



## Jordan's Official Media Discourse in Light of the Coronavirus Pandemic

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### Article History

**Received:** September 21, 2020

**Revised:** October 22, 2020

**Accepted:** October 28, 2020

**Published:** October 31, 2020

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## Abstract

The study stands on investigating the Media content of the official Jordanian broadcasting, in light of the Corona pandemic and the method used to employ the media instruments to deal with the Jordanian and global health and economical situation. Also the characteristics of its media discourse. The study relied on the descriptive and documentary analysis method to explore the Media content, guided by the systematic analysis approach about the input and output of media discourse, and the feedback to manage the media scene. The study concluded that Jordanian Media discourse characterizes by the participatory, integrative, and interactive approach within the two main parties of the crisis represented in the government and the public recipient, where the health and economic media releases its Media agenda which enabled it to employ its previous experiences and gain new experiences that could be added to the national Media experiences in the other world countries.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus Pandemic; Official media discourse.

## 1. Introduction

The study headed to investigate a national media model by focusing on the official Jordanian mass media, as the study sample to identify its media discourse in light of the Coronavirus Pandemic based on the documentary descriptive analysis of the media content and the systematic analysis method to explore the extent of its adoption to the feedback approach.

The study investigated the media tools used in local and global health and economic media content, during the time period of virus appearance in Jordan and in the world, going through the government's announcement of the matrix stages to deal with the Corona Pandemic, and the study continue its investigation of the media content way after that until the end of June, 2020.

The study concluded that Jordanian media discourse is distinguished by the characteristics of its transformation into a crisis media, where its contents occupied specifically by the health and economical media, as a model of national case study that has become a major source of the local public and a media portal to inform the world of the importance of cooperation and national harmony in the participatory to manage the crisis, which provided the success to contain the consequences of this pandemic.

## 2. Study Problem

The study examines the official Jordanian media discourse; in its various forms the written, audio, video, and digital in light of the Corona pandemic by investigating the media's tools and templates that adopted in the content and discourse of the media. It mainly focuses on the media, the health and economic reality, and specifically its extent to keep up with the global pandemic.

## 3. Study Objectives and Importance

The study aims to explore the extent of official Media discourse to adapt with the "Crisis Media", its characteristics that enabled it to manage the Media scene in light of the pandemic, the role of the Media to be a key player in achieving the success in its containment, and the innovative media experiences and lessons that may be added to it. The scientific importance of the study also appears by providing a study model for a national situation that may contribute along with other similar national studies to the theoretical and practical enrichment of the "Crisis Media".

## 4. Study Methodology

The study relied on the descriptive and analytical approach, in its research of the Media content through the documentary tracking of the official Jordanian Media activities; in light of the pandemic. The study also drew on the systematic analysis approach in the Humanities, which based on the study of inputs represented in data and information, and the way that can be used to build its Media discourse by adopting the feedback mechanism between the official decision-maker and its audience.

### 4.1. Study Sample

The study sample represented in the official Jordanian Media; whether it was visual, audio, written, and digital such as the Jordanian Ministry of Health Media, the platform of the Corona Crisis Management Team, the Jordanian News Agency (Petra), the official Jordanian television channels, the main Radio Of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and its local subsidiary radio, the written press represented in Alrai, Addustour, and Alghad, and the government electronic platforms.

### 4.2. Study Limitation

The study followed the Media content of the study sample since the announcement of China about the appearance of the Corona virus in it, the beginning of its spread outside of it, and the increase in the number of infections globally going through the recording of the first case in Jordan at the beginning of March, 2020 followed by an increase in the number of infections until the end of June, 2020.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

### 5.1. The Beginning of the Crisis and its Development Stages

The Jordanian Ministry of Health has followed Corona virus infections since the report of the outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan, on 31 January 2020 to take precautionary measures to prevent the virus from arriving to Jordan, publish the information about the new Corona class, and raise the health awareness and education by communicating and cooperating with the World Health Organization (WHO)

