



Article Features of Social Behavior and the Awareness of Moscow Residents about COVID-19 at the Beginning of the Pandemic

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Abstract: The coronavirus pandemic has raised serious questions about the need to properly inform residents of large cities about the rules of hygiene, behavior in self-isolation, and maintaining health. This study aimed to identify in more detail the sources of information and to assess the levels of awareness and knowledge of the inhabitants of a typical metropolis about coronavirus infection to further search for ways to improve health information during pandemics. This research has a questionnaire survey design. Data from 478 adult Muscovites were collected on 20–25 March 2020 by the Institute of Social Sciences of Sechenov University. The aim of this study was to study the level of awareness in preventing the spread of infection and peculiarities in the perceptions of residents of the city of Moscow toward the large-scale social changes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their impact on the way of life, social relations, lifestyle, and ideas about the future of the population. This article presents the results of a medical and sociological survey of residents of Moscow implemented at the beginning of the spread of coronavirus infection in the country, which showed the awareness of residents of Moscow regarding the problem of the spread of coronavirus and the prevention of infection as well as a high level of anxiety and the pessimistic expectations of respondents regarding the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the state, society, and people. At the same time, the fears of the survey participants involved both immediate risks of the disease and a wide range of socioeconomic problems from near and distant perspectives.

Keywords: the COVID-19 pandemic; perceptions of Moscow residents; sociology of medicine

1. Introduction

Pandemic coronavirus infections are often compared to epidemics of plague and the "Spanish flu" that broke established social ties; led to the transformation of social relations at the level of country, social groups, and individuals (Mahmood et al. 2020; McCartney 2020; Shereen et al. 2020); and changed the way of life, living arrangement, and professional employment (Shigemura et al. 2020; Wang et al. 2020; Zhou et al. 2020). In the context of a pandemic, the human community—both in ancient times and in modern times—is faced with a wide range of psychosocial reactions (fear, panic, despair, grief, etc.) which are largely associated with the financial situation of a person (Wigand et al. 2020).

Medical specialists and nursing staff were at the forefront of countering a pandemic that previously seemed possible only in postapocalyptic films, but many people without medical education also took part in the fight against the spread of coronavirus infection as part of volunteer work (Tierney and Mahtani 2020). At the same time, professional journalists covering news about coronavirus infection as well as employees of pharmacies, shops, public transport and taxis, delivery services, employees of the housing and communal services of cities, and a number of other professionals were at high risk of infection (Naveed et al. 2021).



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Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https:// creativecommons.org/licenses/by/ 4.0/). Mass distress caused by the danger of a fatal infection as well as caused by the need for self-isolation all over the world led to the manifestation of psychological disorders, behavioral deviations, an increase in aggression, and distance in the family (Otterbring et al. 2021; Roesch et al. 2020; Tyson et al. 2021). Field studies do not record significant deviations in the process of judging the problems under consideration for different regions or for developed or developing countries (Aker and Midik 2020; Huang et al. 2020; McFadden et al. 2020). However, there are still not as many studies as necessary that focus on such differences (Finn and Jakobson 2021; Naveed et al. 2021).

Despite the government's unprecedented action, the pandemic has swept the Russian Federation, and the capital region first faced the spread of COVID-19. However, due to the peculiarities of the country's mentality, a significant proportion of Russians initially perceived the COVID-19 pandemic as a "problem of other countries" (Reshetnikov et al. 2020), which made it difficult to understand the preventive measures introduced by the government. The transformation of understanding of the risks associated with the growing number of cases in the country and the expansion of the area of the coronavirus pandemic has determined the movement of the "social pendulum" of public opinion from ignoring the risk of infection to panic manifestations, including a sharp increase in purchases of personal protective equipment (medical masks and gloves), sanitizers, food, and essential goods. In the current situation, the Moscow city health system faced the need to prepare for providing medical care to patients with coronavirus infection while forecasts for the expected incidence rate had significant discrepancies (Burakova et al. 2022).

