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Aneela Muzaffar

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Aneela Muzaffar

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Supervisor: Linus Andersson

Examiner: Krister Herrting

Summary

COVID-19 pandemic and social media: The Swedish case.

COVID-19 pandemic has been the talk of the world for many months in 2020, and coronavirus spreads this disease. Till today no vaccination has been developed. Therefore it is spreading everywhere across the globe. The virus spreads by close contact between the two people. Therefore it is recommended to practice social distancing. Due to coronavirus severity, most of the countries have put a lockdown and travel restrictions for months so that people stay safe at home. If someone develops the symptoms, he/she is advised to remain in isolation for the good of others. This case leads to panic, and people want to be more and more aware of the situation in this crisis. In such circumstances, social media is playing a vital role in keeping the people updated about the current situation. According to a survey, 71% of people in Sweden use social media (Nordicom, 2019), and 87% of them are in the age group of 25 to 44. This usage has increased even more in the crisis as there is a massive majority of people stuck at home and refer to social media to get the latest news and updates. Unlike most countries, including Nordic countries like Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland, who have rather strict approaches to combat the situation, Sweden is acting completely different than the rest of the world. Therefore, the whole world is discussing this distinguished strategy of Sweden, which is adopting a very normal approach rather than implementing a strict lockdown in the country to combat COVID-19. The world is keen to know the outcomes of this approach. This method adopted by Sweden is based upon the belief in the voluntary actions of the public, is receiving appreciation and criticism at the same time. Therefore, in this COVID-19 pandemic, this thesis tries to discover the impact of social media and gathers the knowledge about how is social media helping in making the situation better or worse. Along with that, the thesis tries to determine the opinion of the general public of Sweden (social media users) acting in this pandemic situation.

Based on my readings, I think that social media is helping to make the situation better as it is educating the people and keeping them updated and entertained. Although on the internet, a lot of fake news is spreading, social media users are cautious and reconfirm everything before acting upon it. The people mainly refer to official websites to take precautions in the situation. Sweden has a different response to the situation, which is based upon the voluntary measures, as they can be maintained for a longer duration than a strict lockdown, in the absence of the vaccine.

The research problem of thesis is: what is the role of social media in the situation of COVID-19 and how much it is helping in updating the general public. Secondly, what does the Swedish population thinks about the strategy of Sweden in this crisis. The ultimate aim of this research is to study the characteristic behavior of Sweden and the role of social media in the coronavirus situation.

To achieve this aim, I have interviewed five young people in the Stockholm population. These people are in the age group that is most enthusiastic and tend to get better informed about the situation and are most users of social media. I conducted a lengthy and in-depth interview with each of them and then explained the results with qualitative analysis.
From the results of the interviews, it can be seen that the social media helps people to understand the disease and the situation better, it is educating them about what precautions to take and how much social distancing is important. Along with that, it is keeping them occupied in order to decrease panic crisis. And the population of Sweden which I interviewed strongly approves the decision of the authorities there are only a few expectations, but majorly people appreciate the strategy. Strategy of Sweden is useful, and soon, better outcomes are expected.

Keywords: Strategy of Sweden , Social media, Corona virus, health and lifestyle changes.

Contents

1. Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic is the contemporary element of worriment across the world. It is the disease that is spread by Coronavirus whose vaccine is not yet discovered. Therefore, it is also a leading concern for Nordic countries. In this situation, the best approach to stay sterile is proposed to be socially distant, and staying enlightened about the situation. (WHO, 2020b)

About 87% of the Swedish population uses social media, and in the current situation, this percentage has increased. The general public prefers to stay at home the social media is a major source of information and infodemic. Humans, in curiosity try to stay updated, and therefore are more gripped to be associated with social media. In the process, they encounter various information which could be appropriate or unsound in the same way (Sharma et al., 2020).

In contrast to all other Nordic countries Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland Sweden has taken a reclining approach despite having a similar aim by putting faith in the inhabitants to slow down the spread and act responsibly in these circumstances (Ellyatt Holly, 2020)**.**

Therefore this research aims to understand the role of social media in the case of COVID-19 in Sweden "whether it is doing any good or is just worsening the situation". And also to gather the information that what is preferred by the people, either the traditional media or the social media to get mindful of accurate news, And to know what do they think about Sweden having a different approach to fighting this situation.

This thesis involves the case analysis method to investigate the questions about Coronavirus and social media. Telephonic interviews are conducted with Swedish young people age between 25 and 44 years. Then, qualitative research methods are used to analyze the results of the interviews further. The Study concluded the Swedish citizens' approach to the usage of social media in the strenuous situation of Coronavirus and their country's response in this locale.

 I have tried to formulate the results about the effects of social media in this current problematic situation with the review of the previous literature and with the long in-depth telephonic interviews.

2. Background

2.1 Corona Virus pandemic.

Today, the world is taking a fresh start by leaving behind the tragedy of COVID-19 and moving forward to the era of technology and trade. When looking behind, we see that the increased urbanization, growing population and ample business and social activities between the countries and geographical areas had played a very important role in the spread of COVID-19 disease (Owen Jarus, 2020). Historically, the world has successfully faced serious epidemics like Malaria, Small pox, Influenza, Cholera, Yellow fever, Leprosy, Ebola, swine flu etc. Right now, no matter the world has progressed so much but still some anomalies in human civilization exist. Like the humans have become so much sophisticated that they open themselves up to various trades, different eco systems, populations, and become more curious. As a result, they have become more vulnerable to catching strange diseases and this thing has paved the way towards the spread of most recent and life threatening COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately as time is progressing, this COVID-19 pandemic has started becoming a part of the history books (Walsh, 2020). In the series of combat with COVID-19, a great tribute to the Public Healthcare Systems whose strategy and efforts has played a very effective role all over the world in decreasing the number of fatalities.

As of today, 27th May, declared by WHO this COVID-19 has caused more chaos than natural disasters like volcanic eruptions, hurricanes and earthquakes or even war has about 34,440 Confirmed of people infected by Corona virus and about 4125 fatalities around the globe (Simonsen et al., 2013).

2.1.1 History of COVID-19

COVID-19 arose in the City of Wuhan in China around the date 31st December 2019. The situation became critical due to numerous infected cases in the "Huanan Seafood Market" (Aljazeera, 2020). Chinese government documented the incidents of disease having symptoms

like Pneumonia but the nature of virus was still unknown. The cases increased to about 40 in a span of thirty days. This virus had a history in China known as the SARS disease and it took away the lives of around 770 people back in year 2002 and 2003.

