"Media Uses and Functions during the

Coronavirus Crisis in Kuwait"

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Introduction

The world has not witnessed similar situation before as seen in the times of coronavirus. No matter how much everyone tries to stay away or resume the normal routine functions, coronavirus is a topic that cannot be ignored at all. The impact of coronavirus on everyone's personal yet social life is such huge that there is no chance it is returning to normal anytime soon. Moreover, this whole crisis has created a situation of unrest and uncertainty among everyone and it won't be wrong to say that each one of us has a huge responsibility of making sure to play their positive role during this pandemic. Owing to the changes brought by covid-19 throughout the world, everyone has become to fight in the survival mode by practicing the measures needed to prevent themselves from this virus. This disease caused by a typically small creature which is not even visible to the naked eye, is a disease of respiratory system with a tendency of making breathing difficult for a person in severe cases. As scary as it sounds, the fatality rate to this disease is not higher than the recovery rate. In these situations of chaos there occurs a lot of panic and everyone, from government to each individual, lies under the responsibility to make sure that there is no unnecessary nonsense transferred which makes the situation even worse. This article will discuss about the roles of media during the corona virus case.

We all are aware of the impact of media on minds of people, it is not surprising how strongly media can mold minds and make sure that a person thinks as to what is shown or broadcasted. Since, media is easily considered as one of the most important means of communication and a strong way to deliver information whether true or not, it provides the huge responsibility to media for being the one who creates calm and handles situation in uncertain times, maturely. Since, we all know that one day or another there is a new crisis bound to rise, from shortage of a

certain product in the market to a global pandemic media has access to almost all types of information. Now the media can play its role to use that information however they like. In times like coronavirus, media can even create calm and relax everyone by conveying positive news, but when there is nothing positive how should a media act as not to create chaos but also to alert everyone about the seriousness of this issue? This is a tricky job on media's part. They have to be responsible while conveying news, that the message conveyed is totally clean and does not add any exaggeration. To ensure this it is better to put entire situation openly in front of the public and motivate them to the what is best for them and the community (Ghassabi F, 2015).

The purpose of conducting this study is to evaluate how the media can have an influence on the minds of people and how often we ignore that. We think that the situation around us does not impact if we are not taking any sudden reactions to it. But that's not true, everything we hear, do or see becomes a part of our personality both negative and positive. This article will carry out a deep research on functions and uses of media in the times of crisis such as coronavirus and how does it affect community in the bigger picture.

Theoretical Background

Coronavirus initiated from China in late 2019 and has made its way into 2020 with a strong blow. Owing to the fact that powerful and developed world countries such as America and China are not able to defeat this virus completely, shows the severity of this disease. However, China should be applauded for the quick reaction time to this situation even after being the first country to be affected by this virus. This shows how a proper educational system or a stronger network of media could have resulted in improved management of corona fiasco in the first place. The point is that, when China was suffering from the virus in the initial stages, the other parts of the world did not take this whole situation seriously, as the major country greatly affected by this was Italy. The reason Italy couldn't manage to control the situation was they did not understand the severity and continued their business operations with China, then from Italy to the rest of the world, this is how virus spread kept on increasing. Now when it comes to the roles of media, there are several situations where media is needed extremely and has to be vigilant and active while making decisions. This is one such scenario, if media had responsibly caused awareness in the initial days maybe the situation wouldn't be this much worse.

To understand how deeply media impacts us without our knowledge, a simple theory such as Media Dependency Theory can be studied. This theory was first introduced by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur in 1976. The theory is coupled with various approaches such as psychoanalytic & the theory of social networks, systemic & casual approach and uses base elements and the principle of pleasure with less emphasis on results. The theory of media dependency is one of the theories, first of its kind, which considers audience as an integral part of the cycle of communication. As the name suggests, this theory refers to the dependency of audience on media to gain knowledge. It discusses the strong internal link between the media,

audience and a greater social system. Since the amount of knowledge perceived or gained from real life experiences is limited so the audience depends on media to get their educational needs fulfilled. This greater use of media in everyday learning and gain a knowledge of surrounding creates an association of dependency among the audience and media and this is what this whole theory is about (Communication Theory, 2014).

