Spatial isolation and health during the Covid-19 pandemic: A critical discourse analysis

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1. Introduction

In late 2019, the virus SARS-CoV-2, often called COVID-19, was detected in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) declared the spread of the virus a pandemic in March 2020 (Azoulay et al., 2020; Strålin et al., 2020; The Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2020; WHO, 2020), leading to the initiation of national lockdowns and strict restrictions in most countries. By May 2022, more than 515 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including more than six million deaths, had been reported to the WHO (2022). Much research from an epidemiological and medical perspective has been published. Reports in social media, television, radio news, and the daily press, have described the global situation. However, there is a lack of knowledge of how the media described people's everyday lives during this period. What ideologies regarding social identities, people's relations, actions, and economy, in ordinary life, are constructed in the media discourse? Fairclough (2015) defined the term "ideology" as a set of beliefs and attitudes, while hegemony is defined as the social struggle for power and dominance waged for certain ideologies to be influenced. According to Fairclough there is an ideological hegemony when connections among cultural ideas, norms, talk and material practice can be seen.

2. Background

In Europe, the first occurrence of the virus was registered in January; one month later, 47 cases had been registered, and by 5 March, the spread was out of control, with 4250 registered cases (Spiteri et al., 2020). In Sweden, which has a population of 10.3 million people, 2.5 million had been confirmed infected in 2022, including nearly 18,000 deaths (The National Board of Health and Welfare of Sweden, 2022). Restrictions involving mobility, physical distancing, hygiene rituals, masks, and other protective equipment became a part of people's everyday lives, leading to shortages of needed commodities. Private homes, workplaces, and institutional settings (i.e., places and spaces where people inhabit and dwell in their ordinary everyday lives) soon became isolated spaces and places. Restrictions differed among countries and even counties within the same country. The Swedish strategy was in general more liberal with fewer restrictions than its neighboring countries and rest of the world. The country had no total lock downs. This Swedish strategy was heavily debated and questioned nationally and internationally.

2.1. Theoretical and philosophical perspectives

Health is, according to the WHO (1946), a fundamental right of every human being and includes three dimensions (physical, mental, and social well-being), defining that health is not purely the absence of disease or infirmity. The United Nations ((UN), 2019) sustainability goals state through the third goal that health and well-being should be ensured for all at all ages. Equal health and the promotion of health are expressed as the state's and the individual's responsibility. Access to and knowledge of medical and psychological information is stressed as a government responsibility. The pandemic is ongoing; health, human suffering, and economic crisis are still serious problems around the world.

The philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer (2004) described the experience of health as being in equilibrium and that healing processes reverse the imbalance that occurs due to illness and disease. Galvin and Todres (2013) took a phenomenological approach to health and argued that the quality of human life cannot be quantified but has to do with the meaning a person ascribes to his or her life and healing relationships with others. The nursing theorist Eriksson (1997), however, described health as the experience of wholeness; consequently, being healthy means the experience of oneself as an entity of body, soul, and spirit. According to Eriksson, health is the goal of professional caritative caring

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and depends on each individual's view of life, culture, interests, and competences (Bergbom et al., 2021b). According to Foucault, power constructs and results in oppression of people's everyday world, and is present at all levels of society and social relations (Foucault, 1997). He argued that different discourses and constructions form humanity, and through complex spaces that are architectural, functional, and hierarchical, it is possible to create disciplined and docile bodies. Detailed administrative processes, surveillance, and control support these processes and forms obedience (Foucault, 1977, p. 138). Foucault's concept of Governmentality suggests a mentality of power and control (Foucault, 1979, p 20; Rose, 1993; Rose et al., 2006). It aims to ensure the wellbeing of the population. Authorities have come to realize that the population possesses its own reality, with regularities of birth, illness, and death, as well as internal processes that exist independently of the government but still require government intervention. To ensure the wellbeing of individuals and the population, the government must employ various strategies and tactics. This societal perspective and the measuring of people's health and illness is referred to as the "governmentalization of living" (Wahlberg and Rose, 2015).

2.2. What does the concept of isolation mean from a caring and health geographic perspective?

> No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee. 1642 sermon by John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral

Humans are social beings; we thrive when surrounded by others (Galvin & Todres, 2013). Thus, meaning in our own lives is given by others and cannot be given by ourselves (Holopainen et al., 2014). Togetherness unveils intersubjectivity, and is neither me nor you; it is what lies between us, in our encounters, from which we all can gain strength (Holopainen et al., 2014). Isolation has been found to have three elements or characteristics: sensory deprivation, social isolation, and confinement (Gilmartin et al., 2013). These attributes define isolation as a state of reduction in social input with imposed limitations on physical space or movement, and as a decreased level of normal sensory input (Gilmartin et al., 2013). However, loneliness can be voluntary, whereas isolation is often involuntary and emphasizes detachment from others, i.e. from society (Merriam-Webster). Health geography is a research field that focuses on the caring environment and the meaning of space and place in relation to health (Andrews, 2003; Dahlborg Lyckhage and Lindahl, 2013; Roxberg et al., 2020; Sundberg et al., 2019, 2021).

