



# MEDICAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSES IN EASTERN AND WESTERN MEDIA NEWS DISCOURSE USING VAN DIJK FRAMEWORK

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Article history:	Abstract:
<b>Received:</b> 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2022	The medical discourse shows that Covid-19 has affected the lives of people all around the world. The present study aims to investigate the ideologies in medical discourse in selected Eastern and Western media news using Van Dijk's ideological square framework. The data was collected from five news articles selected purposely during the timeframe of December 2019 to April 2022. Al-Jazeera, CNN, New York Times and BBC were selected. The media discourse transcripts include more than 4000 clauses analysed using Vand Dijk microstructure and content analyses to analyse occurrence, frequencies of Evidentiality, Hyperbole, Metaphor, Negative Lexicalisation, and Number Game. The study found that evidentiality was the most common strategy found in both newspapers. Another interesting point is that although hyperbolic language was used to a great extent in <i>eastern media news</i> , hyperbole was the least frequent strategy employed in <i>western media news</i> . In terms of similarities and differences, all the news organizations were focused on the governments as they have mentioned the words "government," state," and "governor". All the news organizations covered issues regarding the pandemic. On the other hand. BBC and CNN published news concerning their local issues but Al Jazeera was significant from the global perspective
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## INTRODUCTION

Medical (healthcare) professional discourse is investigated in different dimensions in relation to the goals of the healthcare sector. Medical discourse differs from institutional discourse in that it requires specific ethical standards as well as stringent legislative and bureaucratic regulations (Kuipers, 1989; Waitzkin, 1989). The role and designation of professionals in the medical sector are defined by the dress code, test and observation schedules, Latin terminology, and other sign systems in medical communication (Good, & Del Vecchio Good, 1981; Khan, 2019). As per Habermas (1970) medical discourse is influenced by 'scientific ideology'. Professional ethics prohibit involuntary expression of feelings and sentiments in the medical sector (Madzhaeva, 2015; Heritage & Maynard, 2006). Medical misinformation can spread in the public sphere as a result of doctors' assessments of politics & social contexts (Ovchinnikova et al., 2021; Caulfield et al., 2019). The power of restrictions, on the other hand, varies depending on the social and cultural contexts of communication in the medical professional (Good & Del Vecchio Good, 1981). Thus, the understanding of medical discourse theory and practice requires research of offline and online medical communication in many countries. An examination of studies on various aspects of health and medical discourse reveals that Adolphs et al. (2004) are fully justified in referring to the number of studies in this subject as "phenomenal". A significant portion of this amazing trend focuses on so-called medical interactions, which comprise descriptive or critical analyses of doctor-patient communication (e.g., Cordella 2004; Gotti & Salager-Meyer 2006; Ainsworth-Vaughn 1998, 2003; Gulich 2003; Mishler 1984). Most of these studies place medical communication discourse within a social context broader (e.g., Shaw & Greenhalgh, 2008; Fisher and Todd 1983, 1993). Adding to the social concern, some critically oriented medical discourse research have sometimes concentrated on the political and ideological roots of medical discourse by either directly alluding to a critical stance or implicitly adopting critical analytical processes (MacDonald 2002; Waitzkin 1989, 1993). This study evaluate two specific cases of medical discourse in two diferent types of medical print media in consideration of a similar concern for social relationships of authority and power while alluding to the role of discourse in shaping and legitimizing perceptions, practices, and worldviews (van Dijk 2004; Jager 2001; Fairclough 1989).

## Theoretical Frameworks of Critical Discourse Analyses

### The Social Theory of Exception

The social theory is focused on language Because it tries to examine social and political events in society. Discourse, according to this theory, is a social practice that establishes the power of distinct entities. This, it appears, results in the

creation of authority and an ideological practice in society that confers power in language and signals. Because of their complicated linkages, manifested practices regard social behaviors and events as contradictory. social discourse theory is generally concerned with how to connect speech to society while emphasizing on the types of participant interaction, types of social events, and social goals. Fairclough (1992) developed a three-dimensional CDA model in accordance with this theory that includes text, social, and discursive practices. These features are linked to semiotics, which is the interpretation that is used to explain the occurrence of specific phenomena. The three-dimensional framework generally seeks to introduce difficult principles since they are better grasped when the text is linked to the social context. The presence of text, which allows for textual analysis, is the first dimension in a three-dimensional framework. The study of linguistic features and discursive practices is known as textual analysis (Fairclough, 1992). Being that languages contain packages of numerous linguistic features, analyzing each component becomes technical and complicated.

