

Research Article

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THE EFFECT OF INFORMATION SOURCES ON THE
FEAR OF COVID-19

BİLGİ KAYNAKLARININ COVID-19 KORKUSUNA ETKİSİ

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ABSTRACT

The information about COVID-19 is published through various written and visual media channels. Although these channels can be useful in terms of the society's knowledge source of news about the coronavirus, they can sometimes cause problems like fear. This study aims to examine what are the sources of information about coronavirus and their impact on the fear of COVID-19. This research reached 1851 people through Google Forms. The Sociodemographic Questionnaire and the Fear of COVID-19 Scale were used, and the data were analyzed by SPSS. The study shows news sources on COVID-19 consist of mostly of TV, social media, and online sources. The differences were found in terms of news sources according to gender. As age increases, the use of news sources decreases; as the educational level increases, the use of news sources increases. A significant difference in the fear of COVID-19 among those use television, social media, online resources, friends, and family members as news sources. The fear of COVID-19 increases as the number of news sources reached increases ($P<0.05$). This result reveals the effects of more information obtained from more news sources on the fear of COVID-19. As a result, it can be suggested to develop protective and preventive social work intervention strategies to use news sources for beneficial use of news sources in terms of individual and community levels.

Keywords: The Fear of COVID-19, Social Work, Sources of Information, News, The News of COVID-19

ÖZET

COVID-19 ile ilgili bilgiler çeşitli yazılı ve görsel medya kanalları aracılığıyla yayınlanmaktadır. Bu kanallar toplumun koronavirüsle ilgili bilgi sahibi olması açısından yararlı olurken korkuya da neden olabilmektedir. Bu çalışma, koronavirüs ile ilgili bilgi kaynaklarının neler olduğunu ve bunların COVID-19 korkusu üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada Google Formlar aracılığıyla 1851 kişiye ulaşılmış; Sosyodemografik Soru Formu ve COVID-19 Korkusu Ölçeği kullanılmış ve analizlerde SPSS programı kullanılmıştır. Çalışma COVID-19 ile ilgili haber kaynaklarının çoğunlukla TV, sosyal medya ve çevrimiçi kaynaklardan oluştuğunu göstermektedir. Cinsiyetlere göre haber kaynaklarının kullanımı açısından istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılık bulunmuştur. Yaş ilerledikçe haber kaynaklarının kullanımı azalmakta; eğitim seviyesi yükseldikçe haber kaynaklarının kullanımı artmaktadır. Haber kaynağı olarak TV, sosyal medya, çevrimiçi kaynaklar, arkadaş ve aile üyelerini kullananlar arasında COVID-19 korkusunda anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmuştur. Ulaşılan haber kaynağının sayısı arttıkça COVID-19 korkusu da artmaktadır ($P<0.05$). Bu bulgu daha fazla haber kaynağından elde edilen daha fazla bilginin COVID-19 korkusu üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Sonuç olarak, COVID-19 ile ilgili haber kaynaklarına yönelik birey ve toplum düzeyinde koruyucu ve önleyici sosyal hizmet müdahale stratejilerinin geliştirilmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler; COVID-19 Korkusu, Sosyal Hizmet, Bilgi Kaynakları, Haber, COVID-19 Haberleri

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INTRODUCTION

The epidemic, which started with the reporting of pneumonia cases of unknown cause in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei province of China, in December 2019. It continued with the identification of a new coronavirus, and the epidemic gained a global dimension (Chen et al. 2020a; Yang et al. 2020). Coronavirus disease caused by severe SARS-CoV-2 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. As of June 2022, approximately 529 million people worldwide have been infected with coronavirus and approximately 7 million people have died. In Turkey, on this date, approximately 15 million people were infected with coronavirus and approximately one hundred thousand people died (WHO, 2022). Various restrictions have been imposed around the world, like curfews, the transition of institutions to the home-working system, and the closure of schools. Various changes have been experienced in a society in psychosocial areas as well (Dubey et al. 2020; Dong and Bouey, 2020; Ting et al., 2020). These changes include feelings such as fear, anxiety, panic, stress, and depression (Dawson and Golijani-Moghaddam, 2020). These negative emotions can cause a crisis in society. Macro social work practices are carried out to intervene in the crisis.

