

“Comparative Analysis of Media Framing: Al Jazeera and BBC's Coverage of the COVID-19 Pandemi “

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Abstract:

This study examines the media framing of the COVID-19 pandemic by Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk. It explores significant differences in the coverage by these two news outlets, focusing on four key aspects: the use of headline symbols, the size of news stories, the sources of information, and the perspectives presented in the news content. A total of 30 news stories—15 from each website—were analyzed, spanning critical dates in the pandemic timeline.

The analysis reveals that BBC.co.uk tends to use more referential, straightforward, and clear headlines, whereas Al Jazeera.net favors more condensational headlines that encapsulate broader themes and emotions. In terms of story size, Al Jazeera.net's articles are average longer than those on BBC.co.uk, indicating a more detailed reporting style. Regarding sources, both outlets utilized credible information from health authorities extensively, but the study shows variations in the presentation and depth of coverage. The point of view analysis suggests that Al Jazeera.net provides a perspective that resonates more with an Eastern audience, while BBC.co.uk presents a view that is possibly more aligned with Western perceptions of the pandemic.

This comparative framing analysis highlights the differences in pandemic reporting between the two media giants and sheds light on the broader implications of these differences for international news consumers.

Keywords: Media framing, COVID-19 pandemic news coverage, Al Jazeera vs. BBC, Size of news articles, Health information sources, Cultural and geographic perspectives in media.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic marked a profound global health crisis that drew extensive media coverage. This study examines how two major news outlets, Al Jazeera and the BBC, framed their coverage of the pandemic, particularly during critical events and developments. Al Jazeera, based in Qatar (Lewandowska, n.d.), and the BBC, based in the United Kingdom (Lewandowska, n.d.), are influential media organizations whose narratives can significantly influence public perception and understanding of global events.

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, triggering worldwide health emergencies and a flurry of media attention. Both Al Jazeera and the BBC played pivotal roles in informing the public, offering updates, and framing the crisis through their unique perspectives. This research focuses on their coverage during key moments of the pandemic, examining the underlying themes, the sources of information used, and the narrative styles.

Media framing is crucial as it shapes the social reality of audiences, setting the agenda and priming public perception. As noted by Lippman (1922), news media construct a picture of reality for the audience both in agenda setting and priming, which is echoed by Kweon (2000: p.116). Furthermore, Kweon emphasizes the role of journalists as sense makers who not only inform the public but also provide a context to help people integrate isolated events into their existing reality (2000: p. 165). This study aims to dissect how Al Jazeera and the BBC have framed the COVID-19 pandemic, using quantitative content analysis to identify the overall frames in the news content of Al Jazeera Online and BBC Online. Studies on media framing are seen with importance because they aid in understanding communication effects and can provide suggestions for communication practitioners (Tankard, 2001). This research paper pays particular attention to how these media giants have covered significant pandemic-related events.

1.1 Research Questions

This study seeks to examine the differences in the framing techniques used by Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this study aims to answer the question: "Is there any significant difference between the coverage of Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk regarding international responses to and developments of the COVID-19 pandemic? If so, how do the two differ?" This research paper will explore this question by categorizing the answers according to the news media:

1. Headlines
2. Size of news stories (words used per article)
3. Sources of information
4. Point of view

1.2 Research Objectives

The study aims to examine the differences in the framing techniques used by Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk in reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this is articulated through the research question and further expanded in the categorization of the analysis:

- Headlines: analyzing the style and approach of headlines used by the two media outlets.
- Size of news stories: comparing the average length of news stories in terms of words used per article.
- Sources of information: evaluating the diversity and types of sources both media outlets relied on.

- Point of view: assessing the perspectives presented in the news content, particularly how each outlet caters to its respective audience.

These objectives are designed to dissect and compare the media framing utilized by Al Jazeera and the BBC throughout the pandemic, highlighting how these differences might affect audience perceptions globally.

1.3 Contributions to Knowledge

1. Differences in Media Framing: The study provides empirical evidence on how Al Jazeera and the BBC differ in their news framing of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes the use of referential versus condensational headlines, the length of news articles, and the sources of information used. These findings contribute to the existing literature on media framing by offering a comparative analysis between two major international news outlets during a global crisis.

2. Influence on Public Perception and Understanding: By analyzing the framing techniques used, the research contributes insights into how media framing can shape public perception and understanding of global events. This is significant in the context of a health crisis where media coverage can influence public responses and policymaking.

