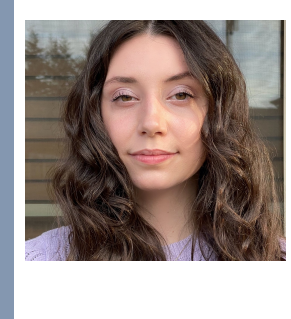


A Hidden Agenda: Media Coverage of the Overdose Crisis



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BACKGROUND: Six years since the overdose crisis was declared a public health crisis in British Columbia, overdose deaths are at an all-time high and there appears to be no end in sight. In recent years, researchers have begun discussing media portrayals of the overdose crisis within Canada and how they can influence public opinion and impact resources allocated to the crisis. However, within a British Columbia context, research in this area is scarce. Therefore, this study will address and examine British Columbia's new media portrayal of the overdose crisis between the years 2016-2021, to help understand how we arrived at where we are currently with the lack of successful policy responses.

METHODS

1. News articles were purposefully sampled from *Canadian Newsstream* database, that were portraying the overdose crisis in BC
2. Using NVIVO 12, a thematic analysis of 63 news articles was conducted
3. Data was inductively coded in order to allow themes to emerge from the data

RESULTS

- Three subthemes with related subthemes were found, see Table 1
- When portraying the overall issue of the overdose crisis in news media, I found that most articles highlighted the number of deaths that have occurred since the onset of the public health emergency

News Media has portrayed the overdose crisis in three ways:

- 1) By focusing on the death rate
- 2) By highlighting the causes of the overdose crisis
- 3) By highlighting the potential solutions to the overdose crisis

Table 1: Summary of Themes and Subthemes that emerged from Thematic Analysis

Theme	Subtheme
<i>The Overdose Crisis in News Media</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “B. C’s worst month ever”
<i>Causes of the Overdose Crisis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Pharma • Failures of the Government • Toxic Drug Supply
<i>Solutions to the Overdose Crisis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug Law Reform • Treatment Over Harm Reduction

MORE RESULTS

- Given the rising death rate that has been associated with the overdose crisis, I found that the news media has portrayed three significant causes to the overdose crisis to explain these deaths to the reader. these were: *Big Pharma*, *Failures of the Government*, and the *Toxic Drug Supply*.
- Since the news media portrayed the causes of the overdose crisis, I found they also proposed solutions to the overdose crisis, these being: *drug law reform* and *treatment over harm reduction*

DISCUSSION

- Although the causes and the solutions to the overdose crisis are known, death rates are still the highest they have ever been.
- This study helps gives an explanation to this phenomenon as readers of these news articles may believe that the government is responding to the overdose crisis, however they are only “recommending” policy implications that they should implement.

REFERENCES

Scan below for references used in this presentation and my thesis



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