

Newswork in crisis: Sourcing patterns during COVID-19 through a 'lived experience' perspective

the International
Communication Gazette
2023, Vol. 85(8) 627–645
© The Author(s) 2023

Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/26331055231214373
journals.sagepub.com/home/gaz



Paschalia (Lia) Spyridou

Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus

Pantelis Vatikiotis

Panteion University, Greece

Theodora A Maniou

University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Abstract

During crises the newsmedia are expected to provide relevant and accurate information to help citizens comprehend the crisis and act upon it. As a source-driven practice, journalism relies on a variety of sources to validate news and provide perspectives. The disruptive nature of a crisis though raises questions about how journalists select sources and what these choices say about professional autonomy and criticality. Considering source choices as newsgathering venues and strategies, and drawing on semi-structured interviews with journalists in Greece and Cyprus, the study explores the factors that shaped journalists' sourcing practices during the COVID-19 crisis. We find that journalists over-relied on political sources and selective authoritative voices compromising the tenets of verification and independence. The fear to convey inaccurate or 'biased' information amid disinformation flows, bolstered journalist's elite orientation. Professional precarity and economic pressures are found to further worsen the 'lived experience' of journalists limiting their ability to question and scrutinise power in times of crises.

Corresponding author:

Paschalia (Lia) Spyridou, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, Cyprus.

Email: l.spyridou@cut.ac.cy

Keywords

Sources, sourcing practices, risk journalism, social media, elite sources, autonomy, precarity, Cyprus, Greece

Introduction

When major crises occur, people experience an increasing need for information and sense-making (Lowrey, 2004). The plurality, diversity, depth and credibility of the information conveyed by the media largely shapes public understanding and knowledge (Cushion et al., 2022). In the case of the coronavirus pandemic, a health issue surrounded by epistemic uncertainty (Dunwoody, 2020), the news media were assigned the difficult duty of making people understand the disease itself, be aware of preventive steps and actions taken by governments, and comprehend the benefits and risks of proposed medical measures (Fletcher et al., 2020). At the same time, large-scale measures applied during the disease disrupted the routines and conventions of journalism (Olsen et al., 2020), afflicted the financial viability of news outlets and worsened the labour situation of journalism professionals (Nielsen et al., 2020; Posetti et al., 2020). Amid threats to press freedom (Papadopoulou and Maniou, 2021) and extensive spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories described as an ‘infodemic’ (Siapera, 2022), journalism’s (c)aim to deliver relevant, useful and credible news and information was seriously questioned. Evidence suggests that coverage was predominantly negative focusing on statistics of infected and deceased (Basch et al., 2020), emphasising drastic counter-pandemic measures. Understandably, news consumption oscillated between doom scrolling (Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021) and news avoidance (Spyridou and Danezis, 2022).

Such criticisms raise questions about the practice and structural conditions of the journalism craft which influence and shape how news is produced (Deuze, 2019). Sourcing practices lie at the heart of news production (Carlson and Franklin, 2011). The question of who has voice and authority in mediated constructions of reality remains central to how we interrogate journalism’s claim to represent the world (Curran, 2019; Tuchman, 1978). Research investigating sourcing patterns claims that COVID-19 related news stories relied predominantly on elite sources: politicians, prominent public figures and representatives of big health organisations were the primary definers of relevant coverage (Deprez and Van Leuven, 2018; Mellado et al., 2021; Pentzold et al., 2021). Scholarly work on sources tends to adopt a quantitative approach, focusing on the types of sources and the actors appearing most frequently (e.g., Mellado et al., 2021; Van Leuven et al., 2015).

In this study we aim to examine the forces that shaped sourcing practices in Greece and Cyprus during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to go beyond the mere identification of the types of sources used and to illuminate the factors that shaped professionals’ sourcing practices, which necessitates an additional step towards what Lewis (2020) calls the ‘lived experience of news production’ during the corona virus crisis. It is argued that in order to more fully comprehend journalists’ work practices, we need ‘a better account for the affective, complicated lived experience’ (p. 685) of journalism professionals. Lewis emphasises precarity, economic calamity and

crisis-generated symptoms (e.g., stress, vulnerability, increased workload) as conditions which affect journalists' performance. In this regard, we consider source options more as journalistic venues and strategies rather than a specific communication channel used by journalists. Additionally, the study draws on the idea of 'risk journalism' (Volkmer, 2014, 2022), a term used to identify the emerging sphere of journalism which addresses global crises and its implications. Communication during the pandemic involved a wide set of actors including journalists, governments, international organisations, scientists and citizens who engaged with each other on digital platforms beyond national borders. The study of sourcing practices in two peripheral countries of South Europe can add empirical evidence on the idea of 'reflective interdependence' (Volkmer, 2014) in news production, as a model for public communication and inform us about the power assigned on specific actors (both national and international) within the micro-networks created by journalists when doing their job.

Why sources matter

'News is unimaginable without sources' (Carlson and Franklin, 2011: 1); they are used to collect and verify information, to trigger news stories and to assign legitimacy on the content produced. News sources define the reality of news coverage and give structure to the news production process (Lecheler and Kruikemeier, 2016). How reporters choose sources and the types of sources they use determine not merely the information conveyed but also what image of society is presented. When discussing news sources three issues emerge: first, the question of who gets to be a news source (Carlson, 2009) – the selection of sources frames the issue and carries with it implicit assumptions about who is important. Second, the interactions between journalists and sources (Davis, 2008). Official sources and experts tend to have greater bargaining power when negotiating visibility and (favourable) coverage (Anderson, 2017). Gans (1979) has described this relationship as a 'tug-of-war'. Third, sourcing patterns are part and parcel of journalism's claim to truthfulness and authenticity (Curran, 2019). Sources have an agenda-setting effect (Wanta and Alkazemi, 2018); they can convey their own frames into media coverage (D'Angelo and Shaw, 2018) and they can be used to assign legitimacy and credibility to news content (Manning, 2001). The latter use can have negative ramifications for reporting as 'the need for evidence supports a journalism of attribution rather than a journalism of independent verification' (Carlson, 2009: 528).

