

Twitter Study on the Framing of Covid-19 Communications by the Government of Assam

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Abstract

Millions of people were affected by the upsurged of Covid-19, creating a global health crisis. It changed the mode of transformation of information around the world and among the people of Assam. In the light of this, the present study seeks to understand how communication for public health has been framed through the transmission of public health message by the Assam Government in creating awareness. For this study, the researcher selected one of the social media handlers as a good surveillance system to analyze the Twitter Handle of HimantaBiswa Sharma (then Health and Family Welfare 2016-21) of Assam. The study analyses the responses of the common people to the tweets and contents shared by the minister locating within a scheme of cognitive schemata through which we prioritize events perceiving, organizing and communicating experiences. The results of the study elaborate the acceptance of relevant information shared by the minister among the public, which supports to replicate the role of the government in handling the pandemic situation.

Keywords: Pandemic, Assam, Twitter, Public Health Communication, Framing, Government.

Introduction

The world is currently battling a serious health emergency due to the outbreak of a series of respiratory disease such as Coronavirus, which caused 25,708,659 total cases, 6,928,638 active cases and 859,669 deaths globally till 31st August'20 (worldometer, 2020). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that it was first detected in December 2019 in Wuhan City of China and On March 11, 2020, was labelled as COVID-19 and was officially declared as a pandemic on 30th January'20 (Just, Damiano, & Catellier, 2020). The disease had some similar characteristics to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) infections. These diseases proved to be fatal, with very high mortality rates (Rabeeh et al., 2013). Since the pandemic of coronavirus is continuously evolving, it is hard to attain the real death toll or number of victims as some of the countries are suspected of lidding up the authenticity of the number of victims. However, the spread is massive, far-reaching global implications creating havoc for mankind. India holds the world's third rank with the highest number of Covid-19 cases with 3,687,939 total cases, 785,127 active cases and 65,435 deaths till date. While Assam records a sudden spike in the number of coronavirus cases with 109040 total cases, 24,804 active cases and 306 deaths (Statista, 2020). The amount of information flowing about Covid-19 is quite overwhelming as this entails more attention in curtailing the risk of the crisis. Hence, it is the prime necessity for reporting the pandemic in an appropriate to drench the crisis risk rather increasing it. Massive actions have been adopted by the government abruptly to connect with the people to change their behaviour and attitude in combating the rapid spread of a new disease like Covid-19.

Throughout the preliminary phase of the Covid-19 outbreak, local health authorities communicated preventive measures to the masses aiming to minimize the rate of infection. Effectiveness in the public communication regarding the pandemic plays a crucial role in providing information regarding the latest updates of the virus, motivating people to adopt preventive measures and reassuring the government's role in safeguarding public health. Covid-19 has been momentous in causing political, social, and economic disruption along with mortality and morbidity (Madhav, et al., 2017). Covid-19 is one of the infectious diseases with large-scale outbreaks that greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area causing significant economic, social, and political disruption. Specially,

pandemics have caused critical fiscal damage, involving short-term monetary shocks along with a long-term loss to commercial growth with a rise in need of lockdown, quarantine, political tension, etc. triggering changes in personal behavior and emotional like aggravation, stress, boredom, resentment, anguish, etc. Evidence suggested that the likelihood of pandemics to have increased over the past century with increase in global travel, amalgamation, urbanization, land use variations and natural environment exploitation (Jones et al., 2008). Such events are likely to lead civic view by expressing emotions in direction of the disease and events that will occur during the pandemic. Towards the later part of the 20th century when people started sharing their feelings, emotions, and opinions over online mediums. Formerly deadly outbreaks occurred in the 20th century, example the influenza flu pandemic (1918-1920) occurred in the absence of personal computers and mobile phones for communication (Mohanta, 2020).

The role of the internet and social media together with that of mainstream press outlets in creating awareness regarding the pandemic cannot be undervalued, international mechanisms of surveillance regulated by the WHO to receive alerts from these new media, as well as communication issued from official channels for the public (Dry, 2010). With the purpose of creating awareness for the situation, innovative modes to operationalize data congregating from tweets, blogs and social media micro post sources are being utilized with a sight to identify in near- to-real-time emergence of a crisis (Pieri, 2019). Thus, it gets easy to examine and study public opinions, attitude, and emotions shared during civic views the outbreaks using data provided by social media.

