THE MEDIA AND MIGRATION DURING THE CIVD19 PANDEMIC: DISCUSSIONS, POLICIES, AND PRACTICES DURING A TIME OF EMERGENCY

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To introduce the special edition of Media and Communication on "Media and Migration in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Discourses, Policies, and Practices in Times of Crisis," the following editorial is provided. During the pandemic, digital infrastructures and media may shape people's perspectives and experiences of migration; this topical issue provides a forum for discussing these effects. This collection of seven articles presents a synthesis of several empirical studies that take a multi-actor approach and use various techniques and cross-cultural and interdisciplinary frameworks to address this topic. To better understand the opportunities and challenges of leveraging media technologies to promote inclusive, sustainable, and meaningful participation and representation of migrants beyond the pandemic, the contributions featured in this thematic issue may be helpful.

INTRODUCTION

Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic offered unprecedented problems to global public health, but it has also created enormous disturbances in a variety of elements of society, including migration. (Castells, 2020) The epidemic has caused these challenges and disruptions. (Crawley, 2020) The implementation of emergency measures by national governments, such as border closures, travel restrictions, and quarantine procedures, affected the movement of people across international boundaries as countries struggled to contain the fast spread of the virus. (Eberl, 2020) During this chaotic era, the media, a solid social influencer, had a significant role in molding public views, distributing information, and influencing governmental actions (Gemenn, 2020).

This study investigates the dynamic interaction that occurred between the media and migration in the middle of the COVID-19 epidemic. (Hampshire, 2020) The emphasis of the investigation is on the conversations, policies, and practices that surfaced during this period of emergency. (Phillip, 2020) We want to do this by shedding light on the complicated nature of the landscape of migration in the context of a global health crisis via an analysis of the multiple interactions between the representations of the media, public debate, and the government's actions.

Many countries have dealt with the COVID-19 epidemic as a transportation problem. Fear-mongering and the use of military imagery in discussions of the current health crisis have opened the way for new limits on freedom of movement on a worldwide scale. These restrictions were placed when the most vulnerable people's freedom of movement and settlement had already been severely limited. The public's perspective on migration and its associated processes has been profoundly influenced by the mediating mechanisms that have formed these measurements and related discourses via intricate media landscapes and the imaginations of various social actors. These discourses and measures pose a severe threat to the continuing processes of migrant reception, settlement, and integration by further aggravating the rights and vulnerabilities of migrants.

Further, the media plays a vital role in crises by giving populations, such as migrants and refugees, access to pertinent information and participating in arguments over the ratification of preventative measures. In light of this, it's crucial to call attention to the risks of technology use (such as misinformation, privacy invasion, and surveillance) that can prevent refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced people from keeping up with developments in the Covid19 crisis in their places of settlement. This increases their vulnerability, exacerbates existing inequities, and leaves them invisible as a group. Last but not least, digital practices and mobility policies during times of crisis represent how communication and relationships within transnational families have been transformed and tested.

Within the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the articles in this special issue of Media and Communication concentrate on the intersection of digital infrastructures and media. The pieces chosen for this special edition explore topics such as these.

(a) the benefits and limitations of digital technologies in risk and crisis management among migrant communities; (b) the opportunities and challenges of using digital technologies to conduct research on migrant populations during a global pandemic; and (c) the role of media discourses around the immediate and long-term effects of the Covid19 on migrants and in facilitating solidarity movements towards migrant groups or, conversely, anti-immigrant mobilizations. The following is a synopsis of the seven articles included in this collection.

Kaarina Nikunen and Sanna Valtonen's (2022) opening article for this issue is a photographic exhibition created in collaboration with photographer Katja Tähjä, the Helinä Rautavaara Museum, and seven participants in the research project that explores the digital self-representation of the everyday life of recently or currently undocumented migrants in Finland during the Covid19 crisis. Influenced by the pervasiveness of digital technologies as an intimate infrastructure, this paper investigates visibility from two angles: as a social status and as a photographic research strategy for increasing public awareness. It also considers the interplay between being seen and being hidden online. The authors' research on visual pictures of self-expression by individuals in vulnerable circumstances illuminates how digital media settings subject these populations to compelled exposure in their ongoing fight for speech rights.

