EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF THE NEW MEDIA COVERAGE ON PUBLIC OPINION IN THE CASE OF IMAM HUSSEIN

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INTRODUCTION: NEW MEDIA OVERVIEW

New media refers to digital communication platforms and technologies that have emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In this paper, we highlight the literature and studies on the influence of the new media coverage on public opinion in the case of Imam Hussein, as well as related concepts that influence new media among the public. Nowadays, the increasing application of technology, especially in new media, has inspired researchers to conduct a study on the impact of new media communications. Unfortunately, the most worrying issue is how the communication systems solve these problems (Sánchez-Casado, Artal-Tur, & Tomaseti-Solano, 2019).

There are several theme approaches related to this study such as the influence of new media coverage related with public opinion and its focus on the case of Imam Hussein. For the convenience of the reader, the we have compiled a highlight of this literature based on the objectives of this study. In general, the literature will assist researchers in getting some ideas and direction of the study conducted. According to Chua (2014), literature can be broken down into various sub-topics based on one's interest and research values. New media is a platform for social interaction that entails a new branch of communication that emerges from communication contexts. This medium is made up of online sites, services, and activities that all involve some sort of process. Collaboration, sharing, and democratisation of new media users are among the processes involved (Ho, Chung, Kingshott, & Chiu, 2020).

In today's world, new media is used for three primary purposes: as a means of communication, inquiring about the latest information and doing business online. As a result, this strategy is quite useful in people's daily lives. The new media communication technique,

according to Rothschild (2011), comprises online forums, social blogs, microblogging, photographs, videos, user ratings, and social bookmarks. The new media branch offers several mechanisms that allow new media users to communicate with other new media users in a variety of ways. Furthermore, through communication, outreach, and community reorganisation, new media has an immense ability to assist corporations, specialising in product branding (AlKhalifa & Farello, 2020). Several studies have found that many new media platform users are already addicted to utilising social networking sites, and that their use of new media sites on a daily and continuous basis is strongly dependent on the individual's position. People who are very addicted to Facebook, he says, are unaware of the impending crisis (Katz & Cohen, 2020)while many children are at risk due to social isolation and reduced social services. Objective: Examine child protection in Israel during COVID-19, as portrayed in mainstream news media and government policy documents. Participants and setting: The study analyzed all policy documents and mainstream media reports published in Israel from March to May 2020, during the initial mandatory nationwide quarantine. Methods: (1).

THE INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA COVERAGE ON PUBLIC OPINION

The influence of media coverage on public opinion regarding the case of Imam Hussein (a.s), a revered figure in Islam and a central personality in the event of Ashura has not been specifically addressed in the provided sources. However, the general impact of media representations of Islam and Muslims can provide some context. Research has shown that media depictions of Islam and Muslims can greatly influence public opinion and contribute to phenomena such as Islamophobia (Rane et al., 2014). The way media frames stories and the narratives it chooses

to focus on can shape the public's perceptions, sometimes leading to negative stereotypes and biases (Baker et al., 2013). In the context of the portrayal of figures such as Imam Hussein (a.s), media coverage that is not sensitive to the cultural and religious significance of such a personality could potentially contribute to misunderstandings and reinforce existing prejudices. Conversely, media that provides well-researched, respectful, and nuanced reporting can enhance understanding and appreciation of different cultural and religious narratives.

It is important to critically assess media sources for their credibility, such as considering different viewpoints and the reputation of the outlet. For instance, viewers who find specific networks like Al-Jazeera credible may be influenced by their coverage of such topics (Johnson & Fahmy, 2008). Therefore, the new media coverage, depending on its quality and orientation, can significantly affect public opinion concerning historical and religious figures like Imam Hussein (a.s).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper is related to understanding the influence of new media coverage on public opinion in the case of Imam Hussein (a.s), which can vary depending on the context and the goals of the research. Based on the research problem, the purpose of this paper is to find out the dependency of new media coverage on public opinion. Specific research questions are:

1. **How does the new media shape the portrayal and perception of religious figures like Imam Hussein (a.s)?**

2. How does the content and discourse surrounding Imam Hussein (a.s) in new media spaces influence public attitudes, beliefs, and interpreta-

tions of his legacy?

