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Covid-19 Digital health literacy of Sofia University IT students – preliminary results

Ioannis Patias¹

¹Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Bulgaria

Background

The SARS-CoV-2019 pandemic and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) virus, made us use various sources of health information available on different digital platforms on the Internet, thus brought in front side issues related to health literacy (HL). People using digital information platforms not always have the ability to adequately evaluate the acquired health information. Even more IT professionals are often engaged in systems development, where their ability to provide the system with reliable, checked input as for example training data and information is crucial. Namely this makes IT students, as future professionals, health literacy important case for study.

Methods

For the purpose a Questionnaire developed by Dadaczynski, K., Okan, O. & Rathmann, K. in 2020 as COVID-19 Health Literacy Survey: University Students (COVID-HL Survey), and the respective Scale Documentation under the Public Health Centre Fulda (PHZF) at the Fulda University of Applied Sciences & Interdisciplinary Centre for Health Literacy Research at Bielefeld University, was used. The main goals are to assess digital HL of university students; explore the different digital sources of information students consult when seeking for COVID-19 information; capture student's future time perspective/worries; and also assess students Sense of Coherence under this health situation.

Findings

Most (roughly above 60%) of respondents indicated that it was easy to search, acquire, evaluate reliability, and determine relevance for health information related to COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2019, and other related topics. Immersive the amount of students (above 85%) that crosscheck acquired health information in both English and Bulgarian languages. As for the various possibilities of how to get information about the coronavirus and related topics on the Internet, the respondents indicate most often they use search engines (e.g. Google, Bing, Yahoo!), followed by official Health portals (for example, the Bulgarian unified information portal, the current news – Ministry of Health, and the Regional Health Inspectorate).

Conclusions

The preliminary results so far show that most of the students of the current sample reported high HL. May be their ability to crosscheck health information explains their satisfaction regarding to this information. Young people as the students in Sofia University trust modern digital platforms, but also have a high rated opinion for the official health authorities in the country, including the developed Bulgarian unified information portal, the Ministry of Health, and the Regional Health Inspectorate web pages. The study is still ongoing. More results and discussion should follow the responses acquisition completion.