Muhammad Thariq

Journalists' understanding of COVID-19 coverage in Medan, Indonesia

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Journalists' understanding of COVID-19 coverage in Medan, Indonesia

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Abstract The background of this research highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including journalism. In the city of Medan, journalists face unique challenges in covering pandemic-related news and must quickly adapt to rapid technological changes. The purpose of this study is to assess the level of understanding of journalists in Medan City regarding technological changes in COVID-19 coverage. The research method used was conducted through Purposive Sampling interviews with 60 journalists in Medan City focusing on their experiences in reporting about the pandemic and how they used technology in their work. The results found by the researchers during the conduct of this study showed that 90% of journalists from the number of informants in Medan used their smartphones as the main tool of news coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic. 80% of them stated that this technology facilitates communication and collaboration with colleagues and resource persons, allowing for rapid adaptation to technological changes during crises. The conclusion of this study shows that 90% of journalists in Medan used smartphones as their main tool during the COVID-19 pandemic. This technology makes communication and collaboration easier, allowing journalists to adapt quickly to technological changes in times of crisis. The study is expected to contribute to a further understanding of the challenges and adaptations of journalists during crises such as a pandemic.

Keywords: journalist understanding; reporting challenges; technology adaptation

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the largest global crises in modern history, impacting various sectors of life, including the economy, health, education, and the world of journalism is indeed no exception. In the protracted health emergency situation, the public's need for accurate, fast, and relevant information has increased significantly. Information about the pandemic is not only necessary for general understanding, but also to support efforts to prevent the spread of the virus, ensure health policies are acceptable and adhered to, and provide guidance to the public in overcoming the uncertainty posed by this crisis. In this context, journalists play a very important role as the main provider of information that can help the public make the right decisions in the midst of an evolving situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an urgent need for information to the public and created great challenges for journalists in carrying out their duties, especially in the city of Medan. Since March 2020, COVID-19 has been a major topic in print, electronic, and online media, with information easily accessible and shared (Junaidi & Arafah, 2022). The pandemic has also changed the way journalists and PR work, moving communication from face-to-face to online through video conferencing technology, causing the postponement of various public activities (Arifina et al., 2024). As the third largest city in Indonesia, Medan offers a dynamic local journalism context but faces unique challenges in media digitalisation. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) designated COVID-19 as a global pandemic after cases

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increased 13 times. Feinleib (2001) defines a pandemic as a global epidemic that crosses national borders and affects large populations (Sanal & Aram, 2024). As a case study of government communications during a public health crisis, we covered a daily press conference led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Director General of Health Ashley Bloomfield (Beattie & Priestley, 2021). The study also investigates the agenda-setting between Twitter and elite media, where elite media are more influential in shaping social issues related to COVID-19 vaccines (Wang et al., 2024). COVID-19 itself is an infectious respiratory disease with symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, which in some cases can cause severe pneumonia (Fuchs, 2020). The study found that the pandemic resulted in significant changes in journalists' work patterns. Online communication replaces live coverage, degrades the quality of news and creates uniform information that supports government propaganda (Masduki & Prastya, 2022). Social restrictions, such as lockdowns and health protocols, limit the mobility of journalists and force them to rely on digital technology in gathering and distributing news. Technologies such as video calls, instant messaging applications, and social media have become the main tools that journalists must master during the pandemic to continue to carry out coverage.

In the city of Medan, adaptation to technological changes has been carried out with varying degrees of success, depending on the readiness of each journalist and the media they work in. Not only in terms of news collection, but information distribution has also undergone significant changes. Digital media, including online news portals and social media platforms, have become the main channels for the dissemination of COVID-19-related news. Traditional media such as print newspapers have experienced a sharp decline in circulation due to physical restrictions and changes in the behaviour of media consumers who rely more on digital access. Journalists in Medan must be able to adapt to these changes in distribution patterns by utilising digital technology to ensure that the news they report is widely accessible to the public. Another challenge that arises is how to maintain a balance between the speed of news distribution and the quality and accuracy of information, considering that disinformation can easily spread through digital platforms.

