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## Biopolitical media discourse in France in the COVID-19 pandemics

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**Abstract.** The publication activities of the French media during the COVID-19 pandemic in a biopolitical way are analyzed. The theoretical frame of the study is set by Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, as well as the propaganda model of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky. To collect and analyze empirical data, the methods of computational linguistics and the method of identifying contextual ideologemes were applied. The research materials were the texts of independent media (Le Figaro, Le Monde, Le Parisien), identified using the keywords “pandemic” and “COVID-19” during the four waves of the pandemic (from January 2020 to March 2022). A total of 29,584 Le Figaro articles, 22,446 Le Monde articles, and 6,402 Le Parisien articles were used in the research. The purpose of the research is to analyze the strategies for including the French media in the biopolitical practices of propaganda and public education on the example of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the research, it turned out that the studied media during the pandemic were integrated both into general information campaigns and into biopolitical education and propaganda campaigns. Two scenarios for organizing media discourse during the pandemic of COVID-19 were identified, determined by target groups and media tasks. The first scenario actively involves educational and propaganda tools to promote state biopolitical goals. The second scenario integrates informing readers about the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures used by the authorities for biopolitical control, with the presentation of the hierarchies of responsible persons/institutions (within the state biopolitics). It is concluded that the participation of French independent media in the active promotion of biopolitical programs indicates their close connection with the actors and subjects of biopolitics – the state or business representatives.

**Keywords:** biopolitics, ideologeme, propaganda, Le Figaro, Le Monde, Le Parisien

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## Медиадискурс биополитики во Франции в период пандемии COVID-19

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**Аннотация.** В биополитическом русле анализируется публикационная деятельность французских медиа во время пандемии COVID-19. Теоретические координаты исследования заданы концепцией биополитики Мишеля Фуко, а также моделью пропаганды Эдварда Хермана и Ноама Хомского. Для сбора и анализа эмпирических данных использовались методы компьютерной лингвистики и методика идентификации контекстуальных идеологем. В качестве материалов исследования выступили тексты независимых медиа (*Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien*), идентифицированные по ключевым словам «пандемия» и «COVID-19» в течение четырех волн пандемии (с января 2020 г. по март 2022 г.). Всего использовано 29 584 статьи *Le Figaro*, 22 446 статей *Le Monde* и 6402 статьи *Le Parisien*. Цель исследования – выявить стратегии включения французских СМИ в биополитические практики пропаганды и просвещения во время пандемии COVID-19. Установлено, что изучаемые медиа были интегрированы как в общие информационные кампании, так и в кампании по биополитическому просвещению и пропаганде. Идентифицированы два сценария организации медийного дискурса, детерминированные целевыми группами и задачами медиа. Первый – активно использует просветительские и пропагандистские инструменты для продвижения государственных биополитических задач. Второй – интегрирует информирование читателей о пандемии COVID-19 и мерах, используемых властью для биополитического контроля, с представлением иерархий ответственных лиц и институтов (в рамках государственной биополитики). Таким образом, участие независимых медиа Франции в активном продвижении биополитических программ свидетельствует об их тесной связи с акторами и субъектами биополитики – государством или представителями бизнеса.

**Ключевые слова:** идеологема, пропаганда, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien*

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## Introduction

On March 16, 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron declared a “sanitary war” in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by strict quarantine measures and a law on a “health emergency”. Based on these innovations, the prime minister was given the right to take emergency measures during the pandemic: restrict the movement of citizens and establish a self-isolation regime, requisition property and establish price controls (Lapina, 2022). A year later, in the summer of 2021, France moved to the turning point of the pandemic – the development of “herd immunity” through the vaccination of the population, which became mandatory for a number of categories of the population (medical workers, catering employees, etc.).

In the background of the government’s fight against the pandemic, a community of “critical citizens” has formed in the French society, who do not agree with the activities of the authorities to overcome the pandemic, who consider their government’s biopolitics to be erroneous and disastrous for the economy and society. To promote the idea of “herd immunity” and vaccination, an educational and propaganda biopolitical campaign was launched in France, explaining the need for quarantine measures, delivering the meaning of vaccination and presenting the activities of the government in a positive and constructive light.

