

Ukraine War as a Cause of Food Crisis: A Framing Analysis of Three Giant International Media

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Abstract

Food availability is one of the important things that any state must fulfill so that its people can live healthy and active lives. Currently, the world is encountered with food insecurity that threatens human welfare. The world, which has not yet recovered from the domino effects of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and most recently the Russia-Ukraine war, is becoming increasingly unprepared for a global food crisis. Malnutrition, mass starvation, and famine will become major problems if this crisis continues. Warnings on a global food crisis that are often ignored have put the global food system on the verge of collapse. With the increasing level of hunger, the issue of food crisis has become a hot topic of discussion again. Foreign media are competing to report on the food crisis particularly the causes of the rapidly developing food crisis. The purpose of this study is to find out how the media has framed the causes of the food crisis. This study will take samples from three major regional media, namely Al Jazeera, Asia Times, and Washington Post, during the period of April 2020 to June 2022. This research applies a qualitative research method using the content of foreign news. The data was processed using the NVivo 12 Plus and analyzed using media framing theory and food insecurity. The findings of this study show that the issue of war between Russia and Ukraine is the most widely used form of framing by the three media. This is because the war disrupts not only world food production but also food distribution. This research is expected to be developed using more news samples to get more varied results.

Keywords: Food Crisis; Framing Media; Climate Change; COVID-1; Russian-Ukraine War

Introduction

Food insecurity is a complicated issue. Food insecurity can be defined as an individual's lack of regular access to healthy and safe food. This occurs when food is unavailable or they cannot obtain it (FAO et al., 2022). The risk of families experiencing a food crisis rises due to their inability to fulfill their necessities. The concept of food insecurity is only occasionally related to poverty, and those

who even live comfortably may experience food problems if they lack access to food (Hunger and Health, 2021). The percentage of food insecurity has been increasing gradually in the last six years and nowadays it affects 30% of the world's population (FAO et al., 2021).

Food insecurity cannot be separated from environmental issues, particularly climate change. The tendency of the world's population to grow is frequently associated with the earth's

ability to provide resources for the world's population to live decent lives (Jemadu, 2014). Population growth necessitates additional food and energy for cultivating food crops. Climate change, which has caused numerous natural disasters, has made providing sufficient food for everyone more challenging. Climate change will affect food production, access, quantity, and utilization (El Mokhtar et al., 2021).

Climate change significantly affects agricultural potential. Degradation of the soil diminished fertility, and poverty genuinely threatened food security. A further consequence of climate change, soil degradation has resulted in an enormous decrease in crop productivity and economic sustainability. This is evident in sub-Saharan countries such as Africa, South America, and India, putting food security and farmers' livelihoods at risk. A stable agricultural output is required to match the increased agricultural production (Styawan, 2022).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates the issues of food insecurity. Ensuring the availability of basic human needs such as food, water, and shelter has surpassed the control of the pandemic as the primary concern of world governments. Additionally, the pandemic has significantly impacted livestock and poultry production. A lack of food can decrease nutrient and calorie intake, which humans need to combat a pandemic. Food with poor quality can also cause various other diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and even hypertension which aggravate the immune system. This will unquestionably increase global vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic (O'Hara & Toussaint, 2021).

Restrictions on human and goods activities and disruptions to the trade supply chain have devastating effects on vulnerable populations such as children, women, and the elderly. In addition, the fear of running out of food caused global prices to soar. As the pandemic spreads to every corner of the globe, access to food becomes increasingly tricky. The government implements a policy of social distance that affects the number of agricultural workers. The virus has affected the health of low-income in production and distribution employees. The community no longer has access to food since they lack income. The poor are required to pay a more significant amount for food. The economic slowdown and

recession will indirectly affect millions of livelihoods. (Fan et al., 2020).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has once more exacerbated the global food crisis. The war erupted when the global food system struggled to fulfill the world's population's food intake in the face of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Russia and Ukraine have emerged as global agricultural actors, exporting approximately 12% of the world's food. Both are leading providers of agricultural products, including wheat, sunflower oil, and even fertilizer. Several global regions rely heavily on these two countries for their basic food requirements. Russia and Ukraine provide 50% of North Africa and the Middle East's cereal imports, with East Africa importing 72% of its cereals from Russia and 18% from Ukraine (Anna & Eric, 2022).

