S P R A W O Z D A N I A   Z   B A D A Ń

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HIS EXCELLENCY CORONAVIRUS: SOME REMARKS ON THE RESEARCH ON THE MEDIA IMAGE OF CORONAVIRUS AT THE ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ (UAM)

The global COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected the lives of billions of people all over the world. It has taken away their sense of security, shaken the foundations of institutions, changed the rules of social life, and even limited civil liberties in modern societies. In this new world, we have seen the growing role of media as the primary source of information on topics that, until recently, had been thought to be the domain of specialists such as researchers, physicians, or lawyers.

The epidemic has also left its mark on the language used in the Polish media to describe this new reality. Previously highly specialised concepts have become commonplace, and new meanings have been given to the already existing lexemes (Makowska). Newly popular expressions may refer directly to the pandemic, with words such as 'pandemic', 'epidemic', 'plague' (this expression refers to "Love in the Time of Cholera", a novel by Gabriel Marcia Marquez, whose Polish title uses a more general 'plague' instead of cholera and has become a common phrase in Polish), *pandemia*,

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epidemia, *zaraza*, *łańcuch zakażeń*, *wirus*, *covid*, *koronawirus*, *korona* ['chain of infection', 'virus', 'Covid', 'coronavirus', and 'corona'], or to the forced restriction of movement and avoidance of close and (later) direct relations with others, such as *kwarantanna*, *izolacja*, *lockdown*, *bezkontaktowy*, *dystans społeczny* ['quarantine', 'isolation', 'lockdown', 'no-contact', and 'social distance']. There are also expressions such as *zdalny*, *hybrydowy*, *zamrożenie* and *odmrożenie gospodarki*, *wprowadzenie* and *luzowanie obostrzeń*, *wypłaszczanie krzywej* ['remote', 'hybrid', 'freezing and unfreezing the economy', 'introduction and loosening of restrictions', and 'flattening the curve'] as well as *e-nauczanie*, *e-badania*, *e-recepty*, *teleporady*, *home office*, *praca zdalna*, *nauczanie zdalne*, *hybrydowe*, *webinaria*, *godziny dla senioró*w ['e-learning', 'e-testing', 'e-prescriptions', 'remote consultation', 'home office', 'remote work', 'remote teaching', 'hybrid teaching', 'webinars', and 'senior shopping hours']. Patients are frequently divided into *pozytywni*, *bezobjawowi*, *negatywni*, and *ozdrowieńcy* ['positive', 'asymptomatic', 'negative', 'convalescent']. Also frequent in media discussions are *test*, *testowanie*, *wymaz*, *szpital jednoimienny* and *tymczasowy*, *dezynfekcja*, *maseczka*, *przyłbica*, *rękawiczki*, *szczepionka*, *zaszczepić*, *wyszczepić*, *tarcza (antykryzysowa)* ['test', 'testing', 'swab', 'single-purpose hospital' and temporary hospital', 'disinfect', 'mask', 'face shield', 'gloves', 'vaccine', 'inoculate', 'vaccinate', '(anti-crisis) shield'] – the last of which refers to the governmental program of financial support to mitigate the economic effects of pandemics on companies and artists.

Agnieszka Cierpich-Kozieł in her article "Koronarzeczywistość – o nowych złożeniach z członem korona- w wieku pandemii [Corona-reality – on the new words containing the word 'corona' in the time of pandemic] distinguishes 52 Polish lexemes with the segment *korona*-, noting the organic nature of a word formation process and its high potential for growth (102-117). The Polish media have used neologisms such as *koronatime*, *koronaparty*, *koronateam*, *koronaspotkanie*, *koronaśmierć*, *koronawizyta*, *koronamajówka*, *koronagrill*, *koronakryzys*, *koronawakacje*, *koronasceptyk* ['coronatime', 'coronaparty', 'coronateam', 'coronameeting', 'coronadeath', 'coronavisit', 'coronamayholidays', 'coronagrill', 'coronacrisis', 'coronavacations', 'coronasceptic'].

UAM RESEARCH ON THE MEDIA IMAGE
OF THE CORONAVIRUS

The image of the pandemic reality in the Polish media has been the subject of this research carried out by our team of linguists and political science scholars from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań: Malgorzata Kołodziejczak, Dagmara Świerkowska, Marta Wrześniewska-Pietrzak, Przemyslaw Wiatrowski, Jacek Wyszyński, Katarzyna Zagórska, and the author of this paper. The project *COVID-19 – Czarna seria ciągle trwa. Medialny obraz koronawirusa i jego oddziaływanie społeczno-polityczne* [COVID-19 – the black series continues. The media image of the coronavirus and its socio-political impact] received funding in a competition announced by the Rector of the Adam Mickiewicz University.

