

## 20. BÖLÜM / CHAPTER 20

### THE IMPACT OF HEALTH NEWS ON UNDERSTANDING AND PERCEPTIONS: THE USE OF VISUALS IN TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

### SAĞLIK HABERLERİNİN ANLAMAYA VE ALGILARA ETKİSİ: GELENEKSEL VE SOSYAL MEDYADA GÖRSEL KULLANIMI

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#### ABSTRACT

Media is everywhere and nowadays people choose to be led by it, with the assumption that it is the only source from which to learn and grasp policies, attitudes, ideas, and opinions. It is interesting that the debate over whether children learn from schooling or from their families leads to a debate about whether people learn from the media or society. Yet currently, with new forms of media, it has become easier to track the flow of media, media coverage and media usage, and thus one can at least come up with some ideas and conclusions about media consumption. Consequently, we may have some implications and predictions about whether the media is directed at specific audience types or not. However, depending on their restricted knowledge and potential interpretation techniques, the individuals consuming media come up with their own possible clues or conclusions from the same message. Thus, various transmedia information sources might change the content, perceptions, and level of information, which can result in unintended outcomes. The basic challenge is to find ways to prevent people, specifically children, from being exposed to infollution, misinformation and disinformation.

Within the framework of a multidisciplinary perspective, this study attempts to shed light on what transpires in the triangle of children, media literacy and health to underline the significance of the media in childhood development. The study of the written press, audiovisual content, and interactive media within the context of media literacy reveals that health is a key topic on the media agenda. Also, stories about health have a considerable impact on both traditional and social media. The impact of news, particularly its images, on child development is examined in the study using qualitative data.

**Keywords:** Infollution, visualization, child development, health and media

## ÖZ

Medya her yerdedir ve günümüzde insanlar, politikaları, tutumları, fikirleri ve görüşleri öğrendikleri ve kavradıkları tek kaynağın medya olduğu varsayımına sahip olarak medya akışı tarafından yönetilmeyi seçmektedir. Çocukların okuldan mı yoksa ailelerinden mi öğrendiği tartışmasının, insanların medyadan mı yoksa toplumdan mı öğrendiği tartışmasına dönüşmesi ilginçtir. Ancak günümüzde yeni medya ile medya kapsamını ve kullanımını takip etmek daha kolay hale geldi ve bu nedenle en azından medya tüketimi hakkında bazı fikirler ve sonuçlar ortaya çıkabilir. Sonuç olarak, medya özellikle onlar için ayarlanmışsa veya ayarlanmamışsa, bazı çıkarımlarımız ve tahminlerimiz olabilir. Ancak medyanın karşı karşıya olduğu bireyler, sınırlı bilgilerine ve potansiyel yorumlama tekniklerine bağlı olarak, aynı mesajdan kendi olası ipuçlarını veya sonuçlarını çıkarmaktadırlar. Dolayısıyla, transmedyanın çoklu bilgi kaynakları, içeriği, algıları ve bilgi düzeyini de değiştirebilir ve hatta istenmeyen bazı sonuçlara neden olabilir. Temel soru, insanları, özellikle çocukları, bilgi kirliliğinden, yanlış bilgilendirmeden ve dezenformasyondan korumanın yollarını bulmaktır.

Bu çalışma, çok disiplinli bir bakış açısı çerçevesinde, çocuk, medya okuryazarlığı, sağlık üçgeninde pandemi döneminde neler olduğunu ortaya koyabilmeyi, çocukluğun gelişiminde medyanın önemini vurgulamayı ve örnekleri ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Medya okuryazarlığı temel bilgileri çerçevesinde yalnızca yazılı basın değil, sözlü ve görsel basın da değerlendirildiğinde, sağlık temasının medyanın gündeminde oldukça fazla yer edindiği, hem geleneksel medyada hem de sosyal medyada sağlık ile ilgili haberlerin etkisinin yüksek olduğu sonucuna varılmaktadır. Çalışmada nitel veriler ışığında haberlerin özellikle görselliklerinin çocuk gelişimine etkisi konusu tartışılmaktadır. Bulguların sembolik kodlar, kod açıklamaları, kültürel değerler ve benzer kültürler çerçevesinde irdelenmesi ile çalışma sonuçlarının serimlenmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Bilgi kirliliği, görselleştirme, çocuk gelişimi, sağlık ve medya

## 1. Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, adults and children were exposed to more traditional and social media content than in ordinary times. Everything both important and irrelevant found its way into children's consciousness, generating a variety of unpleasant outcomes ranging from nervousness to anxiousness, addiction and terror. Newlove-Delgado et al.'s (2021) England's Mental Health of Children and Young People (MHCYP) survey showed that the increase in probable mental health problems reported in adults also affected 5–16-year-olds in England, with the incidence rising from 10.8% in 2017 to 16.0% in July 2020 across age, gender and ethnic groups.

It is clear that the "health agenda" of the media may have an impact on both adults and children's lives, both temporarily and permanently. Agenda is a flexible and intransitive word. The "agenda setting theory" developed by McCombs explains how "the news media might impact the significance given to the themes in the public agenda." (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). This implies that particular aspects of the news are attributed higher or lower values

by the media, and that this affects how individuals implement them in their lives. It follows that culture, traditions, habits, and many other things can all be cultivated with the influence of the media. Additionally, the study shows that when kids' stress levels are high, the material they are exposed to could have a higher impact on their development. This means higher in its positive or negative sense. Thus, the agenda proposed to society by the media should include more appropriate and acceptable criteria specifically for children, since the number of the children in the whole population is so high in Turkey.

Consumption of traditional and social media markedly increased at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic as new information about the virus and safety guidelines evolved. Much of the information concerned restrictions on daily living activities and the risk posed by the virus. The term “doomscrolling” was used to describe the phenomenon of elevated negative effects after viewing pandemic-related media (Price, et al., 2022). According to Price et al., the effects of doomscrolling likely vary based on prior vulnerabilities for psychopathology such as a history of childhood maltreatment. It was hypothesized that social and traditional media exposure was related to an increase in depression and PTSD and that this increase was moderated by the severity of childhood maltreatment. The results suggest that doomscrolling is associated with increases in psychopathology for those with existing vulnerabilities. In other words, the doomscrolling news creates a “bad world syndrome,” which causes loss of appetite, sleeplessness, sadness, and a sense of hopelessness.

