



e-Journal of Media & Society

THE ROLES OF MEDIA IN SPREADING AWARENESS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Aini Nadhirah Ismail, Fatin Masyarah Massury, Nurul Najihah Abdul Ghafor
Abdul Rauf Ridzuan, Rosilawati Sultan Mohideen, Ilya Yasnoriza Ilyas, Mohd Hilmi Bakar

Universiti Teknologi MARA

Correspondent email: rauf1608@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created a global health crisis that has had a deep impact on the way we perceive our world and our everyday lives. Today, social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, have become primary sources of information. They are also vehicles for fake news and disinformation. During a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, media takes the roles in spreading awareness during Covid-19 pandemic to ensure the society aware about this disease. For the methodology of this research, the researchers follow the research design of qualitative research. The researchers uses semi-structured interview in gathering information from the informants. At the end, the researchers found out that media plays a big roles in spreading awareness during covid-19 pandemic. People might see that media can be the effective way in spreading awareness during covid-19 pandemic, but certain people might see that media will bring the negative impact to the society. Also in taking roles as media during this pandemic, they need to identify and analyze the best content to be shown to the target audience.

Keywords: Media, Covid-19, awareness, Media,

INTRODUCTION

The researcher is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in more than 100 locations. According to World Health Organization (2020), the virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”). Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus (named SARS-CoV2). The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a betacoronavirus, like MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. In general, control of the spread of infection uses strategies such as increasing awareness, protective clothing, treatment, and perhaps most importantly vaccination (Azhar, 2020). However, in the case of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), antiviral treatment and vaccination are not available. Thus, to contain the further spread of infection, hospitalization, quarantine, and safety measures are key factors. Virus transmission appears to occur from infected individuals regardless of the appearance and severity of signs and symptoms.

Meanwhile, according to the Ahmad (2020), in Malaysia when the government implemented Movement Control Order (MCO) the community still against the government order by not applying social distancing with each other, attend to the mass gathering and not apply the hygiene steps provided by the Ministry Of Health Malaysia. According to the Husaain (2020), the level of awareness among societies about Covid-19 disease are still in a low level because they are not fully exposed with the information about Covid-19 disease.

Within this context of physical threat, social and physical distancing, the role of the different mass media channels in lives on individual, social and societal levels cannot be underestimated. Mass media have long been recognized as powerful forces shaping how we experience the world and ourselves (Abdullah, 2020). According to the Sulaiman (2020), there are variety of media that spread awareness about Covid-19 to the community such as through RTM and Media Prima that always updates about the current cases of Covid-19, provide info graphic video and spread awareness about Covid-19 disease. In other hands, the radio platform

also play roles to spread this awareness to the society such as Hot FM and the other radio station who always keep updating about the Covid-19 cases in Malaysia and all around the world. From this action, people will tend to follow the government rules and it will increase the society's awareness about Covid-19 disease because media is the powerful way to influence them to change their lifestyle to become better than before.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Shen (2020), since December 2019, an increasing number of cases of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)-infected pneumonia (NCIP) has been identified in Wuhan, a large city of 11 million people in central China. On December 29, 2019, the first 4 cases reported, all linked to the Huanan (Southern China) Seafood Wholesale Market, were identified by local hospitals using a surveillance mechanism for "pneumonia of unknown etiology" that was established in the wake of the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak with the aim of allowing timely identification of novel pathogens such as 2019-nCoV. According to Ministry Of Health Malaysia (2020), the new updates in 19 April 2020 they are 195 Malaysian who diagnosed with positive Covid-19 and they are around 40 to 72 years old and now they are been treated at the Hospital. Meanwhile, the total cases in Malaysia are 5,389 and around the world are 2,565,059 with 177,496 totals of deaths and it involves more than 114 countries all around the world.