### **Biopolitics and media discourse of the COVID-19 pandemic**

Among all theories of biopolitics, the biopolitics of Michel Foucault, the renowned French social philosopher, is the most popular. Biopolitics, according to Foucault, is aimed at analyzing the etatization of the biological, it took place in stages in the historical process (from control over the body of an individual to control over the “societal body”), and in a modern format it is turned to managing the life of the population (Samovolnova, 2017; Zhelnin, 2019; Lorenzini, 2021). Michel Foucault's biopolitics not so much disputes as comprehends the control and exercise of power over the “societal body” in the field of population reproduction (birth rate, mortality, etc.), health and medicine, illness and the “norm”, old age and other forms of cessation of active labor activities, environmental problems both natural and artificial (Foucault, 2010).

The theory of biopolitics, which characterizes a certain historical type of government rationality, can act as an analytical matrix for assessing the actions of governments of different countries during pandemics, including the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to governments that control the population, representatives of the “capitalist machine”, for example, pharmaceutical companies are traditionally considered subjects of biopolitics (Schubert, 2021).

Despite the fact that the mass media are not subjects of biopolitics, it is the media that become the conductors of biopolitical ideas. There is a point of view according to which the radical and unpopular measures of governments during a pandemic are a response to challenges from the media and social networks, which turned out to be sources of stress for the population, provoking a crisis in the implementation of the state's biopolitical strategies (Christiaens, 2021).

Modern studies of the European media discourse of the COVID-19 pandemic partly confirm the destructive potential of media (especially the so-called “new

media”), since they are the ones who spread “conspiracy communications” (Moliner, 2020), use fakes and disinformation (Giry, 2022; Jeannin, 2021), at the same time, British media distort information differently than French media (Liu, 2017), form stereotypes when describing vulnerable categories of the population (Lagacé et al., 2021), etc.

Existing research on French health biopolitics (Atlani-Duault, 2021; Chopplet, 2022) does not answer the question of the constructive involvement of the French media in outreach. What do the media during the COVID-19 pandemic prefer: to inform or to educate? How actively do non-state media support the biopolitical actions of the French government in promoting the health of the country?

Russian media studies have identified two key ideologemes that characterize the media reality of the COVID-19 pandemic in Russia: “virus”/“koronavirus” (“coronavirus”)/“COVID” and “vaksina” (“vaccine”)/“vaktsinatsiya” (“vaccination”) (Radina, 2021). The first ideologeme was used during the first wave of the pandemic – a period of uncertainty, confusion, fear of a new epidemiological threat. The ideologeme “vaksina” (“vaccine”)/“vaktsinatsiya” (“vaccination”) appeared at the stage of the “second wave”, when the coronavirus vaccine was in the process of being created and tested. Whereas the ideologeme “virus”/“koronavirus” (“coronavirus”)/“COVID” reflected the semantic focus of the pandemic, the ideologeme “vaccine”/“vaccination” reconstructed the biopolitical dimension, contained a reference to the “societal body” and the protection of society from the pandemic. The ideologeme “vaccination” in the media texts turned out to be an indicator of the coordination of the actions of the media and the government, an indicator of the participation of the media in biopolitical propaganda.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the use of the ideologemes “coronavirus” and “vaccination” on the basis of the French media and to characterize the features of the inclusion of non-state French media in the biopolitical practices of propaganda and education of the population by the French government.

## Methods

The general framework of the study is the theory of biopolitics in the understanding of Michel Foucault. Modern states use biopolitics to control the population, which is especially evident during periods of biopolitical crises (for example, during a pandemic). Thus, the confusion and panic of society at the initial stage of the pandemic is faced with the desire of the authorities to create a vaccine and vaccinate the population to cope with the pandemic. Communication between the government and society is supported by the media, taking a more or less active part in educating the population.

From the point of view of media theory, this study is based on the propaganda model of E. Herman and N. Chomsky (Pedro-Carañana et al., 2018), according to which all media broadcast on their pages a “picture of the world” that has passed through editorial filters, that is, media worlds are constructed for relevant media tasks. Comparing media discourse by period (for the same media) or comparing media discourses of different media, it is possible to identify the problems and challenges behind media discourse, it is possible to find out whether or not the media participate in the biopolitical enlightenment campaign.

