

Conspiracy Theory in Discussions of the Coronavirus Pandemic in the Gulf Region

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Abstract : In light of the tense relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, this research paper sheds some light on Al-Arabiya's reporting of Coronavirus in the Gulf. Particularly because most of the cases, in the beginning, were coming from Iran, some programs of this Saudi channel embraced a conspiracy theory. Hate speech has been used in talking about the topic and discussing it. The results of these discussions will be detailed in this paper in percentages with regard to the research sample, which includes five programs on Al-Arabiya channel: 'DNA', 'Marraya' (Mirrors), 'Panorama', 'Tafaolcom' (Your Interaction) and the 'Diplomatic Street', in the period between January 19, that is, the date of the first case in Iran, and April 10, 2020. The research shows the use of a conspiracy theory in the programs, in addition to some professional violations. The surveyed sample also shows that the matter receded due to the Arab Gulf states' preoccupation with the successively increasing cases that have appeared there since the start of the pandemic. The results indicate that hate speech was present in the sample at a rate of 98.1% and that most of the programs that dealt with the Iranian issue under the Corona pandemic on Al Arabiya used the conspiracy theory at a rate of 75.5%.

Keywords : Al-Arabiya, Iran, Corona, hate speech, conspiracy theory, politicization of the pandemic

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