Media Credibility, Misinformation, and Communication Patterns during MCO of COVID-19 in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

During Movement Control Order (MCO) of COVID-19, many information has been disseminated through both traditional and social media. Some of that information was credible and came from reliable sources while other information was fake and included misinformation, disinformation, and *infodemic*. The people needed credible information rather than fake one in this critical time. This study aimed to explore the credibility of media, information sources, the main issues, and preferred communication patterns and method of works perceived by Malaysians during MCO. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 210 were returned. The results of this study showed that the majority of respondents 69% relied on new media as their main source of information compared to 30.9% who relied on traditional media. However, a total of 64.8% of respondents considered traditional media as more credible and accurate compared to 35.2% for new media. Additionally, the main concerns and issues followed by respondents on media were health, economic, social, education and others. Finally, a total of 55.7% preferred face to face communication compared to 44.3% who preferred online communication. A total of 51% of respondents preferred to work from the workplace or office compared to 49% who preferred to work from home. Television played a significant role during the pandemic period due to its high credibility as perceived by Malaysians. The main intriguing implication of this study is considering the traditional media as more credible than social media by the Malaysians although the social media was their main source of information.

Keywords: *Communication patterns; COVID-19; credibility; infodemic; misinformation*

INTRODUCTION

The infectious coronavirus disease (COVID-19) caused by a recently discovered coronavirus (WHO, 2020d). The first discovered cases of COVID-19 were reported by officials in the Chinese Wuhan City in December 2019. Some of the earliest discovered cases were associated with the wholesale food market in the city. The market has been considered as the source of the virus or played an important role in the initial spread of the virus (WHO, 2020c). Then the virus spread to other countries and other imported cases were reported in January 2020 in some Asian countries such as Thailand, Japan, and Republic of Korea (WHO, 2020f).

Yet, the virus did not stop and continued its spread to reach other countries around the world including Malaysia. Increasing the number of reported cases in Malaysia has led the

Malaysian Government to take several measures in its efforts to suppress the virus. One of the main measures was announcing the Movement Control Order (MCO).

The Movement Control Order (MCO) was implemented in Malaysia from 18 March 2020 to 31 March 2020 after the announcement of Malaysian Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. It came after the increase of the number of Covid-19 cases in the country. The Malaysians were advised by the National Security Council (NSC) to not leave their homes except for important issues such as buying essentials, and to practice social distancing. All educational institutions and non-essential services sectors were ordered to shut down and all public gatherings were banned to minimise spreading of the virus (Ahmad, 2020). The issue of COVID-19 became totally ubiquitous and has changed the norms of day-to-day activities in the whole world including Malaysia. The use of media has increased by people whether to retrieve the information about the virus and the surrounding due to their staying at homes, or to work or study from their home instead of working from their offices.

The best way to slow down and prevent transmission of COVID-19 is being well informed about this virus, how it spreads, and the disease it causes (WHO, 2020d). The COVID-19 pandemic has severe economic, political, and social effects. It has also influenced systems of media and communication in unprecedented ways. This fast-evolving situation has led the traditional journalistic media to adopt with it, while alternative news media has given this situation their specific ideological spin on the internet. Criticism has been directed at such voices for spreading potentially fake news, conspiracy theories, and enhancing societal confusion via several online channels including social media (Boberg et al., 2020).

In addition, implementing the social distancing policy and lockdowns by many governments to stop the spread of the virus has many impacts on the life of people. They were forced to work, study, and even worship from their homes. This policy has changed the patterns of communication and increased the participation of people in communication technology (Putri & Irwansyah, 2020).

This study aimed to explore the credibility of both traditional and new media, the sources of information, and the main issues and concerns of Malaysians during MCO of COVID-19. Also, the study examined the differences in the perception of Malaysians on the preferred communication patterns and method of work.