During the pandemic, people's access to geographic spaces and places changed. International borders closed, government and municipal authorities closed entrances to their buildings, and visitors to hospitals and health centers were forbidden entry. Everyday life became an experience of isolation, and for those who were privileged, the world became digitalized. This resulted in the shrinkage of people's everyday experiences and natural mobility, resulting in a closed off existence, enclosure, or being fenced in at one's home. Home is often depicted as a desirable place to stay in—a place that offers protection and safety and represents a part of a person's identity where you socialize with others. The philosopher Levinas (Kemp, 1992) talked about the home in terms of a place where a person gathers strength, reflects, and creates hospitality for others. However, a home can also be a place in which people experience feelings of being left out, isolated, and restricted (Lindahl and Kirk, 2019). Some people who had been in contact with the COVID-19 virus were quarantined. Suddenly, health and its preservation became paramount concerns, leading to people's lifeworld becoming restricted and isolated. The nursing philosopher, Martinsen (2006), stated that there is a difference between inhabiting and dwelling in a place. To dwell in space or a place has to do with feelings of belonging and feeling comfortable and secure in the relationships in which a person participates. Inhabiting a place means occupying or staying in a certain room, which says nothing about how a person's personal needs are met. Martinsen claims that when a room loses its sense of belonging, it metaphorically sings melancholy songs or even cries.

2.3. Rationale

Scientists and people in general have not yet been able to fully analyze and understand the effects (positive and negative) of the COVID-19 pandemic on societies and on people's everyday lives. The governments aimed to save lives and alleviate human suffering, goals that were carried out through restrictions and control, meaning having power over people. This is something that was done in all countries where the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged. However, restrictions in Sweden did not include a total lock down, which became an often-discussed topic both in Sweden and internationally. The pandemic immediately led to an overwhelming number of articles published in various national daily press and media outlets concerning the supply of groceries and face masks. Various countries have reported on COVID-19 tests, vaccines, medical treatments, and different restrictions. Less has been published in scientific journals about how the pandemic has shaped people's everyday lives, and very little has been considered about what messages the media has brought forth, nor has the media discourse been analyzed in a scientific manner concerning which discourse and constructions have been depicted. Gaining knowledge of people's everyday situations during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant restrictions, such as physical isolation, is of value in preparation for the future worldwide. One way to get such knowledge is to analyze how the pandemic isolation was depicted in printed media. What ideologies and use of language, thus power relations, did the daily press communicate related to isolation. Clarifying the discourse order of pandemic isolation can reveal newspapers' construction of different prerequisites and conditions affecting people's everyday life. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to critically investigate how spatial isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic was constructed in the Swedish daily press and tabloids.

The following questions guided the analysis: How was isolation depicted with regards to various places and spaces? What voices are heard, and is there a hegemonic discourse?

3. Materials and methods

This research employs Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018; Fairclough, 2013). The CDA aims to describe, evaluate, explain, and ethically value existing realities in a society. The concept of discourse can refer to spoken or written language use and to non-verbal communication (Tengelin and Dahlborg-Lyckhage, 2017). The CDA has a constructionist's standpoint and a critical approach that illuminates underlying power struggles and values in social domains. By analyzing the text of a specific area, it is possible to uncover relationships of dominance, power, and control that are manifested in the language (Fairclough, 2015). Central to CDA, and what distinguishes it from other discourse analyses, is that language is seen as being simultaneously shaped socially as well as shaping the social landscape. According to Fairclough (2015), the "linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena" (p. 56). A CDA approach also links discourses to social practices, e.g., healthcare.

3.1. Data collection

Newspaper articles were searched via the Media Archive database, where four of the leading Swedish daily newspapers (Swedish: *Svenska Dagbladet* (SvD), *Dagens Nyheter* (DN), *Expressen*, *Aftonbladet*) were

chosen. The introductory search was performed with search terms (see Box 1.), in collaboration with a university librarian (C.T.). Extraction dates were chosen as 15 March, 15 April, 15 May, and December 15, 2020, that is, representing a sample and day from the start of the pandemic and three pandemic "waves".

