

## Relevance of the mass media in Prevention, Education and Contextual Management of COVID-19

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to determine the relevance of the media in the prevention, education and contextual management of COVID-19. Methodology: descriptive non-experimental transectional research. An international survey validated by experts was applied, surveying 1082 people during a month. The countries with the highest participation were Peru, Colombia, Mexico, the United States and Russia. The data was processed using SPSS version 25. 64.7% of the respondents affirmed that the means were decisive in preventing the pandemic; 59.1% recognized the importance of the media for awareness and prevention of the pandemic, and 64% valued the importance of the media for the contextual management of the pandemic; demonstrating a significant relationship between the variables. Contributions: the need for strategic, prudent, ethical and socially responsible communication that benefits citizens in a pandemic situation is highlighted.

Keywords: Mass media; communication; electronic media; social networks; education; prevention

## **1. Introduction**

The genesis of communication dates back to when the human being, faced with the need to solve and overcome the challenges of everyday life, needed to network and communicate. From that time to the present day, communication has progressively positioned itself in society. The emergence of the printed media meant a more effective and rapid alternative for sharing information in greater volumes, and with much greater speed and efficiency. Then, the Internet made it possible for the media, especially the printed press, radio and television, to disseminate colossal volumes of information unlimitedly, reaching high levels of dissemination and places never before imagined. Next, computer social networks and intelligent cell phones positioned themselves as an unprecedented international opportunity for media access, making it possible for anyone with a cell phone and an Internet connection to become the protagonist of real-time communication. This fact caused the news scoop to stop being a privilege of the media corporations and become a civic right of wide access. An example of this is the extensive news coverage of the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

In March 2020, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) pointed out that "pandemic is not a word that should be used lightly or recklessly - because - used inappropriately, it can provoke irrational fear or give rise to the unjustified idea that the fight is over, and cause unnecessary suffering and death as a result" (Adhanom 2020).

### *1.1. Literature review*

Mass media are the channels that lead to the emission-reception of a message, a fact, an event... through the written press, radio, cinema, television, internet and computer social networks that are everywhere. Although television has been the most prevalent medium since the late 1980s (Madrid-Morales, 2017), it is currently giving way to intelligent cellular devices which, as well as serving to make a call, offer useful applications for accessing television, radio, cameras, social networks, geolocation, among many other benefits. With regard to the Internet, more than 50% of the world's population forms a billionaire network of connected people who share information, communicate and entertain, without pre-established rules (Capurro, 2019). Cybercommunication also makes access to computerized social networks feasible, currently positioned as the most immediate and least complicated way of sharing information at the macro level, becoming "an opportunity for education, learning and prevention in the event of health emergencies" (Moreno-Montoya, 2020). Their possibilities of penetration are so many that there is no relevant social fact that goes unnoticed, being systematized with immediacy by that natural or legal person who disseminates it. However, this has its pros and cons, because many people know what to share, but do not how, and sometimes they end up communicating what is irrelevant or distorting the truth through improvised or manipulated news (voluntarily or involuntarily), which has a direct impact on the preventive, educational and contextual management role of the mass media.

### *1.2. Preventive role of the mass media*

Prevention is as important as finding a vaccine that will eliminate COVID-19. Prevention is therefore a key factor in saving lives during the current pandemic crisis. Sun et al. (2020) propose that the vital way to reduce mortality is a strong early intervention to prevent disease progression. In this sense, the mass media represent an opportunity to create, innovate and prevent through the news, ratifying itself as a modern and useful communication vehicle to inform the user in real time.

The preventive role of the mass media has been systematized by researchers such as Márquez López et al. (2018) who state that "communication persuades and makes people react to a stimulus". These researchers add that "any person or institution needs to express themselves in different ways to achieve defined objectives". Two essential pillars for communication are fact and truthfulness, that is, even if the communicator treasures a relevant fact, before disseminating it, he or she must ensure that its sources of support are hermetic; then ask oneself: how do I apply the principles of communication to ensure that this fact is purposefully informed and the macro objective achieved? "Communication is a dialogue that will create something new... it conveys its communicative intentions and the listener recognizes them..." (Álvarez Fuentes, 2019); therefore, the message must be sincere, corroborated, constructive and innovative; it must be mediated by an axiological component that, in addition to

typifying the news, avoids mimicking personal interests with social demand. In this way, the quality of the information must awaken in the user a need to continue to be informed.

