

## **From epidemic to pandemic: How Pakistan's web Media depicts the portrayal of coronavirus**

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### **Abstract:**

*The world has experienced an effective challenge in the shape of Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19). First, from china to the globe, the coronavirus expanded in a very short span of time with fear and anxiety around the globe. People were taking precautionary measures and some were not taking it seriously although it was severe. Media from the entire globe covered it on a primary basis, as it became a pandemic from an epidemic. Media covered it in news stories, features, editorials, columns, and vlogs and in blogs too. Digital media presented the news story in the top categories where a citizen can reach the content easily. In this article, the researcher will explore how the Pakistani net-centric media portrays and depicts the news stories of corona virus, as it is a hot and current affair topic all around the globe, which needs to be researched in this scenario.*

**Keywords:** Covid19, Digital, media, coronavirus, pandemic, depiction, Pakistan

## **Introduction**

(COVID-2019) was identified as the causative virus by China and then in March 2020, the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic. This virus spreads from person to person and by respiratory droplets released when someone infected with the virus coughs, sneezes, or talks.

All around the globe media is covering it in many means where masses are also interested to know about it as it is getting worst day by day and the masses are in the condition of anxiety and depression due to the circumstances of the lockdown.

Mass media functions in any society are always declared and followed according to regulated bodies or according to a code of conduct. Mass media functions can be considered an integral role in any state or class system. Through this, the media elaborates on every matter, event, and incident. Mass communication exists to detect, inform and interpret. In times of crisis, mass media declarations offer forewarnings and guidelines. Especially a function of surveillance and mobility play a vital role because they both occur when there is a need for mobilization in any society. Warning, Or Beware and Influential surveillance has to do with the broadcast of information that is valuable and cooperative in normal life regarding special affairs.

COVID-19 is a worldwide crisis that has blowout during the ecosphere at a hazardously reckless pace. Media plays a huge role in socializing information, affects public behavior, and can restrain the feast of the virus. (Raees, 2020)

Communication requirements the society must be met for the life of the society. The mass media is able to join different essentials of society that are not right allied. Primitive society had sentinels that scanned the environment and repeated dangers. The Council of elders interpreted facts and made decisions. Today, the way of communication has been changed totally due to digital media. It has evolved all around the globe with the characteristics of hypermedia, flexibility, interactivity, multimedia, and above all social media. The unembellished acute breathing disease coronavirus 2 eruption has had a noteworthy effect on global well-being, the economy, and civilization as a whole. (Tang, 2020)

The demand from the masses is observed at the peak where they want to be informed, interpreted and updated regarding Covid-19. People see isolations, curfew, lockdown and similar regulations too. People are very conscious and they have curiosity as well to know more and more about this pandemic.

There is a list of countries that decreased their covid-19 rate or a graph of the positive side, because of the role of media. The media itself proved a comprehensive approach and a tool to keep the masses refrain from the possible ways to get affected. Social media platforms are functional to instruct people to take public health procedures; one of the first republics hit by COVID-19, Singapore's fruitful response has helped from the early exploit taken by the country through new media. A nationwide WhatsApp station was immediately shaped to update people living in Singapore about government updates and ingenuities on COVID-19. There have been over 635,000 people pledged to the channel to obtain rationalized messages. (Tang, 2020)

#### **Coverage of Covid-19 all around the globe:**

All around the globe, media houses from each country have been covering covid-19 for many means. From precautionary measures to highlighting, the real stories about victims or about symptoms, everything is being covered. News media play a critical role in cooperating public well-being and strategy information. News coverage connects risks to readers and figures public perceptions over the amount, content, and tone of broadcasting. The aim of the COVID-19 public health statement is to increase understanding of distancing rules and to make the most of the impact of administrative policy, the degree to which the quantity and class of information from different communication channels like social media, government pages, and influence public understanding of public healthiness measures leftovers to be recognized. (Krawczyk & Chelkowski, 2021)

Covid caused up until now economically, social, political, and educational losses all around the globe where people from all around the world have understood clearly the power of technology and its evolving perspective too especially in E-commerce and academia.

#### **New Media, acceptance, and covid-19:**

The recitation of the COVID-19 pandemic has proved how the feast of misrepresentation, enlarged on social media and other digital podiums, is proving to be as much a threat to worldwide public fitness as the disease itself. Technology advancements and social media generate chances to keep people safe, well-versed and linked. However, similar tools also permit and increase the current infodemic that endures to undermine the worldwide response and endangers actions to switch the pandemic.