The collected newspapers articles (n = 451) were briefly scanned by two of the authors (XX and XX), focusing on the main heading and abstract leading to a reduction of the data set to 203 articles (Fig. 1). In total, 121 articles were read in their entirety, appraised in relation to aim, and research questions, and included in the data set as they were assessed as fitting the aim and research questions. The corpus, distributed amongst the four dates, had most articles published in April (57) and March (40). As an example, the dataset for the day 15th March, comprised approximately 5600 words.

3.2. Data analysis

3.2.1. Data analysis

The texts were analyzed using Fairclough's (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018; Fairclough, 2013) model with three dimensions; 1) description (text analysis), 2) interpretation (processing analysis), and 3) explanation (social analysis). All authors were involved in analyzing the data. The analysis started by descriptive linguistic work, starting with reading all newspaper articles (n = 121) thoroughly as a whole. Then paragraphs and sentences were closely examined in line with the aim of the study. Words, personal pronouns, and grammar were focused on (Table 1). Value laden words, modal auxiliary verbs, words for assessments and metaphors were marked, noting which words used over others.

The second dimension of analysis involved interpretations of the discourse practice. Finding what discourses were visible, includes analysis of the production and consumption of the text. In that analysis, the following questions were asked; who is the text addressed to? What are the consequences of the text? How was the text been created? This was combined with the linguistic description and thus, the four discourses were identified. We also identified words that came from other discourses, and from other texts, and how those words had been used in those discourses. In the third dimension of CDA, a critique of discourses is combined with an explanation of how they work in social practice. In the third dimension of the analysis, power relations and ideology are central, and one can explain how the discourses construct the reality and how reality construct discourses. This paper seeks to *explain* the relation to existing social orders in society and modality, that is, which people or authorities in the actual discourses were given strong authority, and how equity and inequalities or power were mediated. This step is presented in the discussion section, where also an ethical analysis is presented. The latter is advocated for in Fairclough and co-authors later writings concerning CDA (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018).

4. Results

The discourse order of isolation in newspapers writing about the Corona pandemic comprised of four discourses: Discourse of a foreign threat, Discourse of restrictions, Discourse of a failing strategy and Discourse of inequity (Fig. 2). The hegemonic discourse was the Discourse of inequity supported by three underlying discourses that the newspapers contained. The discourse of foreign threats and discourse of a failing strategy are dependent to the discourse of restrictions. The condition for the dominating discourse of isolation was the discourse of a foreign threat.

4.1. Discourse of a foreign threat

Patient and staff integrity in intensive care units (ICUs) are in general protected from photographing. However, suddenly, this changed. The articles contained photos as well as descriptions of how ICUs quickly filled up with critically ill patients around the world. The former closed area became public interest. The third wave occurred in December 2020 and led to massive, overcrowded ICUs, described as a disaster for patients, staff, and families.

The discourse of a foreign threat was both foremost and central to the pandemic discussion. The first wave of the pandemic was seen as a foreign threat, for which people in general, as well as the authorities, prepared for the unknown, in other words, the worst. War terms were commonly used in the papers, such as *closed borders, roadblocks, mass graves, emergency, arm, virus as an enemy,* and *police and military forces guard the national borders.* Nobody knew what to expect, and many countries were described in a nationalist tone where number one priority was themselves.

An escalated prompt of preparation to meet the threat of the virus in private homes, institutions, the public sector, and organizations was constructed in the printed media. This preparation of personal protection equipment (PPE) was depicted in the text as an arms race and hoarding by those who had the ability to equip themselves began. Sharing PPE between regions, institutions, or even neighbors did not occur. Toilet paper was mediated as hard currency, even if it was not a commodity in short supply. The prevalent ideology became "each to their own!"

> *"When we were shopping, it was empty; it was completely empty. People hoarded completely" (referring to empty shelves in the grocery stores)".* (Expressen, 15-03-20).

There were opinions rooted in fear. Why were schools still open when senior citizens were isolated with no visits? In May 2020, it became obvious that the pandemic had affected people's health and well-being; people had psychological, economic, and existential worries.

4.2. Discourse of restrictions

This discourse was constructed to convince the public that it was important to stay isolated. Preparation, social isolation, and physical distancing were common messages to the masses.

Nouns repeated in the newspaper texts were *isolation, restriction,* and *elderly.* Isolation at home meant safety and the possibility of avoiding getting critically ill. Senior citizens' loneliness was illustrated by the voices of politicians, scientists, and managers. A government mandate announced that people must stay at home or not travel further away than 2 h from home. The health care system was seriously burdened, and

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Box 1
Presentation of the search terms that were used.

