

COVID-19 in Religious Communities in Focus of the Croatian Media

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Looking for the media presentation of the COVID-19 pandemic in religious communities on 5 Croatian web portals (Jutarnji.hr, Vecernji.hr, 24sata.hr, Glas-slavonije.hr, Index.hr), the paper consists of two parts. The first part presents numeric data of infected and dead religious, and self-isolated religious in the period of 15 March to 15 November 2020. The purpose of the second part of the paper is to analyse the media's presentation of COVID-19 in religious communities checking was it in a sensationalist manner. The study is conducted by using the method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 5 web portals in the period of 15 March to 15 November 2020. Specific goals of the research are to examine the objectivity of the articles' content and whether they conform to the Media Act, to observe values promoted in an article, and to notice differences in the COVID-19 media reports in female religious communities compared to COVID-19 media reports in male religious communities. The paper deals with the power of media in creating the image of religious communities in the Croatian public.

Key words: COVID-19, media, objectivity, public relation, religious community, sensationalism

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Introduction¹

The COVID-19 pandemic that the entire world has been facing since March 2020, has had a powerful impact on all aspects of human society. Accompanying anti-pandemic preventive measures have left consequences of unimaginable proportions in the domains of politics², economy³, education, religion, health⁴, and media. The media has had one of the key roles during the development of the pandemic and in the fight against it.⁵

The presentation of the COVID-19 pandemic through the Croatian media has been very intense ever since the pandemic was first declared in March 2020. All news programmes broadcast via radio / TV start with an overview of the current situation regarding the pandemic: the number of people who were tested, infected, i.e., the number of people who have been prescribed isolation and self-isolation, the number of hospitalized people, the number of people surviving thanks to respiratory support, the number of deaths caused by COVID-19.⁶

Numerical data are most often mediated in connection with geographical locations. Accordingly, citizens have been informed about the places with the greatest or the smallest number of infected people; they know exactly where the (new) viral fortifications are – the so-called *hotspots*. Most often, these are the places where people gather, primarily institutions: educational, health, social and charitable. So, the news cycles constantly report on the virus spread-

¹ Translated into English by Emanuel Maloča, mag. educ. philol. angl. and corrected by Patricia Wittberg, PhD.

² Cf. S. M. THOMAS, How Shall we then Live? On Global Politics and Living in a Coronavirus Age, in: G. L. GARDINI (ed.), *The World Before and After COVID-19. Intellectual Reflections on Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations*, Salamanca-Stockholm, European Institute of International Studies, 2020, 32-35.

³ Cf. A. GAROFALI, International Economic Outlook in Times of COVID-19 – a SWOT Analysis, in: Gardini (ed.), *The World Before and After COVID-19...*, 57-60.

⁴ Cf. D. BERNARDINI, The Need for a new Governance in Health: The Role of the World Health Organization, in: Gardini (ed.), *The World Before and After COVID-19...*, 48-51.

⁵ Cf. Lj. Lj. BULATOVIĆ, G. BULATOVIĆ, Media Frames of COVID-19 Pandemic, *In medias res*, 10 (2021) 19, 2969-2986, 2970.

⁶ Cf. Ž. RUTOVIĆ, Medijska prodaja straha. COVID-19 – infodemija – sociologija promjene [Media sale of Fear. COVID 19 – Infodemic – Sociology of Change], *In medias res*, 10 (2021) 19, 3009-3020, 3015.

ing to: kindergartens⁷, schools⁸, hospitals⁹, assisted living facilities¹⁰, and even convents.

Transmission of the virus usually occurs in places where measures prescribed by the National Civil Protection Headquarters are not followed (restricted movement, social distance, hand disinfection, face mask). Accordingly, the people who got infected are often stigmatized in the media and portrayed as the culprits for the infection, condemned by the public as irresponsible and disobedient.¹¹ The web portals' pandemic reports are also numerous and follow the logic of reports via radio / TV transmitters. Those reports are almost always focused on numerical and geographical data related to the infection and its cause.

The World Health Organization web portal published „COVID-19. An informative guide. Advice for journalists“¹² in February 2021. According to the WHO recommendations, journalists should „communicate facts and truthful information, and refrain from being sensationalist“¹³. In the context of sensationalism, „news is (...) seen as a commodity, (...) carefully constructed media product, going through a series of production processes before (...) publication“¹⁴. Sensationalism could be defined as „presenting a story in a specific way to provoke public interest“¹⁵. It is opposite to true and objective

⁷ Cf. A. ČADA, *U Dubrovniku zatvoren vrtić, u Goričanu zaražena teta, cijela jaslička grupa u samoizolaciji* [Kindergarten Closed in Dubrovnik, One Kindergarten Teacher in Goričan Infected With Covid-19, Entire Nursery School Group in Self-Isolation], (03.09.2020), <https://www.24sata.hr/news/zarazena-teta-u-medimurskom-vrticu-cijela-jaslicka-grupa-u-samoizolaciji-vec-osam-dana-714300> (25 October 2022).

⁸ Cf. K. TURČIN, *Virus ušao u šest škola i prije početka nastave, neke su već odgodile početak školske godine* [The Virus Entered Six Schools Before the School Year Even Started, Some Schools Have Already Postponed the Start of Classes], (06 September 2020), <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/virus-usao-u-sest-skola-i-prije-pocetka-nastave-neke-su-vec-odgodile-pocetak-skolske-godine-15017381> (25 October 2022).

⁹ Cf. S. VUKOVIĆ et al., *Korona u bolnici Sveti Duh, 10 ljudi zaraženo, 31 u izolaciji* [Covid-19 in Sveti Duh Hospital, 10 People Infected, 31 in Isolation], (14 October 2020), <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/capak-danas-bi-vjerojatno-mogao-bitirekordan-broj-novih-slucajeva-1438319> (25 October 2022).

¹⁰ Cf. *Korona ušla u dom u Vukovarskoj u Splitu: "Njegovateljci je jednostavno pozlilo"* [Coronavirus Entered the Nursing Home in Vukovarska Street in Split: "The Nurse Simply Got Sick"], (16 November 2020), <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/korona-usla-u-dom-u-vukovarskoj-u-splitu-njegovateljci-je-jednostavno-pozlilo/2230874.aspx> (25 October 2022).

¹¹ Cf. BANJALUČKI CENTAR ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA, *Ljudska prava u periodu COVID-19. Utvrđeni propusti u ostvarivanju ljudskih prava u Bosni i Hercegovini* [Human Rights During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Identified Shortcomings in the Enjoyment of Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina], Banja Luka – Sarajevo, Banjalučki centar za ljudska prava, 2020, 13.

