

# Mass-Media Impact on non- and Post SARS COV<sub>2</sub> Infection Anxious Disorders

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**Abstract:** *How is the dependency spiral triggered? It might start by looking either for pleasure or escape. In either case, the time spent in front of a screen leads to a pleasant, dopamine-mediated experience. The desire to repeat the use is further fuelled by the physiological process of tolerance and addiction. This is how things unfold in screen dependence (mass-media) when socialization, games, movies are concerned. Things look entirely different when the need for information is taken into consideration. What is the need for information's threshold? Information is not the same thing as the learning process. The fourth power in the state is the MEDIA. In mass-media, information relies on amazement, emotional shock, fear. Media feeds on powerful emotions. Are we all victims of such emotions? As of December 2019, until the present, mass-media information focused on the medical and social issue of the coronavirus pandemics. How have we been affected by this information? What was its impact on our anxiety? How was the perception on reality of the people who had the disease altered? In order to get a few answers, we applied a series of questionnaires to a batch of 30 people who had the SARS COV<sub>2</sub> infection and to a batch of 20 people who haven't yet contracted the virus.*

*Used material:*

- Coronavirus anxiety questionnaire [www.researchcentral.ro](http://www.researchcentral.ro)
- Mass-media dependency questionnaire [www.researchcentral.ro](http://www.researchcentral.ro)
- SRGS posttraumatic development scale; Crystal Park, Lawrence Cohen and Renee Murch

*The summarized data indicates that the people from the batch who was infected with cu SARS COV<sub>2</sub> have a high anxiety level, a minimum level of mass-media dependency and a maximum SRGS level. In the batch of people who have not contracted the disease, the majority has a medium towards maximum anxiety level, minimum mass-media dependency. The people in both batches unanimously asserted they felt oversaturated with the media information, although a year ago they could have declared themselves as addicted to such type of information. Considering that the questioned people suffered minimum manifestation forms of the disease, the high scores obtained in SRGS could only be justified if this disease were correlated to a major psychic disease.*

**Keywords:** *mass-media, anxiety, trauma, virus.*

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## Introduction

Walter Cannon studied the modifications caused by fear by confronting a cat and a dog. Fear triggered in the cat an avalanche of effects similar to adrenaline administration: tachycardia, tachypnoea, mydriasis, piloerection, hyperglycaemia. Pavlov and Avicenna have also proven the devastating effects of anxiety. Dumitru Constantin Dulcan (2009) asserts that *the fear of real or imaginary dangers stresses, poisons our cells in every moment, shortens our days and diminishes our efficiency.*

Any physical or psychic aggression tends to disturb our body's internal balance. Consequently, the body will answer by a series of reactions intended to restore the lost balance (Izzat et al., 2021). This is the stress phenomenon. Through the implied excess of catecholamines, stress may have consequences depending on the individual reactive particularities – occurrence of multiple physical pathologies. The most important things is whether this pathology is psychosomatization or *somatoform disorder*?

The modern people, due to the overloading caused by the technological civilisation, the alert rhythm of today's life, much faster than the biological adaptation one, by the social uncertainties and tensions, pays a heavy tribute to stress pathology (Radulescu et al., 2020).

The rapid evolution of technology over the past 15 years has brought unseen before advantages and challenges to all of us. To the common people, technology is mainly represented by mass-media (Luca et al., 2020).

Mass media is a civic power, after law-making, executive and courts. It is the expression of democracy born from the need to inform the public.

Aware of this force, mass-media is part of our life. With the purpose of informing in a transparent manner, the screens have become each person's source of novelty, news, shaping the future, socialization and recreation, ending up with the well-known addiction (Lupu et al., 2017).

What has changed as of December 2019? How things have evolved until now, two years since the debut of this pandemic? What is the threshold of the information need? Information is not similar to the learning process.

As of December 2019, and until mid 2021, mass-media information has been centred on the medical and social issue of the coronavirus pandemic.

## Material and method

Either we accept it or not, this year has been different. It marked us, changed us, transformed us, *frozen* us, such as our ancestors were marked by the years of war, famish and plagues. Shall we shall split our life between *before* and *after* the pandemic? Are the past years' results visible now? To answer these questions, we must determine what is the role of mass-media in medical education, informing population, occurrence of psychosomatic or somatoform disorders by the anxiety propaganda and generation of perpetual emotional traumas (Baroiu et al., 2021).

Departing from the idea that mass-media contributed to the medical education over the last year more than ever, from the idea that people get informed through the TV and Internet, that the social domain has become almost entirely virtual, we started a linear research study.

We applied a series of questionnaires to a 30-person lot who *had* the SARS COV2 infection and to a 20-person lot who *have not yet contracted* the virus so far.