(coronavirus* or Covid* or corona* or pandemic or epidemic) AND (home* or housing or isolat*or quarantine or restrict* or reduce* or confine* or limit* or outside or outdoors or care* or treatment or" medical treatment" or caring).

In SWE: (coronavirus* or Covid*or corona* or pandemi or epidemi) AND (hem* or bostad or isoler*or karantän or begräns* or inskränk* or restriktion* or utomhus or ute or vård* or behandling or "medicinsk vård" or omsorg).
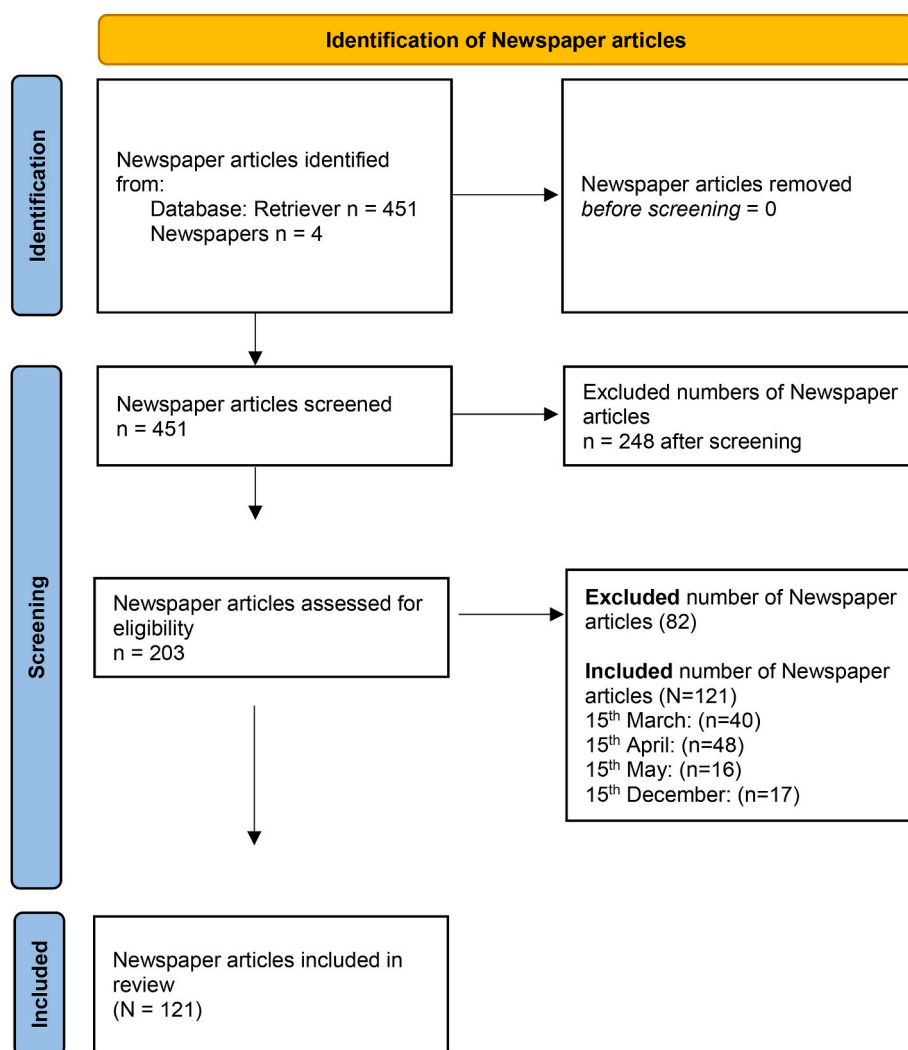
Identification of Newspaper articles

Identification

Newspaper articles identified from:
Database: Retriever n = 451
Newspapers n = 4

→

Newspaper articles removed
before screening = 0

Screening

Newspaper articles screened
n = 451

→

Excluded numbers of Newspaper articles
n = 248 after screening

Newspaper articles assessed for eligibility
n = 203

→

Excluded number of Newspaper articles (82)

Included number of Newspaper articles (N=121)
15th March: (n=40)
15th April: (n=48)
15th May: (n=16)
15th December: (n=17)

Included

Newspaper articles included in review
(N = 121)

Fig. 1. Prisma flowchart.

Table 1
Most frequent words.