The basic research goals of the project were to (i) reconstruct the media image of coronavirus and the world during the pandemic; (ii) show to what extent and under what influence this image has been changing since March 2020; (iii) show whether the evolution in the media image of the coronavirus and the epidemic has influenced social attitudes and behaviours; (iv) identify and analyse the differences in the coronavirus image, with particular emphasis on the degree of emotionality of the message; and (v) analyse the socio-political effects of media statements of particular actors and the linguistic interactions between political actors, journalists and experts.

This article brings together the team's preliminary, partial findings and serves as an article-sized research report that also serves as a preview of a new publication. The detailed findings of the UAM team of researchers will be published in the report entitled *COVID-19 – Czarna seria ciągle trwa. Medialny obraz koronawirusa i jego oddziaływanie społeczno-polityczne COVID-19* [The black series continues. The media image of the coronavirus and its socio-political impact], a digital version of which will be available in the Adam Mickiewicz University Repository (AMUR, repozytorium.amu. edu.pl/).

Magdalena Hodalska, who has been studying the media coverage of epidemics for several years, argues that COVID-19, just like other infectious diseases, is a perfect subject for the media: "full of dramatic stories, frightening numbers and descriptions, heroes, suspense and sensational twists. This keeps COVID-19 [...] on the front pages of newspapers and in headlines around the world" (349). Initially, the first reports of coronavirus in Poland only aroused concern but very quickly the epidemic became not only the

most important news, but also brought major changes to social life. In order to reconstruct the media image of the coronavirus, we analysed the most widely read newspapers with readers from different social groups: *Gazeta Wyborcza* (GW), *Fakt. Gazeta Codzienna* (F), *Super Express* (SE), *Rzeczpospolita* (Rz), as well as television news programmes, i.e., main editions of news services: *Wiadomości* (TVP), *Wydarzenia* (Polsat), and *Fakty* (TVN). These materials constituted the corpus used to extract fragments containing key words in periods representing different phases of the pandemic in Poland and the socio-political situation in the country.

Using the preliminary results from the research conducted for this project, we divided the timeframe into three four-week periods:

1) 4 March 2020 – 1 April 2020; a state of epidemic emergency, the beginning of the official state of epidemic (introduced on 20 March 2020) and introduction of further restrictions.

2) 20 April 2020 – 17 May 2020; the beginning of the lifting of restrictions and the discussion of whether the presidential elections should be cancelled due to *a danger that threatens the health and lives of many people* (a provision in the Polish law that makes it possible to postpone elections).

3) 15 June 2020 – 12 July 2020; the time of the election campaign when Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki argued that "Poland was emerging victorious from the fight against the epidemic", ending with the second round of the election of the President of Poland.

The project covers the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics and multimodal discourse analysis, and is focused on complex verbal-visual and audio-visual messages, i.e., news items selected from the main news services of three television stations and articles from four daily newspapers. In reconstructing the image of the coronavirus and the axiological system inscribed in individual media utterances, as well as their emotional valence (Mikołajczuk 86; Wiatrowski 87-88), this study referred to cognitive science, cultural linguistics and axiological linguistics. Language was perceived as the mental representations of reality, i.e., where the image of the world is formed in the consciousness of the speaker as a result of perceptual and cultural experiences. In line with the cultural linguistics approach that combines semantics with pragmatics and discourse theory, language was also seen as a component of culture and culture was seen as contained in language. Therefore, the language of media, in reference to the coronavirus and the situation during the pandemic, was treated as an interpretation of the world

during the epidemic, a reflection of knowledge and collective experiences, professed views and value systems held by individuals and the members of a given community. In this approach, the linguistic image of the world is fixed in the meanings of words, their etymology, and results from their lexical connectivity, phraseology, metaphors and conceptual metonymies (Bartmiński 12). It is reflected in the semantic structure of texts and the media image of the world, but also results from the mutual relations between text and image and reference to the previous uses of these codes in specific social contexts (Kampka 96-99).

This project included both qualitative and quantitative research which helped determine the frequency of specific key words, topics, speakers or their emotions. For this purpose, this study used CAST (Content Analysis System for Television), computer-assisted media content analysis system developed at the Department of Political Science and Journalism at Adam Mickiewicz University. By using CAST, we were able to efficiently assign codes to the studied material: we analysed individual news stories in which the pandemic was mentioned, as well as the statements made by each speaker in the highlighted news stories. The quantitative study of the press was carried out using media monitoring conducted by the external company PRESS-SERVICE Media Monitoring Sp. z o.o.

