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### Television reporting in pandemic times

Edonit Behluli

*University for Business and Technology - UBT*, [edonit.behluli@ubt-uni.net](mailto:edonit.behluli@ubt-uni.net)

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# Television reporting in pandemic times

Edonit Behluli

UBT – Institution of Higher Education, Calabria Neighbourhood, 10000  
p.n., Prishtina, Kosovo

[edonit.behluli@ubt-uni.net](mailto:edonit.behluli@ubt-uni.net)

**Abstract.** The research will analyze the central news editions during a given month, on four national frequency televisions (RTK, RTV21, KTV and KLAN KOSOVA). This paper will highlight the percentage of news that has been devoted to the pandemic and the percentage of other news that have been broadcast during this time. Also, the research will show whether the structure of an edition with the usual columns has been respected, while specifically addressing the news rankings for the pandemic.

**Keywords:** News, televisions, pandemics, structures

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 virus has changed many things in our lives, including the way media reports about events that occur over time. Throughout human history, many things have changed with the development of technology, especially the media, their reporting has become easier every year. People are aware that technology is advancing fast but also media researchers have realized that technology is evolving and changing them also. Cameras and telecommunications tools have changed and now reporting is differently, in real time thus making the news served much faster. But who would have thought that an epidemic that later turned into a pandemic would change, if not completely, but a large part of television and other media coverage. Our televisions in Kosovo used to report on various events, which focused more on politics, but with the appearance of the first cases of the COVID-19 virus in Kosovo, they began to report on the pandemic. This paper will show how four national frequency televisions report in the central news editions about the COVID-19 pandemic. The main focus of this study is the analysis of the reporting of these televisions, the structuring of the pandemic news that these televisions have given space to the central edition and the percentage of other news that have been broadcast during this period.

### 1.1 Hypothesis

With the rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the media began to increase the reporting of this disease that has spread throughout the world, including Kosovo. Thus, the coverage of 50%, and maybe even more, of the central news edition, with only news about the pandemic, became more frequent, leaving aside many areas without reporting. Televisions in Kosovo were influenced by the global trend and evolved in reporting, due to COVID-19. Numerous cases in Kosovo, as well as the lack of a vaccine and poor capacity in our hospitals, made the media report more in the central news edition.

## **1.2 Work samples**

Samples of this paper highlight the increased attention given to reporting on four national frequency televisions: RTK, RTV 21, KTV, Klan Kosova

## **1.3 Methodology**

This paper is based on two scientific methodologies, that of observation and comparison.

## **2. Literature review**

The paper will be realized based on the theoretical aspect and the observational and comparative methodology. The book "hyrje në gazetari", by prof. ass. dr. Milazim Krasniqi, as well as the book "Raportimi dhe Shkrimi i Lajmeve", by professor and researcher, Melvin Mencher, these books reinforce the findings of this research, which are related to reporting. Media reporting is one of the key elements of a functioning media or journalism. Reporting is perhaps the strongest weapon a media has, and that is where all media compare to each other. It is the reporters who maintain a medium with good reporting, so not everything has to be reported, so the question arises how should they report in different situations?

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed not only people but also the media, especially with the way it is reported. Usually each media, with its editorial policy, have given different spaces to the most important areas of life, starting from politics, economy, justice, sports, culture, and health. However, in the editorial policies a special field has been introduced in the central news editions, that of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now every time, in the news editions we have to see two or three stories about the pandemic.

There is no definitive literature showing how to report in pandemic situations. Journalists have faced wars and various situations, some have faced epidemics but not such a pandemic, and now with new television technology they have access to numerous opportunities for direct reporting and broadcasting. But in the media and literature for journalism, and journalism schools, only the way of reporting catastrophes and major disasters is explained. Prof. ass. dr. Milazim Krasniqi, in his book "hyrje në gazetari", discusses how the media should report on these situations, similar to the pandemic. According to Professor Krasniqi, reporting on such situations, catastrophes and major disasters, is one of the most difficult and delicate and dramatic reporting for journalists, but also for news agencies, radio, television and newspapers. And in this conclusion of Professor Krasniqi, he emphasizes that the reports on these situations and such cases are made according to a media ranking, which is led by news agencies, and then switch to radio and television, ending with newspapers, which according to him they report later, somewhere in the time frame that reaches twenty-four hours. Prof. ass. dr. Milazim Krasniqi, estimates that this ranking has recently been broken, because televisions are taking the primacy of reporting, even that of live broadcasts, for catastrophes and major disasters. (Krasniqi, 2008: 105)