Without abandoning the preventive intention, the news must be dynamic and correlative since it contains an antecedent that must be highlighted in the message so that the user can understand people's behavior in the face of the facts, the situation and the alternatives for short, medium and long-term solutions. The components of communication are also decisive for the success of the communicational process.

The non-verbal component, for example, allows you to communicate effectively, especially when you live in a context where the audiovisual is the order of the day. Since the 1970s, Mehrabian (1972) has analyzed the relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication, emphasizing that when the user listens, he or she barely mobilizes the emotions, sensations, feelings and ideas, and their communicational impact is lower than that which results from paraverbal activity through intonation, tone and emphasis. Also, he explained that the greatest communicational effect resides in determining elements of body language such as gestures, postures, looks and emotional exteriorization. He also suggests that, in order to communicate effectively, it is important to establish a legitimate and complementary connection among the verbal, paraverbal and corporal.

Unfortunately, communications plan or strategies for dealing with pandemics are either unknown or have not had the expected effect. In view of this reality, there is an urgent need for strategic communication to warn, especially, the most vulnerable sectors of society about the risk factors concerning this pandemic that we are dealing with. It is also important to bear in mind that minimized or exaggerated risk perceptions can potentially undermine the adoption of protective health behaviors (Dryhurst et al., 2020). Therefore, countries must prepare their basic capacities in risk communication and event-based surveillance (Palpan-Guerra & Munayco, 2017), since early warning systems are essential to prevent this type of situation, as long as there is an updated information flow that allows linking mass media with the contextual situation. In this way, it is convenient to warn about the need to communicate with moderation; otherwise, the communicator could provoke unnecessary and counterproductive panic.

Despite the social despair, rising numbers, generalized lack of control, vulnerability and fear evident in the social context, false news has been generated ranging from a miraculous cure and warnings from those who went to the "Afterlife", to intimidating information disseminated through viral messages via WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, among others. Faced with situations like this, the communications professional and, why not, any well-informed person, must be straightforward, not only to refute the illegitimate news, but also to broaden the reliable information, through an educational message, which aims to clarify the facts and educate a society that lacks up-to-date information. "The media can be a unique pedagogical channel to properly instruct and cultivate social values and, on the other hand... prevent disorders that can lead a person to commit suicide" (García Sanmartín, 2018) or other complex

situations. To successfully implement mass communication activities, programs can hire diligent communication staff and outside media consultants with public health experience and use a combination of channels and cost-effective media categories to reach key audiences (Kreslake et al., 2019).

### *1.3. Educational function of the mass media*

Educating the citizen and the citizen being educated is a human need that in times of crisis increases, as well as a social responsibility of the first order that starts by prioritizing the common interests of society over personal ones. Vera, (2016), using mass media, the communicator can "make a storm in a glass of water, or even hide information" and the current situation has been no exception because the disinformation generated by fake news has global reach and causes citizens to create assumptions, take sides and draw conclusions. To educate from this reality, one needs communicators whose axiological profile is based on deep human convictions that serve as support for the communicational process; but, unfortunately, "the media are in a decline in social popularity, where dubious independence, lack of professional rigor, and sensationalism of information are causing the confidence of citizens to decline" (García Sanmartín, 2018, p. 452).

Terrones Rodríguez (2018), from a critical perspective, warns that "the population has been educated by the traditional mass media, the unidirectionality of these media has transformed the social subject into a passive subject, receiver of information and data. Currently, this and other types of situations of human deactivation could be "coming to an end, by the hand of digital communication networks"; but he indicates as very important "that the citizens be careful with the information they receive and that they process it from a critical attitude". He also argues that the traditional media have identified themselves with both the power and interests of powerful companies and owners of the news who have neglected their basic work of researching, corroborating and communicating from an educational, constructive and renovating performance. The thesis of Terrones Rodríguez (2018) finds support in Bourdieu & Passeron (1996) who, since the 70's of the last century, warned about the relations of power and domination that the "dominators" exercise over the "dominated", establishing the concept of Symbolic Violence as a type of indirect and intangible violence of some over others.