[https://www.moh.gov.jo/DetailsPage/MOH\\_AR/HealthAndPublicInformationDetailsAR.aspx?ID=45](https://www.moh.gov.jo/DetailsPage/MOH_AR/HealthAndPublicInformationDetailsAR.aspx?ID=45)

As the Corona virus infections began to increase in the regional and global environment, and due to fears that Corona would enter the country through the crossings borders and the airports, the Government has prepared to approve and implement other measures. On 2, March 2020 the Jordanian Minister of Health announced the first report of Coronavirus infection cases in Jordan for a Jordanian who developed the symptoms of Corona disease after (14) days from returning to Jordan coming from Italy. Therefore, the health officials took a decision to put this person and his family members under isolation. Also conducted the laboratory tests and proved some of the hospitals for isolation <https://www.almamlakatv.com/>

In view of the rapid developments associated with the spread of the virus, the government has taken a package of more strict and severe measures, and after registering (6) Corona infections, the Minister of Health announced that Jordan is entering a new response phase to the virus and described it as the containment phase, especially after the increase in infections at the neighbouring countries which puts Jordan in front of a critical stage in the future (Al-Khaytan, 2020). As a result of the increase in Corona infections cases, the Royal Will issued an approval of the Cabinet's Decision to operate by (the Defense Act No. 13 of 1992) from 17, March 2020 to limit the spread and containment of the infection <http://www.pm.gov.jo/upload/files/Order-Defense-1.pdf>

As a result, on 23 March 2020 the government decided to formulate the Corona Crisis Management Cell with the membership of Minister of State for Media affairs (The Official Media Spokesman), Minister of Health, and the director of cell operations; as a representative of the Jordanian armed forces to work around the clock and follow up on the developments related to dealing with the new Coronavirus, and driven from it a team for health care and another team to organize and follow up on the affairs of borders, crossings, and airports

<http://www.pm.gov.jo/search?q=%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9+%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A9>

After that, the Prime Minister issued various defence orders to deal with the developments of the Corona pandemic and its aftermath. However, after Jordan reached a moderate level of health risk, the government made an announcement at a press conference on 4 June 2020 about the "phases matrix for dealing with the Corona pandemic", which enable the government to take the progressive open decision of the public and economical sectors, and reduce the embargo hours.

### 5.2. Media and Health Status

The Health concern took the Media content of the official Jordanian Media by adopting multiple and different Media tools, methods, and templates. It all started with the global news about the Corona pandemic but after the emergence of the first infection case in Jordan and increase the number of infections, the Media content intensified in size and type to adapt with the health reality and situation of Jordan.

### 5.3. Media of the Jordanian Ministry of Health

The Coronavirus Website contains updates and reliable information on the new corona disease (Coved-19), such as the service portals which related to asking questions about the Corona via the toll-free number 111, a daily

updated chart that show the number of infections, healings cases, under treatment, deaths, examinations, and an awareness information on the transmission methods, infection symptoms, and preventive measures. Also the Website contained latest updates on the daily Media briefings of the Coronavirus, Q&A, your awareness is your safety, Health Media and Awareness Directorate, the National Campaign/ you have friend, the government platforms to deal with the Coronavirus, the accredited hospitals, the educational videos, the identification of home quarantine, the national concern donation box, and related links <https://corona.moh.gov.jo/ar>

The following table shows the Corona statistics in Jordan/2020

Month	Number of Infections	Under Treatment	Cured	Deaths
March	274	239	30	5
April	453	73	362	8
May	739	146	522	9
June	1132	109	882	9

Recited at <https://corona.moh.gov.jo/ar2020/7/2>

It notices from the table above that the number of infections increased during those four months to reach by the end of June, 2020 (1132) cases while the number of medical care recipients and deceased decreased. Also with an increase in the number of cured cases which considers a good indicator on the success of preventive and therapeutic measures, the siege of the pandemic, and the arrival of health risk level to a moderate-risk rate.