¹² Cf. *COVID-19. An informative guide. Advice for journalists*, (04.02.2021), <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/339256> (26.12.2022).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴ S. E. UDEZE, C. E. UZUEGBUNAM, Sensationalism in the Media. The Right to Sell or the Right to Tell?, *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, 5 (2013) 1, 69-78, 72.

¹⁵ L. GRUNDLINGH, Identifying Markers of Sensationalism in Online News Reports on Crime, *Language Matters*, 48 (2017) 2, 117-136, 120.

reporting.¹⁶ The objectivity in journalism is a rather complex concept when it comes to its' ontological, epistemological, and procedural aspects. „Ontologically, journalists claim they describe things the way things are. Epistemologically, they support their claims by appeal to their sources, their evidence, their methods. They also evoke a procedural sense of objectivity by claiming that they judiciously balanced views and treated sources fairly.“¹⁷

If we consider the great power the media outlets, or the so-called “fourth authorities”¹⁸, have in creating public opinion, a need to question the objectivity of media reports, i.e., whether the media complied with the rules imposed on them by the codes of their profession, becomes obvious.

2. Methodology

The research study consists of two parts. The first part presents numeric data related to the COVID-19 infection in the religious communities, in the period of 15 March to 15 November 2020. The tool was a questionnaire focused on the following data: number of infected and dead men and women religious, the number of self-isolated men and women religious, the place of residence and time (month) when COVID-19 was diagnosed. The request for participation and the questionnaire were sent via email to Superiors of 76 religious communities. 44 religious communities (18 women's religious communities/provinces, 14 men's communities and 12 women's cloistered monasteries) agreed to participate in the study.

The goal of the second phase of the research was to analyse the media's presentation of COVID-19 in religious communities. The basic hypothesis was: Croatian media reported on the COVID-19 pandemic in religious communities in a sensationalist manner. Sensationalism was observed through the perspectives of objectivity, conformance to the Media Act, promotion of values and equality while reporting on different groups.

Derived hypotheses:

H1: Media reports were not objective.

H2: The COVID-19 pandemic reports related to religious communities did not conform to the Media Act.

¹⁶ Cf. K. SEDAK, *Senzacionalizam u kontekstu vjerskih tema [Croatian Media Sensationalism in the Context of Religious Topics]*, in: J. VALKOVIĆ (ed.), *Vjerska tematika u hrvatskom medijskom prostoru. Zbornik radova znanstvenog simpozija i projekta na Hrvatskom katoličkom sveučilištu u Zagrebu [Religious Topics in the Croatian Media Space. Proceedings of a Scientific Symposium and Project at the Catholic University of Croatia]*, Zagreb, Hrvatsko katoličko sveučilište, 2019, 161-176, 164.

¹⁷ S. J. A. WARD, *Truth and Objectivity*, in: L. WILKINS, C.G. CHRISTIANS (ed.), *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, New York, Routledge, 2009, 71-83, 73.

¹⁸ Cf. Stjepan MALOVIĆ, *Mediji i društvo [Media and Society]*, Zagreb, International Center for Education of Journalists, 2007, 10.

H3: The media reported on the COVID-19 pandemic within religious communities more often in a negative than in a positive light.

H4: There are differences in the media reports that covered the COVID-19 pandemic in female religious communities, compared to COVID-19 pandemic reports that focused on male religious communities.

The study was conducted using the method of quantitative and qualitative content analysis¹⁹ of 5 web portals (*Jutarnji.hr*, *Vecernji.hr*, *24sata.hr*, *Glas-slavonije.hr*, *Index.hr*), which had the greatest number of items relevant for the research, in the period from 15 March (the beginning of the pandemic) to 15 November 2020. *Google* search engine was used in the process of creating the research sample.²⁰ The key terms, along with their Croatian versions, that were entered in the search engine were: “woman religious”, “man religious”, “coronavirus”, “convent”, “church”. 93 results proved relevant for the research. Exceptionally, the research also took into account one video²¹ available on *YouTube*. The report on this video²² was also published on the web portal *Index.hr* but was removed since then. Thus, 94 items, in total, were included in the research.

3. Results and Interpretation

3.1. General Facts of COVID-19 Infection in Religious Communities

In Croatia there are 76 religious communities (Table 1): 35 women’s apostolic communities (2.391 members), 22 men’s apostolic communities (910 members), 2 men’s monastic communities (16) and 17 women’s cloistered monasteries (198 members).²³ Of these 44 (58%) participated in the research, or 2.391 (68%) of the religious.

¹⁹ Cf. F. SUDWEEKS, S.J. SIMOFF, Complementary Explorative Data Analysis. The Reconciliation of Quantitative and Qualitative Principles, in: S. JONES (ed.), *Doing Internet Research. Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, California, Sage Publications, 1990, 29-55; A. MITRA, E. COHEN, Analyzing the Web. Directions and Challenges, in: Jones (ed.), *Doing Internet Research...*, 179-202.

²⁰ Cf. K. Krippendorff, *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*. California, Sage Publications, 2003, 119.

²¹ Cf. *Mislav Bago opsovao časnu sestru iz Đakova* [Mislav Bago Cursing a Woman Religious From Đakovo], (25 June 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OU0PAHD_CQ4 (25 October 2022).

²² Cf. *Mislav Bago opsovao časnu sestru iz Đakova* [Mislav Bago Cursing a Woman Religious From Đakovo], (25 June 2020), <http://www.index.hr/indexforum/postovi/289341/mislav-bago-opsovao-casnu-sestru-iz-djakova> (25 October 2022).

²³ Cf. Sr. Krista MIJATOVIĆ, Statistički podatci o redovničkim zajednicama u Hrvatskoj (31. prosinca 2020.) [Statistical Data on Religious Communities in Croatia (31 Dec 2020)], *Vijesti Hrvatske redovničke konferencije i Konferencije viših redovničkih poglavara i poglavarica Bosne i Hercegovine*, 49 (2021) 1, 67-79, 72-73.

Table 1. Religious Communities in Croatia Participating in the Research

	Religious Communities in Croatia	Religious Communities participating in the research	Religious Community members in Croatia	Religious Community members participating in the research
Women's Apostolic Communities	35	19	2.391	1.697
Men's Apostolic Communities	22	11	910	624
Men's Monastic Communities	2	2	16	16
Women's Cloistered Monasteries	17	12	198	54
Total	76	44 (58%)	3.515	2.391 (68%)

The data collected on the cases of the COVID-19 infection in Croatian religious communities show that out of 2.391 religious who participated in the study, only 8 died from the effects of the COVID-19 infection (Table 2).

