

TRABAJO DE FINAL DE GRADO:
INFLUENCE OF IRRATIONAL BELIEFS OF COVID-19

ABSTRACT

The following study is contextualized in the COVID-19 pandemic. The density of information transmitted without control and its resulting uncertainty cause people to be more likely to refuge in their own beliefs and to find in them groups or movements that they can feel represented in. The tendency to be exposed to information that reaffirms pre-existing beliefs is called selective exposure, and the active search of this information is known as confirmation bias (Stroud, 2010). Besides, looking for a group or movement where people feel represented in is related to Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory. The importance of beliefs and groups that people feel represented in can lead to "conspiracy theories", which is a theory that involves actions and agendas of coalitions of individuals and can be developed by the threat to the group itself.

The general objective is to know if there is an effect between COVID-19 beliefs, behavior related to public health and the use of information. The hypotheses that arise are: (1) the previous beliefs of the people will influence the credibility of the message, (2) the credibility of the message will be influenced by the transmitter and (3) the use of measures of prevention will be influenced by previous beliefs. There were a total of 525 participants in the study, 65.7% of the sample were women. The results have confirmed hypotheses (1) and (3) and disproved (2). It can be concluded the importance of beliefs in a message's credibility and in the addition to behaviors related to those beliefs. The related SDGs are SDG 3 related to health and well-being and SDG 17 that seeks for alliances to achieve the goals.

Keywords: COVID-19, irrational beliefs, credibility of the message, influence of the issuer and prevention measures.

El siguiente estudio se contextualiza en la pandemia por COVID-19. La densidad de información transmitida de manera incontrolable y la incertidumbre derivada, provoca que las personas tiendan a refugiarse en sus creencias y buscan en ellas grupos o movimientos con los que se sientan representados. La tendencia a exponerse a información que reafirme las creencias pre-existentes se denomina exposición selectiva y la búsqueda activa de esta información se conoce como sesgo de confirmación (Stroud, 2010). Además, la búsqueda de un grupo o movimiento con el que sentirse representados se relaciona con la teoría de la identidad social de Tajfel y Turner. La importancia de las creencias y de los grupos de los que las personas se sienten representadas puede originar las "teorías conspiranoicas" que son teorías que involucran acciones y agendas de coaliciones de individuos y pueden desencadenarse a causa de la amenaza al propio grupo.

El objetivo general es conocer si existe un efecto entre las creencias del COVID-19, el comportamiento relacionado con la salud pública y el uso de la información. Las hipótesis que se plantean son: (1) las creencias previas de las personas van a influir en la credibilidad del mensaje, (2) la credibilidad del mensaje se va a ver influida por el emisor y (3) el uso de

las medidas de prevención se verá influido por las creencias previas. Los participantes del estudio han sido un total de 525, siendo un 65,7% de la muestra mujeres. Los resultados han confirmado las hipótesis (1) y (3) y desmentido la (2). Se concluye la importancia de las creencias en la credibilidad de un mensaje y en la adhesión a comportamientos relacionados con las mismas.

Los ODS relacionados son el ODS 3 relacionado con salud y el bienestar y el 17 que busca alianzas para lograr los objetivos.

Palabras clave: *COVID-19, creencias irracionales, credibilidad del mensaje, influencia del emisor y medidas de prevención.*

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 exceeds a thousand infected. The World Health Organization (WHO): **INFODEMIA**. The news that have resounded during the pandemic, have caused a worsening in the application of medical recommendations.

In relation to the above, there is a tendency to consider groups as irrational. However, adherence to a "we" is considered a backbone in the fight against the COVID-19 crisis.

A relevant theoretical approach: Tajfel and Turner's **theory of social identity**, 1979. Two core concepts:

- SOCIAL IDENTITY:** "the knowledge of the individual that he belongs to certain social groups, together with the emotional meaning and value that this group membership has for him" (1972, p. 31).
- PERSONAL IDENTITY:** it is based on the internalized sense of a person about their own individuality (Jettin, Reicher, Haslam and Cruwys, 2020).

This social identity is what leaders must make use of to calm the uncertainty of citizens and socially influence to control the virus (Jettin, Reicher, Haslam and Cruwys, 2020)

Beliefs are part of our identity. A belief is, therefore, a frame of reference or set of rules that determine our way of being in the world or the evaluation we make of situations (Calvete, E. and Cardenoso, O., 2001).