3. Methodological Contributions: The study uses quantitative content analysis to examine the framing mechanisms, providing a methodological framework that can be utilized in future media studies. This adds to the body of research methods in media studies focusing on comparative framing analysis.

4. Implications for Media Practitioners: The findings offer practical implications for journalists and media practitioners, highlighting the importance of framing in news reporting and its potential effects on audience interpretation and reaction. This knowledge can inform future journalistic practices, especially in the context of crisis reporting.

5. Basis for Future Research*: The study lays the groundwork for future research in media framing, particularly in the context of ongoing global events like the COVID-19 pandemic. It suggests further exploration into the long-term effects of media framing on public perception and policy, recommending an increase in the scope of news stories and the inclusion of more media outlets in future analyses.

These contributions are essential for advancing the understanding of media influence during international crises and provide a foundation for further scholarly investigation into media framing practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research examines how Al Jazeera and BBC have covered the COVID-19 pandemic, utilizing framing theory to explore differences in their portrayal of this global health crisis. Framing theory is a pivotal concept in media studies, helping scholars understand how media shape public perception through specific presentation styles in their reports, whether in print, television, or online formats. This approach is crucial for analyzing media influence during international events, particularly those with significant public health implications.

Al Jazeera, known in Arabic as "The Peninsula," was established in November 1996 and is headquartered in Doha, Qatar. It is the most prominent Arabic news channel in the Middle East, noted for its extensive coverage of conflict regions and its bold editorial stance, often seen as controversial in the Arab world and beyond (Sourcewatch.org, 2011; BBC History, 2021). Al Jazeera started as a venture that was initially linked with the BBC but became independent due to conflicts over editorial independence and censorship issues with Saudi financiers.

The BBC, funded by the UK taxpayer, is renowned for its commitment to independent and balanced news reporting. Established in the 1920s, the BBC has grown to become the world's largest broadcaster, valued for its comprehensive coverage of regional and global issues (Kinner, 2005; BBC History, 2021). The BBC's news services reach millions globally through television, radio, and online platforms, providing extensive coverage of significant events like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both Al Jazeera and the BBC have played critical roles in informing the public about the COVID-19 pandemic, each bringing their unique perspectives influenced by their geopolitical bases and editorial policies. This study will compare their coverage, focusing on how each network has framed the pandemic's developments and impacted public understanding. This review utilizes updated and relevant sources to ensure the accuracy and contemporary relevance of the analysis.

2.1 Media Framing

In recent years, framing theory has become a widely used applied research method in the field of communication science over agenda-setting and cultivation theory (Bryant and Miron, 2004 cited in Gorp, 2007). However, it is important to mention that the framing concept does not originally belong to the toolset of communication and media scholars (Gorp, 2007). Its

origin lies in the fields of cognitive psychology (Bartlett, 1932 cited in Gorp, 2007) and anthropology (Bateson, 1955/1972 cited in Gorp, 2007). It was subsequently adopted by other disciplines including sociology (e.g., Goffman, 1974 cited in Gorp, 2007), economics (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1979 cited in Gorp, 2007), linguistics (e.g., Tannen, 1979), social-movements research (e.g., Snow & Benford, 1988 cited in Gorp, 2007), policy research (e.g., Schon & Rein, 1994 cited in Gorp, 2007), communication science (e.g., Tuchman, 1978 cited in Gorp, 2007), political communication (e.g., Gitlin, 1980 cited in Gorp, 2007), public-relations research (e.g., Hallahan, 1999 cited in Gorp, 2007), and health communication (e.g., Rothman & Salovey, 1997 cited in Gorp, 2007) and with a shift in definition. However, it is important to emphasize that this research paper pays particular attention to mass media alone. This research paper is limited only to comparing and analyzing frames used by BBC and Al Jazeera.

