

COM 803-12: Hermeneutics and Communication

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In March of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, it brought about a lot of changes not only in the hospitals but also in societies. The pandemic was not just a health crisis; it was a wake-up call for everyone to be more aware of the way we interpret things, our biases, and the power dynamics that exist in the world. MacKenzie (2020) describes the pandemic as a wake-up call for everyone, highlighting the unpreparedness and the necessary measures needed to prevent future pandemics. From the leaders of the countries to the everyday conversations between people, the pandemic exposed the difficulties we face in distinguishing the truth from the lies and the need for collective action. Kucharski (2020) further emphasizes how the principles of contagion and public health responses can inform our understanding and management of such crises. In this paper, we will delve deeper and explore how the COVID-19 pandemic, when seen through the lens of hermeneutics, exposes not just the uncontrolled spread of the virus, but also the deep-rooted assumptions and misuse of the world community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled significant challenges in global health responses, marked by varying degrees of success and failure across different nations and communities. This paper offers a hermeneutic perspective to analyze the multifaceted responses to the pandemic, arguing that pre-existing biases, socio-political divisions, and the circulation of misinformation have collectively contributed to a situation where opportunities for a more cohesive and effective response were missed. It proposes that the widespread sense of being taken advantage of stemming from unequal access to resources, politicization of health measures, and the erosion of trust in public institutions was not an inevitable outcome but a result of failures. By examining the pandemic through the lens of hermeneutics, this study seeks to uncover the underlying

narratives that shaped public perceptions and responses, emphasizing the role of interpretive biases in shaping both individual and collective reactions to the crisis. This paper concludes with a call for a more reflexive and inclusive approach to public health communication and policy-making, one that acknowledges and addresses the hermeneutic dimensions of crisis management to prevent the repetition of these failures in future global health emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a big problem that has affected everyone around the world. It has changed the way we live our lives. Different people and countries have responded to it in different ways because of their beliefs and values. This paper looks at how people have reacted to the pandemic, and how they have tried to understand it. Because of things like misinformation, prejudices, and a lack of global leadership, we missed chances to control the pandemic better. This has made people feel sad and disappointed, and like they were taken advantage of when they were already vulnerable. Brooks (2020) highlights the psychological impacts of quarantine, showcasing the widespread effect on mental health and the significance of addressing misinformation.

The Hermeneutic Framework and COVID-19

Hermeneutics is a fancy word that means understanding what things mean. It's like when we read something and try to figure out what it really means. Hermeneutics is important because it helps us understand how different people interpret things in different ways. COVID-19 is a big problem that has affected everyone around the world. Hermeneutics can help us understand how people have tried to understand the virus, the advice from doctors, and the news about it. People

have different ideas and beliefs, and these can affect how they interpret the information. For example, some people might think the virus is not a big deal, while others might be very scared of it. Hermeneutics can help us understand how these different perspectives affect how people react to the pandemic. Bambra (2020) discusses how the pandemic revealed and exacerbated existing inequalities, emphasizing the importance of addressing these inconsistencies in the response to future health crises.

Interpretive Failures and Their Consequences

One big problem during the COVID-19 pandemic was that people didn't always agree on how serious the virus was. The spread of misinformation has been a critical issue, with Ecker, Lewandowsky, and Cook (2020) linking fake news exposure to a decline in media trust and an increase in governmental trust, contingent upon political alignments and views. Some places acted right away to try and stop the virus from spreading. They made rules like wearing masks, staying home, and closing non-essential businesses. But in other places, people didn't take the virus as seriously. They didn't make rules or act until things got bad. Some people even said that the virus was not real, or that it was not as serious as people were saying. These different responses were not just about different ways of trying to stop the virus, but also about how people saw the virus. Some people saw it as a big threat to health, while others did not. This made it hard for everyone to work together to stop the virus. It also made things worse because some people used the situation to try and gain power or influence. Selden and Berdahl (2020) illustrate the racial disparities in COVID-19 mortality among essential workers, an example of the pandemic's uneven impact.

The Sense of Being Taken Advantage Of

Beaunoyer, Dupéré, and Guitton (2020) address the digital divide's role in exacerbating access issues to crucial information and services during the pandemic. During the COVID-19, many people around the world felt like they were being treated unfairly. This is because some people had better access to healthcare, money, and other resources than others. This made it harder for people who were already struggling to cope with the pandemic. It also showed that there were already big differences between rich and poor people in different countries. Another problem was that there was a lot of wrong information going around. Some people said things that were not true about the virus, or about how to stay safe. This made it hard for people to know what was true and what was not. It also made people feel like they could not trust the people who were supposed to be helping them, like doctors or politicians. All these things made people feel like they were being taken advantage of and that the people in charge did not care about them. Larson (2020) and Dubé (2020) discuss vaccine hesitancy fueled by misinformation and distrust, further complicating public health efforts. Smith (2020) explores the implications of telehealth as a critical tool in pandemic response, underscoring the need for unbiased technology access.

In conclusion this paper has looked at how people around the world have reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic. We used something called "hermeneutics" to help us understand how

people are interpreting the pandemic. We found that the pandemic is not just a health problem. It has shown us that there are already big differences between rich and poor people. It has also shown us that people can interpret things in different ways, which can cause problems. For example, some people might think that the pandemic is not a big deal, while others might be very scared of it. This can make it hard for everyone to work together to stop the virus. We also found that there was a lot of wrong information going around. This made it hard for people to know what was true and what was not. All these things made people feel like they were being taken advantage of and that the people in charge did not care about them. But this pandemic has also taught us some important lessons. We need to be more careful about how we interpret things, and we need to work together to make sure that everyone is treated fairly. We need to make sure that we have the right information, and that we trust the people who are trying to help us. If we can do these things, we can be better prepared for future problems.

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