Table 2. COVID-19 Infection in Religious Communities in Croatia

	Communities with infected members	Infected members		Self-isolated members	Deceased members
		symptomatic	asymptomatic		
Women's Apostolic communities	15	335	129	725	6
Men's Communities	10	64	30	213	1
Women's Cloistered Monasteries	3	18	0	54	1
Total	28	417	159	992	8

As can be seen from the Table 2., apostolic communities were affected more than the cloistered ones. This is understandable given the fact that cloistered communities fulfil their mission inside their monasteries, and have little social contact outside, which greatly reduces the risk of virus transmission. Communities that gather many people in one convent, recorded more cases of infection. That was generally the case with women's apostolic communities, as evident from the comparison of the numbers of people in self-isolation and the numbers of communities where COVID-19 infection has been reported.

3.2. Media Presentation of COVID-19 in Religious Communities

The Table 3. shows the number of items per portal and the month each item was published. None of them mention outbreaks in cloistered communities. There are few reports on male communities (only 10), in contrast to reports on female communities (84). Most items were taken from the *Glas-slavonije.hr* portal (29), followed by *Jutarnji.hr* (22), *Index.hr* (21), *Vecernji.hr* (14) and *24sata.hr* (7).

Table 3. Web portal's Articles of COVID-19 in Religious Communities in Croatia

Month	<i>Glas-slavonije.hr</i>		<i>Index.hr</i>		<i>Jutarnji.hr</i>		<i>Vecernji.hr</i>		<i>24sata.hr</i>	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
March			1		1		2			
April					1					
May										
June	15		12		15		7		3	
July	6		1		3		1		2	
August	3		1							
September	4		1	2		1	1	1	1	
October	1			3		1		2	1	
November										
Total	29		16	5	20	2	11	3	7	

W = women's religious communities; M = men's religious communities

The first item was published at the very beginning of the pandemic (March 2020). The reports on the pandemic in male communities were written only in September and October of 2020. No items were published in May and November, and the largest number of items dates from June 2020 (as many as 52 articles). The convent in Đakovo, the first Croatian convent where COVID-19 appeared (in June), was the most discussed one (72 articles). It was also the most affected religious community, with 150 members infected.

H1: The media did not report objectively.

The objectivity of media reports was observed in line with several parameters: identity of the author, formulation of the title, number and type of the sources, accuracy of the information, separation of facts from opinions.²⁴

a) Identity of the Author

When it comes to the credibility of a report, the identity of its author is rather important. According to Brautović, „as a rule, journalistic articles with questionable credibility do not have bylines, (...) media presenting content with low-quality avoid mentioning its authors”²⁵. The results of the research reveal that the identity of the author remained secret in a significant number of articles 52 (56%).

Table 4. Identity of the Author

	Sign of the Author	Web Portal as Author	Croatian Informative News Agency (HINA) as Author	Without Sign
<i>Glas-slavonije.hr</i>	21		1	7
<i>Index.hr</i>	1	19	1	
<i>Jutarnji.hr</i>	11	7	4	
<i>Vecernji.hr</i>	8	3	3	
<i>24sata.hr</i>				7
Total	41 (44%)	29 (31%)	9 (10%)	14 (15%)

b) Formulation of the Title

One of the most important elements on which the objectivity of media reports largely depends is the title.²⁶ „In their semantic role, article titles act as symbols (informing, referring), while in their pragmatic role, they act as signals (attracting attention, warning, and arousing curiosity).”²⁷ A title should “be clear, exact, precise, consist of verified information, and its content should be in line with the text”²⁸.

²⁴ Cf. M. BRAUTOVIĆ, Metodologija istraživanja vjerodostojnosti medija [Methodology of Media Credibility Research], in: S. MALOVIĆ (ed.), *Vjerodostojnost novina* [Newspaper Credibility], Zagreb, International Center for Education of Journalists, 2007, 67-76.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁶ „Titles contribute to the overall perception of credibility, both in the message and the newspaper as a whole.” [S. MALOVIĆ, Vjerujemo li novinama? [Do We Trust the Newspapers?], in: Malović (ed.), *Vjerodostojnost novina...*, 17].

²⁷ I. IVAS, Tropi u novinskim naslovima [Tropes in Newspapers Headlines], *Medijska istraživanja*, 10 (2004) 2, 11.

²⁸ M. TOGONAL, I. ULDRIJAN, Vjerska tematika u naslovima. Uređivački trendovi i specifičnosti [Religious Topics in Titles. Editorial Trends and Specificities], in: Valković (ed.), *Vjerska tematika...*, 119-142, 120.

The analysis of the titles shows that the titles are in line with the text, but there are examples of unclear, equivocal titles (*Coronavirus Found in the Convent After the Visit of the Women Religious from Kosovo: 'We Protected Ourselves from Everything, but It still Didn't Help'*²⁹; *In the Convent, 180 Women Religious with an Average Age of 70: 'We May Have Had Some Encounters...'*³⁰; *Now in an Epidemic, While in 1972 They Were Saving People from Smallpox*³¹); speculations and questions, instead of facts (*The Director of the Convent Kindergarten and a Person from the Top of the Archdiocese Are among the Infected?*³²); too dramatic words instead of realistic (*Epidemiologists Are Ready to Drop*³³; *The Number of Newly Infected People in the Osijek Area is Already Counted in Double Digits*³⁴; *This Could Be Another Record-Breaking Day*³⁵; *An Urgent Reaction is Needed*³⁶); ignoring moral and ethical values (*From an Epidemiological Perspective, Prayers Are as Good as Cursing*,³⁷ *Mislav Bago Cursing a Woman*

²⁹ Cf. D. MIKOLA, *Korona stigla u samostan nakon posjeta časnih s Kosova: 'Svega smo se čuvala, ali nije pomoglo'* [Coronavirus Found in the Convent After the Visit of the Women Religious from Kosovo: 'We Protected Ourselves from Everything, but It still Didn't Help'], (23.06.2020), <https://www.24sata.hr/news/korona-stigla-u-samostan-nakon-posjeta-casnih-s-kosova-svega-smo-se-cuvala-ali-nije-pomoglo-701513> (25.10.2022).

³⁰ Cf. N. PATKOVIĆ, *U samostanu 180 sestara prosječne dobi od 70 godina: 'Imale smo možda neke susrete...'* [In the Convent, 180 Women Religious with an Average Age of 70: 'We May Have Had Some Encounters...'], (23.06.2020), <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/u-samostanu-180-sestara-prosjecne-dobi-od-70-godina-imale-smo-mozda-neke-susrete-15004180> (25.10.2022).