In 2006, Twitter came into existence, allowing its users to share posts having 280 or less than 280-character text messages, known as “tweets” through which users shared their feelings, emotions and views to the world (Cynthia & Gunther, 2010). Twitter is the individual social media platform allowing public access to data posted and to the users’ accounts, providing free access to only a fraction of the data it generates. As huge number of tweets are generated daily, this fraction is often considered a representative of the total data generated on Twitter. Tweets are organized topic wise enabling the users to follow accounts that always post messages fascinating them (Wang, Wang, & Patterson, 2017). Twitter is considered as a prime source for disseminating information of news sharing and updates in emergent situations, such as public health crises (Ebola and H1N1). Under these circumstances, it is important to communicate in an effective way; hence, more evidence is necessary regarding

the constitution of effective use of multimedia communicating through Twitter (Yoon, et al., 2019). Use of Twitter in 2009–2010 during the H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic has been studied at the time when Twitter was gaining popularity. Information concerning vaccine updates was intended release collectively among users with like-minded emotions and group of friends intentionally expressing sentiment about the vaccine (Briggs, 2016). Some studies have exhibited that the user of twitter preferred the websites like BBC, WHO, or CDC for sharing reliable information. Again, there were studies analyzing the content of Twitter messages during pandemic trends using large databases to predict the social trends.

To understand the potential and importance of public health communication during this pandemic, a review of the existing literatures have been done. Proper exploration and plotting of news frames on public health has been critically studied. For better understanding of the theme, review have been carried out on the virus like Zika, Ebola and H1N1. The course of human history has been shaped with infectious diseases, ensuing increased deaths in comparison to any other pathological causes. The moment when diseases are considered to be lethal, people perceived as great risk of infection cope-up with their fears by blaming the outbreak of a new disease on someone or group of people living outside their own social sphere (Mccauley&Minsky, 2015). Frame-setting method enables media to actively develop frame of reference that reader as well as viewer can understand public actions on social media (Mccauley, Blake, Meissner, &Viswanath, 2012).

News Frames Communicating Public Health During Covid-19 Outbreak

The media remains an essential agent in the aftermath of health epidemic during the 21st century. This has been witnessed since the outbreak of Ebola, SARS, MERS, and present COVID-19 pandemic. A new term, “Infodemic”, has been used to describe the phenomenon by combining the words information and pandemic. In practice, Infodemic has already heavily impacted on society (WHO, n.d.). Infectious diseases involving unanticipated outbreaks cause acute impact on economy, psychology, physical and social surroundings. (Mutua&Oloo, 2020). Public health communication can be framed into crisis communication that comprises of risk information and different approaches to ameliorate them. Risk information comprises warnings, assessments, notifications, knowledge about symptoms,

medical treatments, and consultations on the social consequences of epidemics. At the time of communication regarding ways to ameliorate these risks, crisis communication is used to focus on the steps taken and resources allocated by officials and organizations. However, it should also deliver practical information about what might have been done by the public or individuals in order to alleviate or avoid threats cumulating self-efficacy that influences behavioral intentions (Ophir, 2018). Health risks communication depends on persuasion for framing of the message that informs public about important information and motivates them to act (Lundgren & McMakin, July 2018). Framing has been defined as a concept, an approach, a theory, a class of media effects, a perspective, an analytical technique, a paradigm, and a multi-paradigmatic research program (Marais, 2012). Public health news frames are organized principles distributed collectively and allegorically obstinate working overtime to give a meaningful structure to the social world about the pandemic and its risk.

Momentous research has been conducted in the field of health communication to examine the effect of narrative messages. For example, Greene and Brinn (2003) explored the effects of narratives in communicating risks of using tanning beds. The study discovered that the narrative message had a major effect on reducing recipients' intention to use tanning beds. Further, researchers found a narrative film to be more effective in communicating the significance of vaccination human papillomavirus (HPV)(Shen& Sheer, 2015). Throughout the pandemic period, the networking of health organizations like WHO and CDC with public through new mass media and technology brings a difference in the meaning of mortality and morbidity as information forwarded by these organizations create a meaningful impact. The framing of health crisis by Covid-19 through these organizations enabled the public to identify different approaches of media to report the pandemic and its effectiveness. Framing of the virus in media would naturally stem people's perception and interpretation about the deadly coronavirus. The media does not blow a critical issue like COVID-19 out of proportion to avoid creating unnecessary panic among the people being capable to lead more health complications. Constructive coverage of the pandemic would help the public to cope with the fear of the pandemic (Ogbodo, Onwe, Chukwu, Nwasum, & Sanita, 2020). The advisory from WHO to governments comprises proactive steps for communicating with the public about epidemics, to share critical information about the epidemic in order to minimize the spread of the disease and foster the public's collaboration with the government. The supreme public health goal is to bring the outbreak under control as quickly as possible, with

as little social disruption. Effective outbreak communication being one tool to achieve that goal (*WHO Outbreak communication guidelines*, n.d.).