This Virus is demonstrated as a respiratory disorder and its incubation period is 2 to 14 days (Lauer et al., 2020). Its symptoms are:

- Dry cough
- Fever
- Shortness of breath
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Muscle joint pains
- Diarrhea
- Loss of senses like smell and taste in some cases.

Upon the incidence of the disease it is recommended that the person stays at home being ill and take the basic medical precautions being isolated from the community as it is a contagious virus. And as seen in many cases the situation worsens slowly leading to pneumonia and problematic breathing (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020).

The coronavirus is transmitted and spread in the following cases:

- Person getting in contact with the droplets or secretions of someone sneezing or coughing and float down the respiratory tract.
- Physical contact with the virus through hands and taking it to the mouth

Therefore in order to decrease the risk of its spread it is advised to keep washing your hands and avoid touching your face in order to eliminate the risk in case a person is exposed to it accidently. Adopting the hygienic habits using the alcoholic hand sanitizers can lead to increased chance of staying safe from the virus (Krisinformation, 2020).

People already experiencing from respiratory disorders and elderly are mainly the target group of the virus. And as today no vaccine is available only supportive lifesaving treatments are being given to infected patients. Whole world even the Swedish medical agencies are collaborating with the International medical teams to develop the treatments and vaccine of this strange virus which is troublesome of the whole world (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020).

If we talk about when this will be over it is a difficult question to answer. History tells us that it took an era to develop penicillin and another decade to develop the polio vaccine. But, it is obvious that sooner or later the vaccine would be developed and this would all be over. Right now, it is a little difficult to estimate the time. Science today is very advanced. We might wake up one day and get to know that this pandemic is about to end and we have the vaccine for it. But, as for now, only possible thing to do is to follow the guidelines given by the government and the health institutions for our safety.

So far, everything has gone to the state of shutdown in all parts of the world. Preventive measures are being taken and people prefer to stay at home as much as possible. Schools at some places have shifted to online courses and Saturday nights are more likely to be movie nights at home. Gatherings have been replaced by spending more time on the social media (Snowden, 2020).

Steven Tylor predicts in his book psychology of risks that the world might experience a new pandemic in the upcoming years and which might have more desolating effects. The only focus is upon the fact that how to eliminate this threat or how to formulate vaccines that are helpful in inoculating the humans. But, one aspect is completely ignored which is the "behavior of the people", that is mostly responsible for spreading or preventing a certain disease. It is obvious that humans are responsible for worsening the situation sometimes due to fear or anxiety or due to emotional distress (Taylor, 2019).

In this critical time of social and emotional distress social media is playing the vital role as keeping the people updated as well as occupied being quarantined and home bound. If social media was not present, the youth would have been more stressful while being at home and leaving the busy lives they used to live.

2.2 Corona Virus and Sweden

Covid-19 is a communicable disease and therefore it is mandatory to adopt the preventive measures. In that case there are two methodologies that can ensure the safety of the public.

1. People can be forced to stay in a lockdown state even if they are healthy.
2. By practicing less forced interventions and allow the people to understand and follow the restrictions about social distancing and be cautious about the necessary requirements that prevent the spread of the disease. (Adopted by Sweden)

As seen in the case of Sweden similar results are achieved by following the second methodology. The Swedish methodology is based upon the voluntary cooperation and responsibility of the Swedish individuals (Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020).

This behavior is making the people really curious around the world. Some countries are appreciating this approach others are criticizing it; therefore it is an ongoing debate right now. By taking a look at the everyday life in Sweden, it seems to be very normal and it doesn't seem to be the country that is virus stricken too. Situation in Sweden is as observed as follow:

- Some businesses and universities are temporarily shut down
- A very few universities are temporarily off
- Decrease in the usage of public transport
- Gatherings of more than 50 people are banned
- Majority of the places are still open

Hence the health of the country is the responsibility of the voluntary actions of the Swedes.

The strategy adopted by Sweden has been questioned by many scientists and countries. Because, it was being predicted that this methodology could result in unwanted outcomes and uncontrollable deaths and the country might fall victim to COVID-19. But, according to Sweden,

the major aim of this methodology was to act according to a sustainable plan that could run in a longer span of time. By keeping the day cares open it was ensured that parents could work without difficulty and with normality.

In the beginning all the countries adopted the strict lockdown and had shut downed all the schools. But now, that situation has been relaxed and all the businesses now seemed to be opening again. All the countries have a similar aim that is to slow down the spread although the methodology might be different (The Local, 2020a).

Although, it is the bitter truth as well, that with 50% of elderly people in the country, Sweden has highest rate of casualties than any of the other Scandinavian countries.

Time is now telling that which countries acted smartly in this situation. It is also important to note that Sweden has less number of people that initially contracted the disease. According to researchers it is also thought that Sweden might end up having better immunity than other countries that practiced lock down. ECDC (European Center for Disease Prevention and Control) has evaluated that approximately half of the Stockholm will be infected with coronavirus and might have developed immunity until now (Maddy Savage, 2020).

Doctor Tagnel the leading epidemiologist in Sweden is of the view that this virus cannot be taken hold of so quickly in the absence of any vaccine. Therefore, lockdown cannot be an option if this all prolongs for about 2 to 3 years. Then, there is no point of isolating the country and closing the borders if the disease has already reached a country. But as a human, Dr. Tagnel feels bad about what happened with the elderly and better could be done in that situation. Although basic measures were taken initially which did not turn out to be fruitful. Prime minister of Sweden Stefan Lofven, has explained the fact that the whole situation is being monitored on all the levels and is well taken care of (Anne Gridtje Franssen, 2020).

According to a survey in polling of Novus, 9 out of 10 Swedes said that they stay at least a meter away from each other. (Maddy Savage, 2020)

According to the survey about the Swedes (The Local, 2020b) it is found that nearly

- 98% of people have brought some changes to their life styles in out of which:
- 85% people answered that they are more careful about their hygiene and they wash their hands more frequently
- 72% answered about practicing the social distancing more than usual and avoid hand shaking
- About 69% said that they follow the news more than they used

Also, that people are avoiding unnecessary travel and are trying to avoid inviting people over. Studies conducted in between 21st of March and 6th of April states that about 42% people said that they are trying to prevent shopping and are trying to stay at home as much as possible (Gina Gustavsson, 2020). Many researches have been conducted in this regard explaining the behavior of Sweden in the pandemic (Paul W Franks & Peter Nilsson, 2020). Researchers and even the general public are curious to know about the relaxed strategy of Sweden. It is receiving a lot of criticism and appreciation at the same time. In this regard many researchers are curious and are trying to investigate about this different behavior. In contrast to other Nordic countries like Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland have rather different approach and have implemented lockdowns but the Swedish approach being distinctive is grasping the attention around the world.