At the instrumental level, the method of searching for “contextual ideologemes” is used, which allows to determine the direction of the media discourse (Radina, 2021). Identification of contextual ideologemes is carried out on the basis of computational linguistics methods: a measure of relative frequency is used, namely the coefficient IPM (instances per million words), showing how frequent a particular word usage is in the text per million words (Michel et al., 2011).

The research materials were French non-state media (Le Figaro, Le Monde, Le Parisien), publishing materials about the pandemic during four “waves”. First wave: January 2020 – June 2020; second wave: July 2020 – February 2021; third wave: March 2021 – October 2021; fourth wave: November 2021 – March 2022 (Table 1).

Table 1

**Periods and volume of analyzed texts: Le Figaro, Le Monde, Le Parisien**

Periods	Le Figaro		Le Monde		Le Parisien	
	Texts	Words	Texts	Words	Texts	Words
First wave: January 2020 – June 2020	5916	2 046 194	6416	3 777 090	4501	3 085 400
Second wave: July 2020 – February 2021	9723	3 333 900	8130	4 633 535	888	3 422 731
Third wave: March 2021 – October 2021	8845	3 448 798	5609	3 258 650	707	2 721 151
Fourth wave: November 2021 – March 2022	5100	2 013 714	2291	1 366 431	306	1 192 173
Total	29 584	10 842 606	22 446	13 035 706	6402	10 421 455

Source: compiled by the authors.

Texts about pandemic from the media were identified by means of keywords (“pandemic”, “COVID”) using BootCat, TreeTagger, AntConc software and computational linguistics methods (lemmatization, frequency analysis, collocation analysis, *n*-gram analysis), then they were extracted, archived and processed. Thus, a general collection of texts was obtained, consisting of collections of various sizes.

The hypothesis of the study was the assumption that the media discourse of the French media about the pandemic can be consistent and focused on the ideologemes “coronavirus” and “vaccination”, which are due to the government's efforts to control the “societal body”/population of France. Differences in the media discourse on the pandemic of the French media reveal other settings of media influence on French society.

### Media discourse of Le Figaro

Le Figaro is the oldest independent daily newspaper in France, founded in the 19th century and still popular in the 21st century, whose materials are used by researchers to clarify the positions of the French press on a particular issue (Abdeslam, 2019; Barushkova, Komissarova, 2021).

Le Figaro collection of texts for all “pandemic waves” amounted to 29 584 texts with a total volume of 10 842 606 words, which made it possible to use the coefficient IPM, on the basis of which it is possible to compare the frequency of

used lexemes in different collections of texts (for example, to compare frequency lexemes in collections of French media texts *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien*). For the analysis of each collection of texts, 20 most frequent lexemes (nouns) were used, except for those that relate to typical journalistic clichés and are not directly related to the topic of the pandemic (“country”, “year”, “person”, “day”, etc.). Let us analyze the indicators (IPM) of the lexemes that made up the content of the texts in *Le Figaro* dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 2).

Table 2

**Media discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic:  
Le Figaro**

Periods	Frequency lexemes of media discourse
Wave 1	coronavirus (IPM 4420), COVID (IPM 2735), pandémie (IPM 2089), épidémie (IPM 1879), santé (IPM 1485), crise (IPM 1454), mesure (IPM 1313), Chine (IPM 1252), virus (IPM 1228), état (IPM 1171)
Wave 2	COVID (IPM 4210), pandémie (IPM 2461), coronavirus (IPM 2187), vaccin (IPM 1438), santé (IPM 1309), mesure (IPM 1239), gouvernement (IPM 1131), président (IPM 1104), crise (IPM 1094)
Wave 3	COVID (IPM 4028), pandémie (IPM 2257), vaccin (IPM 2008), vaccination (IPM 1515), santé (IPM 1315), gouvernement (IPM 1139), fin (IPM 1129)
Wave 4	COVID (IPM 4665), pandémie (IPM 2022), omicron (IPM 1384), santé (IPM 1335), vaccin (IPM 1282), fin (IPM 1254), gouvernement (IPM 1125)

Source: compiled by the authors.

