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Social Media for Relief and Rescue: The Chennai, India Floods of 2015

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Abstract

With the proliferation of the internet, the emergence of social media has accompanied mobile penetration and engagement making the world smaller. Swift communication is needed during natural disasters. Information and communication technology becomes integral to four significant phases of disaster management – mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Situations like disasters also demand stakeholders such as civil society, particularly in the form of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and communities, cater to the need for rapid, efficient communication to minimize the loss during a disaster. So with social media ruling the digital transformation, this study examines how NGOs – Chennai Volunteers, Bhoomika Trust and Chennai Trekking Club – used Facebook and WhatsApp through semi-structured interviews during the Chennai floods of 2015. The satisfaction levels of users of Facebook and WhatsApp among communities in Kotturpuram and Mudichur (two of the worst-affected areas during the Chennai floods, the former within the city and the latter being peri urban) in using these social media platforms during the disaster were also found. For that, a survey with judgement sampling (n=400) was done. The satisfaction level of using Facebook and WhatsApp among the residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur was analyzed. The factors of sense of empowerment – information, real-time operational information, emotional support, situational updates, and trustworthiness – were further analyzed. The results revealed that disaster management during the floods was made more efficient with Facebook and WhatsApp.

Keywords: Chennai floods, disaster management, Facebook, WhatsApp, empowerment

Introduction

The floods in Chennai, India happened during November-December 2015 had shaken the exclusive lifestyle of the upwardly mobile people who were a significant minority.

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The floods not only affected the poor but also the rich. People who did not bother to know their next door neighbours were left helpless. Even their plastic card money was of no use with ATMs becoming dysfunctional. All including the old people who were not much affected by the floods put in their efforts in the relief and rehabilitation operations. When a son working in Mumbai contacted his father via Whatsapp to come over to Mumbai along with his mother, the father wrote back "... At this point of time I don't want to be away leaving everything to others and escaping from this spot. In a critical situation like this we would like to shoulder some of the activities with all the others here... Nothing to worry. God is great and will take care of us" ("Chennai floods: Father's WhatsApp," 2015).

The growth of mobile technologies and the access through social media have transformed virtual communication. Social media increase the rate at which the online culture of interaction prevail and transforms interaction virtually with their instantaneous popularity and timeliness around the globe. With a range of benefits and opportunities, they empower persons to have a massive influence. So, even people who are not actively using social media cannot avoid noticing their everyday presence. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have become a key parameter for economic development. With such ICTs, it is possible to be present when we are absent. The digital world has given a new perspective of how one can get in touch and seek help from the outside when needed.

A natural disaster is the result of natural hazard – earthquake, landslide, tropical storm, flood, or tsunami. Natural disasters affect human activities and thus urge us to communicate or contact our dear and near ones as well as offer/seek rescue and relief efforts. The effective response to a disaster reduction lies in quick, reliable communication. Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and mobile messaging apps are also used to plan and execute mitigation measures as they provide right information at the right time, and can be of immense help for the people to minimize the loss due to a disaster. This has made the social media users disseminate disaster-related information to people at a personalized level even before the stakeholders such as the government and the mass media. Social media tools are taking an ever-growing part in disaster response too (Cohen, 2013; Sarcevic et al., 2012) by ranking as the fourth most popular source to access emergency information (Lindsay, 2011).

Situations like disasters demand stakeholders such as civil society, particularly in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities attempt to cater to the need for rapid, efficient communication to minimize the loss during a disaster. The rapidly-changing communication environment, including interactive and transnational flows and networks, provides NGOs with new communication opportunities to facilitate the victims to overcome the situation during disasters. This study examines how NGOs and communities in Chennai used Facebook and WhatsApp during the Chennai floods of

2015. For doing so, the study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methods of semi-structured interviews with the founders of NGOs – Chennai Volunteers, Bhoomika Trust and Chennai Trekking Club – and a survey to find the satisfaction levels and sense of empowerment of users of Facebook and WhatsApp among communities in Kotturpuram and Mudichur (two of the worst-affected areas during the Chennai floods of 2015) in using these social media platforms during the disaster.

Background

The northeast monsoon routinely causes low pressure which forms over the Bay of Bengal. This would strike the eastern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal and cause floods, while Tamil Nadu experienced droughts. But during 2015, Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu was devastated with record-breaking rain since 1918, which led to massive floods.

With an urban population of 86,53,521 (“Chennai City Census 2011 data”, 2011), Chennai was shattered by an unexpected calamity during November-December 2015. The persistent rain till the end of November led the Chembarambakkam reservoir reach its limit. This led to the overflow of the Adyar and Cooum rivers. With non-stop rain, Chennai was waterlogged with record-breaking 374 mm of rainfall within 24 hours, during the beginning of December 2015 (“Mudichur, Tambaram, Kanchi Parts”, 2015). Following that, many parts of Chennai were submerged in water resulting in the city being declared a disaster zone on December 2.

The 2015 floods in Chennai witnessed one of the heaviest rains in 100 years and this led to disruption of normal life. Roads were overflowing with stormwater making it difficult to commute. Train services were cancelled. The Chennai airport was shut for three days as the stormwater had inundated the runways so much that aircraft floated adrift. Industrial and commercial activities were affected due to the floods. Rivers breached their banks which led to the submerging of surrounding areas with water rising up to the second floor in some places (Pradnya, 2015). One of the runways of the airport had been built on a place that was once a river. The lakes overflowed and the rivers overflowed with sewage as never before. The floodgates were opened and Avadi Bridge collapsed. People were stuck in their homes with their routine life affected. The disaster killed more than 400 people, displaced lakhs of people to the relief camps, causing economic damage. Educational institutions were closed for more than a month. Several city hospitals stopped functioning. Public places such as temples, mosques, churches, hotels, and cinema theatres were opened to those needing shelter and food.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the Indian Army, the Navy and the Indian Air Force (IAF) were deployed to carry out rescue operations in Chennai. The Tamil Nadu police and the Fire and Rescue Department also proved themselves to be

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very resourceful during the crisis. The Chennai floods of 2015 marooned a wide gamut of people from lower class to the elite leaving nobody untouched and also prompted one of the biggest flood rescue operations. Thus, the grim situation of the floods with waterlogged streets, flooded houses, uprooted trees, faulty street lights and stranded transport brought to the fore the good Samaritans who helped the flood victims.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to analyze the use of Facebook and WhatsApp by NGOs and communities during the Chennai floods of 2015.

More specifically:

- To examine how NGOs used Facebook and WhatsApp during the Chennai floods of 2015
- To find out the satisfaction levels of users of Facebook and WhatsApp among the communities in Kotturpuram and Mudichur in using the platforms during the Chennai floods of 2015
- To find out how Facebook and WhatsApp empowered the residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur during the floods.

Review of literature

With the rise of high speed internet and the emergence of social networking apps and mobile messaging apps in smartphones, disaster mitigation communication is made possible which redefines the roles of the government and the media by bridging the gap among the stakeholders and the public. During a disaster, social networking apps and mobile messaging apps give warning messages, educate the public about disaster preparedness, assess damage, coordinate rescue, help in relief and rehabilitation efforts and motivate the public to bring them back to normality. Various organizations and individuals address hazard awareness and risk awareness through these platforms with the help of the internet. They build trust in social media communities, act as an early warning system, foster public feedback, monitor timely reports and also become a way to assess recovery progress. This provides reference and resource material during the catastrophe by which the public are warned as well as updated about the situation. In this way, the social media provide access to relevant and timely information from both official and non-official sources, and facilitate a feeling of connectedness. This connectivity provides reassurance, support and assistance to potentially-distressed individuals and populations towards their loved ones and the community (Taylor et al., 2012). Thus, communication through social media is related to safety status reporting among people in emergency.

