

**ROLE OF MEDIA IN HANDLING A GLOBAL CRISIS DURING THE PANDEMIC
COVID-19: PERCEPTION AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR*****¹Prof. Sanjeev Sood ²Dr. Ritu S. Sood and ³Rishabh Sood**¹Professor, School of Media, Film & Entertainment, Sharda University, Greater Noida, India.²Dean, School of Media, Film & Entertainment, Sharda University, Greater Noida, India.³Postgraduate Student MA in Media, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia.***Corresponding Author: Prof. Sanjeev Sood**

Professor, School of Media, Film & Entertainment, Sharda University, Greater Noida, India.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Severe acute respiratory syndrome- Coronavirus 2 has put beyond doubt intensive pressure on healthcare, economic, and social structures. The problem is how to pass the knowledge of current disease statistics and its prevention to the general population at a rate corresponding to or better than the spreading epidemic. At the same time, a massive amount of health-threatening misinformation is spreading at a faster rate than the disease itself. The large percentage of this false rumour is circulated through media. Thus, providing fast, truthful and reliable information addressing critical problems of infection control is, therefore, of key importance. This study observes both the positive and negative impact of media during coronavirus Pandemic. **Method:** The study is based on an extensive survey among 250 adult participants of various sections of Indian society with different age groups between 18 - 45 years to introspect the level of public awareness by media with respect to cause, spread, prevention and treatment of disease caused by spread of COVID-19 viral outbreak, which is reflected in the societal behavioural response of rigorous precautionary measures. **Results:** This study found a positive association between mass media, the psychological domain of the Indian population during COVID-19. Further authentication and reliability of the Source of the message, true authenticity & reliability of the information should be checked appropriately before disseminating it through mass media.

KEYWORDS: Media, Communication, Covid 19, Coronavirus, Pandemic, Fake News, Human Behaviour.**INTRODUCTION**

The mass media - print, television, radio, and the internet - has been an unprecedented outstretch as an imparting appliance during the current pandemic. In the course of such a public health crisis (COVID-19) mass media directly influences the solitary life of the people in both positive and negative way to combat COVID 19. Inappropriate irrational outcomes among people have been seen to multiply remarkably course of knowledge and rampart providing information and messages via mass media. It follows administer the special recognition to a particular matter, the more coverage on the subject matter by media, sustain more recognition and perturb, especially when it comes to the health of people's lives and have potentiality in mounting an agenda by formulating the issuance to take measures on that. It is conscientiously realized that the mass media, is in numerous ways that impoverished channel for the transmission of scientifically precise details about health and medicine, susceptible to aggrandizement, the transgression of exclusion, and absolute inaccuracy. Various studies also outlined unjustifiable rumours or staggering media coverage has the proficiency to construct misapprehension, misinformation concerning

threat approximate in the minds of the extensive public with regards to the likelihood in a public health crisis.

The media on a broader sphere is doing a lot in informing the public about the adverse effects of this devastating pandemic Covid-19 but the public or the viewer should be warned about all the hazardous impact of this disastrous virus which can easily destroy the complete human race, whereby phone numbers of concerned authorities could be given which can be used anytime in the time of crises or urgent emergency which will not only be of very good help for the family in danger but will also help the virus from spreading to the nearby area, so in this way, an individual will not just protect himself but also the society.

The World Health Organization calls this the battle against "trolls and conspiracy theories." Misinformation creates confusion, and spreads fear, hampering the outbreak response. "Misinformation on the coronavirus might be the most contagious thing about it.

The spread of the COVID-19 has proved deadly, and this is a challenging time for the union as well as state

governments as they work to address this health emergency. However, shows that in times of crisis, democratic governments may take a dangerous autocratic turn. In such a situation, journalism has a great role to play in a democracy, as it has been ideally visualised as a platform for objective information and critical-rational discourse.

Indian media has been helping a lot and is still striving hard to showcase every possible sphere of any piece of information related to Covid-19. When Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi announced lockdown of 21 days where people were asked not to leave their houses until an emergency situation when everything was almost shut it was the Indian media who was the only source of news, information and awareness for the public.