³¹ Cf. S. ŽUPAN, *Sada u epidemiji, a '72 spašavale od variole* [Now in an Epidemic, While in 1972 They Were Saving People from Smallpox], (29.06.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/436003/4/Sada-u-epidemiji-a-72-spasavale-od-varirole> (25.10.2022).

³² Cf. S. Ž., *Medu zaraženima i ravnateljica samostanskog vrtića i osoba iz vrha Nadbiskupije?* [The Director of the Convent Kindergarten and a Person from the Top of the Archdiocese Are among the Infected?], (25.06.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/435717/1/Medju-zarazenima-i-ravnateljica-samostanskog-vrtica-i-osoba-iz-vrha-Nadbiskupije> (25.10.2022).

³³ Cf. N. PATKOVIĆ, *Zaraženo i sedmero vrtićke djece: Epidemiolozi padaju s nogu, moguće strože mjere* [Seven Kindergarten Children Infected, Too. Epidemiologists Are Ready to Drop], (27.06.2020), <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/zarazeno-i-sedmero-vrticke-djece-epidemiolozi-padaju-s-nogu-moguce-stroje-mjere-15004940> (25.10.2022).

³⁴ Cf. N. Z. E., *Broj novozaraženih na osječkom području već dvoznamenkast!* [The Number of Newly Infected People in the Osijek Area is Already Counted in Double Digits!], (23.06.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/435494/1/Broj-novozarazenih-na-osjeckom-podrucju-vec-dvoznamenkast> (25.10.2022).

³⁵ Cf. JUTARNJI.HR, L. BENČIĆ, *Ovo bi mogao biti još jedan rekordan dan: više od 60 novozaraženih u Slavoniji, 37 u Zagrebu...* [This Could Be Another Record-Breaking Day: More than 60 Newly Infected in Slavonia, 37 in Zagreb], (11.07.2020), <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/ovo-bi-mogao-biti-jos-jedan-rekordan-dan-vise-od-60-novozarazenih-u-slavoniji-35-u-zagrebu-15007557> (25.10.2022).

³⁶ Cf. *Capak o novom žarištu u samostanu: 'Potrebna je hitna reakcija, tamo dnevno dolazi 300 ljudi'* [Capak on the New Hotspot in the Convent: "An Urgent Reaction is Needed, 300 People Come There Every Day"], (23.06.2020), <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/capak-onovom-zaristu-virusa-u-samostanu-potrebna-je-hitna-reakcija-tamo-dnevno-dolazi-300-ljudi-1411903> (25.10.2022).

³⁷ Cf. M. JERGOVIĆ, *S epidemiološkog stajališta, molitva i psovka jednako vrijede* [From an Epidemiological Perspective, Prayers Are as Good as Cursing], (14.07.2020), <https://>

*Religious from Đakovo*³⁸); connecting two different and opposing contexts in one (*The Virus Got into the Split Prison. In the Franciscan Convent Eight Friars Are Infected*³⁹); giving the importance to the unimportant event (*Đakovo Firefighters Rescued a Stork From the Convent Where Coronavirus Was Recently Found*⁴⁰).

It can be assumed that the terms “woman religious” and “convent” by themselves aroused the reader’s curiosity, and 50.53% of those titles contained those words.⁴¹ In addition to the mentioned words, the titles contained terms such as: night club⁴², prison⁴³, confession⁴⁴.

47% of the titles mentioned numbers that sounded very attractive to readers for two reasons: they were either quite big (number of sisters who reside in convent⁴⁵ – 180, and their average age⁴⁶ – 70, as well as the number of people who visit the convent daily⁴⁷ – 300) or they were getting inflated daily, by the hour

www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/s-epidemioloskog-stajalista-molitva-i-psovka-jednakovrijede-15007949 (25.10.2022).

³⁸ Cf. Mislav Bago *opsovao časnu sestru iz Đakova...*

³⁹ Cf. F. ŠARIĆ et al., *Virus probio u splitski zatvor...*

⁴⁰ Cf. *Đakovački vatrogasci spašavali rodu sa samostana u kojem se nedavno pojavila korona* [Đakovo Firefighters Rescued a Stork From the Convent Where Coronavirus Was Recently Found], (08.08.2020), <https://www.index.hr/magazin/clanak/djakovacki-vatrogasci-spasavali-rodu-sa-samostana-u-kojem-se-nedavno-pojavila-korona/2203827.aspx> (25.10.2022).

⁴¹ Cf. S. LEPAN ŠTEFANČIĆ, *U Đakovu je bilo oboljelo čak 158 časnih u samostanu* [As Many as 158 Women Religious in the Convent Got Sick in Đakovo], (25.09.2020), <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/u-dakovu-je-bilo-oboljelo-cak-158-casnih-u-samostanu-1433714> (25.10.2022).

⁴² Cf. S. ŽUPAN, D. KUŠTRO, *U Đakovu je zaraženo i dvoje djece, grad neće u karantenu, kreće kontrola noćnih klubova* [Two Children Also Infected in Đakovo, the City Will not be Quarantined, the Patrolling of Night Clubs Has Started], (26.06.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/435950/1/U-Djakovu-je-zarazeno-i-dvoje-djece-grad-nece-u-karantenu-krece-kontrola-nocnih-klubova> (25.10.2022); *Nove mjere u Đakovu: Odgađaju se krizme i pričesti, moguće zatvaranje noćnih klubova* [New Measures in Đakovo: Confirmations and Communions are Postponed, Night Clubs May be Closed], (28.06.2020), <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/nove-mjere-u-djakovu-odgadaju-se-krizme-i-pricesti-moguće-zatvaranje-nocnih-klubova/2193746.aspx> (25.10.2022).

⁴³ Cf. F. ŠARIĆ et al., *Virus probio u splitski zatvor. U Franjevačkom samostanu zaraženo osam fratara* [The Virus Got into the Split Prison. Eight Friars Infected in the Franciscan Convent], (31.10.2020), <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/pristizu-podaci-po-zupanijama-u-pozesko-slavonskoj-12-novooboljelih-1442609> (25.10.2022).

⁴⁴ Cf. D. PAVIČIĆ, *Ispovijest nadbiskupa iz Đakova: Molili smo se da virus ne dospije do 'bolesničkog kata'* [Confessions of the Archbishop of Đakovo: We Prayed That the Virus Would Not Reach the 'Floor with Ailing Individuals'], (04.07.2020), <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/ispovijest-nadbiskupa-iz-dakova-1414745> (25.10.2022).