Frequency of words, clustered in groups of 10, falling scale	
1–10	Has/have, is/are, as, or, if, should, can/may, and, with, it
11–20	not, also, so, be, on, or, for, get, towards, of
21–30	need, virus, trace, pandemic, corona, they, them, he, she, treatment
31–40	after, alone/lonely, be, how, need, treatment, shall, disease, when, but

media described a new rule, pointing out that Swedish citizens were forced to seek health care only in their own county. Statistical graphs became an everyday message in the press.

Consequences of isolation were outlined as a risk of increased domestic violence, gambling abuse or addiction, because people were isolated in their homes and from their families. Economic support programs directed at individuals and to protect the country's gross national product to avoid a stock market crash and mass unemployment were frequently mediated. Some people lost their jobs, while healthcare professionals worked to the limit of what was possible. Healthcare professionals described anxiety about bringing the virus home, something that could also affect their children. This was constructed as an ambivalent thought, stuck between a wish to be isolated at the workplace and isolated at home.

Reports on voluntary actions started to appear in which neighbors and taxi drivers delivered food and supplies to those who were alone at
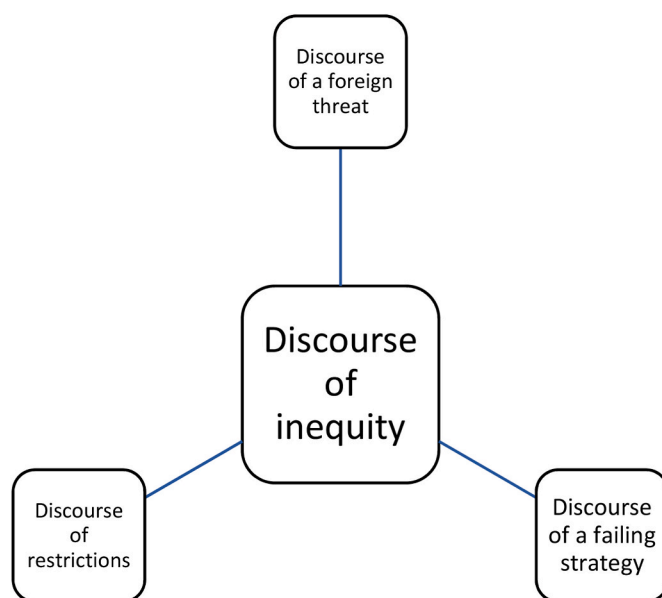
Discourse of a foreign threat

Discourse of inequity

Discourse of restrictions

Discourse of a failing strategy

Fig. 2. Descriptions of constructed discourses.

home. Working from home (remote work) had disadvantages, and the media constructed isolated figures that described uneasiness and even depression. As all social activities were canceled many felt lonely, isolated, and detached from the rest of the world. "*Expect a boring summer in isolation*" (Expressen 15-04-20).

In December 2020, a new form of the virus was discovered, and it spread quickly. Stricter restrictions were introduced, which were described and criticized in the papers. Cries for help from ICU staff became regular headings in the press and like a mantra repeated: "Stay at home so we can work for you!" The staff were forced to minimize their social contacts to be available for the critically ill.

Celebrations and traditions connected with young people graduating from high school or university were also restricted. Children who had divorced parents risked being prevented from staying with one parent, and many senior citizens were left alone and isolated. Isolation was also depicted in the opposite direction; that is, young people who had been abroad were hindered from crossing borders and coming home.

During the second wave the printed media, constructed messages that concerts, and sports events were canceled, and theaters and night clubs were closed. A limit of 50 people was the rule for public and private gatherings, but new ideas for socializing despite restrictions were introduced.

"Cafes are only allowed to serve take-away, and restaurants must close at nine o'clock in the evening" (DN 15-12-20).

Data-generated information from cellphones were used to monitor people's mobility, and the limit of 50 people for public and private gatherings was reduced to eight people. However, in this discourse of isolation there was also hope and media also described a few positive ideas, reporting on people who gave live music performances in parks and outside nursing homes. Arrangements of outdoor activities, such as "Corona walks" in the woods and "collective pep-talks" were published. "*Invitation to hear live music in the courtyard//We want to give them a little joy in everyday life*" (Aftonbladet 15-04-20).

There was news that mediated hopes for the future; as the weather changed, spring and warmth were on their way. The virus might be defeated! However, the darkest of times bred new hope and a longing for togetherness. When the restrictions were softened, all of Swedish society showed somewhat of a resurrection. Happiness was reported in the articles when social gatherings were allowed again.