According to Siddique (2020), in the current scenario of novel coronavirus outbreak, governments across the world are struggling to find ways to prevent the spread of coronavirus by create awareness about Covid-19 through media such as providing info graphic video on how to prevent from Covid-19, the effect of Covid-19 to our body health and the symptom of Covid-10 but only 50% of the community in Malaysia followed the rules and aware about this disease. This can be happened because the society are tend to do something else and do not focus on the commercial break by the Ministry Of Health Malaysia because it is hard to catch the society's' attention during the commercial break session. However, the situation is getting out of control

and the risk of worldwide pandemic is increasing, as hundreds of people are entering other countries from China without being quarantined. Meanwhile, according to the Ahmad (2020), in Malaysia when the government implemented Movement Control Order (MCO) the community still against the government order by not applying social distancing with each other, attend to the mass gathering and not apply the hygiene steps provided by the Ministry Of Health Malaysia in the media. In other hand, based on the research by the researcher from Health Communication, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UITM) Malacca and also involved Quality Use of Medicines in Umrah and Hajj Pilgrimage Research Group (QUMPRG) Taibah University, Madinah, Arab Saudi, they said that Sarawakians recorded the highest percentage of precautions when the COVID-19 outbreak hit the country, followed by Johor and Kedah. Meanwhile, Sabah and Penang recorded the lowest percentages in their preventive practices (Ridzuan, 2020).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How far the effectiveness of media in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society?
- 2) How to increase media effectiveness in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1) To study the effectiveness of media in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society.
- 2) To identify the ways to increase media effectiveness in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effectiveness of media

According to Reema (2020), frequency of watching the media and sources of information also influenced both risk perception and perceived media roles. disease awareness among pharmacists, as well as risk perception must be considered for effective risk communication planning. The role of media in shaping perceptions should also be carefully studied to encourage compliance with government containment measures and engagement in preventive behaviors. Plus, media was found to facilitate obtaining of up to date available information improving knowledge, awareness, and practices of both healthcare workers and general public. Furthermore, media also plays a key role in communication for effective and rapid global response. Recently, the emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak grabbed the attention of media news, press, and social media pages.

Based on Maharashtra (2020), it is undisputable that socialmedia plays an important role in impacting our thoughts, lifestyle, economy and our overall view about the world. It is an electronic forum that brings people to exchange information and ideas. It has been adopted by one and all as an essential part of their daily lives. During the ongoing pandemic the usage of social media has increased. This is because people were looking for more information, awareness and guidance regarding the novel Corona virus disease. Consequently, a lot of awareness campaigns were triggered on social media which helped people across the country to know about the essentials as well as the precautionary measures to be taken during this time.

Media Roles in moving facts

According to Powell (2020), a news read in a day could be entirely out-of-date by the next morning, and this has meant there have been many questions from the public surrounding the outbreak and the virus. In addition, as more information has emerged over the past weeks, experts and public health officials have revised their opinions, advice and recommendations in line with this, and it has been suggested that these updates have made it hard to build trust.

Media organizations should keep up to date with the outbreak using fact and reality information from respective health departments in order to remain a trusted source.

While according to Socialbakers (2020), whether it's by making financial contributions or rolling out new features designed to help keep people safe, it's great to see platforms taking steps towards fighting the coronavirus pandemic. Each platform are crucial and has many great responsibility for their communities of millions of people globally and looking for creative solutions to stop misinformation, raise awareness, and help people adapt to the new normal. For instance, YouTube is a well-known resource for quick tips and solutions, so it is effective for the current issues to be published on the platform.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative Research

This research on the roles of media in spreading awareness during covid-19 pandemic uses the format and guidelines of qualitative research method. Qualitative research method involves the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, documents and observation, in order to understand and explain a social phenomenon (Ridzuan et al., 2015). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Data Collection Strategy

Interview Type: Semi-Structured Interview

The researchers conducted semi-structured interview for this research, 2 major questions had been prepared by the researchers beforehand to help obtain the much-needed information, but the researchers are ready to take into account of any extra details provided by the informants. The researchers interviewed 8 informants in total, and they are from public people who always concern, watching, reading, and listening about media nowadays. Semi-structured interview is a blend of closed and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up of why or how questions and usually involves only one person at a time. Semi-structured interviews are often preceded by observation, informal and unstructured interviewing in order to allow the researchers to develop a keen understanding of the topic of interest necessary for developing relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions (Bernard,1988).