On a whole Indian media has been the biggest support in the time of crisis where all the other nations have lost so many lives but the Indian media has been and is still continuously informing its public about everything that could go wrong if the public does not follow the rules and guidelines that are stated by the Government. However, with the dissemination of news and information comes rumours and beliefs. The rising tide of fake news and misinformation being pumped through mainstream media is making the public very susceptible to the media for responsible news and updates.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To carry out this study, an online questionnaire was prepared on Google forms and distributed among respondents from Delhi-NCR. A total of 250 sample responses were received. A correlation has been used to find out the association between mass media and perception and human behaviour during the current pandemic.

A cross-sectional, observational study was carried out among the Delhi NCR population to define the effect of mass media on the quality of life during COVID 19. A random sampling technique was used. The questionnaire was sent via what's app, Facebook, and G-mail to the contacts of authors and also requested to further share among their contacts and encouraged to fill by all age groups. 250 responses were accepted online from Delhi NCR of different age groups of participants.

The Questionnaire was developed by using Google form which included consent, demographic details, and 10 questions. The first questions were if the media can provide relief or grounds for misinformation, (de)humanization, and perception. The second connects the flexibility and pervasiveness of the media technologies to increase the public's devotion to the safety measures suggested by global health organizations to fight the spread of COVID-19. The third can media support adaptive responses to nurture positive health approaches and adherence to precautionary measures. The fourth was related to the reduction of stigma,

prejudice, discrimination, inequalities and the perception of the people towards the media coverage of the Global Pandemic. The fifth was based on fake news that fake news is widely spread while the real one is rarely given an eye. The sixth question catered to does the media project an overstated portrayal of a pandemic is made while the real picture is over sighted by the media. Seventh question was about the mass media becoming an influencer in educating/informing the public about the pandemic precautionary measures. The eighth question was chosen to check whether fake news was creating chaos in society. Ninth was based on "Are Journalists facing any problems in educating the society about Covid-19".

In the last, one question was asked if the media is able to combat the fake news prevailing in society.

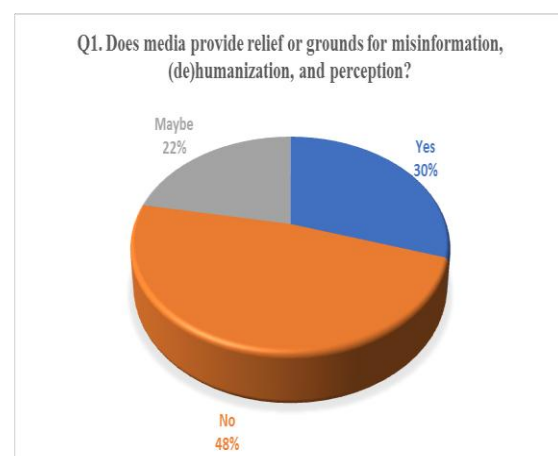
RESULTS

The value of Cronbach alpha (α) came out to be 0.78 indicating the questionnaire is reliable with an appropriate sample size of 250.

Demographic data: A total number of 250 individuals of age groups 18-45years responded. The majority of them belong to the age group of 18-45 years. The majority of participants were using Television and social media of mass media for COVID-19 news. Demographic details are given in table 1.

Table -1: Demographic details of the study population.

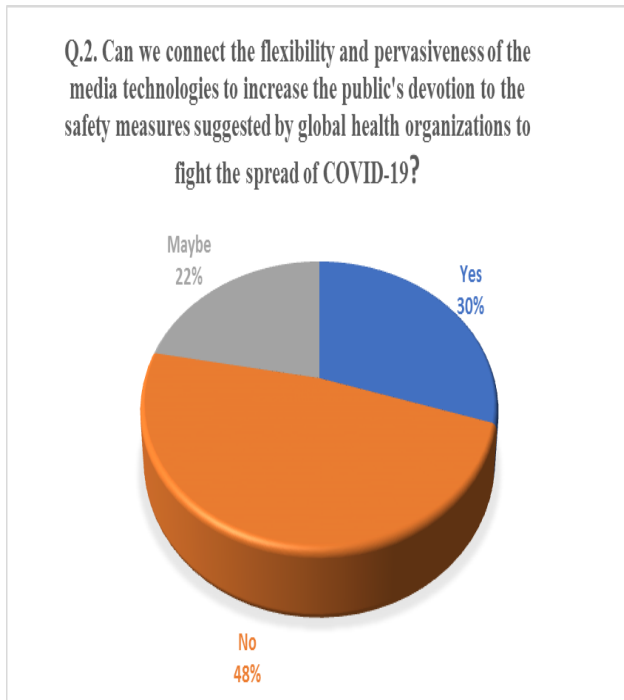
Variables	Participants, N (%)
Gender	
Male	115
Female	135
Age (years)	
18-30	180
31-45	70
Qualification	
PhD	20
Post graduate	125
Under graduate	105



