

The Reshaping of Medical Image by News Reports During COVID-19 's Epidemic Situation

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ABSTRACT

Medical image has always been a long-term topic in social life, through questionnaires and personal interviews to investigate the role of news reports on the reconstruction of medical image before and after the epidemic. Through the investigation, it can be found that the media has played a certain intermediary role and positive guiding role in the alleviation of doctor-patient relationship and the shaping of medical portrayals; some metaphorical discourse descriptions in news reports can achieve better communication effect; through a variety of reporting forms and attribute agenda settings, the media enriches the foreground image of doctors and indirectly shapes the social image of doctors.

Key Words: Covid-19 epidemic, News Report, Medical Image

INTRODUCTION

In the typical reports about doctors, the professional image of medical staff is mainly positive for a long time, and the common topics include doctors delving into medical skills, doctors saving lives, hospitals serving the people and so on. In the period of new media, the media image of medical staff began to change. The news media exposed the "sky-high medical fees" of medical institutions, doctors receiving red packets and kickbacks, medical accidents and doctor-patient disputes, and so on. It's just like the phenomenon described by Lupton, D. (1998) that members of the medical profession may be constantly under the spotlight of media scrutiny.

However, reports focusing on extreme events emerge one after another, and the image of medical groups is constantly negative. Market-oriented medical institutions and doctors are bound to the stereotype of "service profitability" and "lack of conscience". This is similar to the media representations of medicine and the medical profession in the United States, Britain and Australia, which have noted a shift from the 'saintly (male) hero in white coat' portrayal to a

more diverse and critical portrayal, in which the personal failings and problems of doctors have also received coverage.(Karpf, 1988a; Turow, 1989; Bury and Gabe,1994; Bradby et al., 1995; Lupton, 1995).

After the outbreak of COVID-19, the sudden public safety and health incident made the media pay more attention to the health care industry. We are concerned that many changes have taken place in health care-related reports during and after the epidemic, not only with increased density, but also with richer content, more diverse forms and more diversified focus. Will these reports reshape the images of health care workers? How to reconstruct the images of medical media? What kind of inspiration can the actual impact of these changes in reporting give us to our future news work? The above are the main issues discussed in this paper, but also to support the significance of this study.

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

News reports play an important role in influencing the cognition and behavior of audiences. Walter Lippmann believes that the reports of the news media will affect the public's perception of the real world and construct the picture in their minds (Liu Hailong 2008). Walter Lippmann (1922) talked about the image as 'pictures in our heads.' These images are shaped not only by our personal experiences, but also by what we learn from other people. Therefore, the stereotypes that we come to hold are influenced by the social communication, and therefore are likely to represent the biases of those interactions. Later, Kenneth Boulding (1956) further stated the 'image' that we all hold in our thoughts about the rest of the world. Boulding voiced some realization of the fact that as people become more dependent on the media for their cognition about the world, the possibility for erroneous pictures of the world increases. While many pictures about the world have depicted by us, very few of them are actually based on personal experiences.

Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert King Merton proposed that the mass media has social status conferral function, and the media report can arouse people's attention to the reporting object and legitimize its status (Liu Shuangqing 2016). The study found that the media is the main source of health information, and more than 80% of the public rely on television, magazines, newspapers and other media for health information, which is much higher than the proportion of the public getting health information from doctors (Covello, V.T., &Peters, R.G, 2002). News media portrayal of doctors and the highlight of reporting on medical political issues make significant contributions to the agenda for the development of public opinion on the medical profession. (Lupton, D.1998).

To a certain extent, the report of the official media plays a guiding role in the cognition of the audience. Some studies showed that doctors themselves are also worried about what they perceive to be an overwhelmingly negative and distorted portrayal of their profession in the news media, contending that a 'trial by media' is occurring (Karpf, 1988b; Elston,1991). To promote people to have a better understanding of doctor-patient relationship and medical image, news reports will often use metaphorical ways to guide public opinion and build social cognition. In news reports, newspapers often use metaphors such as disease, war, family and so on, so that the audience can briefly and clearly understand what kind of social status doctors and patients are in and what kind of social role they play in society and daily life. However to reach a better communicating effect, some exaggerated stereotypic portrayals existed inevitably.