Stated below is the list of public people who always concern, watching, reading, and listening about media nowadays that has been interviewed by the researchers:

- i. Rahimah binti Satiman
- ii. Amylia Nadia binti Azlam
- iii. Nurfitriah Azira binti Zainuddin
- iv. Muhammad Aidil Syahmi bin Hamidi
- v. Muhammad Azamuddin bin Bahtiar Affandi
- vi. Siti Hajar binti Sanib
- vii. Azlin Natasya Hanie binti Johan
- viii. Anis Batrisya binti Wahid

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this research is individual because the focus of the researchers is mainly on public people who always concern, watching, reading, and listening about media nowadays and the researchers also interviewed each of the people in separate sessions. Unit of analysis is

the entity that is being analyzed in a scientific research and can be divided into four categories which are individual, group, organization, and social artefacts (Millne,1999)

Sampling

1. Sampling Method: Non – Probability Sampling

There are two types of sampling which is probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling means that each sample has an equal probability of being chosen and the probability of the sample is the representatives of the population. Non-probability sampling technique uses non-randomized methods to draw the sample and the participants are being carefully selected for a purpose (Trochim, 2017). For this research, the researchers will be using non-probability sampling to gather informants which are the public people who always concern, watching, reading, and listening about media nowadays.

2. Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study (Leiner, 2018). The purposive sampling of this research targets are from public people who concern about media nowadays because it aims to gather their opinion on the role of media in spreading awareness during Covid-19 pandemic. They are the most eligible to give such input because they have a lot of experience on watching, reading and listening media nowadays. They know how far the effectiveness of media in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society and what is best way to increase the media effectiveness in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society. The researchers also choose the public people who always concern about media nowadays to get the most reliable feedback possible. Their thoughts of mind are very valuable for the study.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a popular method for analyzing qualitative data in many disciplines and fields, and can be applied in lots of different ways, to lots of different datasets, to address lots of different research questions. It presents the data in great detail and deals with diverse subjects via interpretations (Jhonson, 1992).

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

RQ 1: How far the effectiveness of media in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society?

1. Effective health communication for the adoption of sustainable preventive measures and curtailing misinformation

Based on Rahimah binti Satiman, the media has the big roles in spreading the effective health information about Covid-19 for the adoption of sustainable preventive measures and curtailing misinformation. She said, “Media is the best platform to spread the health information about Covid-19 to make sure everyone aware about this disease for example the media made the daily updates about the current cases of Covid-19, and broadcast the prevention ways of Covid-19 to break the chain of this disease among the community.”

According to Amylia Nadia binti Azlam, media broadcast about Covid-19 also important during this pandemic to expose the truth information instead of the fake news to ensure the community and society are not misinform with the fake news about this disease.

Based on Nurfitriah Azira binti Zainuddin, media platform such as social media like Facebook can give the negative impact to the society during this Covid-19 pandemic

because the society are often exposed with the fake news for example get the fake information about the country faced with the lack of food problems so people are tend to made the panic buying and it will make the situation became worse.

2. The society nowadays depends on media

Based on Azlin Natasya Hanie binti Johan, media is playing an important part as one of the ways to spread awareness to society. Nowadays, people lived around technology and can't live without it. Media such as hand phone, TV, laptop and else. The average of each house has at least one phone or TV. She added, people can read news on what's is happening around the world just using phone or watching TV. Social media such as Twitter or Facebook is playing an important role in spreading awareness to young generation. Everything can be known by media. It's really effective using media.

According to Anis Batrisya binti Wahid, it is more effective and efficient as people nowadays depends on media on their daily basis when it comes to getting information and more.

Based on Muhammad Azamuddin bin Bahtiar Affandi, in order to know the media is effective or not, it is crucial to know the target audiences. Since the target audiences are society, it is a quite problem because Malaysia is the multiracial country and has a different status and social background. Yet, as what the media did now, such as spread news through TV and official website, so it is effective.

3. Both effective and ineffective of spreading media

According to Muhammad Aidil Syahmi bin Hamidi, there are both effective and ineffective. The effective part is when people follow the news of covid-19 around the world. The Prime Minister of Malaysia and few other minister keep update about the current situations. However, the ineffectiveness is through social media because not all of the news were accurate. Moreover, there are still a person who do not have a social media or, do not even know how to use internet and smart phone. So the information is not receive by the audiences.