The responses of society to social crises like pandemics are important in social work practices. During the pandemic, many populations in the disadvantaged group tried to cope with negative situations, especially fear (Cullen et al., 2020). Beck and Emery (1979) defined fear as an 'emotional state and physiological response based on the awareness and evaluation of danger'. With the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fear of the coronavirus has started to increase in society (Ahmed et al., 2020; Garcia-Reyna et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2020; Pakpour and Griffiths, 2020; Naeem, 2021). Some studies in the literature focus on the causes of the fear of COVID-19. For example, Urojj et al. (2020) stated that the participants were most afraid of infecting family members, the rapid spread of the disease, disease complications, and being carriers. Du et al. (2020) stated that the fear of healthcare professionals themselves and their colleagues of being infected with coronavirus was listed as the most critical source of stress and anxiety in China. Arpacioğlu et al. (2020) stated that the group average of those living with their parents or family members was found to be significantly different and higher than the group average of those living alone. Yakut et al. (2020) determined that the fear of COVID-19 had a partial mediating role in its effect on burnout and a fully mediating role in its effect on perceived social support.

Social work practices require collecting information about how society accesses information in the face of crises (Ioakimidis et al., 2014). It has been reported in research that the pandemic is a serious source of fear in society (Starcevic et al., 2021; Olaimat et al., 2020). However, how society accesses and uses news about COVID-19 can affect the fear-related situation. Information provided by media tools can cause an increase in fear (Altheide, 2013). The reasons for this can be shown as the rapid spread of information, the concerns of the people that they will be unable to access the spread information and that they will lose some things, and the misinformation can be spread easily (Hathaway et al., 2017; Zhang and Zhou, 2018). Information-seeking behaviors about coronavirus have increased in society (Hashemi-Shahri et al., 2020). Similar to the COVID-19 pandemic in previous outbreaks (like Ebola and Zika), media tools are reported to increase fear (Sharma et al., 2017; D'Agostino et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018). According to research conducted in Turkey, the COVID-19 pandemic increases the sense of curiosity and the desire to receive information (Karataş, 2020). Duplaga and Grysztar (2021) stated in their study in Poland that health literacy and e-health literacy increase the perceived health threat related to COVID-19. In this process, what the coronavirus means, how it spreads, how to protect, what are the symptoms of the disease, how many people were infected and died, the policies followed by the public, local government, private institutions/non-governmental organizations, and their services in the fight against coronavirus created the sought information (Bento et al., 2020; Moreno et al., 2020).

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Social and mass media can reach a large number of users. The written and visual communication tools used can lead to protective and preventive studies in social work intervention. Social workers can share information and resources in real-time; collaborate on research projects, presentations and publications. For example, people can use different mass media channels to combat the spread of COVID-19 (Wittenberg et al., 2020). These may include written, visual and social media. Social media channels like T.V., newspapers, radio, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube are among the main sources of information and news dissemination to the public today (D'Souza et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Hussain, 2020; Tran et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). For example, infection data can be monitored regularly on a web page for the Coronavirus Monitoring Platform created by the Ministry of Health in Turkey, and these data are shared in the news and the print and visual media every day. These media channels can generate information for global health organizations and governments to increase public awareness of prevention and response strategies by providing daily updates on active cases, increasing public adherence to recommended safety measures, and encouraging positive health attitudes and adherence to preventive measures. On the other hand, incorrect information can quickly reach a large number of people through these channels (Hua and Shaw, 2020; Naeem and Bhatti, 2020). At the same time, people can be constantly exposed to information about COVID-19. Incorrect and excessive information overload can cause mental problems (Banerjee and Rao, 2020; Brennen et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020b; Lăzăroiu and Adams, 2020). WHO (2020) draws attention to the identification of the driving forces underlying fear, anxiety, and stigma that feed false information and rumors, especially through social media. The case of the COVID-19 pandemic shows the important impact of this new information environment. The information spreading can strongly influence people's behavior and alter the effectiveness of the countermeasures deployed by governments (Weiss and Tschirhart, 1994; Cinelli et al., 2020; Hyland-Wood et al., 2021; Gallotti et al., 2021).