⁴⁵ Cf. Patković, *U samostanu 180 sestara...*

⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cf. *Capak o novom žarištu u samostanu...*

(the number of infected sisters – 10 in the beginning⁴⁸ and 158 at the end⁴⁹). That method of reporting kept the readers' attention for a long period of time.

c) Number and Type of the Sources

Transparent sources of information are crucial for high-quality journalism. „They are the best protection journalists can have from slander or bias lawsuits, also serving as their credibility's best defence.”⁵⁰

Table 5. Number of Named Sources

	Without any Named Source	One Named Source	Two Named Sources	Three and more Named Sources
<i>Glas-slavonije.hr</i>	2	5	10	12
<i>Index.hr</i>	3	9	4	5
<i>Jutarnji.hr</i>	3	9	5	5
<i>Vecernji.hr</i>		9	4	1
<i>24sata.hr</i>		3	2	2
Total	8 (9%)	35 (37%)	25 (27%)	25 (27%)

As many as 46% of the researched items rely on only one named source or none at all.

„Anonymous sources enrich the topic and, if used honestly and ethically, can contribute to a better understanding of the issues that the journalist is investigating. But media theorists believe it is necessary to seek confirmation from at least two named sources in order for research on the topic to be credible. It used to be a *conditio sine qua non* of the journalistic profession. Today, influenced by the media commercialization, anonymous sources are being used more and more often, thus contributing to sensationalism.”⁵¹

Malović believes that the sources, if they are anonymous, are not actually sources. „They can only help journalists to find out something, but the information needs to be confirmed from two credible, independent sources.”⁵² Around 27% of the researched items name two sources. According to Kurtić, there is a

⁴⁸ Cf. S. ŽUPAN, *Koronavirus u samostanu sestara sv. Križa, pozitivno 10 redovnica* [Coronavirus in the Convent of the Sisters of Holy Cross, 10 Women Religious Tested Positive], (23.06.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/435492/1/Koronavirus-u-samostanu-sestara-sv-Križa-pozitivno-10-redovnica> (25.10.2022).

⁴⁹ Cf. Lepan Štefančić, *U Đakovu je bilo oboljelo...*

⁵⁰ J. KATANČEVIĆ, *Analiza izvora informacija u lokalnom novinarstvu. Službeni i neslužbeni izvori podataka na regionalnim stranicama Večernjeg lista, Jutarnjeg lista i Vjesnika* [Analysis of Sources of Information in Local Journalism. Official and Unofficial Data Sources on the Regional Pages of the Publications Večernji list, Jutarnji list and Vjesnik], in: S. MALOVIĆ (ed.), *Utjecaj globalizacije na novinarstvo* [Impact of Globalization on Journalism], Zagreb, International Center for Education of Journalists, 2006, 143-151, 145.

⁵¹ K. ŽLOF, *Važnost izvora za vjerodostojnost medija* [The Importance of Sources for Media Credibility], in: Malović (ed.), *Vjerodostojnost novina...*, 77-91, 85.

⁵² Malović, *Mediji i društvo...*, 87.

rule in journalism to check information with at least three sources.⁵³ Only 27% of the researched items rely on three or more sources. When it comes to using the “unofficial information”, *24sata.hr*, *Index.hr*, and *Jutarnji.hr* used it once, *Vecernji.hr* did it twice, and *Glas-slavonije.hr* did it on seven occasions. One of the researched items is actually an interview with one source.⁵⁴

Although the sources belong to a circle of competent people, there is still too little information claiming that their source is a convent. When it comes to the number of mentions, convents are only in the fifth place – 12% (after the Civil Protection Headquarters (26%), the health profession (21%), political authorities (14%) and various other interlocutors (13%)).

Table 6. Type of the Named Source

	Convent	Archdiocese	Political Authorities	Civil Protection Headquarters	Epidemiologists	Other Interlocutors	Internet
<i>Glas-slavonije.hr</i>	4	4	14	19	16	13	2
<i>Index.hr</i>	6	3	4	10	8		2
<i>Jutarnji.hr</i>	3	1	3	7	10	7	4
<i>Vecernji.hr</i>	2	3	2	5	2		2
<i>24sata.hr</i>	6		1	2		2	1
Total	21 (12%)	11 (7%)	24 (14%)	43 (26%)	36 (21%)	22 (13%)	11 (7%)

d) Accuracy of information⁵⁵

Since the convent, i.e., women religious occupy only the fifth place in terms of citations in the articles, inaccurate and unverified information is present in those articles in a greater extent. Some inaccuracies were revealed when it comes to numerical data: the number of sisters in the convent (whether there were 170⁵⁶ or 180⁵⁷ or 185 sisters⁵⁸ in the convent), the number of sisters show-

⁵³ Cf. N. KURTIĆ, Konceptualizacija istraživanja [Conceptualization of Research], in: Malović (ed.), *Vjerodostojnost novina...*, 39-65, 47.

⁵⁴ Cf. Pavičić, *Ispovijest nadbiskupa iz Đakova...*

⁵⁵ According to the Honour Codex of Croatian Journalists (article 5), journalists are obliged to „present accurate, verified and complete information” (50. SKUPŠTINA HRVATSKOG NOVINARSKOG DRUŠTVA, *Kodeks časti hrvatskih novinara*, Opatija, 27 Nov, 2009, art. 5).

⁵⁶ Cf. D. MIKOLA, *Korona stigla u samostan...*

⁵⁷ Cf. Patković, *U samostanu 180 sestara...*

⁵⁸ Cf. S. ŽUPAN, *Đakovački stožer: Nismo ni u jednom trenutku pomislili naš grad zatvoriti u karantenu* [Đakovo Civil Protection Headquarter: We Never Once Thought of Putting Our City in Quarantine], (06.08.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/439399/1/Djakovacki-stozer-Nismo-ni-u-jednom-trenutku-pomislili-nas-grad-zatvoriti-u-karantenu> (25.10.2022).

ing the first symptoms of infection (whether it was three⁵⁹ or four sisters⁶⁰); their age (was their average age 69 years⁶¹ or 70 years⁶²; or all of them were from 69 to 71 years old⁶³); the number of people who visit the convent daily⁶⁴ (the data stating 300 people is not true, the number is largely inflated). The data varies from portal to portal, but also within the same portal there is no consistency.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the names of the interlocutors are not listed correctly; for example, instead of Sr. Karmila⁶⁶, Sr. Karmela should be listed. Allegations that the sisters went to Kosovo and brought COVID-19 back with them⁶⁷ – or that sisters from Kosovo brought COVID-19 when they visited Croatia⁶⁸ – are also incorrect. The number of sisters who went to Kosovo or came from Kosovo are false (was it 1⁶⁹, 2⁷⁰, 3⁷¹ or 30⁷² sisters). It is not true that COVID-19 never reached the patient ward.⁷³ It is false that all the rooms in the convent were already disinfected on June 24th.⁷⁴ Sometimes one article corrects the inac-

⁵⁹ Cf. Patković, *U samostanu 180 sestara...*

⁶⁰ Cf. HINA, *Ovdje je 180 sestara, prosječna dob je 69 godina. Ne znamo kako je došlo do zaraze* [There are 180 Women Religious Here, the Average Age is 69. We Don't Know how the Infection Came About], (23.06.2020), <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/ovdje-je-180-sestara-prosjecna-dob-je-69-godina-ne-znamo-kako-je-doslo-do-zaraze-15004066> (25.10.2022).

