Activities of Ukrainian Public Authorities to Response the COVID-19 Epidemic: Information and Security Context

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Abstract: Ukraine, like most countries in the world, has faced a number of problematic issues in various spheres of public life under the coronavirus pandemic.

Ukraine is a post-communist country. Since 2014, an armed conflict has been going on in the eastern territories of Ukraine. This threatened the lives of thousands of people who were forced to flee their homes. Today there are about 1.5 million forced internal migrants in Ukraine. The coronavirus pandemic, combined with the ongoing armed conflict, could potentially lead to political instability and act as a catalyst for the economic crisis in Ukraine. The coronavirus pandemic has raised the issue of information security for Ukraine. Manipulation of information on COVID-19 poses a security threat from destructive information and psychological influences on Ukrainian citizens.

The content analysis highlighted the dominant destructive myths about the COVID-19 epidemic, which are most prevalent in the public consciousness of Ukrainians. It is noted that the low level of information literacy of the population leads to the inability of people to ensure their own information security. The peaks of manipulative coronavirus materials growth in the media space of Ukraine were traced.

It was stated that the coronavirus pandemic has become a test of responsibility for the Ukrainian public authorities. With all the levers of influence, the Ukrainian authorities were largely unprepared to develop timely and effective mechanisms to counter the destructive information and psychological influences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The inefficiency of the authorities was most often manifested either in the slow response to the challenges and destructive informational and psychological threats to the COVID-19 epidemic, or in the disregard of these threats.

Keywords: Coronovirus; *COVID-19,* Ukraine*,* public authorities, information threats, information security, misinformation, manipulation.

INTRODUCTION

In the Chinese city of Wuhan, a new type of coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which can cause COVID-19 disease, was discovered in December 2019. The spread of the COVID-19 epidemic became so serious that on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic [1]. In total, as of March 11, 2020, more than 117 000 cases of coronavirus were registered worldwide, of which 4 131 were fatal.

In Ukraine only one case of coronavirus was confirmed as of March 11, 2020. At the same time, from March 12, 2020 to April 3, 2020, the Government of Ukraine imposed quarantine throughout its territory. Subsequently, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine extended the quarantine until 22.05.2020 [2].

Starting from March 18, 2020, the borders in Ukraine were closed, railway and air connections were suspended, intercity road connections and subway operations were suspended. A number of other severe restrictions were imposed, including the closure of educational and catering establishments. From 22.05.2020 to 31.07.2020 adaptive quarantine was introduced in Ukraine, during which most of the restrictions are removed. However, in those regions of Ukraine where there was a high level of morbidity, more stringent anti-epidemiological measures have been introduced.

Ukraine is a post-communist country with a population of over 44 million people, it gained independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 2014, Ukraine has been in a state of undeclared war. The southern part of the territory of Ukraine – the Crimea – is illegally annexed by the neighboring state of Russia [3]. In 2014, an armed conflict broke out in the eastern territories of Ukraine and hostilities have been going on for seven years. The annexation of the Crimea and the fighting in the East of Ukraine have threatened the lives of thousands of people who have been forced to flee their homes and become internal migrants. As of April 2020, about 1.5 million forced internal migrants are registered in Ukraine [4].

Fighting in the eastern territories of Ukraine, a large number of internal migrants are a danger to the functioning of the state, a threat to its political and economic development. The coronavirus pandemic, combined with the ongoing armed conflict, could potentially lead to political instability and act as a catalyst for the economic crisis. This requires coordinated and effective activity of Ukrainian public authorities in order to avoid economic downturn and social upheavals in society.

The coronavirus pandemic has raised the issue of information security for both Ukraine and the world. This is due to the fact that the pandemic is developing in a high-tech information society. Therefore, the spread of misinformation, manipulative messages and fakes is instantaneous in cyberspace. The World Health Organization called the barrage of manipulations, fakes, and misinformation about the COVID-19, which instantly spread to the information space, an «infodemia» [5, p. 12]. The authorities of each state faced the difficult task not only of organizing anti-epidemiological measures, but also of the simultaneous operational formation of mechanisms to counter destructive information and psychological influences. After all, misinformation in a pandemic, like the disease itself, also threatens people's lives.