According to Siti Hajar binti Sanib, social media is to medium spread the news about novel corona virus. It is because social media is effective medium because most of society nowadays focused on gadget to find the information and current news. But, there is a lack in the used of media which is fake news.

CONCLUSION REMARKS:

In overall, the media user mentioned that the way of media spreading the news about novel corona virus are effective. It is because society nowadays get closer with the technology. As stated in the interview, most of people depends on the technology and media in their life. They have one media in their household, for instance, TV and phone, at least. These day, it is undeniable that social media give a big impacts in life. For example, our thoughts, lifestyles, economy and our overall view about the world. This electronic source give people to exchange information and ideas that has been adopted as an essential part of their daily lives (Maharashtra, 2020). In contrast, there are some of them stated that media give both effective and ineffective impact towards society. It can be proven, when there are fake news and inaccuracy of the information. Yet, they believed the medium to spread the news is good because most of people have a smartphone and social me.

RQ 2: 2) How to increase media effectiveness in spreading awareness about Novel Coronavirus among society?

1. Identify and analyze the best content to be shown to the target audience

According to Rahimah binti Satiman, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) should identify and analyze the best content to be shown to the target audience before they make any broadcast or other media posting. This is to ensure the target audience will get the useful and truth news and not the fake news. It is important during this pandemic in order to increase the media effectiveness in spreading the information and awareness about Covid-19 to the society.

Based on Amylia Nadia binti Azlam, the government should chose the content wisely and tighten the laws regarding the spread of fake news before it become worse. This can be done by increase the amount of compound to the offender and give the appropriate punishment to them. From this action, it will increase our own securities and we will not be exposed with the fake news that will lead to the negativity mentally and physically.

Based on Nurfitriah Azira binti Azlam, the inappropriate content in the media will lead to the inappropriate action of the audience because media is a strong way to influence society mentally and physically because people nowadays have their own smart phone and they can easily reached to the media. Everything is on their fingertips. So the way they watched and practiced the media are actually it portrayed who they are in the reality.

2. Use word of mouth

According to Anis Batrisya binti Wahid, the way to increase the media effectiveness is by using the words of mouth method. It is because, there are some people do not take much attention to the news.

3. Make one official platform

Based on Azlin Natasya Hanie binti Johan, the authorities ought to make an official platform to post online. Nowadays, there are many rumours that can't be trusted

According to Muhammad Aidil Syahmi bin Hamidi, the government need to choose only one TV channel and website for news and information of covid-19. It is because a of the media company deliver the information, so the audiences get confuse. Other than that, the variety of language are need to be applied.

4. Make more platform to spread the news

Based on Muhammad Azamuddin bin Bahtiar Affandi, media need to spread the news through many media platform, not just one. For example, mass media like TV, radio and official websites, or printed media such as newspapers and magazines. In

addition, the language is using the three main language in Malaysia which is Malay, Tamil and Chinese language.

5. Filter the fake news

According to Siti Hajar binti Sanib, government should filter any fake news to avoid from confusing among society. For instance, Malaysian National Security Council (MKN) has delivered and filtered the fake news, they only gave the truthful statement. As a responsible citizen, they should never spread the fake news, be sure to refer to the legit sources.

CONCLUSION REMARKS:

There are few different opinion among respondents. In order to increase the media effectiveness is by identify the best content to the target audiences. Evidently others said that the responsible organization ought to filter the fake news. It is because the fake news could make a huge chaos like panic buying and also people get confuse. Besides, there are recommendation to make only one official to give the information but there is also the opinion of respondent to make many platforms to deliver the information. Nevertheless, they suggest the news should be in the main languages in Malaysia which is Malay, Chinese and Indian. Next, word of mouth method should be applied to increase the effectiveness of media spreading. To be precise, media supposed to keep up date with the outbreak with a fact, real information and trusted source (Powell, 2020)