According to Hicks (2011), social media is a ‘public safety multiplier’ which allows a user to reply through a communication network where information can be exchanged. Social media show how emergency organizations learn to monitor feeds, to track disaster updates, survivor input, and response strategies.

Lindsay (2011) in the report “Social media and disasters: Current uses, future options, and policy considerations” detailed how the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) can improve the use of social media for response and recovery options. It included public safety, notifications, alerts, situational awareness, and direct access to citizens for reporting or requests for assistance.

Prior to the hurricane Sandy in October 2012, FEMA insisted that the people use social media or send texts rather than making calls (Deming, 2014). The FEMA message said: “Phone lines may be congested during/after Sandy. Let loved ones know you’re OK by sending a text or updating your social networks.” Social media worked when phone lines were congested and/or down.

Haiti earthquakes were one of the numerous disasters, where crowdsourcing was incorporated. During the Haiti earthquake in 2011, with the huge data collected by crisis management tools like Crisis Camps and Crisis Commons, crowd-maps were created by civilians, NGOs, governments and private companies. This was later disseminated directly to the Haitian government, emergency responders and the U.S Army that were on site (Zook et al., 2010). Ushahidi, a non-profit technology company, also gathered data from their volunteers through text messages, emails, and social media and also eyewitnesses (Haddows & Haddows, 2009). From this data, crowd-maps were deployed by them to the disaster management field. That is how responders used information from such crowds which became a social disaster response tool for them (Starbird, 2011; Abbasi et al., 2010). In this way, the disaster instantaneously had the emergency responders around the world adopt social media as an important additional communication channel with the public (Bird et al., 2012; Sarcevic et al., 2012). Along with that was Google Person Finder that was launched immediately in three days with collaboration of Google and the U.S. Department of State. Created in different languages like English, French and Haitian Creole, it allowed users to post and search for information about the missing (Beckerman, 2013). That is how NGOs promote collaboration, share information and enhance coordination during implementation of their missions with crowdsourcing maps and location-based information during disasters (Gao et al., 2011).

According to Yates and Paquette (2011), social media has been identified as one of the potential tools for sharing information during a disaster. Wamba and Edwards (2014) and Houston et al. (2014) say real-time operational information and situational updates are taken care of by social media which provide up-to-date information. Choi and Lin (2009) said emotional support is sought through social media followers during a disaster.

The public's pre- and post-disaster trust of social media, level of engagement with social media during disasters, and behaviour and attitude change intentions is a consequence of social media exposure (Jin & Liu 2010; Murdough, 2009).

Theoretical framework

This study uses reverse agenda-setting theory along with indicators of empowerment. Indicators of empowerment – information (McCombs, 2004; Yates & Paquette, 2011), real-time operational information (Wamba & Edwards, 2014; Houston et al., 2014), situational updates (Wamba & Edwards, 2014; Houston et al., 2014), emotional support (Choi & Lin, 2009), and trustworthiness (Jin & Liu 2010; Murdough 2009) – were identified through the review of literature to make better decisions and handle the disaster response effectively. These indicators were used to develop a questionnaire to find out the satisfaction levels of users of Facebook and WhatsApp among the residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur during the Chennai floods of 2015.

McCombs (2004) states that there is a reverse in role in agenda-setting with the public influencing and proposing issues on the agenda for the media, having no longer a traditional approach. In reverse agenda-setting, the social media users use the platform to influence public figures about the issue salience (Castells, 2012; Harlow, 2012; Lim, 2012; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). According to Weiman et al. (2014), the main problem for agenda-setting theory is what people tell the media to think about as the reverse in roles will compel the media to present the public agenda rather than set one for them with hybridization and the commercialization of media content.

Research method

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with founders of NGOs to explore the use of Facebook and WhatsApp during the Chennai floods of 2015. The questions primarily focused on the basic information related to rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts by them during the disaster. The interviews highlighted the use of Facebook and WhatsApp by them and helped examine the actions that should be taken for more efficient utilization.

Kotturpuram and Mudichur were the two areas selected for the study. The choice of the study area was to pick two of the worst-affected areas, one being urban and the other being peri-urban, to study how both were affected. Here both Kotturpuram (urban) and Mudichur (peri-urban) were affected so badly that water did not recede even after the floods and the residents could not lead a normal life for many months (“Live: Area-wise updates”, 2016).

The study used judgment sampling, among the residents of Kotturpuram (n=200) and Mudichur (n=200), which involved the selection of individuals on the basis of prior

knowledge and understanding of the researchers as to which individuals are likely to be the best representatives in the given case. Thus the total number of respondents is 400. The data was collected in the calendar years 2016 and 2017. However, the active messages through social media on the Chennai floods were those of December 2015, the same month when the people of Chennai were affected by floods and were getting back to their normal life soon after. The study explores the relationship between Kotturpuram and Mudichur with factors of sense of empowerment on the use of Facebook and WhatsApp.

Kotturpuram is located 0.8 km south of the Adyar river which joins the Bay of Bengal at Adyar in Chennai. With the maximum capacity of 3,645 million cubic feet that the Chembarabakkam reservoir can hold, the excess water was released into the Adyar river during the floods (Rajendran, 2015). Kotturpuram was affected due to this increased outflow by the Chembarabakkam reservoir and from many tanks in its catchment area. The worst affected were about 3,000 residents in poorly-maintained tenements built by the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board. Everyday life was affected to an alarming extent when storm water overflowed in the Kotturpuram Bridge across the Adyar river. People had to be evacuated in boats when water rose above the ground floor.

The second study area is Mudichur, a satellite town located in Tambaram Tehsil of Kancheepuram district in the state of Tamil Nadu, has a population of 15,438 (“Mudichur Population - Kancheepuram”, 2011). Mudichur is located 6 km south of the Adyar river. The storm water released from the Chembarabakkam reservoir caused massive flooding in areas such as Mudichur, West Tambaram, and Manapakkam. With the lack of storm water drain network in Mudichur, Mannivakkam, Varadarajapuram and West Tambaram, there was an inundation of the entire neighbourhood (see Figure 3). Further, the newly-built Outer Ring Road was responsible for the flooding of Mudichur thereby submerging residential areas up to two floors close by the elevated road. There is a need for greater provision under the elevated Outer Ring Road for the Adyar river in the Mudichur area for flood waters to flow smoothly, with the elevated road almost standing as a dam wall. Armed forces were involved in evacuating the people in boats and helicopters as an emergency measure.

A questionnaire was developed based on the review of literature with the indicators of empowerment. This questionnaire was distributed among 400 users of Facebook and WhatsApp who were residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur. To measure the satisfaction level of these social media, a 5-point Likert scale was used, with response ranging from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). This data was analyzed using independent t-test, which is a tool to find differences in the means of the two separate sets of data groups. This was employed in the study to compare the patterns in the data that emerged from surveys with residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur. The chi-square test to find and establish significant connections between categorical

variables was also applied in the study.

Results

The analysis of data gathered through the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaires are presented below.

Facebook and WhatsApp as disaster management tools by NGOs

The founders of the NGOs – Chennai Volunteers, Bhoomika Trust and Chennai Trekking Club – were interviewed on the use of Facebook and WhatsApp during the Chennai floods of 2015.

a. Rinku Mecheri (Chennai Volunteers)

Rinku Mecheri is the founder of Chennai Volunteers. Chennai Volunteers is an NGO that caters to social initiatives by the Mecheri Foundation. It supports several other NGOs and select outreach initiatives. It aims to promote civic engagement and ensure that non-profits can engage with volunteers in a sustainable and meaningful way.