1. The utmost goal for communication during pandemic is to connect with the public building, maintaining, or restoring **faith**. Throughout cultures, political systems, and level of country development it is the most essential. Losing the confidence of the people can lead to severe loss in health, economic and political terms. Abundant research and prominent public health examples are available supporting the assumption that the less people trusting those who are supposed to protect them are lesser, the public will be more afraid and ignoring them they will conform their choices and behaviour with management instructions during outbreak. Responsibility in communicating with the public is critical in both directions. Evidence shows that public panicking is rare when people have been truthfully informed.
2. In today's globalized world, information about outbreaks cannot be kept hidden from the public as it gets revealed within seconds due to advancement in media. Framing of the event is necessary by making early **announcements** to prevent fake news. People tend to overrate the risk if the information is withheld. Evidence shows that the lengthier officials suppress worrisome information, the more alarming information will seem when it is revealed, especially by an outdoor informant. The advances of early warning balance the risks, and the spreading of inaccurate information can be minimized with appropriate outbreak communication messages.
3. **Transparency** is required to maintain public trust through communication honesty, simple understanding, completeness, and accuracy. The relationship among epidemic managers and the public is characterized through transparency. Using transparency people are authorized to "view" the evidence-collection, hazard-evaluating and outcome procedures connected with outbreak management. Transparency provides many benefits and demonstrates confronting during uncertainty and nonentities, systematic answers are provided by the outbreak managers. A vital factor of public representatives for specific development is media preparation preceding with media interaction. It's simply a formulation of specific ideas and responses to probable questions.

4. An effective communication is critical towards **Understanding the public**. Beliefs that are unambiguously addressed are often difficult to get altered. And it is nearly impossible to design successful messages that bridge the gap between the expert and the public without knowing what the public thinks. Early risk communication was directed at informing the public about technical decisions (known as the "decide and tell" strategy). Today, risk communicators teach that crisis communication is a dialogue. It is the job of the communicator to understand the public's beliefs, opinions and knowledge about specific risks. This task is sometimes called "communications surveillance". The public is entitled to information that affects their health and the health of their families. Learning who they are and what they think is critical to successful outbreak communication. Communication about personal preventive measures is particularly useful as it empowers the public to take some responsibility for their own health.
5. Risk perception is more affected through the trust infused by the public health officials through their decisions and actions. than communication. There is risk communication impact in everything outbreak control managers do, not just in what is said. Therefore, risk communication is most effective when it is integrated with risk analysis and risk management. Risk communication should be incorporated into preparedness **planning** for major events and in all aspects of an outbreak response. Have a risk communication plan ready before it is needed. Outbreak communication planning must be a part of outbreak management planning from the start. To be effective, outbreak communication cannot be a last-minute add-on feature to announce decisions. Communication planning is usually led by agency communicators and often ignored by senior management. Because outbreak communication principles include some counter-intuitive notions about dealing with the public, it is a potential hazard to wait for a crisis to tell managers about the need to acknowledge uncertainty or empathize with the public's beliefs and fears.

Aim of the Study

The current study seeks to understand how health communication among the public being framed through the transmission of health messages by the Assam Government in creating awareness. Therefore, the researcher selects one of the social media handles as a good surveillance system to analyze the Twitter Handle of HimantaBiswa Sharma (Minister of

Finance, Health and Family Welfare) of Assam. The primary goal of the study is to investigate the reactions of the public to the tweets and contents shared by the minister that will help in examining the cognitive schemata through which we prioritize events by perceiving, organizing, and communicating experiences. This study has applied a qualitative method with the use of framing theory and thematic analysis for the statistics shared by the minister on his twitter handle for the month of August 2020.

