



## IMPACT OF AWARENESS ON ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS COVID-19 IN BANGLADESH

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### KEYWORDS:

COVID-19, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice, Bangladesh

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is expected to be one of the most significant public health emergencies of the 21st century. Global efforts have been exerted to prevent the spread of the disease through a combination of governmental action and public education and awareness campaigns intended to increase knowledge and modify personal attitudes and behaviour.

**Aim:** This study sought to conduct a survey of Bangladeshis to assess the level of awareness about COVID-19 and evaluate the impact of awareness on perception, attitude, and behaviour.

**Method:** A cross-sectional survey of 82 Bangladeshis was performed during August of 2020 using a convenient sampling method. The survey data were then used to score the participants by comparing their responses against published facts and guidance about COVID-19 disseminated by international organizations (WHO and CDC) and the Bangladesh Government.

**Results:** The mean knowledge score was 13.25 out of 20, gained mainly through Television and Radio (76.8%), and social media (56.1%). Female respondents were found to be significantly more knowledgeable than men. Knowledge levels were found to be significantly higher in those with higher levels of education as well. However, age and income were found to have an insignificant impact on levels of knowledge in Bangladesh. Most participants (85.4%) were anxious or mentally stressed due to the perceived risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection.

**Conclusions:** Those with more knowledge about the disease were found to be more likely to follow instructions and guidance but were more dissatisfied with the information being provided to them. Increased knowledge had little or no impact on levels of anxiety. The levels of awareness were found to be lower than socio-economically comparable countries like Malaysia and Egypt, but higher than that in Afghanistan.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, a highly infectious novel Coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2 emerged in Wuhan in the Hubei Province of China and has since rapidly spread across the world, giving rise to the ongoing global pandemic. As of now the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, named COVID-19, has taken over 2,79,6561 lives around the globe<sup>1</sup>. In severe cases, the virus causes fatal pneumonia similar to that caused by SARS and MERS. But unlike those two previous Coronavirus outbreaks, global concerns about this Coronavirus have arisen due to its high transmission capability, which may be coupled with morbidity and mortality. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic has become the most consequential public health emergency of the 21st century pushing the healthcare systems of many countries to their breaking points and causing global social and economic upheaval in its wake, including the largest global recession since the Great Depression. Given the novel nature of the disease and the scarcity of newly developed vaccines and effective treatment procedures, the governments of most countries have adopted mitigation strategies in order to stem the spread of the virus.

The mitigation measures include but are not limited to drastic lockdowns, movement control, mask and personal protection policies and shelter in place orders on citizens. In general, much of the mitigation and control strategies are based on the published recommendations and guidelines laid out by WHO and Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since the available vaccines and treatment are still facing insufficiency specially in developing countries, the importance of prevention, control and mitigation of the disease can hardly be understated.

Abdelhafz et al. in 2020 carried a survey named “Egypt: Knowledge, Perceptions, and Attitude of Egyptians Towards the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID 19)” to summarize data on socio-demographic characteristics and medical history and responses to questions concerning knowledge, perceptions, and attitude towards COVID 19. The survey demonstrated that novel channels including social media platforms, and the internet represented the most important sources of information, at the expense of more traditional media platforms; namely: newspapers. Facebook is the main social media platform in Egypt, and users of this platform increased from 33 million users in 2016 to more than 40 million in 2019.