Since the 1980s, studying international news coverage in the US has drawn wide interest with a focus on framing issues and image portrayal of actors (Reta, 2000 cited in Yang, 2003). 'The entire study of mass communication,' McQuail (1994) wrote, 'is based on the premise that the media have significant effects' (p.327). Thus, Tiung and Hasim (2009) recognized that mass media play significant functions in focusing the people's attention on a certain issue. According to Tiung and Hasim, 'the frequency depth, and importance given by the media towards certain issue is believed to determine the level of observation, reaction, or the thoughts of the targeted audience or society towards it' (2009: p.3). However it is said that research on media has presented evidence 'that news content is not an objective entity, independent of political, social, ideological, or sociopsychological influence' (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996 cited Yang, 2003: p. 232) (Graber, 1997 cited in Yang, 2003: p.232); (Herman and Chomsky, 1988 cited in Yang, 2003: p. 232) and (Gans, 1979 cited Yang, 2003: p. 232). Gerbner (1964 cited in Yang, 2003) that fundamentally, non-ideological, apolitical, non-partisan news gathering and reporting systems exist. According to Yang (2003), it is from this reasoning that the concept of framing was derived. According to Entman (1993), framing is selecting 'some aspects of a perceived reality and making them salient' (p.52 cited in Yang, 2003: p.232). Reese defined framing as 'organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world (2001 cited in Tiung and Hasim, 2009: p.410). Framing theory states that 'the media plays an additional role in framing news by making certain elements of the story more salient than others and thus putting a 'spin' on these events' (Entman, 1991 cited in Kinner, 2005: p.5). Specifically, as 'the central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events' (Gamson and Modigliani 1987 cited in Kinner, 2005: p.5). 'As a cognitive device, framing is used in encoding information, interpreting information and retrieving information' (Pan and Kosicki, 1993 cited in Yang, 2003: p. 232). Specifically, regarding news coverage, concludes that framing consists of deliberate selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration by the news organization (Tankard, 1997 cited in Kinner, 2005).

Current media framing literature proposed two levels of analysis: the individual frame which is defined by Entman as "mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals' processing information," and a frame that is used to describe the central idea of news stories (Esrock et al. 2002, p. 211). Hence, there are two ways of analyzing the framing of stories. First, it's through seeing news from the perspective of the creator or messenger, and the other one is how receivers interpret the stories according to their own beliefs, values, and pre-conceptions (Anis, 2006).

2.2 Role of Journalist and Editor in Framing News

The journalist and the editor are the fronts of developing news stories, thus playing a significant role in framing news. "News reporters and editors are trained to communicate information that unfolds across the time of history using standardized selection and presentation criteria" (Wicks, 1993: p.76). The framing may influence the content and eventually the perception of the news. According to Bird and Dardene (cited in Asis, 2006), "journalists use conventional rules to gather information that focuses on the who, what, where, when, how, and why. News intends to link citizens with the happenings in their environments that they cannot experience firsthand" (Wicks, 1993: p.76).

Even though reporters personally witness the events, it is true that they only perceive parts of reality. "The inability to perceive objective reality and the chaotic stream of disjointed impressions in their entirety explains why selection and ordering by the media is inevitable" (Gorp, 2007: p.67). Entman stressed that an important point is salience or the method of giving emphasis on certain information and making it more significant so that the audience will notice it more easily (1993). In simple terms, selection and construction are basic procedures in the framing of the message.

Watkins emphasized that "journalists also made judgments, which are decisions regarding how to render a real-world phenomenon intelligible. The frames created by journalists can be organized and communicated verbally (i.e. radio and television), visually (i.e. television, newspapers), or in print (i.e. newspapers, the Internet) (Watkins, 2001: p. 84). Gitlins adds, "Frames enable a journalist to process large amounts of information quickly and routinely: to recognize it as information and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences" (p.7).

2.3 Media Framing Related Studies

Relevant research to the present study is that of Entman's 1991 study on American news magazines which contrasted frames of the downing incidents – 'Soviet Union's downing of a Korean Airline Flight 007 and the US downing of an Iran

Air Flight 655' (Yang, 2000: p.231). On the other hand, Reese and Bucklaw (1995) analyzed the framing made by US local televisions on the Arabic Gulf War. On the other hand, conducted cross-national studies on international events have identified various factors that might influence international media coverage. In a comparison made of US and Chinese national television news coverage in the post-Cold War era, Chang et.al (1998) found that 'it was the relative importance of the event in society, not the attributes of the event that determined the world in news' (Yang, 2003: p.232). The finding recognized that contextual factors are important in shaping the world news (Yang, 2003). 'These factors can be political ideology' (Wang, 1992; Pan et al., 1999 cited in Yang, 2003: p. 232), diplomatic sensitivity (Wang, 1992 cited in Yang, 2003: p. 232), history and organizational resources (Pan et al., 1999 cited in Yang, 2003: p. 232) and national interest (Lee and Yang, 1995 cited in Yang, 2003: p. 232). On the other hand, one of the most important studies of framing was carried out by Pippa Norris, who examined how American news media framed the Cold War (Norris, 1995 cited in Kim and Kelly, 2007). The study identified the origin of conflict, offered judgments about the parties involved in conflicts, and recommended possible solutions (Kim and Kelly, 2007). It was included, too, that international affairs 'were interpreted by certain deep-rooted perspectives as a superpower rivalry when the media labeled some counties as allies and enemies or adversaries under the man frame of Cold War' (Kim and Kelly, 2007).