The city of Medan, as a major city in North Sumatra, faced challenges in journalism during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as technological disruption, the need for quick adaptation in crisis coverage, and the problem of limited digital infrastructure. The city of Medan has a dynamic history of journalism and an important role as the third largest city in Indonesia. Coverage of local issues such as riots and the development of digital media offers a unique context for this research. Medan has a dynamic history of journalism and an important role as the third largest city in Indonesia. Coverage of local issues such as riots and the development of digital media offers a unique context for this research. One of the biggest challenges journalists faced during the pandemic was limited access to trustworthy information. In crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic, information tends to move very quickly, often exceeding the capacity of organised news dissemination. Disinformation and hoaxes have become increasingly prevalent phenomena, especially in the digital era where social media is often a source of information that is accessed more quickly by the public. Journalists in the city of Medan, as in many other areas, have had to face this challenge with the strenuous effort to verify the news they report. Limited access to credible health resources, such as epidemiologists or accurate data from health agencies, can complicate the process of accurate and thorough reporting.

Journalists face challenges in Medan, but they show a good enough ability to adapt to the situation. Journalists' understanding of COVID-19-related issues is the key to quality reporting. Journalists need to have sufficient knowledge about the virus, how it spreads, its impact on health, and related government policies (UNESCO, 2023). Adaptation to new technologies, such as the use of digital platforms for reporting, is one way for journalists to remain productive and able to meet people's information needs. In the midst of limited physical access and strict health protocols, journalists have recourse to using digital technology to still be able to collect news efficiently. Innovations in reporting, such as using social media to communicate directly with sources or digging up information from affected communities, helped journalists to stay relevant during the pandemic.

Training and education are also important factors in the level of understanding of journalists during COVID-19 coverage. Journalists who have undergone specialised training on health crisis coverage tend to be better equipped to handle technical information related to the pandemic, such as statistical data, medical terminology, and health policy procedures imposed

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by the government. On the other hand, journalists who do not have access to such training may have difficulty understanding the dynamics of the crisis that occurs, thus affecting the quality of their coverage. In the city of Medan, this difference can be seen in the level of understanding and competence of journalists in covering the pandemic, especially regarding their ability to explain technical issues to the public in an understandable way. The social and cultural context in the city of Medan also influences the way journalists conduct their reporting. As a multicultural city with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, Medan has unique social dynamics in dealing with the pandemic. Journalists are not only required to report on the development of COVID-19 cases and government policies, but also understand how local communities are responding to this situation. Sensitive coverage of local, social, and cultural conditions is essential to ensure that the information presented is not only accurate, but also relevant and acceptable to people from different backgrounds.

The researchers conducted a study to understand the importance of journalists in Medan City in reporting COVID-19. The study aims to identify the level of understanding of journalists about the pandemic, how they are adapting to existing challenges, and how the role of technology in supporting their tasks. Using an interview method with 60 journalists in Medan City, this study seeks to uncover the behaviour and response of journalists to this complex crisis situation. The results of this study are expected to provide deeper insights into the capacity of journalists in Medan City and how they can be better prepared to face similar crises in the future.

These findings are also expected to make an important contribution to the development of journalist training programs, especially in the context of reporting about health crises. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on examining the understanding of journalists in Medan City regarding the COVID-19 issues, which have not been widely researched in the local context. This research seeks to fill the existing knowledge gap by exploring the first-hand experiences of journalists, the challenges they face, and the communication strategies they use in reporting. Another novelty is the methodological approach used, particularly semi-structured interviews, which allow for the exploring of in-depth information regarding the journalist's perspective. This is in contrast to previous studies that may have relied solely on quantitative surveys or document analysis, so it could provide richer and more complex insights into the dynamics of coverage during the pandemic. The results of the research are expected not only to contribute to the journalism literature in Indonesia, but also to provide practical recommendations that can increase the capacity of journalists in the future. Thus, this research can serve as a reference for future studies on journalists' responses to health crises and their role in disseminating accurate and reliable information. More in-depth, real-life-based training can help journalists to be more responsive in facing similar challenges in the future, while ensuring that the information they convey to the public remains of high quality. The role of the media in maintaining information resilience is very important, especially in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and a good understanding of the dynamics of this crisis can help them to carry out their duties more effectively and responsibly.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to provide an in-depth picture of the understanding and adaptation of journalists in Medan City during COVID-19 reporting, especially in the context of the use of technology. In his book titled 'Case Study Research and Applications', Yin explains that case study research can be used to explore complex phenomena in real-world contexts. Which highlights the importance of selecting diverse units of analysis and data collection to produce valid and accountable findings. Researchers want to understand 'how' and 'why' an event occurs, not just 'what' happens. This study seeks to uncover journalists' behaviour and responses to complex crisis situations through interviews with sixty journalists in Medan City.