In addition to the immediate risk of infection both in Russia and abroad, a number of issues–satellites of coronavirus infection came to the fore: loss of jobs and income of the population, economic recession, emergency transition of the education system at all levels (school, secondary vocational, and higher education) to a distance learning format, changes in lifestyles, and forced isolation (Lwin et al. 2020; Mahmood et al. 2020; Nicola et al. 2020). The dynamics of the changes in social attitudes on issues related to the coronavirus pandemic turned out to be very high, which was reflected in the measurements of the largest Russian sociological centers.

The sociological direction of research on the pandemic is highly ambiguous to researchers. On the one hand, the timing of research is subject to criticism, which is not always able to capture the state of society and its changes during the pandemic, which is important for understanding the phenomenon of "epidemic psychology" (Monaghan 2020). On the other hand, most empirical field studies are focused on emotional contagion, inadequate beliefs, conspiracy ideation, and other phenomena associated with respondents' already certain judgments about what is happening (Bratu 2020; Monaghan 2020). It seems very important to collect sociological information about the current basic problems, as they are assessed by the population of various regions. These are problems related to prices, nutrition, education, communication, communication, etc. These underlying issues can be seen as a source and motive for psychological changes, such as conspiracy theories and others (Ward 2020). These issues can also clearly reveal issues of inequality, class differences, and expectations of change in social organization and welfare (Matthewman and Huppatz 2020). Studies of the state of public opinion and the assessment of the problems associated with the pandemic make it possible to develop adequate means of informing and self-organizing society (Reznik et al. 2020; Tierney and Mahtani 2020).

At the same time, effective control of the pandemic situation was largely associated with information and educational work with the population aimed at forming an understanding among residents of the Moscow region of the need to comply with the self-isolation regime and limit social activity (Krasnikov et al. 2022). In this regard, the study of this issue from the perspective of the sociology of medicine allows one to analyze the situation of the pandemic both from the "inside" of the medical community and from the point of view of the population (as potential patients), which seems relevant.

This paper attempts to redress the imbalances in previous studies through a descriptive statistics presentation of the opinion of the assessment of residents of a particular metropolis

about the most important problems and their personal perception of the pandemic and selfisolation. Accordingly, the purpose of the study is to get a primary picture of how residents of one major metropolis assess their attitude and well-being in relation to coronavirus and self-isolation and what problems they highlight in this regard. To achieve the purpose of the study, separate objectives are allocated:

- With the help of independently formulated definitions of survey participants, to obtain a list of key dominant associations with the concept of "coronavirus infection";
- To assess the level of awareness of Moscow residents about the problem of coronavirus infection;
- To research and obtain a primary ranking by importance among the population of Moscow of the most important sources of discomfort during self-isolation;
- To compare the results obtained with similar studies in other countries and regions.

2. Literature Review

The social aspects of the coronavirus pandemic have come to the fore in many studies because the pandemic spreads precisely through the mechanisms of social interaction and personal contact (Cevik et al. 2021). As a result of the attempt to stop the massive spread of COVID-19, unprecedented lockdown restrictions have been implemented around the world, and these restrictions have affected metropolitan areas the most (Chung et al. 2020; Cevik et al. 2021). It is the large urban conglomerates, as the researchers note, that suffered the most (Naveed et al. 2021; Nkire et al. 2021).

Researchers note that the sources of information in large cities were very diverse, and these sources, due to the deep penetration of mobile communications, the internet, and social networks, were available to reach a significant majority or all residents of megacities (Lee and You 2020; Lwin et al. 2020). On the other hand, a variety of sources of information formed an extremely heterogeneous picture of information that contributed to the spread of unverified rumors, fears, fakes, and unreliable or antiscientific information about the means of fighting infection or avoiding it (Naveed et al. 2021; Otterbring et al. 2021). In most developed countries, public health authorities have launched extensive campaigns to disseminate information about the correct behavior during lockdown and the use of hygiene products (Mahmood et al. 2020; Ghafurian et al. 2021; Lee and You 2020).