Now this theory can be easily used when understanding the social behavior of people in times of crisis such as coronavirus. For example, a media which is creating and detailing every single case and death from coronavirus along with other social issues such as shortage of supplies and limited medical supplies, clearly on news will create an audience that moves and runs out in panic to buy more supplies before they all run out. As said, sometimes the panic created by a situation is worse than the situation itself. On the other hand a media which is educating each and every person who depends on it responsibly to make them realize how they can break the chain and how there will be enough for everyone if there is no panic created by some of the locals, will generate a nation that can more successfully combat this pandemic. This dependency on media to learn about the seriousness of a situation can result in both negative or positive consequences depending on how responsible media acts in this phase.

Literature Review

Social media are digital tools and applications that allow social communication and sharing of information between and from audiences and organizations. The role of social media in influencing minds and changing how people think is not a new discovery, rather it is a well-known fact that to create a strong impact of something on people's mind, media is the most ideal tool. According to several surveys internet and media has been declared as an important tool for information among the users. In 2009, a survey from American Adults stated that internet has been the most preferred source of information regarding world affairs and their surroundings (Austin, 2012). Usage of social media can change dramatically in times of organizational crisis, as issues that arise online can be more volatile, take sudden turns and multiply faster than issues that emerge offline; however, social media can allow more immediate response and direct communication during crisis. Another study by (The internet and campaign 2006, 2007) states that, during a crisis the use of social media and media increases drastically, as people are desperate to gather more information regarding a subject.

It is important to realize that policy makers can do their jobs as much as they want but if their policies fail to make an impact that's because a simple role of media which was to create awareness, has not be performed clearly. Since, there is a lot of unrest during a crisis, it won't be wrong to say that whenever a new situation arises, there is a rush of public emotions, negative and positive, happy and sad and even some which we do not know how to express. Most importantly in situation like coronavirus there is a fear among the public. To make sure the situation does not get any further out of hand, researchers and journalists working for the media can only obtain information from official sources to limit the amount of conflicting and misleading facts. Accurate and reliable information is one of the most crucial factors in seeking

solutions in circumstances of exceptional and crisis and presenting this accurate information is the best way for the media to assist the victims of the disasters. If, by understanding the type of society, the media plays an involved, supportive role before, after and after natural disasters and seeks to give constructive feedback to government actions, it can be instrumental in enhancing protection from natural disasters; assisting citizens and government in actions to deter, address, restore and rehabilitate. Media and media also have an significant role to play in strengthening the society's defenses against natural disasters and the negative effects of these attempts to restore and rehabilitate (Zare-Farashbandi, 2015).

It is a known fact that Knowledge about the state of the situation is critical for individuals and organizations to respond adequately to a crisis. Receiving important, localized information may help raise awareness of the situation and advise those on the scene how to support themselves or how to continue with efforts to respond. Response actions that can be carried out by both official and resident emergency responders. In addition, timely knowledge of a crisis is required to enable and guide the provision of appropriate, applicable, and effective assistance. Although knowledge is important, it is often the case in dynamic and complex situations that (accumulated) information is limited. Therefore, the sharing of information is key. It is crucial that emergency responders1 at the scene share their insights as they possess or can obtain essential information about the local situation. It is especially important for people to share their experiences as they provide assistance before emergency responders arrive, as their input may not yet be recognized elsewhere. The reporting people also provide additional sources of information to other viewers (e.g., the news media). Social media provides a shared forum where such information can be disseminated to and meet all interested parties. Its added value compared to traditional media is that information can be distributed very quickly and directly, to

very targeted groups. Lastly, if those are no longer available or reliable, social media can take over the role of traditional media (How to use new media during crisi situations, 2015).

When it comes to coronavirus, there is no chance that gulf countries have remained far from infecting. Considering the large trade activities between these rich regions of world to other parts of countries and people traveling from other parts to gulf for job or other purposes. Regardless, it won't be wrong to say that coronavirus has not seen any borders and has affected the world. The situation in gulf countries worsened when 870 corona virus cases were identified across the six GCC nations. These cases, just like in any other part of the world are increasing day by day and there is not a stop seen to them unless everyone acts responsibly. The government has banned all public gathering and usual activities which could present of threat of spreading the virus. Most importantly, there are to be no congregational prayers. This is where role of media comes in practice, to keep calm and a composed environment, as panic will only worsen the situation (Jazeera, 2020).

Research Questions and Hypothesis

At a time when the world is already burdened with several problems, including a series of long-running wars, sectarian tensions, economic crises and widespread political instability, the coronavirus has reached the Middle East and North Africa. In this report, experts at the European Council on Foreign Affairs examine the current effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on the region and its possible repercussions for it (Cinzia Bianco, 2020). But the trouble arises when everyone thinks till how last this situation will continue and what will be the after effects of coronavirus.'

