



Journalistic Construction of Reporting on Covid-19 in Online Media

Asisda Wahyu Asri Putradi¹, Abdul Muta'Ali¹, Sonya P. Suganda¹

¹Linguistic Departement, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Asisda Wahyu Asri Putradi

E-mail: lasisda@gmail.com



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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global outbreak that has significantly changed people's social lives. The complexity of this issue has caused the coverage of Covid-19 to be dominant with negative news. Negative news can produce various psychological disorders that make readers avoid the news. The news media thus has a significant role in bridging society's adaptation to new patterns of life during the pandemic and adaptation to inconsistent government policies in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is important for the news media to be able to bridge government policies with the psychological conditions of people affected by the pandemic. In this research study, constructive journalism can be one solution to overcome this problem. Through constructive journalism, the journalist's job is not only to focus on negative things but also on solutions and positive sides when covering news. Quantitative content analysis was used in this research by applying six elements of constructive journalism to 7 covid-19 articles published by CNN.com in 2020-2022. The research results show that news articles about Covid-19 on CNN.com are not constructive. All elements of constructive journalism found in these articles are below 50%. The element with the highest percentage found was The Rosling (47%) The lowest element found in covid-19 articles on CNN.com was the co-creation element at 9%.

Introduction

The prolonged and inconsistent policies of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRI) in handling Covid-19 have triggered public attitudes to express various opinions and criticism. The public believes that PRI is not serious in dealing with the spread of COVID-19 (Djalante et al., 2020). Apart from that, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the social and economic conditions of society became mixed. In a pandemic situation, individuals tend to be more emotional, blaming, suspicious and worried, rather than finding the right facts and solutions. Anxious situations cause people to make judgments relying more on feelings than on factual information and rationality or knowledge. Indirectly, the pandemic has changed people's contact patterns due to changes in human mobility. In this case, PRI implements policies, such as limiting social distance, travel bans, and healthy living practices such as washing hands, wearing masks, exercising at home, and eating nutritious food. The existence of social distancing and work from home (WFH) regulations as a form of preventing Covid-19 has caused people to become distant and not free to carry out activities as usual. Since then, people have had to adapt to doing many activities from home, such as working and going to school.

In this situation, news media and social media play a major role in informing developments in handling the virus while indirectly intensifying concerns about Covid-19 which has the potential to reduce people's mental health (Jernigan et al., 2020; Garfin et al., 2020; Hong et al., 2020). Hermans & Prins (2022) describe the emergence of the "network society" as related to pressures on journalism in recent years and try to capture constructive journalism as a

reaction to these changes. Constructive journalism is a concept that is currently developing in the world of journalism and research. The term "constructive journalism" was coined by (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017; Lough & McIntyre, 2019). Constructive journalism aims to take a more balanced approach, where journalists discuss problems and solutions as well as positive examples of how to handle crises (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020).

Based on the explanation above, this research explores the relationship between online mass media's critical reporting of the PRI in handling the Covid-19 virus in Indonesia 2020-2022. As we already know, the PRI appears unprepared to handle the Covid-19 pandemic (Djalante et al., 2020) which is characterized by the absence of good communication between the central and regional governments, resulting in a lot of contradictory and inconsistent information circulating in the community. Therefore, the formulation of the problem in this research is what is the form of constructive journalism in reporting regarding criticism formed in online mass media news articles regarding the handling of Covid-19 on the online media CNN.com?

Constructive journalism used in this research approach is a journalistic model whose presence is considered as a way to reduce the impact of negative news (Haagerup, 2017), this is done by presenting news with positive or solution-oriented information (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018) can make news readers feel more positive (Baden et al., 2019; Dahmen et al., 2019; McIntyre, 2019) and involved in the news (Dahmen et al., 2019; Hermans & Prins, 2022; McIntyre, 2015), as well as increasing the credibility of the media itself (Overgaard, 2021; Meier, 2018). A constructive approach is considered to help journalists carry out their role as educators and provide hope without causing panic (van Antwerpen et al., 2022). Audiences also prefer news with constructive elements, even young people who are considered a complex group for news media to reach (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). To deepen the contextualization of constructive journalism, the Department of Journalism at Windesheim University of Applied Science classifies the elements of constructive journalism (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). The following are the six elements and definitions of constructive journalism according to Hermans & Gyldensted (2019): (1) Solution (Solution oriented): adding solution-oriented news framing when covering problems; (2) Future orientation: shows a possible productive perspective about the future and how we can achieve that future. Adding the question "what now?" on traditional journalistic questions 5W+1H; (3) Inclusiveness and diversity: including more voices and perspectives in the news, countering the polarizing dynamics created by the media; (4) Empowering the Community (Empower people): Empowering the community by finding common ground on the issues being reported; (5) The Rosling: Move from covering incidents to covering context and using data to create clear infographics and explain the story; (6) Co-creation: involve and empower the community by creating journalistic content with residents.