Addressing how information is disseminated in crises such as COVID-19 is useful for preventing problems through social work interventions. For this reason, it is necessary to have information about the quality and quantity of news sources related to coronavirus during the pandemic process. Thus, it is possible to work with the effects of information published from written and visual news sources on disadvantaged groups during the pandemic. Studies conducted in this respect mostly focus on the effect of information-seeking behaviors on fear and anxiety levels (Liu, 2020). However, there is no study in the literature on the sources of information in Turkey and its effect on the fear of the coronavirus. In addition, it is seen that no study in the literature evaluates the effect of news sources on COVID-19 separately. This study aims to examine what sources of coronavirus information are and their impact on the fear of COVID-19. It is thought that the results of the research will create a field of knowledge for the social work profession that will enable to inclusion of the effects of the media in different intervention programs.

METHOD

Study Design

In this study, cross-sectional method were used.

Participants

Total 1851 participants with nonprobability sampling method completed the forms. Participants were 1324 females (71.5%) and 527 males (28.5%) living in various provinces of Turkey, ages 18 to 74 years ($M=35.00$, $SD=12.48$). When we examined the educational level of the sample, 105 (5.7%) participants reported less than a high school education, 398 (21.5%) were university students, 838 (45.3%) hold bachelor's degrees, and 339 (20.5%) hold master's degrees, and 120 (6.5%) Ph.D./M.D. degrees. 1069 (57.8%) of the participants are working. 117 (6.3%) of them are at the lower socioeconomic level, 1541

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(83.3%) of them are at the middle and 182 (9.8%) of them are at the upper socioeconomic level.

Data Collection Tools

The sociodemographic question form prepared by the researchers based on the literature review and the COVID-19 Fear Scale were used as data collection tools.

Socio-demographic questionnaire

The sociodemographic form was prepared by researchers based on a literature review. Gender, age, educational status, socioeconomic level, employment, and from which sources they obtained information during the COVID-19 process were included.

The Fear of COVID-19 Scale

This scale was developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020) to measure the fear level of individuals arising from coronavirus. Its validity and reliability study in Turkish was carried out by Ladikli et al. (2020). The scale is a five-point Likert type and consists of 7 questions of the type (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). The internal consistency of the scale was 0.82 and test reliability was 0.72. In our study, we found a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.876. High scores on the scale indicate that fear of COVID-19 is high.

Procedure

The data were collected through an online survey via Google Forms. We created an online survey including an information sheet, questionnaire without any item jeopardizing anonymity, the Turkish version of the Fear of COVID-19 Scale. We disseminated the survey through an online data collection platform, considering that online recruitment would be best during lockdowns and social/physical distancing. We shared the research link on social media accounts, which enabled us to reach out to a diverse population. We also kindly asked potential participants to share our study link with others. All of the participants reached the research questions organized via Google Forms. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants were given no special inducement to participate in the study and were assured of no penalty for refusing to participate, quit to participate at any time. They were informed that the purpose of the survey was to obtain information about their information sources and the fear of COVID-19. They were assured anonymity and confidentiality and asked to answer the questionnaire honestly.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the SPSS version 25. The Fear of COVID-19 Scale was used as the dependent variable. Information sources, the number of information sources, gender of the participants, age, their educational status, their socioeconomic level and their employment were used as independent variables. The independent samples t-test procedure was employed to compare means for two groups of cases, χ^2 procedure was employed to compare the number of participants. We also used Pearson correlation coefficients to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The minimum acceptable level of significance was set at 0.05.

Ethical Aspects of the Study

The permissions have been obtained from Baskent University to carry out this study. This study has been approved by Bařkent University Social and Human Sciences and Art Ethics Committee in 08.04.2021 (Project number: E-62310886-604.01.01-25605).

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RESULTS

The most common sources that the participants get news about the COVID-19 are TV (80%), social media (74.3%), and online news sources (62.7%). The least news sources are the news sources of professional organizations (20.5%), newspapers (16.2%), and radio (7.7%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the participants' news sources on the COVID-19

Source of news	N	%
TV	1469	80.0
Social media	1364	74.3
Online sources	1152	62.7
Friends	751	40.9
Family members	656	35.7
National sources	614	33.4
Health personnel	569	31.0
International sources	527	28.7
Professional organizations	376	20.5
Newspaper	298	16.2
Radio	142	7.7

As shown in Table 2, TV, social media, the friend and family members were used by females at a higher rate and a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$). Newspaper is used by males at a higher rate and a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$). There is no statistically significant difference according to gender in the use of news sources like online news sources, news sources of national and international organizations, health personnel, news sources of professional organizations, and radio ($p > 0.05$).