Much scholarly work concludes a certain bias towards elite sources that limits the range of views and discourses circulating in the public sphere (Saridou et al., 2017). Analysing the quality press in Britain, Lewis and colleagues (2008) speak of a compromised fourth estate due to extensive reliance on 'information subsidies', raising important questions about journalistic independence. The theory of primary definers (Hall et al., 1978) forms an important effort to explain source selection in the news. In contrast to more instrumentalist accounts that assume direct political interference (see Chadwick et al., 2020), Hall et al. (1978) argue that media organisations tend to gravitate towards 'regular and reliable institutional sources', not because of inherent bias but as a result of newswork routines that perceive institutionalised sources as authorised and

legitimate speakers. In this context, sourcing practices constitute long-established norms serving the objectivity norm of professional journalism, facilitating journalists to perform their tasks effectively under time constraints and resource limitations (Gans, 1979). As a result, mainstream media tend to limit the views and discourses circulating in the public sphere and 'strengthen the acceptance of the system' (Carlson, 2009: 534). Hall et al.'s interpretation has been criticised for not considering the existence of multiple potential sources that compete to shape the news as well as for assigning a crude passivity to journalists disregarding their professional ideology (Schlesinger, 1990). In this direction, the concept of 'competitive definers' (Carlson, 2009) foregrounds news production as a site of struggle between competing positions aiming to frame the news. This perspective assumes a less standardised manner of doing news; official sources may have a structural advantage by virtue of their position and the amount of resources they can devote, but their dominance is not always guaranteed.

These criticisms found fertile ground in the new media landscape characterised by a hybrid media system where older and newer media logics intersect (Chadwick, 2013). Digital affordances, social media and citizen journalism are said to transform the relationship between journalists and news sources promising a revision of sourcing practices. Specifically, the network journalism paradigm (Heinrich, 2011) sketches news organisations as nodes within a complex sphere of interconnected nodes which, at least in theory, can interact easily with other nodes, and achieve greater levels of information exchange. Each node might provide different insights, assist to contextualise events and add further perspectives. Volkmer and Firdaus (2013) speak of a networked ecology in which national professional journalism and user-driven media intersect bringing the 'national' and the 'international' together. Such developments prompt journalism to (re)negotiate its practices including the use of a variety of (international) sources. In other words, the proliferation of online sources being an effective, quick, convenient and cheap way (Lecheler and Kruikemeier, 2016) to gather information, find stories, and add viewpoints, has broadened the circle of available sources facilitating greater diversity and plurality into the news production process. In a similar vein, Chadwick (2013) argues that the 'hybridity' of new media presents opportunities for non-elites to exert power, but notes that traditional institutional actors can, and do adapt to these new environments hampering the reconfiguration of sourcing practices in the digital era. Scholarly work on sourcing practices concludes a steady but limited penetration of non-authoritative sources in news coverage. According to Broesma and Graham (2012) online sources, and particularly social media, have become a regular and rich source of opinion and information providing easy access to both elite and ordinary perspectives (Hermida et al., 2013). Splendore (2017) argues that in today's digital landscape we witness the pluralisation of primary definers in the sense that journalists use a wide range of sources, mainly institutional, but also non-elite. His findings corroborate with Kleeman et al. (2017), who found that elite sources retain their dominant position as primary definers of issues, yet non-elite sources have a greater presence than ever in terms of frequency. In a similar vein, Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou's (2016) conclude that although traditionally marginalised voices in the news are still very few, yet when they speak, they are given the opportunity to make their case. Volkmer and Sharif (2018) provide more optimistic

evidence in the case of risk journalism on the occasion of the climate crisis. They found that journalists in Pakistan used and filtered a variety of international sources to gather and verify information providing a ‘cosmopolitan’ perspective in their coverage. Understanding how journalists around the world select their sources when reporting global crises can shed light on how journalism professionals interact with a multitude of potential sources, and how local conditions shape the subjective formation of micro-networks which ultimately affect coverage of crisis events.

Sourcing patterns in the coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic

For almost two years journalists around the world shifted from an ordinary reporting mode to a full health crisis mode devoting most of their time and available space on COVID-19 related content. Health and medical information is often complicated and health journalists tend to be more dependent on health and medical sources for guidance and explanation (Corbett and Mori, 1999). Work by Tanner et al. (2015) suggests that contrary to the dominant information provider role endorsed by journalism professionals, health journalists see themselves as advocates for health behaviour change or as motivators to action. In line with other studies, Deprez and Van Leuven (2018) found that health experts is the most important group of primary sources in health journalism as they play an important role in explaining complex health issues. Discussing the relationship between media and the health ecology, Briggs and Hallin (2016) argue that journalists mediate among a wide range of actors involved in producing and circulating information about health. Research has shown that there is a tendency among journalists to view scientists and medical personnel as credible and neutral sources (Hallin et al., 2021). Overall, the relevant literature indicates that medical professionals and health specialists, academics, government authorities and politicians continue to be the most important voices in health coverage (Stroobant et al., 2018). As expected, the presence of citizens as sources is low, yet there an increasing trend to include citizens to serve the human and testimonial dimension of news reporting (Mellado et al., 2021).

Pandemics represent crisis situations that force news routines and norms to be modified. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation proved really difficult because of the high degree of epistemic uncertainty and consequent ambiguity surrounding the disease and the measures taken (Dunwoody, 2020). Amid multiple sources aiming to inform or misinform the public, professional journalism became the destination to seek credible and trustworthy information and analysis. In their study of 78 media outlets representing different platforms in Chile, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, the U.S., Spain and the U.K., Mellado et al. (2021) found that across countries and platforms, political sources were the most prominent throughout the pandemic (p. 1274). Interestingly, health sources were more frequent during the first months when the pandemic was still a new and distant phenomenon in most countries, and media relied on global health authorities to understand the disease. The use of political sources rose as governments took measures to stay the pandemic. The use of citizen sources was important - in contrast to ordinary practices, and they became more frequent when protests against lockdowns took the form of organised movements

(p. 1278). Analysing 225 pieces of misinformation published in English, Brennen et al. (2021) report that top-down misinformation from politicians, celebrities, and other prominent public figures made up 20% of the claims, yet accounted for 69% of total social media engagement indicating the authoritative and impactful character of elite sources. Analysing the data sections of the online editions of US up-market media, the elite British press outlets and German broadsheets, Pentzold et al. (2021) conclude that ‘news pieces connected consonant sources from science and public health institutions’ (p. 1367). Overall, the news stories relied on a small palette of sources that kept reappearing. Data stories were basically based on national public health agencies, the WHO, and academic medical institutions that supplied informative data and statistical models. Only a few pieces used elaborate interactive components to exploit the added value of data journalism. Similarly, analysing COVID-19 coverage in three leading newspapers, the New York Times (US), El País (Spain) and El Universal (Mexico), Bernaola-Serrano and Aguado-Guadalupe (2022) report overuse of institutional sources, and especially of governmental ones.

