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**The role of the mass media in managing the Corona virus pandemic
“A field study from the point of view of faculty members working
in political science departments in Jordanian universities”**

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Abstract:

This study aimed to identify the role of the media in managing the Coronavirus pandemic, “a field study from the point of view of faculty members in the political science departments in Jordanian universities.” The researcher used the descriptive analytical method and the comprehensive survey method. A questionnaire had been designed for this purpose and distributed on the study population which consisted of 75 faculty members, through which 56 questionnaires were analyzed using the (SPSS) program. The study found an impact of the media in managing the Coronavirus pandemic, a field study from the point of view of faculty members working in political science departments in Jordanian universities. The study recommended the following: Adopting targeted and studied media programs at appropriate times for citizens, adopting the principle of limpidity and objectivity in conveying the facts, setting deterrent sanctions for those who spread rumors related to the crisis and tend to exaggerate its effects.

Key words:

Mass media, the Coronavirus pandemic, faculty members at Jordanian universities

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Introduction

The Covid-19 virus has important and thorough effects in many areas of our society. It affected news, journalism, and the media system, in addition to many other fields. In 2020, a state of emergency was declared in the media due to the information about the outbreak of Covid-19 which became a precious and valuable asset for coping with the situation. The great importance of Covid-19 across the planet makes it a closely related event to study shifts in the media after the emergence of the pandemic. For this reason, we propose here an exploratory and preliminary study to provide preliminary evidence of how it has adapted the dynamics of the media system and how the pandemic was managed (Casero, 2020).

By the end of 2020, the Covid-19 virus has affected nearly all countries and 100 million people around the world. Governments are facing difficult conditions due to the health, economic and social challenges. More than half of the world's population has suffered from the closures and containment measures along with the health and humanitarian tragedy of the Coronavirus. It is now widely recognized that the pandemic has caused the most serious economic crisis in a century. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) expects global economic activity to decline from 6% to 7.6% in 2020, depending on whether the second wave of infections is probably to occur before the end of the year (OECD, 2020).

The responsibility of the media, both public and private, has doubled in light of the era of pandemic in the world and has become the most influential and effective parties in managing the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19). The serious and responsible media contribute to support the governmental administration in coping up with the effects caused by Covid-19 Virus. Not performing their job professionally weakens the government efforts. As known the media was one of the most important pillars of managing this pandemic in many countries of the world, it was part of the pandemic in many other countries when it did not assume national responsibility and was trapped with rumors and intimidation from the pandemic and instead of being a comforting factor for society it sometimes became a reason of fear, panic. (<http://www.nationshield.ae>).

Regardless of the relationship with the mass media during normal political circumstances, during the pandemic it should be seen as a positive partner. Even if politicians have an existing controversial relationship with certain media outlets, it is the time to rush in for the interest and the sake of the nation and

the country. Since the media has access to the audience, they must put aside all disagreements and provide people with public information and both of them are essential during the pandemic. (<https://www.ndi.org>)

The importance of the study

The history of epidemics has a great impact on the behavior of the affected countries and societies since the outbreak of the new corona virus disease (Covid-19) in China in December 2019 and then its spread to different parts of the world (Chen, Yang, Yang, Wang, 2020).

The importance of the study stems from the identification of the role of the media in facing the Corona virus and the extent of its practical success in surrounding the virus and reducing its health, economic and security effects on the Jordanian society. Moreover, it tends to examine the negative effects of this pandemic especially those related to limit the freedoms of citizens in light of issuing a number of defence laws and freezing the normal regulations. Also providing the decision maker with the results that can be achieved in order to overcome the current and future effects of the pandemic.

