Perceptions of Who is in the Healthcare Team? A Content Analysis of Social Media Posts during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that along with physicians and nurses, other professional staff have significant patient-facing roles.
- Social media platforms are seen as an instant method to communicate with the public and to provide better understanding of their perception about the roles of healthcare professionals.
- As literature related to public perceptions of interprofessional teams is limited, social media content analysis is a potential tool to study public perception of interprofessional teams.

Aims

- The aim of this study was to use social listening technique to explore unfiltered public perceptions of the professionals involved in healthcare teams during the COVID-19 pandemic, in a naturalistic, online setting, and to elaborate on the emotional reactions in response to an online social media post.

Methods

- **Study Design**
  - A cross-sectional retrospective observational review of comments to a specific social media post was undertaken.
- **Inclusion**
  - Posts available to public
  - Relevant comments
  - Availability of discrete emotions
  - English-only comments
- **Exclusion**
  - Posts with no or irrelevant comments
  - Tags-only comments
  - Non-discrete emotions
  - Emojis with multiple or undiscerned meanings
- **Screening/Data extraction**
  - Two independent reviewers (SKK and SAK) identified eligible posts for screening and data extraction.
  - Discrepancies were resolved by discussion with a third independent reviewer (AE).
- **Ethical approval**
  - Qatar University Institutional Review Board (QU-IRB)

Results

**Figure 2. PRISMA chart for the comments’ collection process**

**Discrete Emotions Evoked By The Post**

- **Relief**
  - Reassurance after seeing some less-common professions recognized
  - The word ‘Heroes’ was commonly used
  - 16% of comments

- **Gratitude**
  - Thankful to see this post
  - Acknowledging that many professionals are working for the safety of patients
  - 16% of comments

- **Frustration**
  - Media portrays healthcare teams as doctors and nurses
  - Many felt their jobs are overlooked
  - 54% of comments

- **Perception of who is in the team**
  - 40% of comments

Key Highlights Inferred From the Comments

- **Feeling excluded**
  - We are invisible
  - Do not get enough credit
  - No one remembers
  - Always left out
  - 16% of comments

- **Agreement**
  - Finally, it is said
  - Well said
  - Absolutely
  - 23% of comments

- **Perception of who is in the team**
  - Hospitals are ran by more than just doctors and nurses
  - Many healthcare workers are on the frontline
  - 40% of comments

Conclusion

- The current COVID-19 pandemic and the media attention should be taken as an opportunity by the interprofessional community to work together to combat negative media stereotypes.
- It is important to consider how to continue to use social media positively to raise awareness about the interprofessional team.
- Further research is needed to increase understanding of public perceptions of interprofessional practice.

Limitations

- A sampling frame could not be used to select the target population.
- It was difficult to determine whether the sample were healthcare professionals, patients, or a member of the public.
- No inferential statistics were conducted.
- These posts may not be entirely representative of the emotions of the wider population as it relied only on publicly available data.

Reference

This study has recently been published: El-Awaisi A, O’Carroll V, Koraysh S, Koummich S, Huber M. Perceptions of who is in the healthcare team? A content analysis of social media posts during COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Interprofessional Care. 2020;24(4). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13561820.2020.1819779