Self-isolation was chosen as the most adequate and simple means of preventing the spread of infection. At the same time, self-isolation has led, according to many researchers, to tectonic shifts in the social environment, the manners of communication, and the economy, which have changed and may never be the same as before (Chung et al. 2020; Lwin et al. 2020). Self-isolation gave rise to numerous psychological problems, including depression, lack of communication, and psychological perversions (Otterbring et al. 2021). During a study of behavior during self-isolation, it was found that online communication does not fully replace personal communication and does not stop a number of psychological needs that are not satisfied (Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015; Garrett 2020). Researchers especially note changes in the behaviors of children and learning difficulties associated with the lack of proper contact with a teacher and peers (Tierney and Mahtani 2020; Hodson et al. 2021).

As a number of separate regional studies show, the behavior of society and the peculiarities of the reaction of the public to the events of the pandemic often have similar features, which has already been noted by researchers (Wang et al. 2020; Wigand et al. 2020; Tyson et al. 2021). Researchers often refer to such general phenomena as treating COVID-19 as a problem in other countries, swinging the "social pendulum" of public opinion regarding various means and methods of protection and treatment, outbreaks of violence against vulnerable groups of people, the confrontation between advocates and critics of total vaccination, etc. (Roesch et al. 2020; Szkody et al. 2021). Some note that these phenomena may be more pronounced in developing countries, but this opinion cannot be considered strictly statistically proven (Reznik et al. 2020).

There are many studies devoted to the normalization of people's lives during the pandemic, but among them, there is a gap in the research that presents the perception of the

residents of the most affected megacities (Shereen et al. 2020; Shigemura et al. 2020). This gap should be gradually closed by regional and synthesis studies, and the study presented here is one of them. Moreover, part of the observed gap in research is due to the diverse assessment of residents of different rural and urban environments in different regions of the main problems associated with the pandemic (Monaghan 2020). It seems that these estimates should not differ significantly, but in reality, as a number of studies show, this is not the case (Bezerra et al. 2020; Mazza et al. 2020; Yıldırım et al. 2022). This study also partially covers this gap by collecting descriptive statistics for one of the significant metropolitan areas (Moscow, Russia).

3. Method and Materials

3.1. Research Design

This study offers an analysis of descriptive statistics based on a semistructured free survey, in which Moscow residents were asked to formulate from their point of view, the most important associations with COVID-19 infection, difficulties arising during self-isolation, and other issues. Within the framework of a qualitative primary study, an idea was created about how city residents assess the psychological situation that has developed as a result of the impact of coronavirus on the social and psychological components of their lives.

The survey included a number of thematic blocks. Respondents' associations with the concept of "coronavirus infection", the level of awareness of Muscovites about coronavirus infection, self-assessment of the risk of infection, basic infection prevention measures, attitudes towards self-isolation, and ideas about the "post-pandemic" world were assessed. The results were analyzed in accordance with the indicated blocks.

The first block asked the study participants to write down their first, fastest associations with the concept of "coronavirus infection". The second block of the survey included a request to assess the level of their awareness of the coronavirus infection on a scale of fully aware, rather aware, poorly informed, not informed, or the respondent cannot assess this parameter. In this section, respondents were asked also to rate whether they feel they are receiving sufficient information through various channels of information, whether they need to know more, or lack information. Respondents were asked to indicate the primary sources of information about the coronavirus that provided the most information for them personally and their level of awareness about certain aspects of avoiding infection. The third section asked them to describe their perception of the self-isolation regime. Respondents could describe this section in their own words but as briefly and specifically as possible in separate phrases or a short phrase. This approach simplified the further processing of such messages because they turned out to be of the same type and were reduced to a small number of repeated expressions, shown in Figure 1. Each of the sections was evaluated separately, only in the scope of descriptive statistics in the form of percentages of participants who gave certain answers.

The obtained descriptive results can be compared with similar studies in other regions and demographic situations and will also serve as the basis for further factorial, correlative, and other types of analysis of psychological phenomena that determine the reactions of city residents to a pandemic and self-isolation.



Figure 1. Reasons for the state of discomfort among respondents in self-isolation (the sum of indicators as a percentage is not equal to 100% due to the open format of the question and multiple answers).

3.2. Sample Study

The presented research (questionnaire survey) was implemented based on the Institute of Social Sciences of Sechenov University on 20–25 March 2020. The aim of this study was to study the level of awareness in preventing the spread of infection and the peculiarities of perception in residents of the city of Moscow of the large-scale social changes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their impact on the way of life, social relations, lifestyle, and ideas about the future of the population. A total of 478 adult Muscovites took part in the survey.