This has only increased due to the information pollution that occurred throughout the pandemic period. Hand washing, disinfection materials and garlic are just a few of the national and international media trends that children of all ages have been exposed to. Furthermore, when these examples are set by the child's closest relatives, they can become phenomena that are embedded in people's lives, multiplying their impact many times over.

## **2. Aim and Methodology**

This study examines the impact of health news on children's development using qualitative and quantitative media screening results from the time of the study as well as during the pandemic. The aim of the study is to analyze the findings within a framework of symbolic codes, code explanations and cultural values, and against similar cultures. The research aims to reveal what happens during a pandemic regarding the triangle of the child, media literacy and health issues. It provides the reasons, findings and conclusions through a multidisciplinary perspective to emphasize the importance of the media in childhood development, and to consider the example of the “*garlic agenda*” within the context of pandemic period news. Here,

the agenda is referred to as the study of agenda-setting theory describing the way the media attempts to influence viewers. The agenda-setting theory claims that media establishes a hierarchy of news prevalence. During the pandemic, the amount of garlic-related news coverage increased and created an agenda. Thus, the aim of the study is to portray the findings of news coverage regarding garlic issues, analyzing it within the framework of local, national and international medical, symbolic and cultural codes.

The article makes use of both qualitative and quantitative methodology. The study is based on how garlic was presented in print media. A survey was conducted between January 1, 2020 and June 3, 2020 analyzing the presence and absence of garlic-related news in newspapers and social media. The next step involved the categorization of the news coverage of garlic, followed by analysis, maintaining its connection with health-related news. The impact of health news on children's development is examined using qualitative and quantitative media screening results from the data collection period as well as during the pandemic.

### **3. Findings**

For many centuries, narratives aimed to bridge the gap between the “social” and the “individual,” since most of the oral narratives of the past tell us stories of individuals and heroes. Thus, society is informed about possible hopes and threats and learns something from the news. Today, oral narratives are replaced by the daily news on TV or social media, providing us with minute details about life out there. During the pandemic, individuals were locked in their own households and were able to get the news only through the media. Today, most narratives reach the masses through media, new media, computers, or cell phones.

However, these messages are rarely neutral and transparent. “Reality” and “the reality reflected through the media” are sometimes contradictory. As such, fake news often appears in the form of narratives. In short, one explores “the self” through narrative. This exploration brings several important points to light about the nature of what is seen. People frequently ask the question “What’s this got to do with me?,” concentrating on the individual elements and representation patterns within the given narrative. Thus, reality is diversified in different channels in different ways. And in each narrative, a distorted image of the world is recreated.

Reality is not only the same piece of information but also different reflections and representations of the same reality. In this case, narratives reaching the audience through media minimize or maximize reality, and the codes and concepts of the related culture. The example of “garlic” is “maximized” in all these media messages.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, adults and children were exposed to more traditional and

social media content. They heard a lot about Covid-19 and almost everything both important and irrelevant associated with it. Health-related news was among the top topics of conversation both in traditional and social media content. Narratives are important not only because they provide a kind of socialization and shared information, but also because they create the public sense, public sensitivity or tolerance and establish a kind of public opinion. Networks, on the other hand, provide us with a new type of tailored narrative in which the individual can position the “self” and learn more about reality.

While the individual has become so complex in the modern era, the relationship between the reality and filmic reality is more complex. The thin line becomes even thinner with wiser storytelling strategies; one of them is transmedia storytelling and putting intertextual elements into the story to make it more connected to the real world. Transmedia Storytelling is a Narrative Technique practiced since the stories of the “Thousand and One Nights,” by changing the narrator to grab the listener’s attention at the highest level.

Values in today’s society, particularly media values, deteriorate quickly, and the media is mainly to blame for this. The news is repeated on numerous channels, which makes it stale and it loses its news value when it is not properly understood. In the case of internet journalism, Scott (2005) emphasizes that “the transition to an online format exacerbates the negative trends that have perpetuated print journalism for decades.” Scott’s point of view also highlights that internet journalism develops arguments to address the new institutions and traditions of the digital market and expands the existing critique of hyper-commercial journalism.

Media is interpenetrating the individual’s life all over the world so much that individuals are carried to a point where they cannot live without it. Thus, audiences experience a deeper degree of attachment to the characters in serials and follow them from one media to the other. This study examines how the concept of “garlic news” was provided to the community in the form of narration, and garlic was the main character of the narrative. With the development and widespread technological equipment of today, media became quite effective and reached a level that carries the narrative format in our daily lives.

It is crucial to anticipate the possible impact on the young audience exposed to a theme. The developmental issues of children were also questioned when they were exposed to dense images of garlic. Making sense is a quality that emerges with a particular characteristic during the message’s transmission process, sometimes accompanied by images, informative sound, or music. And each visual used in the media contributes to different perceptions and meanings. Steger (2016) asserts that problems with data authenticity, analytic integrity and the ques-

tion of voice should be discussed prior to writing extensively about anything. The primary value of this differentiation is that it may be applied to the larger discourse of contemporary qualitative inquiry.

In order to be able to understand how meaning is created we need to have a look at “The meaning of meaning,” Ogden & Richards’s (1923) famous work, which handles how meaning is created and shared. In fact, in its all means, communication is the process of creating, understanding and sharing meaning. The message of the meaning is delivered and is generated and created between at least two persons and facilitates communication by obtaining a temporary or permanent shared meaning between the sender and receiver. Looking at the Communication Models, we can see linear or non-linear models, Interactional, Transactional or Constructivist Models that guide us to understand the nature of meaning and communication. There is a challenging point in almost all of the theories where the meaning cannot be communicated as objectively and transparently as it should be. This stems from the fact that we, as humans are not objective in gaining and “mobilizing” or transferring the information. During the transfers, we mainly tend to change the content or context of the message or feel the necessity of adding our own thoughts, beliefs and values into the message. Sometimes, the messages are conveyed but they do not cause any change, reaction or interaction on the other end. Just because people are unresponsive doesn’t mean they’re not communicative. In fact, the society we live in shapes all the actions and values we believe that we create. Thus, all attitudes and behaviors developed from childhood are important for the individual in a certain sequence and form a unique form of communication.

The “identity” building element shapes the nature, texture and worth of communication. Thus, all the configurations and orientations of the information are about the Self and the Other. The individual’s perception of “the self” influences how they communicate with others. Self and perception of the world are fundamentally entwined with one another. The concept of one’s own self is, by and large, far more reliable, and it stands for knowledge of one’s own identity and awareness of one’s place in relation to others. Our evaluation of who we think we are, which is influenced by how our “self-esteem” fluctuates, helps us evolve.