THE PRESENCE OF THE CORONAVIRUS IN THE MEDIA

As of March 2020, the media did not have to select topics or escalate emotions – journalistic agendas were dominated by topics related to the pandemic. The intensity of interest in these topics in Poland is shown in the graph on next page.

The number of news stories that featured either statements about coronavirus or references to coronavirus that provided context for other reports varied in time. The highest number of news stories addressing the expanding outbreak occurred after March 4, 2020, when patient zero was identified. Interest in this decreased after the introduction of an epidemic emergency. The appearance of an unknown virus that caused an epidemic in China not only gave rise to a demand for acquiring and broadcasting information about the disease and preventive measures, but also triggered, as further analysis shows, negative emotions ranging from anxiety to fear. At that time, the press reported that the "Coronavirus has already arrived" (GW), "Corona-

virus has reached Poland" (GW), "This is how the coronavirus infects" (F), "You have a weaker sense of smell and taste. Could it be coronavirus?" (F), "Coronavirus infects football" (Rz), "Coronavirus: watch your eyes" (Rz), "Coronavirus mutates dangerously" (Rz), "Coronavirus still surprises" (Rz), "Coronavirus kills companies" (GW), "Coronavirus paralyzes the country" (GW), "Coronavirus changes the law!" (F).
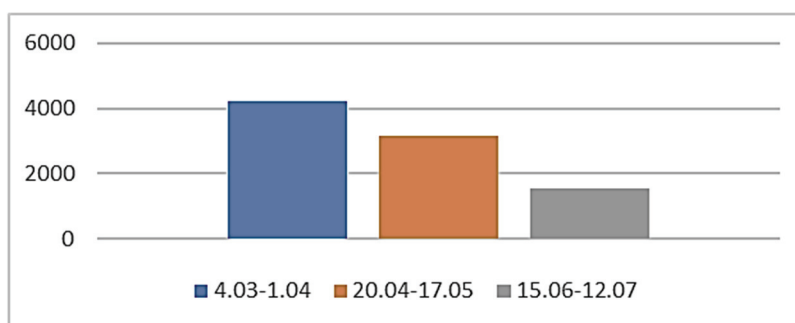

Figure 1: Number of references to coronavirus in Poland in the surveyed news outlets.

During the second period, i.e., after the initial lifting of direct restrictions, there were fewer uses of the word *coronavirus* and references to the pandemic. The preoccupation with other equally important topics, namely the presidential elections, their date, and how to organize them safely, was also visible at this time. The press was filled with information about where the coronavirus had occurred, as well as about adverse changes in the functioning of state institutions, businesses, and the lives of individuals, e.g. "Coronavirus exposed the poor state of national security" (GW), "Family says goodbye to physiotherapist who was killed by coronavirus" (F), "Coronavirus chased boys away from administration" (SE), "Coronavirus stopped loans" (GW), "Coronavirus will speed up the liquidation of many mines" (SE), "Coronavirus and cancer treatment" (GW), but also reflecting a change in emotional attitudes: "Poles no longer afraid of coronavirus?" (GW).

WAYS OF NAMING THE CORONAVIRUS IN POLISH

The published linguistic analyses show changes in the range of names referring to the coronavirus in Polish, as well as in lexical units allowing to describe various spheres of reality transformed by the pandemic (Kuli-

gowska 109-125). In this study, keywords were extracted from news items in television news and articles published in the press. The quantitative research carried out on both types of media showed significant differences in the number and, above all, in the frequency of the key words occurring in individual media and the three study periods (Łaziński 7).
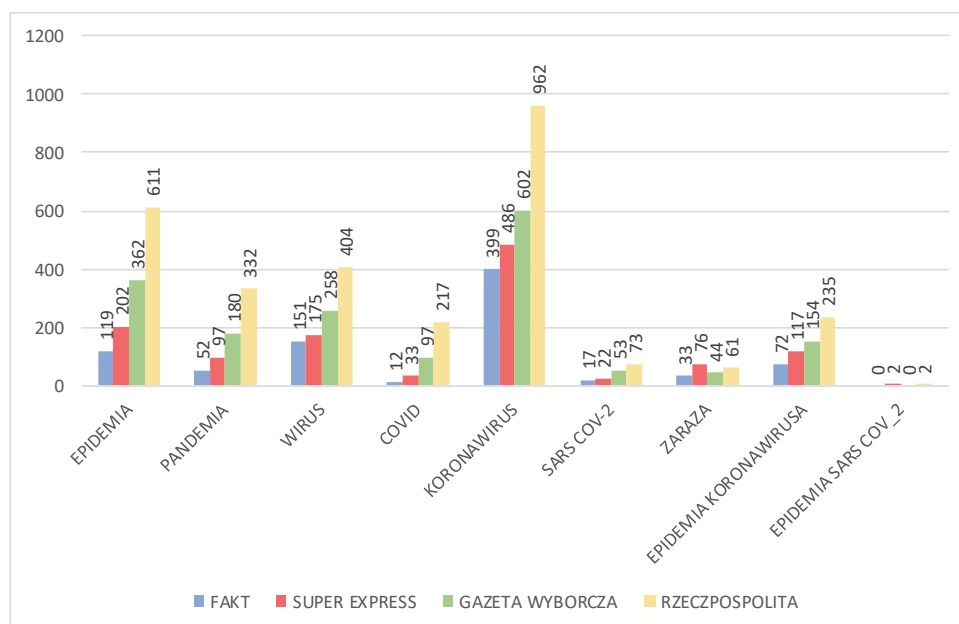