Credibility

A similarity was found between concept of credibility and believability or trust (Edelstein & Tefft; 1974; Idid & Wok 2006; Jackob, 2010; Metzger and Flanagin 2008; Morris, Counts, Roseway, Hoff & Schwarz, 2012). Yet, the concept of credibility was considered by others as multidimensional rather than a single dimension. The definition of credibility came as a perceptual variable instead of being an objective measure for source or quality of information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). Also, the definition of credibility as believability; credible information or people are the believable one (Tseng & Fogg, 1999). Also, the credibility is defined as the quality worthy of trust or believable (Bucy, D'Angelo & Bauer, 2014). The concept of credibility of a news story was also defined as a global estimation of the story objectivity (Sundar, 1999). The believability term is equal to credibility and it has been limited to source credibility (Edelstein & Tefft, 1974).

In the research of communication and persuasion, credibility is an essential research area (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). The academic literature on the topic of credibility goes back to the 1950s, and mainly came from the fields of psychology and communication. There was an agreement that the perceived quality is considered as credibility and it is not limited to a person, piece of information, or an object (Tseng & Fogg, 1999). Media credibility is one of the most vastly studied areas in mass communication research. The topic of credibility has

caused confusion and contradiction to several journalism professionals, scholars, and policy makers (McGrath & Gaziano, 1986).

In Malaysia, the discussion about credibility of journalism, standards, and ethics was within the context of political expediency, corporate interests, and media control by laws (Anuar, 2010). There was a concern about the credibility of media since the more credible media has more effect on the people. The credibility of media is the understood believability degree of source of information by the audience. Credibility is the broadcasted or written report quality, and it is affected by several elements including relative expertise, accessibility, objectivity, report currency, and freedom to report. Assessing the credibility of information requires considering these factors (Idid & Wok, 2006). Much of research of source effects came from interpersonal communication rather than mass communication settings (Edelstein & Tefft, 1974).

Recently, the people had various choices in their information seeking process. They can choose print media, broadcast, or even online media. Going online, give the people greater choices such as choosing the trusted sources news from the producers of independent media, follow the traditional journalism, or even from the ''gatewatchers,'' who give instant punditry and watch the media gatekeepers (Banning & Sweetser, 2007). For many decades, the main source of spreading information was the traditional mass media such as TV, newspaper, radio, and magazine. The main role has been played by traditional media was as societal watchdog and fourth estate of the field (Adeyanju, 2015).

The credibility of traditional media and more specific printed media has been seen as higher than the new media due to their approach and way in discussing different issues. Both credibility and social responsibility are the main factors that influence the popularity and prevalence of each type of media (Tanta, Barić-Šelmić & Levak, 2017). There were two main factors that influenced the credibility of media, namely structural and technological features. Structural features: Explaining the high perceived believability of TV as proposed by some researchers might be through the stricter differences between the industries of TV and newspaper. Technological features: Initially, the thought of some researchers that the ability of bringing live news coverage for events by TV compared to newspaper was disadvantage since it might influence its accuracy (Metzger et al., 2003).

The traditional media such as TV, radio, and newspaper have been perceived as more credible than the new media such as online news portals, Internet, Twitter and Facebook by Malaysians. The most perceived highest credible medium was the TV, while the lowest perceived credible medium was Twitter. The low credibility for social media was due to the surrounding discussions on the issues of post-truth, false information, and fake news. In traditional media, the sources of content are mostly verified or known unlike the new media, which led to the poor evaluation of the new media credibility (Idid, Sannusi & Arandas, 2019). The credibility of traditional media is still much higher than the credibility of new media. Also, the dependency of people on traditional media such as television and newspaper were much more than their dependency on the Internet (Mustaffa, et al., 2010).