On the other hand, professor and researcher of journalism, Melvin Mencher, in disaster situations emphasizes that it is difficult to determine the clear boundaries between disasters and accidents, which according to him the difference can only be in the number of victims. According to Mencher, some

define disaster as mass destruction and death, usually related to the action of forces of nature such as floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, storms, and dryness. However, Professor and researcher Mencher defines the term disaster as a great loss of life, which in our case coincides with the COVID-19 virus, which has caused and is causing great loss of life. Contrary to the definitions of catastrophes and major disasters by Professor Milazim Krasniqi, in his book "hyrje në gazetari", the researcher Melvin Mencher mentions the sources in such situations, which based on what he elaborates, journalists do not remain bad. We can get statements from prime ministers, presidents and kings, generals and local and border police, and in our case health workers and health organizations, but according to Mencher, none of the sources is able to fully give the effects of disaster or catastrophe, without once passing the first shock of human loss. (Mencher, 1991: 397,398,399)

However, in situations of disaster when it comes to reporting in figures, as in the specific case of publishing cases of infection with the virus COVID-19, specified in figures, great care must be taken. Since the first case of COVID-19 virus in Kosovo, the National Institute of Public Health of Kosovo has published daily the numbers of those infected with the corona virus, in a term inappropriate for public opinion. Added to this are two reasons, the first being published in the late evening hours and arousing panic among the citizens about this pandemic, and the second reason that these figures were published after the end of the central news informative edition, which conditioned the media to prepare a special news edition. This situation is also described in the book "Raportimi dhe shkrimi i lajmeve" written by the Missouri Group, with journalists: Brian S. Brooks, George Kennedy, Daryl R. Moen, and Don Ranly. It says that many journalists are anxious to work with figures and often create unintentional confusion when they have to work with erratic mixing of figures and words. (Missouri Group 2005: 124)

It is also said that journalists can incite misunderstandings in reporting such cases by describing large increases in numbers or percentages. (Missouri Group 2005: 126)

In order to better understand the reporting on the pandemic, but also on how it was reported earlier, below we will present a chronology about reporting for variola virus and then the findings on reporting on COVID-19.

## **2. Reporting on variola vera**

COVID-19 is not the only infection that has affected Kosovo.

Kosovo has been affected by such a virus before. Variola vera, was an infection that had affected the people of Kosovo in 1972, otherwise known to the people as bad measles, and which was considered more dangerous than today's coronavirus, since in the statistics of that time it killed three to ten people affected. One of the challenges that time had, was the information and reporting on the disease by the media, ie media coverage, especially in Kosovo, because in that period the technology in the media was not developed, and that communication as opposed to the media that we have nowadays, was almost impossible. One of those who had experienced Variola virus was journalist Nehat Islami, and in an article published by the portal koha.net, he explains the challenges he has faced along with other reporters, about reporting on this virus. *"Today, hour by hour, those few radios in Kosovo, as we do not have a local TV*

*with a full program, distribute advice on how to protect people, what to eat and, distribute advice on how to protect people, what to eat and what to drink, to avoid contacts with suspects, but how to know who has been affected by virus, when she is cunning ". Journalist Islami best reflects that even at that time the same panic had started among the people, with the panic that was added by the media reports, at that time the waves of Radio Prishtina. "Frequent announcements were added to the general panic on the waves of Radio Prishtina in the style: Behold! Come on! Who traveled today with bus no. so and so, let them report immediately to the first medical station ". At that time, Rilindja journalist Nehat Islami had stayed in the quarantined hospital of Gjakova and had been shooting all day inside the hospital in Gjakova. "At the exit, at the main quarantine door, some technicians spray us from the heels to the head with the digestion that had arrived from the outside world against this virus. "The cameras and every part of our equipment were" left ".*