Study Problem

Corona pandemic management requires up-to-date information on a regular basis. This can be done from two to three times a day to once a week. Various methods of updates such as press conferences, press releases, expert opinion, televised speeches and visits to pandemic-affected sites can be used to inform the public. It is important that citizens be informed of the media during a pandemic. It was so crucial to consult experts; members of the teaching staff in universities in the field of politics and to take their opinion through a questionnaire distributed to them. The ultimate goal is to know the role of the media in managing the pandemic through its indicators in the following aspects: (detection of early warning signals, preparation and prevention to face the crisis, containment of damage, restoring normal activity and coordination with other countries in combating the disease). This study shows the role of the media in managing the Corona pandemic as a field study from the point of view of faculty members working in political science departments in Jordanian universities.

Objectives of the study

- To identify reality of the media in the managing of the Corona pandemic as a field study from the point of view of faculty members working in political science departments in Jordanian universities.
- To know more about the reality and level of state administration of the Coronavirus pandemic from the point of view of faculty members working in political science departments in Jordanian universities.

- To recognize the effect of the media in managing the Corona pandemic, a field study from the viewpoint of faculty members working in political science departments in Jordanian universities.

The theoretical framework

The Jordanian media and the Corona pandemic

Pandemics are one of the important and influencing events in societies, as they have become a part of today's environment. It is also a source of concern for government leaders as well as officials due to the difficulty of controlling it due to sharp and sudden changes in the external environment on the one hand and the weakness of responsible departments in adopting an appropriate management model that enables them to quickly and effectively confront the pandemic on the other hand. Early detection of the pandemic, determining its size and type and using the scientific and logical approach to deal with pandemics has become an imperative in order to find a method for managing it, or what is called "pandemic management" with a distinctive mechanism in facing pandemics, and finding a technology directed at the time of emergencies that cannot be avoided. The use of these administrative methods and techniques is different according to the type of pandemic and in line with the type of administrative leadership that deals with these pandemics. Pandemic management refers to the system applied to avoid emergencies and how to deal with them when they occur in order to reduce their devastating effects (Al-Lami, Al-Issawi, 2020).

It can be stated that the pandemic is an unfamiliar or unexpected situation surrounded by uncertainty and leads to imbalance in the normal business of institutions whether at the simple level or at the state level which leads to disruption of the interests of society and the economy. In the Corona pandemic, the Jordanian media reported the developments of the citizen's health status first as it faced the same pandemic as all countries, but it proved that our official and informal media have no special interest or political agendas, but rather it is in its interest to work to convey developments to the citizen with full transparency, accuracy and speed in order not to give the opportunity to spread rumors and fabricated news. Today, we find our official and unofficial media have played an influential role in educating the public to confront the Coronavirus and therefore its impact, strength and success in this stage and the following stages require paying attention to the media and developing it (Assaf, 2020).

Information is an essential resource for the citizens of our society. It is a valuable mechanism to guide people, especially in highly complicated situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Information can help reduce uncertainty and anxiety. On

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the contrary, in the event of a lack of information, the state of panic and chaos will increase (Casero, 2020).

The media enables us to know what is going on around us and gives us access to current events and public affairs that may affect our daily life. Therefore, it is an essential tool for informing citizens of the news. Providing citizens with good information allows them to make their opinion and participate in politics. Indeed, this is the primary aim of journalism (Kovach; Rosenstiel, 2007) and one of the central elements of its concept. By presenting news, journalism becomes essential to clarify the public domain which functions as an independent and mediating system between the state and society ensuring the principle of public access to information for all citizens (Habermas, 2006).

In an interview with the Jordanian Minister of State for Media Affairs: He mentioned that the state seeks to manage the "complicated" Corona pandemic in an orderly manner at the health, security, social and economic levels (Interview with the Minister of Information (4/3/2020)).

The Jordanian government has put forward many possibilities to face the challenges of the emergence of the Corona virus and prepared for all possibilities and compared to the measures taken by the world's governments (Al-Dmour et al., 2020). Jordan is considered at the forefront of countries that have taken a series of precaution measures in anticipation of the outbreak of the disease and these measures were necessary and demonstrated from far-sightedness from The Jordanian government (Kurdish, 2020).