Figure 2: Naming coronavirus in the press – key words.

In both types of media, among the keywords describing the new reality, the word *koronawirus* 'coronavirus'[1] dominated from the beginning of the 1st study period (Figure 1 and 2). Its predominance in the press and television was very visible, as it appeared in 2,499 articles – most frequently in *Rzecz-pospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Coronavirus, defined by the Great Dictionary of the Polish Language as 'a virus having a protein envelope with crown-like protrusions, causing respiratory diseases in humans and various diseases in animals', is not a new name as it refers to the entire genus of viruses of the subfamily *Corona-*

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[1] Description of the meaning, etymology and contexts in which key words of the pandemic time appear in the article Kołodziejczak and Wrześniewska-Pietrzak "Na froncie walki z korona-wirusem, czyli o sposobach nazwania wirusa SARS-CoV-2 i wywołanej przez niego choroby w dyskursie medialnym w Polsce ['On the frontline of the fight against coronavirus': About the names of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 in the Polish media discourse]" (in print).

virinae. The name was created in English in the 1960s (Pyrć 48-54) and could already be found in Polish specialized language in the 1970s. The first reference to the human coronavirus dates back to 1980 (Duda). Only with the onset of the current outbreak in Wuhan did it move from specialised terminology into general Polish (Cierpich-Kozieł). At the same time, its meaning narrowed – in expert statements, the name *coronavirus* sometimes only denotes the SARS-CoV-2 virus (and not any other coronaviruses) while colloquially it is used to denote the COVID-19 disease.

The second most common word referring to COVID-19 is the word 'epidemic' used by the authors of 1,294 articles, 578 texts used the terminology 'coronavirus epidemic' and 4 used 'SARS CoV-2 epidemic', making a total of 1,876 texts. In third place is 'virus' with 988 articles. Less frequent were 'pandemic' – 661 articles, 'covid' – 359, 'plague' – 214, and 'SARS CoV-2' in 165 texts. Looking at the individual results, one may conclude that the pandemic situation was mentioned more often in *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza* (total of 4,665 texts) than in *Fakt* and *Super Express* (total of 2,065 texts). In the last of these papers, tabloid *Super Express*, particularly noteworthy was the number of articles in which the word 'plague' appeared, evoking negative connotations and presenting a war or a cataclysm. This most often appeared during the first period in emotional titles evoking fear, e.g., "A priest killed by the Chinese plague"[2] (SE); "Chinese plague attacks in Poland" (SE); "Plague killed him in 3 hours" (SE); "I will not let plague kill my theatre" (SE).

The key words occurred 1,871 times in the TV news, the highest number of which were recorded in the 1st examined period – 883. In the subsequent periods, their number decreased to 696 in the 2nd and 292 in the 3rd period. The name 'coronavirus' also dominated here, used in 797 news items. The scale of impact and spread of the virus SARS-CoV-2 contributed to describing the threat of infectious disease in terms of 'epidemic' or its hyponym – 'pandemic', indicating an increase in incidence of COVID-19 and at the same time displaying the gravity of the situation, now affecting the whole of humankind. In all TV news services, these names appeared equally often, i.e., in 337 ('epidemic') and 336 ('pandemic') news items. The terms 'suddenly', 'unexpectedly', 'unpredictably', alongside verbs or participles representing the image of a fight or even a struggle against the elements, make