The importance of the pandemic information and security context research is also due to the fact that the topic of coronavirus is exploited by politicians, criminals, terrorists and

extremists. In a pandemic, destructive elements, pursuing their own goals, seek to influence public opinion and use the opportunity to play on people's fears.

The situation with the pandemic highlighted the problems of Ukraine's information policy. Protection of a person from destructive information and psychological influences refers to Ukraine's national interests in the information sphere [6]. Accordingly, the manipulation of information on the issue of COVID-19 poses a threat to the protection of citizens of Ukraine from destructive information and psychological influences.

The Ukrainian state needs a balanced information policy in combating misinformation about the coronavirus pandemic, in preventing the spread of panic in society, provoked by manipulative information technologies. The outlined range of problems determined the choice of topic and direction of research: identifying the effectiveness of Ukrainian public authorities in terms of rapid development of mechanisms to response the negative information and psychological influences associated with the pandemic COVID-19.

RELATED WORK

The growing impact of the information component on social life in the context of the coronavirus pandemic requires a revision of traditional approaches to the explication of information security issues.

The concept of V. Horbulin& Yu. Danyk, which focuses on the specifics of the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of national security discourse [5], is important for the research. It is important to argue about the impact of modern information technologies on society in a coronavirus pandemic, especially those that have signs of purposeful information and psychological actions [5, p. 3]. Disinformation in a pandemic can be spread in order to achieve various goals: economic, geopolitical, psychological, cognitive, and so on. The main drivers of misinformation are primarily social networks and electronic media. The effectiveness of information and psychological operations in the widespread use of cyberspace is determined by three factors – the presence of a real viral danger; accompanying cyber information aspects; economic and geopolitical context [5, p. 6].

According to S. Qadir and S. Quadri, the following basic features should be observed in ensuring information security: confidentiality, integrity and accessibility. The most important criterion is accessibility, as it is impossible to use the methods of confidentiality and integrity without it [7].

Protection of one's own personal space as a condition for ensuring the information security of an individual is the most important factor in the development of a modern democratic state. Confidentiality – according to researchers M. Islama, J. Watson, R. Iannella, S. Geva – is a legitimate control over personal information, not just hiding information [8].

The basic element of information security is information (computer) literacy of the population (N. Safa& C. Maple). In order to provide quality information security training, it is necessary to increase the level of awareness of users, which will allow individuals to defend the value aspects of personal and social life [9].

Modern challenges and mechanisms for counteracting negative information and psychological influences in Ukraine are analyzed by U. Ilnytska [10]. Information security is a component of national security and a priority function of the state. Information security acts

as a link between the national security policy of the state and the information policy of the country.

Protecting the population from the negative impact of information and manipulative technologies during a coronavirus pandemic is one of the most important functions of government institutions (O. D. Lazor, O. Y. Lazor, O. Yaremenko). The scale of the epidemic and the elimination of its consequences depend on the effectiveness of public authorities [11]. Also important for the study were theories about the peculiarities of the management of Ukrainian public authorities in a pandemic, in particular, some provisions of D. Tereshchenko's concept [12].

METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, the study focuses on the use of optimal methodological approaches in various areas of socio-political, public administrative, historical and philosophical knowledge regarding the explication of information security, the COVID-19 epidemic, the activities of Ukrainian public authorities in a pandemic.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the study are general scientific methods of information processes cognition in modern society, in particular, empirical, analytical, comparative and descriptive. In addition, research methods are based on the principles of systemic and structural-functional analysis.

The authors of the study monitored information and security threats on the issue of the pandemic during the strict phase of quarantine in Ukraine (from 12.03.2020 to 22.05.2020). Key electronic media and pages of public opinion leaders on social networks were monitored. The methodological basis for the formation of a current information and security threats list on the issue of the COVID-19 epidemic was the regulatory framework of Ukraine.

In order to identify the dominant destructive theories about the epidemic COVID-19 in the public consciousness of Ukrainians the method of content analysis was used. The synchronous-diachronic method was used to track manipulative information about the coronavirus pandemic, which has signs of destructive information-psychological influences.