The survey was conducted by random sampling using the address database of the city of Moscow. Given the diverse composition of the population of Moscow and the significant number of visitors from other regions and foreigners, a mandatory restriction for participation in the study was the official registration of residence in the city for more than 10 consecutive years.

Potential participants, randomly selected by computer, were sent invitations to participate via SMS. After that, the survey was conducted by sending questionnaires by e-mail, and the participants returned the completed questionnaires also by e-mail. In total, 1082 people were invited, 512 people confirmed their consent and took part, and 478 questionnaires were recognized as completely correctly filled out without errors and valid.

With a confidence level of p = 0.05 and taking into account the size of the general population of the sample as the entire adult population of Moscow for the period under study, the admissible statistical error of the sample does not exceed 4.48. Based on this result, the sample can be considered statistically representative. The gender distribution of the respondents was 53.5% female and 46.5% male. Age groups of respondents: 23.6% were Muscovites 18–29 years old, 20.1%—respondents aged 30–39 years, 20.7%—the group from 40 to 49 years. Another 15.5% of respondents were aged 50–59 years, and every fifth respondent (20.1%) was in the age group over 60 years.

The majority of respondents were working (75.6%), 9.2% were studying at a university or college, 12.9% were retired, and 2.3% were unemployed. At the time of the survey, 55.4% of respondents were married, 6.7% lived together, and 37.8% of the total respondents were single (did not have a partner, were divorced, or were widowed). Two-thirds of respondents raised children (65.1%).

3.3. Statistical Instruments

For statistical processing and obtaining descriptive statistics of the survey results, the statistical software package SPSS 22.0 was used. To visualize the presented data, Microsoft Excel 2019 was used.

3.4. Ethical Issues

During the study, no personal data of the participants were collected, recorded, or used in any way. All participants were informed about the purpose and content of the study and agreed to participate on the condition of anonymity and protection of personal information. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles approved by the Ethics Committee of Sechenov University.

4. Results

The survey included a number of thematic blocks (respondents' associations with the concept of "coronavirus infection", the level of awareness of Muscovites about coronavirus infection, self-assessment of the risk of infection, basic measures for infection prevention, attitudes toward self-isolation, and ideas about the world of "post-pandemic"), a significant part of which served as the empirical basis of this article. The results were analyzed in accordance with the specified blocks.

4.1. Associations of Respondents with the Concept of "Coronavirus Infection"

The COVID-19 pandemic, which affected most of the world's countries in a short time, has seriously changed the lives of a significant proportion of the population. However, the perception of the pandemic was extremely diverse: from panic to complete disbelief. In the study, 91.2% of respondents expressed associations with the concept of "coronavirus infection", which indicates a high level of interest of survey participants in this problem. The resulting array of opinions was grouped into associative groups, depending on the key respondents' perceptions of coronavirus infection (Table 1).

Table 1. Key dominant views of Muscovites about the coronavirus pandemic (n = 436, the sum is not equal to 100% due to the open format of the question and multiple answers).

Key Dominant Opinions	Associative Views (Self-Formulated Definitions by Respondents)	% of Opinions
Socioeconomic	panic, chaos, mass hysteria, expectation of the apocalypse,	26.8
	anxiety, fear for the health of relatives, fear of infection, helplessness,	22.0
	social crisis (threat to humanity as a whole, change in social reality, uncertainty of consequences, social conflicts),	17.9
	quarantine, social isolation, self-isolation, a "remote" life (distant work and education, long-distance relationships),	16.3
	economic crisis, rising prices, lower standard of living, the risks of job loss,	10.3
	panic buying (commodity fever, empty shelves, no products),	5.7
Epidemiological and	social upheaval of historic proportions ("will go down in history", revolution, "world of confusion"),	4.8
	lack of understanding of the seriousness of the situation ("an epidemic that is far away from us"),	3.0
	pandemic (mass infection, the rapid spread and high morbidity, the red circles on the map),	38.8
medico-biological	coronavirus, COVID-19, a viral infection, a disease,	14.2
0	death, high mortality, intensive care unit,	6.2
	seasonal influenza,	6.0
	the resonance of the past infectious diseases (Ebola hemorrhagic	
	fever, measles, avian influenza, anthrax, plague, "swine" influenza,	5.5
	"Spanish flu", HIV),	
	pneumonia, cough,	4.6