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[2] Names indicating the Chinese origin of the virus were deemed politically incorrect (Kuligowska), which is probably why the occasional uses of this phrase in *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* appear with a quotation mark (GW, 14 May 2020, Rz 4 May 2020).
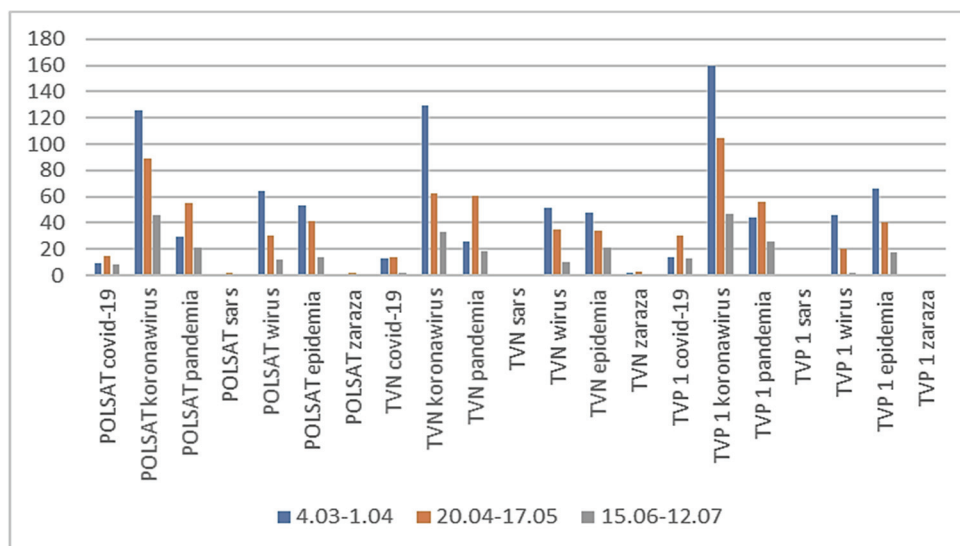
Figure 3: Naming coronavirus in television news services.

the words 'epidemic' and 'pandemic' connote danger, insecurity, as well as anxiety, fear and terror, resulting in apocalyptic visions of the end of the world or humanity. The next place is occupied by 'virus' with 270 news items, followed by 'covid' with 118 news items. 'Sars' and 'plague' appeared sporadically.

MOVING AWAY FROM THE PRINCIPLE
OF NEGATIVITY IN THE MEDIA

One of the determinants of contemporary news is the principle of negativity (Galtung and Ruge) where the more negative an event is, the more likely it is to become news (Kunczik and Zipfel 121). This principle did not change initially in the pandemic; the change concerned technology and production (e.g. the use of Internet calls for contacting guests in the programs) rather than in the general assumptions of information theory. The media did not have to select topics or escalate emotions – reality exceeded the public's wildest expectations, and journalistic agendas were dominated by pandemic-related topics. In this way, news outlets became highly monothematic, especially in March 2020. The media then tried to adapt to the informational needs of the audience (Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe* 45; Zagórska 60-79)

which did not demand the hyperbolisation of negative news but rather strived for more optimistic coverage. The media response was therefore to turn to social activism and promoting various volunteer initiatives – some television news titles forsook the principle of negativity and tried to come up with a positive message, e.g.:

> #Let's help one another (*Fakty*, 15 March 2020),
> Time for responsibility. Good help (*Wydarzenia*, 16 March 2020)

As early as July 2, 2020, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, during meetings with voters in Tomaszów Lubelski and Kraśnik, announced that the "Coronavirus is in retreat and there is no need to be afraid" – for which he later apologized. Although the Prime Minister and the government-controlled national TV station were assuring viewers that coronavirus was subsiding and that Poles had won the fight, other TV stations and the press reported since March 2020 that it was still a 'big threat to everyone', 'mutating', and 'not letting go'. News materials often referred to physical and mental health, reporting coronavirus's ability to infect, transmit from person to person, and induce fear and panic. For example, the coronavirus 'had not disappeared', but was 'rampant' and 'affecting all spheres of socio-political-economic-cultural life', 'wreaking havoc', 'causing upheaval', 'turning everything upside down', 'hitting hard', 'resulting in dire restrictions', 'demolishing', 'brutally bringing down', 'casting a shadow', 'taking on a life of its own', and 'suddenly changing the context'. In addition, 'it has come', 'it has come to us', 'it has exploded, 'it has surprised', 'it has not gone away', 'it has made things even worse', 'it has slowed down', 'it has made things impossible', 'it has thwarted plans', 'it has posed unexpected long-term challenges to everyone', 'it has dominated activities', 'it has caused a decline', 'it has disrupted things', and 'it has stopped works'. These negative actions 'have affected not only Poland, but the entire world'. The coronavirus is often pictured not so much as an enemy with which humanity is fighting an unequal battle, but as a 'catastrophe', 'an element that has taken many lives' and 'has taken a deadly toll'. It 'appears as a wave', 'ravages', 'puts mothers against the wall', and 'has disrupted the existing customs even in hospitals', with their 'tried and tested procedures'. It has also 'shown the loneliness of many seniors', 'highlighted their problems' or 'killed them'. As columnists reported, "The coronavirus is bleeding the economy" (GW) and "effectively reshaped our private, social, and even professional lives" (SE), with the result that "the difficulty of our time is

greater than ever and requires a much greater sense of responsibility" (GW). It should be noted, however, that not everyone viewed coronavirus's impact on reality in this way; there were quoted statements from which the reader learned that the "pandemic is the result of nasty manipulation and that the coronavirus is nothing more than a common flu" (GW).