⁶¹ Cf. HINA, *Ovdje je 180 sestara...*

⁶² Cf. Patković, *U samostanu 180 sestara...*

⁶³ Cf. D. MIKOLA, *Ne znamo odakle stiže virus, kod nas su došle tri časne sestre iz Kosova, držale smo se mjera* [We Don't Know Where the Virus is Coming From, Three Nuns from Kosovo Visited Us, We Followed the Measures], (24.06.2020), <https://www.24sata.hr/news/ne-znamo-odakle-stize-virus-kod-nas-su-dosle-tri-casne-sestre-s-kosova-drzale-smo-se-mjera-701739> (25.10.2022).

⁶⁴ Cf. *Capak o novom žarištu u samostanu...*

⁶⁵ Cf. HINA, *Ovdje je 180 sestara...*; Patković, *U samostanu 180 sestara...*

⁶⁶ Cf. *Osim sestara iz Đakova u bolnici i dva svećenika, nadbiskup obišao Samostan* [In Addition to the Women Religious from Đakovo, Two Priests are Also in the Hospital, the Archbishop Visited the Convent], (23.06.2020), <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/osim-sestara-iz-djakova-u-bolnici-i-dva-svecenika-nadbiskup-obisao-samostan/2192622.aspx> (25.10.2022).

⁶⁷ “When asked about the infected women religious, he said they had returned from Kosovo two or three days prior” [Cf. D. MIKOLA, I. HRUŠKOVEC, M. CINDRIĆ, *U Osijeku 12 novih slučajeva, 5 časnih sestara završilo u bolnici* [12 New Cases, 5 Women Religious Ended up in the Hospital in Osijek], (23.06. 2020), <https://www.24sata.hr/news/uzivo-iz-osijeka-konferencija-stozera-o-zarazi-u-samostanu-701409> (25.10.2022)]. Cf. *Capak o novom žarištu u samostanu...* Cf. S. ŽUPAN, N. Z. EBERHARD, *Koronavirus u đakovačkom samostanu sa 180 redovnica prosječne dobi 70 godina* [The Coronavirus in the Đakovo Convent With 180 Women Religious, Average Age of 70], (23.06.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/435563/1/Koronavirus-u-djakovackom-samostanu-sa-180-redovnica-prosjecne-dobi-70-godina> (25.10.2022).

⁶⁸ Cf. Mikola, *Korona stigla u samostan nakon posjeta časnih s Kosova...*

⁶⁹ Cf. Župan, *Đakovački stožer...*

⁷⁰ Cf. Župan, *Koronavirus u samostanu sestara sv. Križa...*

⁷¹ Cf. Mikola, *Ne znamo odakle stiže virus...*

⁷² Cf. Mikola, *Korona stigla u samostan nakon posjeta časnih s Kosova...*

⁷³ Cf. Pavičić, *Ispovijest nadbiskupa iz Đakova...*

⁷⁴ Cf. *Pozitivne još tri časne sestre iz Đakova* [Three More Women Religious From Đakovo Tested Positive], (24 June 2020), <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/pozitivne-jos-tri-casne-sestre-iz-djakova/2192748.aspx> (25 October 2022); T. PRUSINA, *Četiri pozitivne osobe, 255 u*

curacies stated in other articles.⁷⁵ Spelling errors were also noticed in those articles.⁷⁶

e) Separating facts from opinions

The most common type of journalistic texts among the analysed items is a news article. Out of 94 researched items, 92 are news articles, and only two are columns. The news articles should be focused on argumentative facts, purified from expressions of personal opinions.⁷⁷

„The comments are biased; they are just personal attitudes or opinions on a particular topic. It is precisely because of this cardinal feature that, in the case of credible newspaper reporting, and if it is not a column by an individual author, they should by no means be the basis on which readers will base their judgment. It is quite common in newspaper articles and journalistic reporting in other media that journalists and editors ‘think for their readers’, propagating their own or imposed views without presenting bare facts so that the reader could form personal opinions in line with personal views and beliefs. This, of course, violates the basic function of news reporting, i.e., information.”⁷⁸

Yet, the research results show that attitudes, speculations⁷⁹ and judgements are also present in those articles. This is especially evident when it comes to the cause of the infection, i.e., the issue of compliance with the prescribed anti-pandemic measures. Judgements are direct: „Director of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, Krunoslav Capak, stated this morning: ‘Two women religious from that convent were out of Croatia. After coming back, they didn’t comply with the prescribed measures. That’s why ten women religious got infected.’”⁸⁰; „According to the epidemiologist Karlo Kožul, women religious brought virus from Kosovo to Đakovo.”⁸¹; „Sisters from Kosovo brought the virus in convent. Few days ago, the group of 30 women religious came to Đakovo to visit the sisters and to attend prayer gathering.”⁸²; „Citizens were very disciplined (...)

samoizolaciji [Four People Tested Positive, 255 in Self-Isolation], (24 June 2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/435605/1/Cetiri-pozitivne-osobe-255-u-samoizolaciji> (25 October 2022).

⁷⁵ „It is incorrect that 30 sisters from Kosovo came to our convent. Only three arrived” [Mikola, *Ne znamo odakle stiže virus...*].

⁷⁶ The name of the religious community is not correct [Cf. S. Ž., *Među zaraženima i ravnateljica samostanskog vrtića*]; N. Z. E., *Broj novozaraženih na osječkom području...*

⁷⁷ Cf. S. MALOVIĆ, *Osnove novinarstva* [Basic Journalism], Zagreb, Golden marketing – Tehnička knjiga, 2005, 244.

⁷⁸ M. STANOJEVIĆ, *Utjecaj grafičkih elemenata, sadržajnih elemenata i opreme na senzacionalizam novinskih napisa. Doktorski rad* [The Influence of Graphic Elements, Content Elements and Equipment on the Sensationalism of Newspaper Articles. PhD Thesis], Zagreb, Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2017, 86.