For García Sanmartín, (2018, p. 452), the mass media "are a vital channel for teaching and educating about society's problems and showing the tools, strategies and skills for solving and eradicating those problems," especially in the face of the international communications demand that COVID-19 is arousing. To meet this demand, a communicator focused on a heterogeneous user who presents a common information gap to other users is needed. He or she needs to use all the available tools to educate

from his or her range of motivations and interests, through a conscious and responsible professional practice, and pondering the common good over the conventional good.

Gil Quintana (2016, p. 104) states that "the way citizens think determines the fate of different norms and values on which society is based and presses for change. Based on this reasoning, it corresponds to empathize and know the society that will receive, process and give meaning to the message. The communicator, in addition to the news, needs a level of information, at least basic and prior, from his target audience so that the message reaches and is meaningful and relevant to the social need-demand. Unfortunately, in times of pandemic, it is common to find news, sometimes not very assertive, that underestimates the importance of the social, political, economic and personal context of the current times, showing communicational exercises lacking that educational, constructive and guiding function that allows the user to activate his critical thinking, empower himself and act consequently with the time he has lived. For Zhou et al. (2020) the media can influence the public's attitude towards the disease and improve their awareness of self-protection.

The way in which COVID-19 has been revealing the global deficiencies in social security, health, economy, communication and development policies allows us to reflect on the need to put selfishness of all kinds at bay and learn, not how to live, but how to live together, because it is through living together that humanity interacts, communicates, shares, falls, rises and assumes happiness and the common good as a support for behavior and social cohesion. What importance would a communication, divorced from social cohesion, peace and the common good, have? According to Simpson (2018), thinking about education for the common good (he specifies that it is for peace) allows us to recover "our own positive identity and lays the foundation for building social support networks among communities. In terms of communication, "education is seen as the means to achieve active or critical reception, and the formation of audiences, that is, to give rationality and reflexivity to the media experience" (Valdivia-Barrios et al., 2018). In addition to "rationality and reflexivity", it should be noted that the education produced through the mass media also gives participatory and leading support to the receiver; because, as already pointed out, when the message is objective, it educates and transforms the mental structures of the receiver, it has the desired and necessary amplifying effect to put the news in context and achieve the communicational objective.

#### *1.4. Contextual management of mass media*

Contextualizing the need for mass communication generated by the COVID-19, it is worth noting that, as never before, the rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) allows a digital convergence and integration, useful for the contextual management of the pandemic under study. Novoa Montoya (2019, p. 302) highlights two essential concepts for communication today: "immediacy" and "ephemeral". The immediacy is characterized by "messages and quick responses in terms of an accelerated and multitasking world" that finds in the ICT an unprecedented support. According to the author, immediacy could also lead to the concept of "ephemeral", because the information contents

"are constantly transformed by updating", that is, the permanence of the contents depends on how relevant they are to the user. For news to stay in context, it needs to be valid for individuals; otherwise, it could be dismissed. Therefore, the communicator must understand that the impact of the news is decided by the receiver, who directly or indirectly submits the news to a test in order to retain what is useful and disregard what is irrelevant. On the other hand, the massive positioning of ICT has made it possible for communication processes to be increasingly telematic, multifunctional, free and unlimited, creating an opportunity to contextualize the news from all possible strategic sides. It is also a new challenge for the communicator -let's say formal communicator- who needs to compete to position the news with immediacy in a heterogeneous socio-cultural context that cannot wait and that needs, for example, cyber-communication to empower itself and give sense and dynamism to the news event.