A first conclusion drawn from the literature review is the persistent presence of authoritative sources, or as Carlson puts it a ‘cyclical pattern’ (2009: 530). An (elite) source is used to assign authority. In becoming patterned, the reliance on specific sources continually feeds the power of the sources to speak authoritatively, thereby reproducing the dominance of hegemonic narratives and limiting the spectrum of diverse voices. Against this background, we explore the sourcing patterns of Greek and Cypriot media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Related work on sources tends to adopt a quantitative approach, focusing on the types of sources and the actors appearing most frequently. In this research we aim to examine the forces that shaped sourcing practices during the pandemic, which necessitates an additional step towards what Lewis (2020) calls the ‘lived experience of news production’ during the corona virus crisis, suggesting that we need to look at the broader professional, organisational, political and technological conditions under which professionals perform their work. In this regard, following Zhang and Wang (2022), we consider source options more as journalistic newsgathering venues, techniques and strategies rather than a specific communication channel used by professionals. The purpose of the study is to go beyond the mere identification of the types of sources used and to shed light on the factors that shaped professionals’ sourcing practices, the perceived effects of these practices on storytelling and how journalists evaluate their performance. Additionally, exploring how journalists select their sources in the context of a global crisis can reveal the interplay between local conditions and flows of information circulated by a large number of voices ranging from (mainstream) media and international organisations to citizens and trolls.

The present study focuses on Greece and Cyprus which are rather distinctive cases of the Mediterranean or ‘polarized/pluralist model’ (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) with high levels of political parallelism and strong ties between media owners, journalists and political elites (Iosifidis and Papathanasopoulos, 2019; Maniou and Ketteni, 2022; Milioni et al., 2017). Both countries, being small media markets, exhibit high ownership concentration, hyper-competition while viability issues in the digital era is a major concern. They were severely hit by the economic crisis after 2008 with prolonged effects on the

respective media markets. Journalists report increasing precarity and widespread commercial pressures (Christophorou and Spyridou, 2017; Spyridou et al., 2013).

Method

The study draws on a comparative analysis between Greece and Cyprus aiming to explore the sourcing patterns of journalists during the COVID-19 pandemic. We posed two research questions:

RQ1: How did journalists in Greece and Cyprus navigate through multiple sourcing options when covering COVID-19? Which type of sources did they predominantly use?

RQ2: How did the broader professional, economic, political and technological conditions shape the sourcing practices of Greek and Cypriot journalists?

To address the research questions, we sought first-hand accounts of journalists ‘on the frontline’ during the pandemic crisis. As such, a total of 30 semi-structured interviews in Greece (18) and Cyprus (12) were conducted. The interviews were based on a questionnaire developed collectively by the *Risk Journalism Hub*,¹ an international research project. Extra questions were added, reflecting on specificities of the Greek and Cyprus context. Data was obtained from June to November 2021, namely after the first two, most uncertain and disrupting waves of the pandemic had taken place. The sample comprised of professional journalists working for print, broadcast and online media in the two countries. The study received ethical clearance from the National Bioethics Committee of Cyprus and the Research Ethics Committee at Panteion University. Interviewees provided their consent to participate. Data used was anonymised throughout the analysis. Each interview averaged about 45 min. The aim was to elaborate into journalists’ experiences during the COVID-19 crisis with an emphasis on how sourcing patterns were (re)shaped and why. In-depth interviews is a useful method for gaining insights and subjective information that cannot be gleaned from other sources (see MacDonald et al., 2013) (Table 1).

In accordance with the semi-structured nature of the method, an interview protocol was developed to allow thematic analysis without negating the need for flexibility (Lindlof and Taylor, 2017). Questions revolved around the following themes: types of

Table 1. Sample.

Greece (18 interviews)	Cyprus (12 interviews)
4 national newspapers	3 national newspapers
4 TV stations (3 private, 1 public)	2 TV stations (2 private, 1 public)
3 radio stations	2 radio stations
6 online news outlets	4 online news outlets
1 national news agency	1 national news agency

sources journalists used, sources they trusted most, how they dealt with misinformation, social media use, perceptions of disruption on work practices, constraints hindering their daily work, and professional challenges. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using an iterative qualitative process which involved open coding to identify the main themes. Initially three researchers worked separately to identify the themes that emerged from the data. Then working together, the researchers reviewed and finalised the themes through a process of coding, constant comparison and typologising (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). Some codes were strictly linked to the questions while others emerged by reading the transcripts. The final step involved the selection and grouping of statements based on the codes used.

Findings

Limited access to information

Almost unanimously in both countries, journalists reported limited access to information confirming relevant research (Libert et al., 2022). Social distancing and lockdowns made it very difficult for journalists to access their sources. ‘They did not want journalists in the press conferences. They preferred to speak to the cameras, rather than having journalists asking questions, sometimes bothersome questions’ (Cyprus, Int. 9). Instead of face-to-face encounters, almost all communication occurred through press releases, selective responses to e-mails, texts and messages, and press conferences. Social media apps, like Viber and Whatsapp became a dominant, yet a one-way communication channel of communication between journalists and sources. ‘We will create a Viber group, you will be around 50 journalists in the group, we will categorise your questions and then they are going to be answered’ (Cyprus, Int. 5).

Although this situation proved really hard for journalists, politicians took advantage of it, circulating pre-packaged content and making statements. In the case of Cyprus, political parties set up studios in their offices, hired camera men and distributed pre-packaged content eliminating any chance of journalistic interference. ‘We lost touch with our sources. [...]. We could not ask any questions. We turned from journalists to “people transmitting statements”’ (Cyprus, Int. 1).