Methodology

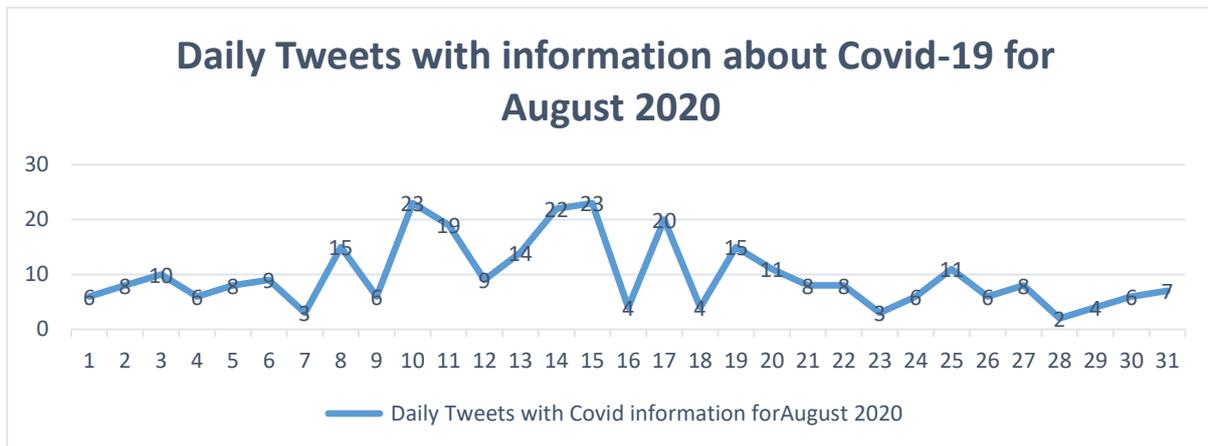
In order to investigate the responsibility of media for COVID-19, the researcher took over thematic and framing analysis approach for analyzing media as formerly utilized by Foley (Thomas, Wilson, Tonkin, Miller, & Ward, 2020). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that is usually used for identifying common topics, concepts, and patterns in each dataset. Qualitative framing analysis is a method frequently used in media analysis for its effectiveness as a heuristic tool (Starr & Oxlad, 2020). The framing of responsibility throughout health crises is recognized as a sense-making and surviving mechanism for individuals that at times leads to stigmatization of an affected group. Therefore, the role of the media in framing responsibility (e.g., on individuals and/or institutions for their various roles and responsibilities) in duration of a health crisis represents an imperative part of messaging among the public. By setting accountability for a health crisis in the course of a pandemic, the media also tries to mediate public behavior into panicking by inducing a sense of distinctiveness which marks an effect of allaying fears by framing them as distant variants (Thomas et al., 2020). The study has applied a qualitative approach to both framing and thematic analysis for the month of August examining the information circulated regarding public communication. Framing theory suggests that media framing can impact the ways how audiences feel about an issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Such framing effects are often explained by the associative network model of memory, which conceives the human brain as a mental system made up of networks of associated cognitive nodes (Price, Tewksbury, Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997). According to this framework, the aspects highlighted in the tweets (i.e., the frames that are present in the story) will trigger various opinions and sentiments among the mind of the readers' enabling them more likely to react in a somewhat predictable manner about their health issues and risks. An understanding of the way government frames about specific issues is, therefore, a prerequisite to knowledge of the changing aspects that encompasses formation of public perceptions on these issues.

The streaming API and the search API are the two key functions of Application Programming Interface (API) that enables public access to tweets on Twitter. In directive of subscribing a continuous streaming of new tweets containing specific keywords or originating from specific users or defined locations, a streaming API is used. Whereas it is relevant to monitor tweets 19 continuously based on defined criteria, the search API, by contrast, can be used to retrieve past tweets according to a range of criteria, including keywords/hashtags, senders, location, etc. (Wang et al., 2017). The search API will only return a limited number of tweets, and therefore cannot be used to retrieve a comprehensive archive of past tweets containing specific hashtags. Furthermore, there are in-built limits on the number of keywords or Twitter accounts that can be queried at any given time or within a certain timeframe. The major issue, however, might be the fact that the search API can only be used to retrieve tweets posted within the last 6 to 9 days, depending on Twitter activity. For hot topics that generate a lot of tweets, the requests can only go back to one or two days (Wang et al., 2017). It should be noted that some of these limits can be overcome, at a cost, by accessing the Twitter API through one of the third-party resellers of Twitter content. Playing with the programming code can also help with overcoming these difficulties. For instance, to ensure a complete collection of tweets over time, the period for data collection has been manually set along with the specific day for Twitter data harvesting. After testing different options and strategies, the researcher decided to use the search API every day for a period of 31 days to collect enough data for the analysis.