2.3 Role of Social media

Social media is a way to digitally link people around the globe. Social media are the apps and websites that enable the people to participate in social networking and can have online communications. People can share their photographs, location, life events, and their activities with other people instantly. It all started in 1844 when Samuel Morse promoted a long distance communication by sending a telegraph from Washington and then in 1997 first website SixDegrees was launched and then Friendster and Myspace followed in 2003 and 2005. In 2004 Mark Zukerberg launched Facebook which helped people communicate in a new way (Singh Ricky, 2019). Every day we spend hours using social media apps without being aware of the time we spend. Facebook has been most popular for long time. Now many other apps like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Snapchat have also risen in competition. Every young person as well as people from all the age groups are fond of using the social media (Esteban Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). In this critical coronavirus situation the governmental authorities are

recommending the social distancing. The only way to maintain safe connections is through the social media and e-commerce. Social media is considered as the hub for the latest news and updates regarding current situation. Statistics show that in this situation the trend of getting the news and updates from social media has increased manifold. It is observed that people prefer searching online rather than sticking to TV and radio. When we talk about coronavirus it would not be an exaggeration to say that social media is creating awareness, helping in spreading news and opinions. This time is said to be the magic moment (Marco Muller, 2020) for social media as all the activities are cancelled and everyone is bound to stay at home. And a lot of videos like "plandemic" are being circulated around the social media those describe the pandemic situation in a misleading and dramatic way. In this hysterical situation people are hungry for information and if they fail to achieve it they would surf the whole internet and believe whatever they see.

The best thing that can be seen in this regard is that social media influencers, actors, athletes that are role models for many people are speaking up and are urging people to practice social distancing and staying safe. And it can be seen as the best way to analyze and gather what people are thinking and how they are reacting in this situation. Along with that it can be seen that in beginning when pandemic started, people started panic buying (Alejandro de la Garza, 2020). It was majorly because of social media too as they used to see news about shortage of masks, sanitizers, toilet rolls people started panic buying which created some problems.

On the other side, social media is also the source of misinformation. Especially, in the case of coronavirus such news can be proven chaotic. Spreading this sort of news further without any research can be problematic in that panic situation (Logan Godfrey, 2020).

Much fake news are travelling on the social media like:

- Breathing the warm air through the hair dryer can help clearing the respiratory track and could treat coronavirus symptoms
- Taking Vitamin C can treat the virus
- Drinking Vodka with 60% alcohol kills the virus etc.

Such news has been revolving on the internet for weeks and many such news can be seen on the social media too which is without any facts but there are a huge amount of people that think that to be true (Jon-Patrick Allem, 2020).

Statistics show that about an increase in 12 million users have been reported on twitter in the start of 2020 and Facebook has reported increase in user activity too. And all the platforms are playing there part in scrutinizing the right and wrong information in order to play their part in the crisis situation (Sarma Reitere, 2020).

Many researchers have tried to investigate the role of social media in the pandemic situation (Wajahat Hussain, 2020) as the role of social media cannot be ignored in this situation. In order to practice social distancing social media is playing its part efficiently.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I am discussing two theories, Uses and gratification theory and social media integration theory, as I have analyzed our results according to these theories.

3.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory relates to the impact of social media upon the people. This explains the usage and satisfaction level of a person and social media and in short explains how social media is affecting the life of an individual. As in this critical situation fighting the negative thoughts, and cognitive needs are tough to be fulfilled therefore in order to stay updated and entertained social media is playing its part (Riva et al., 2016).

This states that consumers use the media to satisfy their needs. Social media can be used for multipurpose like you can watch a movie talk to people about it post statuses, it might be used to gather knowledge or just for entertainment purposes. Only the human need can persuade the approach in which we can use the social media. This theory is majorly used for current media usage as it can determine the relationships between different aspects of relationships with social media e.g. like social media and violence or pandemic etc. the intentions of the user can explain the roles of social media like Facebook etc. and its usage in a society (Ruggiero, 2000).

In order to understand the mass communication UGT can be used to get aware that why and how the users are staying engaged with their social media and what are their specific needs to do that (Learning Theories, 2019). Social media plays a crucial role in the lives of people and also the comparison between the social media and other mediums of information and entertainments can be done following the UGT. Also the choice of the medium is an important aspect of this theory, the answer to what medium does an individual prefers when it comes to social media is answered by this theory. The authenticity and quality is easily assessed by the audience so what a person thinks when he gets certain knowledge about media can be explained too. UGT explains the scheme of media usage which circumstances increased the use of social media and in which situations the usage declined (Megan A Moreno & Rosalind Koff, 2019).

3.2 Social Media Integration Model

This model involves the interaction of social media and the users. This model explains the two way street interaction and promotes the transfer of information in the social networking system. The social bookmarking help the users to express their thoughts about the data present on the internet or the products they buy and make recommendations and leave feedbacks about them.
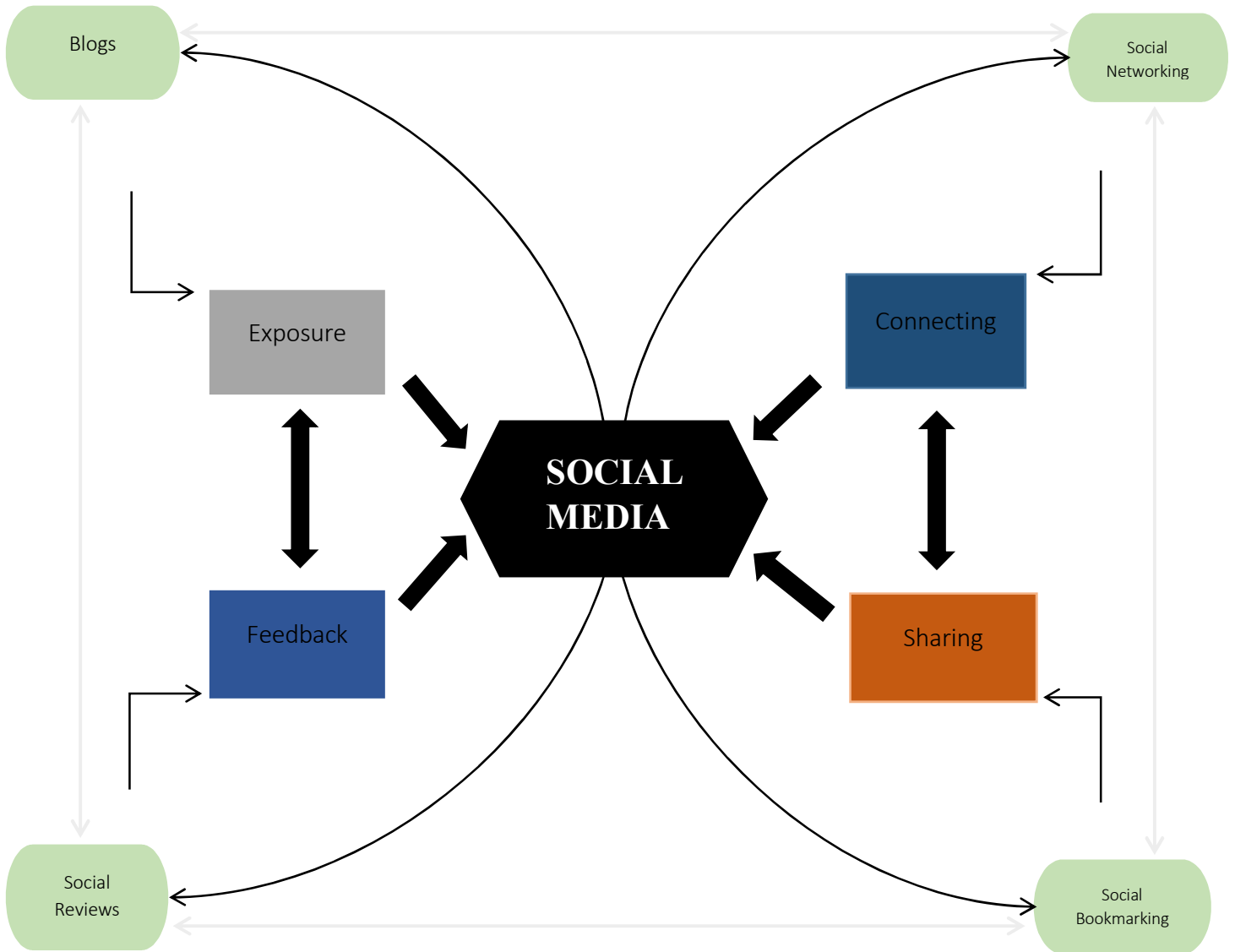