### APPROACH VAN DIJK CDA

Incorporates a variety of linguistic approaches and theories in the creation of social & discursive processes in order to emphasize the assumptions made by the stronger of the less powerful. On the other hand, Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach tries to connect linguistics with cognitive theories and approaches. Van Dijk suggested that critical discourse research is a transdisciplinary position, perspective, or critical attitude that rationalizes the hidden ideology in social practice. As a result, he advocated that the link between discourse, cognition, and society be triangulated (Van Dijk, 2009). This triangulation highlights the cognitive phenomena related with discourse structure, as well as the manner in which social inequality, dominance, and ideology manifest themselves. It is necessary that the relationship between discourse structure and society structure be examined in order to uncover the social representations, ideologies, and attitudes of the social actors. According to Van Dijk (2009), white dominance leads to socioeconomic racism, inequality, and dominance in some countries. Furthermore, the CDA top-down paradigm is emphasized because discourse reveals a common kind of social injustice.

### Past Studies

Many discourse analysts have focused on news reports and newspaper headlines (Bell, 1991; Van Dijk, 1983). Yaghoobi's (2009) examination of Iranian and American publications showed that the choice of passive speech over active voice can eliminate agency for certain activities. Similarly, Atai and Mozaheb's (2013) study of word choices in British newspapers found that Iran was consistently connected with negative themes such as threat, concealment, boastfulness, defiance, and jeopardy, but the US and its allies were portrayed positively. Bilic and Georgaca (2007) looked at how the media portrays mental diseases in terms of representing and politicizing health concerns. Their findings revealed that the public believes mental diseases are a very negative issue since the media has linked them to a variety of issues such as violence, risky situations, and criminality. Analysing discourses on what has recently been rocking the long-progressing, long-thriving roots of the contemporary world, namely Covid-19, has recently been more important. Abbas (2020) examined the coverage of Covid-19 in an American and a Chinese newspaper using Van Dijk's news schemata framework and concluded that the pandemic's news had been politicized to serve ideological agendas. The current study employed Van Dijk's ideological square and Halliday's SFL to examine the discourses of an Iranian and an American newspaper in order to shed more light on the hidden discourses that this epidemic has produced. Following the Covid-19 attack, a large number of discourse analysts and experts became actively involved in identifying discursive forces and media operations in relation to Covid-19, and this body of work led to a slew of new research projects, demonstrating that this field of study requires more thorough investigation (Al-Mwzaiji, 2021).

### METHODOLOGY

The data was collected via a systematic selection of news reports on Covid-19, published between January 2020 and January 2021, from five prominent Eastern and Western media news outlets: The New York Times, BBC, Al-Jazeera, and CNN. The samples were tracked and downloaded from official Facebook pages of Al Jazeera English (Al Jazeera English, 2012), CNN (Cable News Network, 2020), and BBC News (BBC, n.d.). The news coverage focused on how the virus spread across different countries and how they managed to control it. The reason for selecting these media and newspapers is that they both report news in English, hence their target audiences are English speakers. The target audience for Al-Jazeera is mostly Arabs living in Arab countries. On the other hand, *The New York Times*, BBC, and CNN which have been chosen for its range of readership which ranges from academics to workers, is written for Americans and a large majority of people whose second or foreign language is English. The selected newspapers were chosen because of their vast readership. All the newspapers are available online so that they can be accessed from around the world. The systematic approach to studying and categorizing written texts is termed as content analysis (Chuang et al., 2015). It is one of the most well-known core techniques to research in the social sciences and humanities. The studies were also done using Semetko & Valkenburg's (2000) framing analysis method, with the frames for the news content analysis being conflict, economic repercussions, human interest, responsibility, and morality. Contextualization was used to discuss the connection between these frames afterwards. The results of the words and word cluster in this study were compared to a pre-existing list of framing terms (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study are divided in two sections: the first section presents the findings of Van Dijk's approach of critical discourse analyses found in the selected quotes of the selected news papers. The second section presents the findings of similar and different themes found in the eastern and western media news. The findings of Van Dijk's microstructure analyses revealed five themes namely: Metaphor, Evidentiality, Hyperbole, Number Game.

