



# Awareness of Covid-19 Vocabulary: A Study Of Undergraduate Students and Tribal People

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## Abstract

The novel corona virus has impacted virtually everybody in the world today. It has introduced various changes which led to what has come to be known as the new normal in society and as well as language.

The present study aims at evaluating the awareness and knowledge of Covid-19 related English vocabulary in two groups of people-undergraduates and tribal people. A total of twenty Covid-19 vocabulary items have been identified from different sources such as social networking websites, search engines, blogs, corpuses and news articles.

A survey was conducted with the help of a questionnaire (consisting of 20 questions) and interview (10 questions) between 1- 7 December, 2021 to assess the differences in awareness and understanding levels of these Covid-19 terminology between the two groups. The data gathered was analyzed to identify the awareness levels between the two groups.

A total of 150 participants were surveyed in the study, of which 100 (66.66) were undergraduates of Adilabad town and 50 (33.33) participants were tribal people residing in four surrounding Mandals of Adilabad town. At the end of the analysis, it is found that undergraduates possess only 40% of the awareness about Covid-19 terminology. In the case of tribal, it is even lower. They possess only 20% of the knowledge of this terminology.

The average score of undergraduates is 8.2 (questionnaire having twenty questions) and the tribal people showed awareness and knowledge of only 4 Covid-19 vocabulary items out of ten questions in the face-to-face interviews.

The low level of awareness about Covid-19 related vocabulary both in the undergraduates and tribal people leads us to conclude that there is an urgent need to increase awareness and create understanding as these are fundamental to effectively deal with the pandemic. Efforts by government and Non-Governmental Organizations are warranted to increase the public's awareness and fill the gaps within their knowledge.

The primary objective of this study was to test the awareness level and create awareness about Covid-19 terminology. Keeping this in mind, awareness of the twenty expressions selected for study was created among the participants.

## **Introduction**

A lot of new words and complicated terminology entered our vocabulary during Covid-19. Many old words acquired new prominence during the pandemic times such as isolation, quarantine, social distance, containment etc. As these terms are being widely used in media, they are taken for granted and many stakeholders are under the impression that they understand the correct meanings of these words. The project originated out of curiosity to know the level of knowledge and understanding of these words among people.

Because making sure people have awareness and accurate knowledge of this terminology is key to containing the spread of Covid-19. We would be able to respond to things in a clear way, if we have a clear understanding of what we're talking about. It is important to understand these words because they can mean different things.

Naming and being able to use the words would help in coping with the disease more effectively.

It is assumed that people, particularly a majority of the educated have an understanding of the most commonly used terminology. It is also assumed that they can use these terms to talk about the disease when required.

In this context, it is felt that knowledge and understanding of the Covid-19 related terminology would go a long way in the fight against the disease.

## **Statement of the Problem**

On this premise, the present study attempts to address the following question:

- What is the level of awareness and knowledge of Covid-19 words and expressions among the selected groups of people?

In order to test the awareness, twenty most frequently used and most useful English words and expressions have been identified which emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it endeavors to investigate the awareness levels and knowledge of these words among the selected groups of people. A total of twenty Covid-19 vocabulary items have been identified from different sources such as social networking websites, search engines, blogs and news articles.

## **Aims and Objective**

- The main objective is to study the level of awareness of and knowledge of words and expressions emerged in the wake of Covid-19 among the two groups of people. (Undergraduates and tribal people)
- In order to achieve the first objective, it is aimed to identify the most frequently used twenty Covid-19 English words on the basis of usefulness and frequency.

- It is also aimed to create awareness and understanding about these words among the selected groups of people as it equips the them to effectively deal with the disease.

## Review of Literature

The word ‘corona’ comes from Latin which means ‘crown’. The virus is given the name ‘corona’ because it has crown-like shape and spikes.

The outbreak of Covid-19 led to the emergence of new words to define new situations. These words have been coined and widely used in print and social media. A number of hitherto forgotten old words and expressions have acquired new significance during this pandemic. In the early part, i.e., in January 2020, it was necessary to name and describe the virus. By March, the words reflect the social impact of the virus and the medical response.