4.3. Discourse of a failing strategy

From the start of the pandemic, newspapers reported on "the Swedish strategy": Swedish citizens should lean on trust in the government and authorities. Therefore, no lockdowns were established, rather putting faith in the citizen to obey the authorities' recommendations such as physical distancing. The public was responsible for interpreting the different discourses to do the right thing, which meant that people were free to move outside without masks, to keep to their own household, practice physical distancing from others, disinfect their hands often, and work from home if possible. A government program for COVID-19 testing was introduced with the purpose of stopping the spread of the contagion. Words such as "an urge to stay united" and "national unification" were used in the press.

In the beginning, the Swedish strategy was presented as positive. In March 2020, the press focused a lot about PPEs not being shared among regions or municipalities. In April 2020, the tone changed to doubts about and criticism of the Swedish national strategy. The words *failure*, *suspicion*, and *anger* were used when the Swedish strategy, the decision to not impose a lockdown but expecting individuals to follow necessary regulations on a voluntary basis, was compared to those of other countries.

"Therefore, the Swedish strategy has failed" (Aftonbladet 15-04-20).

Problems regarding access to hospital care accumulated. Discontent

spread among people in general; the Swedish restrictions were questioned, as they had a different approach to regulations than the rest of the world. Media started to describe the international responses to the Swedish regulations or, rather, a lack of regulations, including a lack of societal lockdowns.

"*Shut down Sweden to protect Sweden*" (DN 15-03-20).

The mortality rates in Sweden were higher than those in the surrounding Nordic countries. However, the message from authorities was still not to cancel but to readjust the method of interaction. Still, national borders, as well as borders between counties, were restricted. Overall, "the Swedish strategy" was criticized in the press. However, later in 2020, when research findings were available, it was clear that the voluntary recommendations had had positive effects.

"*Swedish primary schools should continue to be open, old people should isolate themselves, and the voluntary strategy has had an effect in Sweden*" (SvD 15-04-20).

Differences regarding how the restrictions should be interpreted erupted and one example presented was from a physician who received a warning from the authorities, as patients at a nursing home were not to be medically assessed physically but digitally. Some nursing homes allowed visits from relatives, while others did not. Some allowed only visits in relation to end-of-life care. Furthermore, there were concerns that celebrating Christmas in isolation would create mental illness. ICUs had always been considered a protected area concerning patient and staff integrity, however, suddenly, there were published photos of critically ill patients cared for in ICUs as well as hospital staff dressed completely in protective equipment. A longing for "the statistical graph to be flattened" and that voluntary social distancing had worked was highlighted. Soon, the available research findings showed it was clear that the voluntary recommendations had had positive effects. However, the Swedish strategy was still described in an ironic manner, and there were critiques of the Swedish government's and the Public Health Agency's actions.

Still in December 2020, the "Swedish model" seemed to be different compared to other nations, even though public places such as theaters and night clubs first were restricted but later closed, and people were told to stay at home in quarantine.

4.4. Discourse of inequity

This discourse highlighted how the pandemic had put inequality in focus. Even if there was a serious threat of a national economic crisis in general society, inequalities due to the economy and unemployment became visible content in the media. This discourse depicted how isolation during the pandemic encapsulated how unequal people are in everyday life. Celebrities like artists and sports stars were isolated in luxury places with their family members, surrounded by swimming pools, oceans, yachts, etc. "*Ronaldo's luxurious life in quarantine. According to the Daily Mail, the 35-year-old has moved to a luxury villa*" (Expressen 15-04-20). However, the reports were not based on personal interviews; instead, they were constructed from pictures taken by paparazzi and even real estate advertising, thus based on secondary sources.

Regular citizens and vulnerable citizens were depicted as isolated, alone, and without even the necessities to survive. They had to rely on charities or the goodwill of others. The media often constructed these narratives on the differences without plainly comparing them adjacent to each other. Instead, readers received differences between the two groups as concealed messages.

The fortunate could take advantage of the pandemic as a holiday or have time to fulfill themselves and recharge their batteries. An example of differences between the groups was practices in relation to visiting hours at nursing homes and in relation to end-of-life care. Another was that some could use their time to renovate their homes while waiting for

the pandemic to end.

Others, such as teachers, healthcare professionals, and cleaners, were exposed to more work and responsibilities. Healthcare professionals, politicians, athletes (at amateur and professional levels), and senior citizens dominated the texts. However, the discourse describing the latter group was not constructed with a personal voice; rather, they were mentioned as "them" or "they," and thus, they became *othered* in the media. Moreover, service personnel, such as cleaners and caregivers had to put in substantial overtime due to the pandemic. Although authorities requested that people work from home or at least stop commuting and travel in their own cars, others with low-wage jobs and fewer economic resources had to keep commuting; that is, they were put at risk, and thus, their health was sacrificed.