For ‘Chennai Volunteers’ without their Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups, any contribution would not have been possible during the Chennai floods of 2015. According to them, Facebook was an excellent medium to reach people for giving and receiving updates on floods and WhatsApp was an action oriented, personalized and active response mechanism which was extensively used for coordination among their organizations. Hashtags played a vital role in Facebook posts and WhatsApp chats during the Chennai floods of 2015 which helped reiterate messages. #ChennaiRainRelief, and #ChennaiVolunteers were the hashtags that were originally used on Twitter by the non-governmental organisations to reiterate the messages. . They gathered the relief volunteers and donors during the floods only through the Facebook posts and WhatsApp chats. This included short-term and long-term volunteers and celebrity volunteers like Suhasini Maniratnam (actress), T.M. Krishna (singer) and Anil Srinivasan (pianist). The posts and chats went viral because the celebrities got in the field to give a helping hand.

b. Aruna Subramaniam (Bhoomika Trust)

Aruna Subramaniam is a trustee of ‘Bhoomika Trust’. Started in February 2001, the Bhoomika Trust works toward providing disaster relief and rehabilitation to the victims of natural disasters. For ‘Bhoomika Trust’ it was again both Facebook and WhatsApp that played a vital role during the Chennai floods. Its founder said the zeal to serve victims was possible only through Facebook posts and WhatsApp chats. Information on the stranded people was verified and rescue measures were taken.

She said that through the shares, comments and forwards of flood rescue and relief messages, ‘Bhoomika Trust’s personal Facebook page and WhatsApp group made a huge difference during the disaster. After seeing her messages via Facebook and WhatsApp, many unknown people came forward to help the victims both physically and financially. One such notable donor was Christie’s, which is an international auction house for holding up annual sales, reinforcing longstanding commitment to the artistic and cultural heritage of a region. The world’s largest arts auction house Christie’s held its third consecutive contemporary India art sale in Mumbai on 15 December 2015, which for the first time had a dedicated section on classical art. During the Chennai floods of 2015, Christie’s came to know about the disaster in Chennai through the Facebook page of the Bhoomika Trust and came forward to help it in auctioning around Rs. 10 lakhs for the cause.

When asked about the reason for the Chennai floods, Aruna Subramaniam said, “Chennai is the most disaster-prone in terms of climatic condition in the country because we are at the sea level. Every disaster provides an opportunity. So it is important to learn how not to encroach and how to unclog waterways. Anyway, it is going to take a decade to restore things which only government and NGOs like us can implement”.

c. Peter Van Geit (Chennai Trekking Club)

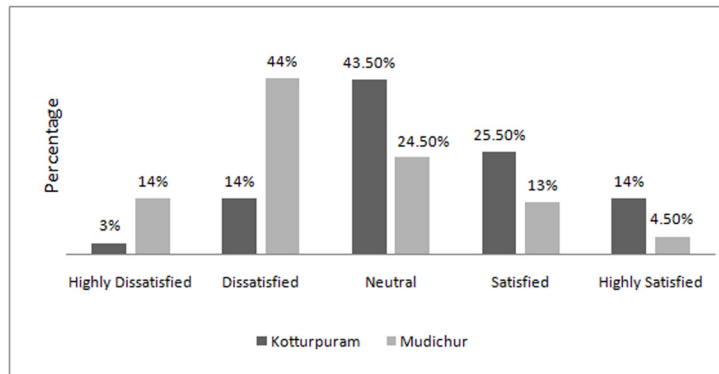
Peter Van Geit is the founder of ‘Chennai Trekking Club’, a 40,000 member non-profit volunteer-based group, which organizes outdoor activities, adventures, sports and environmental conservation activities throughout the year.

For ‘Chennai Trekking Club’, it all went viral when pictures of the worst-affected areas during the Chennai floods of 2015 were posted via their Facebook page and WhatsApp group. On seeing this, volunteers came forward in large numbers and became a part of the organisation to distribute relief efforts. Some of the hashtags used by them were #ChennaiTrekkingClub, #ChennaiRains and #GreenChennai to update constantly on the rescue, relief and restoration in the city.

Satisfaction levels

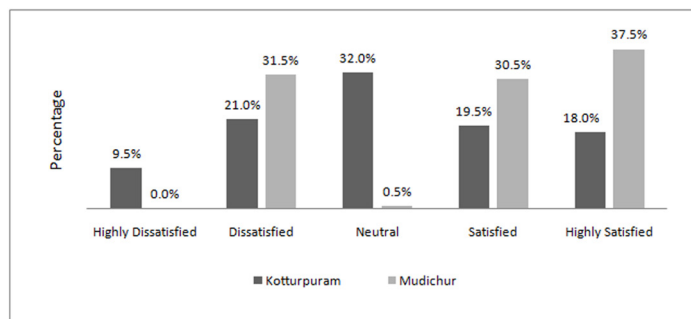
The satisfaction levels of Facebook and WhatsApp users with regards to their information needs including general information, real-time operational information, situational updates, emotional support, trustworthiness and overall sense of empowerment during the Chennai floods of 2015 in Kotturpuram and Mudichur were analysed using chi-square tests. The tests revealed positive/negative association between the Kotturpuram and Mudichur areas and satisfaction levels with regards to information related to flood relief, rescue operations, government initiatives that were received through social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp during the

Figure 1: Satisfaction levels of Facebook among the residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur



Among Kotturpuram residents, Facebook was cited as a highly unsatisfactory source of information or 3%, 14% said they were dissatisfied, found it neutral 43.5%, 25.5% said they were satisfied, and 14% were highly satisfied. Among Mudichur residents, Facebook was highly unsatisfactory for 14%, unsatisfactory for 44%, neutral for 24.5%, satisfactory for 13%, and highly satisfactory for 4.5% (see Fig. 1). The overall satisfaction level of Facebook as a source of information during the floods was 39.5% in Kotturpuram and 17.5% in Mudichur. There is association between the satisfaction levels in these two places with the chi-square value of 73.761 and $p=0.001$. The residents of Kotturpuram strongly recommend the usage of ‘hashtags’ in the Facebook posts which allowed them to crowd-source on shelter, boats, helpline numbers, maps of inundated roads, food, mobile top-up, sanitary needs, water, clothes, medicines, transport, information on links to donate and compilation of area-wise list which had verified doctors and hospitals that were constantly updated.

Figure 2: Satisfaction levels of WhatsApp among the residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur



Among Kotturpuram residents, WhatsApp was stated to be highly unsatisfactory as a source of information for 9.5%, unsatisfactory for 21%, neutral for 32%, satisfactory for 19.5%, highly satisfactory for 18%. Among Mudichur residents, WhatsApp was highly unsatisfactory for no one, unsatisfactory for 31.5%, neutral for 0.5%, satisfactory for 30.5%, and highly satisfactory for 37.5% during the Chennai floods (see Fig. 2). The overall satisfaction levels of WhatsApp was 37.5% in Kotturpuram and 68% in Mudichur. The satisfaction with WhatsApp as a source of flood-related information between Kotturpuram and Mudichur is associated with the chi-square value of 102.804 and $p=0.001$. The residents said that they were significantly satisfied with boats, which were the available modes of transportation during those times. The results of the study highlight the fact that during natural hazards, the residents tend to adapt to the surroundings and to the materials readily available to them to inoculate themselves from further hurdles. Social networking sites have been found to generate a new dimension of understanding among their users.

Sense of empowerment: Here, it is analyzed how Facebook and WhatsApp empowered people of Kotturpuram and Mudichur during the floods of 2015.