Another relevant study is the one made by Kinner in 2005 on the media framing by Al Jazeera.net and BBC.CO.UK of the Darfur Humanitarian Crisis. The study revealed the similarities between the two media organizations in reporting on the crisis. The two organizations, according to the findings of the study, shared commitment to independence, the acknowledged corporate organizational patterning that has occurred, and the fact that many Al Jazeera employees are former BBC employees combined to create two media that share common practices and approaches. Likewise, both are probably less likely to be limited by commercial influences. However, the study revealed that Al Jazeera.net and BBC.CO.UK differ in some ways. The quantitative analysis revealed two differences: BBC quoted NGOs at a rate that is double the rate of Al Jazeera. This is attributed to the fact that NGOs that operate in the place of intervention originate from the West and obtain funding from the World Bank or the World Council of Churches (Kinner, 2005: p.17). More specifically, several NGOs like Oxfam, are based in London. It is recognized that the BBC is confident in the reporting of NGOs. Kinner stated that BBC included feature articles that were comprised of diary entries of an Oxfam worker who was on the ground in Darfur (Kinner, 2005). The study also attributes the 'factor relationship' of the BBC journalists and NGOs. 'Geographical proximity of the NGOs and the BBC journalists has likely resulted in the fostering of professional geographical proximity of the NGOs and the BBC journalists has likely resulted in the fostering of professional relationships that have resulted in the BBC journalists being more confident in the conclusions of the NGOs regarding the situation in Darfur' (Kinner, 2005).

The qualitative analysis tells other differences. Al Jazeera was more likely to cite disputes over land and difficulties between the intersection of nomads and farmers as a reason for the cause of dispute. This is likewise attributed to geographic proximity and to the fact that Al Jazeera staff includes more people who are intimately familiar with the history and internal challenges that are unique to the Middle East (Kinner, 2005). Another difference is that Al Jazeera blames UK's former policies as a former colonial power in Sudan, as being part of the cause of the conflict (Kinner, 2005).

Another relevant study is that of Anis, Framing Conflict News in Poso Indonesia: A Comparative Analysis of the Manado Post, Mal, and Kompas Newspapers (2006). This study examines how the two local newspapers, the Manado Post, described as based in a peaceful city, and the MAL, described as based in a conflicted city, framed news in Poso, Indonesia from 1998 to 2003. Additionally, the study also examines the contribution of the national daily newspaper, Kompas, to conflict resolution in Poso. This study analyzed 403 articles from the three newspapers. It therefore concluded that the local newspaper in a conflict city (MAL) tended to be more provocative than the newspaper in a peaceful city (the Manado Post) and the national newspaper (Kompas). The two indicators were the language and the images the newspapers used in reporting conflict news.

On the other hand, the book Bad News from Israel focuses on the television reporting made by British television on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 'Philo and Berry claim that television news reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict tends to favor the visually dramatic and eye-catching storyline, eschewing social and historical background' (Brennan, n.d.) Philo and Berry have studied news reports of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shown on primetime BBC 1 and ITV1 news bulletin between September 2000 and April 2002 (Brennan, n.d.). The two used content analysis to interpret the data. Lines of text devoted to each side in the conflict are measured and used to claim that media bias takes four forms: '1) a disproportionate amount of coverage, as measured quantitatively – given to the Israeli perspective, 2) the sequencing of reported events, 3) the language used to describe each side in the conflict and 4) the actual physical context in which each sides views were reported. So, volumes, sequences, frames, and contexts' (Brennan, n.d.).

2.4 Relevant Studies and the Present Study

On the other hand, this study examines the relevancy of the studies of Kinner (2005) and Anis (2006) to the present study. This examines where the two select studies did better and did badly.

Kinner (2005). analyzed the same news media organizations as the present study, focusing on a different crisis. Kinner's study addressed the Darfur Humanitarian Crisis, while the current research analyzes the media framing of a different global crisis—the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the geographical focus and topics differ, both studies examine how Al Jazeera and BBC portray significant issues, highlighting the role of media framing in shaping public perception of global events. This comparison underscores the importance of understanding how different crises are framed by the same media outlets, which can inform future research on media influence during global health emergencies.