The “Communication Theory of Identity” developed by Michael Hecht et al. (2005) is a layered theory that conceptualizes identity as experienced at multiple levels or layers, multifaceted and dynamic, and communicated both verbally and behaviorally in diverse ways evolving over time. Depending on whether the message refers to individual values, the enactment aspect of the self, or our relational and communal aspects, numerous interpretations seem to be feasible according to the multiple layers of the message sent and received. For

each level of identity, we manage to perform multiple identities associated with our multiple relational roles. (ex: student-teacher, friend, sibling, parent-child, etc.)

Fullilove (1996) explains “Face Movements” as the way of altering the messages or as a process of managing the way an individual presents himself/herself to other individuals in multiple ways, such as mutual face protection, self face protection, other face protection and mutual face obliteration. Thus, the same “*self*” is multiplied in different ways.

All of these indicate that people are accustomed to the various facades of reality and that they are free to manipulate them. Although it may sound surprising, people may continue to watch or follow the same news on other channels or through transmedia applications in order to see it from diverse perspectives. Maybe this way of viewing is what causes us to believe “fake news” so fast or to be exposed to so much information pollution.

Perceptions influence the basic perspectives (how, when, where, why, and what) of the way we communicate with others. Perceptions also have an impact on how we interpret the messages sent by others. Floyd (2011) explains the reasons why perceptions differ, such as physiological differences, past experiences, culture and co-culture, present feelings and circumstances. Preston (1982), on the other hand, explains how the process of perception could change depending on the type and nature of the stimulation. He also differentiates between selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception and selective retention, whereas the organization of the message and other related factors such as its figure and ground, closure, proximity and similarity make a difference as well. The “interpretation” component of the self or the community prevents the message from being the same in the input and output processes. Individuals may understand the message in particular ways, but it is also feasible for a particular sort of society to perceive the same message in particular ways. Since the beginning of time, humans have altered the environment to suit their needs, derived meaning from it and relied on environmental cues to influence behavior.

### **3.1. The Case of Felix Baumgartner**

When questioning the level of knowledge in a piece of information, one may come across the fact that the same message could mean totally different things to different people. The same message could sound very serious to some or humorous to others. Similarly, the level of sincerity of the message might attract different types of audiences. The level of severity or the level of sincerity of serious or humorous messages could attract different types of people or could be understood in different ways. For instance, the case of Felix Baumgartner might yield valuable data to interpret the value of the news before Covid-19. This case has been

chosen due to its world-wide fame and popularity as one of the most watched events of the world. Pembecioğlu discusses how the creation and dissemination of news violates several ethical norms in her analysis of Felix Baumgartner's space jump (Pembecioğlu, 2019). The fact that press freedom alone is insufficient when it comes to professional press ethics is among the critical considerations. Because of this, it is widely believed that each press outlet should establish its own press ethics. However, it is now evident that the media has the power to minimize even the most serious stories and has the right to show some issues as humor while normalizing and exaggerating others. This indicates that cracks in news ethics just get worse and occur more frequently. It would be more accurate to assess the news itself, that is, its content, independently. Additionally, the manner in which the news was presented or "blended" with other pieces of information should be assessed independently. The international press appears to be, in practice, a party to this style of reporting. For instance, the concerns of objectivity, transparency, and the fear of being sided may force the newsmakers to act in a different way. Thus, they present the news in a diversified way and do not apply objective criteria. The most important ethical break in the Baumgartner news stems from the fact that the news and the reporters are parties to an action that is essentially wrong. In other words, the news itself and its content are problematic. From the outside, it might sound like, "What's wrong with a sportsman jumping from the atmospheric line to the earth?"

Here, not the content but the context becomes more important: how the news is visualized, and how it's been prepared to yield a certain type of information or association. The main problem here lies in associating an energy drink brand like Red Bull with the concept of aviation. In fact, it is clearly seen that this connection is also highlighted in the phrase "Red Bull Gives You Wings." On the one hand, Red Bull is an energy drink of Austrian origin, with sales in 171 countries and with more than 68 billion cans of Red Bull being consumed to date. However, there are a large number of findings that the use of energy drinks in aviation is risky and dangerous. It is also interesting that the first study by Deixelberger-Fritz, et al. (2003) to evaluate the effects of energy drinks on performance in tired pilots was conducted in Austria. So the content of the ads and content of the newsstands are at a questionable point.

One of the key aspects is that the scheduled jump of Austrian pilot and parachutist Felix Baumgartner was postponed multiple times; either there wasn't enough wind or there was too much wind. But it ultimately happened on the same day that US test pilot Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier in an airplane fifty years prior (<https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/uzay-dan-dunya-ya-cilgin-atlatis-1611955>). This is another instance where it is clear that genuine pilots and athletes—specifically, those who do not consume energy drinks and those who do—



are engaged in a covert competition. Or, to put it another way, by discussing these two events in the same line, the news is now trying to make it appear as if they are rated similarly, putting them on the same stage and forcing them to compete. It's extremely intriguing that there is such a strong need to make an energy drink to assist the financial support of this jump. In light of this, it is significant that Çetingüç brings out the fact that energy drinks debuted in Austria in 1987. (<http://www.airkule.com/yazar/HAVACILIKTAENERJI-ICECEKLERI/721/>).

When all of these facts are considered together, it is evident that Baumgartner's Austrian heritage and backing from Red Bull, an energy drink, are not just coincidences. Additionally, it can be observed from the data Çetingüç provided that the market for energy drinks has a budget comparable to NASA investments: "After being introduced in the USA in 1997, its consumption grew quickly on a global scale. Energy drink sales in the USA increased from 8 million boxes per year in 2001 to 3 billion boxes in 2005 and 7 billion boxes in 2007. In 2007 and 2010, turnover climbed to 5.4 billion and 10 billion USD, respectively. In global markets, more than 500 brands have been introduced since 2006." In this instance, it turns out that the Red Bull brand is imitating NASA, indicating that there is another rivalry tale at play.

At this point, it is even debatable whether the "jump" photographs are from a studio, since, from an objective standpoint, they appear to be of an ordinary jump. The jump itself is nothing remarkable without the other images accompanying it and giving us the impression that we are on a platform similar to those where NASA is launching a rocket into space. Baumgartner descended to Earth from a height of 38,700 meters in 2 hours and 40 minutes while wearing a customized capsule and overalls from the Roswell spaceport in New Mexico, United States. The fall took 10 minutes in total, of which 4 minutes and 19 seconds were spent in a free jump. Baumgartner succeeded in breaking three out of the four records he aimed for by landing 65 km from a specific intended point on the ground (<https://www.internetspor.com/felix-baumgartnerin-font-colorff0000cilgin-uzay-atlasisifont-1368513h.htm>). The record for the largest live audience was also broken by Baumgartner, who set other records by jumping from the "edge of space." More than eight million people have reportedly viewed it live on Google's YouTube platform. Over 50,000 people retweeted Baumgartner's tweet asking for a like if they were watching him live at the time.