Table 1: Sense of empowerment in Kotturpuram and Mudichur

Factors of sense of empowerment	Area				t value	P value
	Kotturpuram		Mudichur			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Information – Facebook	55.63	7.75	51.05	7.87	5.863	<0.001*
Real-time operational information – Facebook	31.27	10.36	33.12	8.52	1.950	0.052
Situational updates – Facebook	39.34	11.95	39.83	11.09	0.425	0.671
Emotional support – Facebook	34.42	11.86	36.34	10.20	1.727	0.085
Trustworthiness – Facebook	12.38	5.49	14.96	3.40	5.654	<0.001*
Overall sense of empowerment – Facebook	173.04	45.43	175.29	40.32	0.524	0.601
Information – WhatsApp	15.74	4.76	15.50	8.80	0.332	0.740
Real-time operational information – WhatsApp	20.20	4.82	21.59	11.16	1.618	0.107
Situational updates – WhatsApp	23.27	5.37	24.42	12.17	1.223	0.222
Emotional support – WhatsApp	22.96	6.00	25.61	12.37	2.721	0.007*
Trustworthiness – WhatsApp	16.61	5.12	13.49	6.79	5.182	<0.001*
Overall sense of empowerment – WhatsApp	97.70	22.17	100.68	50.32	0.766	0.444

Note: * denotes significant at 5% level

The Independent t-test applied here showed that there is no significant difference between Kotturpuram and Mudichur with regard to overall sense of empowerment for both Facebook and WhatsApp with $p > .05$. There is no significant difference with regard to the indicators of 'real-time operational information' and 'emotional support' through Facebook. Likewise, there is no significant difference on 'information', 'real-time operational information' and 'situational updates' through WhatsApp, since $p > 0.05$. This means that both Kotturpuram and Mudichur have been benefited in accessing these empowerment indicators via Facebook and WhatsApp during the Chennai floods. One of the real-time incidents was how Facebook came to rescue Nithya, a resident of Mudichur, who was pregnant during the floods. On getting to know the need of the pregnant woman to deliver her baby, through a message posted in Facebook, Shailendra Babu, a senior police officer in Chennai, arranged to send an army helicopter to her house (Koshi, 2015).

There is a significant difference between Kotturpuram and Mudichur with regard to the indicators of 'information' and 'trustworthiness' through Facebook, and 'emotional support' and 'trustworthiness' through WhatsApp, with $p < 0.05$. Based on the mean score, Mudichur is better with a minor difference in the overall sense of empowerment of Facebook ($M = 175.29$) and WhatsApp ($M = 100.68$) than Kotturpuram in all dimensions because the respondents of Mudichur were able to access the platforms due to better connectivity and thus offered or sought rescue and relief efforts during the Chennai floods. Further, the peri-urban area of Mudichur relied greatly on WhatsApp for communication unlike Kotturpuram which is in the heart of the city with several ways to access information.

Discussion

This study helped to gain an insight on the role of social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp during the Chennai floods. When the disaster made communication difficult with the mobile networks and landlines becoming adversely affected, it was the top social networking site Facebook and top mobile messaging app WhatsApp which served as a major component of crisis response. The social media formed channels for crisis communication and provided a platform to engage citizens during an emergency, especially by disseminating information to them as well as accessing information from them. Help was also sought and received in coordinating rescue and relief efforts along with rehabilitation of lives.

Both Facebook and WhatsApp have redefined communication during natural disasters especially when conventional channels of communication have failed. These platforms have become vital for connecting with needed resources, enabling individuals to become involved in various aspects of emergency awareness and

preparedness to connect and discuss.

It is evident that rescue, relief and rehabilitation by the founders of the NGOs – Chennai Volunteers, Bhoomika Trust and Chennai Trekking Club – was possible only through Facebook and WhatsApp. Kotturpuram is better placed through ‘information’ from Facebook but less trusted compared to Mudichur. On the other hand, Mudichur used WhatsApp more but trusted it less, probably because some information got posted in Mudichur before cross-checking.

The dependence on both Facebook and WhatsApp by the residents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur had become a major element in disaster management during the floods. The residents used these social media platforms to tackle the situation and to engage the public at large. Social media acted as crowdsourcing platforms for mobilizing volunteers and deploying crowd maps. They validated information and facilitated rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts. The safety-check feature on Facebook was extremely useful during the Chennai floods too when the conventional communication lines including telephone networks were down. The activities of Facebook and WhatsApp mirrored the actual needs of the people – be it searching and seeking information about what was happening, or actively asking for information and providing assistance to others. Further, social media helped to break boundaries and to reach across to people far and wide.

Both Kotturpuram and Mudichur have benefited from the indicators of empowerment studied: information, real-time operational information, situational updates, emotional support and trustworthiness. Mudichur was a bit better in the overall sense of empowerment of Facebook (mean = 175.29) and WhatsApp (mean = 100.68) compared to that of Kotturpuram, since the latter suffered from interrupted net connectivity. Facebook was dominant in Kotturpuram whereas WhatsApp appeared to be dominant in Mudichur. Since Mudichur is a new settlement area with more youngsters, WhatsApp came in handy as the preferred medium for social action though in terms of ‘trustworthiness’ it does not score high. Whereas, Kotturpuram residents were extensively using Facebook like any other city people.

A myriad of stranded people used hashtags ‘#ChennaiRainsHelp’, ‘#ChennaiFloods’, ‘#ChennaiRains’, ‘#ChennaiRescue’, ‘#ChennaiVolunteers’, ‘#ChennaiRainRelief2015’, ‘#TN flood’, ‘#ChennaiMicro’ and ‘#Nammavargal’. The hashtags used during the floods had themes other than the disaster too. These were ‘sympathy’ (#PrayForChennai), ‘requests’ for help (#Savechennai, #ChennaiRainsHelp), ‘information’ on further weather forecasts (#Chennaiweather), ‘information’ on specific areas in Chennai (#Airport, #Mudichur), and ‘cautionary’ messages (#ExerciseCaution). Once the users marked a post ‘#verified’ it meant that the post was true and had come from an authentic source. Hashtags were created on

a theme, so that it was easy to follow up all messages falling under that. Addresses and phone numbers of people who could accommodate the stranded people were also circulated. Facebook users posted on food being prepared in large quantities and called for volunteers who could distribute them to the needy with the help of these hashtags. Maps of inundated roads were also updated via Facebook with hashtags.

During the Chennai floods, it was not the media but the people who took over the situation and set reverse agendas through social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. This reverse agenda-setting redefined the way public opinion is created especially during a natural disaster. Social media served as a cost-effective alternative to traditional mass media to form groups and get into action during the disaster. They provided information with a personal touch and without censorship. The power of social media was such that traditional mass media not only picked up several stories from social media but also eulogized them – indulging in reverse agenda-setting.

The results indicate that the use of social media and new communication technology for information sharing was the need of the hour for the respondents of Kotturpuram and Mudichur during the Chennai floods. The residents shared updates, spread awareness, built communities, turned up as volunteers for relief operations, raised funds and found missing people using the social media platforms of Facebook and WhatsApp. Their first-hand reporting along with photographs from the disaster zones was received with trust among others. It was found that hashtags made a huge contribution in seeking attention during the catastrophe. People of Kottupuram have greater awareness and they get help easily as they are placed in the heart of the city. They also used hastags for rescue and relief operations.

Conclusion

Facebook and WhatsApp chats have provided valuable insight into the needs and requirements of the residents at times of a disaster in Chennai. Interestingly, the study is about disaster management using social media in Chennai, a city which is not prone to disasters. It presents the cases of how social media has been used as a disaster management tool when all of a sudden a disaster struck. The findings of this study could be used by government agencies and non-governmental organizations to be proactive in disaster-prone areas.

The unique contribution of the study is how social media could play the role of reverse agenda-setting, challenge the role of the gatekeepers in the mainstream media, and empower people at times of disasters. This study proves that the proliferation and expansion of social media has challenged the role of conventional mass media in setting the public agenda by coming out with a new approach that it is no longer the media but the public which propose issues on the agenda and reversely, that the agenda

is accepted by the conventional media as the public agenda. The study contributes to achieve a state of optimal collaboration among multiple stakeholders that helps to facilitate an improvement in the current disaster management concepts with a view to attaining empowerment.

