Original Article

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Attitude towards Online Seeking of Health Information among Young Adults in Maraimalai Nagar, Kattankulathur

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Abstract

The Internet is a primary source of health information for many. Good health is an indispensable prerequisite for the socio-economic development of any country. High-quality health information can be provided through websites, forums, blogs, and social networks, which have been some of the most popular channels for health promotion among young people in past 10 years. *Objective:* The objective of the study was to assess the attitude towards online seeking of health information and to associate the attitude towards online seeking of health information among young adults with their demographic variables. *Methodology:* Quantitative research and descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A total of 150 samples were selected using non probability purposive sampling technique at Maraimalainagar. The tool used for the study comprises of 2 sections, section-A Demographic data (which includes: age, sex, educational status, occupation, monthly income, types of Family, place of residence, and marital status) and section-B- A structured 5 point likertscale developed by the investigator was used to assess the attitude. *Results:* The study findings revealed that among 150 samples, none of them has poor attitude, 2 (1.3%) samples had moderate attitude, 138 (92.0%) samples had good attitude, and 10 (6.7%) samples had very good attitude. *Conclusion*: Health agencies should ensure the improvement of online health information quality and the creation of health-related websites and programs dedicated to young adults.

Keywords: Online Health Information; Health Promotion; Complications; Young Adults.

Introduction

The internet is the main source of health information especially for young adults, over the past several decades inequities in internet availability and accessibility have diminished due to technological advances and lower-cost access to broad Band internet. Currently, over 2.8 billion people use the internet worldwide, with estimates indicating that nearly 90% of adults regularly access the internet for information [3]. High-quality health information can be provided through websites, forums, blogs, and social networks, which have been some of the most popular channels for health promotion among young people in past 10 years [1,2].

While the internet has traditionally been used as a one-way health communication channel [3]. The young people experiences difficulties in accessing mainstream health services, particularly because of the stigma with certain health conditions like mental health, early pregnancy, hormone infection virus, acquired immune deficiency syndrome [4].

Potential solution is to use media resources offering information and support for health problems. Young adult's access to health information is a function of their ability to search for and find answer to their health related questions. Media resources like television, radio, newspaper, magazines, video, electronic readers and internet can be valuable sources of health information that can help youth understand their health issues. Young adult's access to health information is a function of their ability to search for and find answer to their health related questions [4].

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Information is the first step to every health choices. This requires full access to information about the human body, their workings in health and illness and the services available in treatment and care, support and co-operation .

The affordability and availability of the Internet make it a convenient resource that is increasingly used to offer information, support, and services to the population regarding their health. Recent estimates from the United States and Europe suggest that almost half of adults seek health information online, often before or after a visit to a health care professional to obtain further information or advice. Certain subgroups appear more likely to access health information online, including younger adults, women, and those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds. However, few studies have examined the characteristics of online health seekers beyond socio demographic factors [5].

In the late 1990s researchers began to note that huge numbers of people were using the Internet to seek health information, despite various problems with the quality of information or inefficiencies in accessing it.Various problems have been identified for those using search to seek health information [6].

As of 2013 opinions about the relationship health care providers should have with online health information were still being established. According to one 2014 study, "The flow of information has fundamentally changed, and physicians have less control over health information relayed to patients. Not surprisingly, this paradigm shift has elicited varied and sometimes conflicting views about the value of the Internet as a tool to improve health [7].

Materials and Methods

Quantitative approach and descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The variables studied are study variable and demographic variables. The study variable was attitude towards online seeking of health information, whereas the demographic variables includes: age, sex, educational status, occupation, monthly income, types of Family, place of residence, and marital status. The study was conducted in Maraimalai Nagar, Kancheepuram district, Kattankulathur block, Tamilnadu, with a total population of 16,874. The accessible population constitutes of all young adults who are residing in Maraimalai Nagar. The sample size for the study was estimated based on previous studies and formula applied was $n=4pq/L^2$, based on this formula the sample size was 138 but the investigator took 150 samples. The sample size for the present study was 150. Non probability purposive sampling technic was adopted to select the samples for the study. The inclusion criteria includes:

(1). Young adults who are between the age group of 18-35 years who are residing in Maraimalainagar.

(2) .Young adults who are willing to participate in the study.

(3). Young adults who are able to read, write and understand English.

