

# COVID 19 RESPONSE: PRESIDENT ROUHANI AND PRESIDENT RAISI'S POLICY NARRATIVE IN IRAN THROUGH THE MEDIA

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*Submitted:* 11<sup>th</sup> November 2022 *Revised:* 21<sup>th</sup> November 2022 *Accepted:* 28<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Abstract:** In the midst of political and economic sanctions obtained from the United States, Iran had to fight the Covid-19 pandemic which has killed thousands of people in Iran, placing Iran in a chaotic situation due to the initial handling that did not go well. Now President Raisi is taking over the Iranian crisis by issuing new policies related to handling Covid-19 and improving the situation and conditions of people who have lost their trust in the Iranian Government. This research wants to examine the narratives launched by the Government of Iran through the media regarding the policy of dealing with Covid-19. By using the discourse analysis method, this study tries to explore the contents of the narrative and explore what discourse the Iranian government wants to convey to the public.

**Keywords:** Narrative, Media, Government Policy, Discourse Analysis.

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## INTRODUCTION

Iran is one of the few countries in the world that has been directly part of the history of world civilization, namely the Persian empire. The Iranian mainland area that was once called the 'land of the Aryans' became the history of the Achaemenid Kingdom whose territory stretched from Libya, Pakistan to India before it was finally conquered by Alexander The great in 1311. The history of Iran was then marked by the rapid change of government in power until finally the establishment of the Safavid Kingdom which adhered to Shia beliefs and since then Iran has become the largest country in the world to embrace Shia understanding. The relationship between clerics and rulers did not always go as well as it can currently be seen. Even between 1892 and 1905 even the Ulema had a good place in government circles, but the clergy did not play a significant role. Until finally the Ulama formed a coalition with merchants and liberal groups who then succeeded in forming a constitution that was officially in force until 1979.

Iran after 1979 officially became the Islamic Republic of Iran after the end of a long history of uprisings by Iranian people from various groups - social groups led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Shia Islamic leader in Iran. The uprising succeeded in overthrowing the monarchical regime of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlevi.

However, the commotion did not stop only after the revolution. Currently, the world is again shaken by the emergence of coronavirus disease at the end of 2019, or

known as Covid-19. The virus, which was first reported to have appeared in Wuhan, China, spread and mutated very quickly throughout the world until it was officially declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 11, 2020 (Time, 2020).

Iran, of course, has not escaped the spread of the Covid-19 virus. Even Iran and several countries in the Middle East and North Africa region are experiencing so-called religious misinformation which makes handling Covid-19 even more difficult (Alimardani & Elswah, 2020). In his article it is stated that under the regime of government that relatively exercises strict control over the flow of information as well as the existence of a deficit of trust from the public towards the government and rulers causes the dissemination of information aimed at the recovery of the situation to be unbelievable and ineffective. This kind of condition that occurs in these countries is referred to as an 'infodemic' phenomenon to describe the complexity of the problems faced by the location which is likely to be different from the situation in other countries. The assumption of "controlled information flow" by the government can have a strong influence to trigger public trust in the government, which is precisely an anomaly. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (February-May 2020) the opposite happened. There is a lot of miscommunication about the pandemic among the public due to the contradiction of information posted on social media related to the vaccination process. Some of

the issues that stand out are the halal versus illegitimate view of vaccines, the impact on male masculinity, and the impact of other vaccinations being "engineered" or "hoaxes."

This religious misinformation builds a tense atmosphere in society, makes citizens emotional and decreases the ability of religious institutions to change things for the better through the message conveyed. Specifically what is happening in Iran is a dichotomy between the (power of) prayer to God and the medical measures that must be taken by citizens affected by the Covid-19 virus. Clearly, BBC Persia in 2020 mentioned that Iran's Ministry of Health failed to reduce the spread and death of citizens due to Covid and even became the target of criticism from Iranian government officials themselves (Alimardani & Elswah, 2020). This was done by Iranian parliamentary official Ayatollah Mohammad Mehdi Mirbaqeri who questioned the intent and objectives of the lockdown and social distancing policies set by the ministry. As a result, the criticism delivered through social media has gone viral and further undermined the authority of religious symbols in the country of the mullahs, especially when clashed with medical science which in some ways seems to be the opposite.

