

Utilizing Public Media Platforms to Motivate Education and Awareness of Covid-19 Pandemic: A Field Study on a Sample of 18 Arab Countries

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Abstract

The study aims to illustrate the role of mass media in forming awareness and knowledge among members of society regarding the Covid-19 crisis. The goal of the study is to shed light on the role of conventional and modern media platforms in dealing with this pandemic and assess its credibility in delivering the correct news and information about this crisis to the public in the Arab countries. The researcher used the descriptive analytical method through the method of surveying the media and electronic platforms used by the public in the Arab world in communicating with state agencies to obtain various information related to the COVID-19 crisis. The study concluded a number of results such as the success of media briefings and press conferences held by Arab governments during the Corona crisis, in addition to the emergence of the spokesperson in this crisis in a convincing and logical manner. The research also illustrated the success of the media in educating society about precautionary and preventive measures through television, radio programs and social media sites. The study also found that 60% of the respondents were concerned during the crisis, following up consistently all news related to the country's efforts to combat the virus.

Finally, it was noted that doctors prevailed the most through the mass media platforms being the first line of defends, unlike some social media celebrities who lost massive followers as their information about the crisis was not trustworthy and as some of them helped in spreading incorrect rumours among the public.

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I. Introduction

The platforms of mass communication, in its different types, conventional and modern, play a growing role in educating individuals, formulating their awareness, and providing them with needed information and knowledge. Media Platforms play a significant role in our social education due to its power of influence on one hand, and because of technical and information advancement within a limitless open space on the other hand. This contributed to enabling the media of exercising its role in guiding and addressing all levels of society with its varied segments.

During the current Covid-19 crisis, and because of the necessity to stay home for most of the time- as an inevitable approach for the recommended

voluntary isolation - the number of hours we spend communicating and pursuing various public media platforms through our smart devices to stay up to date regarding all the local, regional and global information and developments about the pandemic at the levels have definitely increased.

Hence, we find that governments around the world have paid great attention to establishing awareness among members of society about this epidemic through conventional and modern mass communication platforms. Those platforms contributed significantly to the spreading of health awareness and emphasized the importance of following all preventive and precautionary measures.

In this study, we are aiming to identify the role of mass communication in spreading health awareness among all public segments during the Covid-19 crisis, as all modern health organizations are using all means of mass communication, including social networks, in their strategies to motivate awareness, public health and education (May Field, 2008) Social networking sites have contributed to the increase in the capabilities of communication and information exchange between health institutions and the public through content creation, and spreading of awareness and health education (Powels and others 2009).

In recent years, we have noticed a great development in the means of mass communication due to the widespread use of the Internet in the process of social communication, with its many advantages, such as: ease of communication, low cost, and the speed of transferring media messages from the sender to the recipient. Here (Abed, 2012) confirms that social media networks were among the most important and largest achievements of this era, as these networks tackled, faster than any other conventional media platforms, all global and local developments and events whether they were news bulletins , political or educational events, or any other sort of media content.

As health awareness and awareness spreading are necessary to raise the level of public health among members of society, especially in times of high exposure to diseases and epidemics (as is the case with the Covid-19 pandemic), scientists and doctors considered it an effective and primary approach to educate society about the most important health and preventive measures to be followed, and worked to achieve this through the means of mass communication with their tremendous power in communicating with members of society directly without barriers, especially the electronic media, which contributed to the success and emergence of various social networks, which pulled the rug from under the feet of conventional media.

Finally, we notice that health awareness has witnessed a continuous development in terms of content, tools and methods, and it has changed with the change of means of communication and social systems, so that health awareness has

become dependent on mass communication means to achieve its awareness message such as television, radio, newspapers, and electronic media represented by social networks (Al-Mashakba, 2012).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

First: Mass Communication:

Mass communication is a process in which a person, group of people, or an organization sends a message through a communication channel to a large group of anonymous and heterogeneous people and organizations. This anonymous and heterogeneous group of people can be either a general group of people, a segment of the public, or as it is known as a sample. Communication channels include television broadcasts, radio, social media platforms, and publications. The sender of the message is usually a professional interlocutor who often represents the organization.

To use more accurate scientific definition of mass communication, we can say that it is the transfer of new facts and information of interest to a large number of people in an objective, accurate, rapid or immediate manner whenever possible or necessary. Accordingly, the following three conditions of mass communication should be met. (Ali Ajwa, 1997):

- 1- Objectivity or full accuracy.
- 2- Modernity and instantaneousness whenever possible or necessary.
- 3- Magnitude or significance to the largest number of people.

Mass communication is to provide the future with accurate information, correct news and sound facts that will help in forming a correct opinion about any given fact or a problem. This opinion should express objectively the mentality of the masses, their attitudes, and tendencies (Mahmoud Shoaq, 1998)

Second: Awareness:

Psychologists find it extremely difficult to find a scientific definition of awareness, as human awareness is the basis of every intellectual process and it is a prerequisite for the functioning of human thought, and therefore it is what makes scientific work possible and

realistic, and the process of definition is possible and realistic.