From the very beginning, fear-inducing information and images about the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus were accompanied by a positive message. This aimed to reduce the feeling of fear by building a community of mutually supportive people and institutions in a situation of widespread threat to life as well as various restrictions and limitations imposed by the authorities. The struggle against coronavirus was contrasted with values such as activism, commitment, responsibility, gratitude, generosity, cooperation, and conformity. The adjective 'Polish' was also repeated many times, for example, when 'Polish companies and institutions' supported 'Polish hospitals' and 'Polish medics'. The whole world was fighting against the epidemic, but what was important was how Poland and Poles were resisting the enemy together, sometimes helping other countries as well. In the surveyed news items, information about various initiatives of private persons and social organizations and institutions appeared 218 times, almost half of them in the first period, a little less in the second and by the end of the election campaign the media stopped paying attention to them.
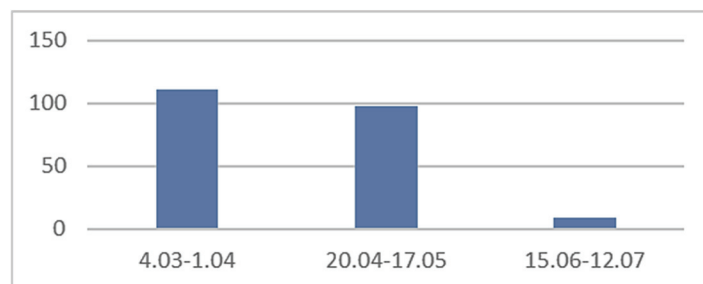

Figure 4: Grassroots initiatives.

MULTIMODALITY OF MEDIA COVERAGE
AND THE IMAGE OF CORONAVIRUS

The constructed image of coronavirus and the evocation of emotions were also based on visual messages. One important and repeatedly used image

contained medical workers dressed in white protective suits. This could be found in news stories about the epidemic threat, the situation in hospitals and emergency wards, as well as in other contexts: during inspections at border crossings, testing for COVID-19, and transporting specialized equipment. They also appeared in news reports containing orders to stay at home and isolate, and when reporting on shortages of hospital beds or insufficient staff or protective equipment. The colour white in European culture is associated with cleanliness and innocence, and is associated with medical personnel providing assistance, although it may also arouse fear in younger patients.

Figure 5: *Wydarzenia*, 13 March 2020.

Figure 6: *Wiadomości*, 30 March 2020.

These images were most intensely published in the 1st period of the study, when they served a persuasive function of convincing the viewer to stay at home, and in the 2nd period when the information function was predominant. A large number of reproduced images, in this case depicting people in white suits, further increased the level of fear in viewers, and it is likely that the epidemic could have gone almost unnoticed if it had not been exploited by the media (Goban-Klas, "Media w płynnej pandemii 2020").

EMOTIONAL CHARACTERIZATION OF MEDIA COVERAGE

The polyphonic specificity of television (Loewe 290) means that the authors of the analysed materials have a rich repertoire of means to increase the emotionality of their messages, giving them a certain advantage over the press. In theory, the function of television news services should be to provide an "informing, faithful, fast reporting of events – a photographic reflection of reality" (Sobczak 271), and the sender of such texts should use uninvolved descriptions, not comment on anything, not appeal to feelings and emotions, and avoid subjectivity and values (Sobczak 271). However, in the studied materials the emotional involvement of the producers was evident, with emotions externalized in the verbal layer. As such, this study included an analysis of lexical-phraseological indicators of the emotional involvement of the speakers, including the names of feelings and their symptoms, expressivism, primary and secondary interjections, and modulants.
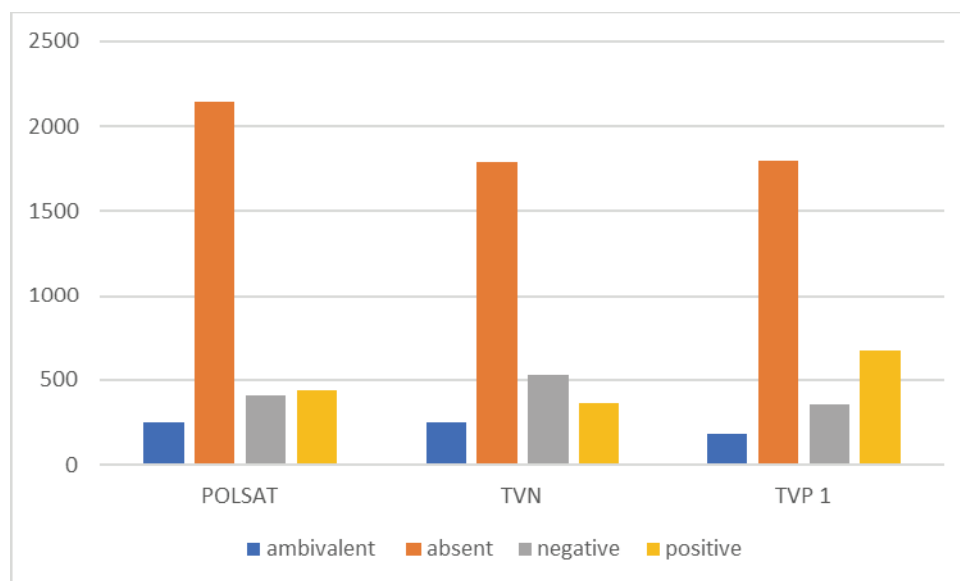