Another basic element for the contextual management of COVID-19 is the communicator's ability to discern between the information society (IS) and the knowledge society (KS). The IS basically prioritizes the accumulation of content, making available to the great masses unlimited volumes of information. Whereas the KS emphasizes the analysis and processing of the available information with the aim of giving it a coherent interpretation in accordance, in this case, with the professional needs of the issuing communicator and the demands of the user. The user is also a potential opinion leader who has the telematic tools to interpret the information he receives, process it and disseminate it. San Miguel Arregui et al. (2017) maintain that "opinion leaders influence their immediate circles, being a source of information and advice, exchanging opinions and behaviors, and becoming role models".

Finally, this pandemic is going to transform the world because, despite technology transfer and scientific advances in all areas of knowledge, it "exposes the society we have created, centuries of global processes and the cultivated, networked society and its interdependent infrastructure architecture" (Parnell et al., 2020). But, in view of this fact, is it possible to communicate effectively in a complex and heterogeneous scenario such as the present one and to achieve a social perception in accordance with social need? Since the exercise of communication is not exempt from this transformation, it must adapt to change; therefore, how it is communicated, what is communicated, when it is communicated, why it is communicated, what it is communicating for and who communicates are determining elements within that transformation that is already under way. Therefore, the communicator must make adjustments that allow him/her to innovate, looking for a professional practice open to the times he/she lives in and that works as an incentive to sensitize, prevent and educate in times of crisis.

### *1.5. Research objective*

The information analyzed up to this point, warns of certain cognitive needs of the phenomenon in question that converge on the following question: What is the relevance of the mass media in prevention, education and contextual management in times of pandemic? The fundamental objective of this study was to determine the relevance of the mass media in the prevention, education and

contextual management of COVID-19; a pandemic that, since its inception, has become the object of global discussion and analysis, causing an unprecedented communication bombardment.

## **2. Methodology**

A non-experimental, transectional and descriptive type of research that allows "investigating the levels of one or more variables in a population" is presented (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). Through this methodology, it was possible to describe the relevance of mass media in prevention, education and contextual management of COVID-19. For the theoretical support, the literature review was used, prioritizing current and relevant scientific information on the subject, available in databases and repositories of international prestige such as Scopus, Web of Science and Springer Open, among others.

### *2.1. Data collection technique and instrument*

For the international opinion poll, a survey was applied to 1082 people using Google forms in a time frame from May 25, 2020 to June 25, 2020. The instrument was developed from the Prevention, Education and Contextual Management dimensions and was structured by 17 items (5 multiple-response items and 12 single-choice items under the Likert Scale modality with a distribution of five levels by items).

### *2.2. Population and distribution by gender and age groups*

A survey was applied to 1082 people using Google forms in a time frame from May 25, 2020 to June 25, 2020. The countries with the highest participation were Peru (22.64%), Colombia (11.46%), Mexico (4.71%), USA, (3.04%), Russia (2.77%), Spain (2.49%), Brazil (2.21%), Ecuador (2.03%), Cuba (1.57%) and Australia (1.47%). The distribution by gender was: 59.4% female and 40.1% male and 0.5% others. The distribution by age was: 18-24 (52%), 25-35 (15.4%), 45-54 (11.7%), 35-44 (10.9%), 55-64 (7.3%) and over 65 (2.6%).

### *2.3. Reliability and validity of the instrument*

To determine the reliability of this instrument, a test and retest were applied, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.790, corresponding to a high level of reliability. The validity of the instrument was carried out in two stages, the first one by Expert Judgment to delimit the dimensions and redefine the items. The second one through exploratory factor analysis to each dimension, which resulted in the linkage of all items, presenting uniqueness in each dimension.

## **3. Results**

The data obtained show that, of the 1083 people surveyed, 794 (73.4%) said that the main medium through which they were informed or learned about COVID-19 was television. 593 (54.8%) through



social networks (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram...). Whereas 448 (41.4%) through the Internet (Web pages, blogs, e-mails, videoconferences...). When asked what media they currently use to get information about COVID-19, this trend continued, but with slight increments: 837 (77.4%) through television, 609 (56.3%) through social networks and 530 (49%) through the Internet.

