

Review Article

Ethics of Media Practice Across the Digital Environment at Health Field During the Corona Pandemic

Asma Bezai* 

Department of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Oum Elbouagui, Algeria

Abstract

The media is a sensitive and difficult field that needs to organize information in it because it greatly influences public opinion and directs it either negatively or positively. It is capable of building or destroying an entire society, therefore, communicators must exercise a sense of responsibility when disseminating information and directing it to the public, this becomes even more important when the field is health media. Here the need for these ethics emerges. The ethics of media practice are considered very important when it comes to the health field, which is primarily concerned with lives and health of people, especially during the occurrence of major crises, as happened and is happening recently through the Corona pandemic. Fear of the epidemic has spread throughout the world, which makes rumors spread faster than before, and these ethics become more important through the digital environment, where the opportunity is available for everyone to express their opinions, even if they are not qualified. Therefore, as well as interacting with and sharing the latest developments. In this study, it will be talked about the topic of health media during the Corona pandemic and its relationship to professional ethics in the digital environment. Then it will move on to highlight some of the contents of the digital environment during the Corona pandemic according to a critical vision.

Keywords

Ethics, Media Practice, Digital Environment, Health Media, Corona Pandemic

1. Introduction

The media is considered a very noble profession. It works to deliver a high-level message, which mainly consists of enlightening the public, expanding its awareness, and opening its ears to various facts. Therefore, a profession this noble must be subject to ethical principles that regulate it and prevent abuses in it.

But these ethics are ancient, and we must always work to scrutinize and mold them according to what is in line with times, as the media field is developing and expanding day after day. Where it appears clearly that digitization has invaded the media field, which has resulted in a broader field of

freedom, making all people media professionals. They express their opinions about events, and engage in issues of public concern, especially when crises occur, where rumors and false news spread in a terrible way, spreading confusion and chaos among the masses who are lost between this and that, searching for the truth.

The regulatory role of media ethics is highlighted, which strongly calls for the necessity of constant adherence to it. The necessity increases when it comes to a person's health, where a single piece of information can make a person live or kill him, and this is the field that is termed: health media, in which

*Corresponding author: AsmaBz1992@hotmail.com (Bezai Asma)

Received: 31 March 2024; **Accepted:** 3 June 2024; **Published:** 31 October 2024



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2024. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

the responsibility on the communicator is doubled. On the one hand, the authorized authorities must provide the correct health information, especially when crises emerge such as the Corona pandemic that humanity has recently experienced, and is still suffering from its effects until now, as the digital environment around the world has been filled with false news and rumors about the emerging virus.

2. The Article Is Based on the Following Main Elements

This study includes the following elements:

1. Cognitive background of the topic.
2. A critical view of some of the contents of the digital environment in light of the Corona pandemic.
3. The conclusion including the results and recommendations.

2.1. Cognitive Background of the Topic

The media is considered a multidisciplinary field. We find health media primarily specialized in disseminating information and news about health issues.

Researcher Bassam Abdel Rahman Al-Mashaqba defines it as “the media that deals with medical, health, nursing, therapeutic, pharmaceutical issues, guidance, and health education with correct facts and honest information [1].

Sami bin Ornis Al-Shaalan also defines it as “a group of means that work to provide members of society with correct news, sound health information and knowledge, and scientific facts that help them form a preventive and curative health culture through four elements: the sender, the receiver, the subject of the message, and the means of communication [2].

Health media is a media that specializes in disseminating facts about health and everything related to it, such as nutrition and prevention of various diseases and illnesses that affect humans, in addition to treatments of various kinds.

The development of health media actually began first with the recognition of the International Health Media Communication Association in 1975, and its establishment of a special section called “Health Communication,” in addition to the American Academy of Communication establishing a new branch called “Health Communication” in 1979 in the field of health care. In addition, the towards printing and publishing books on health communication [3].

The need for health media increases when diseases and epidemics spread, so how to confront them becomes the main concern of the public. Where do you start searching for real, honest information, because a mistake in it may cost a person’s life, and this is what humanity witnessed in the last epidemic it experienced due to the Corona virus, which forced people around the world to remain in their homes. For months in total quarantine.

Where most people continue to suffer from long hours of free time without work, which is the opportunity to exchange

news and rumors that have become known as the “information epidemic” through the digital environment, where true news is mixed with error, especially since the digital environment - which was previously a luxury, has become inevitable during the Corona pandemic - has There is a wide range of freedom for everyone to share news and express their opinions without censorship.

The infodemic is defined as a huge amount of informally collected information about a problem that makes the solution more difficult and, when abundant, is accompanied by psychological effects on its recipients [4].

As defined by the World Health Organization as too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak [5].

Researcher Boukhamlah Fawzia defined the digital environment as “an environment in which the beneficiary can connect from anywhere and from any computer, and the information and references in which the information and references are not organized, but in which the researcher needs to use specific strategies and methods to retrieve the references and sources he is searching for [6].

