

Coordination Method Of Means Of Ideological Work In The Fight Against Covid-19 Pandemic In Vietnam

Método de coordinación de medios de trabajo ideológico en la lucha contra la pandemia de Covid-19 en Vietnam

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Abstract

The study aims to clarify the coordination method of means of ideological work in preventing and controlling the COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnam. The researcher directly observed propagate activities on radio, television, online newspapers, and social networks (Facebook, TikTok, Youtube). Next, to evaluate the results of that cooperation, the researcher conducts a survey on the online community about the impact of means of ideological work to people's perception, attitude, and behavior in dealing with the pandemic. Results show that information on radio, television, online newspapers, and social networks has formed an official information flow in social life, eliminating fake news and untruthful news and contributing to developing advanced awareness before the epidemic.

Keywords: method, coordination, means of ideological work, COVID-19, Vietnam.

Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo aclarar el método de coordinación de los medios de trabajo ideológico para prevenir y controlar la epidemia de COVID-19 en Vietnam. El investigador observó directamente las actividades de propagación en radio, televisión, periódicos en línea y redes sociales (Facebook, TikTok, Youtube). Luego, para evaluar los resultados de esa cooperación, el investigador realiza una encuesta en la comunidad en línea sobre el impacto de los medios de trabajo ideológico en la percepción, actitud y comportamiento de las personas al

enfrentar la pandemia. Los resultados muestran que la información en radio, televisión, periódicos en línea y redes sociales ha formado un flujo de información oficial en la vida social, eliminando noticias falsas y falsas y contribuyendo a desarrollar una conciencia avanzada ante la epidemia.

Palabras clave: método, coordinación, medios de trabajo ideológico, COVID-19, Vietnam

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 03/2020). In the context of the disease has spread to many countries around the world, including Vietnam. However, due to the appropriate approach, Vietnam has achieved positive results in limited resources. In particular, the path towards strengthening information and propaganda work on the COVID-19 epidemic has been paid attention to and focused has brought essential contributions.

Stemming from historical lessons, the Vietnamese Government considers that the consensus of the whole society in preventing and controlling the COVID-19 epidemic is a vital premise to ensure the overall success of the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic. Therefore, right after the “strange epidemic” was announced from Wuhan, China, Vietnamese health authorities continuously updated information about the disease and quickly transmitted warning messages to the public through the system of means of ideological work in Vietnam. Means of ideological work mainly includes social networks, radio, television, online newspapers. Since then, the message “fighting the epidemic like fighting the enemy” was quickly responded to by the entire society, contributing to shaping the general awareness and actions of the whole community in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The past reality has shown that the Vietnamese people have well implemented the messages that the authorities and the health sector have warned to prevent the pandemic. Therefore, with the desire to share lessons from Vietnam’s experience in COVID-19 prevention and control, especially the propaganda work about the recent epidemic, this study, we focus on understanding and analyzing the coordination methods of means of ideological work to explain the achievements in

combating the COVID-19 pandemic that Vietnam has achieved, from there, we propose new points in scientific propaganda.

From the above studies, the author poses two research questions: Research question 1: Which means of ideological work participated in the prevention and control of COVID-19, and how do they coordinate in the context of Vietnam? Research question 2: Is there a communication theory or modality for the media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methods

In this study, we used direct observation and sociological survey methods.

The observation process was carried out from March 2020 to October 2021. The researcher observed the Government, the Ministry of Health, and other authorities via radio, television, online newspapers, and social websites on Facebook, Youtube, TikTok, and Zalo. Simultaneously with observing the communication activities of central agencies, the researcher observes the communication activities about the COVID-19 epidemic of local agencies, including the activities of the human resources committee people from the province, district, and commune to the actions of specialized agencies such as the provincial disease control center, the department of information and communication, the district culture office... to the radio station in the residential area. Along with that are the communication activities of socio-political organizations and social organizations. Then, to ensure that the observed results were general, the observer had discussions with people in several provinces to confirm observations.

To conduct this study, the author also conducted an online survey. The data collection was facilitated using a questionnaire posted on the Google Forms platform (<https://www.google.com/forms/>). The survey questionnaire was sent by Zalo, Facebook, to about 2300 recipients. Three hundred seventy-six completed questionnaires were obtained through the survey's duration, with a survey response rate of approximately 16 %. This sample size could not be expanded further due to the COVID-19 restrictive measures because the survey was conducted only through an online questionnaire. It is worth mentioning that using an online survey resulted in certain groups of people with low educational levels and the age group ≥ 61 years old being excluded.