Awareness is those relationships that bind a person to the outside world and make him adapt in his behavior to the pressures of his surroundings. That is why, we find that the cause of awareness is related to the mind and knowledge, and to the unconscious in insanity and ignorance. Psychologists distinguish between several levels in the state of consciousness such as spontaneous awareness, perceived awareness and shared awareness. (Reda Bokraa, 2003).

Third: The Crisis:

The Oxford dictionary defines Crises as a " tuning point illness, live history, etc.) referring to a turning point from disease, or the development of life or history. This point in life is characterized by difficulty, danger, anxiety for the future, and the need to make a specific and decisive decision in a specific period.

And in the French language, "Crises" means "seizure, crisis, poverty, loss, conflict, tension" (Treasure of the Student, French-Arabic Dictionary, 1972).

Fourth: (COVID 19)

(Covid-19), which is an abbreviation of (Corona Virus Disease 19) of the Corona virus lineage, was first identified in a number of people with symptoms of pneumonia in Wuhan, China, and this virus is transmitted by an infected person to another healthy person through contaminated particles (Duringcoughing or sneezing), or contaminated hands as it spreads through contaminated surfaces. The incubation period of the disease extends from one to fourteen days, and its main symptoms are fever, cough, headache, pain in the throat and difficulty breathing. The treatment of the emerging corona virus (Covid-19) depends on strengthening the immune system in Infected patients, treatment of its symptoms and relief of its complications, as there is no specific cure to this day. (Ministry of Health and Prevention website, 2020 AD).

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used the descriptive and analytical method (Survey Method) surveying the means of mass communication and the electronic platforms used by the public in the Arab world to

communicate with state agencies to learn about the various information related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The study describes how modern and conventional means of communication published and spread information and data on its various platforms, which contributed to educating community members and forming their awareness about this pandemic.

1- Fields of study:

- a) The human Factor: The research was based on a sample of (1220) community members at the level of the Arab world, of whom (56%) are males and (44%) are females, of whom (35%) are Emirati citizens, and (65%) other nationalities namely: (14%)) From Iraq, (14%) from Egypt, (10%) from Saudi Arabia, (6%) from Bahrain, (5%) from Kuwait and (4%) from Jordan and other nationalities (10%) including Algeria-Somalia-Morocco - Yemen - Tunisia - Comoros - Syria - Oman - Palestine - Lebanon - Libya.
- b) Time Factor: The electronic opinion polls were conducted by applying the study form during the months of April and May of the year 2020 AD

2- Study group:

The study included 1220 respondents from the audience between the ages of 20 and 60 years, representing (18) Arab countries, namely: U.A.E, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Algeria, Somalia, Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia, Comoros, Syria, Oman, Palestine, Lebanon, and Libya.

3- Study Tools:

Th a questionnaire to collect data on the role of mass communication means in forming awareness and education among community members about the Covid-19 (Corona) crisis at the level of the Arab world, adhering to the following scientific steps:

A- Surveying and consulting books, theoretical studies and scientific literature on the power of mass communication methods and their impact on public opinion in society.

B- He designed a questionnaire in its initial form consisting of 7 A4 size sheets containing seven axes.

C- The questionnaire includes 50 questions covering the seven axes.

D- The researcher presented the questionnaire to five arbitrators including Professors of Mass Communication, Psychology and Sociology to express their opinion on its validity in terms of the following:

- Are the expressions contained in the questionnaire consistent with the subject of the study?
- Are the phrases properly formulated?
- Are the phrases consistent with what was set for him?

E - The final form of the questionnaire for the study was formulated and the researcher distributed (1220) forms electronically through social networking sites and e-mail to community members at the level of the Arab world, both males and females.

Statistical Analysis:

The necessary statistical analysis for the purposes of the study were carried out using the (SPSS) program, as well as the use of descriptive statistics methods that include frequencies and percentages to answer the study questions according to scientific criteria and standards.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concluded a number of results, the most important of which are: the success of media briefings and press conferences held by Arab governments during the Corona crisis, as well as the emergence of a spokesperson in this crisis in a convincing and logical manner. In addition to the success of the media in educating society about preventive and preventive

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measures through TV and radio programs and social media sites, The study also found that 60% of the respondents were concerned during the crisis, following up on news related to the country's efforts to combat the virus. Finally, it was noted that the doctors seized the media as the first line of defense, unlike celebrities of social media who lost their credibility and pulled the rug from under their legs due to the lack of confidence among members of the public in their information and that some were a source of spreading remorse.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the results' analysis, the researcher comes out with the following recommendations:

1. Enhancing confidence in the government and leadership and its clear role in reassuring the public of the strength, readiness, and capabilities of the state in overcoming such crises.
2. The need to obtain correct information and news in times of crisis from official government sources such as media briefings and press conferences, not from social media celebrity figures.
3. Various state institutions must communicate with community members through new media (social networking sites) instead of conventional media.
4. The importance of educating the community members about the dangers of rumors and all the related laws that criminalize such behavior, so that these rumors do not spread in society, especially during crises.

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