### 3.1. Prevention Dimension

Table 1. Relevance of mass media in the prevention of COVID-19

Items	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid
Very low	14	1,3	1,3
Low	39	3,6	3,6
Regular	228	21,1	21,1
High	700	64,7	64,7
Very high	101	9,3	9,3
Total	1082	100,0	100,0

<sup>1</sup> Source: Own elaboration from data processed by SPSS Software version 25

The Prevention dimension represents a set of items that, when statistically processed, yield a preponderantly high level of 64.7%. It means that a large percentage of the people surveyed referred that the mass media were determinant to become aware of the COVID-19, to safeguard their lives and to protect their families from the infection. Likewise, they were very helpful in becoming aware of the danger posed by COVID-19 to society and to understand that when they return to normal, they must change their lifestyles. A very small number of people reported the opposite with 1.3 and 3.6%; therefore, it was assigned a low level.

The highest concentration of people who recognize the preventive role of the mass media is found in the 18-24 age group; whereas the 45-54-year-old group is not aware of the preventive action in the media, giving them a low level.

Table 2. Social perception of the mass media: prevention dimension

I feel that to help prevent COVID-19, communicators need	Answers	Percentage of cases
	Percentage	
More crisis management training	14,9%	55,4%

Improved ability to adapt to change	8,8%	32,9%
More capacity to persuade society	8,6%	32,1%
Ability to work as a team	6,6%	24,4%
Ability to work multidisciplinary	7,3%	27,1%
Be informed with data and evidence	14,3%	53,2%
Analyze the facts before disseminating them	3,6%	13,3%
Contextualize the facts before releasing them	10,0%	37,1%
Make better use of the wide range of existing media	7,3%	27,3%
Advanced technological equipment	7,4%	27,6%
Being caring people ready to help others	11,2%	41,8%
Total	100,0%	372,2%

<sup>1</sup> Source: Own elaboration from data processed by SPSS Software version 25

Table 2 shows citizen feelings about what communicators lacked to effectively prevent COVID-19.

3.2. Education Dimension

Table 3. Relevance of mass media in the education of the COVID-19

Items	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid
Low	27	2,5	2,5
Regular	165	15,2	15,2
High	640	59,1	59,1
Very high	250	23,1	23,1
Total	1082	100,0	100,0

<sup>1</sup> Source: Own elaboration from data processed by SPSS Software version 25

The Education dimension represents a set of items that, when statistically processed, yield 59.1% for a high level. It means that a large percentage of the people surveyed refer that the mass media were fundamental to know the basic measures of prevention and to ensure that the lack of corroborated information and the mishandling of existing information made them feel fearful of losing their life or that of a beloved family member. Also, thanks to the media, they have been adequately instructed in dealing with the pandemic and the media has helped educate them for when it is time to return to

normal. On the other hand, a very small number of people (2.5%) reported the opposite, so they were assigned a low level.

The highest concentration of people who recognize the educational role of the mass media is in the 18-24 age group, compared to older adults who also attribute this role, but at a regular level of impact.

Table 4. Social perception of the mass media: education dimension

I feel that in order to educate about COVID-19, the communicators lacked	Answers	Percentage of cases
	Percentage	
Getting closer to the vulnerable sectors of society	12,2%	52,2%
Avoid reporting doubtful or false facts	11,2%	47,9%
Denying false news with evidence	10,4%	44,3%
Be better trained in crisis management	8,7%	37,3%
Demonstrate ability to adapt to the crisis	6,8%	29,0%
Demonstrate ability to work as a team	4,5%	19,1%
Be open to multidisciplinary work	4,7%	19,9%
Be informed with data and evidence in real time	9,5%	40,4%
Carefully analyze the facts before disseminating them	9,2%	39,4%
Carefully contextualize the facts before disseminating them	7,0%	29,7%
Make better use of the wide range of existing media	4,5%	19,4%
To have advanced technological equipment	5,4%	23,0%
Being caring people ready to help others	6,0%	25,7%
Total	100,0%	427,4%

<sup>1</sup> Source: Own elaboration from data processed by SPSS Software version 25

Table 4 shows citizen feelings about what communicators lacked to effectively educate about COVID-19.