3. How do the patterns and trends in the coverage of Imam Hussein (a.s) across different types of new media platforms impact public opinion over time?

4. How does new media contribute to assessing the nature of discussions, interactions, and engagement related to Imam Hussein (a.s) in online spaces and in shaping public opinion?

5. How do the mechanisms through which new media cover topics about Imam Hussein (a.s) influence the formation and dissemination of narratives, including factors such as virality, algorithmic amplification, and user engagement?

6. How do new media representations of Imam Hussein reflect broader cultural narratives, ideologies, and power dynamics, and how do they impact public perceptions within specific socio-political contexts?

7. How can we provide insights that can inform media literacy efforts and communication strategies aimed at promoting critical thinking, cultural understanding, and constructive dialogue in digital media environments?

Overall, this paper is concerned with gaining a nuanced understanding of how new media coverage shapes public opinion regarding Imam Hussein (a.s), and seeks to draw implications for media practices, religious discourse, and societal dynamics.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research seeks to enhance understanding of the complex interplay between new media, religion, and public opinion formation,

with implications for religious pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and social cohesion in multicultural societies. By examining the case of Imam Hussein (a.s), it contributes to broader discussions on the role of media in shaping collective memory, cultural heritage, and identity construction in the digital age.

QUALITATIVE RESEACRH METHODOLOGY: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Focus group is a method of group interview. This focus group in this study is applied to new media users consisting of people who depend on new media. Besides, the selected informants are those who always use the new media for their daily activities. Usually, focus groups are used to obtain a deeper understanding on a topic or to get a better understanding of a study such as treatment, attitudes, strategies, and the views of a group (Liamputtong, 2014). Focus groups are preferable and applicable in this study. Focus groups conversations are often used as a qualitative tool to gain an in-depth interpretation of social issues. This method aims to gather data from a precisely selected group of people, not from a statistically representative sample of a wider population.

For this study, the we chose to use focus groups. Focus group have been conducted face to face but online and online focus group is a research method that involves gathering a selected group of informants in a virtual setting to engage in interactive discussions and provide qualitative insights. Focus group discussions are an intense method of qualitative research that entail conducting five (5) groups with six (6) persons in each group. This small sample of informants will be used to examine the perspectives of the informants on a specific concept, plan, or circumstance.

FOCUS GROUP NEW MEDIA USERS

Several parameters have been identified specifically in the selection of informant's new media. The number of new media user informants in this study is as many as six (6) persons for every group, totalling five (5) groups with experience in using new media. This is shown in Table 1.1. The purpose of the selection of this group is to see an understanding of the influence of new media coverage on public opinion involving people directly via online in Karbala, Iraq.

Table 1.1Sampling of New media User Informants

Title	Description	Fraction	Total
New Media User	Youth	30 people	
Age	Youth	15 to 30 years old	
Gender	Man	22 people	30 people
	Woman	8 people	
	Indian		
Area	Karbala, Iraq	6 people in 1 group from each state (16 states)	

Several parameters have been identified especially in the selection of informants within new media users. As much as 30 people who are new media users, with experience in the new media were recruited as informants in this study. Based on Table above, new media users in this study comprised from youth. The purpose for the selection of these groups is to observe if there is any differentiation and hence to get a better understanding of consciousness towards new media coverage influence on public opinion among people.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection process is crucial in providing information reports from informants on the conducted studies. Therefore, it does need serious attention. This section explains the data collection based on three methods of study used in the focus groups. In this study, a focus group was conducted on new media users who consist of youths in Karbala, Iraq. This method is suitable to gain and understand the influence of new media users and their social engagement. In addition, through this focus group, we are able to explore experiences and the influence of new media on social engagement among youth. This process takes between 1 to 1 ½ hours. Focus group implementation information is as follows in Table 1.2 below and the total number of focus group informants is 30 people, and one group consists of 6 informants. Table 1.2 shows the information of the focus group informants.