The exclusion criteria include:

(1). Young adults who were not co-operative.

The Tools used for the data collection was a 5 point likert scale developed by the investigator. which consist of 2 sections

Section A: Demographic data which consist the items for obtaining information about the selected Background factors such as age, sex, educational status, occupation, monthly income, types of Family, place of residence, and marital status.

Section B: 5 point likert scale developed by the investigator was used to assess the attitudetowards online seeking of health information. A 5 point likert scale consisting of 20 statements 10 positive and 10 negative statements with a total score of 100 was used. The 5 point likert scale was framed with a number of statements that would reflect their inner feelings towards online Seeking of health information.

The content of the tools were established on the basis of opinion of nursing experts. Suggestions were incorporated in the tool. The reliability of the tool was done by test retest method. The revalue was 0.83 which indicated a positive co-relation to proceed for the main study.

The study was approved by theInstitutional Ethics Committee of SRM Medical college Hospital and Research Centre, SRM University, Kattankulathur, Kancheepuram District on 28.10.2016 at 10.00am. Ethical clearance number: 1073/IEC/2016. Permission was obtained from the Dean, SRM College of the Nursing and informed consent was obtained from each participant for the study before starting data collection. Assurance was given to the subjects that anonymity of each individual would be maintained and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

The investigator explained the objectives and methods of data collection. Data collection was done within the given period of 1 week in Maraimalai

Nagar. The data collection was done during the day time Self-introduction about the researcher and details about study was explained to the samples and their consent was obtained. The confidentiality about the data and finding were assured to the participants. The participants took 10 Minutes to complete the tools and there co-operation was imperative. The collected data was coded and statistical analysis was performed using SPSS Software version 16.

Results

Table 1: Frequency and percentage distributions of demographic data of the young adults N=150

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-23 Yrs	55	36.7
	24-29 Yrs	60	40.0
	30-35 Yrs	35	23.3
Sex	Male	100	66.7
	Female	50	33.3
Educational	Prim9ary school certificate	2	1.3
	Middle school certificate	3	2.0
	Higher school certificate	42	28.0
	Post high school certificate	24	16.0
	Graduate school certificate	79	52.7
Occupation	Unemployed	25	16.7
	Unskilled workers	5	3.3
	Skilled workers	59	39.3
	Clerical, shopkeeper, farmer	8	5.3
	Profession	53	35.3
Income	Rs.1590 – Rs.4726	13	8.7
	Rs 4727- Rs 7877	13	8.7
	Rs 7878 - Rs 11876	31	20.7
	Rs 11877 - Rs 15754	36	24.0
	Above 15754	57	38.0
Types of family	Nuclear family	73	48.7
	Joint family	65	43.3
	Extended family	12	8.0
Residence	Urban	98	65.3
	Rural	52	34.7
Marital status	Married	66	44.0
	Unmarried	84	56.0

Table 2: To assess the attitude towards online seeking of health information among young adults N=150

Attitude	Poor Attitude N (%)	Moderate attitude N (%)	Good attitude N (%)	Very good attitude N (%)
	0(0)	2(1.3)	138(92.0)	10(6.7)

Table 3: To associate the attitude towards online seeking of health information among young adults with their demographic variables N=150

		Attitude Levels					
		Moderate attitude N (%)	Good attitude N (%)	Very good attitude N (%)	Total N (%)	Chi Square Test	P Value
Age	18-23 Yrs	1(50)	49(35.5)	5(50)	55(36.7)	4.002	0.406
	24-29 Yrs	1(50)	54(39.1)	5(50)	60(40)	4 df	NS
	30-35 Yrs	0(0)	35(25.4)	0(0)	35(23.3)		
Sex	Male	1(50)	93(67.4)	6(60)	100(66.7)	0.483	0.786
	Female	1(50)	45(32.6)	4(40)	50(33.3)	2 df	NS