*"Tonight I have to go to the Kosovo Television Editorial Office in Belgrade, because we still do not have broadcasting technique in Pristina. Tomorrow will be broadcast the exclusive TV show from the quarantine of Gjakova ". (khr. <https://www.koha.net/arberi/210145/variola-vera-ne-kosove-48-vjet-para-koronavirusit-ne-kine/>)*

### **3. Reporting on COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic found Kosovo more prepared in terms of media, as well as in the way it reported. With a more perfect technology than in previous years, and better than the variola time, the media in Kosovo had better opportunities to report on the pandemic, and to avoid increasing cases by reporting in detail on the infected. In real time, the Kosovar media are now reporting on infected people in the twenty-four hour period, thus being transparent with all citizens of Kosovo. Since reporting on various fields such as politics, economics, culture and sports, now the turn has shifted to health, which has rarely happened that all news editions contain at least two or three topics related to health. The COVID-19 pandemic has given space, say, sponsored space to each edition of health news, thus changing the way it is reported during July-September, which is still ongoing.

In the research conducted in two different time periods, on four national frequency televisions: RTK, RTV 21, KTV and Klan Kosova, we see that RTV 21 has reported the most on the COVID-19 pandemic, in both research periods, hence the period July and the period September. In July it reported one hour and 26 minutes and 47 seconds of news about the pandemic, from 4 hours and 44 minutes and 42 seconds that it had for a week in the central edition. Unlike RTK, which is a public television and has a longer airtime than RTV 21, the television that citizens know to be public television, has given more space to politics, which at 19:30, in July when the number of cases had increased, he reported 50 minutes and 4 seconds for the pandemic from 4 hours and 49 minutes and 8 seconds as he had a total of one week of reporting in the central news edition. Kohavision, the other national frequency television, ranks second after RTV 21 for the news reported on the COVID-19 pandemic, thus reporting one hour, 23 minutes and 16 seconds of news on the COVID-19 pandemic, from 3 hours, 45 minutes and 44 second it had in a week reporting in July. Klan Kosova during this period is ranked third of these four televisions for the airtime given to the pandemic COVID-19 in the central news edition, where from 4

hours and 13 minutes and 22 seconds of news in a week, the space that has given to the pandemic was one hour and 16 minutes and 21 seconds, as the ranking in terms of the number of stories within the week is led by the same television, with 45 stories prepared. The longest **storie** dedicated to COVID-19, during the month of July, was realized by RTV 21 entitled "*119 new cases with COVID-19, 92 cured*", with a time of 5 minutes and 55 seconds, a storie dated July 15, 2020 .

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Kohëzgjatja e edicionit brenda javës	Storia/kronika më e gjatë	Numri i storieve gjatë gjithë javës
RTK	0:50:04	4:49:08	0:04:34	29
RTV 21	1:26:47	4:44:42	0:05:55	31
KTV	1:23:16	3:45:44	0:03:59	34
Klan Kosova	1:16:21	4:13:22	0:03:37	45

**Figure 1.** Reporting table of four national frequency televisions in the period: 10.07.2020 - 17.07.2020

Following the decline in cases of COVID-19 infections, television and media in Kosovo began to ban reporting of the deadly virus. With time, politics began to return to our screens furiously as we were used to seeing it, and so did the space given to the pandemic in the central news editions. Only stories that had a great reputation and that caught the attention of the citizens were included in the central editions, while it has become common for infected numbers to be reported in the last 24 hours in the middle or at the end of a news edition. During September, it was again RTV 21 that gave more space to the COVID-19 pandemic, although the space that had been given to this virus two months earlier in our news editions significantly fell. With 31 minutes and 10 seconds to a total of 3 hours and 7 seconds of news coverage over the course of a week, RTV 21 has reported 12 **stories** about the COVID-19 pandemic. Public Radio Television of Kosovo reported 30 minutes and 21 seconds, out of the 5 hours, 18 minutes and 8 seconds available to report, thus counting 16 prepared stories. On the other hand Kohavision reported 29 minutes and 30 seconds for the pandemic, in a total of 3 hours and 57 minutes and 43 seconds as there was space to broadcast news, preparing the most stories in this period, together with Klan Kosova, a total of 18 stories. Meanwhile, Klan Kosova has reported the least in this period for the COVID-19 pandemic, where from 3 hours and 41 minutes and 11 seconds of news space about the corona virus has given 26 minutes and 27 seconds. The longest report prepared by the editorial staff of RTV 21, entitled "*COVID-19 in Kosovo*", with a time of 4 minutes and 56 seconds.