#### 5.4. Media of the Corona Crisis Management Cell Platform

From the platform of the National Center for Security and Crisis Management, the Minister of Health provided a daily press briefing that includes the latest infections with Corona, its number, its source, areas of residence, nationalities, cases under treatment and cured, and deaths, which are broadcasted live on the official and private television channels. At other times, the daily press briefing may be broadcasted from his home via Skype; during the mass curfew time. Also he participates in the public press conferences whenever its conditions and circumstances are met, in the presence of the media to answer their questions and respond to the false news and rumours, as well as the announcements, reports, and meetings with the internal and external media, and the posts and participations of the National Epidemiological Commission.

#### 5.5. Jordan News Agency (PETRA)

It broadcast daily bulletins through the direct communication lines with the Media in Jordan and through the Internet represented in the E-Mail and File Transfer Protocol (FTP). Also the satellite broadcasting via the United Press International (UPI) news agency to publicize the local health situation, the implemented government actions, the Media investigations, the interviews, the dialogue and discussion sessions, the analytics, the selected newspaper articles, and to receive the suggestions and complaints, as well as to follow up and publish the pandemic news and its global implications. Also linked its web page with the WHO link through a window that entitled Coronavirus disease / Coped-19 questions and answers. In addition, it provide information to millions of people inside and outside of Jordan, and provide feedback to the decision makers in the country and the crisis cell <https://petra.gov.jo/Include/Main.jsp?lang=ar>

#### 5.6. Official TV Channels

The Media performance of Jordanian TV includes the expansion of time span of news releases, the major bulletins, the news follow-up, the news tape, and the breaking news. It includes the field work to prepare the Media reports and investigations, host the officials and experts of the Coronavirus crisis via Skype. It also used the infographic technology to broadcast all the updates on the Coronavirus, provides educational Media messages and advertisements about the virus, receives all the initiatives achieved by the government institutions and the private sector to broadcast the awareness clips with the citizens, the security officials, and the officials from various provinces of the Kingdom, as well as the broadcasting of Media messages that emphasize the importance of staying home during the curfew and closure, fight the rumours by looking for the real information, being accurate in publishing the news, and verifying the authenticity of the broadcast messages. In addition, the television sent video clips of the official and semi-official activities to all the Arab, European, and African TVchannels, and broadcasts the news bulletins, the awareness messages, and the updated daily breaking news through its social media accounts (Al-Habashneh, 2020).

As for AlMamlaka TV Channel, all of its programs adapted to the Coronavirus Pandemic and kept up with its reality and developments, where it worked on broadcasting a program as a Media summary for the Coronavirus direction in Jordan that show the most prominent Corona locations in Jordan. It introduced a media portal entitled "Corona of Jordan" to publish information, reports, and Media investigations supported by videos, images, statistics, and graphics, and broadcast the indicative and directorial Media and advertisements. It also continued to broadcast the advertising Media breaks between the programs' periods which include the definition of the Coronavirus symptoms, the preventive measures and the way to quickly spread the infection if not commit to these measures, and media guidance and indicative clips as an advertising breaks between its main programs <https://www.almamlakatv.com/>

### 5.7. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Radio

The Radio of the H.K of Jordan and its local sub-broadcasts worked on the Media coverage of the Corona pandemic through its news bulletins, the host of officials and experts via the phone, the talk shows, the telephone calls that include the interventions, observations, inquiries, complaints, and the responses and feedbacks from the concerned parties, and adapt the topics of its daily and weekly programmes to the Corona pandemic. The health, religious, economical, social, sports, and other programs all linked their subjects to the reality of pandemic crisis, its procedures, and its implications and through it all these programs transmitted the educational messages and the Media announcements (Al-Habashneh, 2020).

### 5.8. Written Press

The paper press turned into electronic copies after prohibiting it from been published in the paper form. The tools and techniques of the written, audio, and visual Media relied on the transmission and broadcasting of news, analytics, articles, investigations, reports, and the press interviews to deal with the various dimensions of the health situation in Jordan. Also it communicate and interact with the public through its pages at the social Mass Media.