However, exposing all of these details and allowing the whole audience (both online and in person) to watch the event "live" do not indicate that the audience acquires the knowledge and awareness necessary to evaluate whether the event is real or not. In fact, it might be argued that the sources that published the photographs did their best to jam as much information as they could into each one. While explanations of other people's previous experiences and

information about the location were regularly mentioned, the images were repeatedly used to prove their credibility.

The news that Felix's jump was successful is received differently by children and parents because it was a childhood fantasy and Felix gave his mother visions of it by sketching a picture of the jump when he was 5 years old. Starting with the notion that goals set at a young age can actually be accomplished, the value of education at a young age is also addressed. Of course, the veracity of this drawing, which has often been flashed on television, is not in question. Neither is the issue of whether parents actually save their kids' drawings in archives for this long!

Here, it is also possible to assert that an unethical circumstance exists, which is occasionally described as "promoting the commercials of the energy drink making use of the news" as if it is an advertorial. An advertorial is an advertisement in the form of editorial content, and this definition suits this jump more than anything! Additionally, concentrating on only one aspect of the news while neglecting other aspects, such as the scientific aspects, raises ethical issues. There are also some very intriguing hypotheses on the confirmation or verification of the story (<http://www.objektifhaber.com/internette-felix-baumgartner-geyikleri140947-haber>; <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/internette-felix-geyikleri-21696059>, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/sosyal-medya-felix-geyikleri-215220>). Because it was necessary to constantly update the jump's time, which was believed to be changed based on the direction and force of the wind, different camera images can be presented as news even days after the event on the grounds that they were shot from different angles each time. This enables a strategy like trying to convince people that the jump actually happened. However, it is seen that the news is manipulated, mistranslated or expressed differently at many points, both in the actual news texts and in the narratives derived from them. Again, in terms of ethical principles, it may seem quite interesting that "wire tapping" news making is done and that the jump is presented over and over again by different cameras and by different people, as if something different could be encountered.

Spreading different parts of the news to different media, also known as "*slicing*," is a frequently used sales strategy. Although unethical practices are not frequently encountered, it can be clearly seen that approaches such as "Purposeful News Fragmentation" or, in other words, "highlighting a certain part of the news" are exhibited within the framework of presenting the event as news. There is also a lot of discussion on the validity of the Felix news, including whether it is a fraud, fabricated information, or fake news. That is, on the one hand, the media is making this news, and on the other hand, some media are questioning whether it

is fake. When evaluated in real terms, almost all kinds of doubts are expressed by the media, from whether the footage was taken in a studio environment to whether the jump is real, and this type of news is only used to attract more attention and popularize the jump, although it is not given any concrete certainty.

However, in media, it is necessary to convey scientific information in a certain manner. It is acceptable for a news source to inform the audience rather than just garnish the news with more details or illustrations. It should be noted that the use of material from other news channels in statements, illustrations, or even jokes should be viewed and judged as “news stealing/information spoofing” or “altering the information context” (plagiarism). In this perspective, it is significant that many of the news stories focusing on Felix’s jump are either given to the public as identical or as a poor translation after being pulled from the common news pool.

It is evident that the classic news format is present in the traditional media, with the visual and humorous elements circulating particularly in social media. Among many channels, it can be seen that there is a transition (transmedia), and people successfully follow these transitions (transmedia) by expressing their thoughts and opinions sometimes in a serious and sometimes in a humorous manner. The main point to underline is that news and popularity are often intertwined. However, news today emphasizes trending subjects, and also what is trending might be news. These two ideas can spread quickly and have a significant impact on a large number of people, especially in the age of digital media. Perhaps it’s not possible to classify the Baumgartner news as fake news, yet it’s inevitable to blame the event for causing so much information pollution.

The analysis of movies and visuals is very important, because visuality is important both in terms of reaching large masses and making scientific narratives visible. In particular, the language and evaluations accompanying the visual are extremely important. After so much news broadcast about him and breaking international viewing records, 50 people were randomly selected from the participants in a big event organized by Red Bull on the coast of Bostancı, in order to conduct a study on the awareness of Felix Baumgartner and the validity and permanence of scientific information about his jump. It was very interesting to find out that only 6% of the participants could specifically describe Felix as “a skydiver, daredevil and BASE jumper who exceeds the speed of sound.” Yet 58% of the participants could define “Man who jumps from space,” and 36% of the participants answered “I don’t know.”

In this research, only 10% of the participants were able to answer the question of his country of origin correctly and 90% of the participants associated him with the UK, USA or Canada. While 40% of the participants could not answer the question about when Felix did

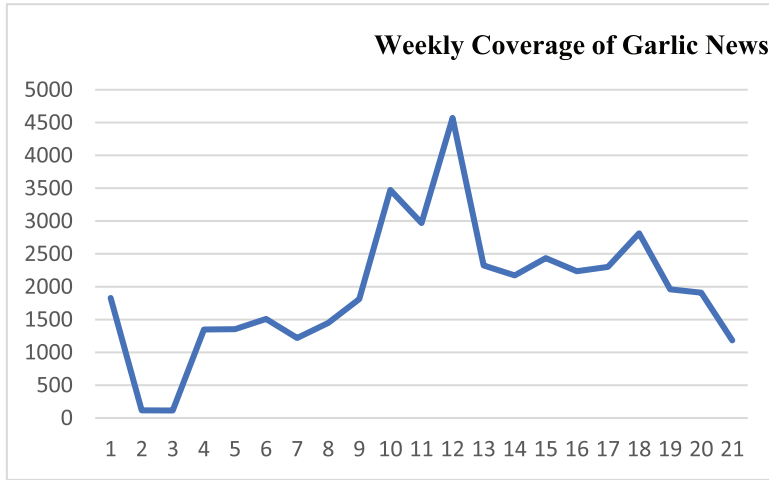
his jump, 46% of the participants answered in 2012 and 14% answered in 2013. When the most important question was asked, about Felix's jump height, only 6% of the participants were able to give the correct answer, while 18% said "I don't know" and 72% expressed different heights.