Table 1.2 Focus Group Implementation Informant

Informant Category	Method	Month	Informant Number
Youth	Focus Group 1-5	August 2023	30 people

In the implementation process, there are five steps for this focus group. The first is group formation. In this study the focus group consisted of six people new media users in a group, around the city of Karbala, Iraq which includes various races and backgrounds. It is carried out in the form of five (5) inner group closed via online session. The second step is the appointment of a moderator. Inside this study the researcher himself became a moderator. Ahmad Sunawari Long (2011) argues that it is preferable that moderators are not recognized by the group members in order to avoid shyness or lack of seriousness among members. The

main task of the moderator in this study is to be the chairman of the group discussion; to note, record, and ensure the discussion session runs smoothly. The third step is to hold a brief familiarization session. It is run before the start of the session discussion. This is because members or informants are made up of various backgrounds and they do not know each other. Therefore, informants are asked to introduce themselves, state their home adress and other basic information. This step will take approximately 10 minutes and will help us ascertain who is a shy character and who is more vocal and outspoken. The fourth step is a discussion session on the study conducted. This part is very important because it helps to get the results of the study. The moderator asks a few questions to the informant and wait for their answers. In this focus group, informants have been exposed to some examples of posters and videos of social involvement among peoples in Karbala, Iraq. However, it is all done after obtaining permission and consent from the informant. All recordings have been presented in text form transcription. As a last step the researcher thanks the informants for participating and their willingness to spend time in this research.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis comes next in a study once the informant has provided the data. The information gathered through MP4 recording has been transformed into text transcription for focus group and interview procedures. Following completion of the informant interview, data analysis was carried out. This makes it possible to compare one group to other groups and make notes about them. To gather correct results, data were further examined using NVIVO 12 software. In addition, each informant in the focus group was given a label to make it simpler to

handle creating or determining the themes in this study and safeguard the secrecy of the study informants. This made it easier to write the study's findings. The labelling of focus group informants is shown in Table 1.3 below:

Table 1.3 Focus Group Informant Labelling (KF)

Focus Group	Informant Number	Informant Labelling
1-5	30	FG1-FG5

To facilitate the data analysis process, each of the objectives of this study has been divided into specific categories. In summary, good research methodologies make it easier for researchers to obtain findings quality while reducing information inaccuracies.

**Figure 1.1: Hierarchy Chart Focus Group Discussion**
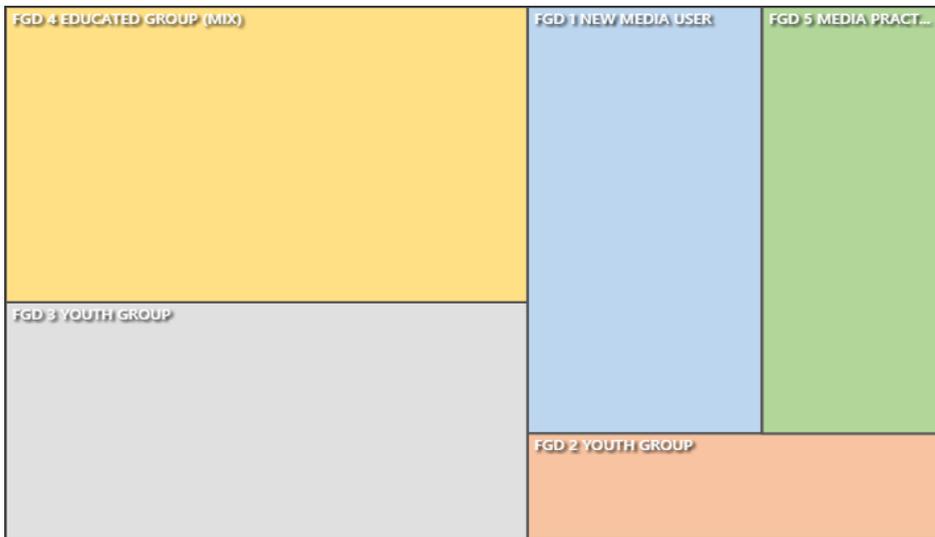
Table 1.4 Compared by number of coding references