Because 'stereotypic portrayals may provide the lowest common denominator on which to build storylines; perhaps without exaggerating or distorting writers and producers have difficulty creating interesting yet credible characters and situations' (Sprafkin, J. N., & Liebert, R. M. 1978).

Media reports play a promotive role in shaping the relationship between doctors and patients. Niu Weihong (2016) mentioned in '*reflection on the current Medical reports in China*' that the mass media has played an important role in spreading and popularizing health care knowledge and supervising and standardizing the medical order, but at the same time, the mass media also has an inescapable responsibility in malicious hype, false reports, misleading the public and so on. Due to the selective deviation of medical reports and the little sense of journalistic professionalism, the doctor-patient relationship has gradually deteriorated.

The development of new technology also makes the contradiction between doctors and patients more acute. The development of Internet technology has brought convenience to interpersonal communication. At the same time, the mass and uncertainty of communication content, as well as the anonymization of communication identity, make Internet fraud cases more and more serious. False medical advertisements on the Internet platform have led to the deterioration of the relationship between doctors and patients. In addition, the borderless presentation of doctors and patients from the perspective of collectivism and relativism in news reports may be one of the factors leading to the tension in the current doctor-patient relationship. Collectivism and relativism suppress the rights between doctors and patients, and the contradictions between doctors and patients cannot be resolved, resulting in the conflict between doctors and patients.

At the beginning of 2020, the epidemic caused by Covid-19 coronavirus broke out all over the world. in the face of sudden health public events, doctors and patients once again stepped on the forefront of public opinion and become the focus of media attention and reports.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this study, the 'medical image' is set as an independent variable, the channel, the way and the number of media reports are taken as dependent variables, and the empirical research method is used to explore the relationship between the two variables. and the reasons that affect the relationship between the two, and conducted a questionnaire survey on the recipients of information.

For the survey of the general audience, the author uses the method of questionnaire survey to investigate and analyze their cognitive situation. According to the design type of the questionnaire, the designed questionnaire belongs to the structured questionnaire, with a total of 19 questions, and finally collected 305 valid questionnaires. In the process of designing the questionnaire, the author conducted a pre-survey, according to the results of the pre-survey data, judged the lack of comparison of relevant variables before and after the epidemic in the questionnaire, and could not obtain the cognitive changes of the audience on the image of health care and the relationship between doctors and patients. After many revisions and improvements, the final data successfully obtained the changes of the interviewees' attitude, recognition, trust and responsibility attribution to the health care image before and after the epidemic.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

The mass media has played an active guiding role in shaping the image of medical care

The positive guiding role of mass media in the reconstruction of health care image and doctor-patient relationship reflected in the survey results can be analyzed from the two dimensions of image cognition and attitude.

The change of Image Cognition

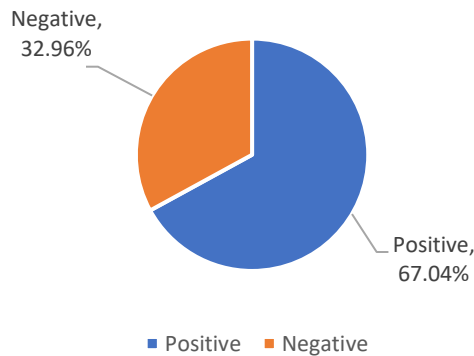


Fig. 1 the public's evaluation of the image of health care before the outbreak of the epidemic