**EVIDENTIALITY**

The most common method was evidentiality, which was represented by Western (N = 320) and Eastern samples (N = 295), respectively. According to Hsieh (2008), the prevalence of Evidentiality in political and economic news cannot be overlooked because it contributes to the objectivity of reporting such news. As a result, when reporting news on critical topics like a deadly virus like Covid-19, people are more likely to trust the newspaper if it comes from a reputable source.

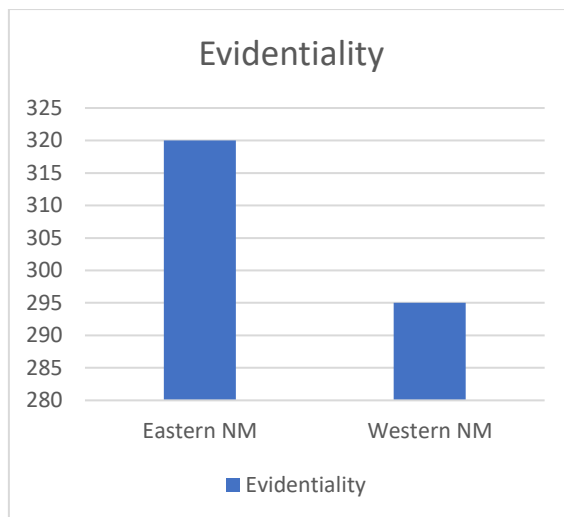


Figure 1. Findings of Evidentiality in the selected news papers

*Evidentiality* used to report the number of coronavirus deaths in Eastern countries and to claim that this number is "among the most outside of China". Using the phrase "officials said" attaches objectivity and credibility to the report and claim (Hsieh, 2008). The macrostrategy of *Negative Other-Representation* is more highlighted through the use of *Evidentiality*. The example also uses the word "battered" metaphorically based on the conceptual metaphor INFECTING IS HITTING.

**HYPERBOLE**

Since *Eastern Newspaper* relied heavily on using *Hyperbole* (N = 45), this micro-strategy is of high importance for this research. In contrast, *Western* used it only (N = 20) times.

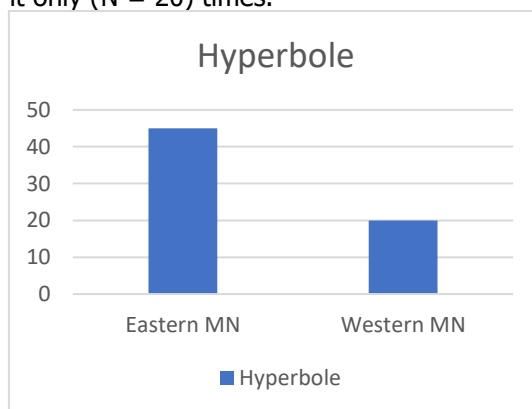


Figure 1. Findings of Hyperbole in the selected news papers

Hyperbole in these publications is used to distort the original item of news in order to attain a political goal by employing macro-strategies such as Emphasizing Our Good Things or De-emphasizing Our Bad Things. Below is an illustration.

The publication attempted to use hyperbolic terms to portray a normal and regulated environment by noting that the newly-identified Covid-19 patient is being handled with "an abundance of caution." This is a gross exaggeration of the current situation, given that nations, particularly the United States, first dismissed the virus's danger. The report of the "abundance of caution" was made more objective, and therefore more credible, by being stated by an authority figure, Dr. Chris Spitters. Following that, the micro-strategy of *Evidentiality* was used. *Hyperbole* created a positive depiction of the US through emphasizing that the US has been extremely precocious in dealing with the virus.

**METAPHOR**

Both newspapers used a variety of Metaphors. Metaphor was used more frequently in Western Minnesota than in Eastern Minnesota, with 120 and 95 instances, respectively. This is because Covid-19 creates bodily difficulties, and these metaphors demonstrate how hazardous Covid-19 is. Metaphor's persuasive power in newspapers has been proven in previous studies (Brugman, et al., 2019). Furthermore, employing metaphoric language can make a document more understandable and pleasurable to read (Zohrabi & Layegh, 2020).