Jordan has followed a great model of its own in managing the Corona pandemic as it did not seek to imitate the Chinese model, nor other models, but rather followed its own path in managing the pandemic, realizing that its political, economic, social and cultural system differs from other countries knowing that every country has relatively observed advantages that it employs in determining the capabilities and modalities of pandemic management (Ma'anis, 2020).

Things that the media must consider during the Corona pandemic (Aladwan, 2020):

1. Emphasizing the need for citizens to trust information issued by the official government or reliable communication channels.
2. The necessity to identify misleading and wrong information that is shared through social media monitoring which must be confronted publicly.
3. The need to incriminate public figures who promote the spread of fake news or those who try to exploit Covid-19 for personal gains.

4. Under no circumstances should you share or promote information that is likely to be fake.
5. The need to guide people to check the source of the news being shared and verify it to see who is reporting. Sometimes, fake news creates unreal or fallacious images making it appear as a reliable news source.

Being more confident on this, the World Health Organization (WHO referred to this pandemic in the context of the COVID-19 virus disease)) as an information epidemic on social media meaning a large abundance of information some of which are accurate and some of them not which makes it difficult for people to find reliable Sources and trusted Guidance when they need it. (WHO.2020)

Coronavirus Pandemic

Pandemics differ from one to another. Every pandemic is unique and needs its own response. The financial crisis differs from a natural crisis such as an earthquake, cyclone and flood and a terrorist attack differs from a health crisis such as an epidemic or pandemic. However, the crises are similar to each other, and the emerging coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in 2020 (<https://www.ndi.org>) is not very different.

Regarding crisis management means being aware of the art of dealing with the crisis which is the decision-making process under unnatural conditions, or it is how to overcome the crisis with different scientific and administrative tools, avoid its disadvantages and benefit from its advantages and at the state level crisis management means increasing the efficiency and capacity of the decision-making system at the individual and whole levels. Politically, it means using the elements of the situation including the threat to use force in a way that guarantees national interests (Al-Zubaidi, 2010).

However, there are a number of factors that contribute to distrust of the media system (Bunker et al., 2019) which limit the effectiveness and scope of use in informal collective decision-making in crises. These include the following:

- Lack of comprehensive regulation, meaning that these media are designed to personalize the system (not comprehensive regulation) which limits its application.
- Enabling antisocial behaviors such as facilitating the spread of rumors (including identity perversion), information, images, false and manipulative voices, cyberbullying, compulsion, harassment, violations of privacy, etc.
- The random facilitation of rapprochement behaviors, that is, the non-systematic production of information between individuals that often produces emerging and persistent behavior and congregation that contributes to the spread of inaccurate information” among individuals during crises.

The nature of the media's role in facing crises

If the crisis, with its simple definition, refers to a sudden and unexpected development in an issue and requires rapid action by the designated authorities to contain the consequences of it (Al Azmi et al., 2012; Abuhashesh & Al-Dmour, 2018; Al-Dmour & Yassine, 2018; Masa'deh et al., 2018; Alrowwad & Abualoush, 2020). Then the role of the media in managing this crisis regardless of its security, economic or health nature is essentially devoted to reassure individuals, society and work to throw back any negative feelings that may result from it and also to combat the rumors associated with it especially if they are the same type of the emerging corona virus which since its announcement of its break in the Chinese city of Wuhan in mid-December 2019 has caused state of anxiety and panic that continues to interact in all countries of the world.

A poll was made in light of the Corona pandemic, in which 159 journalists participated, showed that 8.8% of them find that the government's performance in dealing with the media was excellent, while 17.6% find it weak, 35.8% consider it good, and 37.7% describe it as average, and 22% see Media professionals surveyed that the government ensured the flow of reliable information to a large degree, whether to the public or the media, while most of them, 70%, answered that the government guaranteed the flow of information to a low and medium degree (Tarawneh, 2020).