The analysis of the secondary sociological information array concerning the issues of Ukrainian public authorities activity in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic is carried out.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ukraine, like most countries in the world in the context of the coronavirus COVID-19 spread, faced a number of problematic issues in various spheres of society. Countering the COVID-19 epidemic in all countries of the world has become «a search for a balance between public protection and economic development» [5, p. 10]. It is inexpedient to analyze the COVID-19 epidemic only in a medical or social context, as the pandemic affects the whole spectrum of public life: the economy, the education sector, the sphere of national security, etc.

The pandemic is rapidly changing the world: researches on the role of artificial intelligence in preventing and detecting COVID-19 are already emerging. Large-scale changes are expected in the education system, where new online learning technologies are being actively developed [13]. The COVID-19 pandemic has become a determinant of the social relations reformatting,

contributing to the formation of new cybersocial relations. Global isolation of the population at the place of residence has affected the structure of social relations [14].

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised a rather ambiguous issue of restricting citizens' freedoms. For example, government control over people during quarantine in order to prevent its violation. Mobile, video surveillance, and so on began to be used mainly for such control. In the context of the discourse of the rights and freedoms of the individual, the pandemic has in some way threatened democratic development. This refers to the trend of strengthening control over the actions of citizens. For countries with stable democracies, these threats are less visible, as a reversal to authoritarian political regimes is unlikely. This primarily applies to those countries that are just on the path to democratization, in particular, Ukraine.

During a pandemic, people spend more time in cyberspace. Many of them are affected by destructive information technologies aimed at distorting information about the coronavirus pandemic.

Accordingly, the information policy of Ukraine in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic should be aimed at ensuring the national interests of the state, primarily in the field of the state information security. The concept of information security means «the state of protection of vital interests of the individual, society and the state, which minimizes the damage due to incompleteness, untimeliness and inaccuracy of information, negative information impact, negative consequences of information technologies, as well as through unauthorized dissemination of information» [10, p. 28].

According to the World Health Organization [15], as of July 23, 2020, the following data were detected in Ukraine: 60 995 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection; 1534 people died. The dynamics of coronavirus incidence in Ukraine is quite alarming. The number of patients, despite long-term quarantine measures, is only increasing (Figure 1) [15].
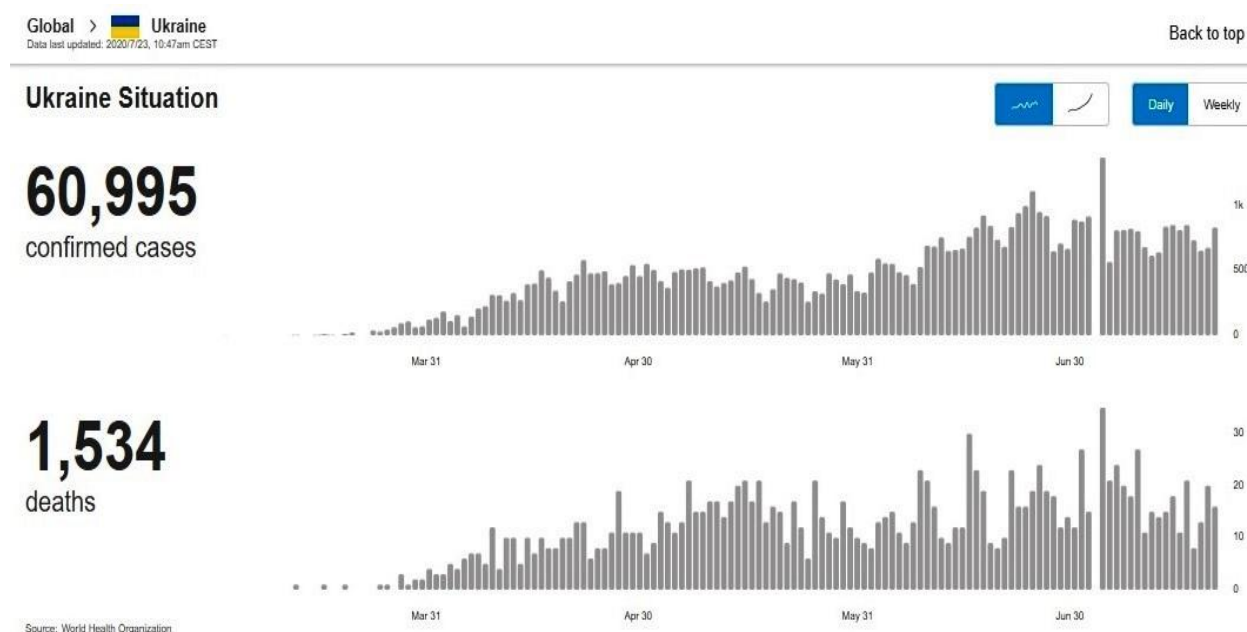