### 3.3. Contextual Management Dimension

Table 5. Relevance of mass media in the contextualization of COVID-19

Items	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage valid
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I Strongly disagree	82	7,6	7,6
In disagreement	109	10,1	10,1
Neutral	192	17,1	17,1
I Agree	479	44,3	44,3
I totally agree	220	20,3	20,3
Total	1082	100,0	100,0

<sup>1</sup> **Source:** Own elaboration from data processed by SPSS Software version 25

The data in table 5 show that users value as very important the relevance of the mass media in the contextualization of the COVID-19, since 44.3% agree with it and 20.3 totally agree for a sum of 64.6%; on the contrary, 17.7% is the sum of those who disagree and totally agree.

Table 6. Social perception of mass media: contextualization dimension

I feel that thanks to the media I was able to contextualize the risk factors of:	Answers	Percentage of cases
	Percentage	
My country versus other countries	40,0%	57,3%
My country versus the regions of my country	35,9%	51,4%
My country versus the locations in my region	24,1%	34,4%
Total	100,0%	143,1%

<sup>1</sup> **Source:** Own elaboration from data processed by SPSS Software version 25

Table 6 shows how the citizens feel about the contextualization of risk factors by the mass media.

#### 4. Discussion

With regard to the Prevention dimension, it is observed that the population, especially in the 18-24 age group, values the role of the mass media as positive and fundamental for the prevention of COVID-19. This result is key for communicators to take advantage of the possibilities of penetration offered by the spatial and situational context and, especially, the Internet to access a greater social representation and inform it with objectivity. Taking South America as an example and averaging the percentages of internet penetration in Bolivia, Argentina, Peru, Brazil, Paraguay, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay, it is found that, to date, approximately 74.41% of the population has access to the internet (INDEC, 2020); (INE, 2019); (INEI, 2019); (CETIC, 2019); (DGEEC, 2018); (SUBTEL, 2017); (INEC, 2019); (DANE-Colombia, 2019). These data constitute a possibility to entwine actions aimed at the prevention of

health emergencies in a strategic and contextualized way. However, why, after eight months of a pandemic, does South America have at least five countries in the top twenty for COVID-19 infections?<sup>2</sup> The factors can be multiple and complex, but the studies addressed transversely in this study show that poor prevention is one of the determining factors.

When contrasting South America with the prevention strategies of countries such as Vietnam, it was found that "transparency and clear communication through social and official networks was determinant in changing community behaviors toward mask use, hand washing, and social distancing, as of February 2020" (Ha et al., 2020). Vietnam, with a population of more than 95 million, had exemplary data at the end of June (2020): fewer than 400 confirmed cases, most with medical discharge and virtually no infections. This was the result of a comprehensive study, in which the mass media were also a determining factor.

Finset et al. (2020) suggest four elements as fundamental keys to informing citizens in times of pandemic: openness and honesty, consistency and specificity, decision-making capacity, and emotional management. These elements confirm the need for a communicator with well-trained human and axiological support to, from that base, focus on communicating with prudence, ethics and social responsibility. The results of this research emphasize that the human being is the center of attention and all actions must be aimed at their well-being. To this end, it is necessary to rethink and, if necessary, advance to an innovative communicational approach that allows to move away from those traditional obsolete ways of communicating and print processes in line with the most pressing demands of society through the use of all available media, especially those with which societies identify more: Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter ... Thanks to the sharing facilities offered by these applications, "the speed of information transmission in disaster contexts has accelerated across social, cultural and geographic boundaries (Park et al., 2020).

In the Education dimension, it is perceived that the population, especially the 18-24 age group, values the importance of the mass media in education about the COVID-19 as positive and fundamental. The importance of knowing the basic protection measures by accessing information corroborated by reliable sources should be highlighted. At the same time, because with proper instruction, false information, including its psychosocial effects, can be dismantled and the fundamental challenges of this pandemic situation can be addressed with more responsibility.

Accurate and well-developed communication can facilitate the way societies deal with uncertainty and fear, promote and achieve adherence to necessary behavior change, satisfy people's fears, and foster

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<sup>2</sup> Updated to 28/10/2020. <sup>3</sup> Brazil (5.44 M); <sup>7</sup> Argentina (1.12 M); <sup>8</sup> Colombia (1.03 M); <sup>11</sup> Peru (891 k); and <sup>15</sup> Chile (505 k). "Statistics on the coronavirus (COVID-19)" Google: COVID-19 pandemic by country and territory.

