

Post-Crisis Analysis of Media Consumption and Perceptions of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Study of Moroccan Youth in Urban Areas

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This study investigates the impact of media consumption habits on the perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic among Moroccan youth in urban areas. A quantitative method was employed, combining survey data, chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis. In total, 872 responses were collected, and the analyses revealed that digital media consumption by Moroccan youth led them to more critical views of the pandemic's media coverage. The regression analysis showed that the emphasis on the origins of the virus was an important aspect that influenced the respondents' assessment of the coverage. The findings highlight the importance of understanding how different age groups perceive and interpret media coverage during health crises. Effective communication strategies must consider the informational needs and motivations of diverse audiences.

Key Words: media, youth, COVID-19, Morocco, urban areas

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<https://doi.org/10.70908/2232-6022/18.83-101>

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak marked this era as one of the most unprecedented phenomena with a global reach. Spreading around the world, COVID-19 affected people's health and also forced governments to impose lockdowns, which impacted economies, education systems,

and the environment. Its global reach, combined with a lack of understanding of its characteristics, made COVID-19 a source of fear, stress, and anxiety.

[84] The media industry played a pivotal role in the crisis management process by disseminating important information, such as reports on infection rates, public health measures, and analyses of the impact of the crisis on the economy and political decisions (De Coninck et al. 2020). Reports, headlines, and interviews—the media devoted its efforts entirely to coverage of the pandemic. On the other side of the screen, the public was eager to get information; from the records of the first cases in Morocco, fear started spreading, leading people to make unreasonable decisions, like emptying supermarket shelves. The COVID-19 crisis did not just reveal vulnerabilities in health systems around the world; it also exposed the intricacies of media influence, public trust, and the importance of responsible journalism in combating misinformation and fake news (Leicht et al. 2022).

From another perspective, the COVID-19 crisis was also characterized by a complete lockdown, which forced people to stay home, glued to their screens and feeding their craving for information. In this context, social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) played a significant role in disseminating information through viral content that often came from unofficial sources (Hendricks and Mehlsen 2022).

This research aims to analyze the media consumption habits of Moroccans from a retrospective standpoint regarding COVID-19 media coverage. The existing literature on crisis perceptions focuses on how different demographics within the Moroccan population respond to media during crises based on the nature of the information they consume. However, little evidence-based research has been done on the effect of variation in media consumption patterns on crisis perceptions.

This paper aims to address this by exploring the role of media diversity in consumption on the perceived efficacy of media outlets, as well as analyzing the influence of increased digital media consumption compared to traditional media in terms of perceived media efficacy among youth. To do that, we first analyzed the existing literature on perception studies of media communication through a literature review, enabling us to identify the following research question: How do variations in media consumption habits affect perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic among Moroccan youth from urban areas?

To answer this research question, two hypotheses may be consid-



ered: (H1) the perceived relevance of specific media channels can predict positive or negative assessments of the media coverage of the crisis situation; (H2) the frequency of following digital media during times of crisis and the nature of the content itself may predict youths' positive or negative assessments of the media coverage.

[85]

Through this analysis, we will offer insights into the media consumption habits of Moroccan youth and also understand their perception of the COVID-19 crisis as influenced by media coverage.

MEDIA CRISIS COMMUNICATION: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Addressing and understanding the public's perception during and after media coverage is essential for any media studies research (Driedger 2007). Analyzing how individuals respond to and interpret the messages they receive on different platforms allows researchers to understand how the public is influenced by those messages. This is especially important in a context of crisis, where the public is confronted with a large volume of media content, which can raise concerns about the spread of misinformation and misleading narratives (Bode and Vraga 2018; Buturoiu et al. 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, the effects of media on public perception have been widely discussed by the research community. Some theories, such as the hypodermic needle model-which suggests that media messages are directly accepted by the receiver-have been largely criticized (Döveling 2011). However, more robust theories, like the agenda-setting model by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw, and the two-step flow theory developed by Lazarsfeld and Katz, are more widely accepted in the study of media effects on public opinion.