Constructive journalism tends to be confused with solutions journalism because of their similar approaches, but they are not the same. Constructive journalism is a general term where solutions journalism is a form of constructive journalism. As an illustration, all solutions journalism is constructive journalism, but not all constructive journalism is solutions journalism (Overgaard, 2021). Lough & McIntyre (2019) recommend future research to define solutions journalism and constructive journalism differently. Therefore, this research emphasizes that although both concepts are solutions-based reporting, constructive journalism and solutions journalism are still different and will not use these terms interchangeably.

Methods

This research uses quantitative analysis of 7 climate change articles on CNN.com published in 2020-2022. CNN.com Indonesia was chosen because it is a relatively younger media and is an online newspaper that attracts great attention because of its long and comprehensive coverage

of big news. Reporting on a model like this is something that is rarely done by online media in Indonesia. In initial research, when typing "covid-19" in the search field, CNN.com found 7 articles. Then researchers manually collected and listed every climate change article published in 2020-2022. The list includes the article title, publication date, and the article author and editor in Microsoft Excel. After data collection, the articles were then sorted to remove irrelevant articles or articles that had been published previously (two or more articles with the same title and content), resulting in 7 articles that could be analyzed. Due to the small number of samples, this research will analyze all 7 climate change articles published by CNN.com.

Quantitative content analysis was carried out using six elements of constructive journalism: solutions, future-oriented, inclusivity and diversity, empowering society, The Rosling, and co-creation. To do this, the researchers listed all the articles and the six elements in an Excel sheet. These texts are coded with two values, namely 1 (present) and 0 (not present) in the coding sheet. Coding is carried out to identify the presence of constructive elements contained in the article, and the frequency of occurrence of each element will be analyzed as a whole. For example, if an article contains a solution element, then the element is coded "1" and "0" if not found. Ultimately, to analyze the constructiveness of CNN.com's climate change articles in 2020, the total number of "1s" from each element will be summed and presented in the form of percentages and graphs in the results section. Through quantitative content analysis, this research will obtain data, number and percentage of constructive elements found in these articles. The research results will be presented descriptively, accompanied by tables and graphs.

Results and Discussion

This research uses 7 covid-19 articles on CNN.com in 2020-2022. This small number of articles is because researchers took data, specifically related to Covid-19 and the criticism contained in it. In the next section, we will discuss each element of constructive journalism found in Covid-19 articles on CNN.com.

Table 1. CNN Indonesia's Media Constructive Journalism Analysis

| Article Title | Solution-oriented | Future-oriented | Inclusiveness and diversity | Empower people | The Rosling | Co-creation |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| DPRD Agrees to Continue Transitional PSBB, Criticizes Supervision | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Many Critics of PPKM Micro ala Jokowi Over Covid-19 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 RMS Activists Detained During Corona, Amnesty Says Human Rights Violations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| 17 Percent of Poor Households Have Not Received Government Social Aid | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Anies Extends PSBB, Jakarta Remains Stuck | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| In front of Anies, Tito reminded the lockdown of Jokowi's authority | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

| Article Title | Solution-oriented | Future-oriented | Inclusiveness and diversity | Empower people | The Rosling | Co-creation |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| Maruf Amin: Government Apologizes for Admitting It's Difficult to Face Corona | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

From the table above, it can be seen that seven news articles from CNN media have low scores for constructive elements. This shows that these articles tend to be negative, critical and pessimistic regarding the issues raised. These articles also do not provide information or suggestions that can help readers play an active role in dealing with these problems. These articles also do not evoke positive emotions in readers, such as admiration, gratitude, pride, happiness, etc. These articles also lack examples of behavior or initiatives that are positive, creative, or different from existing norms.