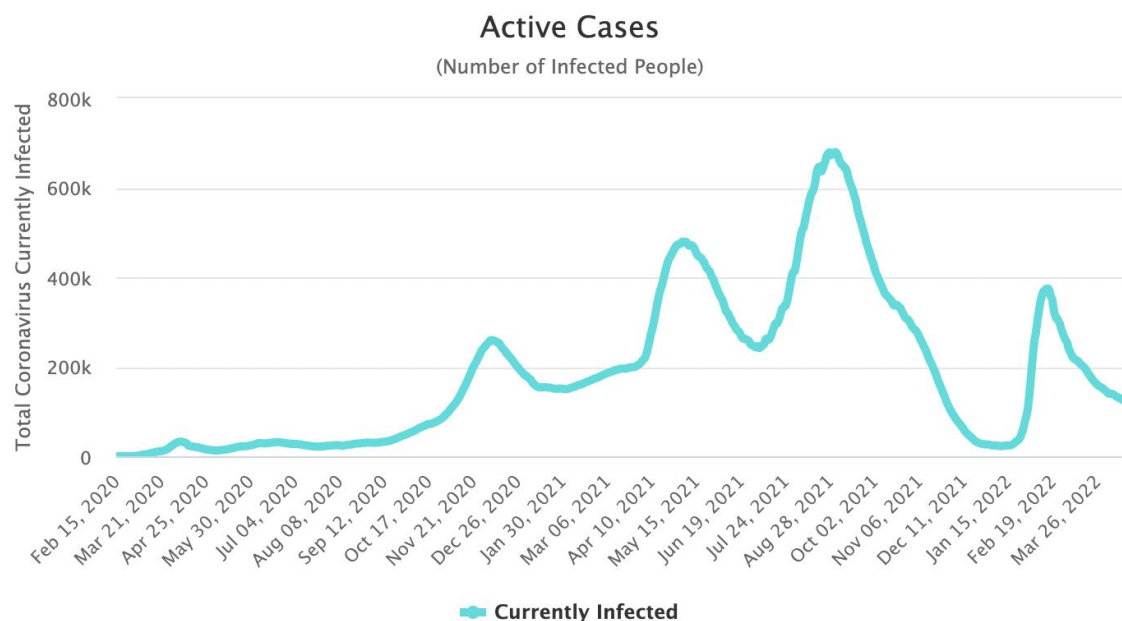
The unique characteristics in handling the spread of the Covid-19 virus that

occurred in Iran are not only in the relationship between the ruler and the people, but the country of 80 million people is currently still a country that has received political and economic sanctions from the United States. This has led to the Iranian government's limitation to provide basic medical equipment, especially for the purposes of diagnosis, action and prevention of the spread of Covid-19 (Abdoli, n.d.). It is also uncertain that the imposition of these sanctions has caused Iran to become the country with the most deaths from Covid-19? Especially in the Eastern Mediterranean region which includes 22 regions of countries such as Cyprus, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine, Israel to Egypt. At the beginning of the period when the Covid-19 virus hit many countries in the world, WHO noted that Iran itself had experienced 3 waves of Covid-19 spread only in 2020, starting from March 2020, the second wave occurred near the beginning of May 2020 and the third wave occurred in September 2020.

However, if you look at Figure 1.1. below it seems as if it appears that the pattern of active cases since the end of 2020 has repeated itself until it reaches its peak in October 2021. This temporary picture impresses the powerlessness of the Iranian government in controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus throughout the territory of Iran.