The frequency of lexemes in large collections of texts makes it possible to analyze the key topics of the text material, since the lexemes used reveal the content of the texts.

The representation of the “first wave” of the COVID-19 pandemic in *Le Figaro* gives a detailed picture of the new pandemic (“pandémie”, IPM 2089; “épidémie”, IPM 1879). The cause is indicated (“coronavirus”, IPM 4420; “COVID”, IPM 2735; “virus”, IPM 1228) and the geographic source of the pandemic (“Chine”, IPM 1252). The purpose of the development of society (“santé”, IPM 1485), its current state (“crise”, IPM 1454), as well as the efforts of the key actor and subject of biopolitics – the state (“mesure”, IPM 1313 and “état”, IPM 1171) are updated.

The representation of the “second wave” in *Le Figaro* relies on key coordinates indicating the pandemic (“COVID”, IPM 4210; “pandémie”, IPM 2461; “coronavirus”, IPM 2187), goal (“santé”, IPM 1309) and efforts (“mesure”, IPM 1239), actors of biopolitics (“gouvernement”, IPM 1131 and “président”, IPM 1104), as well as to the resource of overcoming the problem (“vaccin”, IPM 1438).

The representation of the “third wave” in *Le Figaro* is dedicated to the active promotion of protection against the pandemic – vaccination. A pandemic resistance triangle is being built, where one vertex is an indication of the problem (“COVID”, IPM 4028; “pandémie”, IPM 2257), the other vertex is an indication of a solution to the problem (“santé”, IPM 1315; “vaccin”, IPM 2008; “vaccination”, IPM 1515; “fin”, IPM 1129) and the third vertex is an indication of actors performing biopolitical action (“gouvernement”, IPM 1139).

The representation of the “fourth wave” in *Le Figaro* continues the logic of the previous ones, again pointing at the problem (“COVID”, IPM 4665; “pandé-

mie”, IPM 2022; “omicron”, IPM 1384), possible solutions (“santé”, IPM 1335; “vaccin”, IPM 1282; “fin”, IPM 1254) and actors of biopolitics (“gouvernement”, IPM 1125).

The creation of materials about the COVID-19 pandemic in Le Figaro follows an educational logic (detailed coverage of the details of the pandemic) with elements of active health promotion (strengthening of the topic “vaccination” during the “third wave”), which indicates the media addressee – an ordinary Frenchman who under the tutelage of the media, must follow a difficult path from ascertaining the epidemiological crisis to vaccination and health.

### Media discourse of Le Monde

Le Monde is one of the most well-known and researched media in France (Barushkova, Komissarova, 2021; Sharonchikova, 2014). It is characterized as independent and left-liberal, focused on informing the political and financial elites of France.

The studied collection of texts Le Monde for all waves of the pandemic amounted to 22 446 texts with a total volume of 13 035 706 words. Let us analyze what the indicators of relative frequency (IPM) are presented in the collection of texts about the pandemic of this media (Table 3).

Table 3

Media discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic:  
Le Monde

Periods	Frequency lexemes of media discourse
Wave 1	<i>coronavirus</i> (IPM 2184), <i>COVID</i> (IPM 2112), <i>crise</i> (IPM 1681), <i>épidémie</i> (IPM 1520), <i>santé</i> (IPM 1456), <i>confinement</i> (IPM 1372), <i>état</i> (IPM 1346), <i>mesure</i> (IPM 1284), <i>président</i> (IPM 1172), <i>gouvernement</i> (IPM 1133), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1100)
Wave 2	<i>COVID</i> (IPM 2625), <i>président</i> (IPM 1401), <i>crise</i> (IPM 1233), <i>santé</i> (IPM 1224), <i>état</i> (IPM 1134), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1108), <i>gouvernement</i> (IPM 1093), <i>pandémie</i> (IPM 1041)
Wave 3	<i>COVID</i> (IPM 2875), <i>vaccin</i> (IPM 1826), <i>santé</i> (IPM 1288), <i>pandémie</i> (IPM 1246), <i>vaccination</i> (IPM 1207), <i>président</i> (IPM 1156), <i>gouvernement</i> (IPM 1101), <i>crise</i> (IPM 1092), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1060)
Wave 4	<i>COVID</i> (IPM 2891), <i>santé</i> (IPM 1261), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1260), <i>gouvernement</i> (IPM 1185), <i>pandémie</i> (IPM 1132), <i>président</i> (IPM 1075)

Source: compiled by the authors.