<https://g.co/kgs/gX4UBw>

hope in the face of crisis (Finset et al., 2020). At the same time, "it is essential to evaluate sources of primary and useful information about the epidemic to help people in communities respond and make informed decisions to prevent and control COVID-19" (Tran et al., 2020).

Assuming the relevance of mass media in education about COVID-19 as determinant, this research argues that communicators should take the news to the most vulnerable sectors of society, because that is where disinformation is most latent and harmful. Let's make the following analogy based on the article entitled the role of environmental factors to transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19), 2020, published by AMB Expr 10, whose authors are Hadi Eslami, and Mahrokh Jalili. This paper integrally discussed the role of "environmental factors and conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind speed, as well as food, water and wastewater, air, insects, inanimate surfaces, and hands in the transmission of COVID-19" (Eslami & Jalili, 2020). Based on the importance of the information that these researchers share, it is worth asking: do today's societies have the mastery of language, terms, computer management, or scientific language necessary to analyze, process and objectively use the information found in publications such as this one? Obviously, no. And, therefore, the educational work of the communicator becomes very important.

In the Contextual Management dimension, the people surveyed give great importance to the relevance of the mass media in order to contextualize the news according to the most pressing needs of the local context, a context where the communicator must bring a preventive, educational and transformative message; To do so, the communicator needs to manage the wide range of existing media, bringing fast, useful, accurate and synthesized information to the community, because a crisis like the current pandemic requires measures that are fast, effective and contextualized, and because "the same set of data can be sensitive in different contexts" (Zwitter & Gstrein, 2020).

In the study proposed by Tran et al. (2020), it was clarified that, in the cities, during the outbreak and the peaks of the epidemic, people preferred to be informed through regular updates; but this reality varied with respect to the rural areas where people either do not have access to the Internet or are more attached to traditional media such as television, radio or newspapers. When this precision is compared with the results found in the survey, 57.2% of the respondents feel that thanks to the mass media they have been able to contextualize the risk factors of their country in relation to other countries; 51.1% feel that thanks to the mass media they have been able to contextualize the risk factors of their country in relation to the regions of their country; and only 34.4% assure that thanks to the mass media they have been able to contextualize the risk factors of their country in relation to the localities of their region. This result shows that the communication strategies proposed to address this situation have not been able to reach the most vulnerable sectors in need of information, whether due

to a lack of determination on the part of the communicator, lack of funding, or simply the absence of communication strategies with social intention and responsibility.

## **5. Conclusions**

Prevention through the mass media requires communicators with situational management skills and a proclivity to adapt to change, capable of persuading empathetically, but with the truth. Also, disciplined professionals willing to work in multidisciplinary teams, with ethics to inform, advanced management of ICT and commitment to service. These elements determine that the communicator can enter into the otherness and, using his general and specific competences, develop preventive actions that impact positively on the socio-cultural context.

Educating through the mass media demands a permanent professional who can translate the most complex and difficult to understand information to society, given that in the social context real limitations prevail, such as language skills, reading comprehension problems, scientific language comprehension, deficient use of the Internet for research purposes, connectivity limitations and access to electronic devices. These aspects make access to information difficult and become a breeding ground for those who are dedicated to generating false or unsubstantiated information that alters people's emotional stability.

Contextual management is a determining factor so that through the mass media it is possible to prevent and educate in an organized and focused way. However, in order to focus on the socio-cultural context and have a positive impact on it, communication strategies are needed; strategies that are not only well defined and focused on the message, but also on the people, their customs, possibilities of access to information and traditional ways of communicating and living in their community environment.

Finally, the communication professional must be trained to prevent and educate the population, explaining with clarity and conciseness the information that goes from the genesis of a complex situation to suggested behaviors to overcome that situation, aligning himself to the most effective means to reach and inform citizens: this study found that television, social networks and the Internet in that order are the most used media by people in times like these.

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