

## News Values as Constructed in Egyptian News Reports on COVID- 19: A Corpus Linguistic Study

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### Abstract

The present study seeks to make a significant contribution to linguistic research related to COVID-19 news. As dozens of news were published daily tackling this unprecedented health crisis. The study adopts a corpus-driven approach to investigate how news values are constructed in a selected corpus of 100 news articles selected from Al Ahram Online (<http://english.ahram.org.eg>). The research not only examines the news values within these articles but also explores the specific linguistic resources and strategies that enhance the construction of these values. To achieve this, the study applies the Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA) framework, as outlined by Bednarek and Caple (2017), which identifies and analyzes news values such as Eliteness, Impact, Negativity, Positivity, Personalization, Proximity, Superlativeness, Unexpectedness, Timeliness, and Consonance. The analytical process employs AntConc 3.4.0 software to generate keyword lists, concordance lines, and collocations, thereby providing a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic resources that construct the representation of news values in COVID-19-related news discourse.

**Key words:** *COVID- 19, News values, Corpus linguistics, Keyword list and Collocations.*

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## 1.1 Introduction

The news is considered as the essence of the press, by which an idea for an article or an interview can be generated. Fuller (1996) states that, most journalists would agree that ‘news is a report of what a news organization has learned about matters of some significance or interest to the specific community that news organization serves’ (Fuller, 1996, p. 6). The news also has a great effect on the daily life of the people since the press can attract the argument to become a part of the debate, thus determining the social meaning of the events Nahi (2005). News has a specific significance as it is not only a simple reflection of the events and incidents. Rather, journalists look at the incidents and events through a specific typological discipline of the news values that are considered frameworks for the news. Nahi (2005) elaborates that the framework is a ready measurement to select the news and offer it fast as much as possible in an organized way. Consequently, publishing any pieces of news is not based on the availability of the biggest number of its composition elements. Rather, it is based on the value and importance of each element of these composition elements. This study handles the news values established in COVID- 19 news in *Al Ahram* on line <http://english.ahram.org.eg> given that since the outbreak of this pandemic, hundred news pieces concerning the developments and the effects of this global pandemic were published daily in all newspapers. Hence, this thesis aims to explore to what extent the construction of news values enhances newsworthiness in the text.

## 1.2 Aims of the study

The present study aims at investigating the news values constructed in the Egyptian COVID- 19 news. The paper also aims to explore how news values related to COVID-19 have been linguistically established in the Egyptian news. The paper also aims to discover the extent to which the construction of the news values related to COVID- 19 news enhances the newsworthiness in the text.

## 1.3 Research Questions

The study aims to give answers to the following questions:

1. What are the most frequent news values used in *AL Ahram* on line <http://english.ahram.org.eg> ?
2. What are the linguistic resources used in establishing news values in the Egyptian news handling COVID-19?

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2. 1 News Values**

The approach to news values presented by Galtung & Ruge is firmly centered on how events become news. Most of the researches since the 1960s, including these in Linguistics, have used Galtung & Ruge as the starting point. Since their approach has become the dominant conceptualization of news values in journalism research. Galtung & Ruge (1965) hypothesize that “the more an event satisfies the criteria/news factors, the more likely that it will be registered as news. Once a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965, p. 65). Since the publication of Galtung & Ruge’s seminal work, many researchers have taken up similar perspectives that include criteria that help to determine the likelihood of an event being reported as news. The present study adopts Bednarek and Caple’s (2017) approach in restricting the term *news values* to the ones “concerning newsworthiness of events –their potential newsworthiness in a given community, their newsworthiness as determined by news workers in news practice, or their newsworthiness as constructed through discourse” (Bednarek and Caple, 2017, p. 42). The DNVA approach is concerned with the ways in which news values are established through discourse. This approach revolves around the systematic investigation of the role of linguistic and visual resources in establishing newsworthiness; that is, “how specific events, issues or news actors are constructed as newsworthy.

(Bednarek and Caple, 2017, p.55) presented ten news values which are:

- Consonance: The event is discursively constructed as (stereo) typical (Limited here to news actors, social groups, organizations or countries/nations);

- Eliteness: The event is discursively constructed as of high status or fame (including but not limited to the people, countries, or institutions involved)
- Impact: The event is discursively constructed as having significant effects or consequences (not necessarily limited to impact on the target audience);
- Negativity: The event is discursively constructed as negative, for example, as a disaster, conflict, controversy, criminal act
- Personalization: The event is discursively constructed as having a personal or 'human' face (involving non- elite actors, including eyewitnesses);
- Positivity: The event is discursively constructed as positive, for example, as a scientific breakthrough or heroic act.
- Proximity: The event is discursively constructed as geographically or culturally near (in relation to the publication location/ target audience)
- Superlativeness: The event is discursively constructed as being of high intensity or large scope/ scale.
- Timeliness (Newness): The event is discursively constructed as timely in relation to the publication date: as new, recent, ongoing, about to happen, or otherwise relevant to the immediate situation/ time (current or seasonal).
- Unexpectedness The event is discursively constructed as unexpected, for example, as unusual, strange, rare.

### **2.1.1 Consonance**

According to (Bednarek and Caple, 2017, p. 57) the news value of Consonance has been approached in three different ways:

1. In relation to the expectedness or predictability of events.
2. In relation to expectations about how events proceed and how they are reported.
3. In relation to the stereotypes that exist around people, organizations, and countries.

### **2.1.2 Eliteness**

According to Bednarek and Caple (2017), Eliteness refers to “the discursive construction of the news event, including people,

institutions/organizations and countries, as of high status” (Bednarek and Caple 2017, p. 58).

### 2.1.3 Impact

According to Bednarek and Caple (2017) “the event is discursively constructed as having significant effects or consequences not limited to impact on the target audience” (Bednarek and Caple, 2017, p. 83). Bednarek and Caple (2006) illustrate that the news value of Impact can be established through linguistic resources that assess the significance of the happening such as *milestone*, *momentous*, *historic*, or *crucial*. Such evaluations construct the event as high in impact. The news value of impact can be negative or positive.

### 2.1.4 Negativity and Positivity

Bednarek and Caple (2006) explain that the event is discursively constructed as negative or positive. According to Bednarek and Caple (2017), negativity may be constructed from lexis referring to environmental disasters (*floods*, *bushfires*), accidents (*a fatal drunken-driving accident*), damage and detriments (*deluged the town*, *linked with brain abnormalities*), crime and terrorism (*incest and child abuse*, *terrorist attack*), injury, disease, and death (*bodies*, *taken to hospital with injuries*) to references to chaos and confusion (*turmoil*, *chaos*), political crises (*corruption inquiry*), opposition and division (*pro- / anti- , controversial*),<sup>6</sup> war and conflict (*the Ukraine conflict*, *violent clashes*), and other human suffering (*malnutrition*, *ordeal*) (2017, p.85).

The counterpart of Negativity is Positivity, which can be constructed with

similar linguistic devices, with opposite valence: As Bednarek and Caple (2017) point out that positivity can be achieved by many different ways for example by reference to positive emotion/ attitude (e.g. joy, celebrate), positive evaluative language and labels (e.g. the brilliant astrophysicist, natural intellectuals), positive lexis (e.g. success, win, help), and descriptions of positive behavior (e.g. unveiled a cabinet with an equal number of men and women) (2017, p.88).

### 2.1.5 Personalization

According to Bednarek and Caple (2017) “personalization is related to the event which is constructed as having a personal or

‘human’ face (involving non- elite actors, including eyewitnesses)” (Bednarek and Caple ,2017, p. 88).

Bignell (2002) suggest that “personalization strategies include the use of names, ages, job descriptions, residence, personal appearance, and gender roles, which heighten the concreteness of individual reference” (Bignell, 2002, p. 91). Bednarek and Caple (2017) illustrate that References to ‘ordinary’ people, either by name (e.g. *Jean Baxter*) or non- elite role label (e.g. *a mother of five*): Identifying a person by name is more personalizing than referring to individuals only by a category label.