According to the frequency lexemes, in Le Monde, from the first wave to the fourth, there are two main trends in the discussion of the pandemic. The first trend directly concerns the situation of defeat and the biopolitical programs of the government. In Le Monde from the first to the fourth waves of the pandemic they are actively discussing:

- the virus itself (“coronavirus”, IPM 2184; “COVID”, IPM 2112 during the first wave; “COVID”, IPM 2625 during the second wave; “COVID”, IPM 2875 during the third wave and “COVID”, IPM 2891 during the fourth wave);
- the crisis that has developed around the pandemic (in the first wave – “crise”, IPM 1681; “épidémie”, IPM 1520; in the second wave – “crise”, IPM 1233 and “pandémie”, IPM 1041; in the third wave – “pandémie”, IPM 1246 and “crise”, IPM 1092; in the fourth wave – “pandémie”, IPM 1132);

– public health problems and measures to protect it (in the first wave – “santé”, IPM 1456; “confinement”, IPM 1372; “mesure”, IPM 1284; in the second wave – “santé”, IPM 1224; in the third wave – “santé”, IPM 1288; and the fourth wave – “santé”, IPM 1261);

– vaccination (mainly in publications of the third wave – “vaccin”, IPM 1826; “vaccination”, IPM 1207).

Therefore, the most detailed discussion of the crisis associated with the pandemic is at the beginning of the pandemic (the existence of a pandemic is not yet recognized, “measures” to counteract the spread of “COVID”, including the “isolation” measure, are touched upon). And the key biopolitical ideologeme associated with active resistance to the pandemic (“vaccine”, “vaccination”) appears only at the stage of the “third wave”, when vaccination in reality becomes the most significant event for social life during a pandemic.

The second trend in the discussion of the pandemic concerns the actors biopolitics who make decisions and “make the biopolitics” of the pandemic period. Along with the frequent lexemes describing the pandemic, these publications constantly mention:

– in the first wave – “état”, IPM 1346; “président”, IPM 1172; “gouvernement”, IPM 1133; “ministre”, IPM 1100;

– in the second wave – “president”, IPM 1401; “état”, IPM 1134; “minister”, IPM 1108; “gouvernement”, IPM 1093;

– in the third wave – “president”, IPM 1156; “gouvernement”, IPM 1101; “minister”, IPM 1060;

– in the fourth wave – “minister”, IPM 1260; “gouvernement”, IPM 1185; “president”, IPM 1075.

Thus, the representation of France's biopolitics during the pandemic in *Le Monde* supports the logic of informing the political and financial elites, giving the authorities feedback on their role in the epidemiological crisis. At the same time, the discourse of practical biopolitics aimed at “saving society” (vaccination) is used locally in *Le Monde* – only in the third period of the fight against coronavirus, when vaccination is recognized as the most reliable measure to cope with the pandemic.

### **Media discourse of *Le Parisien***

*Le Parisien* (French daily newspaper covering international, national and Parisian life, founded in the middle of the 20th century) is less often the focus of attention of media researchers (Lapina, 2022; Barushkova, Komissarova, 2021; etc.). In this study, the collection of texts taken from *Le Parisien* for all “pandemic waves” amounted to 6402 texts with a total volume of 10 421 455 words, the most frequent ones are presented in Table 4.

As in the case of *Le Figaro*, *Le Parisien* of all periods elaborates on the theme of the pandemic and how to cope with it in great detail. In the first wave *Le Parisien* tries to protect the health of the French (“santé”, IPM 1756) and to comprehend the new crisis (“crise”, IPM 1328), using the terminology of the epidemic (“coronavirus”, IPM 4940; “COVID”, IPM 2836; “épidémie”, IPM 1882; “virus”, IPM 1258). Measures (“mesure”, IPM 1404) to counter the spread of the epidemic



are actively discussed: medical masks (“masque”, IPM 1398), isolation (“confinement”, IPM 1733), as well as overcrowded medical institutions (“hôpital”, IPM 1243).