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## Active Cases in Iran

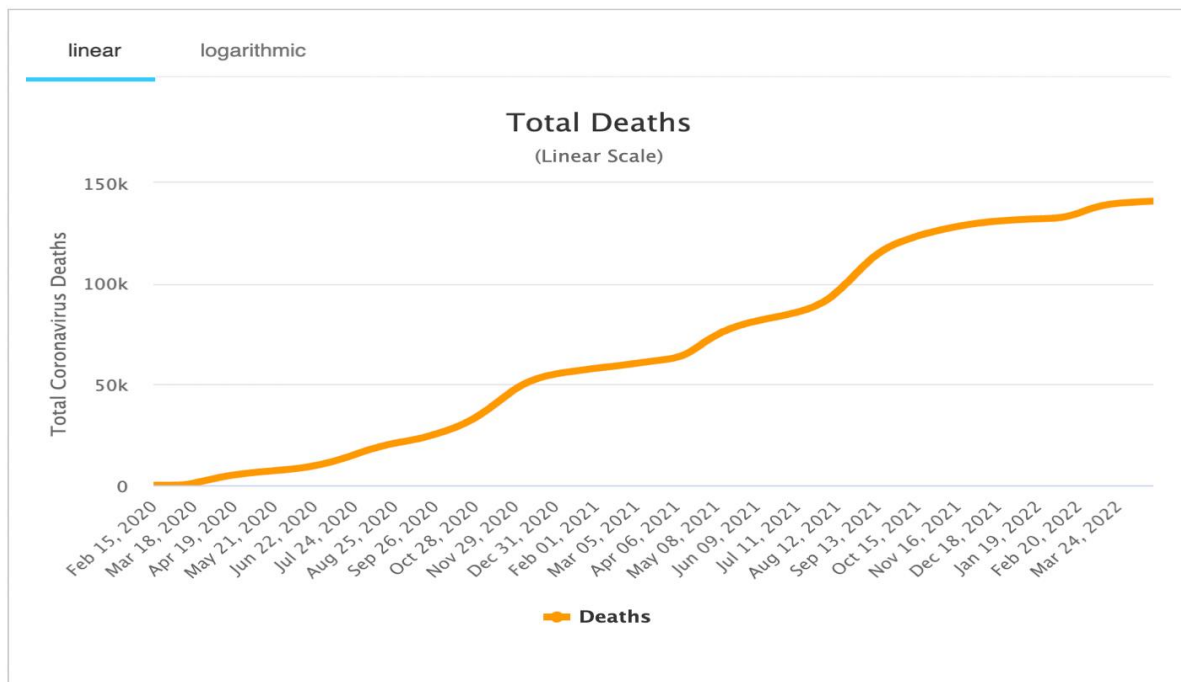


Source : [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info), data taken April 21, 2022

On the other hand it is visible from Figure 1.2. that there is a pattern of repetition of the number of active cases of people affected by Covid-19 in the Iranian region. The data shows a trend of increasing the number of deaths of people due to getting Covid-19. The latest data as of March 24, 2022, although the death rate has begun to decline, the increase in the number of deaths is still increasing. From

these two images, it can be concluded that the sanctions received by Iran do not directly make the Iranian government powerless to deal with the spread of Covid-19, but these sanctions must be recognized as limiting the government's ability to provide high-tech testing and specific equipment needed by hospitals to treat patients affected by Covid-19 (Abdoli, n.d.)

## Total Coronavirus Deaths in Iran



Source : [www.worldometers.info](http://www.worldometers.info), data taken April 21, 2022

Since the Iranian government confirmed the entry of Covid-19 on February 18, 2020, a series of policies have been carried out. Some of the government's policies include locking down all 31 provinces in Iran, setting investment priorities in the health sector compared to military purposes, purchasing weapons and other war equipment, providing subsidies to all citizens who run medium and small businesses through the provision of low interest rates, paying special attention to health care for the elderly and vulnerable groups, as well as involving all institutions from both government and non-government sectors are actively involved in handling and controlling the spread of the Covid-19 virus throughout the country (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, the increasing number of infected people is also increasing. As of July 3, 2021, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani even mentioned that Iran will enter the fifth wave of Covid-19 spread when the Delta variant of the virus enters Iranian territory. The number of deaths, which reached 84,000 people and 3.2 million people infected with Covid-19, will continue to grow amid the difficulty of obtaining additional Covid-19 vaccines from the international community due to the still in force of sanctions from the United States. As a result, the number of people who have received two doses of the vaccine is still at 1.7 million people and only 4.4 million Iranians have received the first vaccine. Therefore, the Iranian government must immediately increase the capacity of local vaccines so that the number of people vaccinated can immediately increase (Has,

2021).

The Iranian government is working hard to address this issue. Since this Covid-19 case was discovered, a number of policies in the form of closing the tomb of saints and even closing mosques have been carried out since the beginning. This was then followed by social distancing and the obligation to quarantine at home for all residents. Even in the celebration of Iran's

1. Inner conflict: residents want the opening of places of worship and tombs of saints which in the midst of this pandemic condition is closed, resulting in conflicts between residents who force their way in and the officials who guard these places.