In this type of pandemic, the media participates in government agencies with a major role in managing them through several main tasks shown in (Shield of the Nation Magazine, 2020):

- The link: to play the role of a link between the authorities concerned with crisis management and the members of society and to clarify the nature of the measures taken by authorities with all transparency and clarity to prevent any vague or unreal interpretations. In such context, the media publishes information about any crisis or disaster with all transparency and accuracy conveying it to members of society in a clear, simple and understandable message, enabling them to know the crisis in its various dimensions to realize the risks and challenges it poses and how to deal with it. This role depends mainly on the nature of information provided by the government agencies concerned with the crisis; the more information it allows for the flow of information in all transparency helped the media to carry out its role, while the absence of information leads to the emergence of rumors about the crisis, which probably hinders government efforts to manage the crisis.

-Awareness role: undoubtedly the different media institutions, visual, audio and readable are of great importance as they play their role in educating members of society, not only to educate them on methods of confronting crises and how

to work to contain their various effects and repercussions, but also perhaps most importantly, to involve them in Crisis management process on the belief that the success of managing any crisis requires the integration of all governmental and societal efforts in it and so the media plays a vital and main role in promoting the idea of integrating social responsibility in crisis management.

- The preventive role: the effectiveness of the media role is no longer measured only by its awareness and enlightening role, but also by its initiatives and campaigns aimed at strengthening the protection of society in times of crisis. The media, with its various platforms and activities, such as programs that host experts and specialists shed light on experiences countries in dealing with crises contribute to protecting members of society.

- Confronting rumors: that aim to provoke disruption in the country and threaten societal unity and the role that the media plays in this context is of great importance especially if we take into consideration the fact that rumors are moving and spreading rapidly in times of crisis and people tend to believe them especially if the authorities concerned with the crisis did not have information about it and make them available to the various media. Mostly, the source of these rumors is social media platforms and media that are not subjected to regulations governing their work.

The COVID-19 outbreak particularly has highlighted the need to develop a comprehensive media communication strategy to enhance and support crisis response. Where misleading information can be a powerful entry point for causing panic or degrading the value of the crisis which thus poses a challenge to government authorities as they develop their crisis communication strategy. Recently, a tension has arisen between “formal command and control” over the issue of emerging informal information and communication systems (Bunker et al., 2015).

Methodology, society and sample

The study followed the descriptive analytical approach in order to collect evidence for the study community which is made of the faculty members of Jordanian universities in the field of political science the 75 faculty members are of various academic ranks. The method of comprehensive survey was used in which 75 questionnaires were distributed to all members of the study sample through universities and personal communication. 56 questionnaires were collected and were valid for analysis. The inspection unit was represented by the targeted faculty members in Jordanian universities.

Statistical analysis and hypotheses testing

Descriptive Analysis

Table (1) Analysis of personal and functional data for study sample

Variant	Number	Percentage	
Gender	Male	49	87%
	Female	7	13%
Age	less than 30 years	2	4%
	30-40	5	9%
	41-50	8	14%
	Above 51	41	73%
Years of Experience	less than 5 years	6	11%
	6-10 years	4	7%
	11-15 years	11	19%
	More than 16 years	35	63%
(4) Country of graduation			
Foreign countries	17	30%	
Arabian countries	25	45%	
Eastern European countries	8	14%	
other countries	6	11%	

From table (1) we can see that the percentage of males in these universities is much higher than that of females, where the percentage of males was 87%, and the highest age percentage was of 51 and more where the percentage reached 73%, and the highest percentage of years of experience is between 16 and more where the percentage reached 63%, while the majority graduated from the Arab countries with 45%.

Analysis of the questionnaire data

Table No. (2) Arithmetic averages and standard deviations for media and Corona pandemic management

Sequence of items	Dimension	Arithmetic average	Standard deviation	Sequence according to average
Mass Media	Independent variable			
1-7	Readable media	3.61	0.351	average
8-14	Visual media	3.95	0.425	High
Arithmetic Mean		3.78		
Corona Pandemic Management	Dependent variable			
1-14	Corona Pandemic Management	4.09	0.285	High

It is clear from table (2) that we have the following:

The independent variable: the media: that the general average for the application of mass media from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities was high with an arithmetic mean of (3.78).

