



Media and the Corona pandemic: credibility or crises and rumors?

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Media Coverage of the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Impact on Shaping Bahraini Public Opinion Attitudes about the Performance of Health Institutions

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Abstract

This study examined role of media coverage of the (Covid-19) pandemic in shaping the knowledge and attitudes of Bahraini public opinion towards the health institution's performance in facing the effects of the pandemic and limiting the risk of its spread. This study assumed that media are not only communication channels, but they can also be an essential tool in political change and formation of feelings and attitudes. This study relied on the assumptions of the cognitive priming theory, which emphasizes that media coverage by focusing on some aspects and ignoring others affects the criteria on which individuals form their assessments and judgments about governments and leaders. Based on an online survey of a quota sample (N= 588) from public opinion in Bahrain.

The study reached several significant results; the positive evaluations of health institutions performance in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic in the Kingdom of Bahrain were (69.3%). Also, Bahraini public opinion was very keen to follow the pandemic news and information in various media formats with a rate of (68.7%). Social media came at the top of these media with a rate of (88.7%), then television with a rate of (81%), while the printed journalism came in the last rank with a rate of (54.3%).

In addition, the results indicated that the percentage of media coverage credibility among Bahraini public opinion was (74.3%). The Ministry of Health website was the most credible media with a rate of (89.3%), then social media accounts of the health ministry with a rate of (87.3), television with a rate of (86%), while news websites ranked seventh with a rate of (65.7%), and social media ranked eighth, with a rate of (54.3%). WhatsApp groups ranked as the least credible media in covering the performance of health institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic with a rate of (47.7%).

Keywords: Media coverage, COVID-19 pandemic, Health institutions, Public opinion, Bahrain.