Table 4

**Media discourse on the COVID-19 pandemic:  
Le Parisien**

Periods	Frequency lexemes of media discourse
Wave 1	<i>coronavirus</i> (IPM 4940), <i>COVID</i> (IPM 2836), <i>épidémie</i> (IPM 1882), <i>santé</i> (IPM 1756), <i>confinement</i> (IPM 1733), <i>mesure</i> (IPM 1404), <i>masque</i> (IPM 1398), <i>crise</i> (IPM 1328), <i>virus</i> (IPM 1258), <i>hôpital</i> (IPM 1243), <i>état</i> (IPM 1235)
Wave 2	<i>COVID</i> (IPM 4931), <i>vaccin</i> (IPM 2279), <i>santé</i> (IPM 2223), <i>coronavirus</i> (IPM 1920), <i>test</i> (IPM 1624), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1542), <i>virus</i> , (IPM 1489), <i>mesure</i> (IPM 1440), <i>épidémie</i> (IPM 1419), <i>masque</i> (IPM 1357)
Wave 3	<i>COVID</i> (IPM 5643), <i>vaccin</i> (IPM 3668), <i>vaccination</i> (IPM 2889), <i>santé</i> (IPM 2379), <i>dose</i> (IPM 2241), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1493), <i>gouvernement</i> (IPM 1362), <i>pandémie</i> (IPM 1353), <i>début</i> (IPM 1342)
Wave 4	<i>COVID</i> (IPM 6260), <i>santé</i> (IPM 2639), <i>omicron</i> (IPM 2429), <i>dose</i> (IPM 2194), <i>vaccin</i> (IPM 2132), <i>vaccination</i> (IPM 2123), <i>passé</i> (IPM 1959), <i>ministre</i> (IPM 1846), <i>test</i> (IPM 1636), <i>gouvernement</i> (IPM 1540)

Source: compiled by the authors.

The second wave brings hope for coping with the pandemic, as scientists begin active work on a vaccine (“vaccin”, IPM 2279). The old protection measures (“masque”, IPM 1357) remain, but there is also a new way to control the pandemic – a medical test (“test”, IPM 1624).

The third wave is characterized by an update in the biopolitical language of the pandemic. In *Le Parisien*, an active discussion of vaccination (“vaccin”, IPM 3668; “vaccination”, IPM 2889; “dose”, IPM 2241) of the population begins. At the same time, the fourth wave, while maintaining the focus on vaccination (“vaccin”, IPM 2132; “vaccination”, IPM 2123), fills this vocabulary with the names of new coronaviruses (“omicron”, IPM 2429), as well as concepts associated with new forms of biopolitical control of the population – “health pass” (“passe”, IPM 1959).

It is noteworthy that in the materials about the pandemic in *Le Figaro* the end of the pandemic is often discussed (“fin”, IPM 1129 – the third wave, “fin”, IPM 1254 – the fourth wave), and in *Le Parisien* – the beginning (of vaccination) (“début”, IPM 1342).

The line of power in a crisis of a biopolitical situation in the materials of *Le Parisien* is confidently preserved, but in the background. The media actively informs and educates the population, while constantly reminding that the French authorities are aware of the crisis and are doing everything possible to find a positive outcome (the first wave – “état”, IPM 1235; the second wave – “ministre”, IPM 1542; the third wave – “gouvernement”, IPM 1362; fourth wave – “ministre”, IPM 1846 and “gouvernement”, IPM 1540).

**Biopolitical discourse of French media:  
discussion of results**

The study of media discourse that reflects social processes during the COVID-19 pandemic (Lorenzini, 2021; Schubert, 2021; etc.) allows you to focus on reflecting the behavior of various media during epidemiological crises. Herman –

Chomsky's model of media propaganda (Pedro-Carañana et al., 2018) presents propaganda instrumentally, as a way of presenting a certain version of events, determined by the position of the editors and media owners. In this context, the comparison of media working on a common topic, such as the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, reveals the propaganda direction of the studied media.