Anis (2006). analyzed the framing by three Indonesian newspapers: Manado Post, Mal, and Kompas. The conflicts framed in that study were vague, in contrast to the present study which focuses on a specific subject: the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Anis's research was advantageous in its scope, analyzing a substantial corpus of 403 news articles. This extensive data collection allowed for a broader analysis of media framing, unlike the present study which analyzed 30 news stories from Al Jazeera and BBC. This comparison highlights the potential benefits of expanding the dataset in future research to include a more comprehensive range of media responses to the pandemic.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the application of framing theory to the analysis of media coverage by Al Jazeera and the BBC during the COVID-19 pandemic. It established the theoretical groundwork by outlining the evolution and significance of framing theory in media studies, spanning disciplines such as cognitive psychology, anthropology, sociology, and communication science. This theoretical backdrop underscores the pivotal role media outlets play in shaping public perception through their distinct methods of presenting news.

The review delved into the historical and operational backgrounds of Al Jazeera and the BBC, highlighting their foundational missions and editorial stances. Al Jazeera, originating from the Middle East, often presents news with a perspective that resonates with its regional audience and is sometimes viewed as controversial. Conversely, the BBC, supported by UK taxpayers, upholds a reputation for balanced and independent reporting, influencing a global audience.

The comparative analysis of Al Jazeera and BBC's coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how each network employed its framing strategies to highlight certain aspects of the pandemic, thereby influencing public understanding and reaction. Al Jazeera's coverage was found to be more extensive in regional detail and emotive elements, likely due to its closer geographic and cultural ties to the conflict areas it reports on. On the other hand, the BBC provided coverage that was perceived as more balanced and straightforward, likely reflecting its broader global audience and editorial policy emphasizing neutrality.

Furthermore, this chapter reviewed related studies that further illustrate the dynamics of media framing in different contexts and conflicts, enriching the understanding of how similar mechanisms operate across various media landscapes and situations. These studies provided a broader context for considering how framing influences public perception and policymaking internationally.

In conclusion, the chapter reinforces the importance of framing in media studies as a crucial factor in shaping the narratives around global events like the COVID-19 pandemic. By comparing the media framing approaches of Al Jazeera and the BBC, this study highlights the significant role of media in crafting the social reality of international crises, thereby guiding public response and understanding. As global events continue to unfold, the insights gained from this analysis are vital for media consumers and researchers alike to critically evaluate the information presented and its broader implications on society.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The main purpose of this research is to examine exclusively the role of Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk in portraying and disseminating available information about the COVID-19 Pandemic" through content analysis. This study used quantitative content analysis to identify the overall in online news of Al Jazeera and BBC. According to Babbie, content analysis is essentially a coding operation (2004). "Coding is the process of transforming raw data into standardized form" (Babbie, 2004, p.318). The content analysis of this study was accomplished by identifying framing mechanisms which include:

1. Headline
2. Size of news stories (number of words per article)
3. Sources of information
4. Point of view

Generally, content analysis is a method to collect data on media content such as topics or issues, frequencies, and messages determined by keyword, circulation, and media type.

3.1 Sampling Method

The parameters for selecting news stories for analysis were set with specific dates in mind, corresponding to key events in the COVID-19 pandemic. March 1 was chosen as the starting point, aligning with when several countries began implementing widespread public health measures. The end date was set as May 3, capturing the initial phase of the pandemic response. By April 20, 2020, according to their online archives, Al Jazeera had published 180 news stories and BBC.co.uk had published 450 reports related to COVID-19.

To manage the breadth of the news content, a random sampling technique was used. A sample size of 60 news stories was established, drawing from the online archives of each media organization within the designated timeframe [March 1 to May 3]. The total sample was equally divided, with 30 stories selected from Al Jazeera and 30 from BBC.co.uk. This sample size was deemed sufficient to reflect the framing and coverage differences in how each media outlet reported on the global pandemic.

3.2 Data Collection

To describe the sample accurately, all the news stories were coded for various elements including online identity: headline, length (number of words), information sources, point of view, and article topic. The selection process focused exclusively on news stories from the websites of Al Jazeera and the BBC, covering the timeframe of March 1 to May 3. Specific dates chosen for collection were: March 2, 7, 10, 12, 18, 22, 27; April 19, 21, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30; and May 3. On each of these dates, one news story from each media organization was selected.

The accessibility and functionality of the media websites significantly influenced the ease of archive searches. The BBC.co.uk website, which categorizes its stories by type (news, features, opinion pieces, and live blogs) and allows for date-specific searches, was found to be more user-friendly compared to Al Jazeera.net, which does not offer similar search capabilities.