New media was amongst the most public ways to study news and apprise on infectious diseases in developing countries. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, social media played a vital role in sharing consistent and reliable statements. The pandemic caused in over 100 million cases and more than 2 million deaths globally as of January 2021, and vaccination is likely to be vital in having pandemic prevention and management. Generally, the study of vaccinations illustrates the long gaps between scientific design, development, production, approval, and population-based use. (Alfatease, Alqahtani, Orayj, & Alshahrani, 2021)

A quarter of all reporting in 2020 covered COVID-19, which is indicative of information overload. In this capacity, our data and analysis for a quantitative basis for informing health communication strategies along traditional news media channels to minimize the risks of COVID-19 while vaccination is rolled out. (Krawczyk & Chelkowski, 2021)

In a WHO report it was often suggested that “young adults Gen Z and Millennials are ‘also relaxed’ and do not care about the crisis, this notion is not reflected in the data, with 90% of respondents were very anxious or somewhat worried about the risk of infection. Elsewhere getting bizarre themselves, the top concern of respondents (55.5%) was the risk of friends and family members contracting COVID-19, closely followed by the economy crashing (53.8%).” Public service media are not coping better despite new chances created by digitization to expand their scope and capacity. (Chan, 2014).

### **Hypothesis:**

The web media depicts the comprehensive portrayal of Coronavirus news stories.

**Research question:**

1. Does a web medium fulfill the requirement of Journalism while covering Coronavirus stories? D
2. Did the chosen websites portray defensive, aggressive, or neutral portrayals? D
3. How the language is manipulated throughout the coverage of coronavirus? H

**The objective of the study:**

- To find, how the web media is interpreting the real images of Coronavirus. T
- To check whether digital Journalism follows the functions of Mass Media. T
- To check, the hype and sensationalism in the news stories. T

**Significance of the study:**

Especially during the pandemic, the world understood and recognized the worth and importance of technology, digitalization, and Digital media. The researcher aims to know how the media, which is empowering the world, covered, this worst and most destructive pandemic in their stories, as web media is ruling the world with immediacy, multimedia, and a variety of content.

The stories were taken from the given news websites

1. AWN.COM D
2. RIBUNE.COM.PK T
3. HENEWS.COM.PK T

4.  
RECORDER.COM

B

**METHODOLOGY:**

The study has been planned to know about the depiction of news stories of coronavirus. For the study, the content analysis technique was used. From 21st march-2020 to 30 May-2020 a sample of 200 news stories was selected from given websites to investigate the portrayal systematically. All two hundred news stories were taken from the websites, which usually have appropriate rank in Alexa (web traffic Analysis Company) in terms of interactivity or news dissemination. The sample was taken through purposive sampling.

**Coding for analysis:**

**CODES AND INDICATORS**

**NEWS**

WIDE-RANGING	IMPERFECT	ACROSS- THE- BOARD

**PORTRAYAL OF COVID-19**

ENLIGHTENING	CORRECT	EXPLANAT ORY

**LANGUAGE**

SELF- PROTECTIVE	UNBIASED	AGGRESSIV E

### **MASS MEDIA FUNCTIONS**

EXAGGERATION/ CLICK-BAIT	FOLLOWED ENTIRELY	SOMEWHA T FOLLOWED

### **Discussion and Analysis:**

The news presentation was found quite comprehensive in terms of providing facts with principles of journalism. A minor ratio of an incomplete factor was observed at 95% neutral and the functions of mass media were followed completely. Same as Dawn, Tribune proved itself to cover the stories in a very comprehensive way where only 3% of incomplete content was found. It was found interpretative then accurate and informative. The defensive mood was 25% only however, 70% neutrality analyzed the phase of sensationalism, and hype was found at a very low level. 47% of functions were followed completely, and 39% moderately followed.

News presentation was found quite comprehensive, whereas, 75 out of 200 news stories were also found incomplete. The interpretation was quite high. For language, aggression was found at 51% and a defensive approach was present at 38%. In terms of media functions, 85 out of 200 stories were moderately followed, 65 out of 200 news stories were followed completely and 25% sensationalism was also found.