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Inside The Newsroom: Television News Making in India

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Abstract

A television newsroom works at different levels through different structures at any given point of time. In these structures, newsmen with various positions come with different entitlements. The professional outlook that they are either trained with or that they acquire, is what makes them different. However, it is important to know that the professional outlook most often has come to mean conformity with organizational policy. The role of the newsroom becomes a very important stage in news making, where the selection framework of input and the framework of output, both work under one roof but sometimes with different priorities and sometimes as an incorporating process of all elements together in a newsroom but a framework of organization policy. Observation of three Indian television newsrooms and interaction with five highly placed news professionals shows three different approaches, sometimes on various stages of news making but seems unanimous on certain issues of processing information. This study also shows how different political-economical, sociological and technological aspects are changing rapidly, which is not only changing newsrooms from within but the television news text (output) in India.

Keywords: Newsroom, Television news, News audience, Political-economy of news.

Introduction

News carries information, but the news is not just mere information; it is a consciously produced knowledge. This consciousness brings rationality and multiple perspectives behind the news. Often, information that becomes news is beyond the immediate experience of the reach of the audience. This gap of knowledge or reach is filled largely by mass media and newsmen. As consciously produced knowledge, the news is legitimized with the premises of truth and knowledge, on which people can rely. This premise, in turn, is based on certain epistemological frames (Ekström, 2002). The strongest frame here is that of the claim to 'objectivity' in producing the news and to

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the very possibility of being the objective in producing news. Many earlier studies have argued that “objectivity of news has been the totalitarian strategies for the sake of power struggle” (Ekström, 2002).

The production and transformation of knowledge is an essential part of news making. The production or transformation of knowledge exists as a part of an ideological structure. This issue of structure raises a fundamental question of ‘why’? Why does this structure exist and who supports or feeds this structure?

News making takes place as a process of news production on television and it goes through many stages of reconstruction and reproduction. “...journalists obscure certain issues... have to invest excessive processing efforts to achieve the required cognitive effect of the articles (media text)” (Bekalu, 2006). This element of processing affects the media message or output of the media product.

News is not static, but dynamic. Different social processes, political, economic, organizational setup, the structure of ownership¹, and technological influences have a decisive role in news making (Harvey, 1958). In the processing of information, there is an important argument regarding the sociology of knowledge belonging to an individual, which arbitrarily affects deciding the news or newsworthiness. The role of society is crucial here as it is made up of different social classes and groups which compete with and are often in conflict with one another. Interests and ideologies operate, therefore this (society) is not a fully homogeneous system. In a hierarchical social setup, there will be dominant and submissive elements. Here, the assertive elements try to influence the society, because assertive or dominant ideology would not only want to sustain its position, but it would also have the power to project particular meaning and practices as a universal, as common sense. Selection of words, images, and the order of facts-figures, which make a news report follow a particular culture of dominance in the context of the outcome of ideological struggles. It is critical to understand the ideological struggle and assertive elements of society, which bring an individual into the realm of presupposition. This element of presupposition shapes the knowledge of an individual and eventually shapes the thought process of newsmen and newsrooms.

The number of television news channels in India has increased rapidly in the last 15-16 years. The total number of “television channels have risen to 877 (2017-2018), which was just 45 in 2001 (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2018). Among these news and current affairs channels are 389”. Here, the term used for current affairs stands for television news channel or related to the analysis of the news events. The number of general entertainment channels is 488 according to the annual report of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2018). A total of 794 channels including 488 general entertainment channels are allowed to uplink and downlink in the country while 83 entertainment channels are uplinked from

overseas but allowed to downlink into TV homes in the country (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2018). If we compare the eyeballs of television viewership between news channels and the bunch of channels, providing entertainment, then we realize that television news channels get very marginal numbers. The news genre is a niche in terms of viewership. “Of total television viewership, the share of news in India was 7%. However, of the total news genre category, the share of English news, averages around a minuscule 0.4%” (Bansal, 2017). Now see, the same pattern in the context of the US. On a national level, what used to be the “three major American networks in the mid-1970s held about 90 percent of the total television audience at any given time, whereas, the four largest networks currently attain about 50 percent of the total news business” (Fitzpatrick, 1995). It is a transformation, which is taking place in the name of the democratization of news and bringing more and more truth and reality to the audience. American experience also suggests that increased competition from new networks, such as FOX, and news networks, such as CNN, has spelled a decrease in profits for the three classic networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) (Jensen, 2002). It can be a classic example to understand how audience sharing can have an impact on news making in the newsrooms.

News networks or channels have a minor share of the audience. This (minor share) is further decreased due to increasing numbers of new television news channels (Tompkins, 2018). It means growing competition and more and more players in the market dividing the audience share, and a smaller audience share means smaller share in rating points and revenue for news operations. “The decline in viewing among younger people is far more pronounced both for television viewing in general and for television news specifically, meaning that the loyalty and habits of older viewers prop up overall viewing figures and risk obscuring the fact that television news is rapidly losing touch with much of the population” (Nielsen & Sambrook, 2016). As a result, the individual network news divisions have decreased their number of correspondents both within the U.S.A. and around the world (Tuchman, 2002). It is also true for the Indian scenario. The fewer number of news correspondents brought in the role of news agencies.

As viewership of news channels continues to fall in the market share, it does not seem logical, the way number of television news channels are increasing rapidly, despite a marginal share of viewership. The reason being more channels mean, division in the share of television rating data. This state of affairs itself says loudly that dissemination of information is not the issue, but the issue is *understanding of news and processing of news* differ according to various organizations. Every news organization wants to tell their viewers about their sociology/understanding of news, without considering the commercial aspect. Television news channels are losing audience share and revenue share too, but the induction of new channels are showing an increasing trend. That means, there is something more (other reasons) apart from broadcasting the news. Commercial issues and revenue models may be there but the message is clear that more and more dominant centers of power describe the new way of making the news and information processing.

The process of selection and rejection of information exists inherently and further process the information for the final product of news, which will be embedded with the organizational construction of a different reality. Even, the sharing of information (through news agencies) creates a decisive impact on the production of news and brings the dominant and decisive role of the newsroom, where the output desk and editor have more power to decide the final product of news.

News making and Newsroom: Earlier discussions

Changes in the equations with or amongst the apparatus of communication production are directly proportional to the changes in the relation of power of production with society. The ownership of the apparatus of communication production has its effect as Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky indicate in this idea of *five filters*¹ regarding *Manufacturing Consent* (Herman & Chomsky, 2011). These filters have a role to play in the process of news making. Mass media runs on a sort of active participation of intellectual and moral obligation as a part of civil society. Antonio Gramsci says that political class tries to penetrate this intellectual and moral obligation through active consent for the policies and decisions they take (Cathey, 2009). It is a significant aspect of this issue because this process of penetration takes place in a news setup in any organizational structure and where it affects the selection and rejection of information before the processing stage.

The press has been considered as a part of civil society, “although civil society is distinct from the ‘public’ apparatus of political society” (Read, 1992). The distinction is a methodological one because in practice apparatuses are intertwined in influencing and shaping one another. In a liberal democratic setup, “the press, which is technically independent of government, but constrained by various laws” (Clark & Ivanič, 1997, p. 23).

Herman and Chomsky (1994) argue that the political class uses its apparatus for manufacturing the consent around the interest, values, and actions of the dominant socio-economic group. This process of building up the consent goes further; while mainstream media re-produces the events, which influences the civil society towards the confirmation of the dominant trends and tendencies, and it also highlights the role of reconstruction and this reconstruction takes place with the process of re-produced media content (Chen & Morley, 2006).