Journalists state emphatically not only the difficulty to do journalism, but their being forced to trust third parties without having the opportunity to raise questions or ask for clarifications. ‘We learnt to depend on the announcement of the Committee every afternoon. [...]. We got trapped for months’ (Greece, Int.2). Journalistic attempts to counter the information embargo and dig deeper were hindered as insitutions invoked ‘the urgency of the situation’. ‘I tried several times to contact EODY [National Organisation of Public Health] but it was impossible to get information’ (Greece, Int.1).

The lack of physical contact between journalists and their sources reduced journalists’ ability to question the official narrative coming from authoritative sources, and in some cases led to the publication of untested and unchallenged information (Saptorini et al., 2022). Moreover, the COVID-19 restrictions seem to have strengthened the legacy of information reproduction (Saridou et al., 2017), bearing negative effects on original

reporting and information collection. ‘The basic problem is what we already knew. Extensive opacity in the procedures and the information transmitted’ (Greece, Int. 1).

Reflecting on the repercussions of the health crisis on journalism, participants argue that the pandemic posed serious restrictions and ‘made journalism worse’ (Greece, Int. 7) as the few instances of original reporting decreased. Moreover, the pandemic left an indelible mark on the practice of journalism (see also Vatikiotis, 2022). ‘Even now that things are back to normal, press conferences and questions have disappeared’ (Greece, Int. 7). This trend seems to compound the lack of in-depth research in journalism and the inability or unwillingness of both Greek and Cypriot media to access diverse types of sources to engage with more analytic and investigative reporting.

We are very few, the stories we produce are not of good quality, most of our reporting is the product of Internet research, we do not go out. [...]. Journalism is not back on track. Journalism has shrunk; less real stories, less journalists beaten by work overload (Cyprus, Int. 3).

Reliance on official, authoritative sources

The second finding corroborates with relevant research arguing that journalists relied on official and well-established sources (Mellado et al., 2021; Pentzold et al., 2021; Zhang and Wang, 2022). Participants argue that stories drew predominantly on political and governmental voices (see also Bernaola-Serrano and Aguado-Guadalupe, 2022), on sources from international health organisations and on information published in well-established foreign media (e.g., the Guardian, the NYT). International sources were mostly used not only to compensate for the lack of access to information and explanation, but also as a safe solution to reproduce information that is perceived as accurate and credible.

My sources are specific. The news agencies, such as the Reuters, the Associated Press, other media we might collaborate with, and of course some websites, some serious websites which produce news about the pandemic in other countries (Greece, Int. 13).

When it comes to national sources, participants express skeptical stances. ‘We know that the Church, the political parties, economic elites have tried to manipulate information. Honestly, it is very hard to say that our source is 100% trustworthy’ (Cyprus, Int. 2).

Essentially, journalists found themselves in a difficult position. On the one hand, they felt the responsibility to provide relevant and useful information to help people comprehend the ongoing crisis. On the other hand, epistemic uncertainty around COVID-19 (Dunwoody, 2020), growing disinformation circulating in the global public sphere (Siapera, 2022) along with a global trend to provide politicised coverage (Araújo et al., 2023; Litvinenko et al., 2022) put journalism in a ‘cautious mode’ hindering journalism’s capacity and willingness to scrutinise authorities and exploit available data and sources to offer critical and constructive reporting. Especially in regard to misinformation journalists sought ‘to mitigate the forces challenging their work as they sought to reverse

the flow of misinformation' (Perreault and Perreault, 2021: 976). However, as journalists found it hard to verify information, they tolerated a degree of uncertainty.

When, for example, I get a piece of information from the World Health Organisation and the European Health Organisation agrees, and academics from a renowned medical school agree, then you can say "I am close to the truth". And you hope to be close to the truth. 100% credible information you cannot have. We always hope, that yes, I've searched enough and I am close to the truth (Cyprus, Int. 1).

The authoritativeness of political, medical and media sources (for example, government sources, the World Health Organisation, the Guardian, the BBC and big news agencies) tempered this uncertainty. 'When it comes to science topics, I will listen to the scientists and their opinion [...] because beyond that you risk falling for misinformation' (Greece, Int. 3).

Beyond that, the fear of publishing inaccurate information, and most importantly the fear of publishing information that could be disputed reinforced journalists' reliance on a limited pool of elite sources.

Besides cases of pure misinformation, there is a thin line between what is fake and what isn't. If I say something, which may not be the absolute truth, a mean-spirited person will say this is fake news. How you verify something, again it depends on your sources (Cyprus, Int. 6).

Routinisation of social media as sources

Social media, and especially Twitter, comprise important journalistic tools used to trigger stories, add background and opinion (Broesma and Graham, 2012). In line with previous studies (e.g., Papa and Maniou, 2020), our findings suggest that during the pandemic the use of social networks increased significantly as social media proved an immediate and effective pool of information allowing the (re)production of news stories. 'Twitter is very practical and immediate. [...] You don't need anything else for the website. Just the original piece of information and a photo' (Greece, Int. 4). Twitter is also described as a valuable and rich source of information, verification and opinion allowing journalists to speak with sources (e.g., colleagues, medical staff) 'in order to get closer to the truth' (Cyprus, Int. 1). Participants frame Twitter as an important channel to get trustworthy information beyond the realm of official sources provided that journalists have a 'good' network and are well-acquainted with evaluating the credibility of sources on Twitter – 'I have checked some accounts on many topics, and I know their sources are safe' (Greece, Int.13).

Participants emphasise Twitter as a means to broaden the range of sources a journalist can have access to. Bombarded with a rigid communication narrative by the government and public authorities, journalists sought 'alternative' sources of information to make sense of what was really going on. Even 'trolling' was sometimes deemed useful because 'trolls through jokes might say something true' (Cyprus, Int.1). Facebook was mainly used for human-interest stories, and trending topics (see also Bouvier, 2019).

In this context, Facebook operated as a monitoring tool regarding how well the measures were received and ‘what type of misinformation would be circulated in the next five minutes’ (Cyprus, Int. 4).

Big data limitations

Data journalism supporting the use of statistics and visualisations to provide precise and careful investigations proved a suitable tool for covering COVID-19 (Pentzold et al., 2021). Our findings suggest that sourcing difficulties were compounded by lack of access to big data. However, we note a significant discrepancy between the two countries. In the case of Greece, participants complained about the limited access to databases (Greece, Int.18), connoting institutional constraints that limit investigative reporting (Greece, Int. 16).