A total of 225 misinformation pieces from English-language fact-checks were analysed and focused on content rated misleading or false. Most of them (88%) have appeared on the platforms of social media, followed by (9%) on TV, then the news outlets and other websites figured (8%) and (7%) respectively. Rating the misinformation throughout this factsheet was based on the misleading or false information content as rated by independent professional fact-checkers (Brennen et al., 2020). The analysis of news coverage of COVID-19 shows that legacy media presents a higher percentage of satisfaction of people in their access to information through several platforms. Regarding the information confidence of people about the health emergency, network TV figured (82%) then both TV

and print media figured (75%). In comparison, digital media has lower percentage (62%) for websites and (64%) for social media (Casero-Ripollés, 2020).

A series of studies about the dominant medium in the lives of audience started in 1959 then continued in 1963, 1974, and 1976 showed that the credible, dominant, believable was the TV. Among the American people, the TV still the main information sources and the most credible one (Roper, 1978). Among college students, the TV was perceived as the most credible news source compared the radio which was perceived as the lowest one. It might be due to the reason of exposing to TV by college students since their birth (Baxter & Bittner, 1974). The credibility of TV was much than the credibility of the Internet. The media reliance, media usage, and issue salience have a significant relationship with the perception of people about the credibility of both TV and Internet (Mehrabi, Hassan & Ali, 2009).

It is suggested that TV is more important, truthful, and credible than newspaper as a source of local news (Abel & Wirth, 1977). TV was perceived by Malaysian youth as the most credible more than newspapers and Internet. Also, perceiving the TV as a credible medium has a positive relation with the consumption of people for TV news (Wok, Tamam & Bolong, 2010). The TV was the main source of seeking entertainment compared to newspaper which was the main source of seeking information. People are less likely to focus on finding news error if they are in entertainment mode than when they are operating in the mode of processing of information (Mulder, 1980). Credibility among the needed types of information such as entertainment and news are different across the channels of media. Internet information was considered a credible as the other obtained information from TV, magazine and radio, but not high in credibility as newspaper information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000).

The news credibility of TV was totally much higher than the credibility of newspaper for around three decades. The judgment of people on the credibility of TV was varied from their judgment on newspaper. The immediate and dynamic nature of TV were the criteria of judgment on it, compared to the space and time separation between newspapers readers and producers. Thus, the newspaper was perceived as an organisational unit rather than individuals set (Newhagen & Nass, 1989). The news of both TV and newspaper were considered as more credible than the news of social media since there was protection by well-trained staff besides their filtering to the news stories to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of news. The knowledge and educational level of the Internet has influenced the believability and choosing the news by people from newspaper, TV, and social media (Adeyanju, 2015).

Decreasing the circulation of mainstream newspapers has a relationship with their credibility. The perceived less credible media received less dependency by people on it. Yet, the television was more credible than Internet which requires improvement of its credibility (Salman et al, 2011). The credibility of newspaper has a negative relationship with structural pluralism in the United States. Ideology of conservative, use of newspaper, and social and political trust appeared to have significant relationship with the credibility of local newspapers. The decrease of credibility undermined the role of newspapers in informing the public about public affairs (Yamamoto & Nah, 2017).

The embedment of mass-mediated communication comes from its medium. The perception and judgment of public about the news story in newspaper is based on their perception on the publisher, editor, and reporter of that story. Although two different newspapers have reported the same story that is related to one reporter and contains the same message, the perception and judgment might be different based on the news story itself (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). Also, the negative evaluation of the credibility of a newspaper is a result of imbalanced structure of newspaper story (Fico, Richardson & Edwards, 2004).

On the other hand, there was doubt about online information credibility from older journalists since the Internet includes much disseminated incorrect and false information

despite the counter-attack efforts by online sites on their preforms against fake news (Vergeer, 2018). The organisation websites of news were different from personal websites of news regarding the perception about their credibility. The organisation websites have higher credibility than personal websites regarding the overall sponsor, credibility and message of the website (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007).