### 2.1.6 Proximity

According to Bednarek and Caple (2017) “proximity refers to the event which is constructed as geographically or culturally near (in relation to the publication location/ target audience” (2017, p.91). They add that the most obvious way in which Proximity is established is through references to places which are near the target audience, for example, a Baltimore County democrat constructs Proximity for an audience in Baltimore or in the state of Maryland (United States). According to Ungerer (1997) “Proximity can be established through reference to generic places such as *the county/ region* and adjectives such as *local* or *home- grown* where they concern the target audience” (Ungerer, 1997, p. 315).

### 2.1.7 Superlativeness

Bednarek and Caple (2017) elaborate that “Superlativeness is achieved by an event which is constructed as being of high intensity or large scope/ Scale. Superlativeness can be established through intensification and quantification” (2017, p.93). Grammatical or lexical intensifiers include adjectives and adverbs which indicate a high degree, force, or intensity of actions. Concerning quantifiers, Ungerer (1997) links numerals and other quantity expressions to the news value of ‘volume’ “We include under the general heading of *quantifiers* various parts of speech which function to emphasize amount” (1997, p. 315). Regarding intensified lexis, (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p. 443) consider adjectives that ‘express an extreme or maximum degree of a property’ as *implicit superlatives*. Bednarek and Caple (2017) regard

‘implicit superlative’ adjectives as intensified lexis but also include verbs (*stun, wreck, smash, sweep, hammer, ravage, devour, vandalize*), nouns (*panic, epidemic, dash, terror, blaze, rampage*), and adverbs (*desperately*), in addition to adjectives (*petrified, desperate*). Bednarek and Caple have argued that metaphors are ‘particularly important for establishing construal of “newsworthy” events’ (Bednarek, 2005, p. 24). They also add that metaphor is used in figurative language to establish Superlativeness. Bednarek and Caple (2017) have argued also that comparison either by using comparative form or superlative form is another way of establishing Superlativeness in the news.

#### 2.1.8 Timeliness (Newness)

Bell (1995) explains that “the event is constructed as timely in relation to the publication date: as new, recent, and ongoing, about to happen, current, or seasonal” (1995, p.322). Since Timeliness is concerned with temporality, important resources for constructing this news value include temporal references, tense and aspect the different ways in which print, and broadcast news stories can incorporate time and mentions different means by which ‘temporal news value’ can be enhanced. Temporal references and tense/ aspect establish Timeliness when they locate an event close to the time of publication (e.g. *today, currently, this week, last night, recent, yesterday’s*).

#### 2.1.9 Unexpectedness

According to Bednarek and Caple (2017) the event is discursively constructed as unexpected, for example, as unusual, strange, rare. Unexpectedness can be constructed linguistically by using adjectives such as *astonishing, unprecedented, different, rare, curious*, and adverbs such as *unusually, unexpectedly, or extraordinarily*.

### 2.2 Review of Literature

There have been several studies that handled “news values”. One of these studies is entitled “Discursive news values analysis of English and Arabic science news stories” made by El-Siedi (2019). The study aimed at comparing the news values constructed to enhance newsworthiness in English and Arabic science news stories. The findings of the analysis have indicated that newsworthiness in science news stories is established largely by means of the discursive

construction of the following news values: Eliteness, Impact, Negativity, Newness, Positivity, Proximity, Superlativeness, and Unexpectedness. The analysis has shown similarities as well as variation in the relative frequency of news values and the linguistic resources used in their construction.

Another study entitled “Discursive news values analysis of crime reports” by Makki (2019), shows “how” newsworthiness is constructed linguistically/discursively in a sample of Iranian crime and misbehavior reports. It is considered a novel approach as both linguistic analysis of “crime reports” and the context of “Iranian journalism” are among under-researched areas. One-month worth editions of two Iranian/Farsi language newspapers were collected and the data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively with reference to the analytical framework of Bednarek and Caple (2017). While the quantitative analysis showed the construction of Eliteness as the most frequent news value in both newspapers, there were differences in the construction of news values between the newspapers. Qualitative analysis of the data also showed the construction of news values in line with the sociocultural values prevalent in society. Notably, and to the best of our knowledge, no study has applied the Discursive News Values Approach on COVID-19 news. In this context, the present study aims at investigating the values constructed in COVID-19 news as this topic dominated the world’s newspapers during the last two years. People all over the world were interested in reading the pandemic news. The study sheds the light upon the linguistic resources used to construct newsworthiness in Egyptian news. It also investigates the most frequent news values established in *Al – Ahram* news handling Covid 19.

## 2. Methodology

In this study, the analysis of news values is based on 100 texts chosen from *Al Ahram* <http://english.ahram.org.eg>. The news concerning COVID-19 will be collected from March 2020 to March 2021 as this period is considered the peak of the virus spread all over the world. The analysis will start by handling the news related to the



virus from March 2020 to June 2020 as this phase is considered the peak of the first wave of COVID 19. Then, the analysis will handle the phase of reopening and lifting the restrictions which took place in June 2020. After that, the analysis will handle the news related to the second wave which emerged in Egypt in November 2020 till March 2021. Corpus linguistics is used for analyzing 100 news in *Al Ahram* online <http://english.ahram>. The corpus analysis toolkit used for text analysis and concordance is Lawrence Anthony's AntConc (2019), freely available online, and able to read and process data converted to a required format (.txt). The version used in this paper is AntConc 3.4.0 (*Macintosh OSX*). The reference corpus will be (COCA Corpus which is a one-billion-word corpus of Contemporary American English). The aim is to test and evaluate the integration of corpus techniques in applying discursive news values analysis (DNVA). These techniques include concordance tools, collocations and key word list.

### **3. Procedures of Data Analysis**

The researcher followed these steps in the corpus analysis of news values:

1. Analysis of keyness with the help of COCA as a reference corpus in comparison with the specialized corpus.
2. Analysis of the concordance lines to reveal the context in which the keywords are mentioned as well as the grammatical structure patterns.
3. Selecting significant concordance lines and clicking on each line to go to file view where the term is shown in its full context to enable the researcher to explore larger extracts and identify additional linguistic resources for constructing news values.

The data collected will be analyzed using Antconc 3.4.0 software tools which are key word list, concordance tool, file view and collocations. According to Scott (p.110), the "keywords" in corpus linguistics refer to the words of which frequency is significantly higher than the Corresponding words in the reference

corpus (COCA Corpus which is a one-billion-word corpus of Contemporary American English).

The “Keyword List” function in Antconc, which could perform a statistical comparison between the target corpus and the reference corpus, where the significantly high-frequency words in the target corpus relative to the reference corpus were listed from top to low according to the degree of difference, also referred as “Keyness” in Antconc.

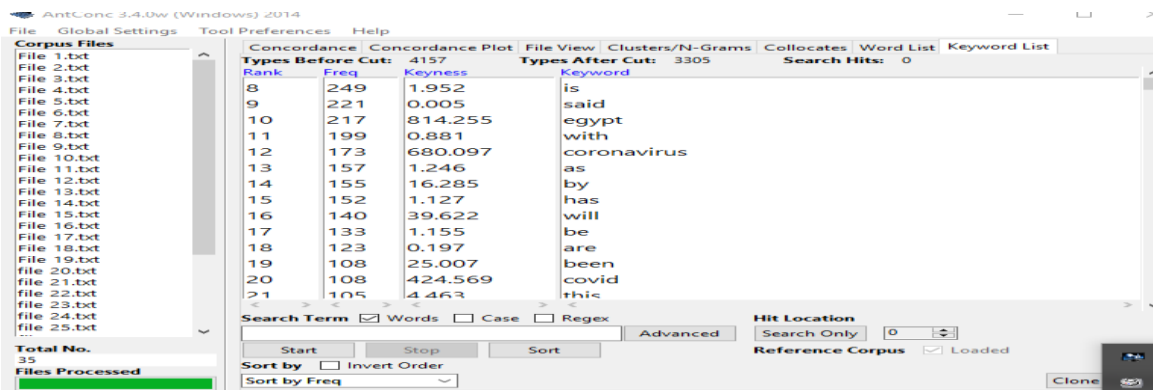
For this purpose, this research conducted a qualitative analysis of each word in the keyword list through the function of “Concordance” and “File view” to examine the role of the words in the formation of the discourse. Based on the qualitative analysis, some keywords had limited semantic meaning in the research, such as functional words (e.g., “a”, “the”, and “it”) were deleted leaving only key words related to the pandemic.