Production of conscious knowledge involves individuals but in a news organization, this individual is replaced by a professional newsperson. A newsperson has a specific orientation towards the editorial policy of the organization and it is also linked with the social-cultural backdrop of a newsperson. Now, a social-cultural backdrop of a newsperson and process of policy conformity can get into a conflict. But what is the process and practices which deal with this issue and moreover, how is this process

different in the context of a television news organization? This question is referring to the issue of *who makes news, about what and for whom?* The positioning and role of a newsperson gets another transformation when it is contextualized with the role of the audience. As Herbert Gans suggests the reporters and editors at newsweeklies and network television programs “had little knowledge about the actual audience... assumption...that what interested them would interest the audience” (Anderson, 2011). Therefore, the question arises that does the audience have a role in news making? The issue is *an understanding of the audience* by the news organization.

The processing of the news input in a television newsroom has been transforming rapidly since the arrival of private players/business houses and the emergence of social media especially short messaging apps. These transformations have created many disruptions in a traditional newsroom. On one side editorial policy and its impact on the newsroom need an investigation as far as the structure of a television newsroom is concerned, on the other side mapping of the audience in the form of rating, data gives a conceptual understanding in identifying the audience. This has been a major yardstick for news processing.

This paper deals with these instantaneous questions of television news in India. In addition to the above-mentioned research questions, the major part of this research paper examines the dynamics of the structure of television newsrooms from the perspective of input and output. This issue has been examined using primary observation and qualitative data to establish the epistemology of television news making.

The problem statement

Knowledge or truth is not absolute; the issue of contextualism is always there. It means the loss of objective is evident and influence of *individual contextualize* (Rysiew, 2016). Ideological struggle and assertive elements of society add another dimension in this knowledge (news) making process. It is critical to processing the information and eventually for news making. But we need to place and describe the role of presupposition, because individuals may carry the baggage of presupposition. What happens when we would see newsmen/newswomen instead of a common individual?

News making further take place as a process of news production on television, but we need to understand that news making and news production went through many stages of re-construction and reproduction. “...journalists obscure certain issues... have to invest excessive processing efforts to achieve the required cognitive effect of the articles (media text)” (Bekalu, 2006). This processing affects the media message or output of the media product.

At this juncture, a structural problem comes before us. Earlier, studies suggest

that the apparatus of communication production is directly proportional to the changes in the relation of the power of production with society. The issue of the apparatus of communication production is linked with a large issue of political, economic, and organizational structure. There is a possibility of interconnection among these three elements (political, economic, and organizational). If this interconnection exists, then how does it work and does it have a role in shaping the news?

As we saw earlier, information processing and news production involve the participation of intellectual and moral obligation, and it is very obvious that media messages get influenced by this obligation. Gramsci stated that political class tries to penetrate this intellectual and moral obligation (Cathey, 2009). How does this process of penetration takes place in a news setup and in any organizational structure and moreover how it affects in selection and rejection of information to get into the processing stage?

Production of conscious knowledge involves individuals but in a news organization, this individual is replaced by a professional Newsperson. Newsperson has a specific orientation towards the editorial policy of the organization and it is also linked with the social-cultural backdrop of a newsperson. The problem exists here, at this point, where a social-cultural backdrop of newsmen/newswomen and process of policy conformity clash. But what is the process and practices which deal with this issue and moreover, how is this process different in the context of a television news organization?

In television, many stages of the news-making process deal with a procedure of production and gatekeeping. It also claims to be a way of producing reality, the embedded value of the television medium, and its impact on rejection and selection of information and news production.

Research questions

- How did the process of the consciously knowledge-making process take place in the context of the processing of information?
- What is the role of political-economic formation and its impact on the organizational structure?
- Is there any hegemonic process, which penetrates into organizational structure, and how does it take place in a television news organization?
- What is the process of conformity of editorial and organizational policy within the organization?
- How do newsrooms conceive the idea of audience and how do newsrooms react to the image of the audience?

Research methodology

From the news reporters to the gatekeepers², the process of selection, and rejection of information for broadcast takes place in the newsroom. Input and Output editors are two decisive gatekeepers² that exist in a standard Indian television newsroom. It is the 'Input editor'³ and the 'Output editor'⁴ of a news channel that perceive the information and news. The important question is how they (input and output editor) make a difference in the selection and rejection of news in a given newsroom (with organizational structure)? In the process of answering these questions, the researcher decided to collect empirical data through the ethnography tool of 'Interview'⁵. The researcher decided to concentrate broadly on two areas of structured questions to 'input editor' and 'output editor'.

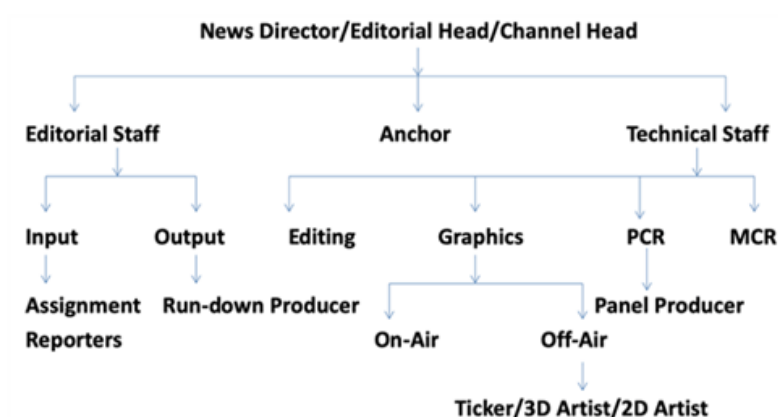
Input editor leads the input-desk and Output editor leads the output-desk. Input is one of the most important departments of a news channel, which has the responsibility of gathering news from different sources. The Input team consistently remains in touch with reporters, news bureaus, stringers, etc. Also, they access and analyze all the news sources, like news agencies, daily newspaper copy, the video feed from national as well as international news agencies, etc. Also if somebody wants to give any information to a channel they call the input.

Input gives the story idea to the output and asks them to make the news package. They provide the information required by the output. Input also conceptualizes the program based on the availability of information. Input also has the responsibility to collect the feedback from the viewers, analyze the TRP, arrange the guests for a program and co-ordinate the viewers' calls during the program (See, newsroom structure of a TV channel in India: Figure-1).

The output is important and relatively the largest department of a channel, which creates news packages out of the information. First, the news feed (either provided by reporters or available in stock) is analyzed and then the information is re-written in a broadcast news format along with the logged bytes and instructions to the video editors. The final version may be an ABT (byte of a person), VBT (footage + byte), Loop (Same footage playing at a regular interval) or, a News Package of various durations. This package is given to the PCR (production control room) to play during the bulletin (Newsroom structure of a TV channel, 2020).

In a news channel structure, input and output are very significant in terms of functionality and input and output editors are well placed in the hierarchy and an important part of the editorial staff. The next picture (Figure 1) defines the broad structure of an Indian news television newsroom. There are differences in nomenclature with slight variations in the ladder of hierarchy but the assigned role and structure is the same.

Figure 1: Newsroom Structure of a TV Channel (Kumar, n. d.)



Methodology for selection of the news channels

In the selection of television news channels, the researchers took a parameter of top and bottom news channels, in the context of viewership ratings for selecting the news channels to conduct the interviews with the ‘input editor’ and ‘output editor’. *AajTak* and Republic had been chosen in terms of the market leader as suggested by BARC ratings (“Broadcast Audience Research Council,” n.d., para. 1) during at least one year or so. NDTV India also had been selected for research because it is constantly in the bottom. NDTV India reflected the contrast in newsroom functioning in the comparison of the top channels.

AajTak: A Hindi Television News channel

The channel (*AajTak*) garnered the leadership position with 295275 weekly impressions (000s) sum in week 24 (2020), according to the BARC India ratings (“Broadcast Audience Research Council,” n.d., para. 1).

Republic TV: English television news channel

Republic TV headed the genre of English news channels. Republic TV scored 5582 weekly Impressions (000s) sum in week 24 (2020), according to the BARC India rating data.