For the Internet, credibility is a vital issue since the media that perceived as credible get more attention by people. The versions of both online and traditional media were considered as somewhat credible (Johnson & Kaye, 1998). The rate of credibility was associated with other variables of using Twitter such as positive attitudes about instructors or who use Twitter or frequently tweet (DeGroot, Young & VanSlette, 2015). Mostly, the readers use a group of features when making decision regarding credibility of tweet. The tendency of readers to be more trusting, probably due to the limited availability of explicit information about the author on Twitter (Shariff, Zhang & Sanderson, 2017).

However, studying the concept of credibility was in two main areas, namely the credibility of the medium and the credibility of the source. The focus of medium credibility is on the channel that delivers the content more than focusing on the sender of content. The source credibility focuses on examining how different characteristics of the communicator can affect the processing of the message. Studying the source credibility was in mass-mediated contexts, organisational, and interpersonal, contexts (Kiousis, 2001).

The focus of medium credibility research is mainly on the medium of delivering the message to the audience such as TV or newspaper (Golan, 2010). Measuring the message credibility can be done by rating from participants about the degree that they think about the authenticity, believability and accuracy of the content. Thus, measuring the credibility of a message can be through the judgment of people about the content accuracy (Appelman & Sundar, 2016). The focus of credibility of the message is mainly on the characteristics of messages can increase or decrease their credibility. The credibility of the message examines how the believability perception is influenced by characteristics of messages whether of the source's message or the source (Metzger et al., 2003).

On the other hand, in the process of communication, the credibility of the source is a significant element, and its literature mainly focuses on the persona. There should be expanded perspective for viewing the credibility especially when recognising the source are multidimensional (Bae, Wright & Taylor, 2001). The focus of Research of source credibility concentrates is on the characteristics of message source such as the organisation, the news organisation, or the speaker (Golan, 2010).

The source credibility is the amount of believability or credibility referred to information source either individuals or mediums as perceived by receivers (Bracken, 2006). Using the credibility of term source was to imply the positive communicator characteristics that affect acceptance of the message by the receiver (Ohanian, 1990). Sources include a wide range of senders of message such as: News anchors, Websites, and news organisations (Yamamoto & Nah, 2017).

Misinformation and Infodemic

In the middle of the unprecedented COVID-19 global health crisis, several policymakers, academics, and journalists have asserted that misinformation related to the pandemic shows a serious risk to public action and public health (Brennen et al., 2020).

Several misleading or false stories are shared and fabricated without any quality or background checking. The circulation of false and inaccurate information was about all the disease aspects such as the origins, causes, treatment of the virus, and its spreading

mechanism. Absorbing and circulating misinformation can be very fast, change the behaviour of people, and probably lead them to have greater risks (PAHO, 2020).

Quick disseminating of accurate information became a necessity during the crises and epidemics. Yet, there are some barriers that must be overcome for taking the recommended action by people when they are accessing high-quality information. The fast spread of misinformation is similar to the pathogens which complicate the response of health emergency (WHO, 2020a). Spreading the misinformation through social media platforms is faster than spreading COVID-19 itself and can causes huge deleterious effects on health (Barua et al., 2020). The global misinformation epidemic disseminates quickly through several outlets and social media platforms poses a critical issue for public health (Zarocostas, 2020).

A mass circulation of falsehood has been spread as fast as the novel coronavirus itself which has reached almost every country in the world. The categorisation of circulation of falsehood was as disinformation by sharing and producing the information with malicious motivation and as misinformation by spreading the lies without any bad intentions (UNESCO, 2020). Differentiating misinformation from disinformation depends on the intention of the agent in sharing or producing inaccurate content. An example of disinformation is producing a content promising fake treatments of COVID-19 for private profit reasons but sharing the same content by some people as believed to be true with having the intention of being beneficial is misinformation (Posetti & Bontcheva, 2020).

Spreading the misinformation by people comes intentionally through sharing them among the contacts of their network, and it is largely presumed that receiving and sharing misinformation by people as they find it veracious. Additionally, sharing misinformation by people not only because they believe that those information are true but might be due to other reasons such as sarcastic reasons, entertainment purposes, or even to challenge the misinformation. Thus, the alleged risk of fake news might be reduced or even reversed (Metzger & Flanagin, 2020).

