19. However, new media and social media platforms consistently broadcast unverified news and facts, which led to the spread of vaccine hesitancy. It was found that virtual discussions, blogs, and several social media accounts promoted personal narratives over empirical data, which demonstrated how social media was a vehicle for the spread of COVID-19 misinformation (Pitch-loeb et al., 2021; Puri et al., 2020). Hence, the mainstream news media with its unique opportunity can use the platform to educate and debunk the misinformation from happening (Lwin et al., 2021). Consequently, the reliability and trustworthiness of the information people obtained from new media platforms could be affected. Hence, people are recommended to recognize their responsibilities as media users when using social media platforms. People should also check and verify the information received, specifically from suspicious websites. News and information can be verified through the official websites of international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). Through these websites, people are directed to authentic sources and equipped with genuine information. It was reported that individuals who trust health authorities are less likely to

be impacted by misinformation (Loomba et al., 2021). In fact, the World Health Organization (WHO) has also established a website called 'The WHO Mythbusters Pages' to help to tackle misinformation (WHO, 2021). Significantly, these sources increase the understanding of health-related information, eventually promoting health literacy and enabling the practice of good preventive behaviour concerning COVID-19.

Meanwhile, receiving excessive information from the media can affect people's psychological well-being. Individuals who are overwhelmed with information from the media do not know which information to trust and follow. When individuals become overwhelmed with information, they become disoriented and encounter more information that they can process which, to some extent, affects their decision-making process (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). This situation can be referred to as information overload, which could be detrimental to an individual's psychological well-being, especially mental health. Information overload can be evoked from different types of information, such as advertisement, promotions, and announcements. However, in the context of this study, it was evoked by excessive exposure to the news (Holton & Chyi, 2012). A separate term can be used to refer to social media overload, which happens when individuals use and are exposed to massive amounts of information from social media (Islam et al., 2018). However, individuals may also suffer from information overload when they access the news through social media. Accessing news through traditional media was not found to be associated with information overload (Holton & Chyi, 2012).

Consequently, individuals may develop anxiety and depression in the long term (Hong & Kim, 2020; Fan & Smith, 2021). Anxiety can develop when people experience unpleasantness and persistent negative effects (Barlow, 2002). Meanwhile, depression is a feeling of heaviness and of being pressed down (Kanter, 2008). Moreover, relying on social media for information on health-related issues, particularly during the lockdown, exacerbated the poor mental health conditions of many individuals due to the excessive amount of information available online. Hence, such individuals tended to develop

misconceptions and misunderstandings about the information (Fernandes et al., 2020). Thus, the COVID-19 outbreak, and lockdowns were identified as having a significant impact on individual psychological well-being.

On a related note, the review also highlighted health literacy, which is determined by the socio-demographic factors of gender, age, level of knowledge of COVID-19, and the frequency of seeking health information from the Internet. When people possess adequate health knowledge, they can seek good health information and differentiate between the truth and false information. Therefore, health literacy refers to an individual's competency to address the complex demands of promoting and maintaining health in modern society. Many countries have prioritized health literacy as in their policies and practices, such as the United States of America (USA), Canada, Australia, those in the European Union, and China. Furthermore, the WHO recommends health literacy be used as a crucial criterion in achieving several aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (Liu et al., 2020).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. Firstly, only two databases were used, so the results are based only on the two databases. It was intended to gather data from additional databases, namely Science Direct and Emerald. However, during the selection stage, the articles gathered did not meet the title and selection criteria. Thus, only two databases were selected for the final stage. Secondly, the quality assessment of the included studies was not inclusive because the experts or panel members selected to assess the studies were not from the media and communication field.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review highlighted the sources and trends concerning the health information that individuals sought, which was divided into three main themes: sources of information, type of information, and health literacy. The variables derived from this study could contribute to the body of knowledge by highlighting the media sources that individuals prefer when seeking health information, as well as the types of information they seek. Different levels of health literacy were also discussed and were

attributed to different demographic backgrounds. Consequently, it was found that the media sources that individuals seek can greatly affect their psychological health. Hence, it is hoped that this systematic review study could provide individuals with better an understanding of how to obtain health information from these sources. Meanwhile, relevant parties such as the government, non-governmental organizations, and policy makers can employ this study to enhance the current practices in fields related to health communication.

This study proposes some suggestions for future scholars' consideration. Firstly, further investigations should assess the credibility and trustworthiness of news broadcast on social media. Individuals cannot simply believe the news presented on social media, although it may have been shared by many. Individuals should remain active and responsible by checking and verifying the news from genuine websites before taking any action. Each country can develop a dedicated website like 'Sebenarnya.my', which was established by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) to combat misinformation (MCMC, 2021). This practice has been emulated by Thailand, which introduced an anti-fake news centre to tackle misinformation (Patpicha, 2021). Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to identify and analyse disinformation (Qishin, 2021). Secondly, Bandura (1997) pointed out at any time, individuals may experience information overload. Hence, they need to practice self-efficacy, which refers to the individual capability to control the actions and events that may affect them. The extension of the self-efficacy concept to cover news efficacy on social media, "the extent of positive confidence about how much a user can get news he or she wants and understands the meaning of it" (Park, 2019, p.2). This means to possess a strong perception of self-efficacy, the people must be able to meets their needs concerning news acquisition from the use of a certain medium. Accordingly, news efficacy is important and plays a crucial role in acquiring and managing news from the social media sources.

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