NDTV India: Hindi television news channel

As far as the viewership rating of NDTV India is concerned, during the last one year or even more, it remains the lowest-rated (week 23, 2020) private Hindi news channel in India (*AajTak* aur *ABP News*, 2020). BARC survey suggests that this channel has been

at the bottom among the private Hindi news channels (“Broadcast Audience Research Council,” n.d., para. 1). NDTV India got 48600 Weekly Impressions (000s) sum in week 12 (2020) (Analysis: It takes AajTak, 2020).

After deciding the news channels for the fieldwork with pre-decided questions relating to the input and output part of newsroom functions, the author researcher met the participants personally and interviewed three input and three output professionals⁶, but the executive editor of Republic TV was responsible for both the aspects in Delhi bureau, therefore there were total five professional⁷ (participants). These interviews were well structured and based on a few pre-decided questions, which were related to newsroom functioning, the role of input and output editors as gatekeepers. The issue of getting more and more television rating data in the favor of their respective channels, identifying the newsperson and audience, and the role of sociology of knowledge in news gathering and process of policy conformity was the fundamental concern.

Interview questions (*interview questions for qualitative data*)

Interview participants: Input and Output Editors of three news channels.

For input editors

(I)

1. What is your idea of ‘input editor’?
2. How and who decides the nature of your sources?
3. How much is your reliance on these sources, i.e., published sources, human sources, other Journalists, stringer and part-time correspondent?
4. How do you identify certain bias or manipulation embedded in certain sources?

(II)

1. How do you resolve the dilemma between the need for neutrality/objectivity of news/input and the awareness, that certain sources for the news are biased, i.e., carrying ideological perception or socio-cultural prejudice?
2. What is the mechanism/processes, where the organizational needs are explained, spelled out?

(III)

1. What are the ways of training the news personnel and familiarizing them about the

policies/ideas of the news organization and its needs?

For Output editor

1. How do you conceptualize your audience?
2. How do you harmonize the requirement of objectivity/neutrality of news and the need for the organization?
3. How do you resolve the dilemma between the need for neutrality/objectivity of news/input and the awareness, that certain sources for the news are biased, i.e., carrying ideological perception or socio-cultural prejudice?
4. How central is the craft of output editor?
5. How do you think the television ratings and its pressure affect the output editors?
6. The pressure of 24x7 news channel is enormous, particularly for holding the audience with filler or news etc. What mechanism is being used?
7. What are the ways of training the news personnel, particularly desk people, video editors and producers about the policies/ideas of the news organization and its needs?
8. The personnel, particularly at the desk are of the verity of background, what ways the organization makes them work in a manner which brings some kinds of unanimity, with the organizational aim/vision.

Organizational framework, gatekeepers and newsroom

It was the 1950s when media was being considered as a component of a larger social system (Tuchman, 2013). Where mass communications contributed as one of the elements of the social structure, which had functioned with the help of feedback from individuals. In a social system, the feedback has been the reason for making changes in output. But many studies suggest that media works in a hierarchical system, where “media seemed to be more powerful, in both institutional and discursive terms” (Tuchman, 2013). The internal news-making process goes through many stages. These stages have their own reasons for selection/rejection of information and processing the news.

A news organization deals with many elements to make a sustainable revenue model, this includes advertisers, competitors, salaries, and regulators. These elements directly deal with the characteristics of news and the selection of content. Ensuring advertisers’ interests affects the process of information selection and its craft. In an Indian context, advertisements are directly related to television viewership ratings. “They (ratings) are

expressed as a percentage for a specific target audience. Networks and stations that offer programs that draw high ratings gain advertisers, earning revenue” (Ratings, 2003). It indicates that certain kinds of stories or content structures are more welcomed and encouraged than others. “News is not necessarily, about the events that unfold, but about what journalists believe will attract an audience and thus attain high ratings” (Batabyal, 2012, p. 77).

Organization and newsroom

The organization has to enforce its policy, which is done indirectly and not in a heavy-handed manner (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 649). The issue is conformity to the editorial policy in the newsroom which does not happen automatically. It happens through a gradual process, which consists of many conscious and unconscious efforts. Control in the newsroom is restricted by many obstacles (reasons), which deal with journalistic ethics and a gap of attitude between staffers of the newsroom and the management. Warren Breed (1955) categorizes these reasons into three broad points. The first one deals with the existence of ethical journalistic norms. The second one describes the different attitude of a newsroom staffer (newsperson) and organization (owners or management in our case), as the staff subordinates (newsperson) tend to have more “liberal” attitudes (and therefore perceptions) than the policymakers of the organization and could invoke the norms to justify anti-policy writing; and the third one talks about the ethical taboo preventing the organization from commanding subordinates to enforce the policy.

Conformity of policy in the newsroom deals with pushing the process of mainstreaming and social cognitive phenomenon, pushing the staffer (newsperson) in the zone of conformity. Warren Breed (1955) also indicates a trend towards social cognition. According to him, “the first mechanism promoting conformity is the socialization” of the staffer with regard to the norms of his/her job. But interestingly, newsmen are never exposed to the policy (formally). This process goes through many stages, by which the recruit discovers and internalizes the rights and obligations of his/her status and its norms and values. It is a process of learning and moreover an unlearning to anticipate the needs of the organization for a newsmen. In a television newsroom setup, the day ‘news meeting’⁸ has a decisive role, as far as learning and anticipation about the needs of the organization is concerned. News meetings are an important moment, where policy is actually defined through discussion for selection, projection, and rejection of any information items.

Controlling the newsroom

There are various processes which decide the news flow and the priority of news items eventually. Executive editor of Republic TV said that the crucial factor is to ‘understand the need of the organization’ for a newsmen in the newsroom. To establish this

understanding, the congruence with editorial policy and collecting the inputs according to that is a continuous process. Input editor of *AajTak* was more adamant and conscious to get the policy conformity from a newsperson. He said that “we try to follow the organization’s need and policy. Moreover we are aware that day to day work is not only the process of training for input editors but also for the news gatherers towards policy conformity.” According to Executive editors of Republic TV, the conformity with the policy is not hard-hitting or a forced process and it works in the background.

On the point of policy conformity through a separate training process, this was also not there in NDTV India. However, there is a day to day continuous passive process, where comments and briefing do the work of training. It involves everyone, including middle-level newsroom staff and news reporters. When it comes to the ethical and legal issues, regarding the newsgathering or coverage, then it acts like a gatekeeper. It is clear that these steps decide the news and moreover establishes a process of selection and rejection of information.

It is quite an old debate whether the media indulges in or follows a functional system, where the processing of information and selection of information/news items depend on a sort of presumed set of patterns. According to the Chicago school, the primary unit of study has been the community (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 644), whereas at Columbia, the community has been replaced by the individual as a primary unit of study. The fundamental issue is the rejection and selection of particular information for the sake of the final output of news after processing the information. Now back to the earlier question; the role of functional approach or individual act as determinism for news in a newsroom. The functional approach suggests the normal or routine functioning of the newsroom, as far as news selection and defining the news for a channel is concerned. This functioning of the selection process of information is a constant activity for a newsperson (Tan, 1985, p. 347). But what makes this routine functioning significant? The issue of contention in any functional system is built or works in tensions amongst institutions within society (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 645).

The telecast of any content gives a status-confirmation for the participating person. An input/output editor and newsperson learns about this functional process in day to day activity of an organization. It is a functional aspect of the system, reason being both (editor and newsperson) the elements work in a given environment and they need each other.

For any pre-decided event, the organizer is a newsmaker and if the news organization considers that media coverage is important enough, otherwise it would be difficult to live up to the expectations of the large anonymous masses. Another aspect of this issue is the prerogative or an occupational embedded authority of a newsperson, who has been given responsibility for the even coverage. Newspersons need the information,

visuals, sound bites, and backgrounder to make a complete news package. Along with this news output, the newscaster gives a testimonial to the participant or product. “Such testimonials not only enhance the prestige of the product but also reflect prestige on the person who provides the testimonials. In a word, his testimonial is a testimonial to his own status” (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 645).