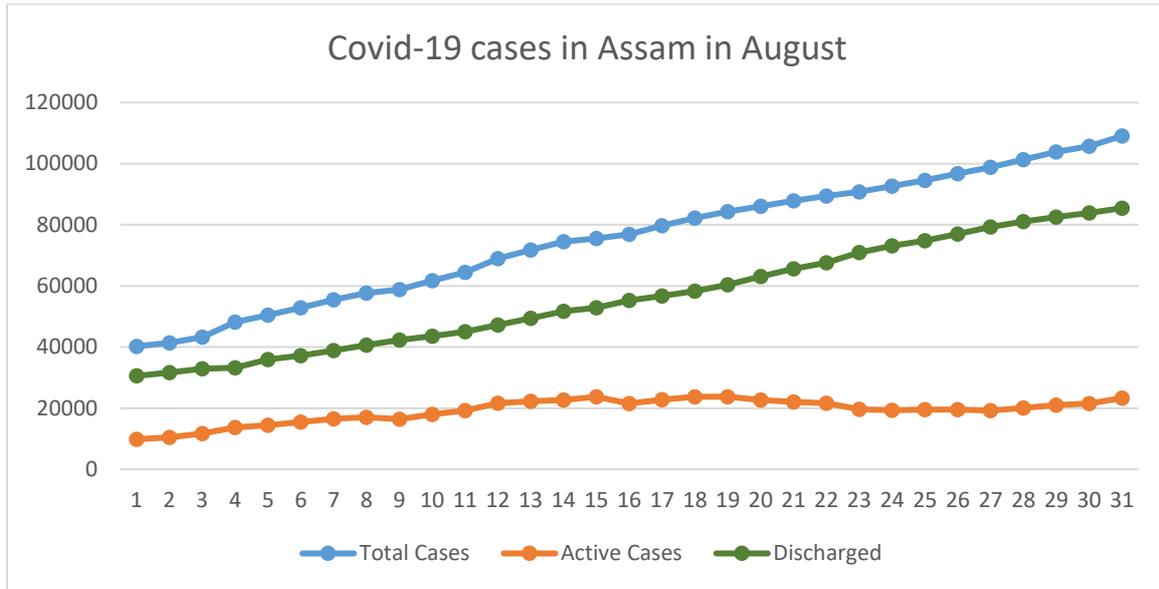
This study employed thematic analysis of the tweets to examine the impact of public health messages regarding the risk and measures about the Covid-19 over the given time frame. Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify what exists in the text as well as the trends of public opinion created by the tweets by the health minister. This study is exploratory in nature and is intended to generate a comparison of news coverage about the pandemic and accuracy of information. Each single tweet related to the pandemic for the month of August was the unit of analysis for this study. Based on the criteria, our sample included 297 tweets related to Covid-19 for the month of August 2020. It should be noted that this study has assessed the universe of what the health minister tweeted about the pandemic and communication for public health, during the selected period. Therefore, it is appropriate to use descriptive data. The authenticity of published information about the number of Covid cases in Assam and all information for the beneficiary of the public has been shared by the health minister as the data has been shared and generated by the government of Assam.

Findings

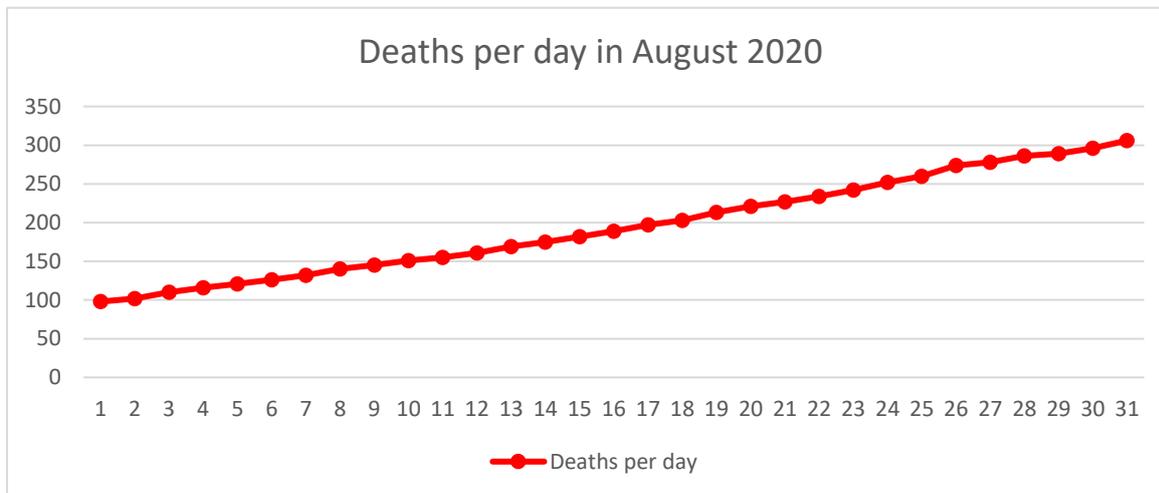
Firstly, the study evaluates the health information about Covid-19 shared for the public by plotting the daily number of tweets against the given time frame (Figure 1). The given figure depicts the number of daily tweets informing the public about the issues related to Covid-19. Total 297 tweets were shared over Twitter handle. Out of which 60 tweets were explaining about (figure 2) daily active, total, discharged, and deaths (figure3) in the state due to Covid-19 (Sarma, n.d.). These tweets also include the names, age and area of the patients who succumbed due to the pandemic. There are tweets on the press conferences sharing information about the SOPs given by the state government for the public. Along with the measures for the public movement, these tweets include the establishment of new Covid-19 hospitals, Quarantine centers, Plasma donation camps, steps adopted by the state to for food supply of food and medical facilities for the infected patients. Also, the number of tests conducted in the state on daily basis in order to reduce the risk of virus in the state.