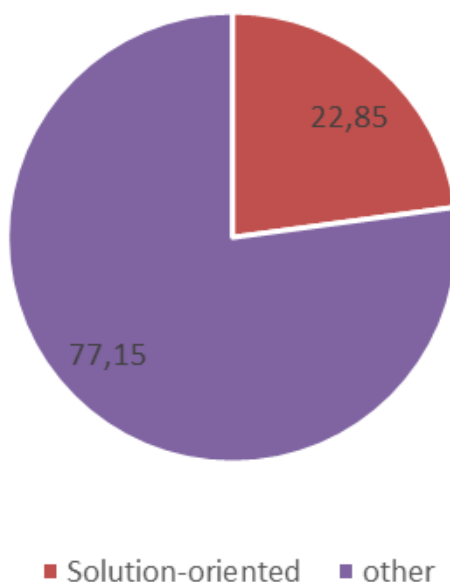


Figure 1. Solution Oriented Percentage

The solution-oriented percentage of the seven news stories above is 22.85%. This shows that the articles criticize more than looking for or providing solutions or reporting problems. This percentage shows that articles about Covid-19 in CNN Indonesia media tend not to be constructive in terms of providing solutions. The following solution-oriented is offered. Example:

"For this reason, he proposed that the government change the micro PPKM strategy by involving more parties, such as religious leaders, community leaders and community organizations." ([Many criticize Jokowi's micro PPKM for overcoming Covid-19])

This sentence offers a potential solution to overcome the problem of handling the Covid-19 pandemic with micro PPKM.

"According to him, the government must improve data on social assistance recipients so that it is right on target and does not overlap. "Apart from that, the government must also improve coordination between the center and regions in the distribution of social assistance." ([17 Percent of Poor Households Have Not Received Government Social Assistance])

This sentence offers an existing solution to overcome the problem of data discrepancies and the distribution of social assistance to the poor during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Ma'ruf Amin also conveyed several steps taken by the government to overcome the Covid-19 pandemic, such as accelerating vaccination, increasing hospital capacity and providing social assistance." ([Maruf Amin: Government apologizes and admits it is difficult to deal with Corona])

This sentence offers existing solutions to overcome health and economic problems caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

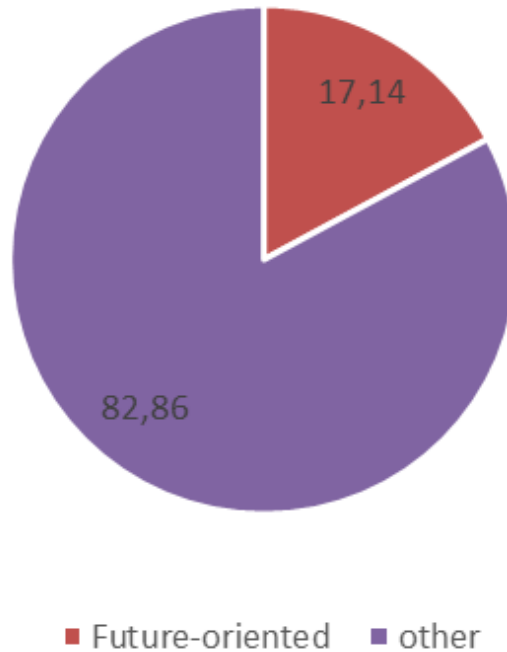


Figure 2. Future Oriented Percentage

The total future-oriented percentage of the seven news stories above is 17.14%. This means that only a few of the seven news stories provide views or projections about the future related to the problems or solutions raised. This shows that these articles focus more on current conditions rather than thinking about impacts or hopes for the future. This percentage shows that articles about Covid-19 in CNN Indonesia media tend not to be constructive in terms of providing hope. The following is an example of future-oriented. Example:

"The DKI Jakarta DPRD approved Governor Anies Baswedan's proposal to continue the transitional PSBB until 27 August 2020. This was done to reduce the number of Covid-19 transmissions in the capital city and prepare for the gradual opening of schools." ([DPRD Agrees to Continue Transitional PSBB, Criticizes Supervision])

This sentence provides a view of the future related to the transitional PSBB solution in Jakarta, namely reducing the number of Covid-19 transmissions and opening schools in stages.