Files	Number of coding references	Number of nodes coding
Files\\INTERVIEWS\\ FGD 1	18	46
Files\\INTERVIEWS\\ FGD 2	10	20
Files\\INTERVIEWS\\ FGD 3	18	57
Files\\INTERVIEWS\\ FGD 4	28	71
Files\\INTERVIEWS\\ FGD 5	14	35

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An important part of the new media coverage and its influence on public social engagement is affected by the publics' new media networking. A big risk factor for many issues and problems is said to be online community social interactions. The idealised self-shows that are shared on new media are a constant issue. Public are at risk of coming out as superficial as a result, although the terrible outcome may depend on how they interact on new media. Problems include and are not limited to, social isolation and online conflict. These are the possible risks for those who intereact with different posts, and so creating new media for safer and better online interaction is important.

Figure 1.2Compared by Number of Coding References for Exploring the Influence of the New Media Coverage on Public Opinion in the Case of Imam Hussein (a.s).
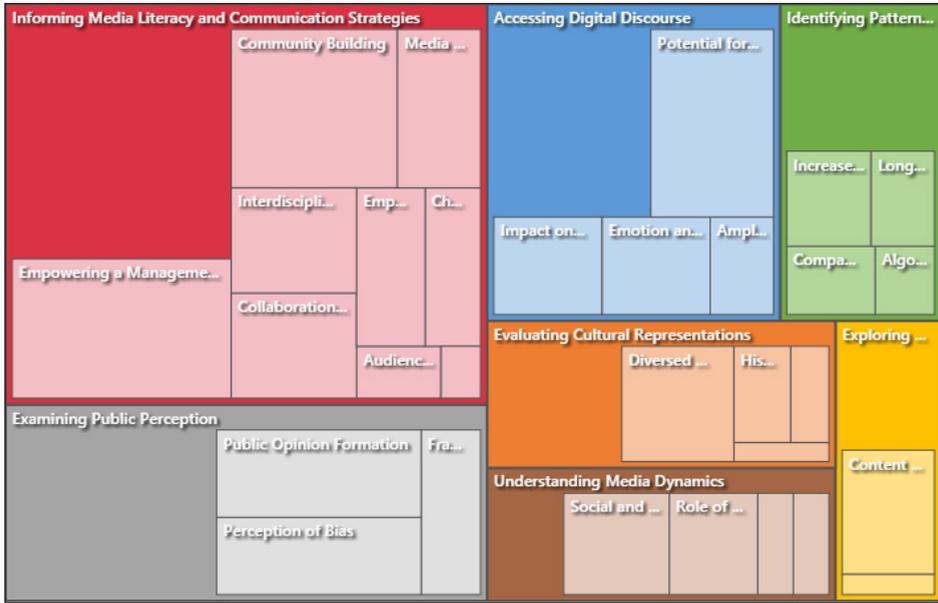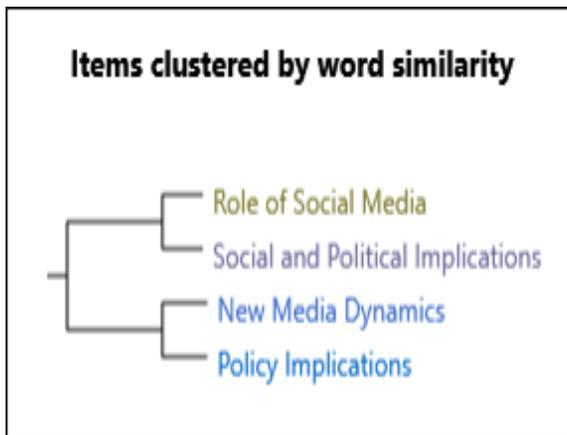