Figure 1. Dynamics of coronavirus incidence in Ukraine (as of July 23, 2020)

The situation with the increase in the coronavirus incidence in Ukraine, despite long-term anti-epidemiological measures, is due to many factors. The most important factors, in our opinion, are a certain disregard of the destructive information and psychological influences on the population by the Ukrainian public authorities and an unsatisfactory level of communication between the authorities and citizens regarding the pandemic.

The authors carried out weekly monitoring of key electronic media of Ukraine and pages of public opinion leaders in social networks in order to track information and security threats on the pandemic during the strict phase of quarantine in Ukraine (from 12.03.2020 to 22.05.2020). The basis for the formation of a COVID-19 epidemic key current information and security threats list was the regulatory framework of Ukraine.

Threats to the national security of Ukraine are certain phenomena, factors, tendencies that make impossible (or complicate) the realization of the national interests of Ukraine, the preservation of its national values [16]. The current threats to the national security of Ukraine [3] include information and psychological wars, as such wars lead to a distorted information picture of the world.

The main threats to Ukraine's information security are the following [3]: waging an information war against the Ukrainian state, lack of a holistic communication policy of public authorities, low level of media culture of Ukrainian society.

In addition, threats to Ukraine's national security in the information sphere include: restrictions on freedom of speech; restricting citizens' access to information; distortion of information, tendentious coverage of information, ignoring information important to society, distortion, suppression and blocking of information; unauthorized dissemination of information; outright misinformation; destructive information intrusion into the national information space; functioning of information flows not controlled by the state in the national information space, etc. [10, p. 30].

It was stated that the low level of information literacy of the population leads to the inability of people to ensure their own information security. People are not ready to use IT in everyday life. Insufficient level of information literacy of individuals had a negative impact on their interaction with the authorities, health authorities, etc. The organization of distance learning, in which most Ukrainian families were actually involved, also suffered from a low level of information literacy.

The main priorities for ensuring information security of Ukraine are set out in the National Security Strategy of Ukraine. These include counteraction to «manipulation of public consciousness and dissemination of distorted information» and «development and implementation of a coordinated information policy of public authorities» [3]. Unfortunately, the monitoring of Ukrainian public authorities on the issue of the coronavirus pandemic shows that these priorities remain largely declarative.

The content analysis identified the dominant destructive myths about the COVID-19 epidemic, which are most common in the public consciousness of Ukrainians: 1) the coronavirus is artificially created, it was developed to create a vaccine against it or to reduce the population; 2) the scale of the coronavirus is exaggerated, the coronavirus does not exist; 3) coronavirus affects only the elderly; 4) the spread of coronavirus is associated with 5G communication, etc. A separate large group of myths has been associated with coronavirus treatments.

Ukrainian scientists V. Gorbulin and Yu. Danyk also note that one of the most common conspiracy theories in Ukraine about COVID-19 is the theory of the artificial origin of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 and the version that the 5G connection directly associated with a new virus (or causes the disease itself, or contributes to its spread) [5, pp. 5-6].

The prevalence of conspiracy theories about the artificial origin of the coronavirus in Ukrainian society is confirmed by opinion polls (Table 1) [17].

Table 1: Which of these statements about coronavirus do you agree with the most?

The coronavirus appeared naturally and then spread to the world	17,6 %
The coronavirus was made artificially in the laboratory, but its spread around the world was accidental	29,3 %
Coronavirus has been specifically designed and deliberately distributed around the world to reduce population and / or harm some countries.	36,7 %
Other	3,7 %
Difficult to answer	12,5 %
Refusal to answer	0,2 %

The largest number of respondents (37 %) believe that the coronavirus was «specially designed and deliberately distributed in the world to reduce the population and / or harm some countries». Another 29 % of respondents chose the option that the coronavirus «was made artificially in the laboratory, but its spread in the world was accidental». That is, the vast majority of respondents (66 %) are of the opinion about the artificial origin of the coronavirus [17].