In the case of Cyprus, the lack of skills to harness big data (databases) and produce data-driven stories as well as journalists’ limited ability to check and verify online information, are identified as factors limiting the use of diverse sources, and subsequently the production of original and explanatory reporting. ‘Most journalists with very few exceptions dealing with financial reporting, have no statistical skills’ (Cyprus, Int. 4). The difficulty to access and analyse data resulted in greater homogenisation of news content and boosted the practice of ‘story churning’ bearing the risk to circulate unverified material (Davis, 2008) and reproduce the position of authoritative voices. The practice of churning is well-depicted in the following quote: ‘I used the Ministry of Health of Malta a lot because it had great visuals’ (Cyprus, Int. 4).

All in all, journalists did not do their job well and interestingly enough they are keenly aware of their role in promoting the official narrative (see also Zhang and Wang, 2022). ‘In trying to make news, yes certainly, we became the conveyors of essentially wrong information!’ (Cyprus, Int. 1). In a similar vein, a Greek journalist notes: “The majority of the media offered guided information, and this is sad, at times infuriating. We saw journalists echoing back the arguments of officials while they were supposed to do their job” (Greece, Int. 2).

Overall, findings indicate that journalists in both countries resorted to a small pool of elite sources coming primarily from the government, medical institutions (national and international), medical experts, news agencies and well-known foreign media (primarily British and American ones due to the language barrier). The next section attempts to delve into the factors that aggravated sourcing restrictions and their ramifications on the content produced.

Governments endorsed a war narrative

Several countries, including Greece and Cyprus, decided from the start to dramatise the situation deploying a war like rhetoric (Maarek, 2022) or ‘trying to sugarcoat the situation’ (Greece, Int. 5). Most participants speak of ‘organised, state misinformation and state propaganda’. The crisis in combination with the official narrative pointing to an ‘enemy’, put journalism in a ‘crisis mode’ which brought with it a responsibility to cultivate solidarity and cohesion (Hallin et al., 2021; Viehmann et al., 2022). The war

rhetoric went hand-in-hand with limited and selective information not leaving room for further investigation. ‘Government sources did not want us to verify anything; basically, there was nothing to verify in the information provided. All we got was cases and measures’ (Cyprus, Int. 4).

Traditional pressures and editorial lines became harder. Faced with a rigid official narrative, journalists worked under the fear of having their work criticised as non-credible or biased which in turn led to compromising their civic role. In this context, the pressure to follow the line of the organisation became overwhelming. However, editorial and organisational pressures, especially in the case of Greece, are described as ‘already suffocating’.

I think it’s getting worse every year when it comes to independence and freedom of the Press, let’s put it that way. No one dares to deviate from the line, because they know that if they do so they will lose their job [...] and they know that it will probably be difficult to find something new in the near future. So most professionals, 9 out of 10 I would say, follow this pattern (Greece, Int. 5).

Precarious labour conditions and political dependency

The aforementioned quote summarises the precarious working conditions of journalists (Deuze and Witchge, 2018) under which creativity and criticality increasingly conform to editorial lines and economic pressures (Perreault and Ferrucci, 2020). As stated in the interviews, ‘it’s all over. Cuts, layoffs, shut downs’. This widespread precarity not only affects journalists’ well-being and psychology, but the ‘fear of being the next one’ in a shrinking labour market renders journalism professionals more vulnerable and submissive to pressures and agendas. ‘I shouldn’t do anything crazy, I have to be serious, to make more effort, to do my job as best as I can in case... I am next. It’s the fear. The fear of being the next one...’ (Cyprus, Int. 6).

Contrary to other media markets afflicted by the digital era and the demise of the traditional advertising model, the economic hardship brought by the pandemic exacerbated the already fragile financial situation of news media in both Greece and Cyprus as the economic crisis of 2008 has left its fingerprint on the media industry. Struggling with reduced revenue, the media became even more dependent on state advertising and more yielding on political power. State subsidies, whether direct, or indirect (through state advertising) is a powerful tool to control the media. ‘When state dependency increases, freedom diminishes. [...]. Journalists’ freedom during the crisis has been reduced even more than before’ (Greece, Int. 14). Despite severe criticisms, the allocation of money to the media through public subsidies still remains a non-transparent and highly manipulative process.

Discussion and conclusions

While sourcing practices comprise a common topic in journalism studies, the amount of research on sourcing is relatively limited during global crisis situations. Drawing

theoretically on the significance of sources as core mechanisms of agenda-setting and meaning-making and reviewing the evolution of sourcing practices in the digital era, this work sheds light on the primary definers of COVID-19 coverage in Greece and Cyprus. We attempt to analyse the factors shaping journalists' sourcing practices during the pandemic through the 'lived experience of news production' (Lewis, 2020) and the notion of 'risk journalism' (Volkmer, 2014, 2022) to illuminate how journalism professionals interact with a multitude of potential sources, and how local conditions shape the subjective formation of micro-networks which ultimately affect coverage of crisis events.

There are four significant findings that emerge from the analysis: the first is that the results of the present study meet the conclusions of other similar research arguing for the dominance of political sources in COVID-19 coverage (e.g., Araújo et al., 2023; Bernaola-Serrano and Aguado-Guadalupe, 2022; Litvinenko et al., 2022; Mellado et al., 2021). Journalists in both Greece and Cyprus admit their over-reliance on authoritative sources, and particularly on political sources and information generated by special national committees and medical experts appointed to manage the pandemic. Coverage was further assisted by information published in well-known foreign (mostly English-speaking) media and international health bodies.

Second, in line with Perreault and Perreault (2021), this work verifies that after the outbreak of the pandemic crisis journalists placed themselves in a responsible but vulnerable position trying to mitigate the consequences of politicisation and widespread misinformation. We argue that in both countries, the tradition of strong editorial lines along with extensive labour precarity put journalists in a 'cautious mode' which operated at the expense of more in-depth, constructive and critical reporting. Moreover, practical constraints and rules imposed by authorities did not allow journalists to question official information while forcing them to tolerate a degree of uncertainty in information verification.