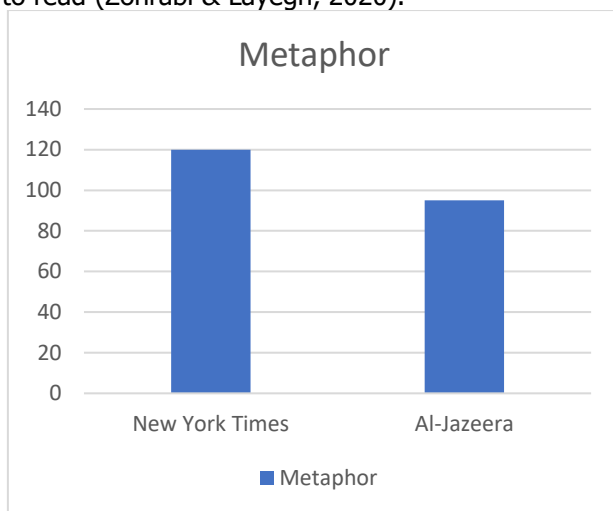


Figure 1. Findings of Metaphor in the selected news papers

The term "tighten" is used metaphorically to describe the process of tightening virus-control procedures. "Tighten" means "to close or secure anything firmly by turning it" in its most fundamental sense (Longman, n.d.). In this news item, the meaning of this phrase is "reinforce regulations and enhance procedures." In this case, the metaphor's major purpose is to provide a positive depiction of the actions taken by Eastern countries to control the situation and prevent the virus from spreading, thus activating Van Dijk's (2006) macrostrategy of *Positive Self-Representation*.

**NEGATIVE LEXICALISATION**

Both newspapers used Lexicalisation to their advantage, similar to Positive Self-Representation. Lexicalisation is one of the micro-strategies associated to SFL in the sense that language users might select a specific term over others to indicate the ideological viewpoint they support (Van Dijk, 1995). Lexicalisation is a systematic, deliberate attention on the word as the unit of choice. Lexicalisation is thus the systematic network of choices represented solely in word choices. Both newspapers utilized Negative Lexicalisation in this study, with (N = 65) instances in Western countries and (N = 95) instances in Eastern countries. These numbers suggest that both newspapers relied heavily on using this specific microstrategy to discuss and depict their ideological and political stance in reporting the news related to Covid-19. The points discussed in this portion of the paper confirmed the findings of Thetela (2001).

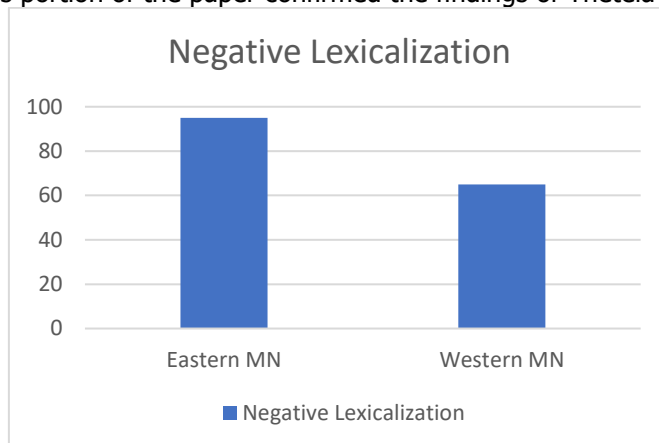


Figure 1. Findings of Negative Lexicalization in the selected news papers

Coronavirus was referred to by a variety of names in both media. Western countries commonly used terms like "Wuhan coronavirus" and "mysterious coronavirus" to emphasize China's role in the virus's creation and dissemination. Another point of note is that, despite its attempts to link the virus to China, this publication did not use the term "Chinese coronavirus" more than once, which is favored by President Donald J. Trump.