Graph-1: Based on Question 1.

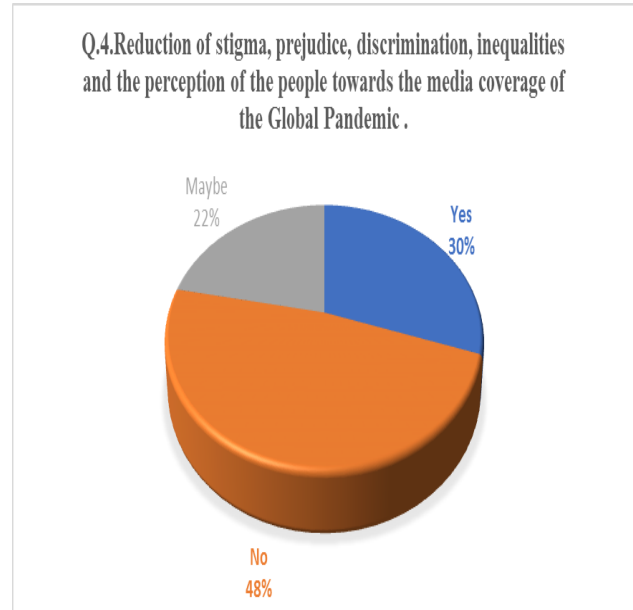
Graph 1 shows that 60% people said yes, 35% people said no and 5% people could not decide if media can provide relief or grounds for misinformation, (de)humanization, and perception.

media can support adaptive responses to nurture positive health approaches and adherence to precautionary measures.



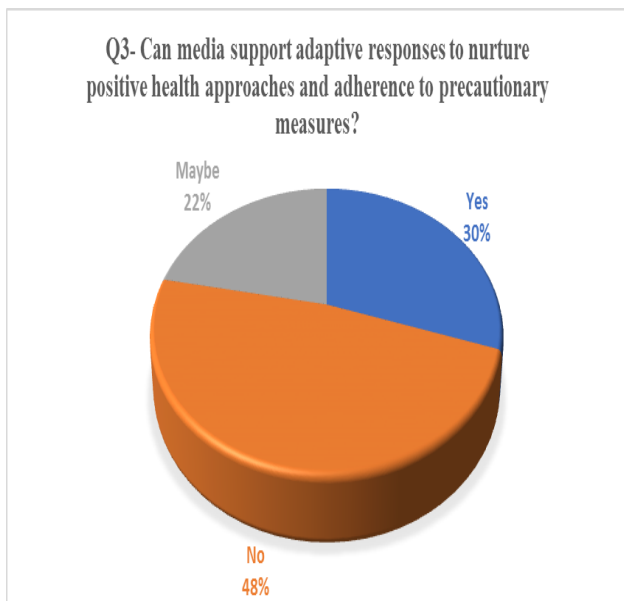
Graph-2: Based on Question 2.

Graph 2 indicates 76% people said yes, 10% people said no and 14% people could not decide if they could connect the flexibility and pervasiveness of the media technologies to increase the public's devotion to the safety measures suggested by global health organizations to fight the spread of COVID-19.



