

CONSPIRACY THEORIES AND OPINIONS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF PANDEMIC IN THE STUDENT POPULATION OF LATVIA DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

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INTRODUCTION

During the pandemic fear and uncertainty about the future is a factor that can contribute to the development and belief in conspiracy theories about the origin of virus. Conspiracy theories have the potential to alter public opinion and can negatively impact opinion on health issues and preventive measures (1).

METHODS

In this cross-sectional study, Latvian university and college students from various educational institutions and study programs, were asked to fill the self-report questionnaire electronically on a voluntary basis. Students' were classified into three groups depending on their studies, group A included health and biological sciences, group B technical sciences, group C arts, literature, education and related sciences (2). Data were analysed using SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to evaluate the results.

CONCLUSIONS

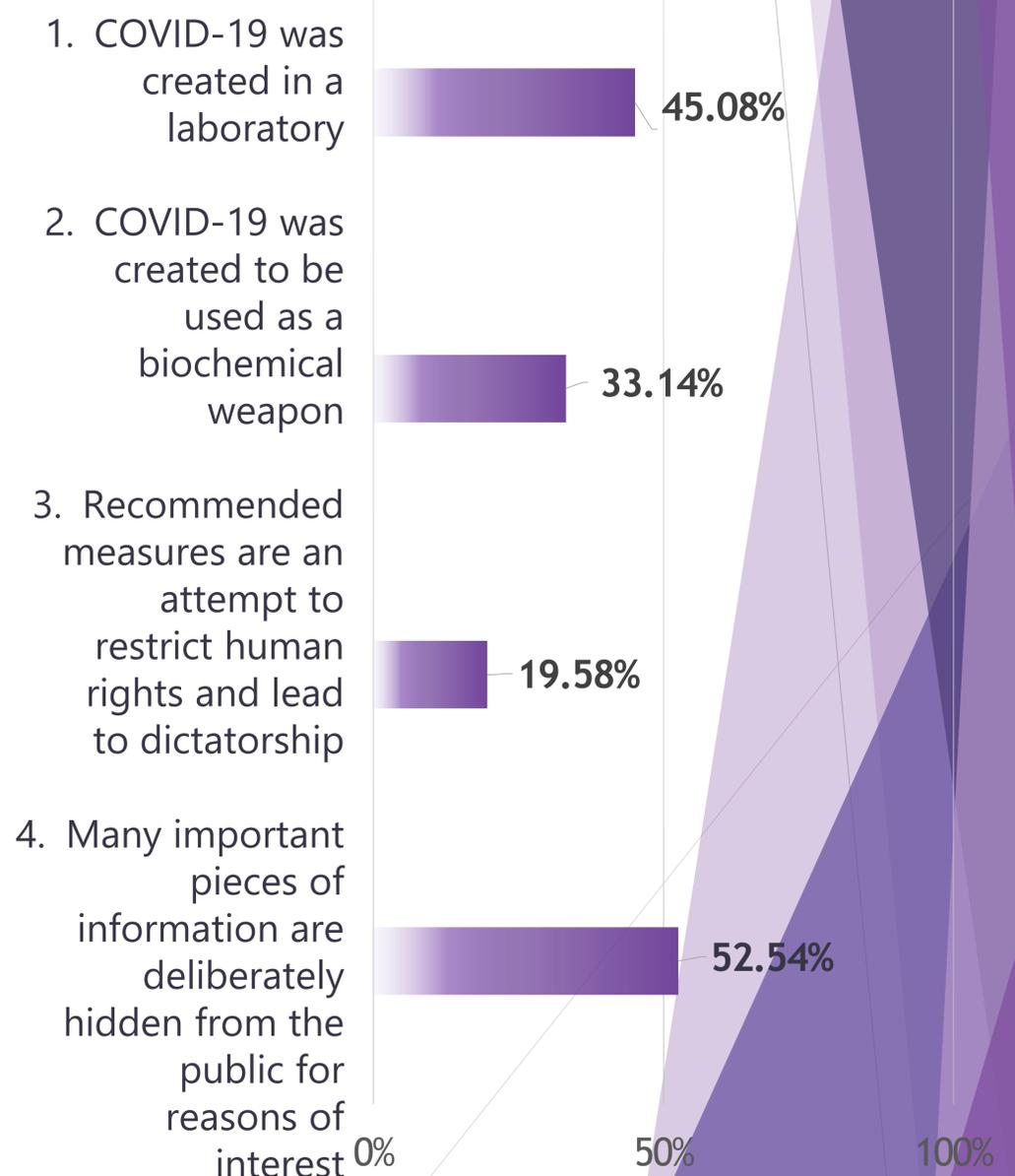
The present findings confirm that students tend to believe in conspiracy theories about pandemic. About half of the respondents' thoughts that government is hiding information about virus, such beliefs can escalate feeling of threat that the solutions introduced by the government may limit civil rights.

AIM

To identify the existence of conspiracy theories about the origin of the virus among the student population in Latvia during COVID-19 outbreak.

RESULTS

In total 1047 students filled the questionnaire, 79.08% (n=828) were women, 20.25% (n=212) were men, 0.67% (n=7) did not want to indicate their gender.



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2. Patsali M, Mousa D, Papadopoulou E, Papadopoulou K, Kaparounaki C, Diakogiannis I et al. University students' changes in mental health status and determinants of behavior during the COVID-19 lockdown in Greece. *Psychiatry Research* [Internet]. 2020 [cited 28 Jan 2022];292:113298. Available from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/db.rsu.lv/science/article/pii/S0165178120319843> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2020.113298>