According to Thorne (2020; also cited in CBC, 2020), more than 1,000 new words – both non-specialized and technical terminology have been created during the current pandemic. Amanda (2020) overviews some of the most widely used vocabulary related to our new COVID-19 reality,

Al-Salman, Saleh & Ahmad S. Haider. (2021) in their study “COVID-19 trending neologisms and word formation processes in English” studied various word-formation processes with regard to Covid-19 vocabulary items and prepared a corpus of the neologisms.

Jefwa Mweri (2021) attempts an analysis of language of social crisis and it examines neologisms in the wake of COVID-19 by shedding some light on how some of the words and phrases of corona vocabulary came into existence and how they are used in the context of this pandemic.

The study conducted by Jaber RM, Mafrachi B, Al-Ani A, Shkara M (2021) evaluated the awareness and practices of both the Jordanian and Iraqi populations during the early stages of the pandemic and concluded that a majority of the people had basic understanding of the Covid-19. They gained the awareness through various means such as government, media etc.

Prama Bhattacharya, Debanjan Banerjee, and T.S. Sathyanarayana Rao have investigated the social stigma, discriminatory behavior and its consequences that are perceived to have any contact with the disease in India.

It is seen that there has been a lack of research work on the awareness and understanding of Covid-19 vocabulary particularly at the local level. In this context, it has been decided to study the awareness levels of the Covid-19 words and expressions in people as awareness is the first step in containing the disease.

## Methodology

### Study Setting

This study was conducted among the undergraduate students and tribal people through survey method. The undergraduate students are generally considered to possess awareness of words and expressions related to Covid-19 disease. The tribal people are considered to lack the awareness of this knowledge. Thus, a cross sectional survey was conducted among these two two groups of people

### Questionnaire

This project used a printed questionnaire for assessing the awareness of undergraduate students. The questionnaire consisted of twenty questions which were framed keeping in mind the most frequently used and most useful terms in the context of Covid-19 disease.

The questionnaire was administered to a group of hundred undergraduate students of five-degree college students in Adilabad town (twenty students each) between December 1-3, 2021. The students doing this project along with the mentor visited the following colleges and sought permission from the principals and the students who consented to participate in the project.

The details of the colleges visited:

Sl. No.	Name of the College	No. of participants	Male/Female
1.	Nalanda Degree College, Adilabad	20	10/10
2.	Vidyarthi Degree College, Adilabad	20	10/10
3.	Vagdevi Degree College, Adilabad	20	10/10
4.	Krishnaveni Degree College, Adilabad	20	10/10
5.	Govt. Degree College (Sciences), Adilabad	20	10/10

The questionnaire was created, designed and printed on a single A4 paper. The purpose of the project was explained to the participants and appropriate instructions as to how to answer the questionnaire were given to them. They were encouraged to mark the choices based on their knowledge and not to seek help from other students. The participants were chosen in such a way that there is a representation from all the three years of degree programme and balance was maintained between men and women students.

To avoid guess work in answering, each question had an option 'I don't know'. Participants were encouraged to go for this option if they do not know the answer rather than marking the answers on the basis of guessing.

While administering the questions, care was taken to use masks and sanitizers in view of the on-going corona pandemic and the emergence of new variants such as 'omicron'.

At the end of the answering of the questionnaire, correct answers were discussed with the participants. The students who undertook this project and the mentor of this project created awareness about the twenty most frequently used and useful Covid-19 terminology.

The efforts and the project and its purpose were appreciated by the participants, the principals and the lecturer in charge.

### Interview

The method of Interview was preferred over questionnaire in the case of tribal people as majority of them, including the educated found it difficult to read and understand the questionnaire. Supplementary questions were also asked in their dialect/accents to elicit responses from the participants in villages.

Interview consisted of ten questions to assess awareness of the basic and most frequently used Covid-19 related words and expressions. It was administered to a group of fifty tribal people belonging to ten villages of four surrounding Mandals of Adilabad district from between 4-7 December, 2021. The students visited the villages for two days on motor bike.