A different way of examining the context of words is provided by a concordance list tool which is ‘a collection of the occurrences of a word-form, each in its own textual environment’ (Sinclair, 1991, p. 32). Baker (2006) points out that “collocations create connotations which are the ideas, emotions, or qualities a particular word is intuitively associated with” (Baker, 2006, p.95). Stubbs (2001) defines collocates as “they are indicative of semantic preference which is “the relation, not between individual words, but between a lemma or word-form and a set of semantically related words” (Stubbs, 2001, p. 65).

#### **4. Data Analysis**

##### **4.1 First Wave data analysis**

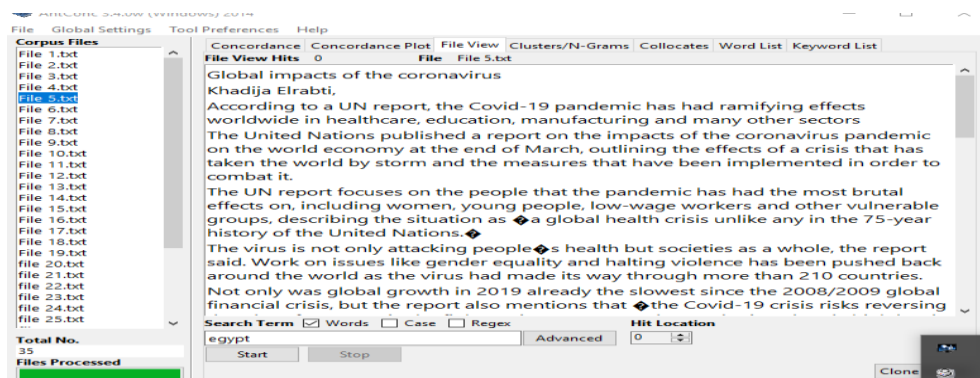
The following list shows that the word “Egypt” ranked the tenth in the key word list with keyness 814.255.



**Figure (1) Key word list in the first wave news.**

The following example illustrates that the word “Egypt” is mentioned in contexts which elaborate reports on the daily cases of corona virus like in “Egypt recorded 510 new coronavirus infection on Sunday, the highest daily rise since the pandemic hit the country in February bringing the total number of cases to 12.229. The health ministry said. The previous extract constructs Proximity represented in the word “Egypt” combined with Negativity expressed by the clause “Egypt reported 510 new coronavirus infections”. The example also establishes Superlativeness which is enhanced by using the superlative adjective “the highest” and quantifiers by using “number of 12.229. The extract also establishes Eliteness by mentioning “the health ministry”.

As for the word “coronavirus” it ranked twelve in the keyword list with keyness 680.097. Most news in this phase concentrated on the negative effect of the coronavirus upon all the aspects of our lives. The following news is taken from UN report reflects to what extent coronavirus changed our lives in many ways



**Figure (2): the keyword “coronavirus” taken from file view.**

In the previous news, Negativity is established through verbal phrases like “has had ramifying effects”, “has had the most brutal effects”. The superlative adjective “the most brutal” in the coming example also establishes Superlativeness “The UN report focuses on the people that the pandemic has had the most brutal effects on, including women, young people, low- wage workers”. Superlativeness is also constructed in the previous example by the use of the superlative adjective “the slowest” as well as the intensified lexis “exacerbating” and “high” in addition to the metaphor represented in the word “fight” “Not only global growth in 2019 already the slowest since the 2008/ 2009 global financial crises, but the report also mentions that the Covid 19 crises risks reversing decades of progress in the fight against poverty and exacerbating already high levels of inequality within and between countries.

The next example shows also the negative impact caused by the virus in the field of education “Education is another area that has been hugely impacted by the coronavirus. The global lockdown has caused many schools and universities to close which has had a huge impact on children and young adults as their learning and socializing has been interrupted without warning and without any clear idea of how long these closures will go on for. 166 countries have implemented country wide school and university closures, more than 1.52 billion children and youth are currently out of school or

university, representing 87 percent of the world's enrolled school and university student population". Through the previous news, it is obvious that Negativity is established using verbal phrases like "has caused many schools and universities to close". "Their learning and socializing have been interrupted". Superlativeness also is established by using quantifiers like in the next example "More than 1.52 billion children and youth are currently out of school or university, representing 87 percent of the world's enrolled school and university student population"

The following news handles some of the hardships which a lot of students face because of the virus spread. "It seems that many students were having a difficult time transitioning to online work, they were experiencing these hardships apparently unbeknownst to many faculty and administrators. Their biggest complaint was the work was too much and that their professors were widely piling on assignments". In the previous news, Negativity is constructed by using the negative lexes "difficult time", "hardships" and "complaint". The next extract establishes Personalization by referring to the experience of ordinary people "Mohammed Bahaa, 20, an AUC business marketing major, said until we shifted to the online mode everything changed. I found myself attending live lectures, having to watch some recorded lectures, several assignments posted in bulk of e- mail received daily. For sure, the workload was higher than the normal time when we used to attend lectures on campus". The previous extract constructs Negativity combining with Superlativeness through using the comparative adjective "the workload was higher than the normal time."

The following table illustrates the frequency of each of the news values in the first wave news of AL- Ahram news stories:

News value	count	percentage
Proximity	267	39.5%
Negativity	115	17,03%
Eliteness	105	15,5%
Superlativeness	70	10.37%

Positivity	55	8.14%
Newness	26	3.85%
Unexpectedness	23	3.40%
Consonance	7	1.03%
Personalization	7	1.03%
Total	675	100%

**Table (1): Frequency of news values in the first wave news.**

In terms of the frequency of news values shown in the previous table. It is observed that Proximity came first followed by Negativity. Eliteness came third, Superlativeness came fourth. Positivity came fifth. Newness came sixth followed by unexpectedness. Personalization and consonance were the least frequent news values.

The following part elaborates the ways by which each of the news values is handled in the COVID-19 first wave news in Al-Ahram news stories as well as examples on each of these values.

#### **4.1.1 Proximity**

The analysis revealed that Al-Ahram news had a stronger tendency to ensure newsworthiness through establishing the geographical and cultural Proximity of the reported events. Cultural and geographical proximity in Al- Ahram newspaper was established mainly by using the noun “Egypt” combined with Negativity and Positivity.

- The following are some examples in which Proximity is combined with Negativity:
- The number of infections in Egypt is increasing
- Egypt recorded 510 new coronavirus infections.
- The following are some examples in which proximity is combined with positivity:
- Egypt was successful in combating the virus
- Egypt will receive its share of the vaccine.

#### **4.1.2 Eliteness**

Eliteness can be constructed by referring to elite persons, institutions, or organizations. The following table represents the frequency of the types of Eliteness in the first wave news

Type of entity	Count	Percentage
Persons	85	73.91%
Institutions / organizations	20	17.39%

**Table (2) frequency of the types of Eliteness in the first wave news.**

In most of the examples containing Eliteness, Eliteness is combined with either Negativity or Positivity. The following are some examples of Eliteness:

- The minister of health blames people's ignoring of social distancing for this week's rapid increase in the number of coronavirus cases.
- The government's decision to resume work in the construction sites aims to save the sector's 10 million workers from joblessness

#### **4.1.3 Impact( Negative/ Positive)**

The analysis revealed that the Impact news value appeared to be inseparable from Positivity/Negativity, Impact being typically constructed as positive or negative. The next table indicates the frequency of the positive and negative impact in the first wave news:

Impact	Count	Percentage
Negativity	115	67.6%
Positivity	55	32.35%

**Table (3) frequency of positive and negative impact in the first wave news.**

#### **4.1.4 Negativity**

The table indicated above elaborates that negative impact was given more focus than the positive impact in the first wave news. The first wave concentrated on the news concerning the virus all over the world to assure the citizens that all the world is suffering from the virus not just Egypt. So that, we will find the word "world" repeated 65 times in the first wave news combined with negativity like in the next example:

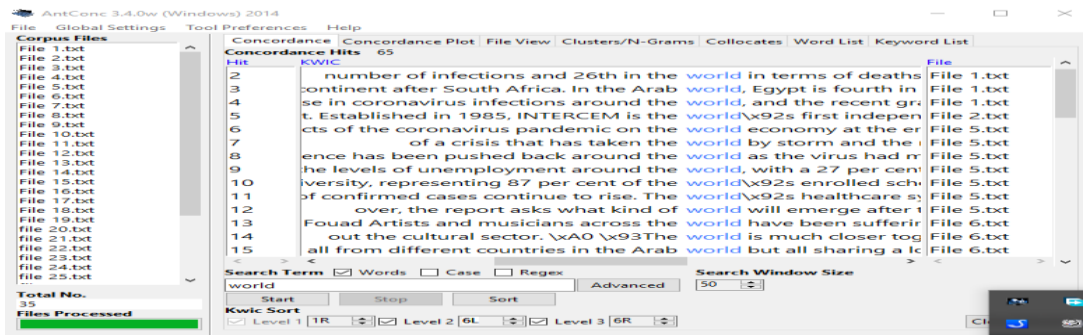


Figure (3) frequency of the word “world” in the first wave news.

In other examples Negativity is combined with Proximity represented in the word “Egypt” to elaborate the serious effect of the virus over different fields of the Egyptian society as indicated in the next examples:

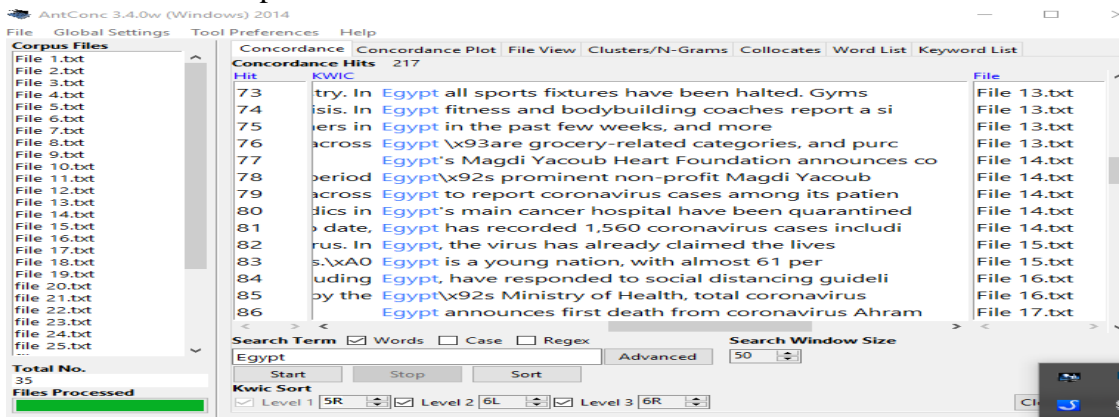


Figure (4) frequency of the word “Egypt” in the first wave news .

- The next table indicates the main linguistic sources employed for establishing negative impact in the first wave news stories:

Linguistic sources	Examples
Verbs with negative connotations	Collapse- threaten- slow down- break down- infect- blame
Nouns	Infections- fatalities- shortage- collapse
Adjectives	Difficult- catastrophic- hard

Table (4) the linguistic sources for negative impact in the first wave news.



#### 4.1.5 Positivity

As for positivity, the analysis revealed that the news values of establishing Positivity are less than those that establish Negativity. It is found that most of the examples constructing Positivity concentrate on the country's effort to protect the citizens from the virus and support them, so it is found that the word "support" is mentioned many times in the first wave news as follows:



**Figure (5) frequency of the verb “support” in the first wave news.**

The coming table indicates the linguistic resources employed for establishing Positivity in the first wave news:

Linguistic source	Examples
Verbs with positive connotations	Protect- support- coordinate-recover
Verbs referring to counteractions to undesirable conditions	Decrease- curb- reduce- shorten-combat
Nouns	Safety- recovery-
Adjectives	positive

**Table (5) linguistic sources for establishing Positive Impact in the first wave news.**

#### 4.1.6 Superlativeness

The analysis also revealed that the news value of Superlativeness is combined with either Positivity or Negativity. The next table elaborates the frequency of the linguistic sources for constructing Superlativeness. The table illustrates that the frequency of quantifiers is the most one because most of the news in the first wave was concentrating on the numbers of deaths and infections occurred every day:

Linguistic source	Count
Specific numerals	47
Superlative adjectives	10
Metaphors	5
Lexical intensifiers	4
Comparative adjectives	4

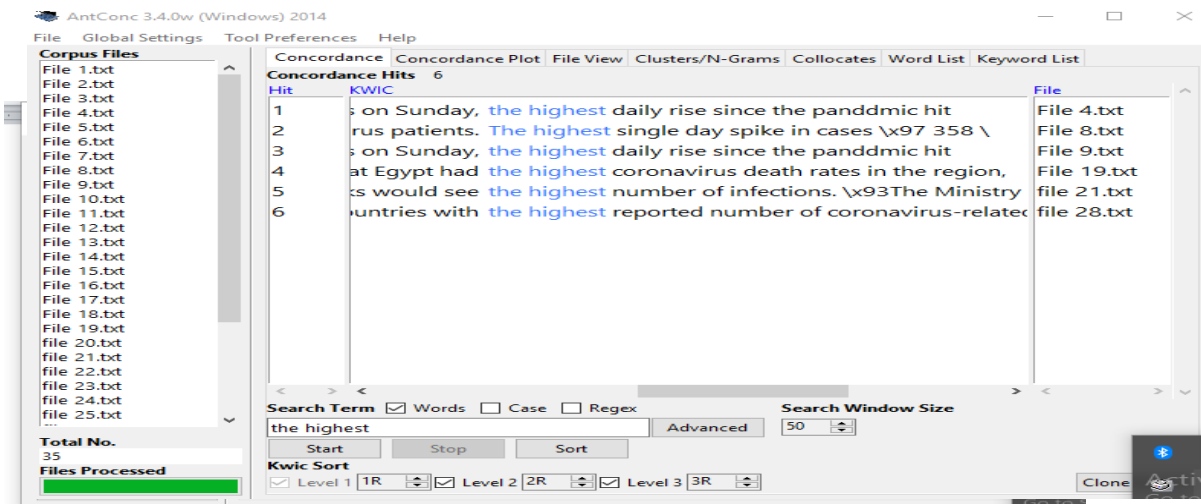
**Table (6) frequency of linguistic sources for establishing Superlativeness in the first wave news.**

The next table elaborates the linguistic sources for establishing Superlativeness in the first wave news stories:

Linguistic source	Examples
Superlative adjective	Egypt recorded the highest daily infections.
Comparative adjective	The workload was higher than the normal time.
Specific numerals	Egypt recorded 510 infections.
Lexical intensifiers	So, why this exaggerated fear of coronavirus.
Metaphors	The country battles against the virus

**Table (7) the linguistic sources for establishing Superlativeness in the first wave news.**

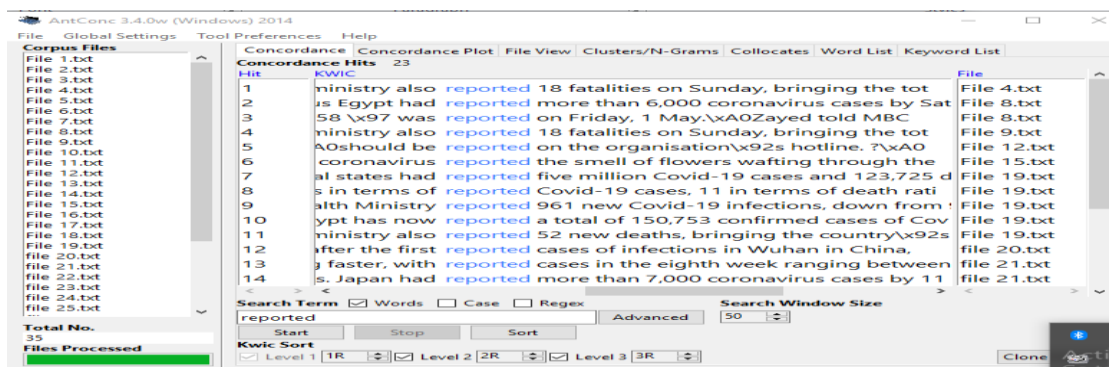
- Collocated with numerals the key words “cases”, “reported” and “recorded” are followed by specific numerals to elaborate the numbers of infections and deaths reported every day.