While the participants attending the Red Bull event were asked "Who is Felix's sponsor?," 20% of them stated that they did not know, and 80% gave the correct answer. It is seen that the minds of the participants are a little confused about which continent Felix landed on after the jump. 50% of the participants stated that he had landed in Europe, 40% in America and 10% in Asia. When the participants were asked whether they followed the news about Felix through visual, digital or print media, 9% of the participants stated that they preferred both visual and print media. On the other hand, the rate of the participants who said that they only followed the written media reached 24%, while the rate of those who said that they only followed the visual media was 58%.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the credibility of the news or the channel has more importance than the content. The audience seems to have a kind of prejudice and attitude regarding which news they follow and in which media. Through the interviews it's been figured out that apart from the content or its importance, the media in which the news is presented / broadcasted has its own reliability. In the interviews conducted regarding Felix's jump, it has been stated that the audience uses its weight in favor of visual broadcasts and tends toward print media less. It is widely believed that social networks, in a sense, corrupt the news and bring in different dimensions such as humor or ideology. It's not how much they were exposed to the message but what they get out of the message. Involvement within the message seems to be the main factor. It turns out that cognition is linked to emotionality. The permanence of knowledge lies in accessing it selectively and from different sources. The permanence of the information, especially fear-based ones (public service announcements) presented against our will or choice, is also extremely low. So the messages, perhaps ads or news, may reveal a low level of relevance.

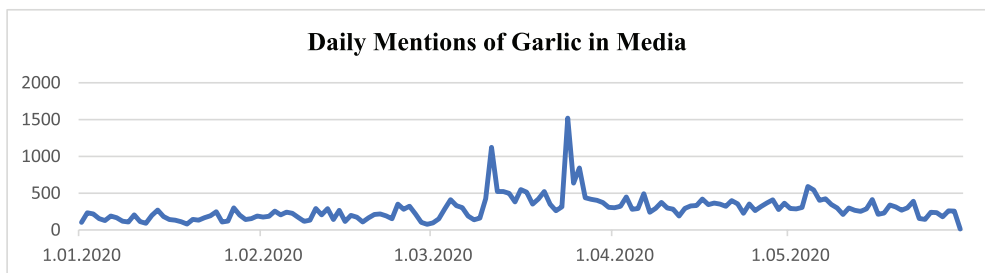
### **3.2. The Case of Garlic**

In order to understand the level of impact on society and specifically children, the most popular news during the Covid-19 pandemic was evaluated. With its content and context, "Garlic News" was chosen as a case study because during the first wave of Covid-19, between 01.01.2020 and 31.05.2020, there were 43,253 posts mentioning garlic.



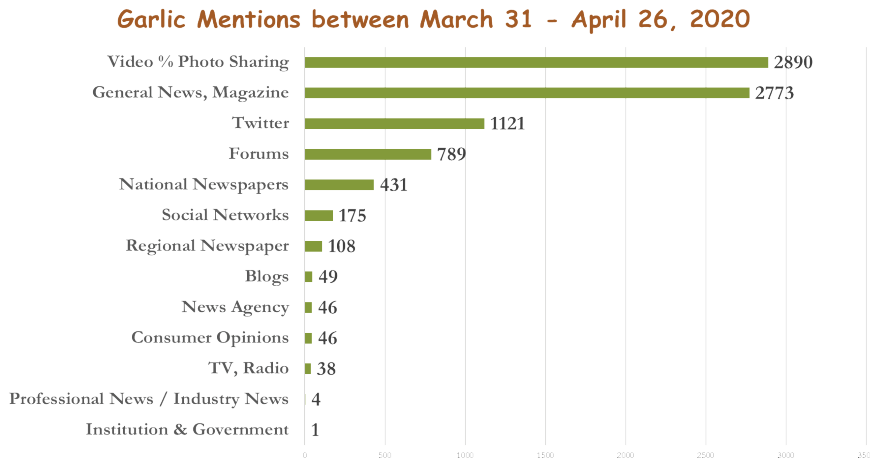
**Visual 1:** Weekly Coverage of Garlic News

The mean of the daily coverage was 286 daily mentions in the news. During the lockdown the numbers were tripled and increased five times more (1,520 daily mentions of garlic - the highest). In most of this news, garlic was introduced to people through narrative-like news in dense doses and frequently. It was a cure for everything. Most of the news never even mentioned Covid-19 but just introduced garlic types and explained why it is important. Yet, out of all the data involving garlic news (46K), 11.9K of it (79%) matches with Coronavirus.



**Visual 2:** Daily Mentions of Garlic in Media

However, it was interesting to see that mentions of garlic between March 31 and April 26, 2020, were concentrated more in video and photo sharing (21%), much more than in general news and lifestyle news shows (20%).



**Visual 3:** Mentions of Garlic between March 31 – April 26, 2020

Soon after the world started getting used to the terms coronavirus and COVID-19, the WHO coined another word: “infodemic” — an overabundance of information and the rapid spread of misleading or fabricated news, images and videos. Proliferating misinformation - even when the content is, in a best-case scenario, harmless - can have serious and even social and lethal health ramifications in the context of a global pandemic. In some countries, rumors about impending food scarcity prompted people to stockpile supplies early on in the epidemic and caused actual shortages. Garlic was one of the basic goods in the hotlist. That’s why garlic news started to appear more than at any time.

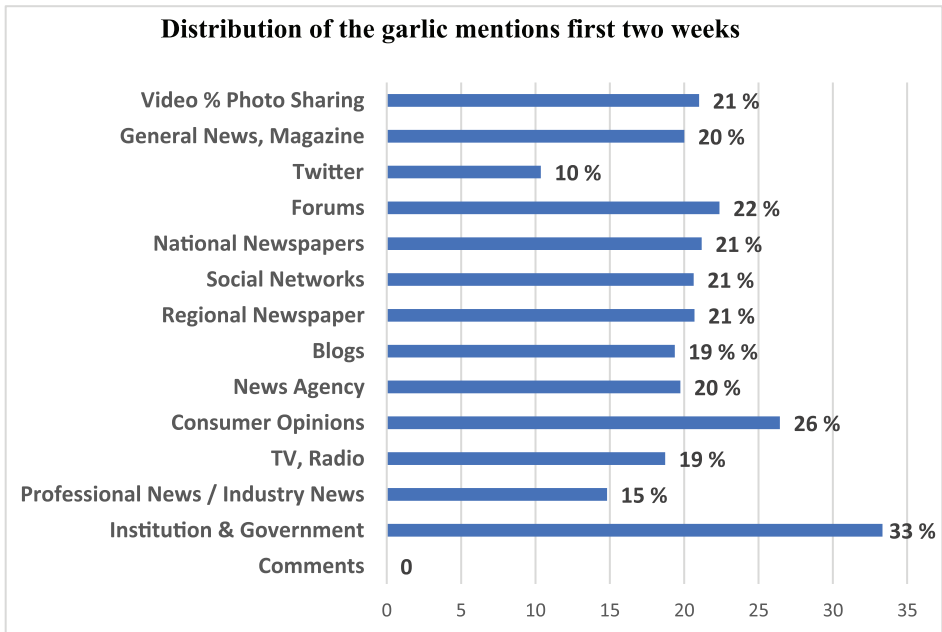
Turkey is a country where all food items are closely followed, and their amounts and prices are recorded to keep an eye on the economy and inflation rates. Some food prices are allowed to be on the hotlist to be used for the calculation of the minimum wage to be paid. That means some food and crops are considered to be basics for people.

