

Constructing Normalcy and Civic Identity: Resilience, Solidarity and Compliance in CNA's Early COVID-19 Coverage

Xiaoyan Huo, Ph.D

Language Academy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract:

During the early stages of a health crisis, journalism not only communicates risk but also defines how everyday life, collective responsibility, and social order should be understood. This study examines how CNA, a Singapore-based English-language broadcaster, discursively constructed normalcy in its early COVID-19 coverage. Drawing on 195 news clips on CNA's official YouTube channel, the study combines inductive thematic analysis with discourse analysis of lexical choices, evaluative language, quoted speech, narrative sequencing, and visual-verbal relations. The findings show that normalcy was produced through three interrelated discourses: resilience, solidarity, and compliance. CNA represented disruptions as manageable "changes," foregrounded solution-oriented adaptation and business continuity, and highlighted citizens who continued everyday routines while contributing to collective crisis management. Stories of community support, recovered patients, and healthcare workers mobilized inclusive pronouns, affective language, and narratives of hope to construct a cohesive national community. At the same time, hygienic practices and adherence to public-health measures were framed as rational, moral, and socially responsible forms of citizenship. Rather than sensationalizing uncertainty, CNA's calm, pragmatic reporting positioned Singapore as orderly, prepared, and capable of collective action. The study demonstrates how crisis journalism can use language to construct civic identity and produce reassurance without denying disruption or risk.

Keywords:

Crisis journalism, normalcy, civic identity, discourse analysis, public health communication.