Figure 1 - Social Media Integration Model

shows that users are there to share information, connect, give feedbacks and gain knowledge through exposure (Potter, 2012).

This model is different from the traditional models it shows the primitive nature of the social media, this process once it enters the system and is known as viral communication in the social mediums. All the social mediums are now mostly the means of communication and information transfer channels. And it can be said that due to social media whole of the communication process has been transformed. According to a study conducted by Chadwick Martin Bailey it as found out that people are more likely to follow the brands and materials that follow the social media like Facebook, twitter etc. (Isra Garcia, 2019)

This model has an overall effect on the capability of the media platforms (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016) and social media has an aim to make there platforms so addictive that a person spend hours watching different stuff on the social media. This is increasing the engagement of customer and social mediums.

With the increase advancement the research on social media is increasing every day and this strategy is used to evaluate the behavior of people on social media.

This theory is related to Social media crisis communication model, (SMCC), it plays a role in the communication of crisis situation today. This model involves the influential who spread the information that is perceived by the other people, the followers who access that information, and the inactive members who are not accessing the information directly through social media but receive them through other sources. The essential component of this model is the circulation of information through the social media and also between the mass media and social media. This model explains the useful communication the risk situation as it is the fastest means of spreading the information keeping in mind the inactive followers the information reach to them through the active followers (Liu et al., 2012).

4. Problem Definition and Aim

4.1 Problem definition

The problem definition of this thesis is divided into the following two aspects:

1. The impact of social media in the Coronavirus situation
2. Why has Sweden adopted a different strategy in corona virus pandemic

To address the first above aspect, I have considered the following questions:

"Is the social media providing the people of Sweden with the authentic information they need to stay aware and updated about COVID-19" or "Is it spreading misinformation among the users that has nothing to do with reality and is creating only stress and problems among people."

To address the second aspect of the problem statement, I have taken the following question into consideration:

"What is the opinion of the Swedish social media users about the approach that Sweden has adopted in this pandemic of COVID-19?"

According to Wikipedia, many episodes of an outbreak of similar viruses have been happening in 2003, 2012, and 2015. But, in 2019, a rather critical form of the virus has taken grasp of the world, which is COVID-19. Coronavirus can kill up to 30% of the infected people (Wikipedia, 2020) whereas in some cases, it can have symptoms like common colds. There are some preventive measures like:

1. Social distancing
2. Washing hands frequently
3. Washing hands for at least 20 seconds
4. Avoid touching your face (as it can transfer virus if it is on your hands)
5. Stay at home if you are infected
6. Inform the medical authorities only if you are sick. (WHO, 2020a)

When people stay at home, there are very few ways to get connected. The most commonly practiced way is through their telephones and social media. In this case, curiosity and anxiety are normal, which leads to the urge to stay aware of the situation. In this critical situation, information through TV channels, radio, and social media is vital in updating the people. It is also keeping people occupied and entertained. Moreover, it is also advised to follow the guidelines of the local health authority. Keeping this in mind, Swedish people are having different opinions about this situation.

Different countries of the world are under complete lockdown, The Nordic countries like Denmark and Norway closed their borders at the beginning of the outbreak, and had enabled a lockdown for a long time(Elflein, 2020). This lockdown is to ensure the safety of civilians and decrease the fatality rate in their countries. But, Sweden has a different strategy in this regard; there is no lockdown. The public is responsible for themselves. Although the preventive measures are seen to be implemented in the country, still many daycares, many businesses, and many restaurants are still open. This all leads to the rise of various ambiguities, and the general Swedish public has different thoughts about it.

This thesis studies and discusses that:

1. How is social media playing its part in this crisis situation?
2. What is the opinion of the users about the information they read on social media?
3. What do people (social media users) think about Sweden's approach in this situation?

To obtain the answers of the questions, Five Swedish social media users are interviewed. Their thinking and feelings about this situation are observed by detailed telephonic interviews. On top of all, I believe that this thesis would be a good contribution to the Nordic countries as the public's opinion is mandatory to attain sustainability in society. The purpose of this study is to generate new knowledge about the critical situation, and contribute to the ongoing research about social media usage and Swedish strategy in the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Aim

My thesis aims to get an insight into the situation of "Coronavirus and the act of social media in this regard" and to know "how the Swedish social media users perceive the approach of coping with Coronavirus" First objective is to gather information about how is social media playing its role in the pandemic situation. Secondly, to get an insight about what these users think about the strategy adopted by Sweden in this situation. Social media is the most potent medium of transfer and share of information in this modern world, is it playing a significant role in this critical situation? The ultimate aim of this thesis is to contribute to already ongoing researches on the relationship of SWEDEN, CORONA VIRUS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

5. Methods

5.1 Design

For the groundwork of this thesis, I have conducted in-depth interviews that are evaluated using a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a relatively flexible approach that explains much more than numbers can tell alone and is more targeted.