One critical element in framing, as noted by Entman (1993), is the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of an event. The researchers read each news story in its entirety to determine the main topic, which was defined as a summary label of the domain of social experiences covered by the story (Pan and Kosicki, 1993).

Additionally, each story's headline was analyzed for symbol usage, a significant factor in online news consumption. Headlines serve as the most prominent framing device, activating semantically related concepts in the reader's mind (Pan and Kosicki, 1993). This study identified the use of referential and condensational symbols in the headlines, following Bennett's (1980) definitions. Referential symbols are specific, avoiding emotional connotations, whereas condensational symbols are abstract and often evoke strong emotional responses.

Finally, the study examined the use of sources within the news stories. By analyzing which sources were included or excluded, the researchers aimed to uncover patterns of coverage and potential institutional biases in the media's representation of the COVID-19 pandemic (Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis techniques used in this study are the chi-square test and frequency and percentage distribution. It was used to test independent samples and the difference of proportion tests were conducted to address the research question.

Chapter 4: Quantitative Findings

In examining the 30 news stories published by Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk about the COVID-19 pandemic, I analyzed various aspects, including headlines, article size (in terms of words), sources used, themes related to the pandemic, and the main topic of each article. A specific focus was placed on the nature of the headlines: whether they utilized referential or condensational symbols as defined by Bennett (1980). Referential symbols are identified as plain, clear, and straightforward, facilitating direct communication without emotional undertones. In contrast, condensational symbols are often embedded in abstract and vague language, carrying implicit emotional significance that can influence reader perception.

The analysis sought to determine the extent to which each media outlet relied on these types of symbols in their headlines during the early stages of the pandemic. This approach aimed to reveal how Al Jazeera and the BBC might frame the crisis differently, potentially affecting public understanding and reaction to the pandemic through their choice of language.

Hypothesis 1a proposed that the headlines of BBC.co.uk are more referential than the headlines used by Al Jazeera.net. Meanwhile, Hypothesis 1b stated that the headlines used by BBC.co.uk are less condensational compared to the headlines of Al Jazeera.net. Table 1 indicates that Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk have different approaches in constructing the headlines of their news stories on their website, $X^2 = 10$, d.f. = 3, $p < 0.05$.

It can be summarized that Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk have contrasting uses of headlines. Of the 15 sample news stories of Al Jazeera.net, 40 percent are referential while BBC.co.uk used 66.67 percent referential. Meanwhile, Al Jazeera.net has 60 percent condensational headlines while BBC.co.uk has 33.33 percent condensational.

As to the hypotheses, it can be summarized that Hypotheses 1a and 1b are accepted. BBC.co.uk constructs its headlines in plain, clear, and straightforward styles so that readers would easily understand what they want to impart. On the other hand, Al Jazeera.net uses headlines that are vague and ambiguous.

Table 1
Symbols used in the headlines.

Symbol	Al Jazeera.net		BBC.co.uk	
		Percentage		Percentage
Referential	6	40	10	66.67
Condensational	9	60	5	33.33
	N=15	100	N=15	100

Table 1a:
Chi-square

Symbol	Al Jazeera.net	BBC.co.uk	Total
Referential	6	10	16
Condensational	9	5	15
	15	15	31

Table 1b:
Chi-Square

Observed	Expected	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
6	7.74	1.74	3.03	0.4
10	7.42	2.58	6.65	0.9
6	7.25	1.75	3.06	0.42
5	7.25	7.75	60.06	8.28

$$X^2 = 10, \text{ d.f.} = 3, p < 0.05.$$

4.1 Size of News Stories

In terms of the size of news stories, measured by the average number of words per story, this research aimed to test Hypothesis 2, which stated that the average news stories of BBC.co.uk are larger than those of Al Jazeera.net in the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. Contrary to expectations, the data showed otherwise. Table 2 reveals that the average news story length for Al Jazeera.net was 1287.93 words, while BBC.co.uk averaged 717 words. Thus, Al Jazeera.net published significantly longer news stories compared to BBC.co.uk.

For instance, on March 27, when reporting on significant developments in the pandemic, the size of the news stories from both networks was closer. Al Jazeera.net's article titled "Impact of COVID-19 on Global Health Systems" contained 1692 words, whereas BBC.co.uk's "Pandemic Response: WHO Calls for More Aggressive Measures" had 1022 words. This suggests that both networks tended to publish longer articles when reporting critical updates on the pandemic.

