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Knowledge, Attitudes and Behavioural Changes towards Covid-19 among General Public: A Cross-sectional Study Online Survey

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Background: Covid-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that caused an outbreak of respiratory illness. Several measures were implemented to avoid the disease. Countries started to advice people to practice social distancing, wear face masks, hand hygiene and to avoid crowded places. Different people showed different attitudes towards this.

Objectives: To study the knowledge, attitudes and to identify the behavioural changes towards Covid-19 among people with online access in Sri Lanka.

Methods: A mixed methods design was used. Online questionnaire was circulated among general public. Eleven participants were interviewed to understand the behavioural changes during Covid-19 outbreak. The quantitative data collected were analysed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS software version 25.0. The qualitative data were thematically analysed using QDA miner lite.

Results: A total of 339 participants completed the survey. Educational level of the participants (28.9%) is diploma level or above. From the participants, 70.5% knew that the first Covid-19 diagnosis was in Wuhan, China. About 90.3% knew the symptoms of coronavirus disease and 88.5% knew that it spreads through respiratory droplets. Nevertheless, only 30.4% knew that Covid-19 was caused by SARS-CoV-2 virus. From the participants, 20.6% displayed negative attitude towards infected patients. Most respondents stated that the infected should be isolated (78.1%) and separately treated (88.8%). Among the participants, 74.0% strongly agreed about their role in protecting the health of the community. Majority of the participants stated that they exhibit behavioural changes like wearing a mask, handwashing and social distancing at public places, while others stated that they would prefer to stay at home. The respondent stated frequent hand washing, wearing masks, avoiding crowded places, always maintaining a distance of one-meter, fumigation and maintaining personnel hygiene would help to prevent being infected.

Conclusions: The findings revealed an adequate level of knowledge and satisfactory behavioural changes towards Covid-19. Attitudes towards Covid-19 were a mixture of both positive and negative viewpoints.

Keywords: Attitudes, Behaviours, Coronavirus, Covid-19, Knowledge