**NUMBER GAME**

Number Game was the least popular micro-strategy, with about 43 occurrences in Eastern and 25 in Western publications. Western appeared more objective in the perspective of its readers since it backed up its claims with numbers. The usage of various verbs, adverbs, and prepositions that imply ambiguity, such as suggested, apparently,

and about, is something to bear in mind. Such phrase prevents the construction of the notion that the numbers offered are absolute, and it significantly removes the news agency from a certain number, allowing them to retract what they had previously stated.

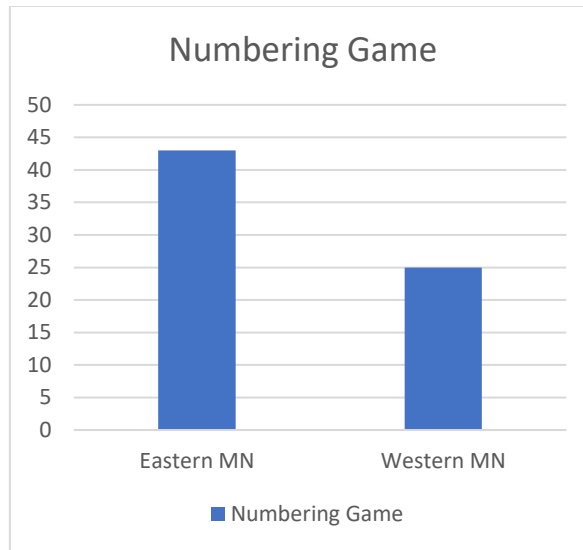


Figure 1. Findings of Numbering game in the selected news papers

Both newspapers used Number Game to implement Van Dijk's (2006) two macrostrategies and to provide their arguments objectivity and credibility. Numbers and statistics have been used to discredit Eastern countries' arguments and to suggest that Eastern countries are lying about the true number of infected people in the country. The macro-strategy of Negative Other-Representation is realized when this technique is used in this setting. Western is also attempting to distance itself from taking a strong stance in response to this news article by using language like "suggested."

Overall, both publications appeared to use the similar micro-strategies when covering virus-related stories. The number of these tactics, however, varied substantially from one newspaper to the next. According to the preceding discussions, it appears that the function of disguise was performed admirably in both Eastern and Western times. Eastern media news, on the other hand, used the micro-strategies of Metaphor, Hyperbole, and Evidentiality more effectively to modify the original news and to make these micro-strategies support its underlying ideology. It's worth mentioning that both concealing and face-saving features were included in both newspapers, although the principal role in both was as described. The findings also imply that The New York Times used both macro- and micro-strategies, including Positive Self-Representation and Negative Other-Representation. Positive Self-Representation was the most prevalent macro-strategy in the Eastern example. The use of the micro-strategy of Evidentiality appears to be mostly in service of the aforementioned macro-strategy, and by doing so, Eastern countries and their preventive measures appear to be distanced from the rest of the world, creating a positive mental image of the Eastern countries government's actions in dealing with this pandemic.

The total number of clauses studied in this study was 3200. Overall, the results of this study demonstrated a variety of clause-level methods, with Evidentiality, Hyperbole, Metaphor, National Self-Glorification, Negative Lexicalization, and Number Game being the most popular techniques in both Eastern and Western cultures, with a total frequency of 1123. The most common tactic was Evidentiality, whereas the least common strategies were Number Game and Metaphor. Regarding Evidentiality, both publications relied on an authoritative figure or a renowned health or government organization to back up their assertions and attempt to make news reporting objective.

A quick comparison of the results shows that the most common tactic in both newspapers was evidentiality. Another intriguing aspect is that, while hyperbolic language was often utilized in Eastern, it was the least frequently used method in Western. This appears to be the case for a variety of reasons. To begin with, while utilizing hyperbolic language draws readers' attention, it makes the news piece less likely to be believed by its target audience. Another reason for this is that, in order to conceal their underlying ideology, these newspapers like to use hyperbolic language, which can reduce the level of camouflage. Eastern used National Self-Glorification more frequently than Eastern. Eastern, on the other hand, preferred figurative language. The findings have two major implications for the roles played by the techniques identified in the study: (1) the role of concealment, and (2) the function of saving face. According to Bell (1991), in order to comprehend the complicated issue of misreporting and misrepresentation, one must use SFL to account for the ideological components of ideas. Many news organizations employ Metaphor, Negative Lexicalization, and Hyperbole to distort the original material and strengthen their arguments viewpoint. "Ideologies in newspapers imbedded in news reporting are not obvious as those in other public discourses, such as editorial (Shokouhi & Moazed (2017)". Government authorities have a strong influence on mainstream ideology in Eastern countries. Our findings supported the findings of Rafizadeh & Alimardani (2013), who claimed that while all news agencies' main ideological stances are the same as their governments', there may be minor differences among newspapers because each news agency in Eastern countries supports a specific political group or party.