The newspapers also wrote about *Otherness* as this discourse depicted special groups of people; those who were more vulnerable than others. The discourse pointed to the importance of showing solidarity with these groups. Descriptions of the situation of senior citizens were present, but their personal voices were missing. In contrast, the texts mediated a paternalistic tone—that is, how citizens should behave to protect senior citizens. These voices represented politicians, scientists, healthcare managers, and professionals but personal accounts from senior citizens were absent. Care for the elderly became ethically loaded due to the very high mortality rates and restrictions on families who were ordered to stay away. Senior citizens living in their own homes or nursing homes immediately became a vulnerable group. High death rates among the elderly occurred, and many were alone while they were dying—despite the call from authorities to show solidarity with fragile people. For senior citizens living in their private homes, food supplies became a problem, and they had to rely on friends or relatives to help, as grocery stores were places of risk for infection.

> "*The older generation has helped us so much. Now, we must help them. Be a fellow human and extend a hand. That's what it's all about*" (Aftonbladet 15-03-20).

In the beginning of the pandemic, young people's voices were not heard. Descriptions of young people's situations became visible first in April 2020. At that point, their situation was highlighted due to canceled social events and gatherings.

> "*No matter how many have sighed over loud student celebrations, the silence will probably be experienced as strange*" (Aftonbladet 15-04-20).

Instead of parties and meeting friends, they were at home alone. The teenagers themselves were still voiceless – their situations were expressed by others.

5. Discussion

The analyzed newspapers revealed a discourse order of four discourses that constructed a strong polarization between various social groups. Less was written about young people, and people with disabilities were not mentioned. Healthcare professionals, politicians, athletes (at amateur and professional levels), and senior citizens dominated in the texts. However, the discourse describing the latter group was not constructed with a personal voice; rather, they were mentioned as "them" or "they," and thus, they became *othered* in the media. Isolation occurred in private homes, institutions, the public sector, and organizations. That is, all places and spaces were affected.

Several of the analyzed texts contained descriptions of different types of housing, for instance, tiny apartments and large houses, and spaces people inhabit, where the richest and the frailest live. These texts promoted the polarization of people. When analyzing the texts, we also asked ourselves why the daily press published so many reports and articles about celebrities and athletes. Was their situation during the pandemic important news? What was the motive? We argue that it was a deliberate action by the press to evoke emotions among readers. The

motive could also be of economic interest. Here our argument is in line with Lawrence et al. (2008) who claimed in an analysis about how tuberculosis has been described in press, that newspapers being collective and commercial institutions, tend to give more attention to elite compared to powerless groups. The media is considered the foundation of a democratic society but is also regarded as the fourth estate, whose main purpose is to review, muckrake, investigate, and report on the government and authorities. The freedom of the press is guided by professional journalism's rules of professional conduct (Journalists, 2020), which distinguish a democratic society. If one scrutinizes the discursive practice, the texts act as an extended arm of the state, being part of governmentality, a concept that can be defined as "the way in which governments try to make citizens embrace their best policies" (Reinbacher and Nielsen, 2016). Media actively works to construct discourses that can result in a willingness of individuals to participate in their own governance. The execution of discipline by governmentality was the use of a dominant media voice that could control details in society, thus citizens were suppressed to a detailed distribution, mastery, and hierarchical government surveillance. The reason for publishing images from ICUs could have been that the media was taking action to remind people in general about the serious situation that was threatening society. It was a message to carefully follow the restrictions, as ICU were filled to the limit, and the situation might end in disaster. However, we also found the discourse, "a failing strategy", where the restrictions were questioned.

Our findings showed that in the discourses, although arguing, people showed great trust in authorities; that is, they were reasonable citizens. When performing a critical CDA the intention is to explain and question what values are communicated (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018). The Danish philosopher Logstrup (1991) argued for ethics based on a belief that people have a natural responsibility to trust in each other. Trust, Logstrup (1991) wrote, can metaphorically be described as the willingness to put one's own life in the hands of the other. This can be seen as the values and beliefs disclosed in a democracy explaining the impact government restrictions have on people's willingness to follow prevailing guidelines and restrictions. Kearns (2021) claimed that the use of metaphors implemented a feeling of togetherness among the citizens. The "Swedish strategy" was based on the history of obedience by Swedish citizens to the government and authorities and was feasible due to the reasonable citizenry (Boman et al., 2021). Perhaps this is due to the long Swedish tradition of trusting the authorities, and therefore, no harsher regulations were necessary. The discursive practice did affect the social practice, as people seemed to have taken on the message and there were no major protests among people.