Such results of the poll indicate the inadequacy of Ukraine's information policy regarding the pandemic situation.

For distributors of manipulative information, the coronavirus pandemic has become a kind of «Klondike». The consequences for consumers of disinformation content are panic and total uncertainty.

Let us turn to the analysis of weekly monitoring information on manipulations related to the topic of coronavirus [18]. Monitoring is carried out by *texty.org.ua* (a project funded by the National Democratic Institute). Sites monitored: 70 Ukrainian online publications, which revealed more than 10% of manipulative news from all news about Ukraine; 68 Russian sites that focus on Ukrainian issues. On these sites only manipulative materials are tracked. In addition, monitoring is carried out on 17 major Ukrainian online publications and 16 major Russian publications focused on the Ukrainian media space. In large online publications all materials are monitored to detect manipulation and misinformation.

From this array of manipulative information, news related to allegations of an artificial coronavirus most often emerges. Analysts have recorded 2 500 news related to the topic of the «artificiality» of the coronavirus. For almost six months since the pandemic unfolded in the world, phrases such as «artificially created», «biological weapons», «laboratory

virus»have been used on dozens of Russian sites in more than 1 500 publications on coronavirus without any attempt at correct argumentation [19].

Ukrainian manipulative sites are more likely to spread misinformation. Moreover, the influence of the Ukrainian media on society is much more significant. Analysts estimate that manipulative publications on such sites could reach an audience of 50 million a month. During the six months of the pandemic, about a thousand materials were published on Ukrainian resources, which spoke about the «artificiality» of the coronavirus. In fact, Ukrainian manipulative sites not only disseminate unverified information about the coronavirus. Quite often they raise remarks from social networks to the level of an expert position.

Figure 2 shows the amount of manipulative information about the coronavirus pandemic on the monitored media resources. In the diagram, the bar height shows the percentage of the coronavirus topic among all materials of the day in a group of sites (period: 30.01.2020. – 12.07.2020.) [18].
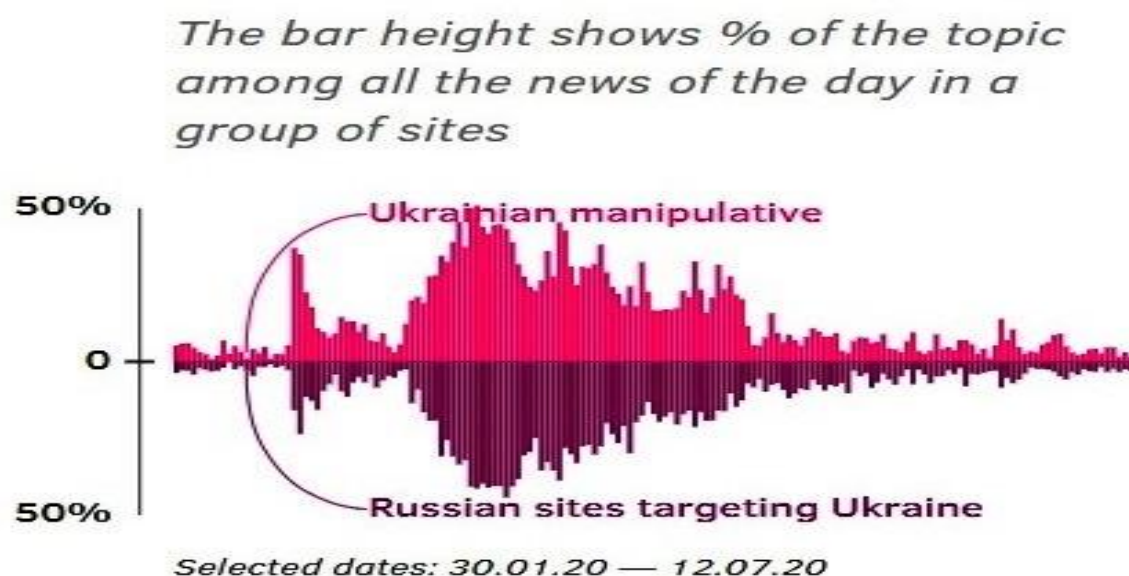

Figure 2. Dynamics of appearance of manipulative materials on the
COVID-19 epidemic in the media space of Ukraine (30.01.2020 – 12.07.2020)

The first peak of the appearance and sharp growth of misinformation about the COVID-19 epidemic in a group of manipulative media occurs on February 20-21, 2020 (Table 2).