Food security is unquestionably highly dependent on the ability of the poor to acquire food. The war disrupted Russia's energy supply, resulting in skyrocketing prices for coal, oil, and gas. The poor must increase their household income to meet daily necessities, such as food preparation and transportation to work. The costs and prices of obtaining energy have increased, which has indirectly led to an increase in food production and transportation costs, increasing food prices. The global food crisis was exacerbated by Russia's decision to ban fertilizer exports in response to economic sanctions issued by the West (Mengoub et al., 2022).

Several preliminary studies will serve as references or comparisons for this investigation. The first is a research article titled "Conveying Information about Food Insecurity: Effects of Media on Food Insecurity Awareness." This article examines how the media employs various information dissemination strategies and framing techniques to motivate readers to combat food insecurity. This study demonstrates that readers are more likely to be influenced by news forms that contain exciting and recognizable facts (Fergusson et al., 2021). Second, the article "Media coverage on food security and climate-smart agriculture: A case study of newspapers in Zimbabwe." This study examines how the Zimbabwean media presents food security concerning climate-friendly smart agriculture. Due to climate change, his research indicates significant differences in food-related issues. Climate change is not the only cause of food

insecurity; issues with post-harvest management and food security management also contribute (Kutyauripo et al., 2021). Unlike the previous two, this article will examine how the media frames the leading cause of food insecurity currently sweeping the globe.

Other studies demonstrate how digital media can be utilized to promote food security. This is explained in a study titled "Digital media to guarantee food security in Colombia during COVID-19". The article using Colombia as the research sample shows that the media is not only used as a tool to raise awareness of food insecurity which has increased due to social restrictions. Instead, the media promote food sales, fair trade, and purchases directly from small producers (Cruz-Vidal, 2020). Under Cruz-research, Vidal's article "HRCE: Detecting Food Security Events in Social Media" demonstrates that social media is used not only to inform people about food security but also to assist them in overcoming problems associated with it (Gao et al., 2020). The previous two studies focused on how the media can combat food insecurity. In the meantime, the authors of this study sought to determine how international media portray the causes of food insecurity.

The global mass media is undeniably the driving force that actively influences global public opinion. Implicit and explicit agendas are articulated in the discourse of the mass media, where ideas and information are defined, represented, and provided significance beyond what they present (Budianto, 2019). Food insecurity issues continue to worsen due to the significant effect of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war, which have hampered investment, slowed the economic recovery and even diminished the population's income prospects. If this crisis continues, malnutrition, mass starvation, and famine will become significant issues. Warnings on the global food crisis are frequently disregarded, putting the global food system on the verge of collapse. Given this fundamental issue, international media outlets frequently report on the food crisis as it unfolds before their eyes. The global food crisis caused widespread panic, and efforts were made to identify those responsible for its rapid spread. However, many still require clarification of the primary reason for the current global food crisis. In this study, the authors are interested in

how the international media frames the causes of the escalating food crisis. This research is novel in that it compares the three issues of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war to determine which issue is most frequently cited as the cause of the global food crisis in international media.

Theoretical Framework

Technological advancements facilitate access to information, but not all information presented by the media is accurate. Sometimes the information provided is intended to falsify or distort reality (distortion bias); sometimes, this information favors one party in a political conflict over the other (content bias). The author's motivations and thoughts are occasionally suspected of creating biased content (decision-making bias) (Entman, 2007). In the media, news writing is based on something known as reality. However, sometimes it is constructed not under the existing reality, in which case the constructed news is not subject to the results of the construction, meaning that the news conveyed in the media is subject to the author's subjectivity and is not objective (Gaio et al., 2015). The news reported in the media is ultimately the product of the journalist's knowledge and thought formation. Before a news story is published, it has been filtered through the media's interests and ideology.