From 2019 to 2020, the highest increase in food prices was announced to be in garlic prices, with a 149 percent increase, and the highest price decrease was in onion with 49.7 percent (<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/gida-ve-tarim-sektorunun-ihracati-2019un-11-ayinda-yuzde-1-04-artti-41414256>). The Turkish Statistical Institute (TSI - TUIK), according to the compilation made from data, declared that by the end of 2019 the highest increase in the price was that of garlic products, with 149 percent (<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/ekonomi/nisanda-fiyati-en-fazla-artan-urun-sarimsak-en-cok-dusen-patlican/1828010>).

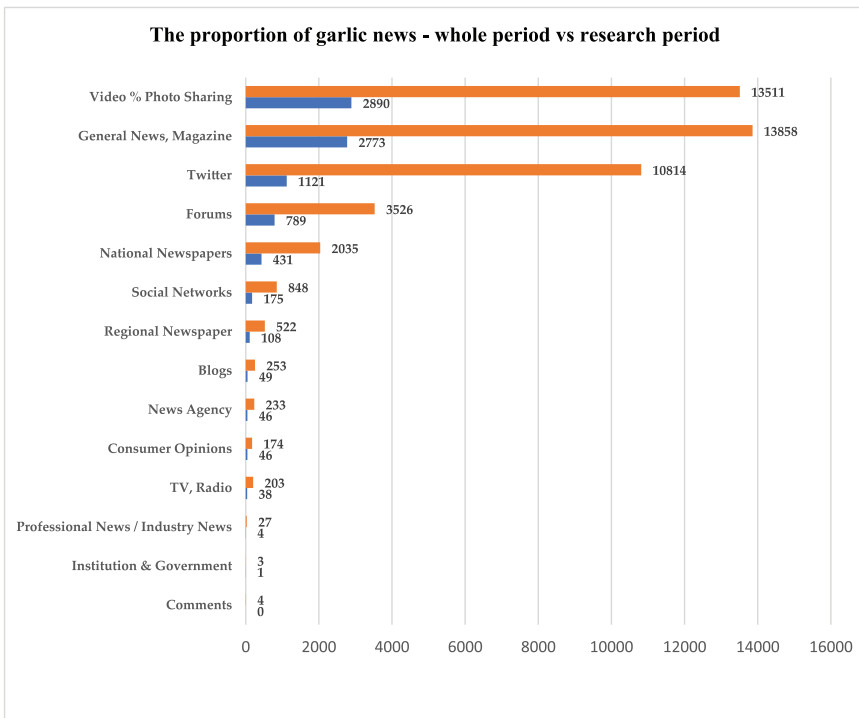
Yet all these parts of communication were mediated through the media, so, the traditional media and the economy pages started to publish more news about the importance of garlic and

the recent increases in garlic prices (<https://ekonomi.haber7.com/ekonomi/haber/2965016-sarimsaginin-kilo-fiyati-55-liraya-ulasti>). The newspapers publish seasonal news, for example, news giving advice on where to go or what to eat in the summer. News about which herbs heal which diseases is also very popular. They offer indispensable home medicine prescriptions. Homeopathy has also been a developing field in recent years due to the wide variety of endemic plants in Anatolia. That means typical information about garlic was still in the newspapers, such as the benefits of having garlic on a daily basis, mentioning how garlic is highly nutritious as a wonderful vitamin stock for vitamin C, B1 and B6, how it can fight sickness, may reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels and might even lower the risk of heart attack, etc. Within the first half of the year, there were 510 shares on garlic prices on the media.

One of the mainstream media outlets, *Hürriyet*, published around 3,387 printed news articles on garlic. 56% of them were news, whereas 28% of them were author posts and 12% of them were recipes. The rate of video news was just 3% and photo gallery news was 1%. However, out of the 102 garlic news articles published between March 12 and April 27, 2020, involve just recipes, while the rest deal with rumors and Coronavirus-associated news, such as the benefits of ingesting garlic and the rising prices of garlic (between 50-60 TL). News items included “What does it mean to dream of garlic?,” “Gaziantep food,” “Anti-aging miracle food,” and “Experts recommend adding garlic to the water when cooking meals as an antibiotic for the whole family.” In each of these, there were visuals of garlic.



**Visual 4:** Distribution of mentions of garlic in the first two weeks



**Visual 5:** The Proportion of Garlic News – Whole Period vs Research Period



This was sufficient media time and space to create a typical tale, even a very long one, and garlic is the star of each episode. However, this story contains more fear-related elements (fear appeal) because, in most cases, it focused on the most terrifying aspects of Covid-19 and the rising cost of garlic, linking the latter to a health danger. As a result, children's attention is captured, as is the family's focus. This is how transmedia storytelling involves more and more people in the media, bewildering them with puzzles scattered here and there. When people are so involved with the narrative, they internalize the characters so that the self disappears leaving a pseudo character in its place. Of course, here, the concept of "garlic" does not stand for a character.

In psychology and cognitive science, "*schema*" describes an organized pattern of thought or behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them. Due to their younger age, the language barrier draws children's attention to humorous elements such as flying, jumping, garlic figures, etc.