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.2 Findings Themes and Categories shows seven (7) Themes and 30 Categories. Figures 1.2 hierarchy charts shows compared by number of coding reference by informants mostly have opinion related to understanding media dynamics (coding reference:4 Direct,19 Aggregated,Items Coded: 2 Direct, 5 Aggregated) , informing media literacy and communication (coding reference:23 Direct,79 Aggregated,Items Coded: 5 Direct, 5 Aggregated) , identifying patterns and trends (coding reference:9 Direct,21 Aggregated,Items Coded: 3 Direct, 3 Aggregated), exploring influence mechanism (coding reference:5 Direct,12 Aggregated,Items Coded: 3

Direct, 3 Aggregated), examining public perception (coding reference:17 Direct,39 Aggregated,Items Coded: 5 Direct, 5 Aggregated), evaluating cultural representations (coding reference:8 Direct,21 Aggregated,Items Coded: 2 Direct, 3 Aggregated) and accessing digital discourse (coding reference:14 Direct,38 Aggregated,Items Coded: 4 Direct, 5 Aggregated) .

KEY THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING MEDIA DYNAMICS

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.3 Findings Categories of Understanding Media Dynamics shows four (4) Categories.
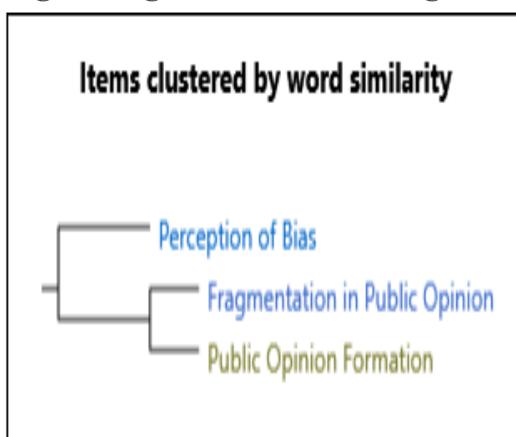
Figure 1.3: Findings Categories of Understanding Media Dynamics

KEY THEME 2: EXAMINING PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.4 Findings Categories of Examining Public Perception shows three (3) Categories.

Figure 1.4 Findings Categories of Examining Public Perception

Items clustered by word similarity

Perception of Bias
Fragmentation in Public Opinion
Public Opinion Formation

KEY THEME 3: IDENTIFYING PATTERNS AND TRENDS

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.5 Findings Categories of Identifying Patterns and Trends shows four (4) Categories.
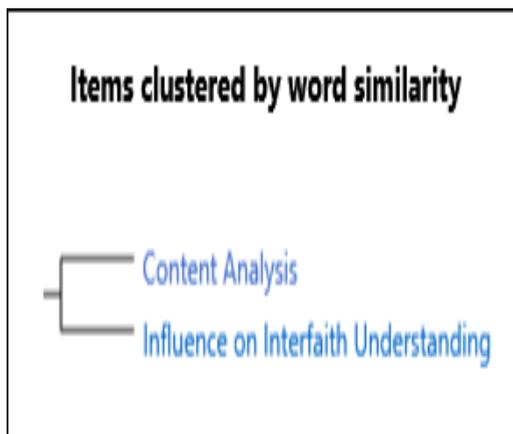
Figure 1.5 Findings Categories of Identifying Patterns and Trends
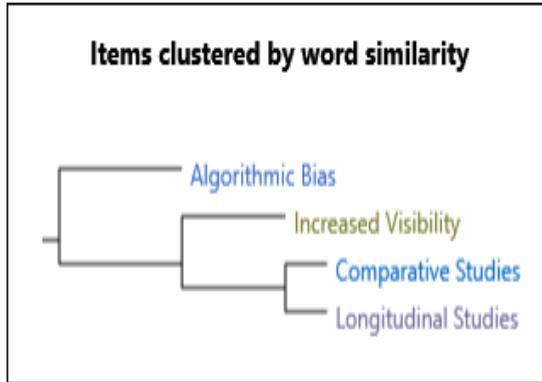
KEY THEME 4: EXPLORING INFLUENCE MECHANISMS