The government has control over the individual, however, to the extent required to increase the well-being of citizens (Götz, 2004). Philosophers have explicated justice with terms such as fairness, dessert (what is deserved), and entitlement, interpreting justice as fair and equitable. The principle of need is often used as an example of material justice. That is, if a human needs something, without it, the human suffers harm, or is adversely affected (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018; Beauchamp and Childress, 2019). Even if there was already an inequality in the society, this risked increasing during the pandemic as not all in the population had their needs met.

The analysis also revealed an evolution concerning the constructed discourse evident from a development over time, starting with fear and moving toward acceptance and appreciation. Compared to other countries, the Swedish restrictions were depicted as more liberal, as a total lockdown order was not issued; the Swedish press focused on comparing the Swedish strategy with other countries' regulations and lockdowns. Isolation affected all socioeconomic groups; however, some groups came to harm to a greater extent, i.e., those with weaker or silent voices. In particular, senior citizens' restricted encounters with relatives were depicted in the press. We claim that such visits preserve and promote health and wellbeing in a double sense, which creates cognitive stimulation and an existence in a lived time; the latter cannot be regained for

this group! These actions, often sanctioned by the authorities but applied in various ways in various institutions, are examples of injustice, unfairness, discrimination, and domination, just the concepts of "wrong" that CDA wants to highlight and put right (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2018). According to the Swedish Corona Commission's (2021) report, disadvantaged groups suffered from isolation more than others, with canceled and postponed healthcare treatment, loss of earnings, and unemployment. The discourse of inequity was materialized regarding teenagers, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

When isolated in space and place, we become separated from our sense of belonging (Galvin & Todres, 2013). explained isolation and loss of meaning as dimensions of dehumanization. When being and dwelling in isolation, not only in a physical sense, the sense of place and feelings of being at home, change and risk being lost. During the pandemic, the borders closed, and Sweden was considered a dark horse, an outsider that differed from the rest of the world with its laid-back restrictions. Several concerns regarding politicians' ability to act were questioned in the texts. Since 1766 (National Archives, 1766), Sweden has been seen ideologically as a country, where the rights to free speech and the press are honored. In a democracy, the media's role is to critically review the state's and politicians' activities. During the ongoing pandemic, the journalists had the power to discursively construct "the truth," which resulted in the four discourses. Hence one may wonder who really owned the discourse. Fairclough and Fairclough (2018) also distinguished between power behind and power in a discourse. The power behind the discourse is hidden, made up of a prevailing ideology, and thus appears in the outspoken discourse. The fearful tone in the beginning changed to a harsh and critical tone. Representatives of the Public Health Agency of Sweden were severely criticized, as some spokesmen were held personally responsible for the mortality rates.

Caring science and health geography share the same point of view, that health and wellbeing is not static in humans; it is a movement (Andrews, 2018, Bergbom et al., 2021a); that is, it varies. Andrews (2017) stated that hope is generated through physical encounters in various spaces and places where people interact. The analyzed newspaper articles described examples where encounters between people in daily life generated hope and joy, and that people became touched by unexpected concern showed to them.

5.1. Limitations

When analyzing a text, there is always more than one discourse that can be uncovered, and together they constitute an order of discourses. An order of discourses encompasses a discursive practice with an ongoing struggle for ideological hegemony, which implies that a discursive practice can be either replaced or reproduced (Fairclough, 2010). A critique could be that the data set consisted only of Swedish articles published in the Swedish press. However, as Sweden followed a different strategy during the pandemic, e.g., had never a totally lock-down, we were interested in examining the discourse in the daily press. Another critique could be that discourse analysis is closely connected to spoken and written language (Fairclough, 2010). Nuances risk being lost in the translation process when presenting the findings in a non-native language. A strength of this study is that we also presented an ethical critique, as described by Fairclough and Fairclough (2018). (Martinsen, 2006) used the metaphor "seeing with the heart eye" when describing such ethical action in contrast to seeing with a reporting eye, which means using a reducing and neutral gaze.

6. Conclusion

The media discourses of the discourse order of isolation inherent four discourses affected public opinion and behavior. In this situation, the discourse of inequity had a dominant position and thus could be seen as hegemonic. Media was an extended arm of the authorities' messages and constructed discourses with this content. The readers of the newspaper

articles had to read with a critical eye that is open to the risk of polarization of people or groups of people. Inequity increases at the weakness of society in every crisis, and this was also present in our study. During the pandemic spatial isolation affected people in general. However, elderly, young people and people living with reduced health were most affected in relation to their experiences of daily living and health. Even if the intention to do good to others that are vulnerable is strong, the voices of these people in the discourse was missing.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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