In Iranian culture, burial ceremonies and expressions of grief experienced by families whose relatives died are part of religious ritual ceremonies. The prohibition of activities like this, causes sadness, psychological effects and even deep depression, especially for the family. The complicated condition faced by Iran is that on the one hand the government has tried hard to carry out policies to deal with Covid-19 which even dares to carry out unpopular policies such as banning activities in mosques, but citizens still show distrust of the government.

The President of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, in early February 2021 even delivered a message to citizens himself upon the first arrival of the vaccine from Russia, Sputnik V. The President conveyed the need for the Iranian people to strictly carry out all advice from doctors to protect themselves from being infected with Covid-19 considering

new year anniversary, "Nowruz", all culturally common forms of celebrations such as family visits, and celebratory gatherings, have been banned (Ahmadi & Ramezani, 2020). Research conducted by Ahmadi and Ramezane (2020) found a number of interesting facts. The Iranian people throughout the Covid-19 pandemic have experienced at least 2 things, namely:

2. Disruption of relationships within the family; The habit of visiting each other between families that is prohibited and people are asked to stay at home eventually causes new conflicts that occur between family members.

that the vaccine process will continue until next year (Syed Zafar Mehdi, 2021). Not quite there, the supreme leader of Iran's Revolutionary Guard (IGRC), Brigadier General Mohamad Pakpour, is ready to assist and mobilize military forces to promote vaccinations throughout Iran. This was conveyed as a welcome at the request of Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of the Iranian revolution, who asked all components of the nation to participate in efforts to control Covid-19. Khamenei also expressed gratitude to President Raisi for setting a one-week deadline to complete all of this ("IRGC Ready to Assist in COVID Vaccination Program in Iran: Commander," 2021). All components of government ranging from the highest to the lowest total intervened to overcome the impact of the spread of Covid 19 and speak directly to the public at every opportunity through various media. However, the spread of Covid 19

continues to increase and the death rate also continues to grow.

Based on the description of the problem above, this research was conducted based on the following problem formulation :

1. What is the message narrative about the Covid 19 control policy built by the Iranian government through the media?

2. Is there a difference in building a narrative message about Covid 19 control policies in both eras of government?
3. What is the discourse that has emerged from citizens toward the message narrative built by the Iranian government to control Covid-19?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research method uses qualitative research which uses the discourse analysis method. Qualitative research aims to dig deeper into a reality (Kriyantono, 2020, p. 51) that is in a discourse whose results will be presented in explanatory form. Paltridge (2012) says that discourse analysis is used to consider the use of language that shows a different view and understanding of a concept. This method was first introduced by Zellig Harris (1952) as a way to analyze a relationship between oral and written discourse, which is used to study how sentences in oral or written texts can together create meaning and be interconnected so as to create a meaning (Paltridge, 2012, p. 2).

According to the discourse theory presented by (Kriyantono, 2020) the object of discourse chosen for analysis must contain a motive, idea, message, and mindset towards something that wants to be conveyed and disseminated to the public. There are various forms of discourse objects in discourse theory, such as speeches, news, articles, radio plays, online media, or websites.

Discourse analysis in this study will be carried out by interpreting and interpreting the object of discourse that has been chosen to examine the meaning contained in depth, because the researcher does not want to only reveal the meaning of the discourse that is common and open, but is also expected to achieve the hidden meaning of the discourse or the implied meaning. The use of qualitative methods in research that views a reality from the researcher's side, then this discourse analysis is inseparable from the impression of the researcher's subjectivity. To minimize this impression, this research will be accompanied by the results of an analysis of other contexts of the discourse being tested.

The object of discourse that will be analyzed in this study is a narrative about the policies of the current Iranian Government, during the leadership of Presidents Raisi and Rouhani, which circulated in Iran through the media. The narrative to be analyzed is one that is read and consumed by the Iranian people. The period for selecting messages in the media

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to be analyzed will be determined after getting a clearer picture of the crucial period faced by the Iranian government. Then the second discourse to be analyzed will be obtained through informants who read and know the content of the previously analyzed narrative. The

informants selected for the study consisted of Iranian government employees and the Iranian public. The analysis is carried out to find out what narrative the Iranian Government wants to convey to its people as well as what discourse arises from the narrative spread by the Government.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the research that has been carried out on the narrative of discourse on the policies of the Iranian government during the leadership of President Raisi and