	Key Dominant Opinions	Associative Views (Self-Formulated Definitions by Respondents)	% of Opinions
		checking the health system for capacity, unavailability of sanitary and epidemiological services, lack of medicines and tests,	4.4
		compliance with the sanitary and epidemiological regime (hygiene, hand washing, masks, antiseptics),	4.4
Conspiracy	lack of a vaccine, hope for experimental vaccines,	1.1	
	disinformation, inciting media panic, suggestibility of the masses, uncertainty,	12.6	
	political games and "bias" of the pandemic to distract the population from the global economic crisis,	3.2	
	virus attack, laboratory virus, biological warfare	1.6	

Table 1. Cont.

According to the study results, the coronavirus pandemic is most associated among residents of the capital with socioeconomic consequences while social aspects occupy a dominant share of views in this group of opinions. The respondents noted an anxious emotional background in society and a violation of the established social order most often. For a significant proportion of survey participants (16.3%), the pandemic is synonymous with self-isolation, and one in ten respondents associated the coronavirus pandemic with large-scale economic shocks. Interestingly, there were opinions that the pandemic will cause "a change in the Gestalt of everyday life" and "a revision of the human essence".

Associations that primarily link the problem of the pandemic to its epidemiological characteristics reflect the heterogeneity of information received by respondents and the anxiety associated with the risk of infection. The most common in this group of opinions were "direct" associations (pandemic, coronavirus, symptoms of the disease). Nevertheless, 4.4% of respondents associated the coronavirus pandemic with the functionality of the social institute of medicine in the current situation.

The third group of associative representations includes respondents' opinions about the "artificial" nature of the pandemic, and first of all, this group of the population explains the reasons for the global spread of infection by the need to "distract the attention of the masses from important social and economic problems". In addition, some respondents in this subgroup admitted that the pandemic may be a "rehearsal for the use of bacteriological weapons".

The distribution of the associative series showed that the pandemic was a factor in the global socioeconomic transformation and revision of existing norms of social behavior while the heterogeneity and diversity of the associations of respondents were objectively associated with the multiplicity of positions in the presentation of information in the media, which largely affected the increase in the level of anxiety in the population.

4.2. Awareness of Moscow Residents about the Problem of Coronavirus Infection

The information component is key for planning epidemiological, preventive, socioeconomic, and other measures. This study's results showed a high level of awareness of respondents about the problem of coronavirus infection: 43.0% consider themselves fully aware of COVID-19, infection symptoms, and risks associated with this disease, and 49.4% consider themselves "rather aware". In total, 6.8% said that they were not informed about the prevention and spread of COVID-19, and another 0.8% of respondents could not answer this question.

At the same time, according to the survey, the majority of respondents (63.2%) noted that through all possible channels (media, messages in clinics, alerts, newsletters, instant messengers) they receive a lot of information about COVID-19, its symptoms, and infection routes and that this information is too much. However, one in six (16.7%) would like to know more about disease prevention and prevention. Another 14.6% lacked information about how to treat coronavirus infection, in particular, about the specific symptoms of viral infection, medications, timing, and effectiveness of modern treatment. About 4.8% of the

survey participants lacked information about the spread of the disease (its rate, the regions with detected cases, the number of cases of infection, and recovery). Other responses had lower scores.

At the time of the survey, the majority of Moscow residents who took part in the survey preferred to receive information about the spread of coronavirus infection from official newsletters of Rospotrebnadzor and the Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation (53.3%) as well as directly from medical professionals (49.0%). About 48.5% of Muscovites surveyed turned to internet resources, including the World Health Organization website, to obtain information about the development of the pandemic in Russia and the world. Among other sources of information, respondents noted television programs and news reports (41.4%), radio programs (13.6%), publications in magazines and newspapers (11.3%), and even Muscovites surveyed preferred to get information from friends and relatives (6.1%) or representatives of pharmaceutical companies (2.9%). About 4.8% of respondents were absolutely not interested in information about the spread of coronavirus infection.