(Figure 1)



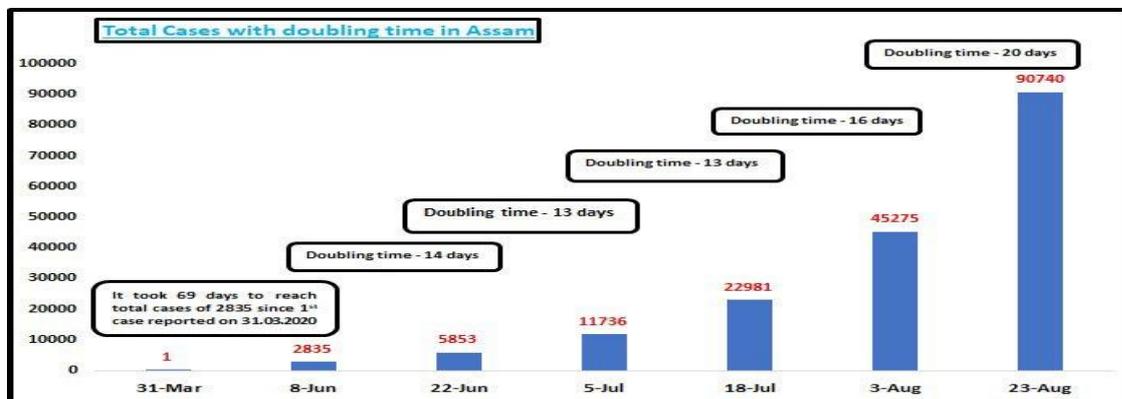
(figure2)



(Figure 3)

The data above reflects activeness of the government of Assam in communicating with the public through the accuracy of the information and daily updates of the pandemic. This information has been categorized under different themes related to the public communication as follows:

Tweets on increasing number of Covid-19 cases in the State:The government has been trying hard to convey the accurate number of cases detected every day and informing the public to take the preventive measures to be safe. Reports have been published regarding the increasing positivity rate of the virus in the state through the twitter handle of the health minister (figure 4). It represents the speed of the virus that has started to double in Assam within a duration of every 15-20 days till 31st August. It is an alarming sign for the public to take immediate care of their health. Hence, the government has been making request to the public to avoid movement out of their homes until it is urgent. Tweets has been shared requesting the public to give priority to their safety stop children and elderly people above 65 years coming out of their homes, keep an eye on health by checking oxygen level, inform the health workers on visibility of any Covid symptoms like cough, fever, diarrhea and problem in breathing. The people who are quarantined in the containment zone are being provided with basic needs like rice, dal, soap, detergent, groceries etc. free of cost by the government so that they don't face any difficulty during those 14 days.



(Figure 4)

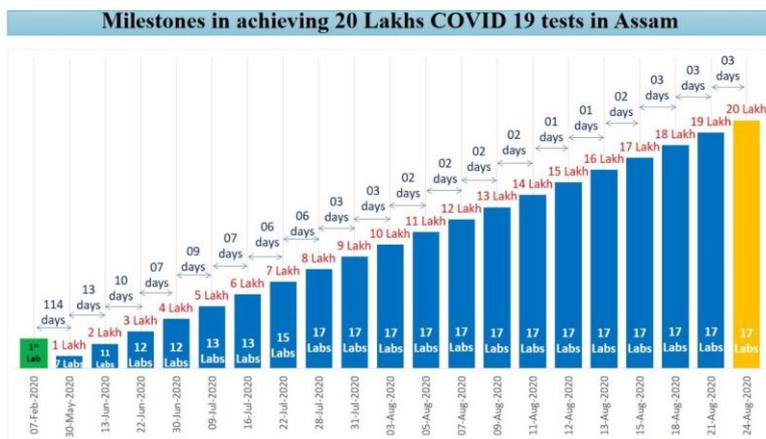
Tweets on opening of new quarantine centers and hospitals: The government is actively taking care about the infected patients by inaugurating new Covid-19 hospitals and arranging Covid care centers. They have been trying hard to maintain the hygiene of the Covid patients of all ages and made all necessary arrangements for them. The government hospitals have