-How far has media been responsible in creating the panic regarding coronavirus? What practices ensure could have made sure that the virus is combated more responsibly? Does media really have a strong role in the consequences brought about by the virus?

-Could coronavirus have been stopped in the early stages? What media practices could have made this virus to be controlled in the beginning stages?

Hypothesis

-If the virus does not have a high fatality rate then why aren't the death being controlled and stopped yet? Who are the main responsible for the spread of this virus?

-Is a complete lockdown the clear solution to coronavirus? What is the impact on economy and how long will the economic blow due to coronavirus to the world will last?

Methodology

We all wish that if we had things differently would have made it a difference? This question arises when researchers emphasize that if early precautions could have been taken then coronavirus would be eliminated by now. This is where the role of media kicks in as well. However, to prove such arguments there is a need to develop suitable methods that work to find out whether a different approach would have sufficed. In this case, to evaluate the role of media there are different methods to be used, these include; Survey, Observation and Personal Interviews. Each of them refers to a different approach but will enable the situation to be seen from a new perspective.

Results

Survey

The purpose of a survey is to ask questions and then gather ideas that come in the mind of common people. This type of evaluation is helpful when dealing with a large group of audience i.e. finding the impact of a certain thing on the whole community. Besides that, they are a quick and inexpensive way of gathering information which can then be converted in the form of graphs and other helpful representations that can easily indicate the results. The most common types are to denote the population preference in the form of a brag graph or a pie chart. To evaluate how well media has been responsible in crisis of corona virus the surveys were created in surveymonkey.com and then shared among group of people to find out the result.

Observation

Observation is an important part of any research. This helps us to see the outcomes of an experiment, even though it isn't the outcomes we expect. It helps us to see surprising things around us which could stimulate our imagination and lead to new experiments. Accurate

observation is far more critical than observation. Sometimes, our eyes and minds are playing tricks on us, making us see what we want to see, rather than what really is there. Especially when the truth is so harsh and uncomfortable, we tend to stay in denial. This is the nature or more precisely a defense mechanism produced by brain in order to avoid the harmful impacts of a dangerous situations. This is where media has to act responsibly. Observation is a mandatory part to evaluate the performance (The Importance of Observation, n.d.).

Now when it comes to coronavirus, even though the situation is not in front of everyone's eyes but certain impacts can be seen by everyone. The changes brought about by this virus to the world has made us all realize how serious this situation is. In gulf countries like Kuwait, the countries have announced complete lockdown abandoning all regular activities. Kuwait took the most drastic steps in the GCC by effectively locking the world out over the weekend, one other nation other than Italy to do so. The main airport road in Kuwait City was quiet, as all commercial flights to and from the tiny Gulf nation were suspended. Drones in the sky have been hearing messages in several languages, urging people to go home again (Jazeera, 2020).

Besides that, everyone is urged to work from home and all office operations have been confined withing 4 walls of home. Shops and other markets that sell everyday stuff are to be opened from 6 am to 5 pm that too on working days. It is clear that this pandemic has shifted the whole system from up to down.

Personal Interviews

On the other hand, this social distancing and lockdown has resulted in a different way as well. People are more involved in online games and stuff, in some parts of the world, online gambling has taken a rise, in other parts games as Ludo star, 8 ball pool and other online gadget-based

games have started to seen new growth in number of users again. one positive impact is that the family time has been increased since all the busy schedules and long working hours have been put on hold some families are enjoying their times at their homes and finding it to be joyful to bond with their family members again.

Discussion and Conclusion

Kuwait has seen a great economical and social impact due to coronavirus pandemic. The government has devised several opportunities to combat and make sure they rise through this uncertain situation successfully. Media has also played a huge praise worthy role in this regard. From spreading news to encouraging everyone to stay indoors by different means, the media is playing a positive role. Thanks to careful monitoring, there is no such severe cases of panic noted in the country. It would be easier to say that Kuwait has been responsibly understanding and dealing with the corona situation and making sure nobody gets extremely affected due to this pandemic. In practice, Kuwait announced measures aimed at shortening its economy against the coronavirus pandemic, including soft long-term loans from local banks, and the central bank called on banks to ease loan repayments for affected firms. The cabinet-approved stimulus package aims to provide funding to fulfill their obligations for small and medium-sized enterprises, that includes directing government agencies to meet private sector obligations as soon as possible. All these measure taken by government in the light of recent pandemic can help a country come out of a global pandemic in a way which is quite reasonable (News, 2020).

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