- concordance lines of the key word “cases” show that it is preceded by specific numerals to construct Superlativeness:

**Figure (6) the frequency of the keyword “cases” in the first wave news.**

The following is concordance lines with the verb “reported”



followed by specific numerals about the numbers of deaths and infections reported every day:

**Figure (7) frequency of the verb “reported” in the first wave news.**

The following is a concordance lines for the Superlative adjective “the highest” which is collocated with numbers of deaths and infections:

**Figure (8) frequency of the superlative adjective “the highest” in the first wave news.**

The following is concordance lines for the verb “recorded” which is accompanied with numbers of deaths and infections recorded daily

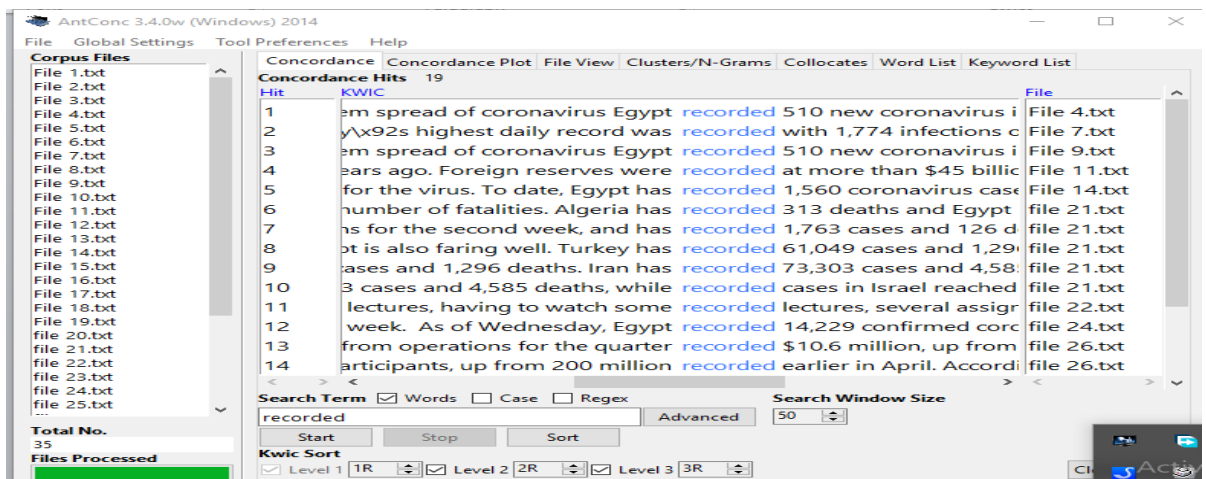


Figure (9) frequency of the verb “recorded” in the first wave news.

#### 4.1.7 Newness

Bell (1995) explains that the event is constructed as timely in relation to the publication date: as new, recent and ongoing” (Bell,1995, p.322). Lexical sources for establishing Newness in the first wave news:

Temporal references	This week- recently- currently
Verbs	Reveal- discover
Adjectives	New- novel
Ordinal number (first)	The first time

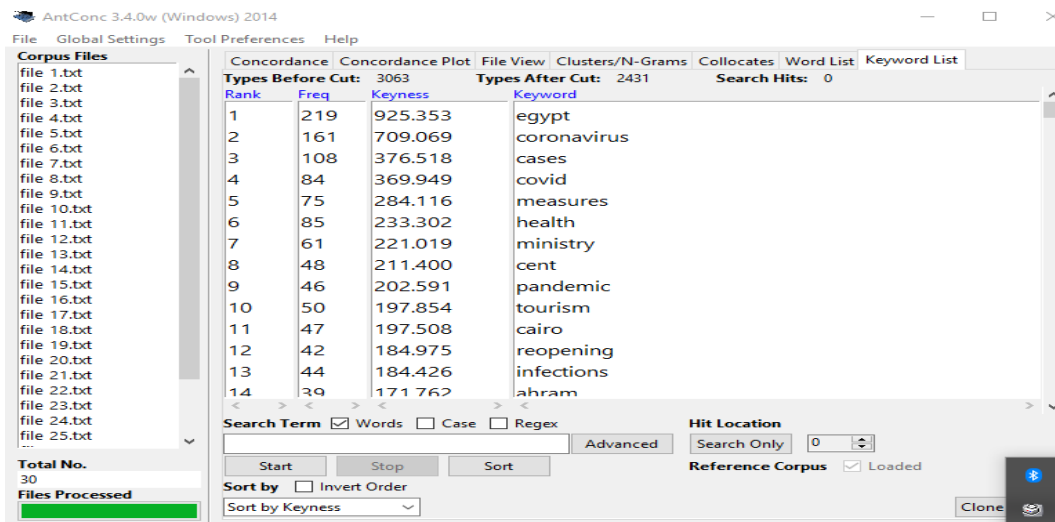
Table (8) linguistic resources for establishing Newness in the first wave news.

#### 4.1.8 Unexpectedness

It involves the discursive construction of the event as unusual or strange. Unexpectedness can be constructed by the ordinal number “first” when it establishes the event as rare: “on Basita, on 7 September, this is the first time that we have done a virtual theatre experience”. Unexpectedness can also be constructed by adjectives like “unexpected” and “unprecedented”.

## 4.2 Reopening phase data analysis

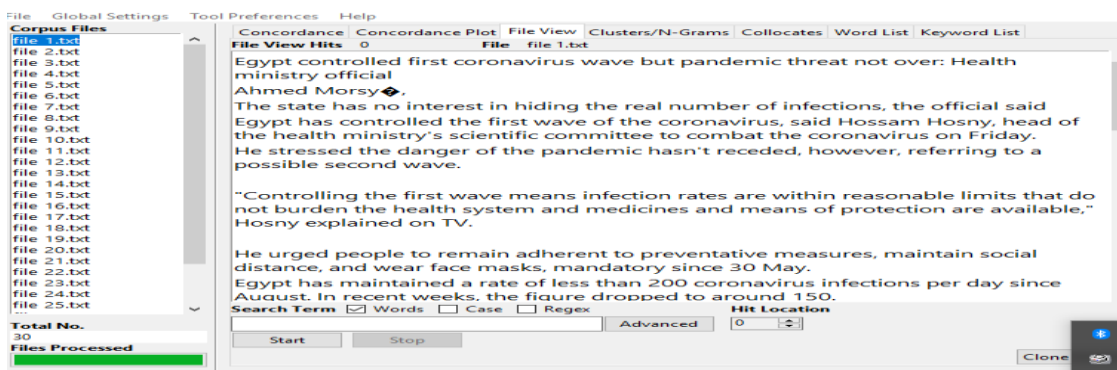
In June 2020, the country decided to lift some of the restrictions which were imposed because of the virus. The next table illustrates the key word list concerning the reopening phase. The word “Egypt” is the most frequent word with frequency 219, followed by the word “coronavirus” with frequency 161 and then the word “cases” with frequency 108.



Rank	Freq	Keyness	Keyword
1	219	925.353	egypt
2	161	709.069	coronavirus
3	108	376.518	cases
4	84	369.949	covid
5	75	284.116	measures
6	85	233.302	health
7	61	221.019	ministry
8	48	211.400	cent
9	46	202.591	pandemic
10	50	197.854	tourism
11	47	197.508	cairo
12	42	184.975	reopening
13	44	184.426	infections
14	39	171.762	ahram

Figure (10) the keyword list in the reopening phase news.

The following examples illustrate some news in which the word “Egypt” was mentioned.