The details of the of the villages visited:

Sl. No.	Name of the Mandal	Names of the Villages	No. of participants
1	Boath	Pippaldhari, Karathwada, Tewti (3)	15
2	Neredigonda	Lokhampur, Sowergaon (2)	11
3	Ichhoda	Dharampur, Chincholi, Junni (3)	13
4	Gudihatnoor	Dongargaon, Kolhari (2)	11

The purpose of the project was explained to the participants and their voluntary participation was encouraged. Ten questions were asked in total. Supplementary questions were also asked to draw responses from them. Precautions such as wearing the mask and sanitizer were used while conducting the interview.

At the end of the interview awareness was created about the basic Covid-19 words and expressions which was appreciated by the villagers.

## Data Collection

The tools of questionnaire and interview were designed based on currently available information about Covid-19 vocabulary. The validity of questions was evaluated by the mentor and a research scholar pursuing PhD. The questionnaire consisted of two basic sections. The first section included details such as name, gender, age, class and the name of the college. The second section included questions to assess respondents' awareness of the following: Meaning of Covid-19, transmission, symptoms, precautionary measures, difference between isolation and quarantine etc. Participants had to choose one correct option out of the available options. The fourth one in each question was 'I don't know' which was included to remove guess work and also to know the level of ignorance among the participants. The Interview consisted of ten questions and consisted of two sections. In the first sections demographic details were taken. In the second, questions were included on Covid-19.

The scoring system: Each correct answer was given one point while incorrect answers received zero points. The person/s with maximum correct answers would mean to have more awareness of the terms.

The participants were stratified into three categories based on their level of awareness: Below average (7 or less than 7); Average (8 or less than 13); above average (14 or above 14)

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the help of evaluation sheets. It was represented with pie diagram and in tabular form. A qualitative and descriptive analysis was attempted on the basis of the data.

## Findings

The average score of undergraduates is 8.2 (questionnaire having twenty questions). It means that undergraduate students showed awareness of only 8 terms and the tribal people showed awareness and knowledge of only 4 Covid-19 vocabulary items out of ten questions in the face-to-face interviews.

- Total no. of questions asked: 20 questions
- Out of these, 1st, 2nd, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> questions were answered by 40 people.
- 3 people answered all the questions
- 14 people did not give any correct answer
- Most of the people have not heard the selected Covid-19 vocabulary and words
- The average of correct answers: 8.2
- The average of incorrect answers: 11.8

- Question number 5 is answered by majority of the students; Question numbers are not answered correctly by majority of the students

## Conclusions

1. The low level of awareness about Covid-19 related vocabulary both in the undergraduates and tribal people leads us to conclude that there is an urgent need to increase awareness and create understanding as these are fundamental to effectively deal with the pandemic. Efforts by government and Non-Governmental Organizations are warranted to increase the public's awareness and fill the gaps within their knowledge.
2. Most of the participants exhibited confusion with regard to some terms which are interchangeably used such as corona virus and Covid-19; isolation and quarantine; physical and social distance, symptomatic and asymptomatic etc.
3. Majority identify Aasha workers as Frontline workers leaving all the others such as doctors, nurses, municipal sanitation workers etc.
4. Questions on Comorbidity and Herd immunity were found difficult by the participants as very few gave correct answers.
5. Majority of the participants understand that one should not participate in functions and parties as part of social distance measures.
6. Most of the participants found the questions interesting and volunteered to participate in the project and answer the questionnaire.
7. Most of the participants expressed that more such projects and programmes are required to create and increase awareness about Covid-19 and related terminology.
8. Tribal people have low level of awareness which may lead to difficulty in the containment of the disease.
9. Some villagers expressed that their villages have only recently been visited by health workers.
10. Government needs to step up medical and other aid in such villages.

## Suggestions

The primary objective of this study was to test the awareness level and create awareness about Covid-19 terminology. Keeping this in mind, awareness of the twenty expressions selected for study was created among the participants.

1. More research and study projects should be conducted both in urban and rural areas on Covid-19 awareness.
2. Changes in language reflect societal changes. There is a need to take up more research on the changes in language due to outbreak of Covid-19.
3. Psychological and social reasons behind the creation of a huge amount of new vocabulary and emergence of old words with added significance need to be further probed.
4. Another interesting aspect for study is the coining of funny and not-so-serious words such as zoom bombing, doom scrolling, quarantines, covidiot etc.

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