President Rouhani related to the pandemic and the Covid-19 vaccine, the following results were obtained:

<b>Table 1. President Raisi's Policy in the Media</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Result</b>
Clear - Unclear	50% Clear 30% Unclear 20% Neutral
For Iranian society - For specific groups	50% For Iranian society 20% For certain groups 30% Neutral
For the Iranian people - For other countries	40% For Iranian society 30% For other countries 30% Neutral
For Iranian society - For the governing elite	30% For Iranian society 50% For the governing elite 20% Neutral
For the Iranian people - For the military	30% For Iranian society 30% for military 20% Neutral 20% Blank
Transparent - Non-transparent	30% Transparent 50% Non-transparent 20% Neutral



Table 2. President Rouhani's Policies in the Media	
Question	Result
Clear - Unclear	50% Clear 40% Unclear 10% Neutral
For Iranian society - For specific groups	50% For Iranian society 40% For specific groups 10% Neutral
For the Iranian people - For other countries	40% For Iranian society 40% For other countries 20% Neutral
For Iranian society - For the governing elite	50% For Iranian society 30% For the governing elite 20% Neutral
For the Iranian people - For the military	60% For Iranian society 30% for military 10% Blank
Transparent - Non-transparent	50% Transparent 40% Non-transparent 10% Neutral

Analysis: based on the data obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to 10 respondents in Iran, it can be concluded that:

1. The aspects of clarity of government action and transparency are perceived differently and contradistinctly between these two presidents, namely for clarity in the media Raisi is perceived better, but for transparency, Rouhani, who is favored, is more transparent in reporting.

2. In terms of partiality to the people in the attitudes and actions taken by the government, President

Rouhani is favored while President Raisi is considered to prioritize or put the governing elite first.

In this section, the perception of the actions of the two Iranian presidents in controlling the spread of Covid 19 in Iran is indeed perceived differently. At least this assumption arises from a group of Iranians who are willing to be respondents in this study. So, based on the table above, President Raisi and President Rouhani are relatively equally superior in the element of inclination to Iranian society over other countries or certain groups. Meanwhile, in other elements, the majority of respondents stated that President Rouhani's policies favored the Iranian

people more than government and military elites, and the transparency of his policies

was also clearer than that of Iran's new President, namely President Raisi.

<b>Table 3. Covid-19 and Vaksin</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Result</b>
How did you first learn the news of Covid-19 in Iran?	40% Internet 30% Friends 30% Government Announcements
How did you first find out about the Covid-19 vaccine in Iran?	20% Internet 30% Friends 40% Government Announcements 10% More
How was your first vaccine?	30% Office clinics 20% City clinics 40% Other (Indonesian Embassy) 10% Blank
Choose one of these news stories that has caught your attention the most about the Covid-19 virus?	20% Government Announcements in newspapers 50% Friend information 10% Personal doctor 20% More (Internet/Friends)
What do you think, is the Covid-19 vaccination halal?	70% Halal 30% More
What do you think about the Covid-19 vaccination process in your country?	30% Good Enough 40% Good 20% Not Good 10% more (no problem)

Based on the data above, the analysis is carried out on 2 important parts , namely:

**1. Citizens' Response To The Government Regarding Covid 19 Control And Vaccine Administration**

The Covid-19 and vaccine table above attempts to find out about how respondents get access to Covid-19 information and vaccines available to the Iranian public. From the table above, it is known that 40% of respondents get

information about the development of covid-19 through the internet, while information related to vaccines 40% of respondents get it from announcements broadcast by the Iranian Government. In relation to the previous element, from the results of the study, 50% of respondents were more interested in Covid-19 information from friends or relatives. In this section, it can be said that the government tends to make more vigorous efforts

regarding vaccines through public communication of officials directly or through the mass media than reporting on the development of Covid-19 itself. It seems to be a big concern for the government if the vaccine is not widely carried out amid the increasing spread of Covid 19 at that time. However, the data seems to contradict the opinion of Mr. Herry Purwanto, staff of the Indonesian Embassy in Iran, through interviews conducted by researchers. Mr. Herry said that the Iranian Government has actually also set the handling of Covid-19 as the top work priority by providing information related to the development and handling of Covid-19 through electronic, print and online media widely.