File View Hits 0 File file 1.txt

Egypt controlled first coronavirus wave but pandemic threat not over: Health ministry official Ahmed Morsy

The state has no interest in hiding the real number of infections, the official said Egypt has controlled the first wave of the coronavirus, said Hossam Hosny, head of the health ministry's scientific committee to combat the coronavirus on Friday. He stressed the danger of the pandemic hasn't receded, however, referring to a possible second wave.

"Controlling the first wave means infection rates are within reasonable limits that do not burden the health system and medicines and means of protection are available," Hosny explained on TV.

He urged people to remain adherent to preventative measures, maintain social distance, and wear face masks, mandatory since 30 May.

Egypt has maintained a rate of less than 200 coronavirus infections per day since August. In recent weeks, the figure dropped to around 150.

Search Term ☒ Words ☐ Case ☐ Regex Hit Location 0

Figure (11) the keyword “Egypt” from file view.

The previous news constructs Positivity in “Egypt controlled the first coronavirus wave”, “means of protection are available” while the news establishes Negativity by using the noun clauses “pandemic threat not over”, “the danger of pandemic hasn’t receded” and “referring to a possible second wave”. The news also establishes Eliteness by referring to the entitlement of persons “Hossam Hosny, head of the health ministry’s scientific committee to combat the coronavirus.

The coming news illustrates that Egypt will not resort to lock down if the corona virus cases increase again “Egypt has enough coronavirus medications to cover market needs, Egypt will not be reinstating a full or partial lock down if coronavirus infections surge once again, Egypt’s Health Minister Hala Zaid told the 67<sup>TH</sup> session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean Tuesday”. The previous news constructs positivity “Egypt has enough coronavirus medications”. Consonance is also established in the previous news by holding comparison with the past that establish the current happening as expected by using the expressions “reinstate” and “once again”. Eliteness is also established by referring to role label of famous persons “Egypt’s Health Minister Hala Zaid”.

The next news elaborates that Egypt begins to reopen some activities “Egypt gradually reopened the economy in June, lifting a nighttime curfew, reopening restaurants and places of worship and resuming regular international flights as part of its plan to co exists with the virus. The cabinet has warned however those restrictions will be re imposed when infection rates increase”. In the previous news, positivity is established by using the verbs “reopen”, “coexist”. Consonance is constructed by the verbs “reopen” and “re impose”. Eliteness represented in the high-status entity “the cabinet” is combined with negativity “the cabinet has warned however those restrictions will be re imposed when infection rates increase”

The next news sheds the light upon the consequences of reopening some sectors “more than two months have passed since Egypt began to lift restrictions to stem the spread of Covid 19 and

gradually began reopening businesses. Life is to a great extent back to normal. People are catching up not only with family and friends but running errands that have been put off for more than three months. "Noha Mohsen, 51 had been waiting to do her annual mammogram but was worried about the risk of coronavirus infections at medical scanning center. This week her doctor told her to try to go through with it while coronavirus infections are low as there are fears there will be a resurgence in numbers when winter approaches". The previous news constructs Superlativeness through using metaphor in "Economy survives Covid 19". There is also Positivity represented in the following verbal phrases "lift the restrictions", "began reopening businesses", "back to normal". There is also Negativity constructed from the verb "put off" and the noun "risk". Newness also is established by using the temporal reference "this week". Personalization is also established through referring to a whole story of one individual experience

As the word "coronavirus" ranked the second in the keyword list. The next examples shed the light upon the word "coronavirus" in some news. The coming news reflects the changes that happened regarding the religious habits in all mosques "when the coronavirus pandemic compelled the government to close mosques more than three months ago to curb the spread of the infections, many worshippers were devastated. The azan or call to prayer was modified to include a verse that says pray in your dwelling. Now to the relief and delight of worshippers, the call to prayer is back to normal. As of last Saturday, prayers are once again allowed in mosques but with new rules. The last news enhances Negativity by using the verbal phrases "compelled the government", "close mosques" and 'were devastated". Positivity is also reinforced by the nouns "relief", "delight" and "back to normal". Consonance is also constructed by the word "once again". Newness is also established by the adjective "new".

The following table illustrates the frequency of each of the news values in the reopening phase:

News values	Count	percentage
proximity	258	47.86%
Eliteness	115	21.33%
positivity	90	16.69%
Negativity	25	4.6%
Superlativeness	20	3.7%
Personalization	14	2.5%
Newness	11	2.04%
Unexpectedness	3	.5%
Consonance	3	.5%
Total	539	100%

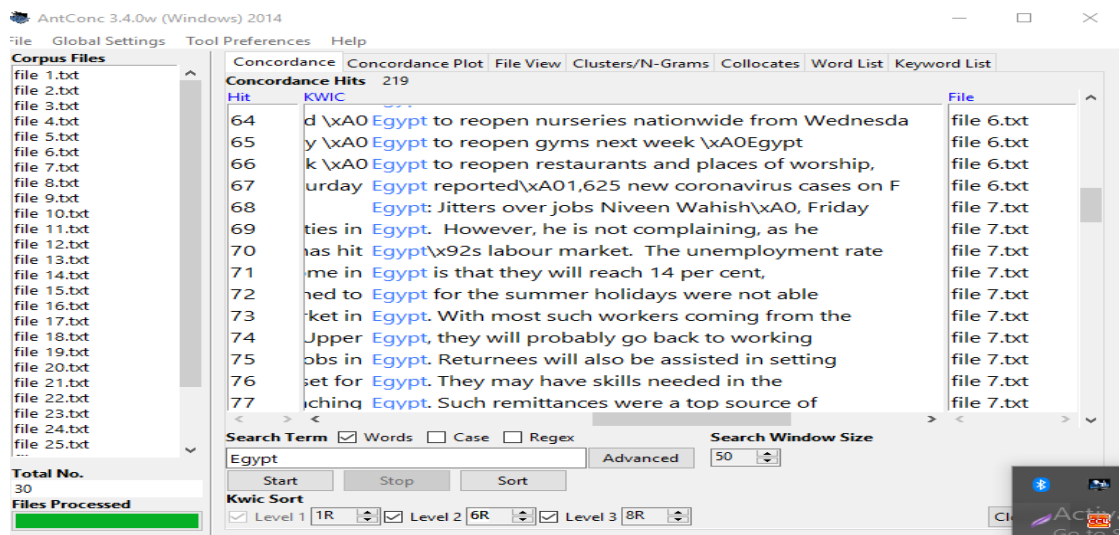
**Table (9) frequency of the news values in the reopening phase news.**

The coming part illustrates the ways by which each of the news values is presented in the reopening phase news as well as examples on each of them

#### **4.2.1 Proximity**

The previous table illustrates that Proximity is the most frequent news value in the reopening phase. Proximity is constructed mainly by the word “Egypt” with a frequency 219 and the word “the country” with frequency 39. The analysis shows that in most of the examples that contain the word “Egypt”, it is combined with Positivity like in the next table taken from the concordance tool:





**Figure (12) frequency of the keyword “Egypt” in the reopening phase news.**

The previous table elaborates that the word “Egypt” is combined with Positivity represented in the verb “reopen” in more than example like “Egypt to reopen nurseries”, “Egypt to reopen gyms” and “Egypt to reopen restaurants”.

#### 4.2.2 Eliteness

As for Eliteness, it is the second most frequent news value in the reopening phase with frequency of 115. The coming table illustrates the linguistic markers for establishing Eliteness:

Type of entity	Count	Percentage
Persons	20	17.39%
Institutions / organizations	95	82.60%

**Table (10) the linguistic markers for establishing Eliteness in the reopening phase news.**

In most examples containing Eliteness, it is combined with Positivity like in the next examples:

-The government is expected to take a decision on the reopening of houses of worship, cinemas, sports and social clubs and restaurants

after a meeting this week of the committee set up to manage the coronavirus crises.

-The government is moving towards the gradual reopening of the economy.

-The cabinet would probably announce the reopening of the mosques by the end of the week.