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.6 Findings Categories of Exploring Influence Mechanism shows two (2) Categories.
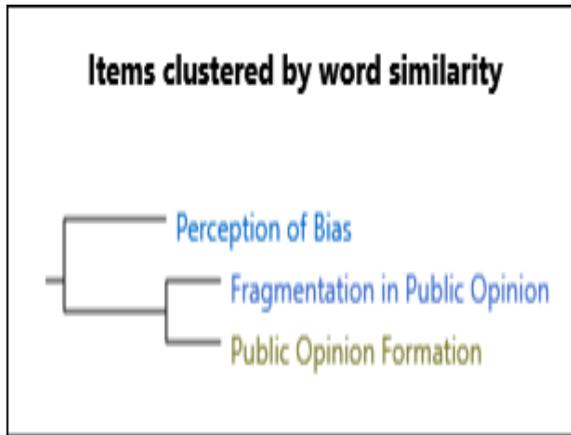
Figure 1.6 Findings Categories of Exploring Influence Mechanism

KEY THEME 5: EXAMINING PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.7 Findings Categories of Examining Public Perception shows three (3) Categories.
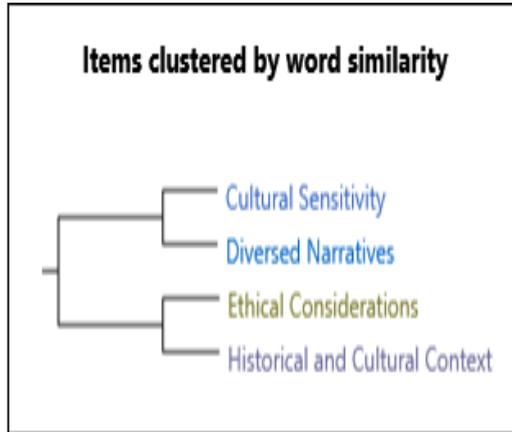
Figure 1.7Findings Categories of Examining Public Perception

KEY THEME 6: EVALUATING CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.8 Findings Categories of Evaluating Cultural Representations shows four (4) Categories.

Figure 1.8 Findings Categories of Evaluating Cultural Representations

KEY THEME 7: ACCESSING DIGITAL DISCOURSE

The findings of the Focus Group Discussion transcripts support the statistical result obtained in answer to the first research question. The findings of the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion transcriptions by NVIVO12 are presented. Figure 1.9 Findings Categories of Accessing Digital Discourse shows four (4) Categories.

Figure 1.9 Findings Categories of Accessing Digital Discourse
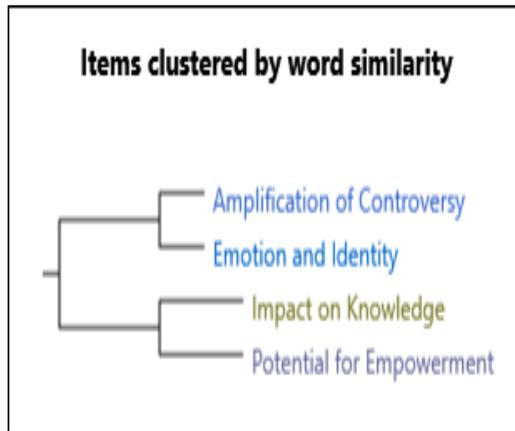
RESULT AND DICSUSSION