I have chosen this research design keeping in view the current situation of the world in 2020, in this pandemic situation it would be best to stay socially distant, Therefore I have conducted telephonic one-hour detailed interviews with people in Sweden to get the vision and opinion of people experiencing this crisis situation (Mywish Maredia, 2020). This situation is a historical situation which needs to be documented so that our descendants can get the perception of what our decade has been through but in this time when we are bound to stay 6 feet apart from each other the researchers are facing difficulties in gathering the knowledge. In this modern age, if it were not for the telephones and social media, this situation would have been a lot more worsened. Although face-to-face interviews have no competition with telephonic interviews as researchers cannot know the emotions and expressions that are helpful to interpret the results.

For this thesis, I had basic knowledge about the COVID-19, its spread and prevention, and the news related to that circulating on social media. People are reacting to that news and having distinguishing ideas about why Sweden is acting differently in situation, when all the countries in the world are adopting similar strategies. Therefore, I gathered the related information and sorted out the question I wanted to focus on my research. Then I asked them to convey their thoughts and decrease my curiosity. I have a different approach to these questions by interviewing them, and then I analyzed them using a qualitative technique.

Qualitative research is inductive research that could be used to get aware of the logic, conception, and an incentive about a problem and is best in case of human experience. In social and natural sciences non numerical data can be most conveniently collected by qualitative research methods (Earl R. Babbie, 2013).

According to Alan Bryman, Qualitative research includes the formulation of general research questions, then selection of related targets, and then a collection of the data, then interpreting it

with the theoretical work and then documenting it formulating the conclusions (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). This research method adopts the appropriateness of methods, objectivity, and diversification of the research contributors and reflexivity of the researcher and hid reflections (Flick, 2009).

According to Denzin, and Lincoln, Qualitative research brings about the analytical approach to the world by taking notes or photographs or recording the things people have to say about the situations. This research includes different methodologies like life history, interviews, etc. which explains the meanings of the problematic situations according to people (Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. LIncoln, 2005)**.**

Therefore, it can be concluded that a detailed analysis could be conducted using qualitative methods. Along with that, like every methodology, this method has some shortcomings, such as ignoring the provisional knowledge and focusing more on the experiences, which can make it somewhat less reliable and take a relatively long time for analysis (Bryman & Burgess, 1994)**.** The sample size taken in this research is small; therefore, this research cannot be generalized for other situations.

5.2 Sampling

For my thesis, I chose people in the age group of 25 to 44. The reason why I chose this age group is that youth is more likely to be the user of social media. Therefore, the data I require can be most efficiently be achieved by interviewing this age group. Being frequent user, I expected them to come across more information in this regard.

Along with that having similar interests and experiences, I thought it would be easier to communicate with this age group. The current situation has some limitations too; therefore, getting people to talk their minds would have been difficult. Therefore, the people I chose to gather information were the best possible opportunities for me to inquire and get a versatile material for my research. I am in Stockholm these days so I could get a hold of more information as most fatalities are seen in Stockholm until today there are more than 2500 deaths in Sweden and a majority of them being in Stockholm city.

I have used simple random sampling for my studies**.** Sampling is most important for analyzing the accuracy of a thesis. That is why the sample size and sampling technique needs to be chosen

efficiently, as this would then affect the results. Here getting proceeded with a probability sample, I used simple random sampling for conducting my studies and the interviewee were carefully selected. (Taherdoost, 2018).

At the start, I interviewed a friend of mine whom I have been in contact before the COVID-19 worsened. After interviewing her, she introduced me to three more people as she thought it interesting to be a part of this research. Covid-19 is the primary concern of everybody so people are concerned and are willing to play their roles in any way that could be possible. And I also interviewed a teacher who is meeting many people and children daily to get a more comprehensive view of the circumstances. So the sample size was five people aging between 25 to 44 years of age.

I designed a questionnaire outline to keep all the points that I needed to ask, but this interview was more of an open discussion and, I did a detailed one-hour discussion and paid more attention to the personal feelings and emotions because currently everyone is suffering because of the situation and being socially distant every human feels emotional and bound; therefore, no uniformity is seen analyzing them qualitatively.

5.3 Data gathering

For my research, I have governed interviews to gather the required material. I formulated an interview manual of some questions to get an overall intuition of the research questions. I mainly focused on the aspects of Sweden, COVID-19, and social media, and I am presenting my research questions briefly.

I wanted to have a clear, detailed description; therefore, I divided it into two aspects and started with the question that how people thought about the current situation and Sweden's reaction about that, this made them involved in the discussion, and therefore I achieved my desired answers. I made up a question: Are they satisfied with the steps Sweden took in these circumstances and how did they get this information about the distinctive behavior of their

country. Getting more insight on this topic, I asked them about the source where they got the knowledge and which source of news, according to them, is preferable.

Secondly, I asked the individuals about their point of view regarding social media: how is it keeping them up to date with the current situation. I also asked them the question of which medium they prefer, the traditional media, or social media, which information do they find more authentic. Either the information broadcasted on the television or the information that is being uploaded on the social media and is then presented on different apps.

I also asked them what they think about the information shared on social media. I also asked them how is affecting their state of mind in this pandemic situation, either they find it helpful or is it causing more panic. I also got them to talk about their opinion; what do they think that people share the information responsibly. Is it done just out of curiosity as it could be a matter of great concern, and some wrong information might create anarchy?

I was intrigued in knowing any interesting or misinformation they might have encountered. Just like In the UK much fake news was circulating, which tended the people to stay in lockdown, and messages seemed to be from the government when they were not, (BBC News, 2020) therefore I wanted to know if some similar messages were circulating in Sweden as well. These questions gave me answers to the questionnaires that I formulated related to the critical epidemic in 2020. I then further processed the data and interpreted their interviews.

5.4 Data processing and analysis

5.4.1 Data processing

I interviewed five people between the ages of 25 to 44. After getting their consent, I asked them to discuss with me their point of view about the progression of the plague. These people were randomly selected is being limited to the option of interviewing people in the crisis situation. I conducted approximately one-hour lengthy, in-depth interviews.

These questions were based on the general knowledge of the people and are no expert opinions. Some questions were about their experiences, and some were about the information they are achieving and understanding the ways they are processing it and are acting in this situation. I gathered some standard information from the internet so that I have some standards according to which I formulated the questions. I got the statistics of the usage of social media in the Nordic countries, and then that is how I selected the sample size.