Figure 7: Types of emotions in the news of individual news services.

The quantitative characteristic primarily emphasizes the type of emotions manifested in news items in *Wydarzenia*, *Fakty*, and *Wiadomości*. Emotions were present in 3,438 news items, while they were absent in 5,727 news items. Emotions were ambivalent in 676 news items, negative in 1,284, and positive in 1,478.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that in the 1st period there was a prevailing fear of coronavirus – its spread, the possibility of infection and infecting others, as well as isolation. The data reporting the number of infected and deceased people, especially from Italy and Spain, were alarming. For a total of 4,320 news items thematically related to coronavirus, there were 1,675 news items in which journalists used lexical means to communicate their own or others' emotions. 15.28% of all news items contained exponents of positive feelings only, 14.93% contained exponents of negative feelings only, and 8.56% contained exponents of ambivalent feelings. News broadcasts from *Wydarzenia* were characterised by the lowest level of emotional involvement. Emotional engagement was somewhat higher in *Wiadomości*, and highest in *Fakty*, where negative emotions dominated. The sum of news items containing positive emotions in *Wiadomości* was similar to the number of items with negative emotions which appeared in *Fakty*.

The analysed material contained lexical exponents of various negative emotions from lexical-semantic fields such as FEAR, SADNESS, SURPRISE, HARM, PITY, CONTEMPT, HOMESICKNESS, ANGER, BOREDOM, and SHAME as well as positive emotions from the lexical-semantic fields of HOPE, BEING MOVED, JOY, PLEASURE, RESPECT, and GOODWILL.

Materials in the 2nd period contained concerns about the forecasted economic crisis, and the fear of the virus, of infecting others (such anxiety was invariably present in statements by medical professionals) and of falling ill. There were also themes concerning outbreaks recorded in the region of Silesia (especially among mine workers) and testing miners there for the presence of coronavirus. Mine workers were afraid not only of the disease, but also of losing their jobs.

In subsequent time periods, the repertoire of linguistic means communicating feelings from the FEAR group decreased along with their incidence, which proves that the topic of COVID-19 had become commonplace – the virus no longer aroused extreme emotions. However, there were some statements that did mention fear caused by the ongoing pandemic. Concerns were also related to the actual – very high – number of infected people in America, the next wave of infections in many countries, the danger of the virus spreading in Poland due to a failure to observe safety rules in public spaces and the lack of expected signs that the epidemic was ending.