#### 4.2.3 Positivity

As for Positivity, it is the third most frequent news value in the reopening news with frequency of 90. The coming table indicates the linguistic resources employed for establishing Positivity in the reopening phase:

Linguistic source	Examples
Verbs with positive connotations	Reopen- back to normal- boost-resume
Verbs referring to counteractions to undesirable conditions	Drop- stem- decline
Nouns	gradual opening - easing of precautionary measures
Adjectives	positive

**Table (11) the linguistic sources for establishing Positivity in the reopening phase news**

Some examples of Positivity from the reopening news:

- Egypt to take decision this week on reopening houses of worship, and restaurants.
- No reported cases of Covid 19 variant in Egypt
- Egypt controlled the first coronavirus wave.

#### 4.2.4 Negativity

As for Negativity, it is the fourth news value in terms of frequency in the reopening phase. The following table indicates the linguistic sources for establishing Negativity:

Linguistic source	Example
Verbs with negative connotation	Suffer- devastated- compel
Nouns	Threat – shortage- restrictions – empty-
Adjectives	Negative- bad- hard

**Table (12) the linguistic sources for establishing Negativity in the reopening phase news.**

Most of the examples containing Negativity concentrate on the dire consequences of closing many activities before lifting the restrictions:

- People around the world have been locked up in their homes.
- People have had to give up almost all their daily routine
- The beaches of Alexandria are vacant in an unprecedented way.

#### **4.2.5 Superlativeness**

As for Superlativeness, it is the fifth news value in terms of frequency.

The following table elaborates the linguistic resources for constructing Superlativeness:

Quantifiers	Egypt recorded more than 1.000 cases a day
Superlative adjective	Covid 19 in Egypt has reached its lowest point
Intensified lexis	Higher unemployment figures may have been spurred by the fallout from Covid 19 pandemic

**Table (13) the linguistic sources for establishing Superlativeness in the reopening phase news.**

#### **4.2.6 Personalization**

As for Personalization, it is the sixth news value in terms of frequency. Most of Personalization examples were concentrating on the suffering of people during the period of lockdown and the extent to which this phase changed their life. Personalization represents the experience of ordinary news actors through using direct quotes like in the next example: “a middle-aged man who preferred to remain anonymous said that: I used to go out all the time but now after spending a lot of time at home, I have learned to cook for myself as I live alone”. Personalization also can be realized when news actors are speaking on behalf of ordinary citizens experience such as in the next example: “Hossam Ali put off renewing his ID for as long as he

could. When he finally went, he had to spend two hours in a crammed office in the simmering heat with his masks on”.

#### 4.2.7 Newness

It is the seventh news value in terms of frequency. According to Bednarek & Caple (2017), It is about how an event is established as temporally relevant to the reader at the time of publication/ broadcast: the event can be construed as having recently happened (recency), as new (newness), as still ongoing (immediacy), as happening in the near future (imminence).

- Lexical sources for establishing Newness in the reopening stage news:

Temporal references	In recent weeks- currently
Verbs	Reveal
Adjectives	New
Ordinal number (first)	The first time

**Table (14) the linguistic sources for establishing Newness in the reopening news.**

#### 4.2.8 Unexpectedness

Unexpectedness is the eighth news value in terms of frequency. Bednarek & Caple (2017) elaborate that the label Unexpectedness indicates that this value is about establishing contrast with the expected. Such a contrast can arise because aspects of an event are construed as atypical, unusual, rare, different, that is, out of the ordinary in some way because they conflict with what audiences have come to expect based on their experience of the world. Unexpected is established in the reopening news by using the adjective “unprecedented”.

#### 4.2.9 Consonance

It is the ninth news value in terms of frequency. “Consonance is defined as the construction of an event’s news actors, social groups, organizations, or countries/ nations in a way that conforms to stereotypes that members of the target audience hold about them” (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 66). Consonance is constructed in the reopening phase using the expressions “re impose” and “re open”.

### 4.3 Second wave news data analysis

In November 2020, Egypt entered the second wave of the virus. The following keyword list shows that the word “Egypt” ranked the first with frequency “198”. The word “coronavirus” ranked the second with frequency 151.

Rank	Freq	Keyness	Keyword
1	198	969.014	egypt
2	151	768.465	coronavirus
3	69	351.153	pandemic
4	68	346.064	covid
5	61	310.440	cent
6	66	251.539	cases
7	67	237.426	per
8	69	220.069	health
9	45	207.059	deaths
10	42	197.800	el
11	42	192.192	virus
12	39	189.289	egyptian
13	45	189.070	measures
14	42	171.086	ministry

**Figure (13) the keyword list in the second wave news.**

The following are some examples that contain the word “Egypt”. The following news elaborates some decisions taken by the government to curb the spread of the virus “In the cabinet meeting on Sunday discussing the latest developments of Covid 19 in Egypt, Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly issued several decisions to curb the spread of the virus after a leap in official number of cases in the last week. The government has also banned New Year’s Eve celebrations to curb the spread of disease in the country. Said Nader Saad, the official cabinet spokesperson. The cabinet also declared that it is completely banning gatherings like funerals and weddings behind closed doors”. The previous news enhances Eliteness by referring to elite persons’ entitlement like in “Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly” and “Nader Saad, the official cabinet spokesperson”. Eliteness is also constructed by referring to various institutions like “the government” and “the cabinet”. Superlativeness is also achieved by using the superlative adjective “the latest developments”. Negativity is also

achieved in this news by using the noun clauses like “leap in official numbers” and “banning gatherings”.

The next news sheds light on the numbers of infections and it also urges the citizens to adhere to the precautionary measures to avoid difficult scenarios. “Egypt reported 329 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, bringing the total infection tally to 111.613 since the outbreak of the pandemic in February. Wednesday’s infection toll is the highest to be recorded in Egypt since 31 July. Egypt’s Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly said during a cabinet meeting last week that the country will not exercise zero tolerance against the people who fail to adhere to preventive measures against the pandemic urging citizens to adhere to the restrictions to avoid unnecessary difficult scenarios”. The previous news constructs Superlativeness by using quantifiers “329 new cases” and “111.613”. Superlativeness is also constructed by using the superlative adjective “the highest”. Eliteness is also constructed by referring to famous person by their description “Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly”. Negativity is also established by using the verbal phrases “will not exercise zero tolerance” and “fail to adhere to preventive measures”.

The coming news elaborates the Egypt achieved high growth rates despite of COVID 19. “Minister of Finance Mohammed Mait told MPs on Monday that Egypt was one of only a few countries in the country to have achieved high growth rates during the COVID 19 pandemic thanks to its economic reform program. According to the world Bank report preventive measures such as cutting interest rates and stimulating business had made the economy more capable of containing the negative impacts of the coronavirus”.

-The following table elaborates the frequency of the news values in the second wave news:

News values	Count	percentage
proximity	235	44.67%
Eliteness	119	22.62%
Negativity	75	14.25%
Newness	34	6.64%
Positivity	30	5.70%

Superlativeness	20	3.80%
Consonance	7	1.33%
Unexpectedness	5	,95%
Personalization	1	,190%
Total	526	100%

**Table (15) the frequency of the news values in the second wave news.**

The next part illustrates the way by which each of the news values is presented in the second wave news of Al- Ahram online. It also presents examples of each of these values.

#### **4.3.1 Proximity**

The table shows that Proximity is the most frequent news value in the second wave. Proximity is established mainly by the word “Egypt” and the word “the country”. It is found that the word “Egypt” is combined with negativity in most of the examples:

- Egypt recorded 788 new cases
- Egypt struggles with oxygen tank shortage
- Egypt drops 4 positions in global innovation index

#### **4.3.2 Eliteness**

As for Eliteness, it is the second news value in terms of frequency. In most of the examples, Eliteness is combined with Negativity like in:

- Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly said New year’s celebrations will be banned
- The health ministry reported 118 new cases.

#### **4.3.3 Negativity**

As for Negativity, it is the third news value in terms of frequency. It is observed that most of the examples containing negativity concentrate on the negative effect of the virus on all aspects of society like in the next examples:

- Some people have lost family members while others have lost their jobs.
- Most of the world’s countries are feeling the pinch of the economic fallout from the pandemic.