Table 2. Distribution of news sources on COVID-19 by gender

Source of news	Gender	No		Yes		Statistics	p
		N	%	N	%		
TV	Female	257	19.4	1067	80.6	$\chi^2 = 4.272$	.023
	Male	125	23.7	402	76.3		
Social media	Female	323	24.4	1001	75.6	$\chi^2 = 8.790$	.002
	Male	164	31.1	363	68.9		
Online sources	Female	504	38.1	820	61.9	$\chi^2 = .182$	.355
	Male	195	37.0	332	63.0		
Friends	Female	760	57.4	564	42.6	$\chi^2 = 7.913$	.003
	Male	340	64.5	187	35.5		
Family members	Female	820	61.9	504	38.1	$\chi^2 = 14.017$.000
	Male	375	71.2	152	28.8		

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National sources	<i>Female</i>	876	66.2	448	33.8	$\chi^2 = .929$.182
	<i>Male</i>	361	68.5	166	31.5		
Health personnel	<i>Female</i>	920	69.5	404	30.5	$\chi^2 = .112$.389
	<i>Male</i>	362	68.7	165	31.3		
International sources	<i>Female</i>	951	71.8	373	28.2	$\chi^2 = .204$	.345
	<i>Male</i>	373	70.8	154	29.2		
Professional organizations	<i>Female</i>	1061	80.1	263	19.9	$\chi^2 = .580$	.242
	<i>Male</i>	414	78.6	113	21.4		
Newspaper	<i>Female</i>	1129	85.3	195	14.7	$\chi^2 = 6.474$	.007
	<i>Male</i>	424	80.5	103	19.5		
Radio	<i>Female</i>	1231	93.0	93	7.0	$\chi^2 = 2.751$	.061
	<i>Male</i>	478	90.7	49	9.3		

Using the news sources according to socio-demographic characteristics is given in Table 3. There was no significant difference in using news sources in terms of genders. There was a correlation between age and educational level in terms of using news sources. There was no correlation between the socioeconomic level and working conditions in terms of the use of news sources.

Table 3. Use of news sources according to socio-demographic characteristics

	N	Mean	SD	Statistics	p
Female	1324	4.33	2.34	$t = 1.480$	.139
Male	527	4.15	2.47		
Age	1851			$r = -.059$	.011
Educational level	1840			$r = .114$	.000
Socioeconomic level	1840			$r = .021$	.360
Working	1069	4.32	2.42	$t = .993$	.351
Not working	782	4.22	2.32		

Table 4 presents findings on the impact of participants' information sources on fear of COVID-19. There was a significant difference in terms of the fear of COVID-19 in using TV, social media, online news sources, using news sources from friends and family members. There was a correlation between number of news sources and the fear of COVID-19.

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Table 4. *The Fear of COVID-19 according to news sources*

Information Sources	N	The Fear of COVID-19		Statistics	p
			SD		
TV					
Yes	1469	18,16	6,14	$t = 2.200$	.028
No	382	17,38	6,23		
Social Media					
Yes	1364	18,20	6,09	$t = 2.316$	.021
No	487	17,45	6,33		
Online sources					
Yes	1152	18,27	6,10	$t = 2.380$	.017
No	699	17,57	6,24		
Friend					
Yes	751	18,40	6,10	$t = 2,302$	.021
No	1100	17,73	6,19		
Family Members					
Yes	656	18,53	6,22	$t = 2.746$	.006
No	1195	17,71	6,11		
National Institutions					
Yes	614	18,10	6,02	$t = .462$	.644
No	1237	17,96	6,23		
Health Personnel					
Yes	569	18,08	5,92	$t = .374$	.708
No	1282	17,97	6,27		
International Institutions					
Yes	527	17,87	6,12	$t = -.594$	.552
No	1324	18,06	6,18		
Professional Organizations					
Yes	376	17,793	6,069	$t = -.739$	.460
No	1475	18,056	6,187		
Newspaper					
Yes	298	18,36	6,48	$t = 1.102$	.271
No	1553	17,93	6,10		
Radio					
Yes	142	18,04	6,02	$t = .081$.936
No	1709	18,00	6,18		
Number of News Sources (0-11)	1851	4.28	2.38	$r = .056$.016