been treating the Covid patients for free of cost. At Mahendra Mohan Choudhary hospital a special pediatrics unit has been inaugurated named as Bagri Children Covid Care Centre. New beds, Intensive Care Units (ICU), Dialysis machines, oxygen cylinders and latest medicines all being provided by the government to the hospitals for treating the Covid patients separately so that the other non-Covid patients don't need to suffer. The patients admitted at the Covid and Quarantine centers are being provided with proper supply of food and medicines. Also, they are being offered with hampers on being cured of Covid while they get discharged. The works of the doctors and other medical staff are being appreciated entitling them as 'Covid Warriors'. Information through tweets is shared about the co-curricular activities being adopted in the Quarantine centers like singing songs, dance, playing games by the patients to keep their spirits high. The health minister is seen replying to the request made by the public on twitter and tries to sort out their problems by providing the needful requirement.

Tweets on issuing public health guidelines/ instructions through conducting press conferences:

In lieu of bringing the pandemic situation under control over the state, the government is putting a lot of efforts by issuing orders regarding public movement. Several guidelines have been launched regarding lockdown and unlocking safeguarding the public health of the people. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been issued by the government for smooth movement of the daily lives of the people amidst the pandemic. These include restrictions on social gatherings, allowing 50% of passengers movement in public transport keeping in mind all the safety protocols, use of sanitizers and soaps in front of every shop, wearing of masks by everyone as mandatory without fail, maintaining social distancing in all offices and public places, imposed fines on those who fail to wear masks in public places. The government of Assam has also launched a website <https://covid19.assam.gov.in/> that provides all Covid-19 advisories for the public. It provides information about latest Covid updates in the State, number of cases each district wise, contains the guidelines issued by the government, information on how to check Covid-19 test results, immediate use AarogyaSetu, Covaas and Covid Suraksha mobile applications. The website also embraces about helpline numbers for the public in case of emergency, guidelines for home quarantine and passengers coming from outside the State. It contains the latest advisory issued by the state government on 13th August allowing inter-district movement of passengers between Monday and Friday

only with 50% capacity in public transport, permitting activities similar in the previous order between 5am to 9pm only between Monday and Friday. No movement of individuals will be allowed on Saturday and Sunday in the entire state. Spitting in public places is strictly prohibited, no activities allowed in containment zone, social/political/religious/entertainment functions allowed with 50 persons only(Assam, 2020). The government has been felicitating the plasma donators with certificates as “Plasma Heroes” and organizing plasma donations campaigns at the government hospitals in the entire state. Guidelines have been issued on opening of schools and colleges(above 9th standard) in the state between 21st to 31st August for which all the teachers are asked to undergo Covid-19 testing before resuming their duties on 1st September 2020. Protocols have been issued for maintain social distancing among the students and monitoring their temperatures on the entry gate everyday. On 24th August 20 lakh Covid test has been done by the State and planning to do more test among the public to put a hold on the community transmission of the virus(Figure 5) (Assam, 2020).



(Figure 5)

As a safety measure for the public health, the government has been arranging Covid-19 test centres in the entire state availing virus testing both Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) and RT-PCR free of cost. The government has been taking all precautions to lower the rate of virus transmission in the State up keeping public health and communicating with them constantly replying to their comments and tweets. In the latest SOP, government has reduced the duration of institutional quarantine for passengers coming out of the state to 7 days from 14days. After residing 7 days in the Quarantine Centre they can go home complete the remaining 7 days quarantine at their own residences.

The public response towards the tweets:

Despite the efforts to provide all necessary measures for protecting the public from the virus, the government has received criticism from few people and opposition leaders. Some people have been complaining about the food and cleanliness at the Covid Care Centers. Some complain about the doctors and working staff to be careless. The health minister has been found looking after these issues and makes the frequent visit to the centers sharing videos and pictures through his Twitter handle. The health minister himself visits the Covid Care Units in the hospitals wearing PPE kits inspecting them. The government of Assam has been receiving a lot of appreciation from the public for their preventive measures. While the health minister and state generally announce crucial policy choices, an area of voters have responded additional favorably to policy proposals advanced by reliable public health officers. Trust upon health care professionals, scientists, and knowledgeable medical organizations has typically remained high despite the public's confidence in governments being low. While communicating, the government. ought to hear the community's wants, considerations and categorical real fellow feeling and concern. Expression of compassion enhances credibleness and results in simpler communication. A section of voters sense that politicians empathize with them and square measure is involved for his or her welfare, the additional seemingly can they respond favorably to the recommendation given. The government ought to praise teams or sectors of individuals on the frontline and follow the provided steering. This feedback is a sort of constructive engagement with voters and might encourage the current maintenance of positive behaviours. In addition, people are seemingly to follow recommendation if they perceive the explanation behind them. Sugar-coating' should be avoided: access to correct information, each positive and negative, helps the public to build correct expectations. The aim must not be to scare the public but to supply ample