The study was carried out from November 11 to November 17, 2021. The purpose of the study is to select the primary information sources, the fastest information channel, and assess the reliability of the information sources. People's trust and confidence in the Government's decisions in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic or not. From there, evaluate the effectiveness of communication on awareness, attitudes, and positive public action against the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, in the context that Vietnam has faced many difficulties during the fourth wave of epidemics starting from April 27, 2021, to the present.

The questionnaire was distributed when the COVID-19 pandemic was still happening, and Vietnam had negative economic growth in the third quarter of 2021. "Gross domestic product (GDP) in the third quarter of 2021 is estimated to decrease by 6.17% over the same period last year, which is the deepest decline since Vietnam has calculated and announced quarterly GDP so far (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2021)". The questionnaire was divided into four parts: a) Demographic data, b) Sources of information about COVID-19, c) Respondents' personal views on the information they received. d) The level of information sharing about COVID-19 and the Government's belief in epidemic prevention and control. The questionnaire included closed-ended, 5-point Likert-scale questions and multiple-choice questions. For Likert-scale questions, participants were offered 5-point answer scales: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = very often, and 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = partially agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Results and discussion

Observation results

From direct observations, it is shown that: Participating in providing information about the COVID-19 epidemic to the public includes mass communication, group communication, and individual communication. Typical mass communication include social networks (Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Zalo), radio, television, and online newspapers. Group communication is done through meetings of agencies and organizations. Personal contact is done through community COVID Teams and SMS messages to individual phones of each citizen.

In the news activities related to the COVID-19 epidemic, subjects including the Government, the Ministry of Health, functional agencies, People's Committees at all levels from provinces to districts, society, and socio-political organizations, social organizations. In addition to the national radio station, national television station, and online newspapers at the central Government, 63 radio and television stations, electronic portals, and online newspapers of 63 provinces and cities. There are fixed 4G loudspeaker systems installed at the district and commune level in each residential area or mobile loudspeaker systems for communication during peak epidemics.

In journalism and communication, press agencies still maintain a lot of news and articles on the prevention and control of the COVID-19 epidemic, accounting for 20-25% of the total number of articles on online newspapers. Television stations produced and broadcast nearly 102 thousand high school programs about COVID-19, with an entire duration of almost 270 thousand minutes. Maintain columns on health care guidelines to prevent COVID; restore production and business. In which, there are many television categories with access from a few hundred thousand to more than 2 million viewers, such as: "Prevention of COVID-19 epidemic", "Discovering Vietnam: No one, nothing is forgotten" - VTV1, Vietnam Television Station; "Dr. Khoe" - THVL1, Vinh Long Radio, and Television Stations; "Your Doctor" - HTV9, Ho Chi Minh City Television; "Perspective Security - Health 365" - ANTV... (Ministry of Information and Communications, 11/2021).

Along with communication on traditional means, the authorities also provide information through social networks (Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, and Zalo). The Government has a fan page, "Government Information" with 2.9 million followers (Facebook, 11/2021). The Ministry of Health fan page "Minister of Health" has 441,000 followers (Facebook, 2020). Some localities that were once epidemic centers, such as Bac Ninh Province, have "Bac Ninh Province Portal" with 361,000 followers (Facebook, 2021); Ho Chi Minh City has a fan page, "Ho Chi Minh City Press Center" with 76,000 followers... Nowadays, many online newspapers have also built their fan pages on social networks. Vietnam News Agency has a fan page with 303,838 followers (Facebook, 2021). VnExpress online newspaper has a fan page with 3,089,310 followers (Facebook, 2021).

Information about the epidemic is communicated to the public, not individually, on each type of means of ideological work. When there

is information, the means of ideological work simultaneously report on specific topics and times suitable for the public. This means that disease messages were communicated in many rich and diverse chains, but also very simple, accessible, and easy to share. However, these chains of information are also very flexible and not rigid. Depending on the influence of the issues arising during the epidemic, the information communicated is focused.

Information about the epidemic has been provided fully, timely, and accurately to most people across the country, especially disease prevention measures. And the combination of knowledge and multimedia is very contagious. That is clearly shown in the song “Washing Hand Song” (Youtube, 2020).

In the past two years, through many information channels, people can update the epidemic situation and related information 24h/24h. Most people always obey the Government’s guidelines, recommendations, and policies in disease prevention and control activities from the information provided.