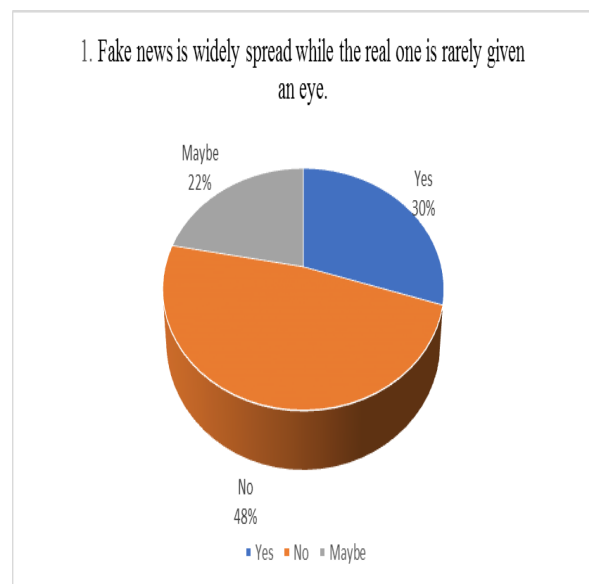
Graph 4: Based on Question 4.

From the graph above it is clear that 64% people said YES, 6% people said NO and 30% people could not decide if media can help in the reduction of stigma, prejudice, discrimination, inequalities and the perception of the people towards the media coverage of the Global Pandemic.



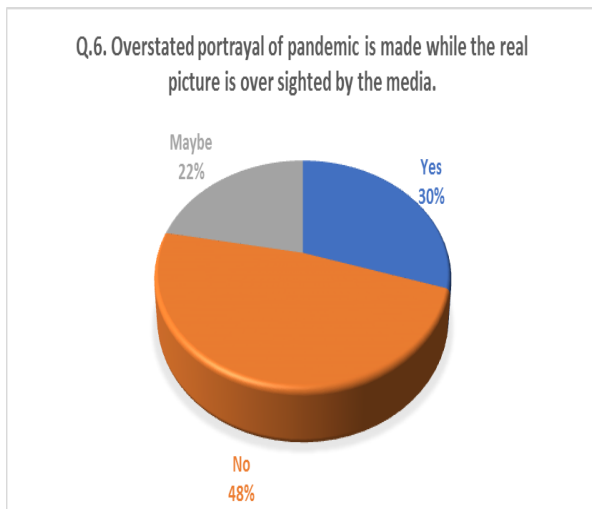
Graph -3: Based on Question 3.

From the Graph 3, it is clear that 77% people said YES, 7% people said NO and 16% people could not decide if



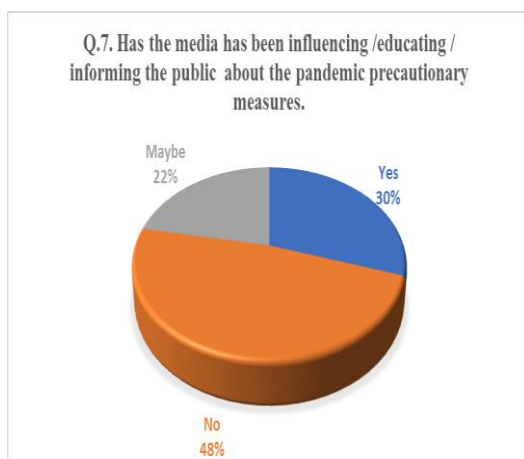
Graph 5: Based on Question 5.

Graph 5 shows that 71% people said YES, 10% people said NO and 19% people could not decide if Fake news is widely spread while the real one is rarely given an eye.



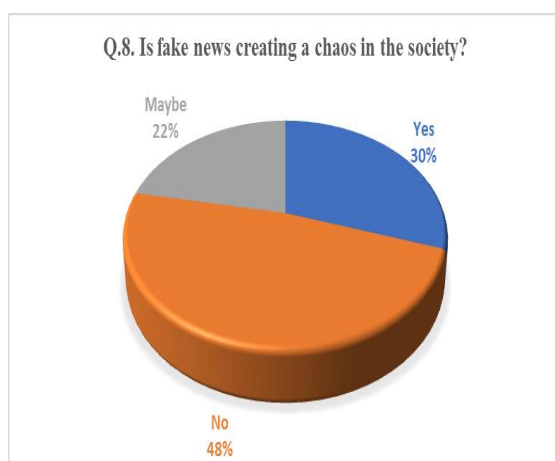
Graph 6: Based on Question 6.

Above graph shows that 76% people said YES, 10% people said NO and 14% people could not decide if overstated portrayal of pandemic is made while the real picture is over sighted by the Media.



