



COVID-19: Time of Unrests

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of social media on citizen journalism and the credibility of mainstream news outlets in Nigeria. It explores how social media affects the news consumption habits of Nigerian youth, the influence of citizen journalism on news credibility, and the relationship between social media engagement and perceived credibility. The study also identifies the most trusted and distrusted social media platforms for news. Data was collected through an online survey of 340 Nigerian social media users, focusing on social media use for news, trust in citizen journalism versus traditional media, and news source credibility. The findings reveal a significant shift toward social media in shaping youth news preferences, with citizen journalism seen as more reliable, affecting the credibility of mainstream media. The study recommends enhancing media literacy initiatives among Nigerian youth to improve critical thinking and fact-checking skills. It contributes to the discourse on the evolving media landscape in Nigeria, highlighting the role of social media and citizen journalism in shaping public perception of news credibility.

Keywords: Social media; Citizen journalism; News credibility; Mainstream media; Youth; Pearson correlation; Spearman correlation

INTRODUCTION

SARS-CoV-2

Since December 31 2019 a new virus, named SARS-CoV-2 began spreading globally, which presumably originated in the Wuhan region in China. The virus has undermined the European economy, thereby causing changes in political decisions and inequalities among social groups. Moreover, the European countries were forced to introduce serious measures in order to prevent the virus to spread further such as self-isolation and social distancing. Thus, it has caused a large number of the social protests against the coronavirus measures. According to European news, Europe experienced increased amounts of riots and protests starting in April 2020, of which 1.600 turned violent. The governments are trying to deal with SARS-CoV-2 dissemination along with protesting citizens who are fighting for their freedom.

Looking at today's protests, it is scary to imagine what the future holds. The pandemic has taken over our lives and the

governments are unable to introduce new problem-solving tactics. I suppose that this can lead to a complete lack of control over society, because citizens have already started to revolt. European countries such as the UK and Italy have a large number of riots due to freedom restricting regulations imposed by their governments. Moreover, Latvia and Poland have experienced salary cuts due to the inability of the government to solve the happened problems, which led to the complaints ignoring and discrimination against citizens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper will examine my research question: How do the governments of UK, Latvia, Poland and Italy deal with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and how have the respective societies responded to that? The research question is related to apocalyptic topics since it examines the causes of the collective protests emergence which are accompanied with violence and unrests within the states [1].

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Received: 20-Nov-2024, Manuscript No. JSC-24-27556; **Editor assigned:** 22-Nov-2024, PreQC No. JSC-24-27556 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 06-Jan-2025, QC No. JSC-24-27556; **Revised:** 09-May-2025, Manuscript No. JSC-24-27556 (R); **Published:** 16-May-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2167-0358.26.15.305

Citation: Petrovska O (2025) COVID-19: Time of Unrests. J Socialomics. 15:305.

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The content of the paper consists of the five parts. The first part illustrates the economy declining and the large number of coronavirus deaths in UK. The second and the third parts show the discrimination by governments against the residents in Latvia, Poland and Italy. All three parts illustrate the process of how the governments deal with the social unrests. Furthermore, the fourth and the fifth parts examine the concept of the possible anarchist ideas which can be defined as the main core of the revolts, and the possible post-pandemic scenario which presupposes the governmental surveillance over the society [2].

SARS-CoV-2 in UK: Economy decline and the protests against measures

When the SARS-CoV-2 virus began spreading in early January, the UK government has encountered difficulties with rapid economy decline. However, in Autumn 2020 multiple protests were recorded which were held on the streets. The UK made the number of alterations to the crisis machinery and the virus spread prevention, including common lockdowns and travel restrictions which were introduced in the entire UK. As a result, the economy contracted by 20.4% over a three-month period (April-June) due to the lockdown. Moreover, due to the large number of closed factories, shops and municipal enterprises, the number of unemployed increased by 4.8% over the six-month period. Most employees were moved to teleworking due to immediate effect of social-distancing measures. However, it influenced salaries which have significantly decreased due to lack of staff. In general, teleworking was introduced only to high-paid workers such as office workers, managers and private businesses, whereas the labor force has been hit by unemployment and low wages [3].