I also gathered information about Sweden's behavior in the pandemic situation so that I have all the required knowledge. And then I compared the views of the people and the data already available on the internet. I got understandings about the facts and how they are transmitted and also the alterations being made in the along the way.

5.4.2 Data analysis

For the data analysis, I have used a qualitative method of study; I have summarized the interview answers and have formulated the results. The qualitative approach is the best method to be used in this case as the interview questions in this research can be best explained extensively in the form of summary as the life experiences and the human behavior and emotions of the people can be most effectively explained by this method (Tracy, 2013).

I have analyzed the collected data, as the interviews were detailed and included some personal experiences, so only the data related to research will be included in the results. Others were being omitted to stick to the topic selected and get a detailed analysis of those.

5.5 Ethics:

The mobile phone interviews have the same protocols as face-to-face interviews as it involves human subjects. However, by the regulations, it is still illegal to gather information without the consent of the interviewee.
The interviews were conducted by informing the participants that the interview is a contribution to ongoing studies about the pandemic and their consent was taken before inquiring them about

their views. This thesis will not affect them in anyway. The data gathered will be submitted anonymously without disclosing and publishing their details and will only be used for the university thesis. The interviewee has full independence to withdraw at any time without being forced to be a part of this research. And I promise that I have not exaggerated or misinterpreted any of the information provided by the participants.

6. Results and analysis

I have divided the study of the results into two parts:

1. The role of social media in the crisis situation.
2. How is Sweden acting in this scenario to combat the Coronavirus

6.1 The purpose of social Media in Covid-19 situation

Social media is playing a very important role in this situation under pressure. I am considering the following factors in this context:

1. What medium is preferably used for awareness and, how frequent?
2. What are the pros and cons of using social media?
3. What astonishing or fake news have they encountered in this regard?

For these questions, the respondents gave me the following answers.

Interviewee A: I prefer watching TV. I am the kind of a person who would sit down and watch TV for hours. In this situation, I watch SVT1 and other informative shows. I also use social media especially Facebook which is most popular in my circle. I try to stay updated and connected with my family and friends. And about the fake news, I haven't seen much fake news about Coronavirus among my Swedish friend's circle except one post explaining that Coronavirus was prepared in the laboratory and is not a natural epidemic.

Interviewee B: In this crisis situation, I watch Swedish news websites, BBC and CNN. I watch TV also, but I am actually a very busy person, and I am seldom at home. My phone is my only

informative tool; I stay updated at Facebook and Twitter. I have international friends, and I try to stay in contact with them through social media. Well, if you ask me about fake news, I have read much fake news on social media, which seemed to be correct, but when I researched them, I was astonished that they were all fake. One of them was a shower with the water at a 54 degree Celsius after you get back home and wash clothes for half an hour with very warm water. I suspected it because water at such warm temperature is not suitable for health.

Interviewee C: I am inquisitive about this whole situation. I sometimes check Facebook ten times a day to gain any news about the updated situation. I watch TV and listen to the radio at times too. I get panicked sometimes to see the news circulating all the time on social media about the virus. Sometimes it is also emotional that I get disturbed. For example: the recording that people post in their most critical situations being in hospitals.

Interviewee D: I prefer the traditional media more I am used to watching TV but I refer to social media and local.se website too, whereas on Facebook I saw the news with a picture on social media that there was a big queue outside the vine shop to get the vodka with a certain amount of alcohol 40% or 60% as that was being said that: Drinking vodka would keep you safe from the virus and Local.se was trying to prove this news wrong that vodka will not protect you from virus. Also, there is list of food items available on the social media that are said to be eaten to prevent Coronavirus.

Interviewee E: I use social media a lot, it is need of the hour and is our only entertainment these days, I live away from my family, it is so heartbreaking that I cannot visit my family and can only connect with them online, About the fake news if you ask me I read on the page Doctor Sweden on Facebook that: One need to get all the symptoms of the COVID-19 in order to gain immunity if you don't have all the symptoms and even in the presence of the mild symptoms you cannot gather immunity and you might get infected in another round of the disease. I got really worried and I discussed it with my friends and I think this is only a fake news.

Through these answers it is clearly seen that social media is the necessity and is somehow affecting the people's life in one way or another. People prefer Traditional media but they refer to social media too. The Swedish social media users are sensible enough to reconfirm any kind of news they see on social media as it is not coming from an authentic source. There is obviously a positive or negative impact on the people's attitude due to social media. Social media is

connecting the people in this critical situation as it is keeping them entertained and also is keeping up the morale. Also is providing them with up to date information and that too in a matter of no time.

6.2 Behavior of Sweden in Covid-19 pandemic

About the behaviour of Sweden in the matter of coronavirus I asked interviewee that "What do they think about the strategy of Sweden in the situation of situation? Why do they think they are behaving differently and is that according to them the better way to react in this situation? The answers in this matter were very informative as they gave an insight about what people think in this regard.

From the results of the survey, I gathered the following reactions

Interviewee A: According to my point of view Sweden has an advanced and stable national conation that is the government wants to practice herd immunity, and this can be easily tested in Sweden as Sweden has less population and a larger area and this could be said more appropriately about Stockholm as they have enough capacity I am not sure if London can practice that strategy as it is densely populated and I am not sure what would happen in case a more strict lockdown has not been put in place , It can bring out better results and when I asked the interviewee as to what they think is the strategy right according to them, I got the answer that I can't give the confirm answer as even the authorized personal are doubting this new situation but everything is getting normal here and now rest of the countries are also appreciating this strategy, At the beginning I used to get negative comments from my international friends on social media But Now I can see it's a big hit in China and my friends in Hong king are really curious about this strategy.

Interviewee B: I have been following this situation since the very beginning and I was keen to know where this all is headed. And about Swedish I am eager to see the results as I strongly support this strategy and most of the Swedish people are appreciating this strategy as When I walk in my society. I watch TV I see the Swedish nation is supporting it, even other countries are now forced to elevate the lockdown, as it is impossible to shut the country down for a longer

26

time, everyone needs to have a better job, However, many people have lost their jobs and this is causing panic. Especially Youth needs to go out, staying locked at home makes them unhappy and, it is actually impossible to keep them at home, in this way their career is at stake and, I have serious concerns about their mental states.

Interviewee C: I think that this strategy can work well, if we trust the officials and keep social distance and follow the rules, there is no problem till then. This virus is an old virus as older people are more victims to it and Sweden has more deaths of elderly and that too elderly of other cultures are more at risk as they live with their families. They are not careful the elderly in Sweden are already isolated and well taken care of. So if you are young and have a better immune system you will get immunity from the virus. As I read somewhere that out of 50 people, test 25 were found to have immunity against the virus without even having the symptoms.