An analysis of the media discourse of the French media allows us to describe various strategies in constructing a biopolitical agenda. Thus, according to the results of the study, the actual information and education of the French population about the COVID-19 pandemic was most consistently carried out by two publications: *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien*, however, the strategies of biopolitical information, education and propaganda in these media were not identical.

*Le Figaro* had 4.6 times more articles on COVID-19 (29 584 texts and 10 842 606 words) than *Le Parisien* (6402 texts and 10 421 455 words). At the same time, *Le Parisien* published articles that were more voluminous and detailed (on average, an article in *Le Figaro* about the pandemic includes 367 words, in *Le Parisien* – 1628 words, that is, 4 times longer on average).

*Le Figaro* described the pandemic in stages from the recognition of the epidemic to the establishment of countermeasures. The focus on vaccines and vaccinations in *Le Figaro* appeared already at the stage of the “second wave”, when the vaccine was just created and tested, but then it did not disappear: the topic of vaccines and vaccinations in *Le Figaro* turned out to be essential.

*Le Parisien* articles also, from the “second wave”, focused on the vaccine and vaccination. At the same time, in *Le Parisien*, at each new stage of the pandemic, new biocontrol techniques were discussed (use of medical masks, isolation, green passports, virus tests, etc.). Thus, perhaps the voluminous and specialized texts of *Le Parisien* are geared towards the “biopolitical enlightenment” of more educated and ambitious readers.

As for the authorities, the key subject of biopolitics, *Le Figaro* includes in the description “état”, “gouvernement” and “président”, *Le Parisien* – the state, the government and the minister. In both media, the authorities only accompany the key topic and are functional in the context of the pandemic.

*Le Monde* follows a different strategy when describing the pandemic (22,446 texts and 13 035 706 words, that is, an average of 581 words per article). In the pages of *Le Monde*, the COVID-19 pandemic is described vigorously, but without repetitive detail. The topics of vaccine and vaccination (a life-saving turn in the fight against the pandemic) are only touched upon in the third stage (the start of vaccination of the population). As for the description of the actors of biopolitics, in *Le Monde*, at each stage, both institutions (state, government) and politically significant personalities (minister, president) are mentioned, which is less typical of *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien*. *Le Monde* not only informs about the state of society during the pandemic, but also gradually, contextually reconstructs the hierarchies of biopolitical actors. Consequently, *Le Monde* presents its readers not only as a “societal body”, which is important to call for vaccination, but also as those who want to find out who is the main person in solving the biopolitical problems of France.

Thus, non-state French media appear to be in accord in key positions (focused on informing the population about the pandemic), but different strategies

take into account both the need to solve biopolitical problems (government) and the need to reproduce power hierarchies in the biopolitical field of the modern French society.

## Conclusion

The conducted research allows us to draw the following conclusions.

1. The studied French non-state media during the COVID-19 pandemic were included not only in informing the population about the circumstances of the pandemic, but also in biopolitical education and propaganda programs. This conclusion is based on the active explanation and agitation of *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien* of the French population in favor of vaccination. The linguistic technique used in this study to identify ideologemes in media texts (an analysis of the frequency of the ideologemes “vaccine” and “vaccination”) made it possible to determine the nature of the biopolitical activity of the media.

2. In the course of the study, two scenarios for the organization of media discourse were identified, determined by the target groups and tasks of the media. The first scenario reflects the logic of biopolitical education and propaganda and is aimed at more or less educated readers of the studied media (depending on the nature of the target group). This scenario dominates *Le Figaro* and *Le Parisien*. The second scenario integrates the logic of informing about COVID-19 and the measures used by the authorities to control the pandemic with the logic of reproducing the hierarchies of responsible persons/institutions of biopolitical programs (within the framework of state influence). This script is used by *Le Monde*.

3. The participation of non-state French media in the active promotion of biopolitical programs indicates their close connection with subjects and actors of biopolitics. Probably, the French media promoted the ideas of vaccination, focusing on state biopolitics (pandemic control through vaccination of the “societal body”). It is also possible that biopolitical programs were supported by businesses interested in biopolitical influence and funding the studied media.

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