Although this caused a number of problems between the working classes, the citizens united together began to protest the self-isolation measures and the growing economic crisis in the UK. According to the British news, already in the end of May the first protest against the problems caused by virus was held in London. Consequently, 19 people were arrested by police for violating the self-isolation rules and social distance non-compliance. Thus, the Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared the easing of self-isolation rules in order to shun the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and combat the economic decline. However, this decision has led to the death toll and reported cases doubling. Consequently, already in Autumn 2020 the situation with the protests against self-isolation and the government's inability to cope with the growing number of deaths went out of control. In September the police escalated to use extreme measures of crowd control, using the tear gas and batons in order to control the protesters. The consequences of this clash between the crowd and the police have led to the result that nine police officers were attacked and wounded by frenzied mob, and three protesters were hospitalized [4].

Moreover, in the end of November more than 150 people were arrested during demonstrations. Most of protesters were saying phrases such as "shame on you" and "stop controlling us" which were addressed to the police officers and politicians. The British reporters recorded the cases which had been accompanied with aggression and inappropriate behavior from the citizen's side.

Some of the protesters deliberately persecuted a police officer, but most of them were arrested and severely beaten by the police. The chaos spreading on Christmas Eve has forced the British government to introduce the strictest measures or SARS-CoV-2 measures. Currently, all citizens must be self-isolated and should not go outdoors without a reasonable excuse, otherwise they will be fined or arrested. Additionally, it is not allowed to leave the residential areas and travel abroad. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are under the full lockdown [5].

The strictest measures presuppose the new protests emergence. However, there have not been any recent protests recorded yet. I myself think that new protests may arise in 2-3 months, because the previous ones occurred after the same amount of time. Since the last protest was accompanied by chaos and violence, it can be assumed that the next one could get even worse [6].

SARS-CoV-2 in Latvia and Poland: Discrimination against residents

According to the Centre for Economic Policy Research, the burden of the virus enhances the percentage of unemployed workers, especially in the former Soviet states which are currently a part of the EU. Overall, the self-isolation and social distancing measures directly affect the labour market since economic activities such as hotels and restaurant businesses are closed, while food and medical services are open daily and suffer from staff shortages. Therefore, a significant part of the workforce is unable to work during the lockdown. For states like Poland and Latvia the SARS-CoV-2 emergency has literally become a disaster. For example, before the crisis spread in Latvia, the number of impoverished was 22.9% from the whole population and in Poland it was 17%. Moreover, compared to the problems occurring in Britain, Poland and Latvia have encountered discrimination amongst their citizens which were ignored by their governments [7].

In Latvia during the period of the quarantine, only health care facilities were operating, which is staggering considering the country's annual capital is heavily dependent on private enterprises. Medical institutions faced the problem of paying low salaries and labor shortage. Moreover, in two of Riga's large public hospitals, doctors and nurses were forced to work daily since the hospitals were in lack of working staff. Most of the doctors insisted on raising medical staff in order to get ready for the second wave of virus that has already happened in autumn. However, the government had not requested for this comment. In the middle of December, the first protest arose in the capital. In Riga almost 300 people gathered who protested against social restrictions and complaints ignored by the Latvian government. According to Latvian radio reports, activists gathered in the main square to voice the complaints to the Latvian government which does not support enterprises affected by the virus and does not provide any proper decision for salary increase. However, after the demonstration nothing has been changed. The most valid governmental decision was to extend self-isolation in order to reduce the number of infected people [8].