There is also a growing body of literature that recognizes the significant role of media platforms in shaping public opinion around COVID-19 and related issues, such as its socio-political effects and vaccine efficacy (Cascini et al. 2022; Flew 2021; León et al. 2023). A study conducted on risk perception during the pandemic by Diana Tsoy et al. (2021) proposed the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), which explains the impact of social media on perceived threat and efficacy during the pandemic. This model suggests that individuals will experience fear and anxiety when facing a highly threatening situation, but these sentiments can be reduced if they believe they can take effective actions to mitigate the threat, thereby increasing their willingness to engage in

preventive behavior. Thus, the EPPM suggests that social media can promote preventive behaviors by providing individuals with information that reduces threat perceptions and enhances their perceived efficacy through taking preventive measures (Tsoy et al. 2021).

- [86] When discussing the impact of media communication on public perception, it is essential to connect perception with the content itself (McLeod et al. 2017). This often necessitates a qualitative approach to better understand the nature of the content. For example, Buturoiu et al. (2021) conducted a content analysis of both television and online news in Romania. Their research showed that these media primarily discussed topics related to COVID-19, such as government decisions and the effects of the virus, and that the content published in mainstream media often originated from digital sources, creating an intermediate agenda-setting effect.

The Social-Mediated Communication Theory also provides a framework that focuses on the role of social media in crisis communication, seeking to understand how information is shared during crisis management through these platforms. This model emphasizes audience behavior, information sources, credibility, trust, and new communication strategies as key components in the dissemination of crisis-related information (Austin et al. 2012). By highlighting the transformative impact of social media and changes in audience behavior, the Social-Mediated Communication Theory acknowledges that people now have access to a broader and larger volume of information sources. This access allows real-time updates and offers the possibility of interactivity and engagement with the content shared by organizations, crisis management institutions, and authorities (Austin and Jin 2015; 2016).

CRISIS PERCEPTIONS IN MOROCCO

A number of studies have been conducted in the Moroccan context, so it is important for this paper to assess the specific characteristics of the Moroccan public. In media studies, it is well known that individuals are culturally and linguistically affected by the type of media they consume. Indeed, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hattani and Jai (2022) examined how crisis communication during the pandemic shaped citizens' perceptions and helped them understand and respond to the crisis. This research established that Moroccans judged the crisis communication positively, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing resilience, prevention, and mitigation.

A similar study conducted by Berni et al. (2021), which monitored



the adoption of safety behaviors related to COVID-19, concluded that the Moroccan population generally complied with the safety measures enforced by authorities. However, high perceived risk, lack of available treatment, and availability of clear information were the factors associated with this compliance, suggesting that feelings of fear about personal health were the motivating reason for adopting safety measures. [87]

From a different perspective, Aboulghazi (2022) assessed that younger Moroccans, from the beginning of the crisis, perceived the authorities' communication strategies negatively, especially because their main source of information was social media. Nevertheless, the older age groups were proven to have a more positive standpoint as they received their information from official political sources and mainstream media. However, the same author, in different research, showed that the official mainstream media failed to debunk misinformation through fact-checking, with media regulators failing to adapt to the specific characteristics of fake news circulating on social media and the Internet (Aboulghazi 2021). Based on a content analysis, Ben Abdelaziz et al. (2021) showed that these deficiencies may be addressed through poor psychosocial support and a lack of strengthening community participation.

Social media, being the main source of information for Moroccan youth during the pandemic, has been shown to foster narratives of fear, distrust, and polarization, especially about scientific uncertainty (Zag and Mifdal, n.d.). This may be explained by many challenges that journalists faced during pandemic coverage, such as restricted access to information, travel restrictions, and increased work overload (Lacroix and Carignan 2020), which in numerous cases accelerated the digitalization of work processes, focusing on digital innovation in gathering and disseminating information, even for traditional media outlets (Matsilele et al. 2022).

So far, we have analyzed the existing body of literature contextualizing both the theoretical framework and the crisis perceptions in the Moroccan case. In the following section, we will provide details about the methodology, the survey content, and the data analysis process.