This was also confirmed by informant Mrs. Sarayanti who continues to follow the development of the Covid-19 pandemic in addition to online, print, electronic and social media, as well as through the Salamat platform, a website portal provided directly by the Iranian Ministry of Health specifically for the Covid-19 pandemic. From the platform, Informant Sarayanti argued that the Iranian Government has been quite good in realizing the importance of broadcasting information about the Covid-19 pandemic, as done by WHO, and has been active in sharing it with the Iranian people.

In addition, based on the presentation from Mrs. Sarayanti, other efforts from the Iranian Government were also found in controlling the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only through television that is used optimally, the Government also provides alternative assistance services and information in the form of telephone

numbers that can be contacted, for information and assistance with the availability of drugs, doctor call services or PCR tests that can come to the house.

There is a difference in perception about which is the priority of the Iranian government, namely between controlling covid 19 or administering vaccines in the policies carried out. This can be expected to happen because the two informants are Indonesian citizens in Iranian Tehran who are concerned about the Iranian government's efforts to overcome the pandemic, while the focus of Iranians themselves is in fact prioritizing the administration of vaccines as an effort that the government must prioritize. This happens because Iranians themselves have to keep traveling and running the wheels of the family economy so that vaccine administration becomes more of a priority in their lives.

## **2. Citizens' Response To The Government, Especially Related To Vaccine Administration**

For the Covid-19 vaccination, from the results of the study, it was found that 70% of respondents felt that the vaccination process in Iran had gone well, with 40% of them getting the first vaccine outside the facilities of office clinics and city clinics, and the majority of 70% of respondents considered that the Covid-19 vaccine was classified as halal without anyone mentioning that the vaccine was haram. This happens because residents think it is for the good of their own health. It is clear from the data that residents are quite satisfied with the government's performance related to the vaccination

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process that is going well.

This is also corroborated by the opinion of Herry's informant who explained that most of the public considers that the Iranian Government and the Iranian Covid-19 response headquarters have used media facilities optimally in providing information about the handling of Covid-19 in Iran and providing information about adequate vaccines to maintain public trust.

On the broadcasting side of the Covid-19 policy and handling from President Raisi and President Rouhani, Informant Herry mentioned the differences between the two, namely (1) In terms of the quality or content of the narrative of President Rouhani's administration, it is more focused on handling and overcoming Covid-19 by focusing on vaccine assistance from donor countries and social organizations. Meanwhile, President Raisi's administration chose a direct approach by providing information and inviting vaccinations by visiting people who are far from the city center. All covid-19 handling programs carried out by the Raisi administration are published directly through existing media channels and in greater quantity than those carried out by President Rouhani before.

In addition to the opinions of Herry Informants, the government's efforts in providing information related to Covid-19 were also presented by Mrs. Sarayanti through an interview conducted. However, there are different answers from Mr. Herry and Ms. Sarayanti regarding the differences in policy broadcasting by President Raisi and President Rouhani. Informant Ms. Sarayanti argued that during President Rouhani's time, she was more aggressive in disseminating information and procuring

covid-19 development meetings that were broadcast on television along with a statement from the Iranian Minister of Health. Meanwhile, during the President Raisi's time, these activities gradually decreased because the Covid-19 pandemic has tended to be controlled and the public has been sufficiently educated about what should be done to avoid exposure to Covid-19.

In addition, this study also analyzed 12 news stories that discussed the Iranian Government's policies related to the Covid-19 pandemic published in online news portals. The twelve articles discussed consisted of 7 articles written before the presidential election was held, namely June 18, 2021, while 5 articles were written during the new Iranian presidential period. The analysis focused on the content of the text related to what message the Iranian government intends to convey through the news. Then the analysis was carried out using the concept of discourse analysis from Todorov (1969) whose study was specifically referred to as Narratology.

An analysis using each element of Narratology from Todorov (1969) can be seen in detail in the appendix. Basically, the discussion here will be divided into 2, namely related to news articles in the era of President Rouhani and President Raisi related to news about Covid 19 control policies and about vaccination which are findings from research on previous data.

### **News Of President Rouhani's Government Policies**

Regarding the equilibrium conditions faced by the Rouhani administration, the

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government often conveys the government's sincerity in controlling covid 19. Various policies have been issued by the government such as restrictions on store opening hours, bans on travel to areas marked with the Red Zone either on weekdays or on major celebration days in Iran as well as the use of masks. However, the condition of residents exposed to covid 19 continued to fluctuate up and down until the end of the era of president Rouhani's administration.