The researchers chose Medan because the city offers a unique context in understanding journalists' understanding during COVID-19 coverage. Alos, the researchers used a case study approach as ouitlined by Robert K. Yin. This research also aims to explore local dynamics that can contribute to the knowledge of journalists and the challenges they faced in crisis situations. The researcher focused on the city of Medan, because the researcher hopes to highlight specific factors that affect the quality of news reporting, as well as provide recommendations to improve journalism practices in Medan. The results obtained are expected to provide more insight into

the capacity of journalists in Medan City, as well as prepare them to face similar crises in the future. To tap suitable participants, this study used a purposive sampling method. The first step is to identify the population by creating a list of journalists who work in Medan and are registered with local journalist associations or mass media. Each journalist is then assigned a unique number through numbering. After that, a random selection was carried out using a number number generator to select the journalists to be interviewed. In this way, the researchers were able to obtain a representative sample and avoid bias (See Table 1).

Table1. Journalist Informant Cluster Table

Position	Experience	Assignment
Young Journalist	0-2 years	Acting as a reporter who covers news directly from the field, digs up information, and conveys facts to the public
Associate Journalist	2-5 years	Processing news reports, conducting re-verification, and having the authority to determine the feasibility of news
Principal Journalist	5+ years	Lead the reporting team, make editorial decisions, and take responsibility for the quality and integrity of the news presented
Health/Science and Technology Journalist	3+ years	Have a background in health and science and technology, focusing on covering health issues related to COVID-19, as well as understanding medical terminology

Source: field research results (2024)

The subject of this research are journalists in Medan City who are directly involved in COVID-19 coverage. Subjects were chosen purposively, i.e. those who had intensive reporting experience during the pandemic. Thus, the data obtained can be more relevant and specific in describing the understanding and adaptation of journalists. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with journalists from various media in the city of Medan which include print, television, radio, and online media. This interview aims to uncover journalists' experiences in covering COVID-19 news, their adaptation to reporting technology, and the challenges faced during the crisis. The interviews were conducted with a semi-structured guide, which provided flexibility for the researcher to explore the respondents' answers further. In addition to interviews, observations were made to see firsthand how journalists work in the field and how technology is affecting their reporting process. These observations provide additional context and validate the information that were obtained from the interviews (See Table 2).

Table 2. Duration and Mechanism of Journalist Informant Interviews

Aspects	Detail
Number of Interviews	60 interviews were conducted with journalists who are experienced in covering COVID-19 issues in Medan City.
Objective of Number of Interviews	Ensure a variety of perspectives and experiences are represented, and achieve data saturation to identify consistent patterns and themes in responses
Interview Duration	The researcher interviewed the informants for a duration of between 30 and 60 minutes
Duration Objectives	To provide space for journalists to describe the experience in detail, this includes challenges and strategies, as well as allowing researchers to explore additional questions.
Interview Process	Researchers conduct interviews face-to-face, and some are online,
Implementation of Documentation	The researcher recorded (with the participant's permission) to ensure the accuracy of data collection, and the analysis researcher transcript to identify themes and patterns.

Source: field research results (2024)

The analysis conducted through interviews by the researchers was thorough and adequate. This study aims to explore the understanding of journalists about COVID-19 coverage in Medan in- depth. The analysis of the collected data was examined using thematic analysis techniques. This process involves identifying key themes that emerged from interviews and observations, such as technological challenges, access to information, training, and the role of the media in the pandemic. These themes are then categorised to understand how journalists in Medan adapt to changing situations, especially in dealing with technological developments during the COVID-19 crisis. The process of manually encoding qualitative data, although more time-consuming than using software, can provide an in-depth understanding of the data. The steps that the researcher took started with data gathering that involved reading data from interviews or documents to understand the context. Important sections were highlighted and annotated with the use of notes and highlighters. Initial coding by creating code for important parts, e.g. 'journalist's challenge'. Next, the researchers coded the data based on similarities to form a