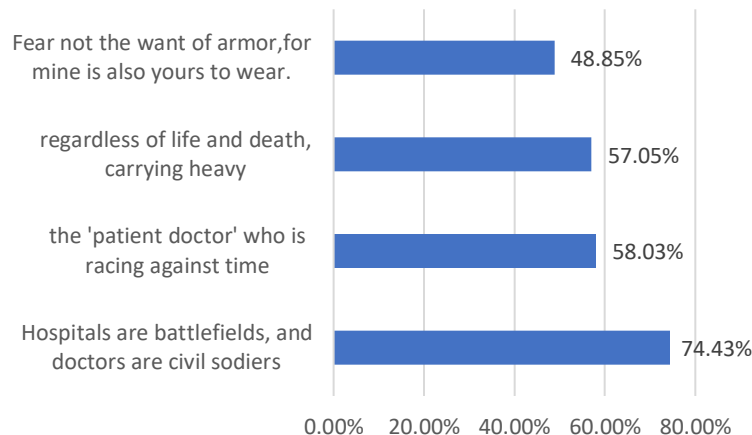
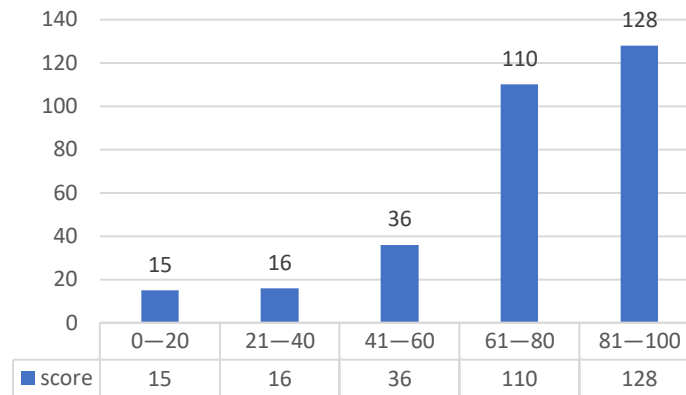
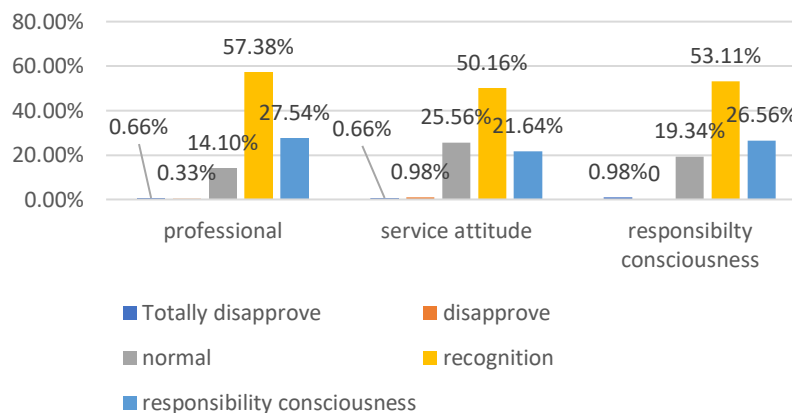


Fig. 2 Public recognition of the vocabulary of medical and health care descriptions in news reports during the epidemic

As shown in figure 1, the questionnaire gives three positive and three negative words related to health care. Before the outbreak, nearly 1 of the respondents chose the negative image in our given health care image, and as shown in figure 2, after the report during the epidemic, the public's awareness of the health care image added positive images such as "anti-epidemic hero" on the basis of the familiar "angel in white". What's more, they agreed with the warm-blooded and selfless description of hospitals as "battlefields" and doctors as "soldiers". Thus it can be seen that the news reports during the epidemic strengthened the positive image of medical staff in the eyes of the audience and played a positive guiding role in reshaping the image of medical media.

Strengthening the positive attitude of the public towards the image of health care**Fig. 3 the degree of improvement in the public's image of health care during the epidemic**

In the survey of the improvement degree of the health care image, after the epidemic, the average improvement degree of the interviewees to the health care image reached 72.28 points (out of 100), that is, there was a great improvement, and the choice of 128 people fell in the range of 81-100, accounting for the largest proportion among the interviewees. It can be seen that the improvement degree of the public to the health care image during the epidemic is more objective.

**Fig. 4 Public evaluation on the image of health care after the epidemic**

As shown in figure 4, in the recognition survey of the three positive health care images set up by the survey, nearly half of the people chose to approve, a small half chose to fully approve, and fewer people did not approve or comment below. This shows that after the epidemic, people generally agree with the positive image of health care.

On the question of whether the contradiction between doctors and patients will be alleviated in the future, nearly 70% of the audience agreed that 'positive reporting during the epidemic will improve the doctor-patient relationship in the future.

To sum up, these survey results prove that the positive reports of the mass media can strengthen the audience's positive cognition of the medical image and the doctor-patient relationship.