Third, findings provide evidence of a vicious circle; epistemic uncertainty on the one hand and the endorsement of a war rhetoric by the governments on the other, generated a cyclical effect (Carlson, 2009), promoting the use and legitimacy of selective institutional sources. At the same time, extensive flows of misinformation in the global public sphere coupled by journalists' limited ability to check and verify (online) sources (due to lack of training, expertise and time resources) increased journalists' reliance on specific authoritative sources. Under these conditions, coupled by the fear of journalists to produce content that could be criticised as inaccurate or biased, the systematic use of a specific set of 'certified' sources became common practice.

Finally, the analysis shows that coverage deficiencies was also the result of self-censorship. During the COVID-19 global crisis journalists in both countries under study did construct micro-networks comprising a variety of online sources outside the organisational and national structure -especially through social media (see Hellmueller et al., 2017; Volkmer, 2014). The synthesis and multiplicity of these micro-networks may vary depending on journalists' resources and expertise, but did offer a more pluralistic, open and critical interpretation of the events. However, this information and analyses remained mostly unpublished. Journalists did feel the need to search deeper and

gain a more comprehensive view of the unfolding crisis, but being in a ‘cautious mode’ refrained from crossing the editorial lines.

Taken together our findings suggest that although the new global public sphere permits journalists to interact with a multitude of national and international sources – both elite and ordinary ones – pandemic news was produced on the basis of a limited pool of authoritative sources. Local professional conditions and COVID-19 restraints gave prominence to specific national actors (politicians and appointed medical experts to manage the crisis) and international ones (eg. the WHO, news agencies and well-established media [The Guardian, BBC, NYT]) who became the primary definers of the global crisis. The practice of churning boomed (Saridou et al., 2017; Thurman and Myllylahti, 2009) resulting in superficial and homogeneous coverage adapted to the war narrative endorsed by public authorities. All in all, during the COVID-19 crisis the media not only failed to offer analytical and useful reporting but essentially served the governmental narrative. This is a marked departure from journalism’s civic role and its potential facilitation by the new media ecology.

A recurring narrative identified in both countries to explain journalism’s failure to scrutinise authorities and exploit available data and sources to offer critical and constructive reporting is that the extraordinary conditions of the pandemic not only brought to the fore the weaknesses and problems of journalism, but essentially made them worse. It is argued that the downsizing of journalism’s civic role during the pandemic was not solely the result of disruption caused by the pandemic but also the outcome of conditions that long preceded it: sustainability issues and commercial pressures (Sjøvaag, 2023); precarious labour conditions and underpaid journalists (Deuze, 2019); personnel cuts pushing journalists to do more; digital transformations favouring copy-paste journalism (Saridou et al., 2017); a clear tendency from state officials to control the information flow (especially in the case of Greece), and lack of (digital) skills hindering journalists’ ability to cross-check public data, avoid standardised types of content and expand their negotiating space with authorities. However, these developments are not pertinent to Greece and Cyprus only, yet to varying extent (see Zelizer, 2017). Journalism is not solely struggling with financial calamity (Pickard, 2020) and job precarity (Matthews and Onyemaobi, 2020) but is faced with an existential threat rooted ‘in the erosion of its very institutionality’ (Reese, 2019: 202) and the public’s lack of trust in it which is persistent and getting worse (Fink, 2019).

Risk journalism in the case of COVID-19 failed to stand up to its mission. Our conclusions corroborate with relevant work that global risk journalism was put in a crisis mode which infused the responsibility to cultivate solidarity and cohesion (Hallin et al., 2021; Viehmann et al., 2022) missing out on critical reporting. In regard to sourcing practices during the pandemic, this study showcased that despite the availability of a large number of diverse sources, the ‘lived experience’ of journalists pushed them towards a narrow range of authoritative sources allowing the primary definers to resurface in a different guise (Tiffen et al., 2014). Editorial dependencies, restrained professional autonomy and limited resources countered the potential of risk journalism to reflect on diverse voices and opinions that contrasts the homogeneous, one-sided information of traditional institutional sources. In practice, the limited and selective pool of sources

used in the coverage of COVID-19 not only hampered the spectrum of voices and opinions, but essentially undermined the watchdog function of journalism as the predominant sources were the same agents who managed the crisis (Bernaola-Serrano and Aguado-Guadalupe, 2022).

In line with relevant work (e.g., Araújo et al., 2023; Litvinenko et al., 2022; Bernaola-Serrano and Aguado-Guadalupe, 2022; Trifonova Price and Antonova, 2022), we argue that global journalism failed to cater for the needs of an informed citizenry as the national framework of news production hampered the informational potential of today's news ecology (Volkmer and Firdaus, 2013) allowing traditional institutional players to dominate the narration of the crisis. Journalism itself was put in a 'cautious mode' that hindered its capacity and willingness to freely use and interact with a multitude of sources in order to explain the pandemic and its consequences. This finding is not strange to journalism professionals who are keenly aware that their sourcing practices resulted in their serving the government narrative rather the public. But even more worrisome is the finding that the pandemic served as an accelerator of ongoing negative developments in the field of (risk) journalism (see also Hanusch, 2022; Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021) raising important questions about journalism's editorial agency and truth-seeking capabilities in the future.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Note

1. This study was conducted in cooperation with the Global Risk Journalism Hub, an international network of journalism scholars, led by Ingrid Volkmer (University of Melbourne), see globalriskjournalismhub.com

References

- Anderson AG (2017) Source influence on journalistic decisions and news coverage of climate change. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Climate Science*. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228620.013.356.
- Araújo R, Lopes E, Almeida Santos S, et al. (2023) Journalists during COVID-19: Perceptions of negative impacts on Portuguese journalism. *Journalism Practice*. DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2023.2239210.
- Basch CH, Hillyer GC, Meleo-Erwin Z, et al. (2020) News coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic: Missed opportunities to promote health sustaining behaviors. *Infection, Disease & Health* 25(3): 205–209.