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theme, followed by reflecting and refining the code to be more precise. Next, the researchers validated the code by discussing the theme with peers or by obtaining feedback from the participants. This is what the researchers did to be more directly involved with data. In terms of validity and reliability, the validity of the data is maintained through triangulation by comparing the results of interviews and observations to ensure consistency of findings. The results of the interviews were conducted with respondents to ensure that the results of the analysis were in accordance with their views and experiences. Through this descriptive qualitative approach, this research is expected to provide comprehensive insights into how journalists in Medan City navigate news coverage during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they use technology to deal with emerging challenges in dynamic and uncertain situations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the understanding of journalists in Medan City regarding COVID-19 varies greatly. This variation is influenced by several factors, including access to information, available resources, and training they received during the pandemic. Journalists who have better access to accurate and reliable sources of information tend to have a deeper understanding of health-related issues and government policy. On the other hand, journalists who have limited access to information often have difficulty in delivering accurate and relevant news. Their resources also play a crucial role in the understanding of journalists. Journalists who work in large media with adequate facilities and support are usually better prepared to face the challenges of reporting during a pandemic. In contrast, journalists in small or independent media often face limitations that hinder their ability to report effectively. The training received during the pandemic also contributed significantly to the understanding of journalists. Journalists who are trained in crisis reporting and the use of digital technology tend to be better able to adapt to changing situations. These findings underscore the importance of building the capacity of journalists to improve the quality of news in the future. The Corona Virus Disease 2019 that is globally known as the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way people live. The importance of maintaining distance and strict health protocols made the community enter the new normal era (Supriyanto, 2020). An important point taken from the COVID-19 Pandemic crisis is the unprecedented health crisis that quickly impacted every country in the world in just a matter of weeks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the main issue was the flow of information and disinformation about the disease, including the most important aspect that is vaccination (Costantini et al., 2024). News media play a critical role in shaping the way people and policymakers understand and respond to health dangers (Beard et al., 2023).

Initially, the Director-General of the United Nations (UN) paid attention to certain groups most affected by this pandemic, namely those living in poverty and in conflict zones, the elderly, children, and most importantly frontline health workers (Thibaut & ELNahas, 2023). In Europe, the response to Covid-19 shows the potential for a transformation to food democracy, although many are also likely to maintain the status quo, according to the study's findings (López Cifuentes & Fiala, 2022). In Abidjan and Ivory Coast, the study explores public perception of COVID-19 vaccines, taking into account the risks of vaccines and the severity of the disease, which are crucial in vaccine uptake to control the global pandemic (Tibbels et al., 2022). The study analysed 1.6 million Portuguese tweets about COVID-19 and China, finding themes such as ‘Chinese virus’, chloroquine, and communism, with a predominance of negative sentiment. These findings illustrate the political polarisation in Brazil and its impact on the perception of the pandemic. (Rodrigues de Andrade et al., 2021). The virtual conference of isirv and WHO on October 19-21, 2021, discussed the response to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and other respiratory diseases, focusing on antivirals, vaccines, surveillance strategies, influenza treatment, and RSV. This report summarises presentations to the medical and scientific community (McKimm-Breschkin et al., 2022). The existence and literacy of KIM journalism in Bandung Regency. The findings show that KIM was established in 2016 by the Communication and Information Service, but the literacy of KIM members needs to be improved (Saepullah & Rustandi, 2020). New Zealand's Aotearoa government communication during the COVID-19 crisis through PM Jacinda Ardern's daily press conference with Dr. Ashley Bloomfield shows open, honest and straightforward communication; motivating language; and expressions of concern. This strategy supports COVID-19 elimination efforts by building trust and mobilising public support (Beattie & Priestley, 2021). The study analysed COVID-19 conversations on

Facebook Italy, finding that the infodemic led to group polarisation and the spread of unverified content. Controversial issues such as migrant flows and 5G technology are often associated with disinformation. The influence of public figures and major media on the platform plays an important role in shaping public opinion(Guarino et al., 2021). This research explores the qualifications of radio journalists in Bandung, focusing on understanding journalistic philosophy, media character, ability to process messages for radio broadcasts, and professional ethics. The findings show the importance of universities in preparing prospective radio journalists with adequate qualifications to face the challenges of convergent media(Yudhapramesti & Fadilah, 2013).

