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## Media and the COVID-19 Infodemic

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# Media and the COVID-19 infodemic

Alek Nelson  
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## Introduction

As coronavirus has altered the way people across the world function, it has also brought about a pandemic of misinformation, or infodemic. False information about COVID-19 have been shared millions of times now. How do news sources and a news-finds-me perception affect this spread?

## Methods

An online survey was administered to 500 participants via Amazon Mechanical Turk at the end of June 2020. The survey consisted of questions to determine a news-finds-me perception, where the participant receives news, and their beliefs about COVID-19. Demographic info was also obtained.

## Results

The news-finds-me perception did not affect beliefs in COVID-19 falsehoods. Those who solely used social media were more likely to believe in falsehoods, while those who relied on public health organizations were less.

## Conclusions

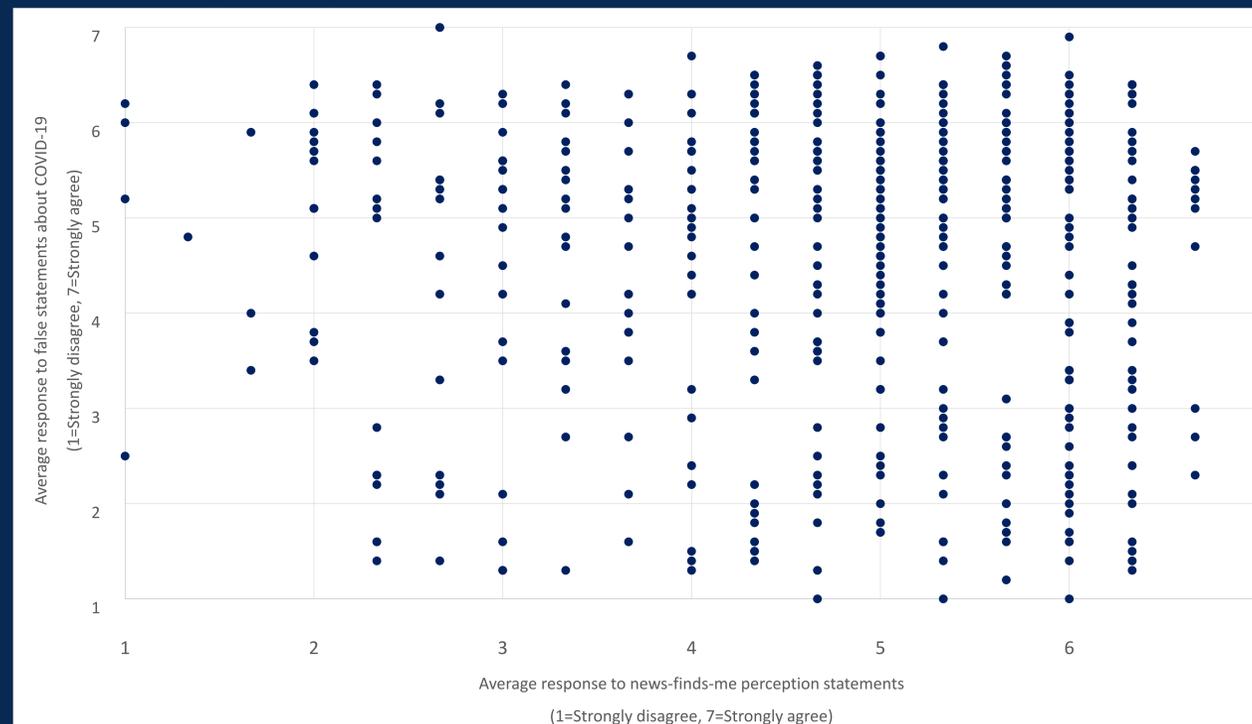
Because a news-finds-me perception didn't correlate with less belief in COVID-19, it appears that one, some, or all of the following things were happening:

1. People were using bad news sources
2. Mainstream news was reiterating false information
3. COVID-19 information was changing so rapidly that people were confused in general.

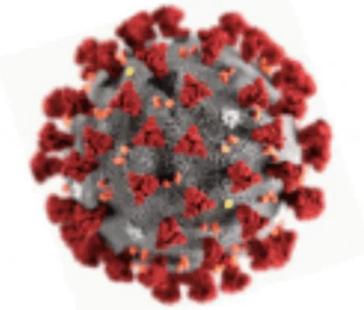
## THEORY

# Actively seeking out news had no effect on belief in COVID-19 disinformation.

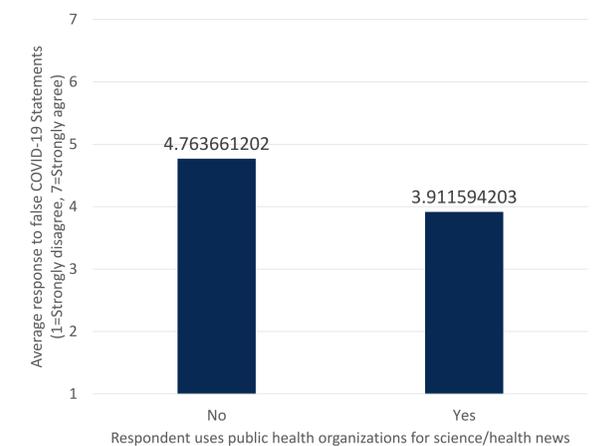
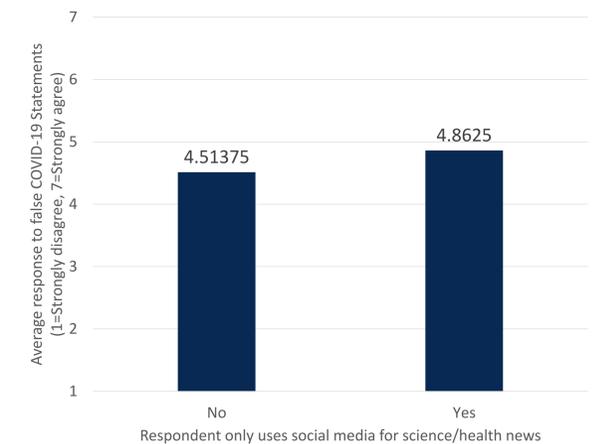
Graph 1 – Average response to disinformation vs. a news-finds-me perception



There is no correlation between belief in disinformation and a news-finds-me perception.



**“The news-finds-me effect stems from individuals' perceptions that they are well informed about current events despite not purposely following the news because the important information “finds them” anyway, through their general media use, peers, and social connections” (Zuniga et. al, 2017).**



Average belief in disinformation vs. social media use (top) and public health websites (bottom)

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