The aspect that 'hampered' the government's efforts to tackle covid 19 that was most prominently reported was the implementation of economic sanctions imposed by Iran by the US and the UK; The increase in the number of deaths and residents exposed to Covid 19 continues to occur even though the government has implemented preventive policies; there are differences of views between Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei and President Rouhani on whether or not to import vaccines from abroad; Disruption also occurs due to the celebration of major days commemorated by citizens by gathering and traveling together, namely the Iranian New Year and Eid al-Fitr; towards the end of the term, President Rouhani also had to overcome an open political campaign that invited crowds during the election period as well as a slow increase in the number of Iranians who had already been vaccinated.

The third element of Todorov's (1969) discourse analysis is related to proving the existence of disruptions that in this case were experienced by the Rouhani administration. The most notable evidence is that Iran is ranked first in the group of

countries in the Middle East with the highest number of deaths from Covid 19 and the largest number of people affected by covid 19. The resignation of a number of government officials who disagreed on the most appropriate policies taken by the government also indicates the existence of weak management in the Rouhani system of government. Likewise, the difference in views on whether or not vaccines from abroad should enter Iran that Rouhani confronted Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, also pointed to weaknesses in the management of president Rouhani's administration.

The Rouhani administration is trying to overcome 2 major problems faced, namely controlling Covid-19 and massive vaccine administration efforts. To control covid 19, the government has taken a number of policies such as the establishment of travel bans, the imposition of monetary fines for violators, restrictions on store opening hours, including providing direct assistance to poor people with a commitment to providing a large government budget. For vaccination, the Rouhani administration has made cooperative efforts with Russia and China and India to obtain ready-to-use vaccines from these countries; Allow all vaccines from abroad to enter Iran except those from the US and the UK; Encouraging cooperation in making local vaccines with Cuba, which was initially a slow process, but was later successfully issued and given to the community; in addition, Iran also gets vaccines under the COVAX scheme which is intended for countries that need vaccine assistance from the international world to demonstrate the principle of equality between countries in the face of the

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pandemic.

On the element returning to the starting point of equilibrium, not much of the data is written down by the quoted media. This is likely because the news focuses on the efforts made by the government and does not report the results that have been achieved through the implementation of the policy.

Based on the foregoing, it can be seen that referring to the notion of narrative function from Sharf & Vanderford (2003), president Rouhani's administration seeks to get Iranians to make the best decisions for themselves and their own families. The decision consists of efforts to avoid exposure to covid 19 and efforts to get the vaccine through all elements of information provided by the government. This narrative is then referred to as the Narrative of a Decision Maker. The government is fixated on one pattern of conveying information so that the news that appears only emphasizes the provision of one-way information which contains prohibitions and restrictions that require the attitude of submission and obedience of citizens to the narrative. In the end, Iranians are directed to determine for themselves what actions are best to take and are willing to bear all the consequences of the choices made.

### **News of The Policies of The Raisi President-Era Administration**

At the beginning of the Raisi administration, it seemed that the level of equilibrium that people expected at the time was to further highlight the government's efforts to increase the number of vaccines given to Iranians. There

is a discourse to open vaccines from anywhere including vaccines from the United States. With regard to controlling covid 19, fears of the entry of the Omicron variant, which has a high transmission rate, led the Raisi government to promise to issue a travel ban for Iranians. Amid rising covid 19 transmission rates, President Raisi appeared before the public nearly a year since he was elected president to claim his administration's success in controlling Covid 19. This is something that president Rouhani has never done during his reign. The Raisi administration wants to convey a new balance that is formed when the number of citizens getting vaccinated has increased significantly compared to the era of President Rouhani.

Amid mounting public scrutiny for the government to speed up the vaccination process and open up the possibility of taking vaccines from anywhere, Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei reiterated never allowing vaccines from the U.S. to enter Iran. This raises doubts among residents about the government's ability to increase the pace of vaccinations, which is considered to be going well. A new disruption is the shortage of dollars in the country needed to buy vaccines from abroad. Ayatollah Khamenei took to the media to call on the government to take covid 19 more seriously due to the influx of the Delta variant, which is more rapidly contagious despite the lower death rate. Finally, the media wrote that the Raisi administration had not actually succeeded in increasing the number of Iranians who received vaccines officially from the government and even the Raisi administration adopted a policy of easing

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travel restrictions so that the government's claim of success was refuted by itself.