Interviewee D: In my opinion, Sweden has got that right and, a harder lockdown would not have helped in any way because Sweden still has 20% spare capacity and has necessary preparations in the hospitals. Along with that, to this problem, there are only two solutions either a vaccine is created or herd immunity as we cannot foresee the vaccine so I think herd immunity is a better option meanwhile. This strategy is what Sweden is working on. And lockdown is only to prevent all the population from getting infected at the same time and not getting enough place to be treated in the hospitals, it is not to avoid being infected at all. Each country will get infected people and, it will not be any different for any country but at the end of the pandemic, it will be seen that Sweden acted best in this case and will come through it faster with its stable economy and better immunity of the people.

Interviewee E. I feel really disappointed as I have lost my dear one to Corona virus just because of no severe steps taken More than 3000 Swedes have fallen victim to Covid-19 and have lost their lives and many of them have died while staying at home unaware of the fact that they are suffering from the disease just because Sweden wasn't doing enough tests. And the deaths are really a very hard price to pay to keep the schools and restaurants open with all this deaths and tremendously sick people. I have heard that even the children aren't safe it is not only effecting the elderly but is also effecting everyone. In my opinion it would have been best if Swedish government would have placed a strict lockdown with the outbreak. We would have saved many

people from dying as we can see in the case of Norway and Denmark there the death rate is so low, it breaks my heart by watching more than 100 people dying with the illness.

It can be seen from the answers that people are supporting the Swedish strategy. Different opinions being individuals and, the emotions vary from person to person. But I think mostly the majority people are satisfied with this strategy and are acting according to the rules established by the Swedish government and mostly the population of Sweden is appreciating this strategy.

7. Discussion

7.1 The discussion of interview

In this part the effects of social media are discussed along with the previous information available from the literature online. In interviews conducted with the people I investigated two major aspects. Firstly I wanted to gather knowledge about the coronavirus situation and the usage of social media in this crisis situation to get awareness or staying updated.
Secondly, living in Sweden I wanted to analyze what people thought about the strategy adopted by Sweden in reaction to Corona virus, and for that investigation I have discussed these two aspects in detail.

Through the long in-depth interviews it was investigated that people are anxious to get informed about the situation of corona and they want to know everything about it. Therefore, Firstly I started talking to them about the situation and how they felt about it and what information they had in this regard. And then I came towards the main Question of their usage of social media and its effects on their behaviors and mental states. The news they watched were ultimately causing them to behave in different ways, (Angell, 2013) I analyzed their reactions to these situations in this way I made them more comfortable showing my concerns and sharing my opinions about the crucial situation, this made my interviews more convenient and interesting.
For this research study I analyzed all the answers given by the interviewee, most of them were of the view that this situation has not panicked them, but still it is so strange to be true. This

situation has made them change their behaviors in many ways, they told me that they are practicing social distancing and are trying to stay in-effected as much as possible. This has not disturbed their daily life a lot. Two of the respondents were staying at home and were of the view that being at home is a good new feeling and is a new experience and has not happened in a long while.

Almost all of them believed that in this situation mass media and social media are playing important roles (Monica, 2017) for the current situation they believed on the news coming from the authorized websites and TV and mostly they use Facebook for this purpose.(Quan-Haase & Young, 2010) when I asked them that why are people spreading any authentic or unauthentic news mostly I got the impression that in panic situation people do not know what to do, therefore they share that information and unintentionally they spread the news with knowing if it's a fake news or not I studied this behavior using the social media integration theory that how is the news spread and through what channels is it reaching the users. (Jon-Patrick Allem, 2020).

So social media in my opinion can be used to create awareness and I think is playing a tremendous role in educating the people in this scenario of crisis situation along with that it provides people with entertainment and is trying to reduce the boredom. Uses and gratification theory also explains the impact of social media on its users, this theory helped me to understand the usage of social media by the people in panic situation more effectively. (Learning Theories, 2019). In my opinion like everything has positive and negative aspects, the positive aspects of social media can be utilized to achieve far better results.

Secondly I wanted to gather the information about what people think about the strategy of Sweden in this situation I got different views and I analyzed them according to the Swedish model. Mostly people were acting according to the instructions of the Swedish government and are following the planned behavior, like interview C having a medical background said that Sweden with this less population can effectively practice herd immunity and can see results with better immunity of citizens in the Future and it can be said more effectively about Stockholm as hospitals there are very well equipped in case of any difficult situation (MedicalXpress, 2020). One of the respondents was however unhappy with the situation and he thought that only

lockdown would have been the best solution in this crucial situation of COVID-19. By the interviews they believed that after this situation Sweden is going to come out having better immunity than many other countries and I found them to be in the favor of this strategy. As one of my respondents told me according to their information 25 out of 50 patients were found to be immune when tested foe COVID-19 which is a promising sign.I got the impression that respondents thought that it is impossible to put a lock down for a longer time this would have many disadvantages especially for the youth as it is crucial time in their career and who knows when this pandemic is going to be over.

7.2 Analysis

According to gratification theory I analyzed that people are hungry for information and social media is acting as a food in this situation as it can provide with all the necessary information required, so with these interviews the behavior of people and their urge to use the social media can be easily explained (Ruggiero, 2000). I gathered knowledge that in this critical times people out of utter disappointment are sometimes showing some racist behavior going on in this situation and this all has increased some biased behavior towards the Chinese (The Local, 2020c) and these news along with many news are circulating on the social media. People use social media and they get to know many news which might either be right or may be false information, majority said that it is although difficult to identify the right and wrong posts on the social media as this situation is new and anything could be right but still they prefer to believe on the official websites before they take any serious actions about them (Robin Worrall, 2020). Therefore it can be said that world will keep on undergoing through one crisis to another and meanwhile social media gets benefits even the political parties gain advantage, stock markets reach sky high and this situation in no matter of time will be like it never happened.

Along with that we are well aware that social media runs on the policy of popularity which means that popular information is more important than the correct information as that might engage more user irrespective of its fact of being untrue. And in my opinion the social apps are looking towards the artificial intelligence more than ever to keep an eye on what is being circulated until then everyone should be responsible for the news they read or share. For example

the news of showering with really warm water in order to finish the disease could be deadly and hence, before acting one should confirm the news they read (Joan Donovan, 2020).

Facebook has introduced corona virus care emoji which shows the solidarity and the presence of people for one another in the difficult times. This is a good initiative to let people know that they are not alone if they are. Many steps are being taken by the social media platforms like Facebook is trying to fight the social media misinformation as much as possible, Instagram is promoting self-isolation and social distancing, WhatsApp has launched COVID-19 info hub, Messenger is trying to reach out to Govt. agencies, Twitter is trying to look after its followers, LinkedIn is trying to keep up with the business, YouTube has restricted ads in the virus related content. Tiktok is working with the WHO and is promoting daily live streaming, Snapchat has launched the mental health resource and Pinterest is trying to allocate the relevant Content required by the users (Sarma Reitere, 2020).