"Anies Baswedan extended the PSBB in Jakarta until June 4 2020. He hopes that this policy can reduce the rate of spread of Covid-19 in the capital city and create safer and healthier conditions for Jakarta residents." ([Anies Extends PSBB Jakarta Still Stalled])

This sentence provides a view of the future related to the PSBB solution in Jakarta, namely reducing the rate of spread of Covid-19 and creating safer and healthier conditions for Jakarta residents.

"Tito Karnavian reminded Anies Baswedan that the lockdown is the president's authority and must receive approval from the central government. He also said that the lockdown could have a negative impact on the national economy and people's welfare." ([In the presence of Anies, Tito reminds Jokowi's authority to lock down])

This sentence provides a view of the future related to the lockdown problem in Jakarta, which has a negative impact on the national economy and people's welfare.

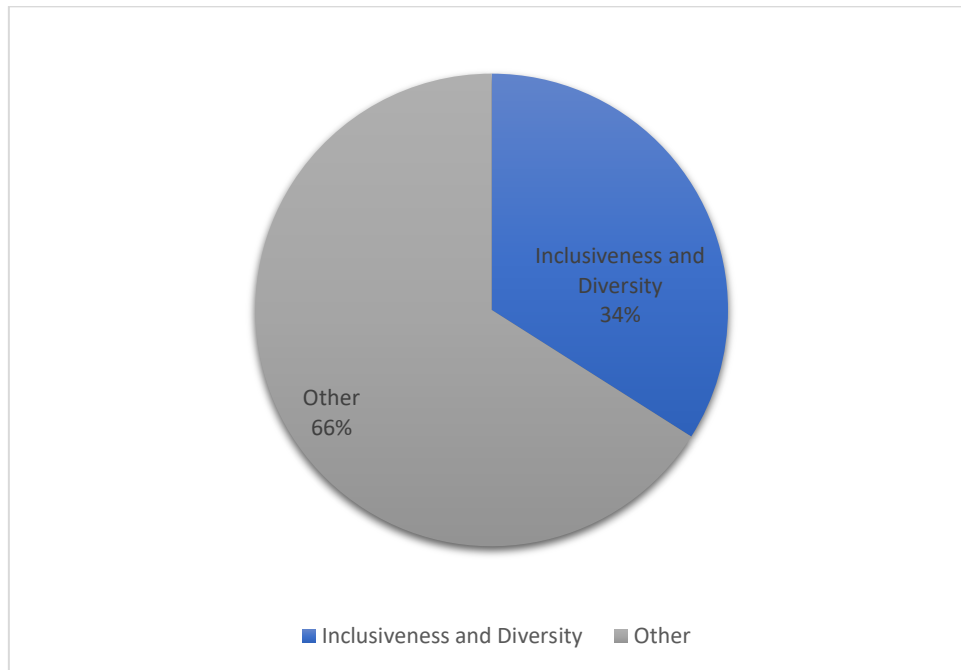


Figure 3. *Inclusiveness and Diversity Percentage*

The percentage of inclusiveness and diversity from the seven news stories above is 34%. This means that only about 34% of articles provide hope or optimism to readers that the problems raised can be overcome or minimized. This shows that these articles cause more worry, fear, or anger in readers than they do to create feelings of confidence, motivation, or empowerment. This percentage shows that articles about Covid-19 in CNN Indonesia media tend not to be constructive in terms of providing inclusiveness and diversity. Example:

"Amnesty International Indonesia condemns the arrest of 13 RMS activists by the police in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Amnesty also urges the government to respect human rights and release the activists unconditionally." ([13 RMS Activists Detained during Corona, Amnesty Says Human Rights Violation])

This sentence gives hope or optimism to readers that the problem of arresting RMS activists can be overcome or minimized by respecting human rights and releasing these activists.