The audience is more inclined to metaphorical discourse expression

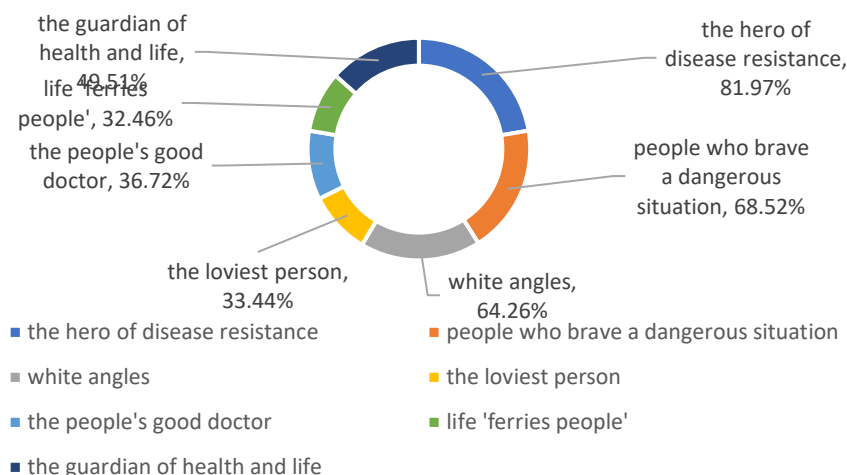


Fig. 5 recognition of vocabulary of medical news reports by the epidemic public

There are seven words with the highest occurrence rate selected from many news reports, including 'angel in white', 'retrograde', 'anti-epidemic hero' and so on. Nearly 80% of the respondents chose the word 'anti-epidemic hero', followed by 'retrograde'. While we are familiar with 'life ferry man', 'the most lovable person' and so on, they doesn't make a deep impression on the audience. It can be seen that in the relevant reports of the epidemic, news reports more often regard the epidemic as a metaphorical framework centered on 'control'. More often express the epidemic as a metaphor of war, for example, 'anti-epidemic', 'war of resistance', 'enemy', 'front line' and other likely words often appear in news reports.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson highlight the theory of conceptual metaphor for the first time in the book *"Metaphors We Live by"*. People use metaphors to define all kinds of reality in the disaster, and take relevant actions on the basis of the reality construction of metaphor (Lakoff, 2015). As an important mean of expressing arguments, metaphor is widely used in various persuasive situations and becomes an important part of news language. In the news reports of the epidemic, the audiences are more inclined to metaphorical discourse, which will make the audiences feel more involved. The ultimate goal of war metaphor is to win. Metaphorizing the epidemic situation into war implies that we will eventually win over the virus, which is in line with the ultimate expectations and expectations of the audience (Bao Yaxiong, 2021). Therefore, adding metaphors in the report will achieve better communication effect.

The diversity of reporting forms enriches the image of the doctors in the front stage

In his book *"The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life"* published in 1956, the American sociologist Erving Goffman put forward the theory of Dramaturgy, which holds that life is a performance, society is a stage, and people in society are actors performing on the stage. use a variety of symbols to perform (Erving Goffman, 2008). Goffman believes that in order to perform, people may distinguish between the front stage and the back stage, in which the front stage is a performance occasion that can be seen in the light and get a specific meaning from it. During the front stage, people present an image that can be admired by others and society.

In reporting the epidemic situation, the mass media have adopted a variety of reporting forms, such as People's Daily's report *"Life and death Golden Silver Pool"* and *"Wuhan Diary"*, Xinhua News Agency's *"extraordinary Calendar"*--an Anti-epidemic Micro-video, CCTV's *"Epidemic"* front-line VR report, and China Daily *"Post-90s War"*, epidemic "Diary" vlog and so on. These works use different narration and expression forms to enrich the images of doctors during the front stage. It makes the images of doctors as 'anti-epidemic heroes' and 'angels in white' deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, and even through individual examples of doctors in the process of protest, such as the personal deeds of Zhang Dingyu, director of Hubei Jinyintan Hospital, enrich the image of doctors in the middle and even back stage, and gain the recognition of the audience in terms of emotions and values.