The news media has a dominant influence on the social aspects of vaccination, while Twitter tends to focus on individual perspectives. The findings show that there is a reciprocal interaction and a shift in meaning in the topic of discussion(Wang et al., 2024). The spread of COVID-19 misinformation through pandemic on social media, analysing how themes, types, sources, emotions, and fact-checking labels affect the power of online misinformation (Lee et al., 2023). COVID-19 vaccination impacted Asia-Pacific stock market volatility by mitigating standard risks and extreme side effects, as well as identifying panic sentiment as a potential influence (Li et al., 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamics of cardiovascular services and the stress of CV doctors, from the beginning of support to politicisation and misinformation that reduced professional self-esteem (Josephson & Gillombardo, 2023). Analyse the practice of medicine in the context of Covid-19 pandemic policies, and apply Foucault's biopolitical theory and 'carescapes' to understand their impact in everyday life (Holmberg et al., 2023). Analyse the impact of socio-ecological factors on global COVID-19 mortality rates, using the SES framework suggest policy strategies for long-term economic recovery and pandemic control (Shi et al., 2023). In relation, Bangladesh in maintaining lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic has failed due to a focus on the country's capacity gap and political and social pressures affecting policy implementation (Ali et al., 2021). An analysis of epistemic expressions in The Guardian's article on COVID-19, compares commitment to information between 2020 and 2022, and explores its social implications for understanding and teaching (Carretero, 2023). Arabic Europe responded to Covid-19 in the context of urban food systems, asking whether this response would maintain the status quo or encourage a transformation towards food democracy (López Cifuentes & Fiala, 2022).

Journalists' Understanding of Health Issues and COVID-19

Journalists' understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial, especially because they act as information connectors between the government and the public. The results of the study show that this understanding is not uniform, but varies depending on a number of factors, including access to information, training received, and the educational background of the journalist itself. First of all, medical terminology is one of the important aspects of reporting a health problem. Many journalists admit that they have difficulty understanding complex medical terminology. This has the potential to hinder their ability to convey accurate information to the public. For example, terms such as ‘flattening the curve’ or ‘herd immunity’ may not be fully understood by all journalists, leading to inaccurate information delivery. In critical situations, where accurate information is urgently needed, these misunderstandings can lead to detrimental misinformation. In addition, health policies issued by the government are also the focus of attention of journalists. This policy often changes as the pandemic develops, and journalists are required to always follow the latest information to report accurately. However, not all journalists have the same access to this policy information. Journalists working in large media typically have easier access to official sources of information, while journalists in small or independent media may struggle to get the necessary updates. These differences in access create gaps in understanding and reporting COVID-19-related news.

The socio-economic impact of the pandemic is also an aspect that should not be ignored. Journalists must be able to connect health data with the impact that society is experiencing, such as job losses, business closures, and changes in daily life patterns. A deep understanding of this social context is important so that journalists can present news that is not only informative, but also relevant to society. However, many journalists find it difficult to link health issues to broader socio-economic impacts, especially if they do not have an economic or sociological background.

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The training received by journalists during the pandemic also contributed to their understanding of health issues. Journalists trained in crisis reporting and information management tend to be better able to navigate emerging challenges. This training often includes how to process information quickly and precisely, as well as how to use technology to obtain the necessary data. However, not all journalists receive the same training opportunities, resulting in differences in their readiness to cover news related to COVID-19.

In this context, it is important for media organisations to provide adequate training and adequate resources for journalists, especially when it comes to understanding health issues. In addition, efforts to improve access to information for all journalists must also be prioritised. By strengthening the capacity of journalists to understand the health issues and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, we can improve the quality of our reporting, which in turn will provide more accurate and useful information to the public.

Overall, journalists' understanding of health issues and COVID-19 has a direct impact on the quality of information delivered to the public. Given the importance of the role of journalists in shaping opinions and educating the public, capacity building for journalists is an important step in facing similar challenges in the future. This research is expected to provide useful insights to improve the process of reporting health problems in the future (See Figure 1).