Julia Camargo et al. (2022) also address communication rights in the context of social and digital inequalities caused by the COVID-19 epidemic by exploring the experiences of Venezuelan immigrants in Brazil. Issues of transnational family communication, obtaining and accessing information, resources, and rights in a host society are discussed, along with the growing concept of digital inequalities, characterized by reduced connectivity and exacerbated (online) vulnerabilities during COVID-19. The findings indicate that all three are very vulnerable in the digital realm, are highly susceptible to online disinformation, and lack access to communication rights as refugees. Accessing uncertain information landscapes online affects not only the well-being and health of refugees but also discourages safe pathways to mobility, and it is argued that government and humanitarian digital infrastructures contributed to enhancing social exclusion and marginalization of refugees.

Nikos Fotopoulos et al. (2022) analyze how the refugee crisis was covered and framed in German, Greek, and British media from January 1, 2021, to May 1, 2021. The writers chose two mainstream, one regional, and one tabloid newspaper from each of the three nations for qualitative content analysis. Their research contends that the coverage of Covid-19 and refugees was sparse in the three countries and overshade- owing to epidemiological changes or other health concerns connected to local populations. The authors also highlight, intriguingly, that the issue's prominence differed depending on the country and the newspaper, with mainstream left-leaning publications more likely to cover the refugee crisis than mainstream right-leaning, regional, or tabloid publications. Furthermore, the article concludes that the "victim" narrative predominated in media coverage of the refugee problem during the epidemic. Once again, noteworthy variations are shown at the newspaper level, with publications that lean left more likely to demonstrate compassion for migrants by discussing the difficulties they encounter because of the epidemic.

Media portrayals of South Africa's migratory and mobile communities as the pandemic unfolded in 2020 are examined by Thea de Gruchy et al. (2022). The authors quantitatively evaluated worldwide English-language media outputs on Covid-19 and migration in South Africa. A framing study is also included to help determine how the media in South Africa portrayed migration and the people who made the journey. Their results demonstrate that articles published by US- and UK-based outlets had a considerably wider reach than locally or regionally generated out- throws, indicating that most of the information about and framing of migration in the nation was not produced locally during the epidemic. The authors also discover that contrary to their expectations, migration was not primarily framed as a danger or as unfavorable to South Africa. Instead, the difficulties migrants encountered due to the epidemic and the state's weak reactions to it were humanized.

In light of the recent influenza epidemic, Hanna Orsolya Vincze and Delia Cristina Balaban (2022) investigate how German media viewpoints were incorporated into Romanian coverage of the native intra-EU labor movement. The authors conduct a quantitative and qualitative content study of major Romanian online news channels, focusing on the early epidemic stage between March 1 and July 30, 2020. Their research demonstrates that both Romanian and German media utilized the pandemic to consider the broader social costs of migration and the accountability of political actors in both sending and receiving countries, as well as at the EU level, despite the underrepresentation of migrants' voices. However, the authors also find significant negative undertones, especially in the later stages of the pandemic (April–July 2020), where Romanian migrants are portrayed as the recipients of "privileged" treatment due to their ability to maintain mobility while their compatriots are subjected to strict lockdown measures.

1. Coverage in the Media: During the epidemic, the media significantly influenced the general public's attitudes about migration. There was a lot of attention paid to the effects that COVID-19 had on migrants, including how it affected their health, how vulnerable they were economically, and how difficult it was for them to get critical services.

2. The Public Discourse: During the epidemic, many different aspects of the topic of migration were discussed. There were discussions on the precarious situations that migrant populations find themselves in, the morality of the security measures implemented at borders, and the significance of international cooperation in resolving the problems that migrants face.

3. Migration Management Policies Enacted by Countries During the Epidemic Several countries enacted migration management policies. These policies included things like limitations on travel and the closing of borders, as well

steps to mitigate the effect on the economy of migrant labor. There was a lot of back and forth on these programs' efficiency and humanitarian elements.

4. Impact on Vulnerable Populations: During the pandemic, migrants, especially those working in informal sectors, were at an increased risk of being vulnerable to the disease. The problems brought to light in the media coverage included people losing their jobs, not having access to healthcare, and having trouble returning to their home countries.