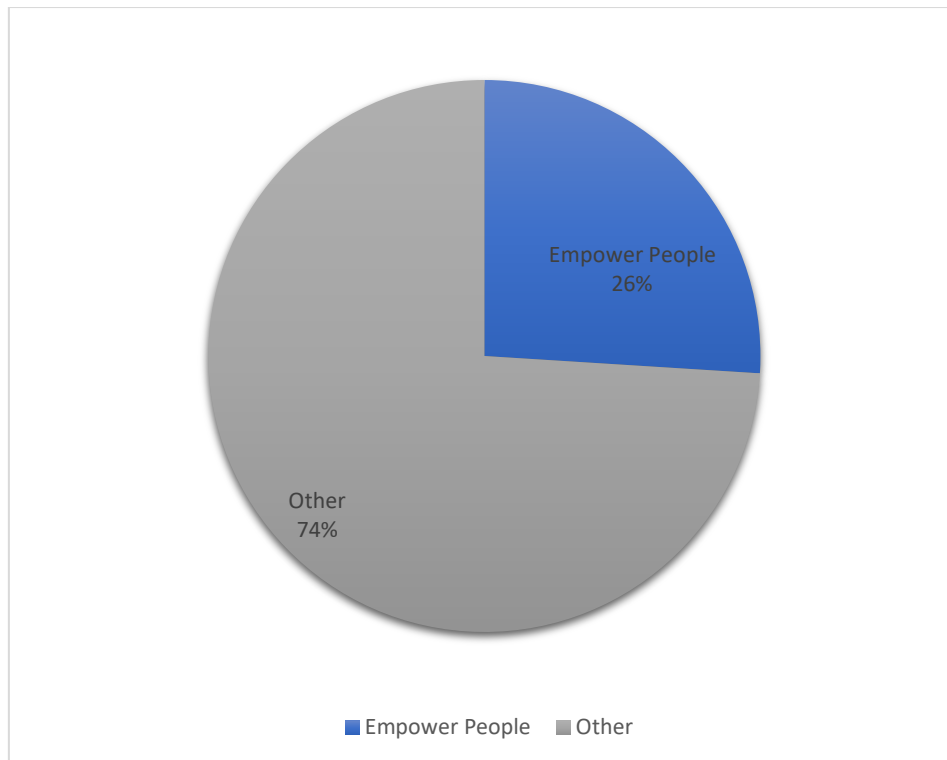


Figure 4. Empower People Percentage

The percentage of Empower People from the seven news stories above is 26%. This means that only about 26% of articles attract readers' interest or attention to the issues raised and encourage them to participate in dialogue or action. This shows that these articles have the potential to increase reader awareness and engagement on important issues, but still need to be improved in a more positive and constructive way. This percentage shows that articles about Covid-19 in CNN Indonesia media tend not to be constructive in terms of creating engagement. Example:

"The DKI Jakarta DPRD criticized the supervision and enforcement of health protocols in the field during the transitional PSBB. "The DPRD also asks for public participation to be disciplined in implementing health protocols and reporting violations that occur." ([DPRD Approves to Continue Transitional PSBB, Criticizes Supervision])

This sentence attracts readers' interest or attention to the issue of monitoring and enforcing health protocols in Jakarta and encourages them to participate in maintaining personal and environmental health.

"There are lots of criticisms of Jokowi's micro PPKM to overcome Covid-19": In this article, there are many reviews of various criticisms that have emerged from various parties regarding the micro PPKM policy launched by President Joko Widodo to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. This article presents several points of view from health experts, politicians, activists and the public regarding the effectiveness and impact of micro PPKM. This article also invites readers to provide comments or their opinions on this issue. ([Many Criticisms of Jokowi's Micro PPKM Overcoming Covid-19]): seen from the title of this article, it can attract readers' interest or attention to the micro PPKM issue and encourage them to participate in dialogue or action related to this issue.

"Maruf Amin: Government Apologizes Admits Difficulty Facing Corona": seen in this article which reports an apology from Vice President Ma'ruf Amin to the public for the difficulties the

government is facing in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. This article also quotes several hopes and suggestions from Ma'ruf Amin to overcome the health and economic crisis caused by Covid-19. This article also invites readers to support the government and help each other in facing this pandemic. ([Maruf Amin: Government Apologizes Admits Difficulty Facing Corona]): seen in the title of this article which can attract readers' interest or attention to the issue of the Covid-19 pandemic and encourage them to participate in actions of solidarity and mutual cooperation.