Media framing is the written, spoken, graphic, or visual messages communicators use to contextualize topics such as people, events, episodes, and problems communicated through text to recipients. (D'Angelo, 2017). Robert Entman's framing analysis will be employed to frame and construct the reality of existing news. Framing consists primarily of selection and characterization. Frame refers to selecting multiple aspects of reality and incorporating them into communication texts, promoting specific problem definitions, casual interpretations, moral evaluations, and behavioral recommendations based on the items described (Entman, 1993)

Entman's framing emphasized describing a selection procedure and highlighting particular aspects of reality through the media. Entman explains the frame concept in four stages: Define Problems (defining problems); diagnose Causes (estimating the causes of problems); make Moral Judgments (making moral choices); and make Treatment

Recommendations (emphasizing completion). He explained further that the frame determines how the audience is made aware of, comprehends, and remembers the issues raised, including how they evaluate and act. The concept of framing has a similar but different impact on most recipients (audience) (Rane et al., 2014).

Food Insecurity

Food is the most basic human need that must always be met. As stated at the 1996 World Food Summit, food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences to living a physically and mentally healthy life (FAO Food Security Programme, 2008). Food has an essential meaning and function in the life of a nation, and insufficient food availability can lead to economic instability. If food security is compromised, various social and political upheavals can also occur, and this critical food condition can even threaten economic and national stability (Wijaya et al., 2020).

Food issues are a top priority for the community's survival and the most hotly

debated topic (Kuzmin, 2016). The problem of food insecurity is a complicated one. The four pillars of availability, access, utilization, and stability illustrate the complexity of a problem in which many people require more resources to meet their basic needs.

These four pillars support the necessary strategies for achieving food security, and there are determining factors, including economic and physical resources, food literacy, diet quality, and food sufficiency (Niles M et al., 2020). Simply put, food insecurity is the consistent lack of access to sufficient food for an active and healthy lifestyle (Hunger and Health Feeding America, 2021). The media are currently reporting Food Insecurity in various ways, packaging the news into three significant events: global climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Material and Methodology

This qualitative study analyses the content of foreign news articles from April 2020 to June 2022. This study investigates how international media frame the causes of food crises. The following media sources were consulted:

Table 1. The Sources of International Media

Media Sources	Website Address	Number of News Samples
Al Jazeera	https://www.aljazeera.com/	30
Asia Times	https://www.asiatimes.com./	30
Washington Post	https://www.washingtonpost.com/	30
Total		90

Sources: Collected and processed by the author

These three publications represent audiences from three different distinct regions. Al Jazeera is a television station broadcasting in Arabic and English from Doha, Qatar. Meanwhile, Asia Times is an international online publication that extensively covers Asian news.

There is also the Washington Post, an example of a publication consistently used by readers worldwide as a news source—using N Vivo 12 Plus for data analysis methods in

research. Crosstab analysis and word cloud analysis are the units of analysis.

Result and Discussion

Food insecurity is often referred to as a food crisis by the international media. This crisis consists of three major issues: global climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The Washington Post, Asia Times, and Al Jazeera were analyzed regarding their framing techniques.