#### 4.3.4 Newness

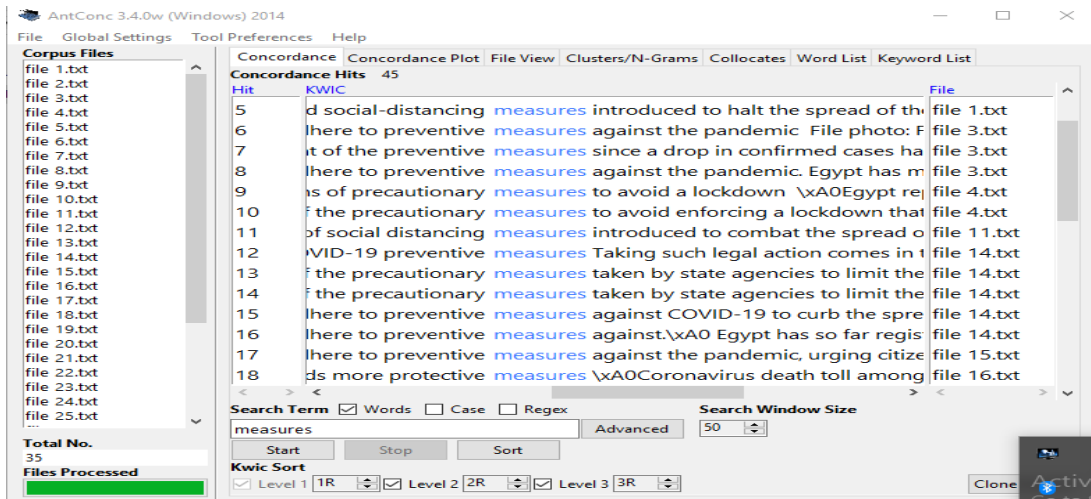
As for Newness, it is the fourth news value in terms of frequency. The next table elaborates the linguistic markers for establishing Newness:

Temporal references	This week- recently- currently
Verbs	Reveal- discover
Adjectives	New- novel
Ordinal number (first)	The first time

**Table (16) the linguistic sources for establishing Newness in the second wave news.**

#### 4.3.5 Positivity

As for Positivity, it is the fifth most frequent news value in the second wave. During the second wave, most news concentrated on the precautionary measures adopted by the country to avoid the lockdown again as happened in the first wave. It is found that the word “measures” is mentioned 25 times preceded by the word “protective” or “precautionary” as follows:



**Figure (14) frequency of the word “measures” in the second wave news.**



#### 4.3.6 Superlativeness

As for Superlativeness, it is the sixth news value in terms of frequency. The next table elaborates the linguistic sources for establishing Superlativeness in the second wave news stories:

Linguistic source	Examples
Superlative adjective	The second highest return in the emerging market
Comparative adjective	The number is higher than the official numbers
Specific numerals	Egypt recorded 510 infections.
Lexical intensifiers	The virus has paralyzed economy- crippled communities- hindered mobility
Metaphors	Beating the virus

**Table (17) the linguistic sources for establishing Superlativeness in the second wave news**

#### 4.3.7 Consonance

As for consonance, it is the seventh news value in terms of frequency; consonance is repeated 7 times in the second wave news. Consonance is achieved by using the word expected like in the next example “Egypt is expected to be among the top 5 countries to achieve growth in 2020”. Consonance is also constructed by the word again like in “The deficit according to fund estimates will decrease again to 5.2 percent next year”. It is also achieved by the word rebound like in “The country has been recently witnessing a rebound in coronavirus daily cases and deaths after months of reporting low and steady daily tolls”.

#### 4.3.8 Unexpectedness

As for Unexpectedness, it is the eighth news value in terms of frequency, it is achieved by the word “first” like in “this is the first time Egypt crosses 1013 cases per day”. Personalization is the ninth and the least frequent news value in this phase.

### 5.Results

Concerning the frequency of news values in the first wave, it is observed that Proximity came first followed by Negativity. Eliteness

came third, Superlativeness came fourth. Positivity came fifth. Newness came sixth followed by unexpectedness. Personalization and consonance were the least frequent news values. Whereas in the reopening phase, Proximity came first followed by Eliteness and then Positivity to show the positive impacts of reopening on people and all sectors of the society. Negativity came fourth concentrating on the dire consequences that occurred because of closing many activities before lifting the restrictions. Superlativeness came fifth, followed by Personalization, which came sixth to shed light upon the suffering of people during the phase of locking down and to what extent those persons don't want to resort to closing activities again. The least frequent news values in this phase were Newness, Unexpectedness, and Consonance. Concerning the second wave, Proximity came first followed by Eliteness then Negativity. Newness came fourth and Positivity came fifth as most of the news in this phase was concentrating on the precautionary measures taken by the country in order to avoid closing again in the second wave. As for Superlativeness, Consonance, Unexpectedness and Personalization were the least frequent news values in this phase. The analysis revealed that Al-Ahram news had a stronger tendency to ensure newsworthiness through establishing the geographical and cultural Proximity of the reported events. Cultural and geographical proximity in Al- Ahram newspaper were established mainly by using the noun "Egypt" combined with Negativity and positivity. Eliteness can be constructed by referring to elite persons, institutions, or organizations. As for Negativity and Positivity, they are established mainly by using negative or positive lexes and adjectives. Regarding Superlativeness, it is established by using specific numerals first to show the daily numbers of deaths and infections related to the virus. It is constructed also by using superlative adjectives, comparative adjectives, lexical intensifiers and metaphors. As for Newness, it is established by using temporal references, verbs, adjectives and the ordinal number "first". Regarding "Unexpectedness", it is applied by using the ordinal number "the first" as well as the adjectives "unexpected" and "unprecedented".

Finally, “Consonance” is achieved by using the verb “expect”, “re impose” and the word “again”.

## 6. Conclusion

This study aims at investigating the news values in the Covid 19 news in Al – Ahram online from March 2020 till March 2021 as in this period much news was released every day tackling the virus and the effect left by the virus on all aspects of society. The present study adopts Bednarek and Caple's (2017) approach in restricting the term *news values* to the ones "concerning newsworthiness". The DNVA approach is concerned with the ways in which news values are established through discourse. This approach revolves around the systematic investigation of the role of linguistic and visual resources in establishing newsworthiness; that is, "how specific events, issues or news actors are constructed as newsworthy. The analysis was divided into three phases; the first phase is related to the first wave which represented the peak of the virus. The second phase tackled the reopening period, which witnessed some of the restrictions. The third wave handled the second wave of the virus. The findings of the analysis have indicated that newsworthiness is established largely by means of the discursive construction of the following news values: Eliteness, Impact, Negativity, Newness, Positivity, Proximity, Superlativeness, and Unexpectedness. The examined texts have also demonstrated that the combining of two or more than two of the news values is a predominant feature of the three phases. Positivity and Negativity have appeared inseparably related to other values.

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## ملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى المساهمة في البحث اللغوي للأخبار المتعلقة بكوفيد ١٩ باستخدام علم المتون لدراسة القيم الإخبارية في ١٠٠ خبر متعلق بكوفيد ١٩ مأخوذ من الأهرام أون لاين. كما تتناول الدراسة المصادر اللغوية التي تعزز القيم الإخبارية . وتتبنى الدراسة منهج التحليل الخطابي للقيم الإخبارية كما طرحه بدنارك وكابل (٢٠١٧) ، وتشمل هذه القيم الإنتماء للنخبة ، التأثير ، السلبية، الإيجابية، الحداثة والقرب ( الجغرافي والثقافي) وا لأفضلية و عدم التوقع. وتعتمد الدراسة على منهج المتون اللغوية مستخدماً تطبيق انتكونك ويستخدم التحليل المستند على المتون اللغوية عدة أدوات منها قائمة الكلمات الرئيسية والكلمات المتوافقة مع كلمة البحث. الكلمات المفتاحية: كوفيد ١٩ ، القيم الإخبارية، علم المتون، قائمة الكلمات الرئيسية ، الكلمات المتوافقة مع كلمة البحث