While analyzing for business recorder, the ratio was 39% complete, 49% incomplete and 12% was comprehensive. For portrayal, 72 news stories were accurate, 68 were interpretative and 60 were informative. The neutrality was found high and the aggressive phase was too short and 45

news stories were found defensive mood. Functions of mass communication were followed by 50% moderately, and 39% followed completely.

Overall, web media depicted a positive way of covering the news stories of covid from epidemic to pandemic. Sensationalism and hype were found very low, except for the news, the level of neutrality regarding language was observed at a high level. Most of the news stories were complete and comprehensive. Except for dawn, the defensive approach was also found very low. Functions of mass communication were followed somehow parallel.

Covid-19 has infested masses more and duty-bound governments around the sphere to lock down their populaces. The rapid growth of vaccines has at the smallest obtainable some grounds for hopefulness.

### **Conclusion:**

Web media depicted a positive approach regarding covid-19 coverage. Platforms dispensing reporting content have thrived, high-tech developments have driven media corporations to face-lift their actions in the sometimes-despairing effort to continue profitable and relevant, while journalists operate in an ever faster-paced industry, and citizens have access to a profusion of sources of news updates and material.

After analysis, it is proven that the hypothesis proved that web media depicts the comprehensive portrayal of Coronavirus news stories. Web medium fulfills the requirement of journalism while covering coronavirus stories. The websites focused on covid coverage and on precautionary measures too. The rise of digital media has affected news production in a big way. Earlier both technology and economic means were in the hands of the editors who acted as gatekeepers through which news would filter through. In a nutshell, digital media is playing a fundamental role in informing, interpreting, and circulating knowledge in a society where the masses can lead their life being updated from every angle.

### **Tables:**

Below are the tables which were filled during the analysis.

**Table a:**

**CODES AND INDICATORS**

**FOR DAWN**

**NEWS**

WIDE-RANGING	IMPERFECT	ACROSS-THE-BOARD
21	4	175

**PORTRAYAL OF COVID-19**

ENLIGHTENING	ACCURATE	EXPLANATORY
99	43	58

## **LANGUAGE**

SELF- PROTECTIVE	UNBIASED	AGGRES EIVE
12	183	5

## **MASS MEDIA FUNCTIONS**

EXAGGERATION / CLICK-BAIT	FOLLOWED ENTIRELY	SOME WHAT FOLLO WED
10	165	25

**Table: b**

**CODES AND INDICATORS**

**FOR TRIBUNE**

**NEWS**

WIDE-RANGING	IMPERFECT	ACROSS-THE-BOARD
49	6	145

**PORTRAYAL OF COVID-19**

ENLIGHTENING	ACCURATE	EXPLANATORY
27	48	125

**LANGUAGE**

SELF-PROTECTIVE	UNBIASED	AGGRESSIVE
51	140	09

### **MASS MEDIA FUNCTIONS**

EXAGGERATION/ CLICK-BAIT	FOLLOWED ENTIRELY	SOMEWHAT FOLLOWED
28	94	78

**Table: c**

### **CODES AND INDICATORS**

#### **FOR THE NEWS**

#### **NEWS**

WIDE- RANGING	IMPERFECT	ACROSS- THE- BOARD
38	75	85

### **PORTRAYAL OF COVID-19**

ENLIGHTENING	ACCURATE	EXPLANATORY
30	35	135

### **LANGUAGE**

SELF- PROTECTIVE	UNBIASED	AGGRESEIVE
76	22	102

### **MASS MEDIA FUNCTIONS**

EXAGGERATION/ CLICK-BAIT	FOLLOWED ENTIRELY	SOMEWHAT FOLLOWED
50	65	85

**Table: d**

### **CODES AND INDICATORS** **FOR BUSINESS RECORDER**

#### **NEWS**

WIDE- RANGING	IMPERFECT	ACROSS-THE- BOARD
78	98	24

**PORTRAYAL OF COVID-19**

ENLIGHTENING	ACCURATE	EXPLANATORY
60	72	68

**LANGUAGE**

SELF- PROTECTIVE	UNBIASED	AGGRESEIVE
45	139	16

**MASS MEDIA FUNCTIONS**

EXAGGERATION/ CLICK-BAIT	FOLLOWED ENTIRELY	SOMEWHAT FOLLOWED
22	78	100

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