



USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PLATFORM FOR PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AMONG ARTS UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA



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Introduction

Digital and social media are prevalent modalities through which young adults explore and learn about health and risk behaviors¹. The leading mode of social media in current society is Facebook which has over 2 billion active users. On the other hand, non-communicable diseases have been rising in Sri Lanka which is mainly caused by an unhealthy lifestyle. The prevalence of high blood pressure is 8.2% while the prevalence of diabetes is 5.7% in Sri Lanka². The Sri Lankan population inevitably needs comprehensive education regarding lifestyle modifications. Thus we intend to combine these two areas and research the efficacy of using social media as a tool to educate the community. It is timely, as adequate research has not been done in Sri Lanka regarding this matter.

Objectives

- To evaluate the effectiveness of a Facebook group in improving knowledge on a healthy lifestyle among arts undergraduates at University of Kelaniya.
- To assess response on posts regarding a healthy lifestyle in the above Facebook group.
- To develop a set of guidelines on developing quality Facebook posts about lifestyle modification

Method

Two Facebook groups were created separately for the study sample and the control sample. Both groups were given a pre-intervention questionnaire that assessed their knowledge on a healthy lifestyle and marks were allocated for correct answers. After that, a series of developed systematically Facebook posts were posted on the study group educating them about a healthy lifestyle. In the end, both groups were presented with the same questionnaire to assess their knowledge. Differences between marks at the start and the end was calculated for each individual. Differences were plotted in a normal distribution for both groups and were compared.

Study design	Quasi-experimental interventional study
Study setting	Two Facebook groups consisting of Arts undergraduates in University of Kelaniya
Study period	1 st of February 2019 to 31 st of March 2020
Study population	Facebook users of 2nd and 3rd year Arts undergraduates of University of Kelaniya
Sample size	156 (78 in the study group and 78 in the control group)
Sampling method	Simple random sampling
Data collection tool	Self-administered questionnaire through Google Forms to which marks are allocated
Intervention	Facebook awareness via posts regarding food & drinks, sleep, alcohol & tobacco and physical activity on the study group
Data analysis	By two sample Z test
Variables	The difference between marks taken for the questionnaire before and after the intervention

Results

76 students participated in the study group and 63 students participated in the control group.