The use of play therapy in media transmissions is evidently widespread. Spencer's (1873) "Surplus Energy Theory" is a foundational theory that highlights how what is observed is imitated in gaming activities. Other significant theories included Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Recreation Theory, Hall's "recapitulation theory" (1920) and Groos's "Practice-Pre exercise Theory" (1985). In Berlyne (1960) and Ellis's (1973) "Arousal Modulation Theory," play occurs as a result of keeping the stimuli in the central and nervous systems at the same level. As these stimuli increase (due to high degrees of media consumption, for example) the animations increase, causing a high level of discomfort. For this reason, stimulant-reducing activities should be engaged in. Ellis evaluates the game as a stimulus-seeking activity.

Regarding the child's position in front of the media with respect to education and communication theories, there are a few of them to be mentioned, such as Bandura's Modeling Theory or "Social Learning Theory (2021), which emphasizes the instructional strategy in which the teacher (in this case media) demonstrates a new concept/approach and students learn by observing. One other theory is Identification theory, reflecting the tendency to resemble, imitate and identify with frequently encountered subjects, in this case Covid-19, threats of health, etc. To Zillmann & Bryant, (2002:437) it is not the mere exposure to entertainment that we enjoy, but the ability of entertainment content to distract us from ourselves and to reveal to us the novel and exciting or threatening experiences of others.

Cohen (2013) argues that, by allowing us to share in the lives of others, entertainment can excite and educate us and can make us imagine, think and feel in ways we may not otherwise

have a chance to experience. It may even transfer us into a new self. This is called identification theory: we expand our emotional and mental lives beyond the scope of our personal experience and participate in community and cultural life. Entertainment is as old as human society, but modern media of communication have multiplied the variety of stories we have access to and the ways in which these are presented.

Arousal theory, together with modeling theory, is used to explain the variation in aggression tendencies that occur in children who are exposed to the effects of the media. Scenario / Schema Theory is another one that can be mentioned. Widmayer (2004) explains “Schema theory,” stating that schemas are context-specific; they are dependent on an individual’s experience with and exposure to it. Schema are important not just in interpreting information, but also in decoding how that information is presented.

As a result of the new information, people associate it with the background information, with their previous life experiences, and decide whether the new information is significant enough or not. A specific anticipation is developed or a pre-experienced scenario has been established as a consequence of a certain situation. This is not only about a single message, but about the cumulative impact of all messages. We can infer and analyze the many events and phenomena we observe and experience around us with the help of these expectations. In this case, for example, an association is created between the Coronavirus and garlic. As a result, many people—especially kids—believed that eating garlic would keep them safe from the coronavirus.

But most important of all is Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1998). According to the proponents of it, as a result of the constant exposure of people to certain messages, a similar and homogeneous image of the world is formed in their minds. In this case, many images of garlic are cultivated in children. Here, the density and frequency of the messages has a higher impact on children.

Regarding the Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), the child’s position in front of the media involves silence with respect to the bombardment of messages. According to this perspective, if the mass media take a consistent attitude about a certain subject (in this case, garlic) in a certain period of time, the direction of the general public is shaped in line with that view. The spiral of silence theory suggests that this orientation arises due to people’s fear of being excluded from majority thought, and states that the anxiety to conform to the majority leads them to a compromise they do not believe in or to remain silent.

Agenda-setting theory (McCombs et al., 2014) tries to explain the impact of media on people. The media provides the setting for people to make them think about garlic. The messages

about garlic are so frequent and dense, and the agenda is so full of garlic issues that people, specifically children, have no choice but to think of garlic in the context of Coronavirus.

Abelson's (1983) Consistency Theory is based on the assumption that people will feel uncomfortable if their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are inconsistent with each other. However, Greenwald et al. (2013) consider the consistency theory to be part of attitude theory. Anyhow, here, it seems that all news and narratives about garlic provide a certain consistency, so much that everybody believes the relationship between Covid-19 and bats, or Covid-19 and garlic, is real. As mentioned before, in psychology and cognitive science, "schema" describes an organized pattern of thought or behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them.

Schema can also be described as a mental structure of preconceived ideas, a framework representing some aspect of the world or a system of organizing and perceiving new information. Schemata influence attention and the absorption of new knowledge: people are more likely to notice things that fit into their schema while re-interpreting contradictions to the schema as exceptions or distorting them to fit. Schemata have a tendency to remain unchanged, even in the face of contradictory information. In Piaget's theory of development, children adopt a series of schemata to understand the world. This might be an easy way to classify the narratives as in the previously given scenarios, such as rich man and poor girl, or vice versa.



**Visual 6:** Nature of garlic news

Audience expectations were met through advertising, which is like short but effective messages. During the coronavirus days, the main sort of programs watched were only the news. However, this new type of news was also in the form of classical soap operas or sitcom-like news, aiming to show off a new episode from the previous day. Thus, it was not only easy to follow the news but also it was a genre known by the audience. The language and humor were so important to the audience, because during those gloomy days, they all needed it. For example, people were talking about garlic, from its economic future to passing a specific type of law to bring garlic from China. These were serious subjects, but people were also finding a kind of humor in them. The news provided the plot and characters in real life. All these plots were illustrated or characterized by real people to help the audience grasp the idea. As the news makers, the main thing the media cared about was becoming accessible and understandable to everyone. So, they kept it as simple as possible. And this simplicity helped children to follow and understand the news as well. Most people voluntarily watched the news, since it was somewhat compulsory to get the current news. The ministers or highest authorities delivered the information to people; that's why most of the content and context of the message were unavoidable.

<b>Reaction / Unreality</b>	<b>Action / Reality</b>
<b>Inauthentic life</b>	<b>Authentic life</b>
<b>Purity – Neutrality</b>	<b>Escapism</b>
<b>Fears</b>	<b>Expectations</b>
<b>Manipulation and exploitation</b>	<b>Autonomy</b>
<b>Regress</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<b>Childhood / Positive</b>	<b>Maturity/ Negative</b>
<b>Disobeying</b>	<b>Obeying</b>
<b>Casual</b>	<b>Special</b>
<b>A life of fantasy and play</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>

**Visual 7:** Children's Understanding

Structurally, we may classify the items in the news about garlic in the following clusters:

- Gender issues (Male / Female / Other),

- Age (Young / Old),
- Education ( Educated / Uneducated),
- Social Status ( High Class / Low Class),
- Economic Status (Rich / Poor),
- Ability (Able / Unable – Handicapped – Disadvantaged – garlic odor),
- Capacity (With / Without Capacity – To buy, to eat, to grow garlic),
- Physical Condition (Attractive / Unattractive),
- Emotional State (High-Low Motivated),
- Communicative Status ( Inward-Outgoing-Outgoing),
- Cultural Status (One of Us / One of Others – garlic eaters or not),
- Resident Status (Urban / Rural Origin),
- Attitude and Behavior (Appropriate / Inappropriate),
- Linguistic Features ( Use of Proper Language and Communication Skills).