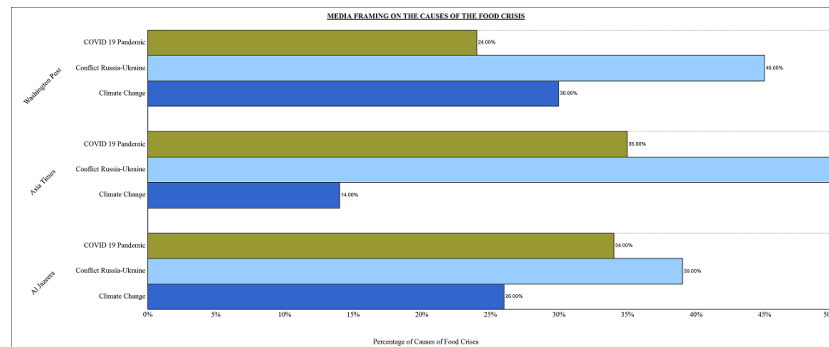


Figure 1. Media Framing on the causes of the Food Crisis

Source: processed based on the NVIVO 12 Plus crosstab method

Al Jazeera

Al Jazeera is a Qatar-based international news network that provides news, documentary analysis, and current events. Al Jazeera is one of the most influential news networks in the world because it is a trustworthy, independent news source. Based on NVivo 12 Plus data processed from April 2020 to June 2022, the author attempts to determine the cause of the food crisis as framed by Al Jazeera. The author discovers that the Russo-Ukrainian War is responsible for 39% of the 30 news samples demonstrating that Al Jazeera is responsible for the current food crisis. Al Jazeera's news coverage emphasizes the food shortage in the Middle East and Africa. Ukraine and Russia export one-third of the world's wheat, barley, and more than seventy percent of sunflower oil (Al Jazeera.com, 2022a). Due to the war between the two countries, the Russian blockade in the Black Sea has made it difficult for Ukraine to export its agricultural products.

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia caused food prices to soar and shipping costs to increase. The possibility of a food crisis is felt in developing nations. Wheat and grain have accumulated in vain in Ukraine because they cannot be exported. The war hindered distribution and affected wheat and grain production in Ukraine. Numerous agricultural lands were harmed and destroyed as a result of the war. According to the United Nations, 36 nations rely heavily on grain imports from Russia and Ukraine, including some of the poorest nations, such as Congo, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen (Al Jazeera.com, 2022b).

In addition to war, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change contributed 34% and 26% to the food crisis effect. According to multiple Al Jazeera news reports, the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted the global food supply

chain. Food distribution to various regions of the world is hindered, exacerbating hunger. Low-income regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, have been disproportionately affected.

Agricultural production was hampered by the lack of agricultural labor and the inability to distribute food to the population due to the pandemic's political policies, such as "stay at home" orders and lockdowns. Due to distribution barriers, the previously provided food supply spoiled and was quickly ruined. As a result of the delayed distribution, the food becomes unfit for consumption.

Before COVID-19 increased the likelihood of a food crisis, climate change had already precipitated this issue. Al Jazeera reported in multiple articles that Africa is a region that is highly vulnerable to the threat of climate change. By 2030, the European Union's Commissioner for Rural and Agricultural Economics, Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, estimates that up to 118 million Africans will be affected by drought, floods, and extreme heat (Al Jazeera.com, 2021). One-fifth of global food production has decreased due to climate change, and 34 million people are on the verge of starvation, according to a study cited by Al Jazeera (Bradham, 2021). Climate change has altered the global agricultural sector's productivity and affected food and livestock.

The issue of climate change, exacerbated by the economic impact of COVID-19, has caused a food crisis in several nations. Numerous Al Jazeera-featured experts assert that this phenomenon will increase with the Ukrainian conflict. This will also result in further price increases for food, energy, and fertilizer. Ultimately, more food must be available; yet it is difficult for children to obtain nutritious food. The food crisis is a

global threat that requires immediate resolution.

Asia Times

Asia Times Holding Limited, a Hong Kong-based media and public relations corporation, owns Asia Times. Since its 2016 relaunch as an English-language Asian digital news platform, its readership has multiplied and expanded globally. Asia Times is based in Bangkok and Hong Kong. The author chose Asia Times as a representative sample of Asian readers and writers.