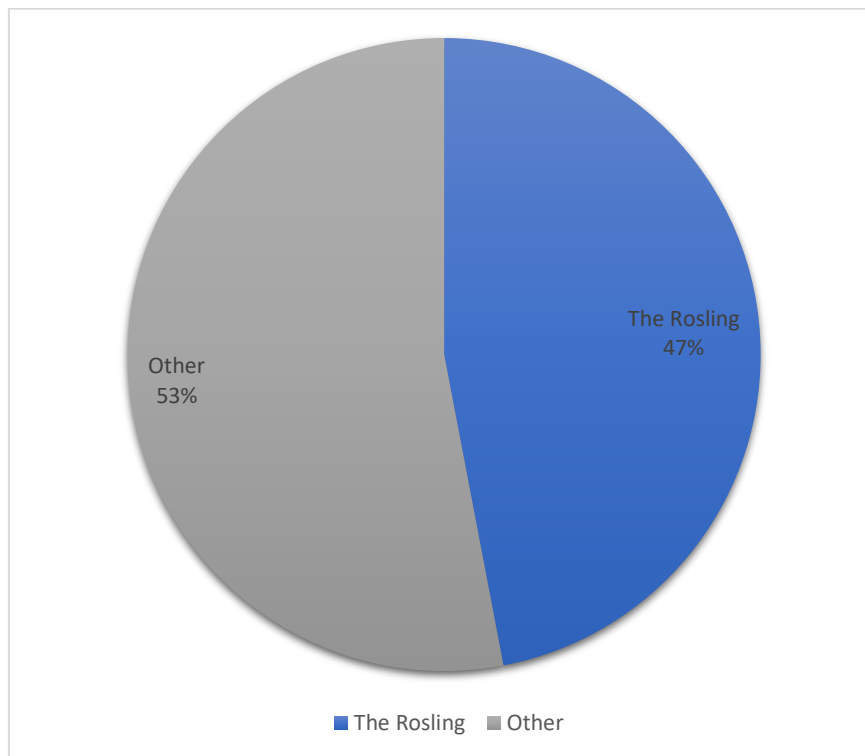


Figure 5. The Rosling Percentage

The Rosling percentage is 47%. This means that only about 47% of articles evoke positive emotions in readers, such as admiration, gratitude, pride, happiness, etc. This shows that these articles arouse more negative emotions in readers, such as sadness, anger, fear, frustration, etc. This percentage shows that articles about Covid-19 in CNN Indonesia media tend not to be constructive in terms of providing positive emotions. Example:

"Anies Baswedan extended the PSBB in Jakarta until June 4 2020. He hopes that this policy can reduce the rate of spread of Covid-19 in the capital city and create safer and healthier conditions for Jakarta residents." ([Anies Extends PSBB Jakarta Still Stalled])

This sentence can evoke positive emotions in readers, such as hope, optimism, or happiness, because they see policies that aim to protect public health and safety.

