Social Media Health Interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic: A rapid systematic review

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1. Introduction

There is a dire need to identify elements that foster health-seeking behavior during COVID-19. While there are several significant systematic reviews on social media and health (e.g. Keles et al, 2020; Smailhodzic et al, 2016), there are little or no systematic reviews on social media health interventions focused on COVID-19.

2. Aims/ Objectives

The aim is to analyze and discuss the scholarly literature about social media health interventions (SoMeHIs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objectives are

i.   to identify factors of COVID-19-related SoMeHIs associated with changes in knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP),
ii. to review the effectiveness of COVID-19-related SoMeHIs crafted and curated for health literacy and behavior change, and
iii. to recommend a suitable theoretical framework and criteria for COVID-19-related SoMeHIs.

3. Methods

A review of papers from 2019 – 2020 about SoMeHIs suitable for COVID-19 was conducted using two online databases, Google Scholar and PubMed. The Joanna Briggs Institute Prevalence Critical Appraisal Tool was used to evaluate potential bias of the studies.
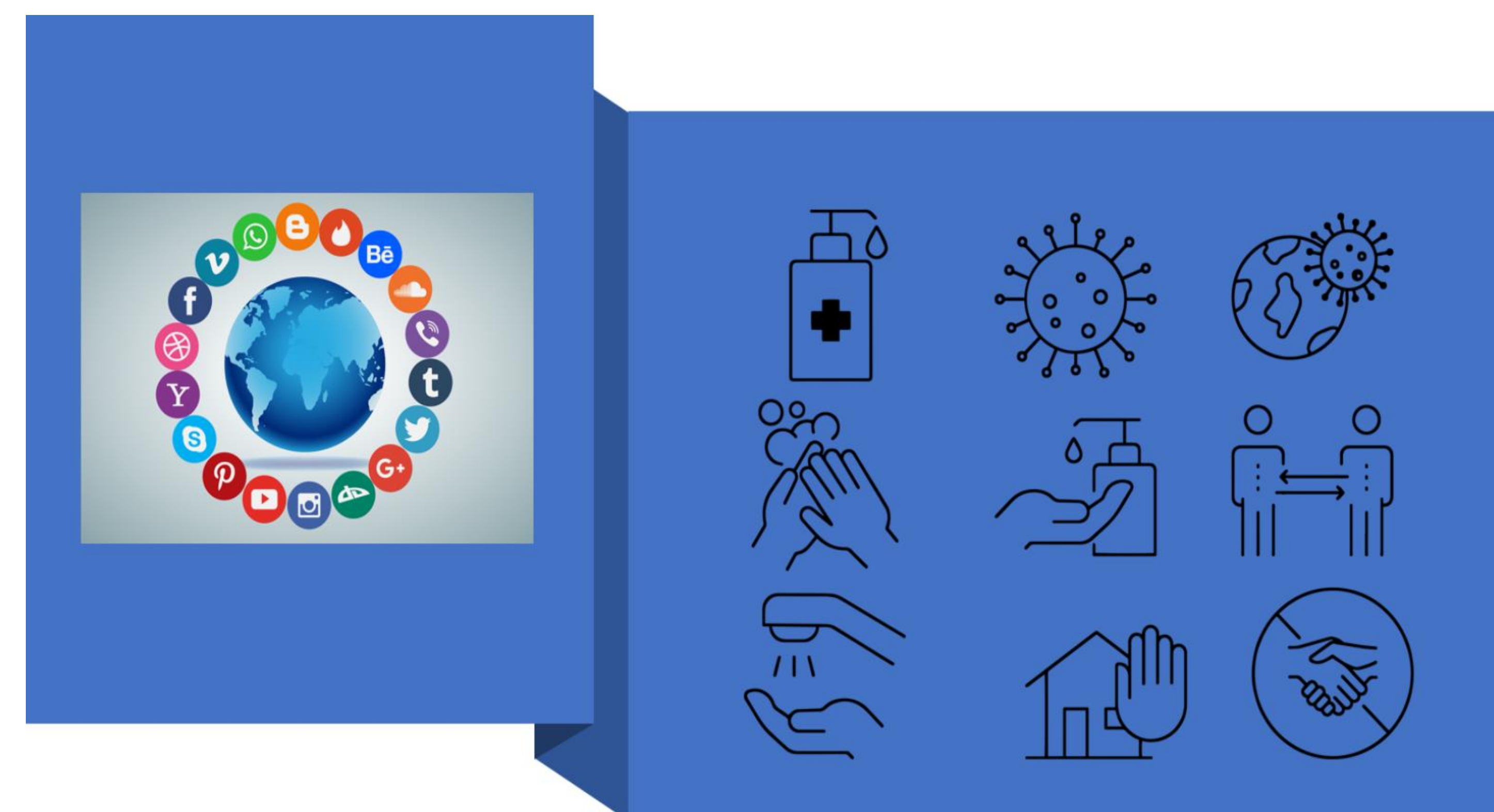
4. Results

Twenty-five (25) studies were identified in the rapid review. The literature was carefully analyzed to address the three aforementioned objectives:

i.   Factors identified in the literature that impact the effectiveness of SoMeHIs on KAP include nudges, media richness, dialogic loop, content type and emotional valence.
ii. There is some evidence that SoMeHIs may improve handwashing and collective action; however, misinformation and negative sentiments are apparently moderating factors for health promotion.
iii. Two theoretical frameworks (Schillinger et al, 2020, and Young and et al, 2020) were identified as suitable for COVID-19-related SoMeHIs.

5. Conclusions/ Recommendations

Nudges, media richness and dialogic loop are key factors in creating effectiveness SoMeHIs during COVID-19. Studies suggest that COVID-related SoMeHIs *could* improve handwashing and collective action. Of the two models identified, the SPHERE (Social media and Public Health Epidemic and REsponse) continuum model is deemed the more suitable theoretical framework for epidemics.

Recommendations for policy makers include
i.   frequent dissemination of concise compelling health messages via popular SM platforms and
ii. the sponsorship of online research targeting vulnerable persons (e.g. the elderly, poor, disabled, youth, health workers) to inform computer-tailored SoMeHIs.

6. References

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