Table 2: Manipulative materials on the topic
of coronavirus in the media space of Ukraine (20.02.2020.-21.02.2020.)

Date	Ukrainian manipulative nature		Russian sites targeting Ukraine	
	Number of items	% of news on topic as share of total in a group of sites	Number of items	% of news on topic as share of total in a group of sites
20.02.2020.	90	36,9	35	15,7

| 21.02.2020. | 85 | **34,8** | 54 | **23,5** |

The second peak of disinformation growth in the Ukrainian media space about the COVID-19 epidemic occurs at the end of March 2020 and holds a fairly high position until the beginning of May 2020. It was then that there was a period of strict quarantine (Figure 3).
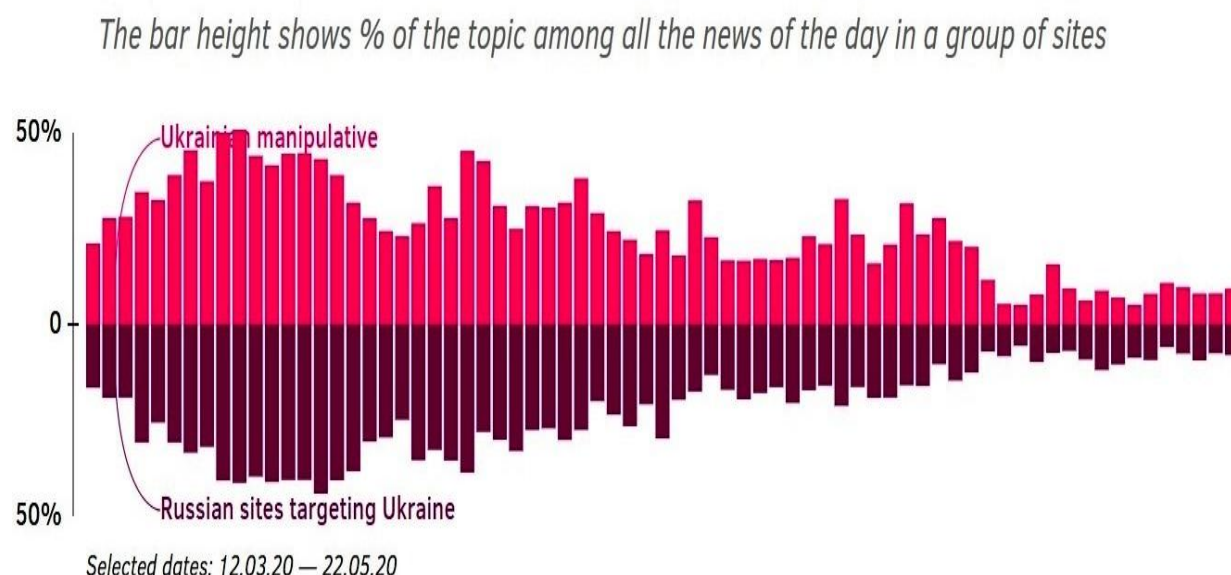

Figure 3. Dynamics of appearance of manipulative materials on the COVID-19 epidemic in the media space of Ukraine (March 12, 2020 – May 22, 2020)

The strict stage of quarantine lasted in Ukraine for 72 days (from March 12 to May 22, 2020). Table 3 shows information on the dates in March, when manipulative information about the coronavirus exceeded 30% of the total array of information of those media resources in Ukraine that were monitored [18]. That is, misinformation about the coronavirus was actively generated at the beginning of quarantine.