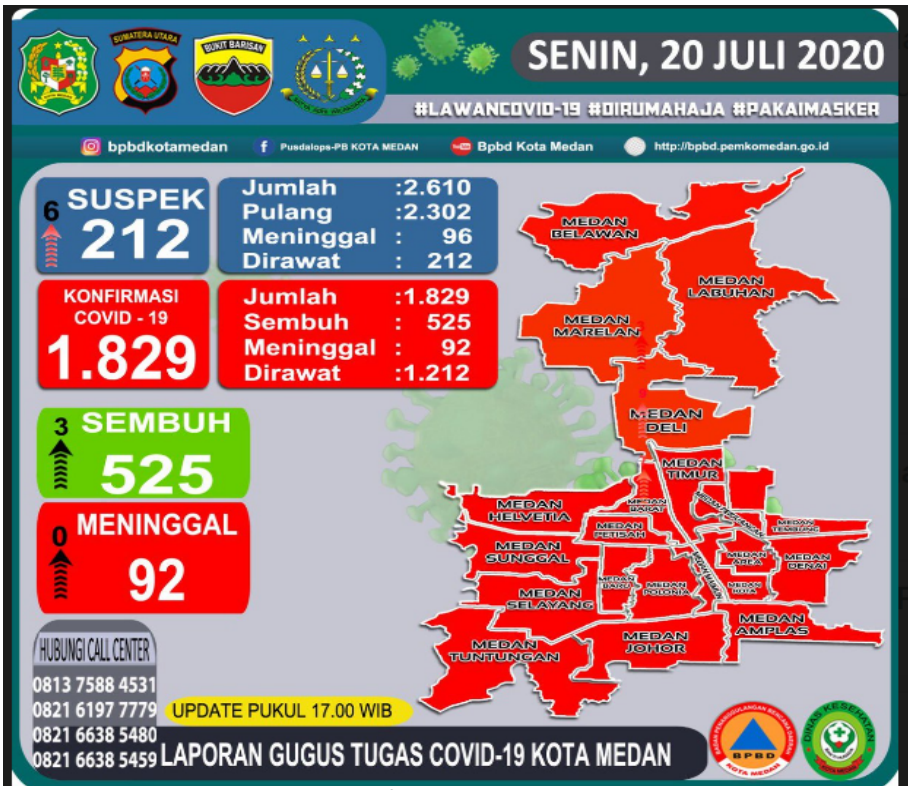


Figure 1. Map of Medan City, North Sumatra Province
Source: Results of Field Research assisted by Google Map (20 July 2020)

Journalists obtained data and crafted it into coherent messages, describing information word by word to convey Covid-19 news in Medan City. This news represents another news that is distributed to publishing agencies in the city.

Official sources of information and the challenges of misinformation are the problems that journalists often face as challenges in obtaining accurate information during the pandemic. Official sources such as the Ministry of Health, WHO, and local governments are the main reference for journalists in writing news related to COVID-19. However, the challenge of increasing misinformation on social media is also a big concern, especially in big cities such as Medan which reportedly face a wave of fake news related to the pandemic (Kompas, 2020).

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Technology Adaptation in COVID-19 News Coverage

The development of digital technology is very helpful for journalists in covering the pandemic. Virtual reporting, online interviews, and the use of instant communication platforms are key elements in maintaining the sustainability of COVID-19 news coverage. Journalists in Medan City, like in other cities, are adapting technology to minimise physical contact and maintain health protocols during news coverage (The Jakarta Post, 2021).

Local media in Medan plays an important role in informing residents about the development of PPKM policies handling COVID-19 cases, and preventive measures. A report from the Medan Tribune shows that journalists in the field must work hard to maintain accuracy and overcome challenges in accessing information that is often limited (Medan Tribune, 2021).

Social restrictions during Community quarantine and restrictions Level 4 have a significant impact on the way journalists work. Mobility restrictions and the closure of various public facilities require journalists to switch to remote reporting methods. Streetlights that are turned off at various points in Medan City also have an impact on news coverage at night, demanding journalists to be more flexible in managing their working hours (Detik News, 2021). The results of the literature search obtained by this researcher can provide context related to the challenges and adaptations faced by journalists in covering news during the pandemic in the city of Medan.