CONCLUSION

The researchers through the reading like from article and news about the roles of media in spreading awareness during covid-19 pandemic. It is really important especially while handling such disaster like novel virus covid-19. It is because media need to be a middle man between government and citizen. Moreover is the effective platform to spread the news because it can reach a huge target audiences. There are a lots of media that contribute in spreading the news about covid-19. For instances, through newspaper, radio and TV. However, there are still the society that against the ordered by government by not bear with the standards operational

procedure (SOP) such as keep the social distancing and wear face mask. It can be seen that the level of awareness among societies are still in a bad positions. It could be, they do not get enough exposure about the information of covid-19 disease. The researchers found the media is the best way towards spreading the news. This statement can be supported by the answer form respondents which said that the people nowadays depends on media a lots. It could be to find the information, to share the news and much more. Nevertheless, there are few respondents stated that media could be both effective and ineffective. It is good because people can easily share the information but it can be true or false information. These day, there are a mounts of people share a fake news. Hence, the respondents said the media ought to serve the best content and information for the target audiences. It is to ensure the information get close to the audiences and they will alert of it. In addition, the fake news should be filter and people need to get a legal information from official platform to avoid from confusing. From this, people will increase the awareness among societies. It is unbearable that the media is the most effective way to exchange the information. However, sometimes the irresponsible person will mislead the news to the unacceptable sources.

REFERENCES

- Ahmad, R. (2020, April 26). Taking the movement control order seriously: *The Star Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/making-progress/2020/03/23/taking-the-movement-control-order-seriously>
- Abdullah, D. (2020, May 12). 'Community empowerment needed to curb Covid-19': *New Straits Time*. Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2020/05/591824/community-empowerment-needed-curb-covid-19>
- Azhar, I. E. (2020, June 10). Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel coronavirus in Wuhan, China. *The Lancet: ScienceDirect*. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673620301835>
- Beenard, R. (1988, July 23). *Qualitative in research*. Home Semi. Retrieved from: <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>
- Creswell, A. (1994, February 30). Hand book of Qualitative Research. Retrieved from:

<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-research/book242504>

Centres For Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, May 13). Symptoms Of Coronavirus Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Ministry Of Health Malaysia. (2020, March 24). Updates on COVID-19 diagnosis and treatment. Retrieved from: http://vlib.moh.gov.my/cms/content.jsp?id=com.tms.cms.section.Section_c90a7f31-a0188549-b02c4100-7a476c70

World Health Organization. (2020, May 20). Retrieved from Prevention Ways Of COVID-19: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Jhonson, M. (1992, July 10). *Thematic Analysis - A reflexive approach.* Retrieved from <https://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/thematic-analysis.html>

Millner, D. (1999, June 6). Qualitative Data Analysis: The unit Data of Analysis Retrieved from: <https://researchdesignreview.com/2019/12/10/qualitative-data-analysis-unit-of-analysis/>

Ridzuan, A. R. (2020, April 10). *Sarawak tertinggi amalkan langkah pencegahan COVID-19.* Utusan Borneo Online Retrieved from: <https://www.utusanborneo.com.my/2020/04/10/sarawak-tertinggi-amalkan-langkah-pencegahan-covid-19>

Ridzuan,A.R, Jusang, B, Suyurno, S.S, Kamal,R, Jafri, F (2015). Developing Sns Factors Structures Towards Constructing Sns Survey Questions, *Journal Of Human Capital Development*, 8(2), 25-35

Saintler, L. (2018, March 29). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive. Retrieved from: file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/Comparison_of_Convenience_Sampling_and_Purposive_S.pdf

Shen, W. C. (2020,May 22). Chinas Wuhan revises coronavirus case count death toll statement media Retrieved from CNBC.COM: <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/17/chinas-wuhan-revises-coronavirus-case-count-death-toll-state-media.html>

Siddique, A. R. (2020, April 1). Novel coronavirus, poor quarantine, and the risk of pandemic. *Hospital Infection.* Retrived from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32057788/>

- Sulaiman, A. (2020, May 20). *Roles of mass media during pandemic*. Retrieved from:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/research-topics/13638/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-the-impact-and-role-of-mass-media-during-the-pandemic#overview>
- Trochim, W. (1996, January 7). Nonprobability sampling. *Conjointly.ly*. Retrieved from
<https://conjointly.com/kb/nonprobability-sampling/>
- Reema Karasneh (2020, April 23) . Media's effect on shaping knowledge, awareness risk perceptions and communication practices of pandemic COVID-19 among pharmacists. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1551741120304307>