Sharing the content of misinformation and fake news through social media reduces the effectiveness of the policy of evidence-based interventions and undermine the scientific expertise credibility with possibility of longer-term consequences (Hartley & Khuong, 2020). The increase of global access to social media, internet connection, and cell phones has led to the rapid production of information and the number of possible paths for having it, creating an infodemic or the epidemic of information (PAHO, 2020).The health crisis global scale, some world leaders, and social media contributions have worsened the current infodemic (France 24, 2020). Similar to the epidemic, the infodemic spreads between humans through physical information and digital systems. The escalation of infodemic phenomenon needs a coordinated response (WHO, 2020a).

The word "infodemic" came on 15 Feb 2020 during Munich Security Conference on the tongue of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of World Health Organisation (WHO) who said, "We're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic." The term infodemic is an information overabundance that includes both accurate and inaccurate information which hardening for people to find reliable guidance and trustworthy sources when they need it. In the COVID-19 pandemic context, the global emergency scale has exacerbated the infodemic and increased by the interconnected way of consuming and disseminating the information through several channels including social media (WHO, 2020b).

The social media and technical risk communication teams of WHO have been working to respond and track the rumours and myths due to the high demands for trustworthy and timely information about COVID 19. Identifying the most spread rumours that have the possibility to harm the health of public such as false cures or prevention procedures was the

focus of WHO through its offices and partners. Refuting these myths came through evidence-based information. WHO made public health advice and information and on COVID 19 that includes myth busters, available on its channels of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Weibo, LinkedIn, and website (WHO, 2020g).

Additionally, the Director-General of WHO said that the organisation is fighting the infodemic besides its fighting against the epidemic. Disseminating the fake news is more easily and faster than the virus, and it is dangerous as the virus itself. WHO worked with media and search companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Tencent, TikTok, YouTube, Pinterest and others to face spreading misinformation and rumours (WHO, 2020e).

The role of social media in the dissemination of information communication has made it an ideal platform in disseminating the rumours. The early detection of rumours is debunking them at their stage of dissemination is known as early rumour detection comes through dealing with consecutive posts about disputed factual claims with highly textual duplication and certain variations over time. Identifying trending rumours requires a flexible and effective model that has the ability for getting long-range dependencies among postings and creating special representations for the right early detection (Chen et al., 2018).

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has published research about spreading the fake news within the new media realm. The most used platform for spreading fake news was WhatsApp (84%), then Facebook figured (8%), followed by blogs and Twitter with (4%) and (1%) respectively (Hussain et al., 2019). More than 350 claims related to COVID-19 have been checked from the beginning until the middle of 2020 by MCMC. Additionally, over 260 papers related to fake news on COVID-19 have been investigated together with the Royal Malaysian Police (Zainul, 2020).

Communication Patterns

Currently, the advancement of technology has a strong influence on the way of communication between individuals. Bit by bit, the technology became an essential part of the way of communication between people and face-to-face communication has been taken a place increasingly this technology. The reliance on technology in communicating with family and friends has increased compared to the decrease of personal engagement with them which uninhibited by the use of devices and phones, even when in the situation of the presence of others (Drago, 2015).

Yet, many other people still prefer face-to-face communication over all other computer-mediated communication forms (Johnson, Sutton & Poon, 2000). New technologies of communication have changed the use of communication media in organisations. However, face-to-face (FTF) communication perceived as an influential communication channel for employees despite the increase of using technology in organisations. In disseminating the work-related information and building relationship between managers and employees, FTF is considered as more effective than computer-mediated communication (CMC) although the CMC was the most used channel for employees (Lee, 2010).