### Similarities & Differences of Language Use in the Selected Media News

#### Similarities

Al Jazeera English, CNN, and BBC News, all have similar main themes in the following ways: The epidemic was reported extensively by all news outlets. Words related and relevant to Novel Coronavirus were their priority. The term "Corona" was used the most in Al Jazeera News text (320 times), BBC News (295), and CNN's entire text was the word "Corona" (320 times). Apart from the direct "Corona," the related terms were also prevalent in their texts. The top terms on their list included "test," "death," "health," "people," and "case." During the "word cluster" list analysis, Al Jazeera used the "corona case" (35 times) and "corona pandemic" (25 times), which were at the top of the list, whereas BBC's "confirm case" and "corona pandemic" word clusters were used only 8 times each and did not make the top 10 list. CNN also used the term "corona case" only 10 times .

Because the words "government," "state," and "governor" were stated, all the news organizations concentrated on governments. The word "government" was found as the 6th most used word (8 times) in Al Jazeera texts and 5th most used word (101 times) in BBC texts, and as the 38th most used word (39 times) in CNN text. In addition, cluster words (Table 2) such as "home order" are mentioned in Al Jazeera, BBC, & CNN texts. It appears that BBC and AL Jazeera were worried about central government policies and system around the world, whereas CNN had a different perspective. The analysis also found that AL Jazeera and CNN focused more on the US president in their coverage. Regarding the world cluster section, Al Jazeera referenced US President or Donald Trump 9 times out of 21 news texts while CNN cited US President Donald Trump 11 times out of 41 news stories. In addition, "White House" was cited prominently in the news, as Al Jazeera and CNN mentioned them 10 times (0.17 percent) and 30 times in their entire text from world section. World Health Organization (WHO) was referenced in earlier studies during previous pandemics like SARS as among the words in the word lists of CNN and BBC (no study was found on Al Jazeera); however WHO was not discovered in the word frequency lists of Al Jazeera, BBC, or CNN. The UN also failed to make the top 30 words (in the word frequency list) in BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera publications. The term "people" was the next most often used word, meaning that all the news media put people first; it was the third most frequently used word (frequency 104) in the Al Jazeera's text frequency, whereas the text analysis of BBC and CNN placed the word second (181 times) and sixth (151 times) in their texts .

#### Differences

There were several notable discrepancies in the news organizations' texts when framing the Covid-19 global issue, despite some parallels. The following are the primary distinctions:

The term "health" was in 6th place on the BBC's word frequency list, appearing 89 times, and was the third most often used word on CNN (153 times). However, Al Jazeera used the word 56 times, therefore it did not make the top 10 list. The analysis of the other word clusters showed that BBC's top 3 word clusters (Table 2) were "care home" (41 times, 0.64 percent), "social distance" (29 times), and "protective equipment" (16 times), all of which represent the BBC's focus in the health-care system, while "social distance" was mentioned 44 times by CNN and "public health" was mentioned 40 times; "health code" was mentioned 26 times, and "home order" was mentioned once (25 times). The top word clusters on Al Jazeera, on the other hand, were "corona case" (28 times), "corona pandemic" (24 times), and "death toll" (25 times). This demonstrates that Al Jazeera was concerned about the impact of the pandemic, whilst CNN and BBC were more concerned about public health.

Although the BBC and CNN reported on local issues, Al Jazeera was noteworthy from a global standpoint. When reading the news, the source of countries was investigated to determine the country of origin of the news. Two of the 21 AL Jazeera news stories focused on the United Kingdom and other European countries, while six others focused on the United States, Asia, and South America, Africa, and Australia. However, out of 39 news items, just four were about Asia, three were about the United States, and the rest were about the United Kingdom and Europe. Only one text-based news story was from the United Kingdom, and another was about France, with the remaining 35 stories being local.