The results of the interview were adjusted to the research titled 'Understanding of Journalists in COVID-19 Reporting in Medan City' and the results are as follows:

Technology Adaptation in Reporting

In reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic, journalists in Medan City showed high adaptability to technological changes. As many as 95% (57 out of 60) journalists use smartphones as the main tool to take photos and videos in the field. In addition, 90% (54 out of 60) journalists use editing apps on their smartphones to speed up the editing and delivery process. This technological advancement allows 85% (51 out of 60) journalists to send news directly from the reporting location, so that news can be conveyed to the public faster.

Understanding of Health Protocols in COVID-19 Reporting

The understanding of journalists in Medan regarding health protocols during the pandemic is also fairly good. All respondents, namely 100% (60 out of 60), are aware of the importance of maintaining health protocols during reporting. The majority, 80% (48 out of 60), chose to conduct remote interviews to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. In addition, 70% (42 out of 60) journalists would rather attend a virtual press conference than an event involving many people.

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration among Journalists

communication skills and digital collaboration of journalists have also improved during the pandemic in using digital communication technology. As many as 90% (54 out of 60) journalists use instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram to communicate with sources and colleagues. In addition, 75% (45 out of 60) journalists use video conferencing apps like Zoom to conduct remote interviews. As many as 85% (51 out of 60) of journalists feel their ability to communicate and collaborate digitally has improved during the pandemic.

Challenges in COVID-19 Coverage

Despite adapting well, journalists in Medan City faced various challenges during COVID-19 coverage. As many as 65% (39 out of 60) journalists stated that it is difficult to get direct access to news sources due to the restrictions imposed during the pandemic. In addition, 70% (42 out of 60) journalists feel increasing pressure to deliver news quickly and accurately. In addition to professional challenges, 60% (36 out of 60) journalists also admitted that maintaining a balance between work and mental health during the pandemic is a challenge.

Training and Technology Support

A total of 55% (33 out of 60) journalists stated that they have received training related to the use of digital technology to support the news process during the pandemic. In addition, 60%

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(36 out of 60) journalists feel that the media companies they work for provide sufficient support in the form of training and the provision of work equipment to facilitate remote coverage.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to the work patterns of journalists. 80% (48 out of 60) of journalists stated that they work more from home and report remotely. This change forced 75% (45 out of 60) journalists to become more independent and creative in seeking news, as mobility restrictions and strict health protocols limited physical access to news sources.

The results of this interview provide in-depth insight into the understanding and adaptation of journalists in Medan City in reporting COVID-19. This shows that journalists can navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic, both in terms of technology, health protocols, and changes in work patterns. However, they also face significant challenges, especially related to access to information and mental stress during this global health crisis.

CONCLUSION

The researcher concluded that the theoretical implications of the study aimed to determine the understanding of journalists in reporting COVID-19 in Medan City are as follows, first, that the Understanding of Journalists in the Context of the Crisis This research highlights the importance of a deep understanding of public health issues that will be written by journalists. In the context of a pandemic, journalists must not only report facts, but also understand the medical and social context of the news they convey through writing or news. Crisis communication theory and information delivery models can be used to explain how a journalist's understanding affects the way information is delivered to the public. Having journalists who have good knowledge about COVID-19 can reduce misinformation and increase public understanding of the virus. Second, the challenges for journalists when reporting also provide insight into the challenges faced by journalists, such as access to information, pressure from authorities, and social stigma. Knowledge of these challenges helps in the development of more effective training and communication strategies in the future. Third, Recommendations for Journalist Capacity Building, which can be said to be the result of this study, can contribute to the development of journalist capacity through training focused on understanding health issues. This is important to create journalists who are not only competent in reporting news, but also can analyse and present information accurately and responsibly. The theoretical implications of this study not only enrich the literature on journalism, but also provide practical insights that can be applied to improve the quality of news coverage during future health crises.

This suggestion is very relevant to the research title 'Understanding of Journalists in COVID-19 News in Medan City.' To improve the quality of news reporting and the adaptation of journalists in crisis conditions such as the pandemic, media companies need to continue to provide support in the form of digital technology training and the provision of adequate tools. This is in line with the needs of journalists who rely on technology in remote reporting and real-time reporting. In addition, the mental stress that journalists face when covering challenging situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, needs to be addressed through a comprehensive mental health mentoring program. Open access to official sources of information must also be improved to reduce barriers to accurate data acquisition, so that the quality of coverage can be better maintained.

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