		Attitude Levels					
		Moderate attitude N (%)	Good attitude N (%)	Very good attitude N (%)	Total N (%)	Chi Square Test	P Value
Educational	Primary school certificate	0(0)	2(1.4)	0(0)	2(1.3)	8.975	0.344
	Middle school certificate	0(0)	3(2.2)	0(0)	3(2)	8 df	NS
	Higher school certificate	2(100)	38(27.5)	2(20)	42(28)		
	Post high school certificate	0(0)	24(17.4)	0(0)	24(16)		
	Graduate school certificate	0(0)	71(51.4)	8(80)	79(52.7)		
Occupation	Unemployed	1(50)	21(15.2)	3(30)	25(16.7)	8.934	0.348
	Unskilled workers	0(0)	5(3.6)	0(0)	5(3.3)	8 df	NS
	Skilled workers	0(0)	58(42)	1(10)	59(39.3)		
	Clerical, shopkeeper, farmer	0(0)	8(5.8)	0(0)	8(5.3)		
	Profession	1(50)	46(33.3)	6(60)	53(35.3)		
Income	Rs.1590 – Rs.4726	0(0)	13(9.4)	0(0)	13(8.7)	7.819	0.451
	Rs 4727- Rs 7877	0(0)	11(8)	2(20)	13(8.7)	8 df	NS
	Rs 7878 - Rs 11876	0(0)	29(21)	2(20)	31(20.7)		
	Rs 11877 - Rs 15754	1(50)	35(25.4)	0(0)	36(24)		
	Above 15754	1(50)	50(36.2)	6(60)	57(38)		
Types of family	Nuclear family	1(50)	65(47.1)	7(70)	73(48.7)	7.573	0.109
	Joint family	0(0)	62(44.9)	3(30)	65(43.3)	4 df	NS
	Extended family	1(50)	11(8)	0(0)	12(8)		
Residence	Urban	1(5)	89(64.5)	8(80)	98(65.3)	1.200	0.549
	Rural	1(50)	49(35.5)	2(20)	52(34.7)	2 df	NS
Marital status	Married	1(50)	63(45.7)	2(20)	66(44)	2.52	0.284
	Unmarried	1(50)	75(54.3)	8(80)	84(56)	2 df	NS

NS – Not Statistical association between demographical variables and attitude levels at 95% ($p > 0.05$)

Discussion

The Internet is one of the main resources of health information especially for young adults, but website content is not always trustworthy or validated. Little is known about this specific population and the importance of online health searches for use and impact. It is fundamental to assess behaviors and attitudes of young people looking for online health-related information and their level of trust in such information[1]. The Internet is assuming an increasingly important role in its young users' lives and is increasingly becoming one of the major health information mediums in many countries [1]. The present study addresses none of them has poor attitude. The outcome of the study reveal that majority 138 (92.0%) samples had good attitude among online health seeking information.

A similar study was conducted by Francois beck phd, Jean-baptisterichardmsc 2010, on use of the internet as a health information resource among French young adults, the result shows that 48.5% (474/977) of Web users aged 15-30 years used the Internet for health purposes. Those who did not use the Internet for health purposes reported being informed enough by other sources (75.0%, 377/503), stated they preferred seeing a doctor (74.1%, 373/503) or did not trust the information on the Internet (67.2%, 338/503). However, approximately 80% (371/474) of young online health seekers considered the information found online reliable. Finally, for online health seekers aged 15-30 years, one-third (33.3%, 157/474) reported they changed their health behaviorsbecause of their online searches [8].

Another study conducted by Oluwaseun l. Obasola, OjoMelnin Agunbiade (2015) on Online Health Information Seeking Pattern Among Undergraduates in a Nigerian UniversityBased on a cross-sectional design, this study investigates online health seeking and its possible influence on decision making among 400 university undergraduates in Nigeria. From the results, it was found that daily Internet use was on the average (33.7%), he majority (72.7%) who perceived available health information as accurate and dependable had an opportunity to seek similar information on their health conditions from different online sources. A high proportion (202) claimed that they consulted a physician after that, just a few (54) of the respondents consulted a traditional healer, and a few others relied on self-medication (10%) or asked friends for

suggestions (11%). Thus, there is a need to provide reliable Internet connection and enlighten the Nigerian youth on criteria for assessing quality online health information [9].

Conclusions

The present study addresses none of them has poor attitude. The outcome of the study reveals that majority 138 (92.0%) samples had good attitude among online health seeking information. The Internet is a useful tool to spread health information and prevention campaigns, especially to target young adults. Young adults trust online information and consider the Internet as a valid source of health advice. Health agencies should ensure the improvement of online health information quality and the creation of health-related websites and programs dedicated to young adults [8].

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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