Most people are also very interested in monitoring the Government’s disease prevention and control actions. Specifically, on June 5, 2021, in the online Livestream to launch the Vaccine Fund of the Government Portal on Lotus social network, there were 5 million live views (Lotus, 06/2021). On September 6, 2021, the peak epidemic time of Ho Chi Minh City and the southern provinces, in the Livestream program “Sharing information with the people of the Ho Chi Minh City government” broadcast on Facebook, had over 1 million views (Facebook, 09/2021). At the same time, most people also absolutely adhere to wearing masks when going out in public, washing hands with an antiseptic solution, keeping a distance when communicating. In particular, people always comply not to gather in large numbers when required.

However, sometimes there are still a few cases where people do not comply with regulations on preventing and controlling the COVID-19 epidemic. There are even cases of posting fake news on social networks. “At the conference on police work in epidemic prevention and control on October 11, 2021, the Ministry of Public Security said that it has directed police units and localities to strengthen their grasp and control of the situation in cyberspace; administratively sanction more than 150 subjects posting fake news, untruthful; block, request to

remove 10,944 news, articles and videos containing malicious information (Ministry of Information and Communications, 11/2021).”

Sociological survey results

Characteristics of survey participants

A total of 376 people participated in this study from all VietNam. The questionnaire respondents were asked to answer about their gender and age.

Information sources

In this section, respondents answer about the information channel they regularly monitor to update information about the COVID-19 epidemic. Data analysis shows that, in tracking information about the COVID-19 epidemic, social networks, including Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo, are the information channel most interested in following (314 people, 83.5%). The second most-watched information channel is television (215 people, 57.2%), followed by online newspapers (166 people, 44.1%) and radio (139 people, 37%). Data analysis also showed that most respondents answered that they updated information about the epidemic from two or more sources (222 people, 59.04%). However, among those who only follow news from a single start (154 people, 40.96%), the number of people who follow information via social networks (Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo) is also the same as the largest (113 people, 30%).

Ability to distinguish fake news from real

In this section, respondents answer about the ability to distinguish official information related to the COVID-19 epidemic from the authorities and fake news and false news spreading in social networks. To assess the certainty in public perception of issues related to the epidemic, in this question, the researcher only used a 3-point scale, 1 = yes, 2 = sometime, 3 = no. Accordingly, most respondents (270 people, 71.8%) confirmed that they might distinguish between information from official information channels, information channels from authorities with fake and false information accurate. Only a tiny percentage (4 people, 1.1%) think that they can't distinguish between fake news at all.

The fastest and most reliable information source

In this part, respondents choose to evaluate the source of information that they consider the fastest and the most reliable source. In this section, the researcher uses an exclusionary choice question, and the respondent is only allowed to choose one answer. The analysis data shows that, in selecting the fastest news source, the majority (236 people, 62.8%) choose the social network answer (Facebook, Gapo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo), ranked second. Online newspapers (58 people, 15.4%) and television (57 people, 15.2%) are far away. However, in the selection question to assess the most reliable news source, only a meager percentage (16 people, 4.3%) chose the answer to social networks (Facebook, Gapo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo). The majority of respondents (292 people, 77.7%) chose television as the most reliable source of information. The percentage of people who decide TV answers is 8.5 times higher than radio (34 people, 9.0%), the second most reliable source.

The usefulness of disease-related information COVID-19

In this section, respondents choose the usefulness of the COVID-19 related information they have access to. According to the results obtained, almost all respondents (352 people, 93.7%) said they have access to valuable information. The percentage of people who think that information about the epidemic is beneficial is 55.1% (207 people). And no one believes that the information they have is unhelpful or very unhelpful.

Sharing information about the COVID 19 epidemic

In this section, respondents answer how often information is shared regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, respondents also answer what means they use to share information about the epidemic with people and the community. To assess the extent of people sharing information during the epidemic, the researcher used a 5-point LIKERT scale. In choosing a medium to share information, the researcher uses the option of exclusion to confirm that the medium is a popular information-sharing channel. According to the analysis of the collected data, there is a tiny percentage (27 people, 7.2%) who never share information about the COVID-19 epidemic with those around them. In contrast, on the side of those who regularly and consistently share information about the epidemic accounted for a relatively large

proportion (157 people, 41.7%). In information sharing, data analysis results show that: social networks (Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo) are the primary means and communication channels used for people (157 people, 41.8%) sharing information about COVID-19 with the community. In addition, direct communication (94 people, 25%) and texting and calling (81 people, 21.5%) are also critical information-sharing channels during the epidemic. In addition to the above means of ideological work, a few (44 people, 11.7%) chose other means to share information.