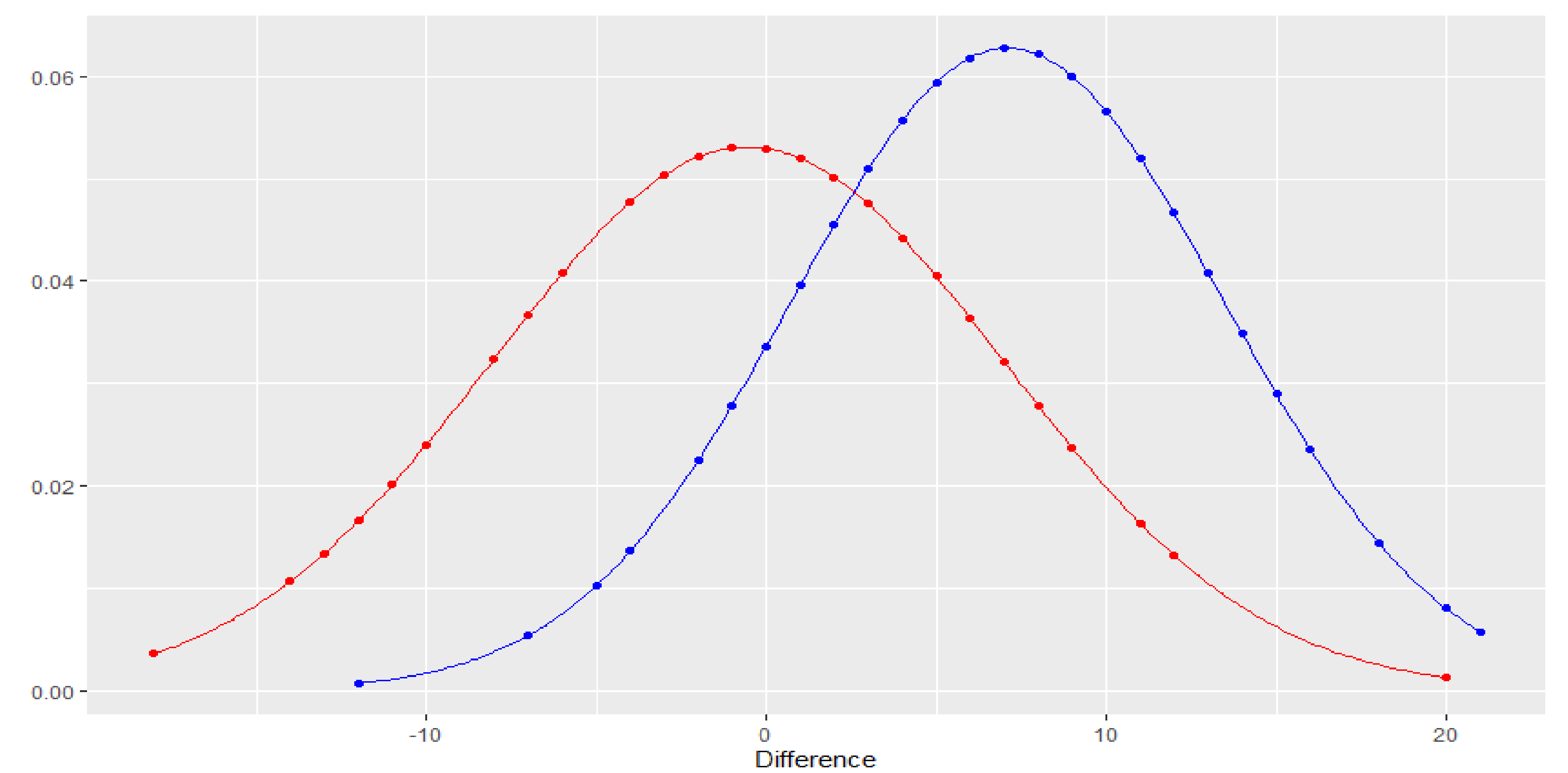


Figure 1: Normal distribution of Difference; red-control, blue-study

Two-sample z-Test

- data: difference in the study group; difference in the control group
- $z = 6.4$, $p\text{-value} = 1.554e-10$
- alternative hypothesis: true difference in means not equal to 0
- 95 percent confidence interval: 5.303722, 9.986169
- sample estimates: mean of study = 7.1052632; mean of control = -0.5396825

The interactions for the Facebook posts in the study group were as follows.

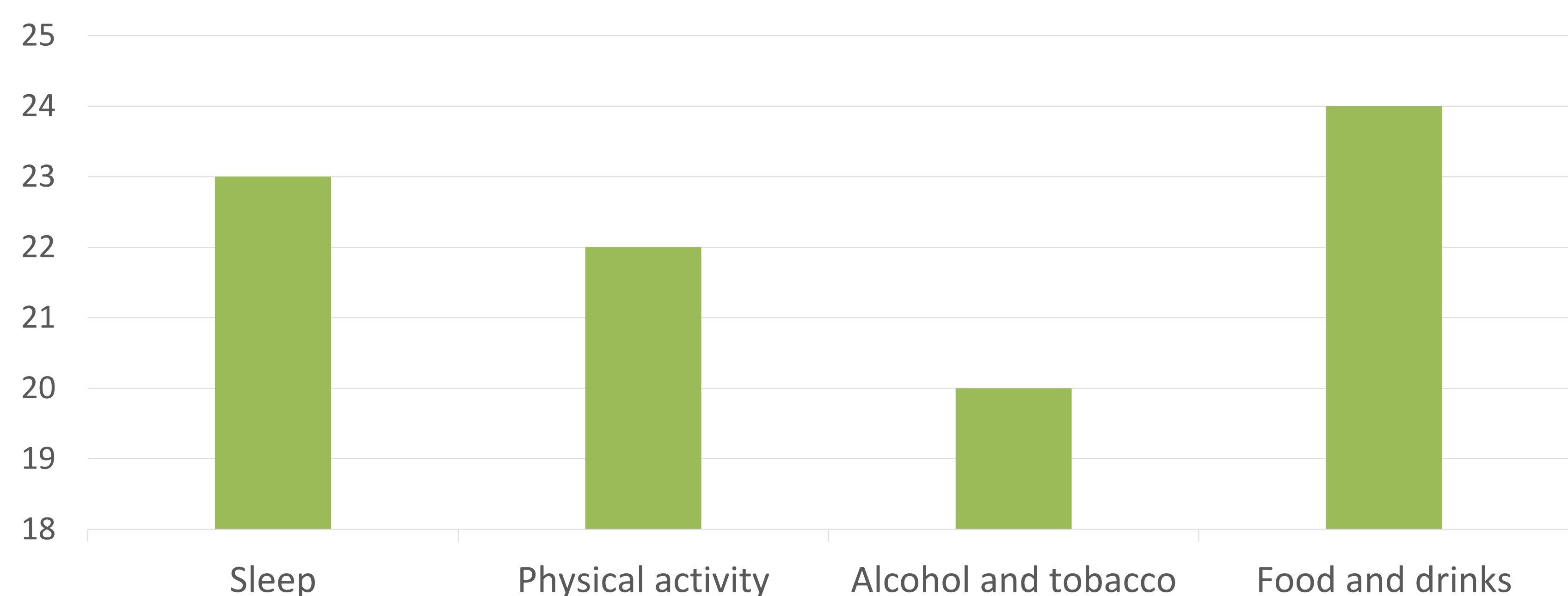


Figure 2: Likes for each category of posts

Conclusion

- The intervention was successful as the difference of score in the study group was significantly better than the control group. Hence the use of Facebook groups as a platform for promoting a healthy lifestyle is effective.
- The interaction of group members with posts of different categories was in a relatively same range. The sample was equally engaged in the above categories.
- A protocol for the development of quality Facebook posts regarding a healthy lifestyle can be developed using this research where approved sources are used and reviewed.

References

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