Economic factors, professional quality of doctors and communication between doctors and patients are important factors that affect the image of health care

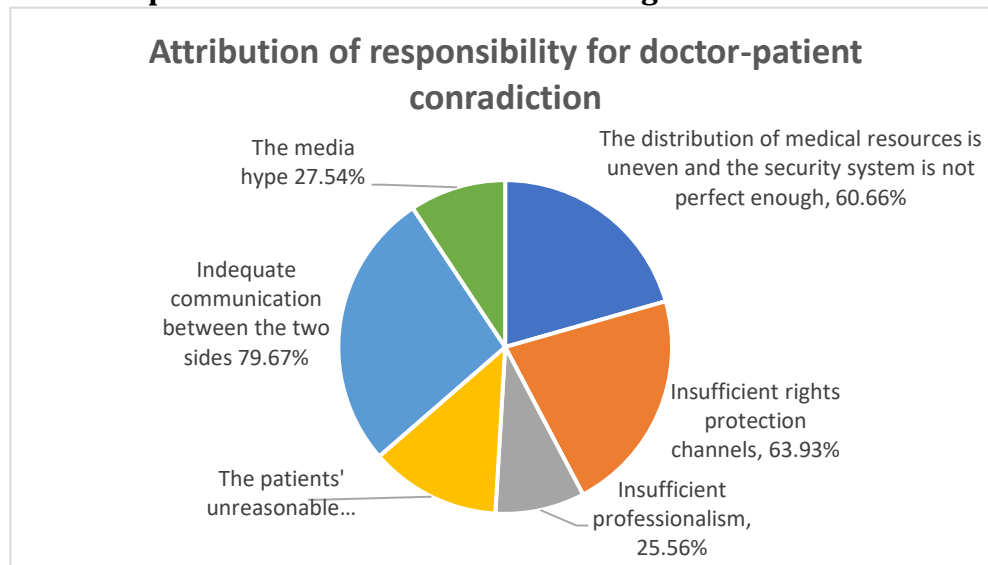


Fig. 6 Attribution of responsibility for contradiction between doctors and patients

As shown in figure 6, before the outbreak of the epidemic, nearly 40% of the respondents' negative perception of the image of health care was the profitability of services, from which it can be seen that economic factors have become a major factor affecting the image of health care, and "considering the economic interests of patients" has become an important factor in shaping the image of health care (Yao Zelin, Kou Jingyuan, 2018). In addition, the professional ethics of doctors is an important factor affecting the image of medical care. The profitability of the service presents the ways of "receiving red envelopes" and "receiving gifts" in the forgotten news reports, so it is necessary to avoid the profitability of the service and, to a certain extent, to practice medicine incorruptly, which plays a certain normative role in the professional accomplishment of doctors.

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as the ways, such as 'receiving red envelopes' and 'receiving gifts', in the forgotten news reports. Therefore, it is necessary for doctors to avoid persuading too much profits from service and be integrity in medical practice. It plays a certain normative role in the professional accomplishment of doctors.