According to the findings, all the three news outlets (Al Jazeera English, BBC News, and CNN) characterized the Novel Coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic. Their main goal was to raise awareness about the virus and its consequences. When individuals were looking for information, it was a popular question. Also, during the worldwide lockdown, their news was in high demand among global readers, and they framed the topic in accordance with public demand, which covers economic issues via the lens of economic effects. However, they did not all present the coronavirus in the same light. When we look at the differences, we can see that BBC and CNN focused more on the healthcare & public health aspects of the issue, which supports the responsibility frame, whereas Al Jazeera focused on the impact of the Novel Coronavirus. Their news coverage focused on deaths and infected persons. We presume that Europe and the United States were dealing with mortality tolls, and that these news organizations set their agendas to educate the public about the infection's protection and management strategies. It's also worth noting that the World Health Organization received the least attention from all three news outlets. It's the polar opposite of Tian and Stewarts (2005) framing analysis during the SARS outbreak . In a case involving a worldwide disease, pandemic, or epidemic, where World Health Organization guidelines or opinions are important, the situation was just the reverse. In this scenario, the frame delimitation was really important. The blind eye on the World Health Organization could be either intentional or unintentional. All the news, bases on the data analysis focused mainly on people and public health. The virus outbreak has put a strain on the global health management system, and just a few countries were ready to face the problem, while the majority of countries are just trying the much they can. People were therefore the news slant on

which these news agencies attempted to concentrate. This framing involved individuals to the greatest possible extent, and the combination of people and public health drew in a large number of public attention. Interestingly, when governments are faced with serious economic and public health challenges, these news organizations framed the governments of the countries and attempted to get their attention using the responsibility frame, which allowed the governments to consider the issues more deeply (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). These information gatekeepers kept a careful eye on the local government or the national government, as well as the governments and systems. It's worth noting that CNN was worried about local issues at the time of their vulnerable timeframe of the pandemic. The findings showed that local news was highly dominant in the BBC and CNN articles. They have refused to share information on foreign events. Al Jazeera, on the other hand, was writing from a worldwide perspective. In their English version, the Qatar-based news station gave relatively little coverage to local issues. The researchers were unable to investigate the news of Al Jazeera's local or Arabic version due to a linguistic barrier. However, the survey suggests that Al Jazeera & CNN seem to be more focused on the president of the United States. For centuries, the British and the United States of America have had a strong relationship in diplomatic and political matters (Clark & Angell, 1991; Hotez, 2018). This political claim is backed up by official government pronouncements (U.S. Department of State, 2018; US Embassy & Consulates in the United Kingdom, 2018). However, CNN in the United States and Al Jazeera in Qatar were comparable in framing the US president. Al Jazeera was previously noted to be interested in reporting on the United States (Meltzer, 2013). As a result, they have framed the president of the United States from many perspectives. While CNN attempted to frame the President in terms of their local interests while dismissing other international and national leaders; Al Jazeera prioritized placing the US president in a conflict framing position. From a theoretical standpoint, this research aids in the comprehension of framing from the perspective of news sharing publication by news organizations. For example, the study demonstrates that there are reasons to choose a social media platform carefully when sharing news. Furthermore, the manifest content analysis methodology used on Facebook news posts is a gift to the field of study.

### CONCLUSION

The current research offered valuable insights into the language use and medical-political discourse inefficacies of the media news reports in eastern and western countries, which resulted to the fact that in political and ideological stances of governments and news agencies are prioritised and issues related to people's health are mostly ignored. The principal motivations influencing the writing of Covid-19-related media reports appear to be aimed toward supporting a certain administration or political group in national and worldwide political feuds and rivalries, rather than saving people's lives. In the same vein, the study's key contribution would be to pinpoint the macro and micro techniques used by newspapers to promote specific ideas while attacking those who are inherently opposed with their own multifaceted advantage. Another significant contribution of such studies is the benefit to the general public and raising general knowledge of the masses by allowing them to observe what kind of deceptive language they may encounter in their daily lives. Future studies might focus on certain micro-strategy in a bigger number of media news in order to report more indepth analyses.

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