The authors conclude that the high level of awareness observed in most Muscovites about the peculiarities of the spread of coronavirus infection, its transmission routes, measures to contain it, and symptoms of the disease is combined with some inconsistency and gaps in knowledge among respondents. A control open-ended question about the infection prevention measures known to the respondents showed that the most effective preventive methods, in the opinion of Muscovites, are limiting personal contact and self-isolation (70.2%), washing hands (54.8%) and treating them with antiseptics if necessary (12.4%), observing personal hygiene rules (29.8%), wearing personal protective equipment (masks and gloves) when leaving the house (26.5%) as well as disinfection measures (surface treatment, gadgets, outerwear, and shoes) (16.4%). Another important preventive measure, according to 11.3% of the survey participants, is to strengthen the immune system (through proper nutrition, sleep, sports, vitamin therapy, etc.). In addition, 5.2% of respondents consider it necessary to place citizens with suspected coronavirus infection in strict quarantine.

A proper attitude to safety measures (in particular, wearing masks, and washing hands) during a pandemic contributes to controlling the spread of the disease; according to Chinese researchers, 98.0% wore masks during the announcement of the epidemic, which helped prevent the spread of infection (Zhong et al. 2020). This thesis is confirmed in a study implemented by Italian scientists, which shows that information through the media significantly affects the behavior of a population during the pandemic (Motta Zanin et al. 2020; Reznik et al. 2020).

The high level of awareness of the necessary measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (wearing medical masks, observing social distancing, washing, and treating hands by nurses, additional measures for processing fomites, etc.) confirms data on the changes in social behavior and everyday habits of respondents. Most metropolis residents wash their hands whenever possible (77.6%), avoid crowded places (67.8%), and use hand sanitizers (55.6%). Less than half indicated that they wash their hands only after returning home (41.6%), and just over a third of respondents regularly wipe their gadgets with antiseptics (37.4%). Close to these indicators are the respondents who conduct frequent wet cleaning at home (35.1%) and systematically use personal protective equipment (medical masks, gloves) (33.5%). One in five respondents often washed their face. Among the least popular preventive measures are strengthening the immune system and treating outerwear and shoes with antiseptics. Only 2.3% do not apply any measures to protect against infection with coronavirus while some of the respondents in this group justify their inaction with the confidence that they have already had coronavirus before (0.2%), and another 0.4% admit that they simply do not have enough money to buy disinfectants.

According to foreign studies, behavioral responses are influenced by the population's readiness for health emergencies. For example, at the beginning of the spread of infection in Korea, the population, having received information from the government about prevention

measures, quickly began to apply them: 67.8% observed hand hygiene, 63.2% wore a mask on the street, and another 41.5% tried to avoid crowded places (Lee and You 2020).

Among the measures that respondents took to ensure the safety of themselves and their families during the epidemic, the most frequent ones were the refusal of social contacts (56.9%), the purchase of antiseptics (46.4%) and personal protective equipment (35.6%) as well as the formation of a "safety reserve" (34.5%)—food, essential goods, and medicines. In addition, some respondents (18.2%) indicated that they turned to traditional medicine to strengthen the immune system, and 9.0% noted that they began to buy purchases more often with home delivery. However, 6.3% did not take any measures because they are confident that products can be purchased in any development of the epidemic situation. About 5.6% of respondents turned to management with the initiative to working remotely. Similar sentiments were recorded in other countries of the world where, as the incidence rates increased, there was an increase in purchases of essential goods and products (Grant et al. 2009; Holt-Lunstad et al. 2015; Nicola et al. 2020).