- Bernaola-Serrano I and Aguado-Guadalupe G (2022) Thematic analysis and use of journalistic sources in the COVID-19 crisis: The New York Times, El Universal, and El País. *International Journal of Communication* 16: 3801–3821.
- Bouvier G (2019) How journalists source trending social media feeds. *Journalism Studies* 20(2): 212–231.
- Brennen S, Simon F and Nielsen RS (2021) Beyond (mis)representation: Visuals in COVID-19 misinformation. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 26(1): 277–299.
- Briggs C and Hallin D (2016) *Making Health Public*. New York: Routledge.
- Broesma M and Graham T (2012) Social media as beat. Tweets as a news source during the 2010 British and Dutch elections. *Journalism Practice* 6(3): 403–419.
- Carlson M (2009) Dueling, dancing, or dominating? Journalists and their sources. *Sociology Compass* 3(4): 526–542.
- Carlson M and Franklin B (2011) Introduction. In: Franklin B and Carlson M (eds) *Journalists, Sources, and Credibility*. New York: Routledge, pp.1–18.
- Chadwick A (2013) *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chadwick A, McDowell-Naylor D, Smith A, et al. (2020) Authority signaling: How relational interactions between journalists and politicians create primary definers in UK broadcast news. *Journalism* 21(7): 896–914.
- Christophorou C and Spyridou LP (2017) *Media Pluralism Monitor 2016: Monitoring Risks for Media Pluralism in EU and Beyond*. Cyprus: Country report.
- Corbett J and Mori M (1999) Medicine, media, and celebrities. News coverage of breast cancer, 1960–1995. *J&MC Quarterly* 76(2): 229–249.
- Curran J (2019) Triple crisis of journalism. *Journalism* 20(1): 190–193.
- Cushion S, Morani M, Kyriakidou M, et al. (2022) (Mis)understanding the coronavirus and how it was handled in the UK: An analysis of public knowledge and the information environment. *Journalism Studies* 23(5-6): 703–721.
- D'Angelo P and Shaw D (2018) Journalism as framing. In: Vos T (ed) *Journalism*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, pp.205–233.
- Davis N (2008) *Flat Earth News*. London: Vintage UK.
- Deprez A and Van Leuven S (2018) About pseudo-quarrels and trustworthiness: A multimethod study of health journalism, sourcing practices and twitter. *Journalism Studies* 19(9): 1257–1274.
- Deuze M (2019) What journalism is (not). *Social Media + Society* 5(3). DOI:10.1177/2056305119857202.
- Deuze M and Witchge T (2018) Beyond journalism: Theorizing the transformation of journalism. *Journalism* 19(2): 165–181.
- Dunwoody S (2020) Science journalism and pandemic uncertainty. *Media and Communication* 8(2): 471–474.
- Fink K (2019) The biggest challenge facing journalism: A lack of trust. *Journalism* 20(1): 40–43.
- Fletcher R, Kalogeropoulos A, Simon F, et al. (2020) Information inequality in the UK coronavirus communications crisis. *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism*. Available at: <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/information-inequality-uk-coronavirus-communications-crisis>.
- Gans H (1979) *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Glaser B and Strauss A (1999) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New Brunswick: Aldine.
- Hall S, Critcher C, Jeffe T, et al. (1978) *Policing the Crisis*. London: Macmillan.

- Hallin D, Figenschou T and Thorbjørnsrud K (2021) Biomedicalization and media in comparative perspective: Audiences, frames, and actors in Norwegian, Spanish, U.K. and U.S. Health News. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 26(3): 699–718.
- Hallin D and Mancini P (2004) *Comparing Media Systems*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hanusch F (2022) Change and continuity in digital journalism: The COVID-19 pandemic as situational context for broader arguments about the field. *Digital Journalism* 10(6): 1135–1140.
- Heinrich A (2011) *Network Journalism. Journalistic Practice in Interactive Spheres*. New York: Routledge.
- Hellmueller L, Cheema S and Zhang X (2017) The networks of global journalism. *Journalism Studies* 18(1): 45–64.
- Hermida A, Lewis SC and Zamith R (2013) Sourcing the arab spring: A case study of andy carvin's sources during the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 19: 479–499.
- Kleeman M, Schaap G and Hermans L (2017) Citizen sources in the news: Above and beyond the vox pop? *Journalism* 18(4): 464–481.
- Iosifidis P and Papatthanassopoulos S (2019) Media, politics and state broadcasting in Greece. *European Journal of Communication* 34(4): 345–359.
- Lecheler S and Kruikeemeier S (2016) Re-evaluating journalistic routines in a digital age: A review of research on the use of online sources. *New Media & Society* 18(1): 156–171.
- Lewis J, Williams A and Franklin B (2008) A compromised fourth estate? *Journalism Studies* 9(1): 1–20.
- Lewis S (2020) The objects and objectives of journalism research during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. *Digital Journalism* 8(5): 681–689.
- Libert M, Le Cam F and Domingo D (2022) Belgian Journalists in lockdown: Survey on employment and working conditions and representations of their role. *Journalism Studies* 23(5-6): 588–610.
- Lindlof T and Taylor B (2017) *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*. 4th ed. London: Sage.
- Litvinenko A, Borissova A and Smoliarova A (2022) Politicization of science journalism: How Russian journalists covered the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journalism Studies* 23(5-6): 687–702.
- Lowrey W (2004) Media dependency during a large-scale social disruption: The case of September 11. *Mass Communication and Society* 7(3): 339–357.
- Maarek P (2022) Introduction: Similar and dissimilar patterns of government communication on COVID-19. In: Maarek P (ed) *Manufacturing Government Communication on Covid-19. A Comparative Perspective*. London: Springer, pp.1–14.
- MacDonald DH, Bark R, MacRae A, et al. (2013) An interview methodology for exploring the values that community leaders assign to multiple-use landscapes. *Ecology and Society* 18(1): 29.
- Maniou TA and Kettani E (2022) The impact of the economic crisis on media corruption: A comparative study in South and North Europe. *International Communication Gazette* 84(1): 66–89.
- Manning P (2001) *News and News Sources: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.
- Matthews J and Onyemaobi K (2020) Precarious professionalism: Journalism and the fragility of professional practice in the global south. *Journalism Studies* 21(13): 1836–1851.
- Mellado C, Hallin D, Cárcamo L, et al. (2021) Sourcing pandemic news: A cross-national computational analysis of mainstream media coverage of COVID-19 on Facebook, twitter, and Instagram. *Digital Journalism* 9(9): 1261–1285.
- Milioni DL, Spyridou P and Koumis M (2017) Cyprus: Behind closed (journalistic) doors. In *The European Handbook of Media Accountability*. Routledge, pp.39–46.