People's trust in the Government of Vietnam's epidemic prevention and control work

In this part, respondents have to answer questions to confirm their attitude towards the Government's epidemic prevention and control work. Through the answers, we can effectively assess the impact of the media in general and the means of ideological work in particular in the communication process about the COVID-19 epidemic in Vietnam recently. At the same time, the participants were also asked to give their personal opinion to people and authorities in the prevention and control of the COVID-19 epidemic in the coming time. According to the data, in Vietnam, the percentage of people who trust the Government's epidemic prevention work is vast, almost absolute with 98.7% (366 people). With the proposal to give a personal opinion to people and authorities, the researcher collected 280 comments (74.47%), and the rest did not express any views. Most of them show awareness, attitudes, and even very positive and progressive actions in preventing and controlling COVID-19. Specifically, in which many comments mentioned the implementation of the 5K recommendation of the Ministry of Health: "Comply with 5K", "Let's do well 5k for good disease prevention, everyone!", "Propaganda propaganda 5K campaign", "Implement 5K message", "Everybody implements 5K by the directives of the government"... There were also many comments calling for the solidarity and cooperation of the community to work together repel the epidemic and trust the leadership of the Government, such as: "The epidemic is very complicated so everyone needs to be vigilant," "protect yourself and those around," "Do well! The whole country joins hands to fight the pandemic.", "Everyone, please obey the directives of the state.", "Remember to wear a mask, limit going out and take good care of your health during the Covid-19 pandemic!", "Keep yourself and everyone

safe.”, “Let’s all join hands to fight the epidemic by always complying with the 5K regulations”.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the word “infodemic” refers to too much information, including false and misleading information circulating in digital and physical environments during a pandemic outbreak (Eysenbach, 2020), and media is prone to be used for misinformation (Suraj, 2021). However, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam, we can see communication theories such as the “Magic Bullet” theory, the two-step communication theory (Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper, 2019) has been applied flexibly, timely and has brought high efficiency. 98.7% of people believe in the anti-epidemic work, affirming that the Vietnamese Government’s early, remote, focused, and drastic communication strategy is correct and has brought great results to succeed when resources are limited. Also, during the pandemic, the means media system has clearly shown its role in shaping and promoting progressive social consciousness, positive attitudes, and right actions. That is clearly shown in the prompt, timely, accurate, correct, sufficient information to the necessary subjects and resolutely preventing the influence of fake information, false information, and distortion (Vu. 2021).

Means of ideological work fight against COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam

In the fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic in Viet Nam, several channels and means with appropriate advantages and strengths were widely used to contribute to raising awareness and changing attitudes and behaviors of people in dealing with COVID-19. Among them, we can mention the following: Firstly, the mass communication such as radio, television, and electronic newspapers; Second, group communication with activities of social organizations, socio-political organizations; Third, communication through socio-cultural institutions such as cultural houses, markets, and places of community activities; Fourth, communicate through the direct communication team, community COVID-19 groups; Fifth, communication through social networking platforms (Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Twitter, Youtube and Zalo). The means of ideological work simultaneously conveying messages about COVID-19 created a spillover effect, resonance, and great attraction for the public, turning information related to the disease into the focused exchange in social life. Slogans like “Fighting The Epide-

mic Like Fighting The Enemy (Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper, April 2020)”, “Every Citizen Is A Soldier (Nhandan Online, April 2020)” right at the beginning of the war were strongly contribute to promoting and shaping the consciousness of Vietnamese people before the COVID-19 pandemic. Keywords related to the COVID-19 epidemic, such as “Coronavirus,” “COVID,” “COVID-19,” have become popular search terms on Google (Google Trends, 2020). On January 23, 2020, when Vietnam recorded the first positive case with COVID-19, then known as the disease caused by the Coronavirus, Google Trends recorded over 100,000 searches for the keyword “Virus Corona (Google Trends, 2020).”

The researcher found that, during the simultaneous coverage of information about COVID-19, the means of ideological work formed chains of coordination. First, the chain of vertical coordination from central to local or vice versa. For example, information is sent from the Ministry of Health to the provincial Health Departments and then to the district health centers and commune health stations. Second, the chain of horizontal coordination between agencies at the same level. For example, the coordination to provide information by the Ministry of Health in coordination with the Ministry of Information and Communications or the Ministry of Health with the Ministry of Public Security; coordination between localities with standard information such as Hanoi city and Bac Ninh province. The third is the internal and external coordination chain between agencies, units, and localities in the same vertical and level with an external agency. For example, communication coordination of commune, district authorities, and provincial health authorities. Or the coordination between domestic and international information communication.