The digital environment is “a group of elements with varying tasks and specializations that humans interact with in various institutions through the application of new technology [7].

You can say that the digital environment is the advanced technical society created by the Internet, which has become full of diverse information, and a means that has eliminated geographical borders and granted the right to convey voice to everyone.

the need for ethics in media practice increases to control how to deal with the pandemic and grant the right to speak to professionals, including doctors and health practitioners, as well as health institutions and medical bodies, and to refute rumors and false news.

Ethics: “the study of what is morally right and wrong, or a set of beliefs about what is morally right and wrong [8].

Sometimes it can be found that some people confuse the terms morality and ethics, but practical reality reveals the big difference between them. Taylor defined ethics as a system of rules and standards that become part of a society’s culture, embodied in its customs, traditions, and laws [9].

While professional ethics is defined as a set of principles that are a reference that determines the behavior that must be adopted by members of the same profession [10].

In this study, what is meant by ethics: the set of rules and principles that must be respected and not violated when presenting health issues in digital media such as social media networks.

2.2. A Critical View of Some of the Contents of the Digital Environment During the Corona Pandemic

During the Corona pandemic, social media sites circulated

popular recipes whose owners claim to kill the virus, but the real danger in this lies mainly in the fact that some of these recipes may be suitable for one person but not another.

Which poses a real danger to people's lives, especially those who follow everything they encounter on social media sites. There are also some of some recipes that can be considered healthy food that strengthens autoimmunity if you continue to eat them, but before contracting Corona. For example, there have been many posts on Facebook saying that garlic prevents infection with the Coronavirus, but the World Health Organization stated in this regard: "Garlic is a healthy food that may contain some antimicrobial properties. However, there is no evidence that eating garlic protects people from the virus, in this context, Dr. Bassam Hijjawi, a member of the Epidemiology Committee in the Jordanian Ministry of Health, says that it is not recommended to take herbal prescriptions without medical controls, and on scientific grounds determined by studies [11].

A rumor spread that a hot climate eliminates the Corona virus, and this became clear as soon as the summer season entered, when humanity became aware of the increase in the number of infected cases during that particular period, and even before that, when the virus spread in areas characterized by a hot climate, the National Health Agency in France confirmed, in a study published on its website, that high temperatures may reduce the risks associated with the outbreak of the Corona virus, but this is in a "modest" way and does not deserve to place many hopes on it to see the virus disappear. The French agency called for the necessity of adhering to preventive measures, social distancing, and wearing masks [12].

Facebook pioneers circulated posts stating that the Corona virus does not affect young people, but cases of infection and even deaths have been recorded all over the world among young people, "William Schaffner", a doctor who also works as a professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University, said, "The list of Corona symptoms is expanding," expressing his astonishment at the increase in young patients who come to the hospital complaining of abdominal pain.

The website report indicated that doctors also observed symptoms such as severe migraines, nausea, and diarrhea in young people infected with the Coronavirus [13].

Facebook was ablaze with the news of the death of a Corona patient in the state of Batna located east of Algeria after doctors injected her with the drug chloroquine, this spread fear, and opinions differed about whether to take the drug or not, which caused great chaos and confusion, especially among the families of the injured. Here, no one can decide on the patient's condition except the doctor. Every person has a physical and health condition that differs from the other, in addition to the difference in the style of living. From one person to another, in a situation like this it is not possible to generalize.

Opinions conflicted about the discovery of a cure for the virus, even from major countries, and then they quickly refuted it, which was exhausting the psyche of people around the

world. This is what happened in Algeria when rumors spread that an Algerian-Iraqi research team had invented a nutritional supplement that would reduce the disease. The severity of the virus and even complete recovery,

The issue continues to ebb and flow, and it is possible to imagine the extent of the shock after the joy of discovering a medicine for an epidemic that terrified humanity, only for it to be revealed that the medicine is just a lie, which makes rumors during a crisis period more dangerous than the crisis itself.

There are conflicting news on social media, even about the number of infections and deaths, which keeps the public far from the truth.

At the beginning of April, Algerians circulated posts on Facebook stating that there were influential people, who came from France, which was suffering from a record high number of infections on the evacuation ship, who had left the quarantine hotels without completing the necessary period of quarantine, estimated at 14 days. This would spread panic and fear among Algerians due to the possibility that they might be carriers of the virus on the one hand, and on the other hand would create a gap between members of the same people, considering that the influential people roam freely while the rest of the segments of society are under the imposed quarantine.

Immediately after the outbreak of the Corona virus in the world, cases of hand sanitizer shortages appeared in many countries in pharmacies, and then many recipes for making home hand sanitizers spread on social media platforms, which was refuted by specialists, given that many recipes are harmful to the skin, and some of them may not be suitable for sterilization.

Because these sterilizers made in laboratories respect skin-friendly standards, which provide a high sterilization rate, given that they contain 60 to 70 percent of alcohol.