Jonassen & Kwon, (2001) stated that in the process of group problem-solving, FTF is more personal and cohesive compared to CMC which has clearer role expectations and more task oriented. The result of Okdie et al., (2011) shows that more positive impressions and interactions have been formed between participants who have FTF interaction comparing to others who have CMC interaction. Also, a better self-other agreement was found between FTF participants compared to CMC participants. The impressions of participants were similar to their partners during FTF interaction than CMC. The results revealed that FTF interaction

which includes plenty of social cues made it a better channel for individuals to gauge characteristics of others (Okdie et al., 2011).

CMC has some technical limitations such as taking a long time to complete the allocated task than FTF and make less remarks in a given time period. These limitations lead to some consequences such as frustration with the medium and the poorer evaluations of the communication partner besides the medium itself. Thus, the tasks that require increased interdependence between groups cause a problem to the performance of CMC (Bordia, 1997). Johnson, Sutton, & Poon, (2000) study revealed that overall, FTF is communication preferred by students compared to CMC although they use CMC for social bonding purpose. FTF allows transpiring both personal and non-verbal information and in synchronous setting and real time.

During COVID-19 pandemic, Work from Home (WFH) through CMC has mostly replaced FTF communication. WFH has both advantages and disadvantages for both organisations and employees. WFH through CMC that includes several technologies and mediums has created different climates and changes in communication patterns, but it was not richer than FTF communication. At least it has a significant role during the pandemic such as allowing the people to study and work from home, increasing the social connections between people, and providing much-needed entertainment and information (Putri & Irwansyah, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

A total of 300 nationwide online questionnaires were distributed via Google form, yet the returned questionnaires were 210. Using an online google forms questionnaire was the safest and suitable way for data gathering due to the infection and spread of the virus in Malaysia. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 23 has been used to analyse the collected data for this study. The data analysis relied on descriptive including percentages and frequencies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Characteristics
The total number of respondents was 210. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The female respondents figured 56.2% compared to 43.8% for male respondents. The vast majority of respondents 81% aged between18-30 years, followed by 12.9% for those from 31-40. Finally, the respondents aged between 41-50 and 51 & above were 3.3% and 2.9% respectively.

Regarding the race of respondents, the Chinese race was the most dominant with 89.0%, followed by Malay then Indian with 6.2% and 4.8% respectively. The respondents who gained between RM2000 and less monthly income shaped 66.7 %, followed by 17.6% for those who gained from RM2001-RM3000. Respondents who gained between RM4001-RM5000 and RM3001-RM4000 were 5.7% and 5.2% respectively. Finally, those who gained RM5001 & above shaped 4.8%.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	118	56.2
Male	92	43.8

Age		
18-30	170	81.0
31-40	27	12.9
41-50	7	3.3
51 & above	6	2.9
Race		
Chinese	187	89.0
Malay	13	6.2
Indian	10	4.8
Highest Education		
High School	56	26.7
Diploma	73	34.8
Bachelor's degree	75	35.7
Postgraduate	5	2.4
Others	1	.5
Monthly Income		
RM2000 and less	140	66.7
RM2001 – RM3000	37	17.6
RM3001 – RM4000	11	5.2
RM4001 – RM5000	12	5.7
RM5001 & above	10	4.8
Total	**210**	**100.0**

Media Credibility, Reliance, and Concerns

Table 2 presents the source of information, media credibility, and concerns during COVID-19. Most of the respondents 69% relied on social media as their main source of daily information, followed by 20% for TV. Then, newspaper and radio figured 5.7% and 5.2% respectively. However, a total of 42.9% of respondents considered the TV as the most credible and accurate medium, followed by social media especially Facebook and Instagram, and newspaper with 27.1% and 17.1% respectively. The less credible mediums for respondents were the official government websites and radio with 8.1% and 4.8% respectively. Additionally, respondents were asked an open-ended question about the reasons for trusting one medium than another. Their answer was that they trust TV rather than social media due spreading large amount misinformation, disinformation and fake news on social media. The respondents accessed the media to know about some specific issues and concern. The most prevalent issue was the health issue with 40% followed by economic and social issues with 37.6% and 11% respectively. Finally, education figured 9.5% and other issues were 1.9%.