The dependent variable: Corona Crisis Management: The general average for managing the Corona pandemic from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities was average with an arithmetic mean of (4.09).

Hypotheses Test:

To test hypotheses a regression method was used to test hypotheses:

The first main hypothesis, H01: There is no statistically significant effect at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) for the means of media in its dimensions (readable, visual) on the

management of the Coronavirus pandemic from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities.

Table No. (3) Model summaries

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std.error
1	.699	.488	0.512	0.187

Table No. (4) ANOVA analysis of the first main hypothesis

Model	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	square of Averages	F	Sig
regression	1.615	1	1.615	67.19	0.00
Residual value	1.718	55	0.032		
Total	3.333	56			

Table No. (5) Table of (Coefficients)

Model	Standard error	Beta standard coefficients	T Calculated Value	Sig
Constant	0.245	-	3.061	0.000
Readable media	0.078	0.281	8.451	0.000
Visual media	0.82	0.425	10.856	0.000

The test result was as follows:

From the Model summary table, it becomes clear that there is a high correlation between the means of media and the management of the Coronavirus pandemic, where the value of R = (0.699) also it was found that the value of R² = (0.488). This means that the independent variable of the media explains the percentage of 48.8% of the variance in the dependent variable (Coronavirus Pandemic Management). From the ANOVA table, it is found that the value of F reached (67.19) at a confidence level (0.000 = Sig.) This confirms the significance of the regression at the level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) and at one degree of freedom df = 1-55). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that **“there is a statistically significant effect at the ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) level of mass media (readable and visible) on the management of the Corona virus pandemic from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities.**

Testing sub-hypotheses:

Sub-hypothesis H01-1: The first sub hypothesis: There is no statistically significant effect at the level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) for the readable mass media on the management of the coronavirus pandemic from the point of view of faculty members in Jordanian universities. Referring to the coefficients, the value of (t) was (8.451) at a level of confidence (0.00 =Sig.) and since the value of Sig. is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that "there is a statistically significant impact at the level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) for the readable mass media on the management of the coronavirus pandemic from the point of view of faculty members in Jordanian universities.

Testing of the second sub-hypothesis: H01-2:

There is no statistically significant impact at the level of ($\alpha 0.05 \leq$) of visual media on the management of the coronavirus pandemic from the point of view of faculty members in Jordanian universities. Referring to the coefficients, the value of (t) was (10.856) at a level of confidence (0.00 =Sig.) and since the value of Sig. is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistical indication at the level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) for visual media on the management of the coronavirus pandemic from the point of view of faculty members in Jordanian universities.

Results and recommendations

Results

- The application of the visual and readable media was applied to a high degree during the pandemic, while the written media were dealing with the pandemic in a moderate degree and from the viewpoint of the faculty members in Jordanian universities.
- The level of management of the Corona pandemic was generally at a high level.
- **There is a statistically significant impact at the level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) of the media (readable, visible) on the management of the Coronavirus pandemic from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities.**

There is a statistically significant impact at the level ($\alpha 0.05 \geq$) of the readable media on the management of the Corona virus pandemic from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities.

- "There is a statistically significant impact at the level ($\alpha 0.05 \geq$) of the visual media on the management of the Coronavirus pandemic from the viewpoint of faculty members in Jordanian universities.

Recommendations

- Adopting targeted and studied media programs at appropriate times for citizens
- Adopting the principle of transparency and objectivity in conveying facts
- Imposing deterrent sanctions for those who spread rumors about the pandemic and those who tend to exaggerate a lot.

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- Providing radio and television broadcast stations with news and also update them about the pandemic.
- Developing a specialized media center about the pandemic, in partnership between the government and the private sector.
- Supporting government media institutions and overcoming the difficulties facing them in communicating with the largest segment of citizens.
- Monitoring rumors and news about the crisis that are broadcast by the media in the private sector.
- Developing media strategies for public institutions and building their communication capabilities.
- Establishing a fund to support independent mass media.

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