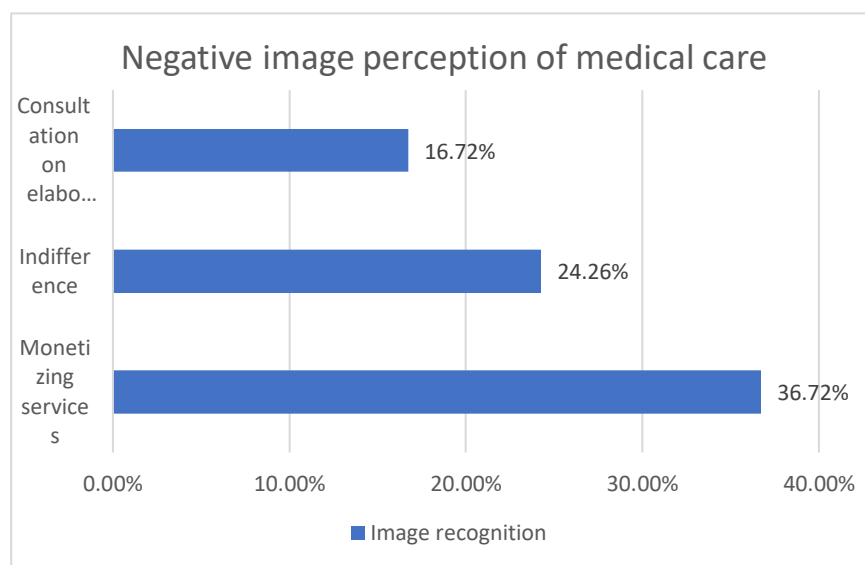


Figure 7. Cognition of negative image of medical care

Doctor-patient communication is also one of the factors to shape the images of doctors and nurses. As shown in figure 7, when there is a doctor-patient dispute, nearly 80% of people think that it is caused by the lack of communication between doctors and patients, and good communication can promote the healthy development of health care relationship, and then improve the images of health care, promoting the two-way loop of the image of doctors and nurses and the relationship between doctors and patients.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The media plays an intermediary role in related reports

Lazarsfield and Morton once proposed that mass communication has capacity to legitimize the status quo, and any kind of problems, opinions, commodity, groups and even people or social activities, as long as they are widely reported by the mass media, will become the focus of social attention, gaining high fame and social status (Guo Qingguang, 2011). And apparently, the media played an intermediary role in the reporting of the epidemic.

The reports before the epidemic have significant characteristics, usually around some medical news with great social impact, fierce conflicts and serious consequences, creating an image of doctors as cold, dull and lack of intimacy. During the epidemic, the media created a heroic image of the doctor in fighting the epidemic through a variety of reporting forms, enriching the images of the doctor in the front stage from the perspective of a 'storyteller' and making the doctor appear in front of the audience in a multi-dimensional way.

In the future doctor-patient related reports, the media should still play its intermediary role and do a good job in guiding public opinion. In the reports, reporters should respect each other's human nature, not only to depict heroes, but also to restore their real and vivid,

affectionate and righteous, bitter and tearful reality for the public. At the same time, the reports should be prudent, comprehensive and objective, and pay attention to the diversity and complexity of a group at any time. When reporting, it is necessary to show the group image in an in-depth, comprehensive and objective manner, and should not demonize a certain group arbitrarily, nor excessively deify a certain group.

The public holds a positive attitude towards the cognitive changes between the image of doctors and nurses and the contradiction between doctors and patients

There are two kinds of changes in the public's perceptions of the image of health care workers before and after the epidemic. One is to strengthen the existing good image cognition, the other is to change their cognitions in unobvious effect, and the majority of the public agreed with the development trend of the contradiction between doctors and patients in the future. It is believed that the contradiction between doctors and patients will develop in the direction of easing and benign development in the future.

This development trend is what we expect, but we should also prevent the contradiction between doctors and patients from worsening again. The metaphorical discourse expression of the media is that the public recognizes the expression of the media more, but not all metaphors are correct, so the audience should improve their media literacy and their abilities to distinguish between the truth and objectivity of news reports. They should also cultivate their own ability to judge independently, instead of becoming blind followers of the mass group.

The establishment of an effective communication mechanism between patients and their families and medical staff is of positive significance to the reconstruction of medical image

Patients and their families are the people who are in direct contact with the doctors, and they are also the ones who can perceive the doctor's attitudes, construct the medical images, and form the opinion cognitions. In our questionnaire survey, nearly 80% of the people think that the lack of communication between doctors and patients is an important factor leading to the negative images of health care. Therefore, establishing an effective communication mechanism between patients and their families and doctors is the emphasis of the construction of doctor's image.

To promote an effective communication between doctors and patients, the related department should establish communication channels and improve the communication efficiency between doctors and patients. At present, the establishment of communication channels is insufficient. Due to the limited medical resources and relatively little contact time between doctors and patients, it is necessary to broaden communication channels. To improve the communication ability, there should be more opportunities of emotional communication between doctors and patients. Patients can follow the doctor's advice, and doctors can provide more specific help to patients. While, emotional dissatisfaction caused by people's rebellious heart stimulated by negative emotions can also lead to poor communication between doctors and patients (Jiang Hongwen, Wang Lingyun, Sun Shaojing, 2013). Therefore, the establishment of an effective communication mechanism between patients and their families and medical staff is of positive significance to reshape the image of doctors and nurses.

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