Table 2. Source of information, media credibility, and concerns

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Main source of daily information		
Social media	145	69.0
TV	42	20.0
Newspaper	12	5.7
Radio	11	5.2
Credibility and accuracy of media		
TV	90	42.9
Social media	57	27.1

Newspaper	36	17.1
Official govt. websites	17	8.1
Radio	10	4.8
Main concerns and issues during MCO		
Health	84	40.0
Economic	79	37.6
Social	23	11.0
Education	20	9.5
Others	4	1.9
Total	**210**	**100.0**

Patterns of Communication

Table 3 describes the communication patterns and preferred medium of communication and work during COVID-19. A total of 55.7% of respondents preferred face to face communication method compared to 44.3% who preferred online communication with others. Additionally, a total of 51% of respondents preferred to work from office or workplace compared to 49% who preferred to work from home. Finally, the vast majority of respondents 71% agreed that staying with their family has improved their relationships and ties, compared to 29% who have disagreed.

Table 3. Communication patterns

Items	Frequency	Percentage
Preferable medium of communication		
Face to face	117	55.7
Online	93	44.3
Preferable method of work		
From workplace/ office	107	51.0
From home	103	49.0
MCO and improving relationship with family		
Yes	149	71.0
No	61	29.0
Total	**210**	**100.0**

The respondents of this study have perceived the TV as the most credible medium. In this study, the results were in line with previous studies (Baxter & Bittner, 1974; Idid, Sannusi & Arandas, 2019; Wok, Tamam & Bolong, 2010). Additionally, previous studies (Armstrong & Collins, 200; Wanta & Hu, 1994; Westley & Severin, 1964; Yamamoto & Nah, 2017) argued that reliance on media by the audience has a correlation with its accepted credibility.

However, the majority of respondents (69%) used social media as their main source of information rather than other mediums although they considered the TV as the most credible medium (42.9%). This might be attributed to the interests and demographics of respondents especially their age since the majority of them (81%) belong to millennials who have been born from the years 1981-1996 and generation Z who have been born from the years 1997-2010. Both millennials and generation Z rely heavily on social media compared to Baby Boomers and generation X. As discussed by Kuyucu, (2016) that social media became the favourite media of the new generations. The new generations prefer social media rather than traditional media which cause a threat to traditional media. Different generations have

various ways and motivations in their use of online media. The known traditional communication means are replaced slowly by the new digital tools (Fietkiewicz et al., 2016).

Additionally, most of the respondents' preferred face to face (FTF) communication compared to computer mediated communication (CMC), more than half preferred to work from office rather than home, and finally, the vast majority agreed that staying with family members during MCO has improved the family relations. It can be understood that FTF communication still occupies a significant aspect in the daily life of respondents despite their use of CMC.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to explore the media credibility, information sources, and the main concerns of Malaysians during MCO. Also, the study examined the preferred method of work and communication patterns. The results of this study revealed that media use was not related to media credibility, but to the interests of respondents. Although the TV was perceived as the most credible medium the respondents relied more on social media. Additionally, the news consumption by Malaysians during MCO of COVID-19 was about health issues followed by economic, social, education, and other issues.

On the other hand, spreading misinformation, disinformation, and fake news as mentioned by WHO mainly came through social media rather than traditional media. However, since social media became the main source of information, thus decision-makers and stakeholders such as health authorities and MCMC can disseminate their messages through online TV streaming or TV accounts on several social media platforms. This approach can increase the use of TV as the most credible medium and refute the misinformation and infodemic.

Additionally, refuting and debunking the misinformation and fake news about COVID-19 requires a high level of coordination and arrangement from all countries, governments, official bodies, and organisations especially media sector at both international and local levels. Fact-checking of the information besides identifying the fake news by them might reduce the severity of spreading such harmful information and thus reduce the harm of COVID-19 itself.

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