We used:

- Coronavirus anxiety questionnaire [www.researchcentral.ro](http://www.researchcentral.ro)
- Mass-media addiction questionnaire [www.researchcentral.ro](http://www.researchcentral.ro)
- SRGS post-traumatic development scale; Crystal Park, Lawrence Cohen and Renee Murch-applied only to those who had the disease (COVID 19)

## Results

Out of 50 questioned people, 30 had the disease while 20 did not. From the first category, 7 had the influenza shot and from the second category 11.

TABLES

**Tabel 1.** Batch split

	<b>Number of persons</b>	<b>Vaccinated against flu</b>
<b>Batch 1 – persons that were infected with SARS COV2</b>	30	7
<b>Batch 2 – persons that were not infected with SARS COV2</b>	20	11

**Tabel 2.** Coronavirus anxiety questionnaire

	<b>POINTS</b>		
	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
<i>Batch 1 – 30 persons</i>	17	12	1
<i>Batch 2 – 20 persons</i>	10	10	0

**Tabel 3.** Media addiction auestionnaire

	<b>POINTS</b>		
	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
<i>Batch 1 – 30 persons</i>	4	9	17
<i>Batch 2 – 20 persons</i>	2	6	12

**Tabel 4.** Post traumatic development scale SRGS

	<b>POINTS</b>		
	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
<i>Batch 1 – 30 persons</i>	15	8	7

## Discussions

The limitations of the survey are strictly numerical. The subject lots were small, of various age categories ranging between 20 and 55 years, 80% of the subjects being female. As this is about a lot of 50 people, it cannot reflect the public opinion. Questioned about the virtual social life, the subjects declared they prefer to stick to conversations with the family, although before 2020, the social networks were used as recreation method (Pandele et al., 2021, Silistraru et al., 2021). The psychic oversaturation for approximately 1 year through anxiety-inducing media materials resulted into the absolute refusal to be informed via the TV, reduction on time spent on-line for socializing and estrangement from the extended family.

Departing from the hypothesis that the patients who felt the COVID 19 disease as a trauma, with the possibility of further development of somatoform disorder (causality relationship between trauma-somatoform disorder, already demonstrated), the following hypothesis take shape:

- Patients with somatoform disorders often display signs of depression, anxiety, personality disorders. The people who had the maximum score at the trauma development questionnaire are the future patients with somatoform disorders (Grigoras & Ciubara, 2021).

- Coping mechanisms were already affected among the people to considered this disease as a trauma. Or was it just the functional adaptation

mechanisms that helped them have a mild-medium form of the disease? (Rebegea et al., 2019)

70% of the patients declared they had preferred to not go through the disease, while 30% declared that having the disease considerably reduced their anxiety level, feeling satisfied they had gone over the disease.

100% of the subjects who had the disease declared that *anxiety* and *mass-media* played a major role in the disease's evolution.

Somatoform and dissociative disorders are physical disorders lacking organic causes, while physical disorders with psychological factors and behavioural influences are proper psychosomatic disorders (Luca et al., 2020).

The valid solution at this moment is the large-scale practice of *behavioural medicine*, because this is a bio-psycho-social interdisciplinary approach. Unlike the psychoanalytical psychosomatic medicine, behavioural medicine is based on the connections between behaviour/experience and organic disorders. In 1977, the American physician and psychoanalyst, George Engel, presented the bio-psycho-social model of the disease that considers the biological, psychological and social plans of the diseases process underlying the modern concepts of behavioural medicine. As a consequence of the psychic and psychosocial overload, any person may develop a physical ailment.

*I was waiting for the day I would start feeling worse. Each new symptom frightened me. I knew from the TV that day 9 was the worst. I learnt from the news that there is no cure. I didn't have the courage to go to hospital. I didn't have courage to stay at home. I was thinking I would never see my family again. The thought of death was near although I was feeling.*

These are just a few of the additional statements of those who had the disease.

Although it is too early to have a clear picture, we expect in the future that somatoform disorders grow, experienced traumas and anxieties to have a say on the physical body and psychosomatization become so obvious that the internal medicine physician works hand in hand with the psychiatrist and psychotherapist.

It is desirable that his pandemic had a positive side from the viewpoint of interdisciplinarity and team work.

## Conclusions

1. The anxiety level within the people who suffered from COVID19 is similar that of those who did not have the disease.

2. 100% of the questioned subjects declared that as to the mass-media addiction, they considered themselves as addicted in 2020 although

now they can declare themselves oversaturated. They stated they wished to reduce to the minimum the use of audio-visual technology. It is to be noticed that only 4, namely 2 people of the two lots, obtained notable scores in this questionnaire.

As to the PTSD development scale, we have concluded the following:

3. Departing from the idea that the COVID19 disease might be considered as *trauma*, as the interviewed subjects declared as well, this questionnaire was only applied to those who had the disease and were quarantined. Whereas 50% of them obtained the maximum score and 30% obtained an average score, the percentages may be correlated with the severity of the declared symptoms.

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