Meanwhile, Poland reported incidents where the patients have been humiliated in the hospitals. According to the Ministry of

Health, the Polish government is also suffering from a budget crisis. Therefore, the Polish Ministry of Health is unable to provide free places in the public hospitals, because they simply do not have them. Last month there were several cases of infected patients who were forced to spend 14 hours in an ambulance due to a lack of space in the local hospitals. Furthermore, ambulances were forced to travel between hospitals to collect patients and send them home. Interestingly, a representative of the Ministry of Health blamed ambulance dispatchers for this. Moreover, cases where infected people did not have enough oxygen while they were waiting in the ambulances also have been recorded. After these cases, Poland reported 27,000 new cases coronavirus infected citizens. Ultimately, 6842 died in November. In fact, this responsibility rests with the conscience of representative offices and The Health Ministry, who must make reasonable and human decisions to ensure the safety of infected citizens. However, the Polish government decided to not respond to these cases. Consequently, on the following days the residents started to revolt against the governmental ignorance of the infected people [9].

SARS-CoV-2 in Italy: The chaos in the state

Italy is the hardest hit country in the European Union by number of deaths caused by pandemic. Presently, the death toll exceeds 2,300 people per month and continue to grow. One of the main reasons was the lack of the medical equipment for infected citizens and the corona-measures non-compliance by residents. Therefore, the Italian government decided to introduce the full lockdown in March 2020. However, since the government has agreed to a general lockdown, including the measures such as the introduced curfew and travel ban, the public situation became even worse.

Italy right now can be defined as the most protesting country in Europe where the use of violence against police and citizens became a normality. The main reason for the held protests in Italy was a struggle for freedom. For example, the largest violent protest of the entire pandemic took place in November. The protests against a new presumable lockdown took place across the whole terrain of Italy. According to Italian news, protesters began rioting in the famous squares of Milan, Rome, Turin, etc., when the police used tear gas against the mob, whereupon some protesters threw petrol bombs on the police officers. Cases have been recorded of deaths by means of pots and pressure cookers. Moreover, during the demonstration several high-priced boutiques in Italy were robbed and burned.

Furthermore, the protests began to occur in the local penitentiaries too. Due to constant overcrowding in prisons, the virus began to spread rapidly amongst inmates. The protests were caused by the introduction of a ban on meeting with families, the absence of the proper medical care and the contagion preclusion. Thus, 49 protests which involved almost all penitentiaries have occurred so far during the period of pandemic. The riots were accompanied with collective anger and the deliberate consent of homicide of wardens. Meanwhile, the relatives of the inmates and the external solidarity groups joined the prison rioters, accusing the health authorities of

discriminating against prisoners. However, the health authorities had started to charge them by violating the corona-measures. In result, 72 prisoners have escaped and 13 wardens have been killed.

After these chaotic cases in the state, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte declared that the pandemic has reached the highest rate of lawlessness, therefore the Italian government would provide tougher measures to prevent chaos. Ultimately, the new decree means a ban on visiting all events, shopping centers, shops, etc. Additionally, no gathering, travel and unreasonable appearances on the street are permitted, otherwise the lawbreakers will be arrested.

DISCUSSION

Thomas Hobbes: Theory of anarchy

In general, the facts mentioned above illustrate the process of how the governments of the mentioned countries are fighting with riots caused by SARS-CoV-2 and the process of how society is trying to fight for the freedom. A preliminary conclusion can be drawn with the fact that the governments cannot prevent the massive riots growth. They tighten up the measures which eventually lead to other unwanted protest. According to a study done by Kennedy Institute, most of the EU states might soon experience a period of the anarchist ideas which can emerge within the social stratum of society and immediately will lead to massive riots. Following this statement, it can be presumed that the duration of the riots growth presupposes the anarchist concepts emergence which may lead to anarchy rising within the state.

In terms of international theory and political philosophy, anarchy itself is the most crucial concept. During the Renaissance period Thomas Hobbes' works were mainly concerned with political philosophy, the theory of social contract and the theory of state sovereignty. Most of his work was tightly interwoven with the ethical issues which the state and society faced in that time. Hobbes opposed the concept of anarchy with the absence of the governmental authority over society. According to him, life becomes anarchic when the government is undergoing the state of collapse due to lack of rights, which subsequently leads to the social dissolution and to the complete absence of obedience. Nonetheless, the most dangerous aspect that can diminish the government authority is tightly connected to the social subjectivity. Hobbes was assured that anarchy itself is purely subjective because internally from one individual. Consequently, he spreads these ideas to other individuals, thereby creating a collective mind. The mentioned European countries have been suffering from mass protests and it is presumed that the riots will continue to increase, thereby gaining more power. The current pandemic promotes the slow destruction of the central government as violent riots increase. First of all, it is important to sort out some aspects which could define humans' present behavior.