Table 3: Manipulative materials on the topic of coronavirus
in the media space of Ukraine in March 2020

Date	Ukrainian manipulative nature		Russian sites targeting Ukraine	
	Number of items	% of news on topic as share of total in a group of sites	Number of items	% of news on topic as share of total in a group of sites
16.03.2020.	69	**34,5**	139	**30,8**
17.03.2020.	61	**32,4**	116	**25,6**
18.03.2020.	93	**38,9**	135	**30,8**
19.03.2020.	99	**45,4**	150	**33,4**

20.03.2020.	91	**37,3**	153	**31,9**
21.03.2020.	84	**50,0**	120	**40,7**
22.03.2020.	99	**50,8**	90	**41,3**
23.03.2020.	105	**43,9**	178	**39,6**
24.03.2020.	117	**41,5**	189	**41,1**
25.03.2020.	117	**44,5**	188	**40,5**
26.03.2020.	104	**44,6**	177	**40,5**
27.03.2020.	103	**43,1**	184	**44,1**
28.03.2020.	70	**38,9**	121	**40,6**
29.03.2020.	46	**31,7**	91	**38,2**
30.03.2020.	72	**27,7**	131	**30,5**

Starting from April 1, 2020, there has been less manipulative information. However, throughout the quarantine period, manipulative messages about the coronavirus pandemic were permanently introduced into the information space of Ukraine.

In late March - early April 2020, the percentage of publications on the problem of coronavirus on sites with manipulative content was about 50 % of all publications. That is, in every second publication - regardless of what it was - the coronavirus was mentioned in some way [19].

Today's quarantine restrictions ignoring by the population of Ukraine is a direct consequence of the rampant phobias in March-April 2020.

Let's address the issue of the effectiveness of the Ukrainian public authorities actions in combating the coronavirus epidemic. From June 20 to 23, 2020, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted a poll in which respondents were asked to assess the situation regarding the threats associated with the coronavirus epidemic in Ukraine. Strictly speaking, it was about the effectiveness of the authorities in combating the threats of the epidemic. The majority of respondents (63 %) believe that Ukraine has not yet coped with the coronavirus epidemic. Accordingly, the number of new patients will increase [20].

Table 4: : In your opinion, has Ukraine already coped with the coronavirus epidemic? will there be fewer new patients soon? or Has Ukraine not coped with the epidemic yet? will the number of new patients increase?

Ukraine has already overcome the coronavirus epidemic, there will be fewer new patients soon	18 %
Ukraine has not coped with the epidemic yet, and the number of new patients will soon increase	**63 %**
Difficult to answer	19 %

Only 18 % of respondents believe that the coronavirus epidemic in Ukraine has been overcome. According to them, this will help reduce the number of patients (Table 4). 19 % of Ukrainians, i.e. almost one in five respondents, could not answer this question.

Disappointing conclusions about the low efficiency of the Ukrainian authorities can be drawn from the all-Ukrainian poll of the group «Rating», which was conducted on June 24-28, 2020. According to the results of this poll, the threat of coronavirus seems less dangerous to Ukrainians than the incompetence of the Ukrainian authorities (Table 5). When asked what will be the cause of the economic crisis in Ukraine in the fall, 53 % said that it would be the incompetence of the government. 32 % of respondents believe that the cause of the economic crisis may be the COVID-19 epidemic. Only 6 % of respondents believe the war in the Ukrainian Donbass, which has been going on since 2014, as a possible cause of the economic crisis [21, p. 6].

Table 5: Choose one reason why the economic crisis may occur this fall: the coronavirus, the war in the Donbass, the incompetence of the authorities?

Coronavirus	32 %
The war in the Donbass	6 %
The incompetence of the authorities	**53 %**
Other	3 %
Difficult to answer	6 %

At the same time, a third of Ukrainians consider the COVID-19 epidemic to be the most important threat to Ukraine's economy.

This assessment of the government's actions is due to the fact that the level of trust in the first persons and public authorities in Ukraine is quite low (Table 6) [21, p. 10].

Table 6: How satisfied are you with the activities of such institutions?, %

	Quite satisfied	Rather satisfied	Difficult to answer	Rather dissatisfied	Not at all satisfied
President of Ukraine V. Zelensky	9	26	12	20	32
Chairman of The VerkhovnaRada of Ukraine D. Razumkov	6	15	28	15	36
The VerkhovnaRada of Ukraine	2	7	15	20	55
The Prime Minister of Ukraine D. Shmygal	1	7	36	16	39
Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	1	7	21	20	51

Distrust in the activities of Ukrainian public authorities in responding the COVID-19 epidemic has significantly increased due to contradictory statements and behavior of Ukrainian statesmen.