MEDIA COVERAGE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

On the one hand, the image of social attitudes present in television broadcasts can be regarded as information about the attitudes of Poles towards the coronavirus and the SARS-CoV-2 epidemic, but on the other hand, the most frequently reported attitudes constitute a kind of pattern of behaviour emulated by the public. As shown by psychological and sociological research (Klebaniuk), the impact of television programmes is related to their high availability, easy access, as well as the specific ease with which they can engage huge numbers of viewers.
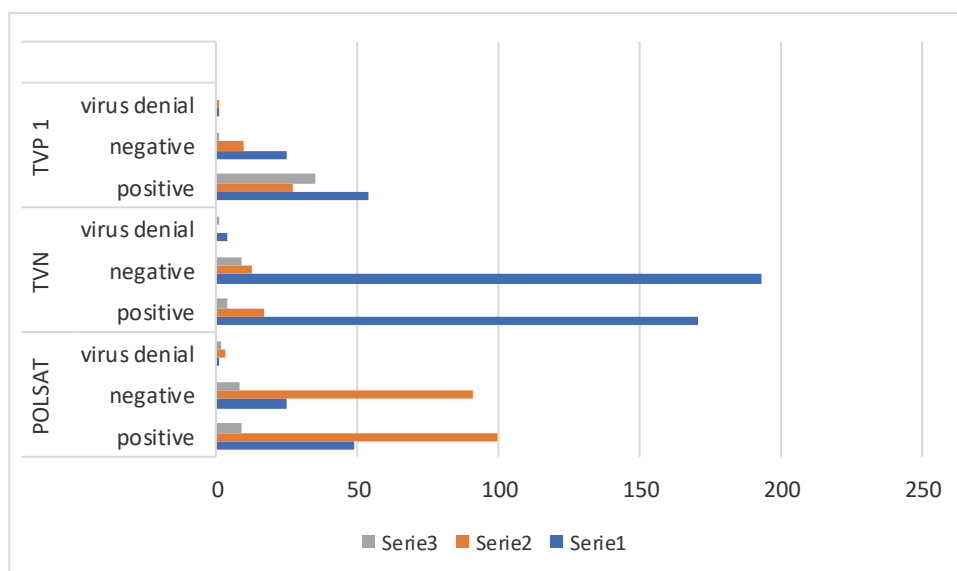

Figure 8: Social behaviour.

In the epidemic emergency, television programs were one of the most important sources of information, providing figures on new infections, deaths, and recoveries. Speakers on television – experts, politicians, journalists and ordinary people – expressed their opinions about the virus, presenting one of the following three attitudes: positive – approving of the introduced restrictions; negative – which manifested itself through violations of recommendations and regulations, and denialist – associated with denying the very existence of the virus. The collected data show a consistent manner of presenting people denying the existence of the virus (who, in addition, were very rarely shown on TV). Most frequently presented were attitudes approv-

ing or disapproving of the introduced restrictions. *Wiadomości* was showing a higher number of positive attitudes, and almost half this number of people presenting attitudes negating the introduced restrictions and preventing measures. The collected data show the need for further analysis of the correlation between the presented attitudes towards the coronavirus and the restrictions introduced by the government and the way these behaviours were valorised. In the analysed messages, it was not uncommon to find information showing gross violations of the recommendations and then condemning them as negative and posing danger to the health and lives of others. We also found news which showed absurdities associated with the practical implementation of some Covid-related regulations.

From early spring 2020, the discourse in the Polish media was dominated by news stories and articles about coronavirus. For many weeks, viewers and readers were informed daily on the number of infected, dead, those under epidemiological surveillance, the number of tests performed, occupied beds and used ventilators, and those vaccinated. The media reported on patient zero being found, more restrictions being put in place, schools and universities, cultural institutions, shopping malls, restaurants and hotels, airports and borders being closed, mass events being cancelled, a national quarantine being put in place, the number of worshippers allowed in temples being limited, and then a loosening of restrictions, state-sponsored aid to businesses, and plans to unfreeze the economy. Residents staying at home, working and studying remotely, staying in isolation, including self-isolation, learned from news outlets about the recommendations of the Polish government, as well as the WHO, and how other countries were coping with the coronavirus and what help they could count on from the European Union. In late spring 2020, they learned that the virus was weakening and the country could safely hold presidential elections.

In this study, key words for media messages in the study period were 'coronavirus', 'COVID-19', 'COVID', 'SARS-CoV-2', 'epidemic', 'pandemic', and 'plague'. Their accumulation intensified the sense of threat and was meant to induce responsible social behaviour, especially in the initial stages of the pandemic. Negative images of coronavirus and negative emotions dominated media coverage, but their intensity varied from media to media and changed from period to period, as well as being influenced by the different editorial lines of TV stations. Regardless, in March 2020, all the analysed media contained a message of community-building – it was also present in later periods but less obvious or distinct due to the different character of media coverage during the presidential campaign and elections.

The media image of coronavirus changed between the three study periods highlighted by the UAM team. The report will present detailed data concerning, among others, the ways of naming the coronavirus by various media in different periods, the subject matter taken up in news and articles in which the word *coronavirus* or its synonym appears, the speakers, genre syncretism, persuasiveness and emotionality of the message, as well as non-verbal mechanisms of inducing fear in the recipient. Digital version of the research report, funded under the *Badania nad COVID-19* [*Research on COVID-19*] competition of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, will be available in the Adam Mickiewicz University Repository (AMUR, repozytorium.amu. edu.pl/). It is entitled *COVID-19 – Czarna seria ciągle trwa. Medialny obraz koronawirusa i jego oddziaływanie społeczno-polityczne COVID-19* [The black series continues. The media image of the coronavirus and its sociopolitical impact].

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