In the news, various evidences are clearly written in the form of interviews with citizens who choose to go to the border with other countries to get vaccines and for other Iranians, efforts to get vaccines from abroad with tourist destinations are a favorite choice for Iranians who are classified as economically capable. Citizens' disobedience to health protocols occurred widely in almost all corners of the country so that eventually the military would intervene to bring this in order. Various forms of residents' rejection of the provisions of health protocols appear in various forms, such as the broadcast of shows on television whose stars do not wear masks, including violations of store opening hours. The same thing happened when school had started and the series of pilgrimages to the holy tomb were carried out in disregard for the health protocols set by the government.

Seeing the existing conditions, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, met with military commanders and then asked the military to seriously intervene to bring order to citizens' compliance with health protocols. In addition, the cooperation that has been carried out since the time of President Rouhani, is still carried out, namely by bringing vaccines from Russia and China, especially. While improving information to the public and reminding the importance of implementing health

protocols.

Almost the same as the news in the era of president Rouhani, it is difficult to find success in the news that makes the condition gradually return to its original balance. The only claim of success written in the media is President Raisi's success in vaccinating, namely that a total of 153 million vaccines have been given including 30 million booster vaccines that have been successfully given to Iranians.

Referring to the notion of narrative function from Sharf & Vanderford (2003), president Raisi's administration uses narrative as the dominant form of understanding. In the explanation, this form of narrative has 2 characteristics, namely using stories in the past which are then conveyed by a familiar person. In this regard, the Supreme Leader of the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khamenei himself, often speaks directly both highlighting the performance of the government and directly asking Iranians to follow all policies to control covid 19 and administer vaccines made by President Raisi's administration. When viewed in terms of the content of the policies made by the new government, there are actually no new policies taken. Almost all policies following the policies of the previous administration include requesting vaccine assistance from Russia and China, banning vaccines from the US and UK, restricting the mobility of citizens, especially to the Red Zone region etc.

President Rouhani	President Raisi
Focus on the narrative of covid-19 pandemic	Emphasizing the narrative that tells the

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control policies, such as restrictions on community activities and health protocols.	success of the Iranian Government in controlling the state of the Covid-19 Pandemic
Build a narrative that emphasizes things that can be done by the community and must be obeyed by the community.	Elevating the figure of Ayatullah Khomeini, as a leading figure in Iran, in the narrative of controlling the Covid-19 pandemic and the vaccine campaign.
The narrative tends to serve as a decision-maker that the Iranian people must abide by.	Emphasizing a narrative that serves to convey understanding and persuade the Iranian people about what to do.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis and discussion above, this study draws the following conclusions:

First, the narrative of the message about the Covid 19 control policy built by the Iranian government through the media basically concerns 2 major things, namely: (1) The government's efforts in controlling Covid 19 and (2) The government's efforts to increase vaccinations for all Iranian citizens.

Second, the difference in building a narrative message about covid 19 control policies and vaccine administration policies in the two eras of government in Iran is that President Rouhani emphasizes more on narratives that describe the conditions that Iranians will face in doing certain deeds in the pandemic era. Meanwhile, the message narrative that was built about the Covid 19 control policy and the vaccine administration policy in the era of President Raisi was to emphasize more on the success story of handling covid 19 during his administration to build a suggestion to Iranians that the newly formed Iranian government is able to control the situation.

In addition to using success stories, narratives are also built through the delivery of stories using characters widely known by the public, namely Ayatullah Khomeini himself. Thus the form of narrative used is different from the previous era which emphasized the narrative for decision making while in the era of President Raisi the narrative that was built emphasized more on the understanding of Iranians to the situation at hand so that finally citizens can accept the policies made by the government including when asking the military to intervene in controlling covid 19 and administering vaccines.

Third, Iranians' view of the narrative built by the government on controlling covid 19 and administering vaccines is reflected in the 40% of information about covid 19 control through the internet. This means that the government's communication space for citizens does not seem to be running smoothly so that Iranians can more easily get information through the internet which is rife with hoaxes and political interests. Meanwhile, the 70% figure represents a relatively large



enough figure to show iranians' satisfaction with the vaccine administration carried out

in the second term of government.

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