⁷⁹ Cf. S. Ž., *Među zaraženima i ravnateljica samostanskog vrtića...*

⁸⁰ Župan, *Koronavirus u samostanu...*; Cf. Capak o novom žarištu u samostanu...; Mikola, Hruškovec, Cindrić, *U Osijeku 12 novih slučajeva...*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Mikola, *Korona stigla u samostan nakon posjeta časnih s Kosova...*

especially Sisters of the Holy Cross.”⁸³ „I know very well how much sisters tried (...) to comply with prescribed measures.”⁸⁴ or indirect: „Although the women religious claim that they do not know where the infection came from, a group of sisters from Kosovo arrived for spiritual renewal.”⁸⁵

H2: The Media Act was not respected in the reports covering the COVID-19 pandemic in religious communities.

According to Art. 3 § 2 and Art. 7 § 1 of the Media Act, the media are obliged to respect the privacy, dignity, reputation and honour of every person.⁸⁶ In the reports covering the COVID-19 pandemic in religious communities, the media did not respect the privacy of the sisters; they published unnecessary information (about the location of the convent and institutions where the sisters perform their mission,⁸⁷ the name of the religious community,⁸⁸ the name of the Superior,⁸⁹ the activities of the sisters,⁹⁰ the name of the infected sister,⁹¹ the occupation of the infected sisters,⁹² the placement of the sisters within the convent⁹³, and their age⁹⁴, the presence of sisters at public events before they were diagnosed with COVID-19⁹⁵). The media also published videos and photos of the convent and women religious.⁹⁶

The media did not respect the dignity, honour, and reputation of the sisters. They were portrayed as not telling the truth: “Although the women religious claim that they do not know where the infection came from, a group of sisters from Kosovo arrived for spiritual renewal.”⁹⁷ Sisters were seen as non-compliant with the prescribed measures: “Two women religious from that convent were out of Croatia. After coming back, they didn’t comply with the prescribed measures. That’s why ten women religious got infected.”⁹⁸ Although the title of the article „Women Religious Take Care of Children with Special Needs” has a positive meaning, the text of the article has negative connotations, referencing the quote that women religious do not care enough for the children entrusted

⁸³ S. Ž., *Među zaraženima i ravnateljica samostanskog vrtića...*

⁸⁴ Pavičić, *Ispovijest nadbiskupa iz Đakova...*

⁸⁵ Cf. Župan, Eberhard, *Koronavirus u đakovačkom samostanu...*

⁸⁶ Cf. HRVATSKI SABOR, *Zakon o medijima* [The Media Act], Zagreb, Narodne novine, 30 April 2004.

⁸⁷ Cf. Župan, Eberhard, *Koronavirus u đakovačkom samostanu...*; Župan, *Koronavirus u samostanu sestara sv. Križa...*

⁸⁸ Cf. Župan, Eberhard, *Koronavirus u đakovačkom samostanu...*

⁸⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Cf. *Ibid.* Cf. S. Ž., *Među zaraženima i ravnateljica samostanskog vrtića...*

⁹² Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹³ Cf. Župan, Eberhard, *Koronavirus u đakovačkom samostanu...*

⁹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Župan, *Koronavirus u samostanu sestara sv. Križa...*

to their care: „Children are hungry and live in untidy conditions.”⁹⁹ The reports linked convents to nightclubs¹⁰⁰, or to prisons¹⁰¹.

H3: The media certainly reported on the COVID-19 pandemic within religious communities most often in a negative light.

To test this hypothesis, several codes were selected, i.e., several positive (support, solidarity, help, responsibility, understanding) and several negative words (stigma, insult, guilt, embarrassment, cancellation, infection, illness, hotspot). First, the frequency of occurrence of the mentioned words in the researched items was checked.

Table 7. Positive Terms

	Support	Solidarity	Help	Responsibility	Understanding
<i>Glas-slavonije.hr</i>	4	3	5	21	3
<i>Index.hr</i>			1	5	3
<i>Jutarnji.hr</i>	2		2	15	2
<i>Vecernji.hr</i>	1		1	8	4
<i>24sata.hr</i>			1	1	1
Total	7	3	10	50	13

Table 8. Negative Terms

	Stigma	Insult	Guilt	Embarrassment	Cancellation	Contagion	Disease	Hotspot
<i>Glas-slavonije.hr</i>	9	1	2	2	18	107	64	28
<i>Index.hr</i>	1		2		3	85	46	16
<i>Jutarnji.hr</i>	2	2	2		11	152	41	17
<i>Vecernji.hr</i>	2		2		3	93	18	10
<i>24sata.hr</i>	1	1	2	2		16	3	2
Total	15	4	10	4	35	453	172	73

⁹⁹ Cf. H. TKALČEVIĆ, Ž. RUKAVINA, *Sestre skrbe o djeci s posebnim potrebama: 'Djeca se igraju na dvorištu, nemaju simptome'* [Women Religious Take Care of Children with Special Needs: 'The Children Play in the Yard, They Show no Symptoms'], (06.10.2020), <https://www.24sata.hr/news/sestre-skrbe-o-djeci-s-posebnim-potrebama-djeca-se-igraju-na-dvoristu-nemaju-simptome-720529> (25.10.2022).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. HINA, *Beroš: 81 novi slučaj...;* Korpoš, HINA, *Virus se proširio...; Zasad preko 40 novih slučajeva [So far, over 40 New Cases]*, (26.06.2020), <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/zasad-preko-40-novih-slucajeva-20-u-zagrebu-8-u-djakovu-6-u-rijeci-5-u-splitu/2193237.aspx> (25.10.2022).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Šarić et al., *Virus probio u splitski zatvor...*

Terms with a negative connotation were used much more than words with a positive connotation. To better understand the obtained results, it is necessary to mention the contexts in which the mentioned terms appear. The term “understanding” is one of the key words of a statement issued by a convent in which the sisters beg the public for understanding.¹⁰² Professional services ask for “responsibility” and responsible behaviour.¹⁰³ “Solidarity” and “support” are mentioned only 10 times as expressions of support for the sisters.¹⁰⁴

The terms “stigma”, “insult”, “guilt” and “embarrassment” are primarily expressed by sisters when describing the experiences, they have with the general public.¹⁰⁵ In one of the researched items, the archbishop Đuro Hranić discussed the appearance of stigmatization and unjustified feelings of guilt forced on the sisters. He thanked the people who are close to sisters and who do not stigmatize.¹⁰⁶ Stigmatization was also mentioned by the deputy mayor Robert Francem who asked „citizens not to stigmatize (...) and to have a humane approach to infected people”¹⁰⁷. The most used terms of “hot spot”, “disease” and “contagion”, did not encourage feelings of solidarity, empathy, and compassion in the public, but on the contrary, provoked condemning attitudes, discrimination, and stigmatization.