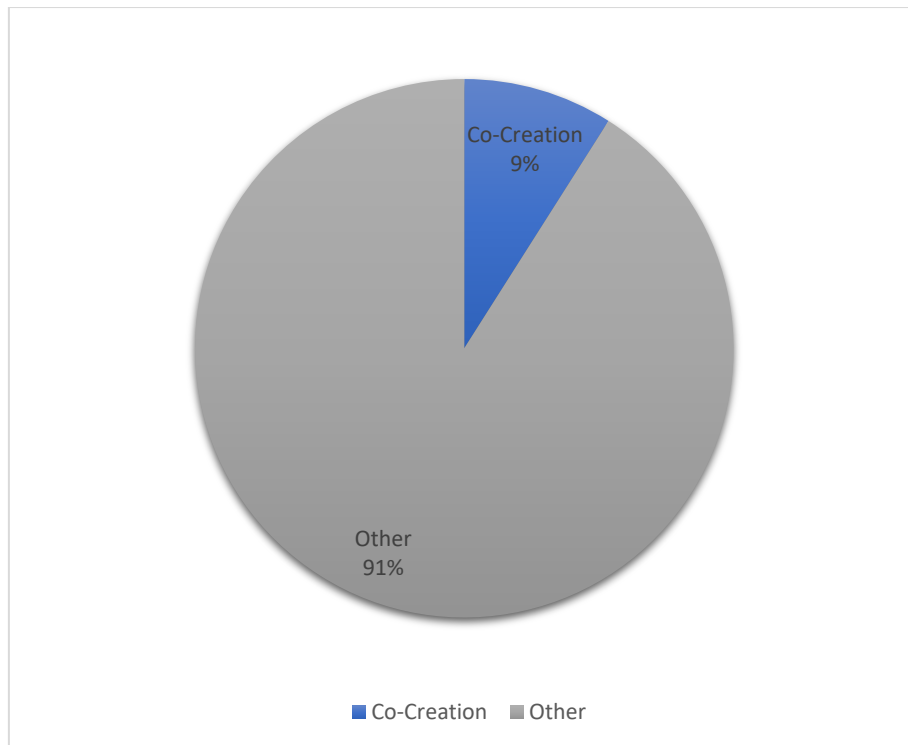


Figure 6. Co-Creation Percentage

The percentage of Co-Creation is 9%. This means that only about 9% of articles feature examples of behavior or initiatives that are positive, creative, or different from the norm. This shows that these articles mostly display behavior or initiatives that are negative, ordinary, or in accordance with existing norms. This percentage shows that articles about Covid-19 in CNN Indonesia media tend not to be constructive in terms of providing positive examples. Example:

“BPS states that around 17 percent of poor households in Indonesia have not received social assistance from the government during the Covid-19 pandemic. BPS also appreciates the government's efforts to continue to improve data and distribution of social assistance by using technology and collaboration between the center and regions.” ([17 Percent of Poor Households Have Not Received Government Social Assistance])

This sentence shows examples of behavior or initiatives that are positive, creative, or different from existing norms, namely the government's efforts to improve data and distribution of social assistance by using technology and collaboration between the center and area.

Conclusion

This research aims to quantitatively present the application of constructive journalism in covid-19 articles on CNN.com reported in 2020-2022, using six elements of constructive journalism. In sample collection, of the 19 articles on Covid-19, only 7 were relevant. This is because the focus of the data in this research is regarding Covid-19 information and criticism of the PRI. Overall, the covid-19 articles on CNN.com reported in 2020-2022 were not constructive. All elements of constructive journalism found in these articles received a percentage below 50%. The element with the highest percentage found was The Rosling (47%), meaning that they report on climate change with enough data and context to explain the story.

The lowest element found in covid-19 articles on CNN.com was the co-creation element at 9%. This finding connects with other research using elements of constructive journalism where little

or no elements of "co-creation" were found. Hermans & Gyldensted (2019). So, people will only appreciate these elements if they experience the positive experience of co-creation firsthand.

As previously mentioned in the Background section, an article is considered constructive enough if it contains elements of solutions and inclusivity and diversity, especially the inclusion of minority groups. Unfortunately, in CNN.com's reporting, this element has a low percentage. This means that most of the Covid-19 articles on CNN.com do not include solutions to the problems reported in the news. A fundamental value in journalism is depicting the world accurately, and that is only possible if journalists report on the world's "illness" and world well-being (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2018). With the few solutions offered, readers will not receive information on how to adapt during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two studies by Wang (2021), who analyzed COVID-19 articles in The New York Times, and by Ariestyani (2023), who analyzed COVID-19 articles in The Herald, found that solution-oriented elements were the most constructive elements most frequently found. The reason why COVID-19 articles are more constructive is probably because of the urgency of the pressing problem that needs to be solved, with millions of people affected and dying from the virus in a very short period of time. Encourage news media to help governments and scientists share preventive measures and solutions to deal with this virus with the public.

It can be said that with the high percentage of "The Rosling" elements and the low percentage of the other five elements, CNN.com does not use special techniques or writing methods in reporting on Covid-19. This is because the main aspect of The Rosling is completeness of information (5W+1H) and data, and 5W+1H are important elements that must be present in every report.

Overall, covid-19 articles on CNN.com reported in 2020-2022 were not constructive, with a low percentage of all constructive elements, including key elements such as solutions, inclusivity, and diversity. The constructive element most often found in covid-19 articles on CNN.com in 2020-2022 is The Rosling and the least frequently found is co-creation. These findings show that although CNN.com does a good journalistic job in providing data and context, they are less or less solution oriented, less public oriented, do not provide solutions and empower diverse audiences.

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