The findings for exploring the influence of new media coverage on public opinion in the case of Imam Hussein (a.s) can vary based on the specific research methods, contexts, and objectives of the study. However, findings include (i)Increased Visibility: New media platforms have expanded the reach and visibility of discussions related to Imam Hussein (a.s), allowing for a broader audience to engage with his legacy beyond traditional media outlets.(ii)Diverse Narratives: New media coverage of Imam Hussein (a.s) reflects a diverse range of narratives and interpretations, influenced by factors such as religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, political affiliations, and personal perspectives of content creators and users.(iii)Amplification of Controversy: New media platforms may amplify controversial or polarizing perspectives on Imam Hussein (a.s), leading to heightened debates and discussions among online users with varying viewpoints.(iv)Community Building:Online communities and networks centered around Imam Hussein (a.s) have emerged on social media platforms, fostering solidarity, religious expression, and commemorative practices among followers and enthusiasts.(v)Influence on Public Perception: New media coverage can significantly shape public perception of Imam Hussein (a.s), impacting attitudes, beliefs, and interpretations of his legacy among diverse audiences, both within and outside of religious communities.(vi)Algorithmic Bias: Algorithms and platform dynamics may influence the visibility and prominence of certain narratives or content related to Imam Hussein (a.s), potentially reinforcing existing biases or privileging specific viewpoints over others. (vii)Challenges of Misinformation: New media environments present challenges related to the spread of misinformation, misinterpretation, and manipulation of information about Imam Hussein (a.s), requiring critical media literacy skills among users to discern credible sources

and accurate representations.(viii)Potential for Empowerment:Despite challenges, new media platforms offer opportunities for marginalized voices and alternative perspectives on Imam Hussein to gain visibility, challenge dominant narratives, and contribute to more inclusive and diverse discussions.

Overall, the findings highlight the multifaceted nature of the influence of new media coverage on public opinion regarding Imam Hussein, underscoring the importance of critically engaging with digital media content and understanding its implications for religious discourse and cultural representation.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Over the last few decades, the development agenda has paid more attention to social engagement at all levels. There has been a growing recognition of the importance of engagement in both public and wider development, as well as formal recognition of the need to actively address the many challenges that a growing population face.

Empowering community building through a system that integrates with new media can indeed foster a positive perception of the Imam Hussein (a.s) case. By leveraging social media platforms, such a system can disseminate accurate information, facilitate constructive discussions, and encourage engagement among individuals interested in the case. Features like real-time updates, educational content, interactive forums, and user-generated content can help cultivate a sense of community and solidarity among those who share an interest or belief in the significance of Imam Hussein's legacy. Additionally, the system could promote values

such as compassion, justice, and unity, aligning with the principles associated with Imam Hussein and his message. Through strategic use of social media and technology, this system can play a vital role in shaping positive public opinion surrounding the Imam Hussein case while fostering a connected and empowered community.

Empowering a management organization system by integrating it with social media can be highly beneficial for shaping a positive perception of the Imam Hussein (a.s) case. Systems that could work include (i) Real-time Engagement: The system can link with social media platforms to provide real-time updates on events, discussions, and developments related to the Imam Hussein (a.s) case. This ensures that the management organisation stays informed and can respond promptly to public opinions and concerns. (ii)Community Building: By leveraging social media, the system can facilitate the creation of online communities where individuals interested in the Imam Hussein (a.s) case can connect, share information, and engage in constructive dialogue. This fosters a sense of belonging and solidarity among supporters. (iii)Educational Content: The system can disseminate educational content about the historical significance of Imam Hussein, his principles, and his contributions to Islamic history. This helps to enhance public understanding and appreciation of the case. (iv)Dialogue Facilitation: Through social media integration, the system can host virtual forums, webinars, and Q&A sessions where experts and community members can discuss various aspects of the Imam Hussein (a.s) case. This promotes open dialogue and allows for the exchange of diverse perspectives. (v)Monitoring Public Opinion: The system can monitor social media channels to gauge public sentiment and identify any misconceptions or misinformation circulating about the Imam Hussein case. This enables the management organisation

to address concerns and correct inaccuracies effectively. (vi)Positive Messaging Campaigns: The system can launch targeted social media campaigns aimed at promoting positive messages and narratives about the Imam Hussein (a.s) case. This helps to counter negative perceptions and cultivate a more favourable public opinion.