METHODOLOGY

To understand youths' consumption habits and their perceived understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic, we adopted a quantitative approach based on a survey that gathered 872 responses. The survey was distributed in both physical form to university students at the Euro-

Mediterranean University of Fez and University Ibn Tofail of Kenitra. A digital form was also published on the author's social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn).

[88] Considering Morocco's linguistic diversity, the survey was available in three languages: French, English, and Arabic. To ensure minimal translation bias and improve clarity, the survey was translated and cross-verified by two independent peers.

Survey Content

The survey design aimed to collect data on a Likert scale on the following aspects:

- Media consumption behaviors: Frequency, media preferences (digital, television, radio, newspapers), perceived relevance of each media channel.
- Perceived understanding of the pandemic.
- Assessment of media coverage.

Data Analysis

The collected data were then transcribed and analyzed using SPSS software, version 26. Initially, the data analysis included descriptive statistics to provide a basic understanding of the data distribution. Subsequently, a frequency analysis, including cross-tabulation between variables, was initiated to understand patterns in media consumption and perception among the surveyed age groups.

For a detailed analysis of the collected data, chi-square tests were used to assess the independence between age groups and their media channel preferences, as well as their perceived relevance and understanding of the media coverage. A correlation analysis was aimed to examine relationships between age, media preferences, media consumption frequency, and perceived relevance to provide deeper insight into the age differences in media engagement during health crises.

Additionally, to quantify the strength of association and predict trends, a multinomial logistic regression analysis was used to understand how different factors influence respondents' overall assessment of the media coverage.

Demographic Overview

The demographics of our respondents included both genders with a balanced distribution: 50.9% male and 49.1% female. The majority of



the surveyed individuals were predominantly young adults (18 to 35 years), comprising 56.9% of the sample, with smaller representation from other age groups. The majority of the respondents had university-level education, representing 79% of the total sample.

[89]

STUDY RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides a cross-tabulation of media channel preferences with age as a dependent variable. Breaking it down, it clearly shows that the distribution of media preferences is very heterogeneous across the age groups. Digital media/Internet and TV, for example, are more preferred by the majority of the 18 to 35 age group ($N = 442$, $N = 431$). Newspapers, on the other hand, are overall less likely to be preferred, especially among respondents under 18 years old.

Chi-Square Test Results:

- Digital Media/Internet: 47.508 ($df = 3$, $p < 0.001$)
- Newspapers: 43.707 ($df = 3$, $p < 0.001$)
- TV: 34.170 ($df = 3$, $p < 0.001$)
- Radio: 227.120 ($df = 3$, $p < 0.001$)

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Conducting the Chi-square test for independence, we tested if there's a significant association between age groups and media channel preference. The p -value for all media types is 0.000, which is less than the

TABLE 1 Media Channel Preferences by Age Groups

Age	Media Channel				Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
Under 18	24	0	23	1	48
Between 18 and 35	442	95	431	163	1131
Between 36 and 55	280	109	277	218	884
Over 55	51	17	68	68	204
Total	797	221	799	450	2267

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) digital media/internet, (2) newspapers, (3) TV, (4) radio.

TABLE 2 Perceived Relevance of Media Coverage by Media Channels

Media Channel	Perceived Relevance				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
TV	9	31	345	443	44
Radio	95	256	342	156	23
Newspapers	168	295	197	205	7
Digital Media/Internet	20	208	263	288	93

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) not at all relevant, (2) slightly relevant, (3) relevant, (4) very relevant, (5) extremely relevant.

significance level of 0.05, indicating that the distribution of media preferences differs between the age groups. The table clearly shows digital media as the main source of information for youth; however, it also shows that even with the growing trend of digital media, more traditional channels remain of interest to Moroccan youth (e.g., $N(\text{TV}) = 431$, between 18 and 35).

Chi-Square Test Results:

- TV: 59.260 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)
- Radio: 284.857 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)
- Newspapers: 221.666 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)
- Digital Media/Internet: 303.056 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)

The Chi-Square tests presented in table 2 reveal significant associations between age groups and the perceived relevance of media coverage for TV, radio, newspapers, and digital media/Internet. Effect sizes (Cramer's V) are moderate, indicating practical importance. Both youth and older adults show moderate associations, suggesting that age plays a significant role in influencing perceptions of media coverage relevance.