At the beginning of the quarantine, it turned out that Ukraine lacked personal protective equipment. At the same time, the media published shocking information for Ukrainians: personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, medical gowns) were sold en masse to other countries in January-February 2020 [22]. For example, protective masks were exported from Ukraine to 48 countries and regions of the world. Disposable medical gowns and medical gloves were also actively exported.

Finally, on March 11, 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine banned the export of certain anti-epidemic goods. However, at the time of quarantine, it was difficult to purchase individual means in Ukraine itself. In particular, the medical staff appeared to be the most vulnerable. Moreover, during the introduction of quarantine, protective masks and respirators in Ukraine became 50 or even 100 times more expensive than pre-quarantine prices.

In addition, distrust in the activities of Ukrainian public authorities in combating the COVID-19 epidemic has intensified after conflicting statements by top officials. Thus, the Chief Sanitary Doctor of Ukraine Viktor Lyashko stated on the Ukrainian TV channel «Ukraine 24» on May 8, 2020 that parks and squares were closed for visits during the quarantine for psychological effect [23]. This was done for one purpose only – to make people feel the need to comply with quarantine. This position outraged Ukrainians, especially parents of young children, who were banned from visiting parks and squares for a long time. Eventually, many people stopped adhering to the quarantine restrictions that the Ukrainian government continued to call for.

Another situation that upset Ukrainian society was related to the behavior of the head of state, President of Ukraine VolodymyrZelensky. On June 3, 2020, the President of Ukraine, members of his team, and local officials visited a coffee shop in Khmelnytsky[24]. Due to quarantine restrictions, the work of cafeterias was still prohibited at that time. And the first person of the state violated the quarantine. Owners of other restaurants were outraged that they were not allowed to work, but some cafes were open to officials for some reason. Due to public outrage, the police eventually fined the President of Ukraine for violating the quarantine rules.

In addition, the information on the use of funds from Anti-COVID Fund, which amounts to UAH 64,7 billion, has become rather ambiguous for the citizens of Ukraine[25]. According to the report of the Minister of Finance dated July 1, 2020, the government decided to transfer more than half of the Fund's budget (UAH 35 billion) to road repairs and reconstruction, but not to fight COVID-19. And all this with the growing dynamics of infected people in Ukraine!

Of course, it should be understood that for government institutions, the pandemic period has become a test of the ability to apply decisive and effective management, which involves both operational management and strict methods of control. Issues of providing administrative services, solving various social issues, providing opportunities for distance learning, etc. have become quite problematic.

However, the coronavirus pandemic for Ukrainian public authorities has also become a test of responsibility. With all the levers of influence, the Ukrainian authorities were largely

unprepared to develop timely and effective mechanisms to counter the destructive information and psychological influences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Ukrainian government institutions at various levels have shown unwillingness to operate effectively in a crisis situation and quarantine restrictions. Quite low efficiency of the activity of Ukrainian public authorities in the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic was observed from the point of view of unpreparedness of operative formation of mechanisms of counteraction to threats of information security. Most often, the inefficiency of the authorities was manifested either in the slow response to the challenges and destructive information and psychological threats to the COVID-19 epidemic, or in ignoring these threats.

The shortcomings of the regulatory framework of Ukraine also led to low efficiency of coordination of various measures of the authorities in counteracting information and security threats related to the coronavirus epidemic.

Despite long-term anti-epidemiological measures, there is an increase in the coronavirus incidence in Ukraine. One of the important factors in this situation, in addition to a certain ignoring of the destructive information and psychological influences on the population by the Ukrainian public authorities, is the unsatisfactory level of communication between the authorities and citizens regarding the pandemic.

The content analysis highlighted the dominant destructive myths about the COVID-19 epidemic, which are most prevalent in the public consciousness of Ukrainians.

It is stated that the low level of information literacy of the population leads to the inability of people to ensure their own information security. It was observed that during the quarantine period manipulative messages about the coronavirus pandemic were permanently introduced into the information space of Ukraine. The consequences for consumers of disinformation content were panic and total uncertainty. Such results indicate the inadequacy of Ukraine's information policy regarding the pandemic situation. This has led to a significant decrease in the level of trust in Ukrainian public authorities.

In general, the information policy of Ukraine in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic should be aimed at ensuring the national interests of the state, primarily in the field of information security of the state.

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