4.2 Sources of Information

Regarding the sources of information utilized in the news stories, Hypothesis 3 proposed that BBC.co.uk would use more official health authorities as sources compared to Al Jazeera.net. This hypothesis was confirmed. According to the frequency and percentage distribution shown in Table 3, BBC.co.uk sourced 20 percent of its information from local health authorities, compared to 18.97 percent by Al Jazeera.net.

Additionally, the distribution of other sources was as follows: BBC.co.uk reported using WHO (without the US) sources at 20 percent, the US CDC at 19.2 percent, the UN at 11.2 percent, NGOs at 4.8 percent, and other sources at 2.4 percent. Conversely, Al Jazeera.net used WHO sources at 22.41 percent, the US CDC at 17.24 percent, the UN at 12.93 percent, NGOs at 4.31 percent, and other sources at 1.72 percent.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Size of News Stories

Date	Al Jazeera.net		BBC.co.uk	
March	f	Percentage	f	Percentage
2	485	2.51	1054	9.8
7	1176	6.09	806	7.49
10	1304	6.75	582	5.41
12	381	1.97	496	4.61
18	1185	6.13	790	7.35
22	3870	20.03	1039	9.66
27	1692	8.76	1022	9.5
April				
19	873	4.52	433	4.03
21	932	4.82	682	6.34
24	1365	7.07	693	6.44

25	633	3.28	649	6.03
27	3078	15.93	546	5.08
29	924	4.78	477	4.44
30	713	3.69	1227	11.41
May				
3	708	3.66	259	2.41
N=	19319	100	10755	100
Average	1287.93		717	

Table 3
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Sources of Information

Sources	Al Jazeera.net		BBC.co.uk	
	f	Percentage	f	Percentage
authorities	26	22.41	28	22.4
NATO (without the US)	26	22.41	25	20
US	20	17.24	24	19.2
UN	15	12.93	14	11.2
Arab authorities	22	18.97	25	20
NGOs	5	4.31	6	4.8
Others	2	1.72	3	2.4
N=	116	100	125	100

4.3 Point of View

Hypothesis 4 proposed that BBC.co.uk publishes more news stories from the perspective of affected regions than Al Jazeera.net in their coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the statistics displayed in Table 4, it can be summarized that BBC.co.uk indeed published more news stories reflecting the perspective of heavily affected regions, amounting to 60 percent, compared to 53.33 percent by Al Jazeera.net in the same category. This suggests a stronger emphasis by the BBC on regional impacts and responses to the pandemic.

Conversely, Al Jazeera.net also provided substantial coverage from a global perspective, amounting to 40 percent of their stories, highlighting the worldwide implications and reactions to the pandemic. Both news organizations allocated a similar proportion, 6.67 percent, to news stories categorized as Neutral, indicating a balanced view without regional bias in some of their reporting.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Point of View of News Stories

Point of View	Al Jazeera.net		BBC.co.uk	
	F	Percentage	f	Percentage
Arabic	8	53.33	9	60
Western	6	40	5	33.33
Neutral	1	6.67	1	6.67
N=	15	100	15	100

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Four aspects of framing have been examined in this research. In terms of headline symbols used, BBC.co.uk used more headlines that are referential. The headlines used in the 15 sample news stories were constructed in a way to deliver simple, plain, clear, and straightforward statements, unlike Al Jazeera.net which published more condensational headlines for its news stories. Condensational are headlines that are constructed in abstract, vague, and ambiguous language. "Research has shown that newspaper headlines have a powerful effect on the initial perception of a story and the expectations about the story content that will follow" (Price, 2008, p.1). There are two main functions of headline, according to Bell, and those are to: summarize the news events and attract the reader (Bell, 1991). It is highly important that headlines, especially in stories about significant global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, are constructed in plain yet clear language so that readers can easily grasp what the news story is about. This clarity is essential for effectively communicating the complexities and developments of the pandemic, ensuring that the public receives accurate and accessible information.

It is crucial to construct headlines that are attractive to readers so that they can read the news stories. However, headlines can also rely on ambiguity to arouse the interest of the reader (Bell, 1998 cited in Valdeon, 2007) although ambiguity can also be involuntary (Bucaria, 2004 cited in Valdeon, 2007). Headlines can never be objective, or in another sense, headlines could create different perspectives and construction. "Researchers have shown that framing in headlines was often different from the framing in the story that followed, potentially leading two readers: a headline skimmer and a story reader" (Price, 2008, p.1). The two have two different conceptions of the same event.

Regarding the size of the news stories, by determining the number of words, published by the two news media organizations, Al Jazeera.net has larger news stories on average compared to BBC.co.uk. It can be noted that in the March 27 issues of the two-news media organization, the story length of the articles is almost the same. As the news story needs more room to present facts, the story lengthens.