Chi-Square Test Results:

- Pearson's Chi-Square: 82.475 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)
- Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square: 112.161 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)
- Linear-by-Linear Association Chi-Square: Not applicable ($df = 1, p = 0.991$)

Table 3 presents the cross-tabulation of respondents' age groups against their perceived understanding of COVID-19 through media consumption. The chi-square test results indicate a significant association between age groups and the perceived understanding of COVID-19. Both Pearson's and Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square tests yielded p -



TABLE 3 Perceived Understanding of the Crisis by Age Group

Age	Perceived understanding of COVID-19					Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Under 18	0	11	2	10	1	24
18–35	4	116	184	131	61	496
36–55	1	72	120	89	2	284
Over 55	0	0	36	32	0	68
Total	5	199	342	262	64	872

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) not at all, (2) slightly, (3) moderately, (4) very, (5) completely.

[91]

values less than 0.001, suggesting that the distribution of responses is unlikely to be due to random chance. The Linear-by-Linear Association Chi-Square test did not show a significant linear trend in the association between age groups and the perceived understanding of COVID-19.

Chi-Square Test Results:

- Age Group vs. Assessment of Media Coverage: 58.781 ($df = 12, p < 0.001$)
- Measure of Association (ϕ): 0.260
- Measure of Association (Cramer’s V): 0.150

Correlation Analysis

Table 4 presents the results of the association between age group and perception of media coverage of the crisis. The Chi-Square test indicates a significant association between the age of the respondents and their assessment of the media coverage ($p < 0.001$). However, it was important to calculate the strength of this association; therefore, the Phi

TABLE 4 Cross-Tab between Age Group and the Assessment of the Media Coverage

Age	Overall assessment					Total
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
Under 18	0	10	11	2	1	24
18–35	1	156	223	92	23	495
36–55	1	61	147	73	2	284
Over 55	0	0	42	26	0	68
Total	2	227	423	193	26	871

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) strongly dissatisfied, (2) dissatisfied, (3) neutral, (4) satisfied, (5) very satisfied.

coefficient (0.260) and Cramér's V (0.150) further confirm a moderate association.

[92] *Age-Related Trends in Media Consumption: Traditional vs. Digital Media Preferences*

A positive correlation between age and the frequency of media follow-up ($r = 0.34, p < 0.01$) reveals a gap based on the age of the respondents, with seniors showing more interest in media coverage than youth. There is also a positive correlation between seniors and the perceived relevance of traditional media such as newspapers ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$) and radio ($r = 0.32, p < 0.01$), indicating a reliance on these sources of information by seniors. However, youth are more inclined towards digital media, as demonstrated by a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.39, p < 0.01$).

The correlation matrix also indicates a positive correlation between the perceived relevance among traditional media consumers, suggesting that individuals who perceive one traditional medium as relevant are more likely to perceive other traditional media as relevant as well. For example, there's a strong positive correlation between the perceived relevance of radio and newspapers ($r = 0.66, p < 0.01$) and a moderate correlation between TV and radio ($r = 0.29, p < 0.01$). On the other hand, the weak negative correlation between digital media

TABLE 5 Correlation Matrix

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1)	1.00									
(2)	0.34	1.00								
(3)	-0.02	0.05	1.00							
(4)	0.32	0.11	0.29	1.00						
(5)	0.31	0.12	0.02	0.66	1.00					
(6)	-0.39	0.06	-0.20	-0.23	0.01	1.00				
(7)	0.11	-0.26	0.13	0.11	0.23	-0.11	1.00			
(8)	0.17	-0.24	0.27	0.31	0.23	-0.15	0.19	1.00		
(9)	-0.16	0.32	0.27	0.07	-0.16	0.03	-0.05	-0.24	1.00	
(10)	0.16	0.09	0.01	0.10	0.14	-0.03	0.30	0.20	-0.19	1.00

NOTES Column/row headings are as follows : (1) age, (2) media follow-up, (3) TV relevance, (4) radio relevance, (5) newspapers relevance, (6) digital media relevance, (7) understanding of COVID-19, (8) awareness measures topic (9) vaccine progress topic (10) overall media assessment.