At the same time, respondents were asked to describe their observations of changes in Russian society caused by the coronavirus pandemic. According to the observations of respondents in the period of March 15–25, 2020, the number of "panic purchases" of goods increased (64.2%) as well as the number of citizens in medical masks on public transport and in public places increased; this was noted by 54.8% and 55.2% of survey participants, respectively. In addition, the majority of respondents noted that the main topic of conversation in this situation is the coronavirus pandemic (60.3%). A third of the survey participants noticed that there were fewer passengers in transport (37.7%) and customers in stores (30.3%). Another 14.0% of respondents noted a reduction in the number of cars on the roads. However, 21.8% (total) of the survey participants noted that the behavior of the population as a whole has not changed, and there were no panic manifestations. Other responses were 3.0%.

The majority of Muscovites surveyed in the situation of the spread of coronavirus infection take the necessary preventive measures, provide their family with a "safety reserve" (food, essential goods, and medicines), limit their social activity, and adhere to the recommended rules of behavior in a pandemic; however, some survey participants (16.7%) do not consider it necessary to change their usual behavior, and every fifth respondent (21.8%) in their observations noted the prevalence of this attitude to the risk of infection among the population.

4.3. Perception of the Self-Isolation Regime by Residents of Moscow

One of the priority measures to control the spread of coronavirus infection is the restriction of social contact of the population and the regime of self-isolation. To a greater extent, self-isolation discomfort among respondents is associated with a decrease in quality of life (rising prices, falling incomes, loss of work), limited personal space and freedom of movement as well as the need to organize leisure and food for the family during a long and closed stay at home (Figure 1).

As shown in Figure 1, the most common reasons for discomfort experienced in selfisolation are economic reasons: rising prices (39.3%) and a temporary drop in income (38.3%). The third most important inconvenience was the limitation of personal space (26.4%). This fact may also be related to the economic impact of the pandemic, as many people with relatively high incomes are accustomed to spending a significant amount of time in public places, restaurants, concerts, etc. The loss of this public space and constant presence in housing spaces is perceived as a restriction of personal space. Interestingly, almost the same number of participants (24.5%) reported that they did not feel discomfort from self-isolation. Since the various answers were not mutually exclusive, we can assess the intersection of these two sets—and it is minimal: only 1.7% of respondents associated self-isolation with the restriction of personal space and at the same time noted that they did not experience discomfort. For a quarter of the survey participants (24.5%), the self-isolation regime is comfortable, and in this subgroup, the majority were young (44.8%), childless citizens (75.0%), most of whom (64.3%) are not afraid of infection, which indicates a certain introversion among the younger generation.

5. Discussion

The self-isolation regime, as a priority measure in the fight against the pandemic, is recognized by respondents as the most effective for saving the population from infection and, at the same time, it is accompanied by a number of risks (loss of income, conflicts, depressive disorders, etc.) and the need to organize life in new conditions (Cevik et al. 2021; McCartney 2020; Wang et al. 2020). In addition, in the current environment, the scope of research interests needs to be expanded. Thus, the scientific literature highlights multiple emotional and psychological problems in the population associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the unusual conditions of isolation (Aker and Midik 2020). Researchers all over the world note the difficulties of maintaining social ties, increasing social isolation and disunity in society, the growth of depressive and stress disorders, and an increase in cases of domestic violence (Chung et al. 2020; Garrett 2020; Wang et al. 2020).

Since self-isolation and the problem of psychological reaction to new outbreaks of the COVID-19 pandemic remain relevant for the whole world, the accumulation of primary information for research in the form of descriptive statistics within the framework of qualitative research continues to be relevant. Therefore, this study relies on a statistical analysis of a survey of Muscovites, avoiding temporarily more accurate factor estimates or correlation analysis. A similar approach is taken by many field studies of the problems of buffer psychological responses to a pandemic (Finn and Jakobson 2021; Nkire et al. 2021; Szkody et al. 2021). The observed trends of increasing anxiety among Muscovites, associated with the risk of infection with a new, unknown infection and ideas about self-isolation as a "vacation" means of preventing the spread of infection (but burdened with the risks of loss of income and restrictions on free movement), are expected to be replaced by new risks of self-isolation and increasing social disunity in society (Dzerzhinskaya et al. 2022).