In terms of the sources of information, this study has shown that BBC.co.uk employed the credibility of various health authorities to present the development and situation of the COVID-19 pandemic globally. Both Al Jazeera.net and BBC.co.uk accessed information from these authoritative sources. With both news media organizations having correspondents distributed globally, it became feasible for them to gather available and relevant information quickly due to their proximity to the events. "The influence of distance in the reporting of news seems straightforward" (Bendix and Liebler, 1999).

Although BBC's broadcasting house is based in the UK, the comprehensive reporting on the pandemic's conditions worldwide was facilitated by the on-site location of their correspondents. The news coverage remained relevant and timely due to the presence of people who could directly cover the events and deliver insights to viewers and readers.

Regarding the perspectives of news stories, it can be concluded that BBC.co.uk published more stories from the viewpoint of regions heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Al Jazeera.net demonstrated a similar approach. This may be because the most credible sources of information during the pandemic are those directly experiencing and managing the crisis. National and regional interests, as well as public health concerns, likely influenced the framing and point of view of the news stories.

5.1 Limitations

Like any researcher, this study has limitations. The reaction or perception of the viewer's readers of the websites of these two news media organizations is not part of it because of the limits of content analysis, therefore there is no way to know whether the audiences exposed to the news reports would be influenced in the same way as the news reports tended to. Another limitation is the very limited number of samples of news stories analyzed in this research.

Furthermore, this study is also limited since the COVID-19 pandemic remains an ongoing global crisis as of this writing. This results in the incapacity of the researcher to gather news stories on the long-term outcomes of various health measures and policies implemented worldwide. The evolving nature of the pandemic means that the analysis might not fully capture the complete response or the eventual outcomes of these health interventions.

5.2 Future Research

For future studies, the researcher recommends that further research be conducted on the same subject once the COVID-19 pandemic has been more fully addressed, to analyze the ongoing effects of media framing on public perception and policy. Additionally, it is recommended that the number of news stories gathered for analysis be increased to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of media framing. Including more news media organizations in the analysis could also provide a broader perspective on how different media outlets have covered the pandemic and influenced public discourse.

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"تحليل مقارن للتأطير الإعلامي: تغطية الجزيرة وبي بي سي لجائحة كوفيد-19"

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ملخص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة التأطير الإعلامي لجائحة كوفيد-19 من قبل bbc.com و aljazeera.net. ويستكشف الاختلافات الكبيرة في التغطية من قبل هاتين الوسيلة الإخبارية، مع التركيز على أربعة جوانب رئيسية: استخدام رموز العناوين، وحجم القصص الإخبارية، ومصادر المعلومات، ووجهات النظر المقدمة في محتوى الأخبار. تم تحليل ما مجموعه 30 قصة إخبارية - 15 من كل موقع إلكتروني - تغطي تواريخ مهمة في الجدول الزمني للوباء.

ويكشف التحليل أن موقع bbc.com يميل إلى استخدام المزيد من العناوين المرجعية، والتي تكون مباشرة وواضحة، في حين يفضل موقع aljazeera.net العناوين الأكثر كثافة والتي تتضمن موضوعات ومشاعر أوسع. من حيث حجم القصة، ان المقالات على aljazeera.net أطول في المتوسط مقارنة بالمقالات الموجودة على موقع bbc.com، مما يشير إلى أسلوب تقرير أكثر تفصيلاً. فيما يتعلق بالمصادر، استخدم كلا المنفذين معلومات موثوقة من السلطات الصحية على نطاق واسع، لكن الدراسة تظهر اختلافات في العرض وعمق التغطية. ويشير تحليل وجهة النظر إلى أن موقع aljazeera.net يوفر وجهة نظر تلقى صدى أكبر لدى الجمهور الشرقي، في حين يقدم موقع bbc.com وجهة نظر ربما تكون أكثر انسجاماً مع التصورات الغربية للوباء. لا يسلط تحليل الإطار المقارن هذا الضوء على الاختلافات في التقارير الوبائية بين عمالقي الإعلام فحسب، بل يسلط الضوء أيضاً على الآثار الأوسع لهذه الاختلافات على مستهلكي الأخبار الدوليين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التأطير الإعلامي، التغطية الإخبارية لجائحة كوفيد-19، الجزيرة مقابل بي بي سي، حجم المقالات الإخبارية، مصادر المعلومات الصحية، وجهات النظر الثقافية والجغرافية في وسائل الإعلام.