



# An Empirical Investigation of Global Media Framing, COVID-19, and the Vaccination Debate

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## Abstract

**Background:** This study looked at how the COVID-19 vaccine has been framed in international media. Understanding the possible impact of international media outlets as producers of health messages during pandemics required consideration of the framing and media dependency theories.

**Methods:** To produce qualitative and quantitative data to address the research topics, content analysis was performed. While the quantitative data included statistical information about the frequency, viewership level, and types of news frames on issues of vaccination for COVID-19, the qualitative data offered rich descriptive data about the themes and types of news frames on issues of vaccination for COVID-19.

**Results:** This study's findings demonstrated that conflict and responsibility frames were the most common ones used to report on COVID-19 vaccination-related difficulties. The results of this analysis also showed that the primary media focus on the COVID-19 vaccination problem was vaccine safety.

**Conclusion:** In both wealthy and developing nations, health communication is supplied by the worldwide media. This study suggested that a global information campaign be led by the media to dispel myths, falsehoods, and misinformation regarding COVID-19 vaccination.

**Keywords:** Health promotion, Health communication, COVID-19, Health literacy, Pandemic

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## Introduction

The worldwide community's efforts to enhance human capital have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is currently associated with an increase in fatalities across the globe. Researchers concur that COVID-19 is a severe health problem with detrimental snowball effects on the world's economies. The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the health infrastructure and economic security of the majority of countries worldwide; it was noted in a similar vein. COVID-19 is a plague that has thus adversely affected human existence. Additionally, the COVID-19 epidemic has a detrimental multiplier effect on several systems, industries, and institutions around the world [1, 2].

Notably, a number of international health organisations, like

the WHO and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), have suggested vaccination as a primary health measure to stop the disease's spread. These organisations claimed that when a sizable portion of the global population has received vaccinations, the viral disease's spread can be stopped. Therefore, COVID-19 vaccinations will both lessen the pandemic and advance long-term health security in both developed and developing nations.

The effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccinations has recently been the subject of numerous arguments and disputes. While some of these studies concentrated on the myths surrounding the vaccines, other investigations emphasised the effectiveness and significance of the vaccine [3]. There are, however, few empirical investigations on how COVID-19 vaccine issues are framed in the global media.

In light of this, this study looked at how the COVID-19 vaccine debate has been framed in international media. This is crucial since it's necessary to produce qualitative and quantitative data on the many viewpoints on the vaccination debate. The importance and utility of this study is that it offers empirical data on the various viewpoints on problems impacting COVID-19 vaccination in developed and developing countries. Additionally, this study's uniqueness is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 3.4, which highlights the significance of health literacy and information for infectious and viral diseases worldwide. The objectives of this study are to determine the types of global media framing on issues of vaccination for COVID-19, the audience level of global media framing, and to assess the recurrent themes of global media reports on issues of vaccination for COVID-19 [4].

## Discussion

COVID-19 is currently associated with an increase in fatalities in both developed and developing nations. The worldwide community's sociocultural, political, and economic systems are all negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, vaccination has been recognised as the most important medical strategy to stop the viral disease from spreading around the world. This study looked at how the COVID-19 vaccine debate was framed in the international media [5].

The empirical data produced for this study demonstrates that different news headline formats were adopted by international media outlets in order to accomplish specific goals. Aljazeera started using question-headlines frequently to report on vaccination-related topics. For instance, Which COVID-19 vaccines perform better than the others? What happens to the AstraZeneca vaccine in the future? The AstraZeneca vaccine: is it secure or not? The news headline's goal is to pique interest, which will be utilised to influence the reader or listener. It might be assumed that the purpose of using question headers was to sway listeners' opinions. CNN started using reason-why headlines frequently to report on vaccination-related difficulties. For instance, "Trump supporters explain why they won't take the vaccine," "A nurse is willing to lose her job to dodge the vaccine, hear why," and "Why do those who have received the vaccine need to mark?" View Gupta's response. The reason-why headline's objective is to inform and change behaviour. It can be inferred that the purpose of using "reason-why" headlines was to dispel myths and offer further explanations for concerns [6].