As the study proposed here also demonstrates, one of the complex psychological consequences of self-isolation is a differentiated response to it on the part of different social groups, which can provoke misunderstanding and even manifestations of aggression and cruelty between different social and demographic groups (Huang et al. 2020; McFadden et al. 2020; Nkire et al. 2021). In particular, there have been cases of a significant increase in aggression toward women in a number of regions, which requires a separate study of the factors of such behavior in different regions and its causes (Roesch et al. 2020). If young Muscovites without children in that study mostly perceive self-isolation positively or create psychological buffers that allow them to perceive it adequately, then most studies of families with children in various countries note an increase in fear, anxiety, distress, and fatigue in both parents and children (Hodson et al. 2021; Mikocka-Walus et al. 2021; Tyson et al. 2021). This behavior is associated with both the objective difficulties indicated earlier, for example, a decrease in real purchasing power, and psychological, for example, uncertainty about the future of children. In some critical cases, distress in parents, especially with sick children, leads to self-accusations of having a child in a world or environment that is too dangerous (Hodson et al. 2021).

The low assessment by Muscovites of factors of discomfort, such as limited communication, distance learning, and physical activity, may be due to national characteristics of character or coincide with a similar process in a number of developing countries. Contrary to these findings, research demonstrates that support and social contacts are the best means of buffering the negative psychological effects of a pandemic and self-isolation (Szkody et al. 2021). At the same time, a number of studies indicate a number of negative effects of preferential network communication and communication through social media during a pandemic, the manifestation of narcissism and neurotic abnormalities, etc., which were not mainly observed during normal social interactions before the COVID-19 (Naveed et al. 2021; Otterbring et al. 2021). Among the means of solving this problem, even the use of special social robots and algorithms that emulate close human communication is proposed (Ghafurian et al. 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic shook the foundations of society and changed the face of not only the existing global world but also determined the historical vectors of human development. At the same time, the pandemic has exposed serious problems of interaction within human society, primarily the problem of providing resources (food and essential goods, medicines, medical services, etc.) for survival in the new, historical conditions. Today, for sociologists, the primary tasks are to fix the facts of the new reality, make sense of them, and provide a basis for a development strategy for the postpandemic society. In light of a massive flood of heterogeneous information, there is also an increase in anxiety levels among the population that, given the drastic changes in usual living arrangements in connection with the regime of isolation and declining living standards, contribute to the growth of pessimism in a high proportion of the population.

6. Conclusions

This study shows that at the beginning of the spread of coronavirus infection in Russia, residents of the capital region showed a high level of awareness about the problem of the pandemic but underestimated the risks of their infection. However, the coronavirus pandemic was considered by most respondents to be a factor of global socioeconomic transformation, which required preventive measures to ensure the safety of their families (purchasing food, essential goods, and medicines). The survey results showed that the residents of Moscow are dominated by socioeconomic associations with the concept of "coronavirus pandemic" (maximums of 26.8% and 38.8% of respondents); 43% and 49.4% of respondents assess their awareness as high or sufficient; 53.3% were predominantly informed through official information channels of government ministries and departments, but the majority used a very wide range of information sources. Self-isolation is also most significantly associated with economic problems: rising prices (39.3%) and falling incomes (38.3%). At the same time, almost a quarter (24.5%) of respondents did not associate selfisolation with discomfort. At least 33.5% used all basic recommended hygiene practices and restrictions, and washing hands as often as possible was the most popular procedure (77.6%). It should be specifically pointed out that a similar pattern of preferences and sources of information is observed in many developing countries. The contribution of this study lies in a more accurate and differentiated presentation of knowledge and sources of informing a resident of a modern metropolis about coronavirus infection.

The study has a few limitations. The research method is descriptive statistics as a primarily qualitative analysis of data, intended for further formulation of hypotheses and research of factors affecting the studied phenomena. This limits the conclusions of the study to ascertaining the observed picture and comparing it with other regions and the results of other studies.

One should also take into account the fact that Moscow is the largest metropolitan area in Russia, and living conditions in this city differ significantly from conditions throughout the country and may differ from conditions in other countries and regions; therefore, the research results can be extrapolated to wider samples only taking into account their similarity to the sample used in this study. Further research will be aimed at identifying topics, tools, and the most effective channels for informing residents of megacities to increase their preventive security in the face of possible future pandemics.

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