People are naturally social beings and they have a predilection to rally with other people, and create communities. They cannot survive being alone all the time. The issues the world has

encountered caused by the inability of most governments to make reasonable, humane and at least new decisions in order to prevent the amount of protests. I assume that people started feeling fear and hatred towards their countries. These feelings and emotions essentially give people an opportunity to organize certain groups within society in order to unite. In principle, the target of these small groups always consists of gaining one common goal and common good. However, today the protests against self-isolation prove that human freedom is reduced to a minimum. This determines that one individual can experience the negative emotions as anxiety, stress, fear, anger and hatred, thereby spreading his own negative emotional experience over others. Consequently, these emotions prompt violent tendencies. In general, these facts presuppose inappropriate behavior of people at protests, so when the police used violence against the protesters, the protesters used violence in response. Looking at everything that has happened in the UK, Latvia, Poland and Italy, Hobbes would say that anarchy is the complete insecurity of both the government and the citizens. Indeed, when fear and violence are spread among the society, the coming of anarchy is inevitable.

Post-pandemic scenario: Possible public surveillance

Finally, it could be reasonable to provide an assumption about post-pandemic scenarios in the mentioned states. The governments grant more rigorous measures, which further limit the freedom of individuals. Apparently, the continuation of massive riots could become the most serious problem the governments have ever struggled with. For the entirety of the pandemic, the European Commission has adapted the common laws in order to reduce the spread of the virus, which causes the conspicuous conflicts between society and governments. These laws vary from temporary arrests to pending curfews to track public movements in the Europe. However, it could get worse if the governments decide to provide surveillance of citizens.

It is important to mention, that China has already introduced a decree of surveillance in order to preclude a further spread of the virus. The supposed success of coping with SARS-CoV-2 in China may serve as an appropriate example for less democratic states in the EU. Moreover, the surveillance systems can be a proper opportunity for massive riots and collective actions disposal. If the surveillance system is introduced in the short-term use, it presupposes that the present measures of self-isolation and social distancing may help the governments to decrease the arrests. Thus, controlling the mobilization of residents would help to reduce anti-corruption as an advantage for the governments. However, if the surveillance system is introduced in the long-term use, it may become a huge problem for society. Long-term use of the surveillance system will reduce civil space and freedom to minimum, slowly transforming the democratic countries into authoritarian. Thus, human freedom will totally depend on governments making society more vulnerable and keeping it within fear frameworks. Furthermore, the fear of day-and-night surveillance will subject

activists to self-censorship. Hence, restricting press freedom will undermine the struggle against corruption because the governmental actions will become inexplicable and obscure to citizens.

CONCLUSION

To sum up: According to the introduced cases caused by the current pandemic, it can be said that SARS-CoV-2 will leave a huge mark in the European history of our century. The unstable situation in the UK, Latvia, Poland and Italy is growing every day, affecting millions of people's lives. The governments of these countries are trying to prevent the spread of the virus by strengthening coronavirus measures. However, society remains dissatisfied because their freedom gets limited daily. Moreover, the residents get discriminated because their governments do not provide a proper medical care. The fact that the protests will gain strength is quite clear. Following this, it can be presumed that citizens will continue to protest until the pandemic is over. Although, the cases of the fierce violence and murders during the Latvian and Polish protests had not been recorded, the residents still remain ignored by their governments. According to Hobbes, when in society arises the question about the unattainability of their common good, people begin to rally together in order to actualize it. Thus, it can be presumed, that the violent between protesters may occur next time. Additionally, Italy and the UK already can serve as a good example since their protests were accompanied with the social unrests and homicides. Consequently, the possible continuation of the protests presupposes the massive riots which ultimately could lead to the massive kill of the public health authorities and residents as well.

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