H4: There are differences found in the media reports that covered the COVID-19 pandemic in female religious communities, compared to the reports focused on male religious communities.

The difference between the two is already noticeable in the number of reports. Out of 94 researched items, only 10 dealt with the pandemic in male religious communities (10.4%). Half of the researched items have the name and surname of the author of the text stated. 4 items contain a photograph of the convent, and only 1 item contains a photo of a men religious¹⁰⁸. Other

¹⁰² Cf. Župan, Eberhard, *Koronavirus u đakovačkom samostanu...*; HINA, *Đakovački samostan ne zna kako je došlo do zaraze: 'Sestre su se pridržavale mjera'* [The Đakovo Convent Does not Know how the Infection Occurred: 'The Sisters Followed the Measures'], (23 June 2020), <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/dakovacki-samostan-ne-zna-kako-je-doslo-do-zaraze-sestre-su-se-pridrzavale-mjera-1411939> (25 October 2022).

¹⁰³ Cf. Župan, Kuštro, *U Đakovu je zaraženo i dvoje djece...*

¹⁰⁴ Cf. S. ŽUPAN, *U Đakovu premijera pjesme o sestrama sv. Križa, dio su i mjuzikla* [The Premiere of a Song about the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Đakovo, They are Also Part of the Musical], (22.09.2020), <https://www.glas-slavonije.hr/443376/4/U-Đakovu-premijera-pjesme-o-sestrama-sv-Križa-dio-su-i-mjuzikla> (25 October 2022).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. T. OZMEC-BAN, *Časne iz Đakova: Pogadaju nas neugodnosti, uvrede radi virusa* [Women Religious from Đakovo: We are Affected by the Embarrassment and Insults due to the Virus], (03.07.2020), <https://www.24sata.hr/news/casne-iz-dakova-pogadaju-nas-neugodnosti-uvrede-radi-virusa-703569> (25 October 2022); Župan, Starčević Tesari, Kuštro, *Časne iz Đakova. Pogada nas...*

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Pavičić, *Ispovijest nadbiskupa iz Đakova...*

¹⁰⁷ S. Ž., *Među zaraženima i ravnateljica samostanskog vrtića...*

¹⁰⁸ Cf. HINA, *U Franjevačkom samostanu u Sinju zaraženo osam fratara: 'Bili smo pomalo neodgovorni...'* [Eight Friars Infected in the Franciscan Convent in Sinj: 'We Were a bit

researched items contain just general illustrations of people wearing protective suits. The name and surname of the Superior are cited in 3 items. 6 items list the convent as their primary source of information; they only relay the convent's public statement. The convent's statements were not accompanied by additional comments or speculations regarding the possible causes of the infection. There is only one convent statement in which the Superior states that the cause of the outbreak could be the irresponsible behaviour of community members.¹⁰⁹ The statements further provide information on the church disinfection, the possibility of receiving the sacrament of Holy Confession and the holding of Eucharistic celebrations.¹¹⁰

In the context of this hypothesis, it would be good to further explore whether differences in reporting arise from the way public statements are formulated by female and male communities.

Conclusion

The research on media reports regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in religious communities, conducted on 5 Croatian web portals, confirms the initial thesis that the reports are sensationalist. Arguments that support this thesis are: biased reporting, violation of the Media Act, negative connotations, inequality in reporting on male and female religious communities.

Reports are not objective because they are often not signed by the author; the number of used sources is mostly less than three, while convents are used too rarely as sources of information; they contain inaccurate information and do not clearly separate facts from personal views. They frequently violate the Media Act, which provides for the protection of the right to privacy, dignity, reputation, and honour. Contrary to the mentioned Act, reports fully reveal the identity of the people they write about and provide unnecessary details regarding the life and activities of religious communities. Dignity, reputation, and honour are also questioned by placing convents in inappropriate contexts for which there is no immediate need. The content of web portals did not promote positive values but indirectly encouraged hate speech, discrimination, and stigmatization. Fewer reports have been published on the COVID-19 outbreaks

Irresponsible...'], (31 October 2020), <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/u-franjevackom-samostanu-u-sinju-zarazeno-osam-fratara-bili-smo-pomalo-neodgovorni-15029020> (25 October 2022).

¹⁰⁹ Cf. HINA, *U franjevačkom samostanu u Sinju osam fratara ima koronu* [In the Franciscan Convent in Sinj, Eight Friars Have Been Infected with the Covid-19 Virus], (31.10.2020), <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/u-franjevackom-samostanu-u-sinju-osam-fratara-ima-koronu/2226516.aspx> (25 October 2022).

¹¹⁰ Cf. HINA, *U Franjevačkom samostanu u Sinju zaraženo osam fratara...*

in male religious communities, while the privacy of the people mentioned in them was respected more.

The study could have been extended to include the comparison of media's portrayal of other COVID-19 cases (for example, politicians, famous people) or by adding different perspectives to improve the interpretation of results. Also, in comparison with media's presentation of pandemic outbreaks in religious communities in other countries, this constitutes one of many possible trajectories of future research.

Jasna Krista Mijatović*

COVID-19 u redovničkim zajednicama u fokusu hrvatskih medija

Sažetak

Analizira se medijska prezentacija bolesti COVID-19 pandemije u redovničkim zajednicama na pet hrvatskih internetskih portala (*Jutarnji.hr*, *Vecernji.hr*, *24sata.hr*, *Glas-slavonije.hr*, *Index.hr*), a istraživanje ima dva dijela. Prvi dio istraživanja prikazuje brojčane podatke o zaraženim i preminulim redovnicama i redovnicima, kao i o onima kojima je bila određena mjera samoizolacije u razdoblju od 15. ožujka do 15. studenoga 2020. godine. Drugi dio istraživanja propituje je li medijska prezentacija bolesti COVID-19 pandemije u redovničkim zajednicama bila senzacionalistička. U istraživanju je primijenjena metoda analize sadržaja u kvantitativnom i u kvalitativnom smislu na pet internetskih portala u razdoblju od 15. ožujka do 15. studenoga 2020. godine. Specifični ciljevi istraživanja su: ispitati objektivnost sadržaja članaka i poštivanje Zakona o medijima, otkriti koje se vrednote promoviraju u člancima i uočiti razlike u medijskim izvješćima o pandemiji bolesti COVID-19 u ženskim redovničkim zajednicama u odnosu na muške redovničke zajednice. Istraživanje je povezano s moći medija u stvaranju percepcije o redovničkim zajednicama u hrvatskoj javnosti.

Ključne riječi: COVID-19, mediji, objektivnost, odnosi s javnošću, redovnička zajednica, senzacionalizam.

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