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DISCUSSION

In this study, it is determined that the news sources about COVID-19 are mostly TV, social media, and online news sources. These resources are expected to be used nowadays where digital transformation and technology are used extensively. This finding of the study can also be interpreted as the participants seeking information through more data sources using both written, visual and social media in using news sources about COVID-19. Similar to this finding, Ali et al. (2020) reported that media sources like television, radio, podcasts, and newspapers were the greatest sources of information about COVID-19. From the perspective of social work, it can be said that the sources of information about the coronavirus consist of channels that can spread faster. This situation can be interpreted as that population such as children and youth, who use technology more intensively, will concentrate on obtaining information about the coronavirus.

In our study, it was determined that the information provided by national resources and professional organizations is low. From the perspective of social work, this finding of the study may indicate that the participants are likely to reach misinformation about COVID-19 in terms of not choosing the information provided by national sources and professional organizations in order to reach accurate information. At the same time, it is thought-provoking why the participants did not choose these resources. The reason for this is that there is a need for more information on whether the information provided by national sources and professional organizations is easily accessible or not understandable by users. The accuracy and inaccuracy of the information that emerged between two different information sources may have created contradictions on the participants. These contradictory situations can be discussed as a factor that increases the fear of COVID-19. Different from the finding in our study, Ali et al. (2020) identified the largest source of individual information as government websites. However, the low access to information provided by professional institutions, especially by the participants, suggests that exposure to incorrect information may be high. Chong et al. (2020) and Apuke and Omar (2021) also reported that there are ample opportunities for people to instantly access true and false information about healthcare due to the worldwide spread of mobile devices.

In our research, it was determined females received more news about COVID-19 from television, social media, friends, and family members. Males received more news from newspapers. This finding of the study shows that females get information about COVID-19 from more sources. Even so, no significant difference was found in the use of news sources according to gender. Ho et al. (2020) found that women were more likely to receive pandemic information from sources than males. Studies in the literature also indicate females are more concerned about health-related information than males and are more likely to seek health information (Powell et al., 2011). When this finding of the study is evaluated in terms of social work, it can be thought that females exhibit more information-seeking behavior in the face of a serious public health crisis like a pandemic. For this reason, social work interventions may be needed to ensure females receive information from accurate and sufficient sources.

There was a negative correlation between age and using news sources about COVID-19. Accordingly, the use of news sources related to COVID-19 is higher among young people. When this finding of the study is evaluated in terms of social work, it can be explained by the fact that young people use technology more, and thus they can access a wider variety of news sources. Young people can access much different and diverse information by accessing many information tools in terms of news sources. This finding can be interpreted as establishing safe platforms for young people to have access to the right resources. On the other hand, the use of news sources related to COVID-19 was found to be lower among elderly people. Accordingly, it is seen that elderly people reach limited sources and receive news from these sources of information. Having a limited number of sources of information can also result in believing in false information. For this reason, it is necessary to examine whether the sources of information used by elderly people are correct. Gao et al. (2020) found in their study in China that, similar to this finding, young people are more exposed to social media. Ho et al. (2020) stated that respondents who frequently search for information on COVID-19 from the internet media are younger, and participants who frequently receive information from traditional

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media are older. While this situation can be evaluated positively in terms of news sources about COVID-19, it suggests young people are a population that should be protected against false information or news that may adversely affect their mental health.

Those with a high level of education are more likely to use news sources about COVID-19. In terms of social work, it can be interpreted the people with higher education levels know different news sources and gain knowledge through these sources. It can be thought as it is possible for highly educated people to analyze the information they obtain from different sources and to reach the right information. However, people with a low education level may have access to a limited number of sources of information, which may result in believing in false information sources. Gao et al. (2020) also reported that as the education level increased, the behavior of seeking information about COVID-19 from social media tools increased. Ali et al. (2020) also determined that as the education level of the participants increased, they had access to more news sources.