### 5.9. Government Electronic Platforms

The Public Electronic Platforms included various and different Media materials according to its field of interest in the official state affairs associated with the reality of the Corona pandemic and its implications. Therefore, the health Media discourse of the official Jordanian Media engaged with the level of health risk phases and adapted to it. Its broadcasting of the Corona pandemic news relied on the government media sources and on the local sources, which driven from the society and from the medical and health institutions operating in the field of pandemic response. In parallel, it used the interpretive media tools based on the information and standpoints of the Jordanian and international health doctors and experts.

Also in its speech, government followed advice and solutions emanating from the insights of Media professionals, and their suggestions and observations on managing the health scene and the educational Media to build a healthy, preventive, and social behavior in accordance with the requirements of adherence to the preventive measures.

After the success of government procedures in managing the crisis, and after the announcement of the stages matrix for dealing with the Corona pandemic on 4/6/2020 and the arrival to a moderate-risk stage, the Media discourse turned toward the adaptation of the new phase by taking the decisions to gradually open the logistic and productive public and economical sectors, and the procedures required to protect the public health safety. At the same extent that the official Jordanian Media kept up with the health situation from the beginning and throughout the development of the crisis, it also kept pace with the economical situation and reality based on the same Media tools. Therefore, its economical discourse adapts with the requirements of crisis development stages.

### 5.10. Media and Economical Situation

The government Media and the crisis cell, the official media spokesman of the government and with the participation of ministers and officials in the economical sectors to announce the government economical actions and decisions. It explained its details and justifications, and worked in parallel with the Media of the government electronic platforms related to the jordanian economical situation, and formed a reliable source of information Media but the decisions related to the embargo, quarantine, and closure of economical difficulties led to the controversy of the health or economical priority level in light of the Corona pandemic.

### 5.11. Health and Economy

The Media perspectives shifted between those who put the economy as a priority and those who see the health as a priority. Therefore, it summarize into two standpoints, the first biased to the priority of health variable while the second warned of its direct negative repercussions on the economy.

The first perspective called for the decision-making to not cause any internal panic, to announce an economical package to lessen the effects of these decisions, and to develop an economical contingency plan to manage the fallout of Corona (Abu Tair, 2020).

The Prime Minister of Jordan explained the viewpoint of the Jordanian government during the press conference where he announced the matrix to deal with the Corona pandemic, which summarized to take into account the economical and health realities in light of the balance between the protection of citizens' health and the economical and health realities by adopting the risk level standard of each stage. Therefore, the government will be able to adopt the health reality indicators to make decisions about opening the different sectors, but in harmony, interaction, advice, and mutual dialogue between all sectors to deal with the health and economical situation (Alrai Jordanian Newspaper, 2020a).

### 5.12. Poverty and Unemployment

The Media broadcasted the opinions of people, the owners of economic sectors, and the experts and economic specialists through the audio, video, and electronic Media. It showed the extent of unemployment phenomenon and the discrepancy that imposed on the financial incomes of workers in the economical sectors, which includes the paper press by preventing it from issuing paper copies and losing the financial resources for sale, subscriptions, and advertising.



Also the Media published data released by the General Statistics Department, which showed an increase in the unemployment rate during the first quarter of 2020 to (19.3%), and its increase to higher levels during the second quarter, due to the Corona pandemic (Abu Hamour, 2020).

### 5.13. Post-Crisis Economy

The government's announcement of the matrix to deal with the Coronavirus imposed on the Media to keep up with the gradual opening reality of the economical sectors, publish educational messages to protect the public health safety, follow up the economical solutions to address the losses suffered by the economical sectors, and to take advantage of the Corona crisis lessons to draw the prospects of a post-pandemic economy.

Therefore, the Media content took a curve in line with the end of crisis phase and recovery, where the Media content returned to expand the Media space for other topics with the continuous Media coverage of the pandemic locally and the return to begin its Media interest in the Corona pandemic globally.