By leveraging social media integration, the management organisation can effectively harness the power of digital platforms to shape a positive perception of the Imam Hussein case, foster community engagement, and advance its objectives.

For exploring the influence of new media coverage on public opinion in the case of Imam Hussein (a.s), several recommendations can be made such as (i)Interdisciplinary Research Approach: Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars from fields such as media studies, religious studies, communication, sociology, and cultural studies to provide diverse perspectives and insights into the complex dynamics of new media coverage and public opinion regarding Imam Hussein (a.s). (ii)Longitudinal Studies: Conduct longitudinal studies to track changes and trends in new media coverage and public opinion over time, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of evolving narratives, patterns, and influences. (iii)Audience Analysis: Conduct audience analysis to better understand the demographics, motivations, and engagement patterns of individuals consuming and participating in discussions related to Imam Hussein (a.s) on new media platforms, helping to tailor communication strategies and interventions effectively. (iv)Content Analysis: Utilize content analysis techniques to examine the tone, framing, and thematic content of new media coverage related to Imam Hussein (a.s), identifying prevalent narratives, representations, and discursive strategies employed by media producers and users.(v)

Comparative Studies: Compare new media coverage and public opinion regarding Imam Hussein (a.s) across different cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical contexts to identify commonalities, differences, and factors shaping variations in narratives and perceptions. (vi) Ethical Considerations: Address ethical considerations related to the portrayal of religious figures in new media environments, including issues of respect, sensitivity, cultural appropriation, and the potential for misinformation or manipulation. (vii)Media Literacy Education: Promote media literacy education initiatives aimed at empowering users to critically evaluate, analyze, and engage with new media content related to Imam Hussein (a.s), equipping them with the skills to navigate complex digital information landscapes responsibly. (viii) Collaboration with Community Stakeholders: Collaborate with religious leaders, community organizations, and digital media influencers within Shia Muslim communities and beyond to co-create research agendas, disseminate findings, and develop community-driven initiatives for fostering informed dialogue and understanding.(ix)Policy Implications: Inform policy discussions and interventions related to digital media regulation, religious representation, and cultural diversity by providing evidence-based recommendations grounded in empirical research on the influence of new media coverage on public opinion regarding Imam Hussein (a.s).

By implementing these recommendations, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the influence of new media coverage on public opinion regarding Imam Hussein (a.s), fostering dialogue, empathy, and cultural exchange in digital media spaces.

In conclusion, for a paper exploring the influence of new media coverage on public opinion in the case of Imam Hussein (a.s), we

might want to summarize the findings regarding the role new media played in shaping perceptions about Imam Hussein (a.s). The interplay between new media narratives and public opinion, and acknowledging the complexity of this relationship, highlights both the extent and limits of new media's influence, as well as any changes in public perception that were noted during the period of study. Finally, researchers suggest areas for further research to understand the evolving influence of new media on public opinion in historical and contemporary contexts. It involves empirical studies or content analysis.

This paper reiterates the significance of new media in appropriately presenting Imam Hussein's (a.s) story and the broader Islamic message in a manner resonant with moderation and historical context, highlighting the necessity for Iraqi media to align their representations with the religious significance and ritualistic nature of Imam Hussein's (a.s) cause, especially given the contemporary challenges and ideological complexities across the region. To sum up, the methodological approach of using Focus Group Discussions to gain qualitative insights and consolidate the findings demonstrates new media's dependency and influence on public perception regarding Imam Hussein (a.s).

We must therefore emphasise the originality and value of this research in providing a critical analysis of the intersection between new media and the public's understanding of religious events. Furthermore, the management and policy implications might offer for communication experts and media practitioners seeking to leverage new media to disseminate balanced and educational content. To conclude, by noting the potential positive impact that informed and sensitive new media coverage can have on public opinion and the understanding of Islam and its historical figures like Imam Hussein (a.s), ensures that the essence

and core values of the message are conveyed effectively to both Muslim and global audiences.

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