TABLE 6 Model Fit information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	χ^2	df	Sig.
Constant Only	1678.701	–	–	–
Final Model	1396.343	282.358	76	0.000

[93]

and TV relevance ($r = -0.02, p < 0.01$) suggests that respondents who believe digital media is more relevant may view TV as less relevant.

Table 5 also shows a weak positive correlation between the age of the respondents and their perceived understanding of the crisis, implying that youth felt slightly less informed about COVID-19 compared to the older demographic. Concerning the relevance of specific topics covered during the pandemic, the results show a weak negative correlation, especially with vaccine progress ($r = -0.16$ with age) and awareness-related topics ($r = -0.24$ with media follow-up). Finally, there's a moderate positive correlation between the perceived understanding of the crisis and how the respondents assess the media coverage ($r = 0.30$). In fact, media coverage tends to be rated more favorably if the individual's perceived understanding of the crisis is higher.

Multinomial Regression Analysis

The results of the multinomial logistic regression analysis provide insight into how different factors influence respondents' overall assessment of media coverage during the pandemic. The model fit information, with a final model log likelihood of 1396.343 and a Chi-Square value of 282.358, suggests that the predictors significantly contribute to explaining the variance in the dependent variable (overall assessment of the media coverage). Additionally, the calculated Nagelkerke R-Squared of 0.307 indicates that this model accounts for approximately 30.7% of the variance in respondents' overall dissatisfaction with the media coverage.

Results of table 7 show that several variables significantly affect individuals' overall assessment of the media coverage. The perceived role of the media as informative ($\chi^2 = 40.578$), as an instrument of government oversight ($\chi^2 = 17.599$), and as a source of entertainment ($\chi^2 = 64.422$) indicate a strong effect of these variables on overall media assessment. Additionally, variables such as perceived understanding, focus on the most important aspects ($\chi^2 = 40.369$), and emphasis on the origins of the virus ($\chi^2 = 48.073$) highlight the importance of media content itself in shaping youth's perception of the crisis.

TABLE 7 Likelihood Ratio Tests

Effect	-2 Log Likelihood*	χ^2	df	Sig.
Constant	1396.343	0.000	0	–
Perceived Role: Advocacy for Collective Action	1405.046	8.703	4	0.069
Perceived Role: Informative	1436.921	40.578	4	0.000
Perceived Role: Government Oversight	1413.942	17.599	4	0.001
Perceived Role: Entertainment	1460.765	64.422	4	0.000
Perceived Understanding	1165.267	–	16	–
Focus on Important Aspects	1436.712	40.369	16	0.001
Emphasis on Origins of Virus	1444.415	48.073	16	0.000
Appropriate Coverage of COVID-19 Crisis	1449.891	53.548	12	0.000

NOTES * Of reduced model.

TABLE 8 Parameter Estimates for 'Strongly Dissatisfied' Category

Predictor	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Constant	-7.352	11.638	0.399	0.528	–
Perceived Role: Advocacy	-0.067	3.031	0.000	0.982	0.935
Perceived Role: Informative	-0.576	3.912	0.022	0.883	0.562
Government Oversight	1.022	4.841	0.045	0.833	2.779
Entertainment	2.942	4.774	0.380	0.538	18.950
Perceived Understanding	4.042	4.696	0.741	0.389	56.923
Focus on Important Aspects	2.760	5.935	0.216	0.642	15.794
Emphasis on Origins	3.504	1.321	7.041	0.008	33.246
Appropriate Coverage	-7.893	6.319	1.560	0.212	–

NOTES Column headings are as follows: (1) coefficient (B), (2) tandard error, (3) Wald statistic, (4) significance, (5) $\exp(B)$.