### 5.14. Jordanian Media and the Global Pandemic

At the beginning, the Jordanian Media preoccupied itself with the reality of global pandemic by spreading the news related to it and its areas of spread globally. It preoccupied itself with the efforts of scientific and medical authorities to identify the virus and the efforts to find a cure or a vaccine for it. Also it had interest in the scientific analyses controversy that didn't agree on the reasons of the emergence of the virus, and the political tensions between the centers of world powers (Al-Habashneh, 2020).

It also continued to draw comparisons between Jordan and the world countries in the face of the pandemic, to strengthen the national solidarity and cohesion, and show the importance of adhering to the preventive measures in harmony with the government's decisions that enabled it to succeed and excel. The international Media's praised the Jordanian health system that was able to siege the disease with the help of people's awareness, their understanding, and their response to the government procedures (Alrai Jordanian Newspaper, 2020b).

In the global economy, the Jordanian Media cared about the effects of pandemic due to the closure of world's borders, the serious consequences on the world economy, and its implications on the Jordanian economy, which mainly depends on the regional and global economies. Also Journalists and economists suggested measures that the government should take to help those affected economically.

The Jordanian Media published the information released globally on the economical implications and the proposed solutions by the international organizations and the World Bank reports. It calls for the implementation response measures on the health emergency situation to be accompanied by comprehensive policies that should be followed to promote the long-term growth, expand the investment, and adopt policies to encourage the employment now rather than the employment after the decline of the pandemic (Abu Hamour, 2020).

### 5.15. Characteristics of the Jordanian Media Discourse

The Media discourse adopted the participation and integration approach among all those involve in the crisis management, which led to a national cooperative experience that enabled Jordan to contain the Corona pandemic and work to resolve the difficulties with the participation and cooperation of all the concerned parties, each in the field of interests and specialties. Therefore, the Media contributed to this experience by relying on the government Media as its main source of information and then delivering it to the public recipient. In the same time, it extract the information from the public and delivering it to the decision-makers for the Media discourse to be characterized by the action and reaction.

Also the Media discourse has been distinguished by the complementarity and comprehensiveness of the characteristics and dimensions of the "Crisis Media", with the priority to transmit and publish the news and information related to the Corona pandemic (Broadcasting Media), the health awareness and education (Educational Health Media), and provide the solutions (Media of Solutions).

In the comparison between this study and the study of Mosa that entitled "The Determinants of News Satellite Coverage of the Corona Pandemic in the Digitization Age". It agreed with it on the fact that health Media topped the Media agendas (Mosa Mohammed Al-Ameen, 2020). The Jordanian Media Discourse by adopting the criteria of responsible coverage and the interpretative tools that enabled it to interact transparently with its information sources represented in the government Media and the public. This study agreed with the study that entitled "How did the Corona pandemic change the press and Media industry?", in terms of the exchange of trust with its audience and information sources (Al-Hamami and Al-Sadiq, 2020).

## 6. Analytical Summary

The national public adopted the visual and digital Media as a sole source of information, which increase the number of those who were following it before the Coronavirus, where the national health and economical situation has become a priority in light of the closure of world countries' geopolitical borders to protect itself from the pandemic.

It showed the importance of the Media's contribution to contain the crisis; as an intermediary Media between the public and the decision-makers which balanced between the coverage objectivity and not to cause any fear or panic from the Corona pandemic, which imposed the humanitarian Media nature that carry the responsibility toward the society and to reduce the negative effects of the nationally and globally intensive Media coverage on the mental health, due to the information conflict about the pandemic.

The experience of Media in general and the Jordanian media in specific, in light of the Corona pandemic paves the way to review the Media scene before the Corona pandemic, under the crisis, and after it declined which impose the development of future scenarios for crisis management, in light of the Jordanian Media experience and whatever it may add to the crisis Media on the national and global level. It also impose a pre-readiness for the occurrence of major crises in light of the comprehensiveness, extensions, and the repercussions of such a pandemic that humanity didn't expect to occur.

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