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Kohëzgjatja e edicionit brenda javës	Storia/kronika më e gjatë	Numri i storieve gjatë gjithë javës
RTK	0:30:21	5:18:08	0:03:35	16
RTV 21	0:31:10	3:07:07	0:04:56	12
KTV	0:29:30	3:57:43	0:03:37	18
Klan Kosova	0:26:27	3:41:11	0:02:26	18

**Figure 2.** Reporting table of four national frequency televisions in the period: 12.09.2020 - 18.09.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
RTK	0:50:04	11.07.2020/0:09:11	16.07.2020/0:02:42	11.07.2020/5 storie/kronika

**Figure 3.** RTK reporting table for the period: 10.07.2020 - 17.07.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
RTK	0:30:21	14.09.2020/0:07:47	13.09.2020/0:00:53	14/09.2020, 15.09.2020, 18.09.2020/3 storie/kronika

**Figure 4.** RTK reporting table for the period: 12.09.2020 - 18.09.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
RTV 21	1:26:47	16.07.2020/0:14:43	12.07.2020/0:07:52	11.07.2020 dhe 14.07.2020/6 storie/kronika

**Figure 5.** Reporting table of RTV 21 for the period: 10.07.2020 - 17.07.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
RTV 21	0:31:10	12.09.2020/0:09:19	13.09.2020/0:00:42	12.09.2020/4 storie/kronika

**Figure 6.** RTV 21 reporting table for the period: 12.09.2020 - 18.09.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
KTV	1:23:16	14.07.2020/0:14:53	10.07.2020/0:06:47	14.07.2020/6 storie/kronika

**Figure 7.** KTV reporting table for the period: 10.07.2020 - 17.07.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
KTV	0:29:30	15.09.2020/0:08:26	18.09.2020/0:02:14	13.09.2020, 14.09.2020, 15.09.2020, 16.09.2020 /3 storie/kronika

**Figure 8.** KTV reporting table for the period: 12.09.2020 - 18.09.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
Klan Kosova	1:16:21	13.07.2020/0:14:06	17.07.2020/0:05:52	14.07.2020/9 storie/kronika

**Figure 9.** Reporting table of Klan Kosova for the period: 10.07.2020 - 17.07.2020

Televizioni	Minutazhi për pandeminë	Dita me minutazhin më të madh	Dita me minutazhin më të vogël	Ditët me më së shumti storie/kronika rreth pandemisë
Klan Kosova	0:26:27	14.09.2020/0:10:21	16.09.2020/0:00:34	14.09.2020/5 storie/kronika

**Figure 10.** Reporting table of Klan Kosova for the period: 12.09.2020 - 18.09.2020

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has once again highlighted that the rapid and great development of technology is changing the media world as well as the way of reporting, providing accurate statistics for various cases, and reporting on events while they were happening in real time. In this case, when we researched COVID-19 pandemic reporting, we were informed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week about real-time infections, such as in Turkey, America, Africa, Asia, Europe, everywhere. From the research done and the statistics released, it turns out that RTV 21, even though it is the medium that has the shortest central news edition, has paid attention to the pandemic in both research periods, suggesting that maybe one day of reporting on this virus can always remain, at least in one of the daily news editions. Public Radio Television of Kosovo, had throughout the week as researched, most minutes available to report, but in both periods stood out mostly for news in the political field, which can lead us to conclusions that RTK editorial policy has a program to follow political events. While Klan Kosova is the medium that has reported the most on the pandemic in terms of the number of stories throughout the week, where it counts a total of 45 stories.

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