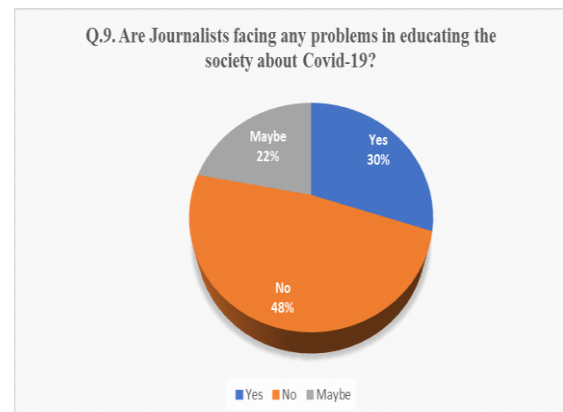
Graph 7: Based on Question 7.

Graph 7 depicts 80% people said YES, 4% people said NO and 16% people could not decide if the media has been influencing or educating or informing the public.



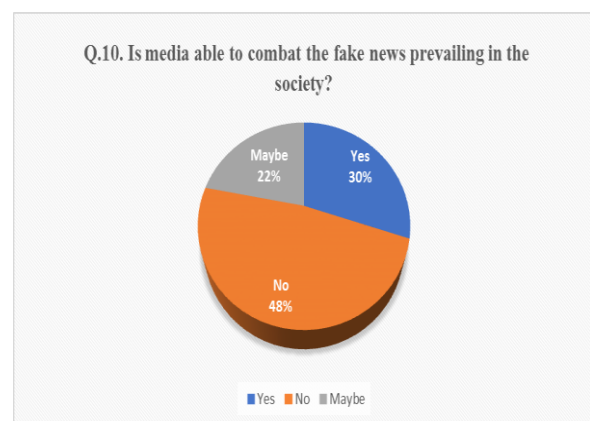
Graph 8: Based on Question 8.

Graph 8 shows that 78% people said YES, 8% people said NO and 14% people could not decide if fake news was creating a chaos in the society.



Graph 9: Based on Question 9.

30% people said YES, 48% people said NO and 22% people could not decide if the Journalists facing any problems in educating the society about Covid-19 as per Graph 9.



Graph 10: Based on Question 10.

Graph depicts that 30% people said YES, 48% people said NO and 22% people could not decide if the media is able to combat the fake news prevailing in the society.

DISCUSSIONS

The present study was conducted to determine the role of media in preventing a global crisis during a global pandemic covid-19: perception and human behaviour. The results revealed that mass media had an impact on the life of individuals of all age groups as mass media is a major influencer for the formation of public opinion. The results of this study showed that the major impact of mass media has been reflected in the psychological domain of quality of life of all the individuals. Mohit Varshney *et al.* in their study reported that the news coverage by mass media on the issues regarding economic growth, health, the progression of the disease, and livelihood has been increased day by day since after this pandemic which creates a significant impact on mental health among Indian population. The results of

this study are in the same line with the results found in another study. Another significant positive correlation of 0.4 was seen between hours spend on media and worry. The underlying cause behind this major impact on mental health in this study could be the stress created due to the publishing of the news by mass media without filter and the fake news shown by the media during this COVID-19 period.

A.S. Panneersevlan on 16th March 2020, (The Hindu, Columns) wrote about the Journalistic Challenges in reporting Covid-19. Panneersevlan specifically emphasized on the use of the word 'pandemic' he said it's not a word to be used lightly or carelessly because if it is misused unreasonable fear or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death.

Jackson Kushner on 25th March 2020, (Industry Trends) examined how media is helping in awaking the public about this pandemic. In his article, he has mentioned how lockdown and quarantine are trending on social media. The underlying cause behind this major impact on mental health in this study could be the stress created due to the publishing of the news by mass media without filter and the fake news shown by the media during this COVID-19 period. Various studies have also reported a negative impact of media exposure on mental health during this pandemic.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that time spent on mass media for news on COVID-19 daily has a direct impact on the population of all age groups. This has affected not only the quality of life but also psychological and Sociological health of the people. So, with this study, we can imply that times spend on mass media for watching COVID-19 news should be less. Further authentication and reliability of the Source of news should be checked appropriately before considering it.

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