- SELECTIVE EXPOSURE**
- CONFIRMATION BIAS**

"Conspiracy theories": theories that involve beliefs about the actions and agendas of coalitions of individuals. At first glance, these conspiracy theories are irrational or speculative and can be triggered by threats to the intragroup (the group itself) along with a feeling of powerlessness or lack of control.

- People: anguish, distrust, low levels of socio-political control and social marginalization. (Jettin, Reicher, Haslam and Cruwys, 2020).

In order to promote compliance with prevention measures, the evidence should be abandoned, and feelings of control and vulnerability should be used as an effective way to reduce these beliefs as a consequence of conspiracy theories (Jettin, Reicher, Haslam & Cruwys, 2020).

INFLUENCE OF IRRATIONAL BELIEFS OF COVID-19



OBJECTIVE

EFFECT?
Beliefs about COVID-19
+
Public health behavior
+
Use of information

HYPOTHESIS

- 1 Beliefs → message credibility
- 2 Transmitter → Message credibility
- 3 Beliefs and transmitter → message credibility

PARTICIPANTS

Total: 525
Age: 18-78
Age X: 32
Liberals: 67%
Conservatives: 18,7%

CONCLUSIONS

People's beliefs don't depend on their age, gender or political ideology, and they will determine their behavior on the prevention measures that they currently have to carry out.

In addition, those beliefs are going to influence the credibility of a message, which is why it is important to be aware of the most effective way of transmitting information so that it adapts to different points of view. These beliefs are part of the social and personal identity, and the affective and emotional component of belonging to different groups allows an influence on the performance of certain behaviors. In order for the people to not feel their beliefs threatened and to reject the recommendations, it is necessary to advocate for social identity, since it is, with no doubt, what makes us feel part of something that we want to keep safe.

- The limitations that have been found are:
- Homogeneous sample in the gender variable
 - Environmental variables due to the virtual nature of the study.
 - Possibility of longitudinal study

RESULTADOS

H1: BELIEFS → MESSAGE CREDIBILITY

Tabla 1. ANÁLISIS DE ANOVA entre grupos 1 (Fidelidad Age en consenso) / grupo 2 (Fidelidad Age en consenso) sobre la credibilidad del mensaje.		Grupos	M	DT	F	p
Políticos	1	2,000	0,338	193,120	2,000	0,000
Extramuros	2	1,500	0,124	72,046	2,000	0,000
Naturales	3	2,000	0,188	94,674	2,000	0,000
Nota. Fuente: Elaboración propia.						

Tabla 2. ANÁLISIS DE ANOVA interactivo sobre la credibilidad del mensaje.		Grupos	M	DT	F	p
Modelo 1	Edad	-0,294	0,264	0,008	4,683	0,000
	Gender	-0,209	0,200	0,000	0,306	0,578
	Ideología política	0,134	0,328	0,026	0,979	0,324
Modelo 2	Edad	-0,040	0,176	0,000	0,104	0,736
	Gender	0,082	0,147	0,000	0,100	0,736
	Tipos de consenso	0,001	0,009	0,927	0,208	70,308
Modelo 3	Edad	0,025	0,083	0,000	0,177	0,677
	Gender	0,072	0,170	0,000	0,100	0,736
	Tipos de consenso	0,074	0,370	0,000	0,100	0,736
	C. Extramuros	0,089	0,493	0,000	0,100	0,736
	C. Naturales	0,128	0,302	0,000	0,100	0,736
Nota. Fuente: Elaboración propia.						

H2: TRANSMITTER → MESSAGE CREDIBILITY

The second hypothesis that the sender of the message would influence the credibility of the message, has not been fulfilled, since F (0.629) and p: 0.406

H3: BELIEFS AND TRANSMITTER → MESSAGE CREDIBILITY DEL MENSAJE

Tabla 3. ANÁLISIS DE ANOVA entre grupos 1 (Fidelidad Age en consenso) / grupo 2 (Fidelidad Age en consenso) sobre la credibilidad del mensaje.		Grupos	M	DT	F	p
Políticos	1	2,000	0,338	193,120	2,000	0,000
Extramuros	2	1,500	0,124	72,046	2,000	0,000
Naturales	3	2,000	0,188	94,674	2,000	0,000
Nota. Fuente: Elaboración propia.						

Tabla 4. ANÁLISIS DE ANOVA interactivo sobre la credibilidad del mensaje.		Grupos	M	DT	F	p
Modelo 1	Edad	-0,294	0,264	0,008	4,683	0,000
	Gender	-0,209	0,200	0,000	0,306	0,578
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	C. Naturales	0,128	0,302	0,000	0,100	0,736
Nota. Fuente: Elaboración propia.						

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