Abstract

Amid the outbreak of the contagious novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), states were put in an unprecedented situation never encountered before. The Qatari government applied certain preventive measures to contain the spread of the virus. Still, knowledge of public risk perceptions and behavioral responses surrounding the COVID-19 epidemic is still emerging, and clear quantitative data remain limited. This poster summarizes the results of a SESRI study that investigated social attitudes, behavior, and consequences surrounding COVID-19 in Qatar. Online survey was conducted in both Qatar and Kuwait from November 2020 to January 2021. A total of 2,282 citizens and residents of Qatar were interviewed, in comparison to 1,184 completed interviews in Kuwait.

Introduction

Over the past four decades, a large number of empirical investigations have examined public risk perceptions, psychological and social distress, and behavioral responses associated with epidemics and pandemics. These studies have also found variation in responses to epidemics according to age (Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novaco, 1987), socioeconomic status (Kunz-Ebrecht, Kirschenbaum, & Stalpoe, 2004), and employment type (Norbeck, 1985), among other factors. However, the applicability of previous results to the case of COVID-19 is limited by the fact that preventive measures to contain the spread of Coronavirus far exceed the use of quarantine. Due to the novelty of the Coronavirus outbreak, quantitative studies of risk perceptions, behavioral responses, and trust in governmental policy surrounding COVID-19 remain very rare. In view of the limitations of existing data, SESRI designed and implemented an online survey that examined social attitudes, behavior, and consequences surrounding COVID-19 in Qatar.

Methods

The research team designed an original online survey and then collected data from the survey over a three-month period from late November 2020 to early January 2021. Participants in Qatar and Kuwait aged 18 years and older were recruited to participate in an online survey via advertisements placed on the most widely-used social media platforms: namely, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The advertisements were restricted geographically by Internet (IP) address, so emerging, and clear quantitative data remain limited. This poster summarizes the results of a SESRI study that investigated social attitudes, behavior, and consequences surrounding COVID-19 in Qatar. Online survey was conducted in both Qatar and Kuwait from November 2020 to January 2021. A total of 2,282 citizens and residents of Qatar were interviewed, in comparison to 1,184 completed interviews in Kuwait.

Results show that COVID-19 is viewed as less serious by Qataris as compared to non-Qataris, but no such difference exists in Kuwait. Secondly, there is no country-level difference in respondents’ willingness to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. Finally, although citizens in Qatar were slightly more likely to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, the risk perceptions of citizens and non-citizens were not statistically different.

Policy Recommendations

- Prioritize increasing public knowledge about COVID-19 in Qatar, especially among Qatari citizens and men, as greater knowledge is associated with greater compliance.
- Present clear explanations of important changes in public policy surrounding COVID-19, as such changes can have substantial impacts on risk perceptions.
- Spread accurate information about COVID-19 to combat the global online misinformation and disinformation conspiracy theories and perpetuating myths.
- Reduce efforts to ensure public compliance with COVID-19 preventative measures, particularly among Qatar citizens and in relation to social gatherings as the data show that Qatar citizens report substantially lower levels of adherence to social restrictions.
- The government should continue the transparent communication about its approach of handling the crisis with the public, in order to achieve better results in facing the virus.
- Effectively communicate the dangers of COVID-19 and to take the vaccine.

Figure 1: Knowledge of COVID-19 by Citizenship

Figure 2: Knowledge of COVID-19 Over Time

Figure 3: Correlates of COVID-19 Risk Perceptions

Figure 4: Adherence to COVID-19 Preventative Measures, by Citizenship

Figure 5: Attitudes towards the State Response by Citizenship

Figure 6: Attitudes towards Public Reaction by Citizenship

Figure 7: Risk Perceptions and Prioritization of COVID-19 Vaccine Recipients

References