The chains of coordination have characteristics: First, in terms of starting point, the subject of messages related to the epidemic may come from the Government, the Ministry of Health, central authorities, but can also come from the province, city, or from the district, or the commune. For example, when Bac Giang province decided to close industrial parks during the fourth outbreak, the message’s sender would be the People’s Committee of Bac Giang province. Second, participating in that communication chain can be the whole system or several means, depending on the object’s scope to be affected. For example, when communicating a message in a residential area, only the media of that residential area operate, such as radio stations, community CO-

VID groups, and cultural institutions of the residential area. Third, each coordination sequence has a definite goal. The government agency will make policy decisions. And health authorities will give messages about health and cases. Fourth, on the topic, in the same period, the media on the same issue. However, the content is diverse and has different approaches. When an area is a lockdown to prevent an epidemic, the press broadcast the Government's announcement, the radio station report on the case, and the community COVID team guide people to follow directions medical guide. Fifth, each coordinated chain of communication targets specific target groups in terms of audience. The communication chain of the health industry will be directed to health issues, epidemic prevention, and treatment. The chain of government coordination will communicate policies and administrative measures.

There are combinations of two or more contacts in communication that have created significant and far-reaching power in society. We can actively build such chains of coordination. In those coordination chains, we appreciate social networks, including Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo, as the most important mean of communication, the leading platform for society to share information. WHO Director-General Statemented on the role of social media platforms in health information: "Social media platforms are the way many people get their information, and they will likely be major sources of information for the next generations of parents. We see this as a critical issue and one that needs our collective effort to protect people's health and lives (WHO, 2019)".

Communication theory in fighting against COVID-19 in Vietnam

Social networks, including Facebook, Gazo, Lotus, TikTok, Youtube, Zalo, are the most popular social media, followed and reached by the public (83.5%). At the same time, it is the medium rated by the public as the fastest way to bring information (62.8%) and the most important means to share information (41.8%). However, social networks are also where fake news, misinformation, and distortion abound (Ministry of Information and Communications, 11/2021). However, besides a social network surrounded by fake news, misinformation, misrepresentation, confusing truth and falsehood, good and lousy interleaving, we still have television channels, with 77.7% believing television is a place the public goes to verify information about COVID-19 as well as other social issues. We also have radio stations, online newspapers where

anyone can access any continent, anywhere. Especially in the fourth industrial revolution, national digital transformation is taking place firmly. Many media such as radio, television, and online newspapers have been integrated into mobile applications integrated on social networking platforms.

On that basis, the researcher would like to propose a communication theory called “Peak mountain, Fog, and Wind.” A social network is an online platform with many followers, considered the peak of the information mountain because information can spread very quickly in social life. However, because it is an open environment, besides reliable information, there are also many fakes, wrong, and distorted information. Not only Vietnam but over the world, “there had already been many conspiracy theories and mis/disinformation about Coronavirus. And now, false and misleading information related to vaccines is also being spread on social media platforms. Anti-vaccine groups are trying to increase vaccine hesitancy with their far-fetched conspiracy theories. For example, Pakistan has failed to eradicate polio due to anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, and now, there is greater risk with the Coronavirus (Khan et al., 2020)”. We call such fake news, misinformation, disinformation like fog because they prevent the truth from reaching the public. Therefore, it is necessary to have the wind that is the official information coming from the authorities through radio stations, television stations, online newspapers to stop the fog, dispel false information, false information, misrepresentation on social networks. From there, we can clearly show the nature of things and events. The public has access to truthful, objective, and comprehensive information.

Conclusion

In 2019, The World Health Organization predicted: “The world will face another influenza pandemic – the only thing we don’t know is when it will hit and how severe it will be (WHO, 2019)”. The COVID-19 pandemic is still raging and shows no sign of stopping. We all know COVID-19 is an epidemic caused by a new strain of Coronavirus in humans, first reported in December 2019 from Wuhan, China. Over time, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has had many variants (WHO, 11/2021). In particular, the Delta variant - the leading cause of the fourth wave of disease globally now accounts for 99.5% of all COVID-19 gene sequences reported to the public database (WHO, 2021). However, on

November 26, 2021, the World Health Organization officially named a new variant Omicron. It classified it as a “disturbing strain” because they are expected to be contagious stronger than the Delta variant (Ministry of Health Portal, 2021). Therefore, the authorities and the communication system from the central to local levels need to continue communicating about the COVID-19 pandemic to actively promote progressive sense, positive attitude, and proper action in the community.

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Declaration of competing interest

the author declares no conflict of interest.

Contribution of the authors

Nguyen Huu Dzong Contributed to the argumentation of the theoretical and methodological reference that is assumed, was in charge of advising the scientific writing.