• Individual Features (The people with leading characters are just 2.5% of the whole population, according to the theory of dissemination of innovations. Critical people make up 16% of the population. Humble and proactive people each have a share of around 34%. So, the individual features mean a lot.)

In conclusion, it is possible to state that Turkey was somewhat very specific regarding garlic issues broadcast during Coronavirus days. There were so many different types of news, yet the reliability and validity of them were very low. The density of the news about garlic was so high that, people were consuming the news more than the garlic. Garlic was a somewhat known subject to all, including children.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There are so many different factors to be considered in the conclusion of the study. In case studies, none of the news on garlic was just suitable news or issues for children. However, it becomes clear that some parts of the news are providing kids with more enjoyable and healthy material, whereas the others just stand in one corner and broadcast for the youngsters. Yet children are expected to swallow whatever they can. They are more eager to pay attention to bad news so they can figure out how to deal with any issues that may arise. In addition, they consume adult content without being aware of the detrimental effects it has on their health.

On one hand, the case of Felix Baumgartner provides a setting that helps us understand how news, humor, ideology, pedagogy, science and ads impact people's memory. While garlic news and Baumgartner news have in common some of the main factors emphasized, such as "News Bombardment," "Infollution" and "Frequency & Density," the meaning and cultural values attributed to garlic, such as beliefs and superstitions (evil eye) or the taste and garlic's being a part of the cuisine (even if most children dislike it), are the main differences.

Comparing and contrasting the two types of information pollution, it may be feasible to identify a barrier to understanding the news as a lack of knowledge and scientific information. Additionally, the lack of resources, such as a lack of social security and health care, likely forces people to study and practice homeopathy rather than medicine. However, garlic has been used in many cultures for ages since it is simple to remember and has no negative effects on the body or the mind. It is also readily available and reasonably priced, making it a possible source of hope in these "Hopeless Times."

This study looked at how much information viewers or news consumers see and how that information affects their understanding and their access to scientific material, how they approach the topic and whether or not they remember it in the long run. Although it is true that visual media is more memorable, it has been discovered that when watching news items like Felix's jump, which is widely covered in the worldwide media, the majority of Turkish viewers do not pay enough attention to the visuals or the text that accompanies with it.

It has been discovered that even though they are able to preserve this information for a short period of time in short-term memory, they are unable to store it for a lengthy period of time and are unable to remember it. In other words, it is clear that the audience, who neglected their reading abilities, faces a challenge like not being able to recall news or information. Because nothing—not even monitoring—can substitute for reading in terms of information load. In fact, it has been discovered that viewers fail to retain any of the details that ought to be given in already known or very basic material.

However, it has also been discovered that those with a high level of media literacy who regularly follow a topic in the print media retain the information and news material better and make instant connections to it. The images and information associated with this news are swiftly erased from our memories over time. The only way to remember them is to relate them to a specific area of knowledge such as values, culture, traditions, etc. or to identify the characters with ourselves.

In this case, even if it imposes a certain doze of "fear appeal" due to the pseudo correlation between garlic and Coronavirus, there seems to be a strong link between garlic and children,

since they care about their health and they specifically remember the taste and smell of garlic. This shows that the garlic issue is not only related to adults but also to children. Associating garlic with the pandemic and specifying it as a means to cure illness greatly affects them.

Another point to consider is that the children always consider the economic conditions of the family and develop a kind of fear about whether they can afford garlic or not, and if it is accessible or not. All these fears are a result of the false association or correlation between garlic and Covid-19.

The density and frequency of the same messages, not only in traditional media but also in social media, cause a huge increase in the number of news items, especially with images, convincing them that there is some kind of correlation between Covid 19 and garlic.

In such times of difficulty, people amuse themselves with light news. Yet it's not the big important things that you remember. It's just bits and pieces – it's the details you come up with in your everyday life. It's the cumulative impact of the news, not just one or two headlines. Thus, Wilhelm von Humboldt's Concept of Linguistic Relativity (Hoiyer, 1969) emphasizes that people perceive the world through the language, words provided within and through the culture and experience. This is somewhat similar to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Chandler, 1994), which makes claims about linguistic determinism (that our thinking is determined by language). Even if due to linguistic relativity, people who speak different languages perceive and think about the world quite differently. Now in the digital age, without language, we establish a similar world for all with the help of images. By associating two images with each other we create new meanings. These meanings become more indelible, specifically for children.

Children relate to the given culture and consume whatever is produced in the society. They also make use of adult terminology, attitudes and concepts. They consume mainly visuals, specifically when they have a language barrier. Or they concentrate more on the frequency and density of the messages.

For sure, garlic will always have a special place in the world of children. But we are not sure if it is a positive or negative one. Specifically, during the Covid-19 pandemic, dwelling on traditions and false beliefs, the media made use of all the background information and created a pseudo “news bombardment” on garlic. Yet “infollution” caused everyone to develop false beliefs and correlations between garlic and coronavirus. A huge demand was created for garlic in the market and prices increased uncontrollably. However, to control these types of pseudo agenda settings, a conscious majority should be created to avoid false news as well as to avoid false health practices. During the coronavirus crisis, especially, there were different

prescriptions spreading from non-scientific sources among the public, and these were carried out for protection with various hopes. Many of these have not been scientifically tested to determine whether they are useful or not. It is crucial to emphasize effective measures and warn the public about ineffective ones. Garlic may be a healthy food that may have some antimicrobial properties. However, there is still no scientific evidence that eating garlic protects people from the coronavirus outbreak. The abundance of news about the issue provides only more infollution and does not provide anything other than people continuing to live within the framework of traditions and superstitions. In the end, a lack of sufficient media literacy skills contributed to the tendency.

A pseudo impact was created through the fake news that Covid-19 has found its way into the children's agenda, and all this caused a variety of unpleasant outcomes ranging from nervousness to anxiety, addiction to terror, etc. Even if it is obvious that the health agenda has both immediate and long-term implications in the lives of adults and children, the findings of this study revealed that the media and health-related news reflected both in traditional media and social media were essential, particularly during extraordinary times such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Fake news or ambiguous information associated with health could endanger the population's health, particularly the youth's knowledge, expectations, attitudes, and applications. As a result, the duty of the audience here is to compare the information they do not know with the information coming from news channels and decide which one is more valuable, realistic and healthy, and thus to prevent the spread of false information.

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