Photos that spread rapidly during the Corona pandemic showed French security forces forcefully removing naturalized citizens of non-French origins from hospitals to give beds to French people of French origins. It later turned out that they were old photos dating back to 2010 during a protest movement carried out by health practitioners in France. This rumor would spread terror in the hearts of non-French communities, similar to the large Algerian community.

3. Conclusions

From the rumors that were circulated about the Corona virus during the quarantine period, it can be said that rumors become more widespread and numerous during the crisis period than in other periods, and affect the crisis in all its aspects, so that the "information pandemic" is much more dangerous than the Corona pandemic, as it undermines Trust in science and medicine causes division in societies.

Rumors can be considered a very dangerous weapon for the person and society, as they spread like wildfire in times of crises, a period that is a fertile environment for the prolifera-

tion of rumors, given that crises generate a state of addiction to spreading lies and misleading news.

The digital environment has increased the danger of these rumors, as well as the speed of their circulation among users, as one push of a button is enough to spread misleading news in a record time, especially since it is the environment in which users search for likes and subscriptions without taking into account the negative harm that this publication entails on the public.

This development that the media is witnessing has deepened its need for many ethics, which would regulate media practice, and which contribute to achieving the ultimate goal of the media, which is essentially reaching the truth and disseminating it to enlighten public opinion and remove confusion about many of the issues about which it has questions that require satisfactory answers from people. Specialization, there is a difference between lies and deception; truth and enlightenment.

Perhaps the responsibility is great for decision-makers to strike with an iron fist anyone who transgresses the ethics of media practice in the digital environment, but it is also not an impossible matter to implement. The media is the weapon of the word. If everyone had the opportunity to give it without restrictions, the disaster would be greater and more lasting.

Through this study, we can say that it must:

Producing professional programs in terms of form and content, dealing with health issues through social media platforms, and not being limited to programs broadcast through traditional media.

Developing a sense of social responsibility among users with the aim of creating a conscious conscience that will make them act consciously while using digital media.

Strengthening the relationship between media professionals, doctors, and health practitioners, and creating a common environment between the two parties to facilitate the exchange of information between them.

Countering rumors in full sync with their appearance, by tracking the real sources of information from health authorities and organizations and publishing it on their accounts through the digital environment.

Unifying the media discourse of government institutions directed to the public during crises, especially health crises, and broadcasting it across all digital platforms to prevent its falsification.

Strengthening security media and its meaningful role in society, and spreading the culture of security responsibility among individuals and users in the digital environment, considering that comprehensive security is a concept that includes various dimensions, including: health media.

Author Contributions

Asma Bezai is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Al-Mashaqba Bassam Abdel Rahman. Health Media. 1st edition. Amman: Dar Osama for Publishing and Distribution: 2012, p91.
- [2] Middle-east-online. The rise of the health media star [Internet]. Available from: <https://m-r.pw/YObr> (Accessed 19 september 2020).
- [3] Bezai Asma: health programs on Algerian tv- Comparative analytical study, oumelbouagui university-Algeria, 2024.
- [4] Aljazeera: "When the information epidemic becomes more deadly than the Corona epidemic" available from: <https://m-r.pw/fpoo> (accessed on 27/04/2024 at 18:01)
- [5] World health organisation: https://www.who.int/health-topics/infodemic#tab=tab_1 accessed on 27april2024 at 18:08
- [6] Fawzia Boukhamla, Scientific Research Methods and Marginalization in the Digital Environment, Forum for Strengthening Scientific Research Literature, National Library of Algeria, December 29, 2015, Algeria, p. 113.
- [7] Boulamnakher Naji: the latest scientific research in light of the digital environment, the challenges of reality and future prospects, Mediterranean Notebooks Magazine; bookbinder06 (december 2021) p105-123.
- [8] Cambridge dictionary.
- [9] Al-Shamayla Maher Odeh and others, 1st edition. Amman: Dar Al-Assar Al-Alami for Publishing and Distribution; 2015, p09.
- [10] Al-Zinati Osama Muhammad Khalil. The Role of Professional Ethics in Promoting Social Responsibility in Palestinian Governmental Hospitals (Al-Shifa Medical Complex as a Model. Master's Thesis, Academy of Management and Politics for Postgraduate Studies in partnership with Al-Aqsa University; Palastine, 2014.
- [11] Aljazeera." In Jordan.. Have medical herbs been a lifeline for Corona patients?", available from: <https://m-r.pw/xxNQ> (accessed on 27 April 2024 at 12:54)
- [12] France24: "Studies: No... the Corona virus will not disappear in the summer or with high temperatures" <https://m-r.pw/kGSj> (accessed 27 April2024at14:51)
- [13] Alhurra:"Corona is turning to the youth group... and completely different symptoms are being discovered in them" available from: <https://m-r.pw/NjDq> accessed27april2024

Research Field

Bezai Asma: Audio-visual, digital environment, social media.