- Nielsen R, Cherubini C and Andi S (2020) Few winners, many losers: The COVID-19 pandemic's dramatic and unequal impact on independent news media. *Reuters Institute Report*. Available at: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/Nielsen_et_al_COVID19_Pandemics_Impact_on_Independent_News_Media_FINAL.pdf
- Olsen V, Pickard V and Westlund O (2020) Communal news work: COVID-19 calls for collective funding of journalism. *Digital Journalism* 8(5): 673–680.
- Papa V and Maniou TA (2020) Recurrent narratives around the COVID-19 crisis in social networks: A case study analysis on Facebook. *Tripodos* 2(47): 11–28.
- Papadopoulou L and Maniou TA (2021) Lockdown' on digital journalism? Mapping threats to press freedom during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. *Digital Journalism* 9(9): 1344–1366.
- Pentzold C, Fechner D and Zuber C (2021) “Flatten the curve”: Data-driven projections and the journalistic brokering of knowledge during the COVID-19 crisis. *Digital Journalism* 9(9): 1367–1390.
- Perreault G and Ferrucci P (2020) What is digital journalism? Defining the practice and role of the digital journalist. *Digital Journalism* 8(10): 1298–1316.
- Perreault M and Perreault G (2021) Journalists on COVID-19 journalism: Communication ecology of pandemic reporting. *American Behavioral Scientist* 65(7): 976–991.
- Pickard V (2020) Restructuring democratic infrastructures: A policy approach to the journalism crisis. *Digital Journalism* 8(6): 704–719.
- Posetti J, Bell E and Brown P (2020) Journalism and the pandemic – A global snapshot of impacts. Available at: https://www.icfj.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/Journalism%20and%20the%20Pandemic%20Project%20Report%201%202020_FINAL.pdf
- Quandt T and Wahl-Jorgensen K (2021) The coronavirus pandemic as a critical moment for digital journalism. *Digital Journalism* 9(9): 1199–1207.
- Reese S (2019) The threat to the journalistic institution. *Journalism* 20(1). DOI: 10.1177/1464884918808957.
- Saptorini E, Zhao X and Jackson D (2022) Place, power and the pandemic: The disrupted material settings of television news making during COVID-19 in an Indonesian broadcaster. *Journalism Studies* 23(5-6): 611–628.
- Saridou T, Spyridou P and Veglis A (2017). Churnalism on the rise? Assessing convergence effects on editorial practices. *Digital Journalism* 5(8): 1006–1024.
- Schlesinger P (1990) Rethinking the sociology of journalism: Source strategies and the limits of media-centrism. In: Ferguson M (ed) *Public Communication: The New Imperatives*. London: Sage, pp.61–83.
- Siapera E (2022) Platform governance and the “infodemic”. *Javnost - The Public* 29(2): 197–214.
- Sjøvaag H (2023) *The Markets for News*. New York: Routledge.
- Splendore S (2017) The dominance of institutional sources and the establishment of non-elite ones: The case of Italian online local journalism. *Journalism* 21(7): 990–1006.
- Spyridou LP, Matsiola M, Veglis A, et al. (2013) Journalism in a state of flux: Journalists as agents of technology innovation and emerging news practices. *International Communication Gazette* 75(1): 76–98.
- Spyridou P and Danezis C (2022) News consumption patterns during the coronavirus pandemic across time and devices: The Cyprus case. *World of Media: Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies* 2: 124–146.
- Stroobant J, Van den Bogaert S and Raeymaeckers K (2018) When medicine meets media: How health news is co-produced between health and media professionals. *Journalism Studies* 20(13): 1828–1845.

- Tanner A, Freidman D and Zheng Y (2015) Influences on the construction of health news: The reporting practices of local television news health journalists. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 59(2): 359–376.
- Thorbjørnsrud K and Figenschou TU (2016) Do marginalized sources matter? *Journalism Studies* 17(3): 337–355.
- Thurman N and Myllylahti M (2009) Taking the paper out of news. *Journalism Studies* 10(5): 691–708.
- Tiffen R, Jones P, Rowe D, et al. (2014) Sources in the news: A comparative study. *Journalism Studies* 15(4): 374–391.
- Trifonova Price L and Antonova V (2022) Challenges and opportunities for journalism in the Bulgarian COVID-19 communication ecology. *Journalism Practice*: 1–18.
- Tuchman G (1978) *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: Free Press.
- Van Leuven S, Heinrich A and Deprez A (2015) Foreign reporting and sourcing practices in the network sphere: A quantitative content analysis of the arab spring in Belgian news media. *New Media & Society* 17(4): 573–591.
- Vatikiotis P (2022) Tracing the digital transformation of Greek journalism in pandemic times: Moving forward and backwards. In: Güngör N (ed) *Communication Studies in the Digital Age Proceedings Book*. Istanbul: Üsküdar University, pp.1083–1098.
- Viehmann C, Ziegele M and Quiring O (2022) Communication, cohesion, and corona: The impact of people's use of different information sources on their sense of societal cohesion in times of crises. *Journalism Studies* 23(5-6): 629–649.
- Volkmer I (2014) *The Global Public Sphere: Public Communication in the Age of Reflective Interdependence*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Volkmer I (2022) Risk journalism and globalized crisis ecologies: Journalists as 'cosmopolitan' actors. In: Allan S (ed) *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism*. London: Routledge, pp.239–247.
- Volkmer I and Firdaus A (2013) Between networks and 'hierarchies' of credibility: Navigating journalistic practice in a sea of user generated content. In: Peters C and Broersma M (eds) *Rethinking Journalism: Trust & Participation in a Transformed News Landscape*. London: Routledge, pp.160–172.
- Volkmer I and Sharif K (2018) *Risk Journalism between Transnational Politics and Climate Change*. New York: Palgrave Mcmillan.
- Wanta W and Alkazemi M (2018) Journalism as agenda setting. In: Vos T (ed) *Journalism*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, pp.189–204.
- Ytre-Arne B and Moe H (2021) Doomscrolling, monitoring and avoiding: News use in COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. *Journalism Studies* 22(13): 1739–1755.
- Zelizer B (2017) Terms of choice: Uncertainty, journalism, and crisis. *Journal of Communication* 65: 888–908.
- Zhang S and Wang Q (2022) Refracting the pandemic: A field theory approach to Chinese journalists' sourcing options in the age of COVID-19. *Digital Journalism*. DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2022.2029521.