Results from table 8 show the relationship between specific predictors and dissatisfaction with media coverage, using dissatisfaction as the reference category. For instance, Moroccan youth are more likely to feel dissatisfied with the media, especially when the origins of the virus were not adequately emphasized ($B = 3.504$, $\exp(B) = 33.246$, $p = 0.008$). This finding further supports the likelihood test, indicating that the way the media covered certain crisis-related topics significantly influenced negative assessments. However, it can be observed that the role of media in government oversight ($B = 1.022$, $\exp(B) = 2.779$, $p = 0.833$) and entertainment ($B = 2.942$, $\exp(B) = 18.950$, $p = 0.538$) are strong predictors of negative assessments, but the high p -values indicate that these associations are not statistically significant.



Hypothesis 1 is accepted, as the perceived relevance of specific media channels does predict positive or negative assessments of media coverage. This is supported by the significant associations between different age groups and the perceived relevance of media channels (TV, radio, digital media, newspapers) presented in table 2 and the correlation analysis heatmap in figure 1, which indicates an increasingly favorable assessment with higher perceived relevance ($r = 0.30, p < 0.01$). The regression analysis further supports this hypothesis by showing how the perceived roles (informative, oversight) significantly affect the overall assessment of the media coverage. [95]

Based on the results, Hypothesis 2 is also accepted, as the frequency of following digital media during the pandemic and the nature of the content itself may predict youth's positive or negative assessments of the media coverage. This is supported by results from table 1, which show that digital media is preferred as a source of information by youth, and the correlation analysis in figure 1 demonstrating a positive correlation between age and the frequency of following the media ($r = 0.34, p < 0.01$), indicating that the older the respondents are, the more frequently crisis-related content is consumed. Furthermore, the regression analysis in table 8 indicates that specific topics, such as the emphasis on the origin of the virus, significantly influence negative assessments among youth.

DISCUSSION

This study set out with the aim of assessing the influence of media consumption habits in terms of diversity and their impact on the perceived understanding of the crisis, as well as the general satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the media coverage of the crisis. The results of this research show that variations in media consumption patterns influence the perceived efficacy of the COVID-19 coverage. The main findings of the study answer the research question by highlighting different patterns in media consumption and exploring the effect of these habits on perceived understanding and overall assessment.

The analysis aligns with the existing literature regarding the preference for digital media among Moroccan youth compared to their seniors, who rely more on traditional media (Aboulghazi 2022). However, the same results show that in the case of COVID-19, traditional media seems not to be completely ignored by youth, suggesting that Moroccan youth still consume information from these channels in times of crisis,

indicating an inclination towards a diversity of sources, alternating between traditional and digital sources.

[96] Additionally, the results reveal a correlation between youth media engagement and their varied perceptions of the crisis, with seniors showing stronger engagement with mainstream media narratives and reporting a better understanding of the situation compared to younger respondents. However, youth exhibit more diverse perceptions, suggesting that consuming a broader range of media channels leads to greater variation in perceived efficacy. This may be attributed to the conflicting narratives surrounding COVID-19 virus and the fact that younger generations encounter a wider range of content on the Internet, including misinformation and fake news (Aboulghazi 2021).

Our study, in contrast, distinct generational patterns in media perception, with younger respondents generally expressing a favorable perception of the media coverage, while older individuals – particularly those over 55 – adopted a more cautious and critical stance. Interestingly, a study by Ceccato et al. (2021) on the Italian context reported different findings, indicating that older adults experienced lower levels of negative emotion compared to younger. These contrasting outcomes suggest that generational differences in media perception and emotional response may be shaped by cultural and societal contexts.

When comparing the assessment of media coverage within specific age groups, subtle differences were also identified. Youths' perception tends to be more diverse, expressing both satisfaction and dissatisfaction to a significant extent, which underscores that age is not the only variable that may affect the public's perception. The diverse digital media sources themselves may result in different perceptions of the crisis (Chauhan and Hughes 2020; Wu 2020). These differences may also be explained by varying levels of digital literacy and other socio-cultural factors.