5. Cooperation on a Global Scale The pandemic highlighted the need for global cooperation to solve the issues posed by migration. A significant amount of time was spent discussing the exchange of best practices, the assistance of vulnerable groups, and the protection of the rights of migrants.

6. Humanitarian Responses: During the epidemic, humanitarian organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played an essential role in giving help to migrants. The provision of healthcare, the dissemination of information, and the promotion of migrant rights were all included in the efforts made.

Hakimu Sseviiri et al. (2022) analyze the everyday digital experiences and social contacts of urban migrants during the COVID-19 crisis in Uganda. Through interviews with refugees and refugee-led NGOs, the authors discuss the concept of social capital among refugees and host communities and how it influences digitally mediated responses to livelihoods, social wellness, and information access during the epidemic. Conclusions Digitally enabled and mediated social networks via ties, bridges, and linkages significantly influence individuals' ability to weather the repercussions of a crisis. The article highlights how digital technologies offer the tools to increase refugees' social support and mobilization capacity even though a disjointed digital infrastructure, inequalities regarding access to ICTs, an inadequate government response, language barriers, and the spread of fake news hampered their use during the crisis.

In the last piece of this particular issue, Svetlana S. Bodrunova and Anna Smoliarova (2022) analyze how the Russian media reported on the emigration of people from Russia and the European Union (EU) during the Covivirus A(H1N1) pandemic. The authors investigate whether or not the media's reporting of the Covington19 epidemic was balanced and humane or biased and influenced by political considerations. The researchers analyzed the content of 12 federal and digital media outlets and four television stations from 2020. They found that the dualism mentioned above was pervasive throughout the pandemic, with pro-state media offering a mild counterweight. The authors conclude that the public's attention shifted away from immigration-related issues, especially in regional media, and that the pandemic did not lead to a re-humanization of immigration coverage.

Influence of the Media on Public Opinion During the pandemic, the media significantly impacted how the public viewed migration. Misinformation and sensationalized headlines contributed to an increase in both fear and xenophobia, which in turn led to unfavorable views towards immigration. It was vital for there to be responsible reporting to combat these tendencies, highlighting the significance of factual information in terms of its ability to influence public opinion.

Regulations Enacted by Governments and the Narratives Promoted by the Media In response to the public health emergency, governments all over the globe enacted stringent migration regulations. The narratives presented by the media often characterized these regulations as essential for maintaining public safety. However, they also emphasized the need to adopt a balanced approach that took into consideration the rights and well-being of migrants. To ensure accountability and preserve the rights of vulnerable population groups, the media's role in monitoring and challenging the activities of the government has become essential.

Challenges Confronted by Migrants During the Epidemic The media played an essential part in bringing attention to the difficulties confronted by migrants during the epidemic. The health hazards for stranded migrants were significantly increased since they often had to live in overcrowded and unclean settings. The media put attention on these difficulties, which in turn prompted conversations on the need to improve living conditions, access to healthcare, and social assistance for migrants during times of emergency.

Initiatives Taken by the Community and Efforts Made at the Local Level:

Alternative and social media channels played a vital role in promoting grassroots activities and community-led solutions, while mainstream media documented the reactions and issues faced by the government. As a counter-narrative, stories of perseverance, mutual help, and solidarity among migrant communities arose, highlighting the significance of community support during distress.

Discussions in the media helped to contribute to the process of formulating policy proposals and lobbying activities. Journalistic examinations of the effect that restrictive laws have had on communities of migrants have prompted requests for more humane policies that focus on human rights. The public debate and decision-making processes were impacted by the media's role in promoting experts' views and research results.

CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear how vital the role of the media is in determining how discourses, legislation, and practices related to migration during times of emergency. Even while the media had a part in spreading fear and false information, it was also an essential instrument for advocacy, community building, and bringing attention to the difficulties that migrants experience. Moving ahead, there is a need for responsible media that places a high priority on truthful reporting and emphasizes how important it is to safeguard the rights and well-being of migrants during times of crisis.

With the global refugee crisis in mind, this special issue of Media and Communication examines the intersection of media and migration as a critical lens to examine the problems of borders, refugees, integration, governance, and representation. The seven articles in this themed issue have broadened our understanding of the subject and raised various concerns that need more research. Understanding how digital infrastructures and media have influenced migratory patterns and discourses during the epidemic will require more research.

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