Also I analyzed that one third of the population does believe on the Covid-19 myths according to a survey (Helen Lee Bouygues, 2020) it was understood that people believed on the myths like 10 percent out of 1000 people believed that washing their nose with the saline water will kill the virus and 12 percent thought that the virus was created in the lab and all the beginning of the virus theories are thought to be true. And in this critical situation of corona virus people are more stick with social media and news on social media in informative but sometimes doubtful therefore there can be chance of being misinformed.

I got the answers from my respondents which showed that people are strongly standing with the descion taken by the government and are acting according to it as they know that the lives of the population is in their own hands. Although it is too early to say that, but I think it is too early to conclude as the situation is still ongoing. One of my respondents had medical background and told me when 50 people were tested it showed that 25 had immunity already. In the beginning I heard every single person complaining and was questioning this approach when they heard lock downs in every countries, but eventually they knew the cause behind it and got satisfied but still not every person van be happy with this situation as I came across a person who had lost someone to Corona virus, he seemed unhappy and said that deaths are a high price to pay just to keep the schools and restaurants open.

7.3 Method discussion

This thesis used long in-depth interviews as the Core, I interviewed five people and then through qualitative analyses I scrutinized the data. This research is conducted with a small sample size of young adults ranging from 25 to 44 (Tracy, 2013). Qualitative analysis has some pros and cons. If we talk about advantages, this method is cost effective and can be conducted without many hurdles but its disadvantage is its sample size which is quite small therefore this research cannot be generalized and can be used as a small case analysis only and I would recommend that further research is required in this case to reach an adequate conclusion.

As this thesis involves the case study with the in-depth interviews therefore I had long conversations with the volunteers and my majors concerns were their usage of social media in the crisis situation and its effects on their lives and to get the insight about their thoughts about the reaction of Sweden in the pandemic.

For checking the validity of the survey I researched the previous parameters available online and the previous data obtained from the literature review. This survey is mainly conducted with telephonic online interviews. All the conversations were recorded for keeping the records and maintaining the authenticity of the data gathered and was interpreted later. Along with that not only interviews but the data already present online has also been used to maintain the validity. I feel the face to face interviews can let you gather a lot more information rather than words but I tried to maintain the orders of social distancing and tried not to communicate in person which was fore sure difficult but was need of the hour, therefore I might have missed some emotional aspects (Leung, 2015).

In this Survey I got to talk to a medical personal who tried to provide me the inside detailed information of the hospitals therefore, I think that the results of the interviews are credible (Elo et al., 2014).

I chose a particular age group so that I can analyze the answers I asked them on the same parameters and in my opinion all the people were experiencing the same emotional factors therefore, I can say I interpreted the answers without being confused about the states of mind. The situation is ultimately different for everybody, as one of my respondents had lost a loved one and was answering me differently.

Although the answers of some of the questions were different and all the people had different approached based upon their knowledge and exposure but basically I tried to summarize the answers according to majority and situation through which we all are passing, keeping all these factors in mind I analyzed the data. Also keeping in mind the current situation I did not get the chance to talk to people in person so In case the respondents answered "I do not know' or I'm not sure, a lot can be said by just looking at the facial expressions, also that factors would be absent in the results formulated and might have affected the results in some ways (Kathleen Bogart, 2020).

The questionnaire I designed included open questions and I aimed that they get them to talk in detail without limiting the conversations. That is why they could talk their thoughts and understandings in an easy way, rather than just answering like yes or no, so that I could get my required answers. I got a lot of extended data which was relevant to the field of research, but not the research questions therefore I tried not to include them and gather the best answers out the conversations I had with the respondents. It created some problems as the open questions sometimes detract the respondents and the interviewer might not get the required answers. And In this case distinguishing between the correct and incorrect information becomes difficult in some instances.

In this case study in my opinion my paper still has some deficiencies as the sample size is small, but this study can be extended in the future. With some deficiencies this paper has validity and reliability, it might not be taken as a general conclusion for the whole population but it has some credibility for the age group of 25 to 44.

8. Conclusion:

After doing a literature review and conducting interviews, it can be concluded that social media is playing a significant role in creating awareness and spreading information about Covid-19. The Nordic countries pay more attention to the authentic information than just believing in any news they read on social media.

Through this research, the research problem of this thesis can be explained, which is the impact of social media in the pandemic situation of coronavirus and the views about the behavior of Sweden in this regard.

I have reviewed many articles and journals and have studied various previous researches in this context and have conducted telephonic interviews. However, this research still has some limitations. Firstly the number of personal interviewed is small and is only based upon the population of Stockholm and represents a particular age group only. Therefore I suggest that more study is required to understand the role of social media, and the outcomes of strategy adopted by Sweden in the pandemic situation. So in my view, to acquire better results, the sample size must be increased to get an extensive view of the matter; secondly, this matter needs to be studied more with increased updates and advancements with each passing day, as this is an ongoing situation. With each passing day, we are achieving betterment and getting hold of the case and are near the formulation of the vaccine that would end up the situation. With that, I would also suggest that some quantitative studies, if performed, would also prove to be enlightening the situation.

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Appendices

The interview outline:

Dear interviewee

Hello,

I am conducting a research about the effect to social media in the current situation of COVID-19 I am a student at Halmstad University Sweden, I would request you to be associated with this research by giving me an interview which will be demonstrated anonymously and will be used for university research and project only. I would be delighted to involve you in my research.

My interviews were long in-depth telephonic interviews and the discussions included all these points.

- Which medium do you prefer to get updated? TV, radio, or social media i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.
- How often you use social media to stay updated about the current situation?
- How has social media been helpful to keep you updated?
- Do you trust social media for being a source of information on Critical matters like COVID?
- Has it caused more panic and do you feel it more comfortable if you stay unaware of the fatalities or current situations?
- Is there anything interesting or astonishing that you might have found on the social media about the current situation?
- What do you think Sweden is taking right steps in COVID-19 situation?
- What do think why Sweden is acting differently in the COVID-19 situation?
- What news have you encountered in this context on Social Media?

Thank you for your participation !

My Name is Aneela Muzaffar, and I am from Pakistan. It has been a pleasure studying at Halmstad University. My major at Halmstad University was the Nordic Welfare System. I would like to dedicate this thesis to my father Muzaffar Ahmad Ch. (Late) as he always motivated me to get an international degree, and also to my family who has always supported me.