Seniors, particularly those over 55 years old, expressed more polarized views, often conveying stronger negative opinions regarding the depth and accuracy of the coverage. This could be explained by a loss of trust in traditional media sources, greater susceptibility to misinformation, or subjective interpretations of what constitutes appropriate coverage (Tucker et al. 2018; Wagner and Boczkowski 2019).

The correlation analysis highlights interesting results, especially the negative correlations between several topics – such as awareness measures and vaccine progress – and both age and frequency of media



follow-up, indicating both hesitancy towards mainstream media narratives and a sense of information overload among the younger generation. Similar results were found through a qualitative approach by Zimmermann (2024), who observed that in the Swedish case, a higher tendency to express feelings of fatigue and information overload appeared to contribute to growing polarization and societal segmentation in the later stages of the crisis. [97]

The results of the regression analysis further emphasize the role media coverage plays in shaping perceptions of dissatisfaction, indicating that the lack of emphasis on origins of the virus, insufficient government oversight, and limited entertainment value are strong predictors of negative assessments. This suggests that the perceived imbalance in the coverage of certain crisis-related topics was a source of dissatisfaction, leading to varying perceptions of the efficacy of the media's effectiveness. This fluctuation in perception was also observed in other cases where levels of trust appeared to decline as the crisis progressed.

It's crucial to keep in mind that these findings should be approached with caution. The limitations indicate a sampling bias, which could mean that certain demographics are not adequately represented in the sample, thereby affecting the generalizability of the results.

Looking at it from another angle, this study specifically focused on age-related differences in how the media is perceived, without considering important factors that might impact how the Moroccan public views issues such as information quality, trust in the media, or levels of media literacy across different age groups. This study was also conducted at a specific point in time, meaning that it does not take into account potential changes in perceptions or trends.

A longitudinal study would provide more in-depth insight into the evolving perceptions of the COVID-19 crisis by the population, tracking how attitudes change over time in response to evolving events and media narratives, especially during a prolonged crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a future research avenue, we could complement this research with a qualitative analysis, such as a content analysis of media narratives or by conducting in-depth focus groups and interviews to analyze behaviors that may be more difficult to detect using surveys alone. Technology and data analytics could also offer valuable real-time insights into large-scale datasets on social media, allowing us to explore public sentiment, media framing, and information dissemination during crises.

CONCLUSION

[98] Analyzing Moroccan youth's perception of the COVID-19 pandemic through the lens of Moroccan media coverage reveals the complex interplay between media narratives and public understanding of the virus. Several key conclusions and implications can be drawn from this research, emphasizing the intricate relationship between media consumption habits and youth perceptions.

The results confirm variations in media channel preferences across Moroccan demographics, highlighting the importance for mainstream media outlets to diversify and adapt their content across a wider range of digital media platforms to effectively reach youth and young adults. The empirical findings of this paper provide valuable insights for Moroccan media organizations regarding public preferences in terms of media consumption and their perceived assessment of the coverage of a globally significant phenomenon. One key implication is the need for targeted communication strategies that address the specific needs and behaviors of different age groups.

While digital media appears to be the main source of information among youth, results indicate that they still rely on traditional media. However, negative perceptions tend to increase when there is a perceived lack of government oversight and in-depth information. This suggests to media organizations that fact-checking, accountability, and adherence to ethical responsibilities are crucial for maintaining public trust and engagement.

Another important aspect highlighted in this research is the growing need for media literacy skills among youth. Misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy theories have been widely shared on digital platforms during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting their understanding. Media education programs and fact-checking workshops may help enhance young people's skills in seeking information online.

Adaptability and agility in crisis response are also key implications of this study. As media consumption patterns evolve during a crisis, media organizations and authorities should adapt their communication strategies based on public feedback and needs. This includes leveraging innovative formats such as podcasts, livestreams, and other interactive content.

The study also underscores the importance of research and interdisciplinary approaches to media coverage during health-related crises. A reasonable approach to addressing this issue would be to emphasize



the need for collaborative efforts among policymakers, media practitioners, public health authorities, and researchers to develop evidence-based strategies for effective crisis communication and public engagement.

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