The study also found that the main media themes surrounding COVID-19 vaccination related to vaccine safety. Global public health organisations are concerned about the safety of vaccines. This finding supports academics' claims that vaccine benefits and hazards messaging have little influence on people's intentions to get vaccinated. It can be assumed that the advantages and safety of vaccines will reduce public mistrust, scepticism, and apprehension. Additionally, the efficacy of immunisations is a key predictor of the global pandemic's reversal.

## Theoretical Foundation

The framing and media dependency theories serve as the foundation for this investigation. It's significant to note that the

framing theory is a branch of the agenda setting theory, which asserts that the media has the ability to report on a distinctive viewpoint on a topic that has both national and international significance. Furthermore, the framing theory's main tenet asserts that how topics are presented in the media can affect how people choose or make judgements. In essence, the media develops distinctive frames for what is occurring in any contemporary society. Researchers discovered four different categories of news frames, including:

- The conflict frame, which is a news framing device that highlights the conflict between people, organisations, and groups.
- Economic consequence, which is a news frame that emphasises an issue in line with the economic consequences.
- Human interest frame, which is a news frame that promotes the interest of humanity.
- An issue is portrayed in a news frame called a "responsibility frame" when the issue's cause or resolution is given credit. According to this study, the media fabricates distinct narratives regarding the COVID-19 vaccine debate in an effort to shape public opinion around the world.

According to the location of the media dependence theory, the media will become increasingly significant in people's life as they become more reliant on it to meet their needs. In essence, a person's reliance on the media to satiate their informational requirements determines the media's effect. Another fundamental tenet of this theory holds that during times of crisis, conflict, or pandemic, people heavily rely on news and information from the media. On essence, health literacy and information on matters of national and international significance are centred in the media. In relation to this study, health information about the nature and threat of COVID-19 in rich and low resource countries is primarily obtained from the media. Additionally, the media acts as a true forum for discussions and debates on preventative measures to stop the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. Furthermore, stories regarding vaccines being used to treat COVID-19 have been manufactured by the media [7, 8].

## Pandemic COVID-19 and vaccines

Coronavirus 2019 is known as COVID-19 in the world of public health. Medically speaking, COVID-19 is a condition brought on by a novel coronavirus called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. (SAR-CoV-2). A significant public health issue that has harmed the entire world community is COVID-19. More than two million people have died as a result of this viral illness in both industrialised and underdeveloped nations. In comparison to Africa and Australia, Asia, Europe, and North America have been significantly affected by the worldwide epidemic.

## Materials and Methods

The study's research strategy included content analysis. To accomplish the study objectives using this research approach, variables must be measured systematically and objectively. To address the research topics in this study, the content analysis produced both qualitative and quantitative data. While the

quantitative data included statistical information about the frequency, viewership level, and types of news frames on issues of vaccination for COVID-19, the qualitative data offered rich descriptive data about the themes and types of news frames on issues of vaccination for COVID-19. It's significant that this study used the descriptive, interpretive, and predictive techniques to data analysis for content analysis [9, 10].

Three international television networks were chosen to fulfil the study's objectives for the sake of empirical innovation. CNN, BBC, and Al Jazeera have been chosen as the international television networks. Based on their network coverage, popularity, and continental influence, these international media outlets were chosen. It's important to note that the research's time frame was from March 2021 to July 2021. Given the widespread use of COVID-19 vaccinations, this timeline was chosen.

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## Conclusion

The originality of this study offers empirical data on global media framing and the various viewpoints of issues impacting COVID-19 vaccination in developed and developing nations. In both wealthy and developing nations, health communication is supplied by the worldwide media. The activity of international news organisations can alter the debate and discussion of enduring topics like COVID-19 immunisation. The global community depends on the media for news and information in order to survive a pandemic, according to the ideas of the media dependency hypothesis. This study suggests that media messages on vaccine concerns be structured to affect importance and protective behaviours to stop the virus's spread. Additionally, a campaign to dispel myths, misrepresentations, and misunderstandings about the COVID-19 vaccine can be led by the international media.