information to be befittingly disturbed. Risk perception is a predictor of protecting behaviours, and so risks must neither be exaggerated nor trivialized. Once the modification is at hand, the state government should communicate early, even with incomplete information. Whereas the public dislike uncertainty, a perception of complication is worse as a result of it diminishes trust. Acknowledging uncertainty does not undermine confidence within the information or its supply. Moreover, withholding information will inspire the public to search for it elsewhere, fostering a belief in rumors, information, and conspiracy theories.

Conclusion

This research determines the use of Twitter in conducting an Infodemic study on Covid-19 locating the public health crisis and the role of government in communication about pandemic and implementation of policy. The study is qualitative in nature, investigates the potential of using Twitter as a source of data to understand the public health communication during the pandemic in Assam. It can be observed that the government has been adopting all possible measures to get hold of the infected cases in the state. All latest information about the virus is being shared by the health minister over his Twitter handle every day. Helpline numbers are being circulated over the websites to answer public queries and assist them when need arises. Different schemes are being implemented by the government to cope up with the health crisis. Work from home has been advised to the people, free admission in the government colleges for the undergraduate and post-graduate students, and waiving off fees in the government run schools for this academic year. The Government have advised all private institutions of the State to offer at least 255 concessions in monthly fees (pre-primary to XII) from May 1 to, 2020 till formal re-opening of the schools. Health workers of NGOs and NHM have deputed for distributing free masks and sanitizers among people and make them aware about the risk of the virus. The tweets made by the health minister gives an overall positive sight of the government for successful communication with the people of the state during this health crisis. The engagement of the public in response to the health messages is strongly influenced by their socio-cultural identity, age, gender, and access to the resources. Such factors are responsible for influencing people's well, like modes of communication and their understanding as a 'trustworthy authority' and substantially their capability to react to the information. It cannot be neglected that within the 'post-truth era,' government communications are seen by some to be inherently political and value-laden. Avoiding exposure to an extremely transmissible infection or taking care of family,

neighbours, and workers could also be shared goals; but, the mode of delivery and also the framing of significant public health info has to be sensitive, and tailored towards specific social teams and communities. It is necessary to know community views and desires; to figure out with native influencers—‘go-to people’—and embody culturally-relevant recommendation around managing risk in households and at funerals. Whereas multiple interaction and shared identity will not guarantee high levels of trust and sympathy, they are indispensable tools for communicators. Moreover, social factors should be taken into consideration once developing a public health communication strategy, which, to be genuinely effective in partaking public support and participation. It must be sensitive to the considerations and values of the public and work with different modes of data sharing. The recent proliferation of data via on-line media provides an extra layer of quality.

Social media handles like Twitter also provides opportunities for effective communication. It permits important messages to be disseminated quickly and expeditiously to be fitly tailored to totally different audiences. It collectively permits communities to themselves to become actively concerned in sharing and honing relevant messages. As declared on top of, trust is wide recognized as being a central pillar of effective public health crisis management. However, we tend to argue that the institution of trust needs transparency and civic engagement and then establish a collection of ten recommendations for effective pandemic communication, drawing totally on analysis from the disciplines of risk communication, social and psychological science, and policy studies. These recommendations are designed to create building blocks of associate degree overarching communications strategy that respects the range of communities that represent up to date societies and reflects a commitment to community participation, whereas we incline to relate a number of the recommendations to the COVID-19 pandemic and illustrate how the State authorities of Assam successfully enforced components throughout the initial happening of COVID-19. We tend to argue that the recommendations are often applied to alternative public health and national challenges that traverse the domains of social life, economy, and health.

Limitations

The present study has some limitations that can be addressed in future studies as it is based on a single social media platform, i.e. Twitter, for a period of one month. This study has both strength and weakness upon the analyzation of qualitative data collected through the tweets on Covid-19 health communication shared by the health minister of Assam. Keeping in view

the public responses on the tweets, it can be assumed that there can be some lapse in the communication regarding the health crisis. The researcher has only examined the data shared on the twitter handle and it can be differentiated with the data shared by other sources. For that, a comparative study can be conducted in the future.

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