When looking at the impact of news sources on the fear of COVID-19, people using TV, social media, online news sources, friends and family members found high fear of COVID-19. In the view of social work, it was considered possible for the participants to access inaccurate information from these news sources. Accordingly, it was found possible for the participants to access inaccurate information from these news sources. While these sources may provide some informal information about COVID-19, the circulation of this information may be faster. This fast circulation can reduce the chance of verifying whether the data are correct or not. In the absence of mechanisms for controlling this information, the fear of COVID-19 may increase in people who believe in this unverified information. Therefore, preventive social work interventions can be carried out to protect disadvantaged groups against the fear of COVID-19. Okan et al. (2020) revealed that 47% of the participants had access to information about COVID-19 through the media. During the pandemic many invalid and false information (infodemic) were among these sources of information, and therefore the fear of the coronavirus increased. Similarly, Abdel-Latif (2020) stated that complex and contradictory information about COVID-19 is frequently featured in the media, that many people have problems accessing reliable information. The message is broader and faster accessible via social media. Social media due to the spread of false information and other traditional media stated that it poses higher risks than its vehicles. Wheaton et al. (2020) found that fear of COVID-19 was higher among those using social media, and participants experienced emotional transmission through social media. Ho et al. (2020) found that information on COVID-19 from the internet/traditional media and friends caused higher levels of coronavirus fear.

There was a positive correlation between several news sources and the fear of COVID19. Accordingly, as the number of news sources increases, the fear of COVID-19 increases. It suggests that participants who receive information from more than one news source may be exposed to more misinformation or their acute stress reactions may increase due to be constantly exposed to the news. Having information about the disease status and death numbers caused by COVID-19 and having large and continuous information about the cases that are progressing may have increased the fear. At this point, various traumatic stress reactions may also occur. Repeated engagement with trauma-related media content for a few hours a day, shortly after traumatic experiences, increases acute stress responses (Holman et al., 2014). Our findings replicate more prior reports that more media exposure is related to more fear (Garfin et al., 2020; Bendau et al., 2021). Similarly Mertens et al. (2020) stated that exposure to more and more diverse media increased the threat of COVID-19 in individuals (both ourselves and our loved ones increased the risk), and therefore fear increased. For previous outbreaks (e.g., H5N1, avian flu, etc.), more media exposure was found to be associated with increased fear (Van den Bulck and Custers, 2009). From a social work perspective, client systems may need to be protected, whose fear level has risen by accessing more coronavirus-related news sources. For example, it may be necessary to establish protective mechanisms for the elderly, children, and the disabled, who are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19.

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CONCLUSION

COVID-19 is a public health crisis that spreads rapidly all over the world in a short time. In the pandemic process, the need for society to be informed about both the disease and social life is increasing. Information about COVID-19 is published through various written and visual media channels. Although these channels can be useful for the society's information source about coronavirus, they can sometimes cause problems like fear. The pandemic, therefore, creates new needs and demands. How communication resources are used within the scope of information needs is important for social work interventions. This study aims to examine what are the sources of information about coronavirus and their impact on fear of COVID-19. The results of our study show that the news sources related to COVID-19 mostly consist of TV, social media, and online sources. Differences were found in terms of news sources by gender. Statistically significant in terms of information obtained by women from television, social media, friends, and family members; men are statistically significant in terms of information obtained from newspapers. As age increases, the use of news sources decreases; As the level of education increases, the use of news sources increases. A significant difference in fear of COVID-19 among those use television, social media, online sources, and friends and family members as their news sources. As the number of news sources reached increases, the fear of COVID-19 increases. As a result, the findings obtained from the research can be used for the protective and preventive practices of social work at the individual and community level. In terms of fear of COVID-19, it can be recommended information sources about the pandemic provide accurate news to protect at-risk groups like children, young people, the elderly, and women. Social workers can perform social work interventions that reduce the fear of the client system that uses these resources intensively and reaches false information. Roles like counseling, education, and advocacy can be used to limit watching news/media, training for social media professionals for reducing the fear of COVID-19 associated with sources of news.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the study. First, the data were collected online utilizing a cross-sectional design in which participants completed measures at a single time point. Second, although a large group of participants was reached, the study sample was derived from nonprobability sampling via social media platforms. The possible effects of this on the results obtained must be taken into account. Additional longitudinal studies, such as cohort studies or nested case-control studies, are important in the future. Second, in our study, it has been revealed that national resources and professional organizations are much less preferred as information sources. These findings bring along a perspective that the quality of the information accessed may be as important as the number of news sources. Qualitative patterned content analysis studies can be done about the accuracy of news about COVID-19.

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