According to an analysis of several Asia Times news articles, the war between Russia and Ukraine was responsible for fifty percent of the food crisis. In terms of the need for agricultural materials, specifically fertilizer, the second world war had a significant effect on North America, Europe, and developing nations. Even though the war did not directly cause hunger in these two large regions, it is feared that if the conflict continues, food prices will rise as it becomes more challenging to obtain fertilizer (Mikovic, 2022).

In multiple articles, the Asia Times emphasizes the issue of food shortages in the Asian region. Nearly 35% of the processed news samples cite the COVID-19 pandemic as one of the underlying causes of the current food crisis. Several cities, including Shanghai and Beijing, have reported food shortages, resulting in rising food prices and "panic buying." A video from a quarantine facility in the Chinese district of Nanhui shows people struggling to obtain food and water (Pao, 2022).

The remainder of Asia also faces famine. Asia Times cites the 2020 Global Hunger Index Report as saying that the pandemic has exacerbated Asia's hunger crisis (Bhasin, 2021). Food has precedence over disease, and Pakistan is also one of the Asian countries severely affected by the pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 precipitated a food security crisis due to a grain shortage. In this region, numerous refugees and lockdowns have disrupted the food supply chain (Shakil, 2020).

In recent years, heat waves have also contributed to climate change in South Asian nations. Continuing climate change increases the likelihood of a humanitarian catastrophe. According to the processed research results, 14% of the food crises attributed by the Asia Times are framed as a result of climate change. Multiple news articles demonstrate that climate

change is not new in Asia, and increasing temperatures due to global warming frequently cause drought and crop failure. Consequently, the South Asian region, including India and Pakistan, requires policies to mitigate this impact while fostering economic growth. If immediate action is not taken, it will become increasingly difficult for people to escape poverty and hunger (Fitzgerald, 2022).

Washington Post

The Washington Post is one of the largest and oldest newspapers in the United States. This newspaper was established in 1877 and is a respected publication read by thousands of people worldwide. The Washington Post, like the two preceding media samples, frequently highlights the current food crisis. A number of its articles demonstrate that the current food crisis is worse than the one that occurred between 2007 and 2008. Several phenomena have contributed to this situation, including climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and, most recently, the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Around 24% of the current food crisis can be attributed to the framing of the COVID-19 pandemic issue, according to processed NVIVO 12 Plus data. The pandemic has weakened the global economy. As the COVID-19 virus spreads, fuel and food shortages have become a significant cause for concerns. The pandemic has increased the cost of agricultural inputs such as fuel, fertilizer, and food distribution. One of China's most populous cities, Shanghai, has been under strict lockdown to control the outbreak. Its 25 million inhabitants are confined to their homes and quarantine centers, unable to access the dwindling food supply. Venezuela loses access to necessities such as food. The country's poverty and hunger are worsening (Briceño, 2021).

The Washington Post uses climate change as one explanation for the causes of the current food crisis. Approximately thirty percent of the processed data indicates that climate change has decreased the yields of staple foods such as wheat and rice. According to a United Nations report on climate change cited by the Washington Post, the rate of warming has increased by approximately one degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit). If global temperatures continue to rise, simultaneous crop failures in different regions will likely increase. As agricultural land

crisis by disrupting the global supply chain. In the meantime, climate change causes droughts, floods, and other natural problems that reduce food production.

According to the crosstab analysis conducted using the NVivo application, the Russia- Ukraine war was the most significant factor or the highest percentage (greater than 39%) in causing global food insecurity. This is because the war disrupts not only global food production but also its distribution. Climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic have already impacted the global community, and the conflict between the two neighbouring states has made it worse. Several impoverished nations that are still attempting to recover from the effects of climate change and the pandemic have been severely impacted by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, on which they highly rely for imported foods. Therefore, of the three framing issues raised in this study, international media frequently cite the Russia-Ukraine war as the leading cause of the current food crisis.

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