Role of input-output editors and deciding the Newsroom

The executive editor of Republic TV was confident that the process of news gathering has been the same for print and television. In the case of television news channels input and output are linked and integrated now. In a traditional setup of a news channel, output interacts with the production side, and input interacts with newsgathering/newscasters. In the changed scenario, both input and output professionals work together in the newsroom to have better coordination in any breaking news situation. On the same issue, the input editor of *AajTak* said that the role of the input editor is very diverse; it has changed over the past five years. Many times, the input part of the newsroom gets direct information from the newsmakers itself, like ministers, members of parliament, spokespersons of political parties and various departments, etc. This is a relatively new situation when newsmakers communicate directly with the input editors or well-placed editors/bureaucrats. Direct information is channelized by input people only, but due to direct communication, newsmakers bypass a few of the input dimensions (like news reporters/correspondents). This change has its own implications on the processing of information and finally on news making. In an obvious newsroom setup, there are two filters (gate-keeping elements) at the level of input and output. Information is being selected/gathered by the input department first and the second filter is exercised by output editors. It also suggests that there are people who wish to influence the process. But sometimes, it is a win-win situation for most of the news organizations and editors in particular, because it reduces the time to get the information and obviously minimizes the apprehensions of losing the essence of a correct understanding of the information.

Forward planning has been the key to every news channel. Through these channels anticipate possible news events and happenings; this planning may take place with the help of various bureaus and reporters from all over the country. The higher bureaucrats (of the channel) usually take part in forward planning. The editor-in-chief hardly participates in this meeting but his/her inputs are always there for the input and output editors. This is an important juncture where editorial or policy conformity comes in and it is also the point where policy training takes place during the process of priorities, the news items and possible happenings/events.

Another major aspect that emerged during the interview of the input editor of NDTV was that the internal research department is now getting a setback in television news organizations. He explained that the news-making business is dealing with the speed

of getting the news first and broadcast as soon as possible. This speed actually not only hampers the value addition or contextualization of the news items but it has also become significant for getting more conformity to the larger policy of the organization. The input editor of NDTV was concerned about the rapid flow of information and comparatively less opportunity for cross-checking the facts.

Another aspect has emerged regarding the changing structure of the newsroom in terms of the input and output departments. In a rapidly changing scenario, the role of output has grown exponentially in terms of role and size in the usual newsroom. The role of input has become limited and is only facilitating the output. Output coordinator of NDTV accepted the fact that output uses additional resources of information and visual input beyond the input desk. This additional input includes file footage and secondary literature or data. This effort brings a tilt in the story; it also brings a particular understanding of editorial policy.

Who decides the News?

The executive editor of Republic TV claimed that the selection of information for the final product (news output) had been decided in a collective manner. But at the same time, he accepted during the interview that there were two levels of information/news selection. The first one was not very conservative and it went with the flow of news falling on the day. When the news breaks then a channel has to follow that flow of news. The second level information/news selection from the highest level, where the editor in chief and owners decide the larger picture of the channel. They may not indulge in day to day business (news selection or prioritization of news flow) and in the output of the channel, but they have a veto in the case of those news items, which may affect the larger interests of the channel. Executive editor of Republic TV said that other than day to day news flow, a larger editorial policy did prevail and acted as a guiding instruction. He explained this guiding instruction as 'the ethos of the organization'. This 'ethos of the organization' is the larger ideological structure. It is essentially the responsibility of ownership, more particularly owner's privilege.

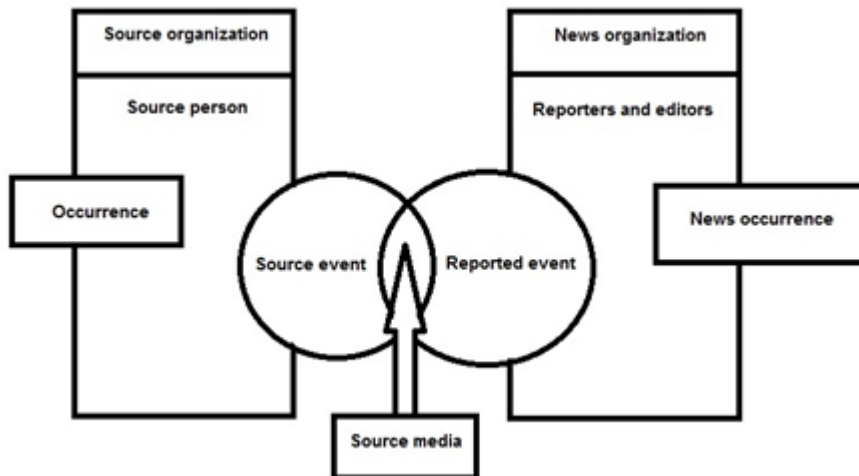
The executive editor of Republic TV was very adamant and convinced that the owner had the privilege and prerogative to decide the editorial policy. It described a situation where news channels shifted the editorial control as it moved towards the realm of big ideological questions, especially in a dominant political-economical social system. All participant interviewees (input and output coordinators) have described that prime time has been a time where the channel has full control but they tend to loosen their control for the rest of the day. Which is like a balancing act.

Newspersons/reporters go through with various 'sources of information/media', like press releases, government reports, telephone interviews, etc. It is important to highlight

that sources of information or media is framed or constructed in a certain way to cross the barrier of gatekeepers in a newsroom. Gaye Tuchman describes this element as ‘the push-pull nexus’ (Tuchman, 2013). Whereas the *source organizations* (typically political bodies and corporations) have different aims and procedures than news organizations. Tuchman describes this circumstance with a structure (figure 2), which defines the relation of source event, which is fully supported by the source organization, but it is propagated by source persons (who is responsible for disseminating the information about the event). The crucial thing here is to understand the extra effort by the source organization and this extra effort comes as availability of source media, pushed by source persons.

Sources and News media as interconnected organizations

Figure 2 Source: Adapted from Ericson et al. 1987: 41; see also McQuail and Windahl 1993: 178 (Tuchman, 2013)



The role of ‘source organizations’ is extremely important here, because they try to mediate between the organization and its context of information/news. Source organizations are “strategically placed (source) newsmakers who can present to reporters as ‘news events’ or newsworthy, hoping that this will be further processed within news organizations and disseminated to a wider public as news” (Tuchman, 2013). The source organization always tries to bypass the gatekeepers of the newsroom and this situation becomes more significant when a reporter gets influenced by any ideological stream.

Identifying newsperson and audience

A newsperson is a ‘mass communicator’ in general and a part of the news-making process, which deals with information gathering and processing. This process transforms the information into a news output for the common audience in particular. Two parallel simultaneous processes work at this stage. First, the mass communicator’s concept of truth (reporting based on his social and knowledge background) and the other one is the understanding of truth for the television news organization.

It was no surprise that before the encounter with any of the editors in the newsroom, newspersons (reporters) themselves act as the first filter for selection of the news or at least news reporters decide the angle or the tilt of the covered event or happening. Reporters are on ground zero and editors are in the newsroom, so there is very little chance to extract the remaining part of the information, apart from reported stories, though social media is rapidly changing this status.

Sociology of newsperson and news

The issue of sociological learning is important in the processing of news making. The executive editor of Republic TV was convinced that television journalism is not science, it is a social science, and editors encounter various prejudices, sometimes social-economic or cultural prejudices. Here the role of gatekeeper comes in the front; executive editor of Republic TV says that “prejudices are an integral part of the news business and the editor tries to minimize that streak”. The aspect of sociological background does have its role, even if it exists in the context of gender and related prejudice.

According to the executive editor of Republic TV, different gender categories of reporters show their different sociological alignments to the news content and selection of information which affects the coverage of the events. This selective sociological perception towards news content has been reflecting in the reported news.

The input editor of *AajTak* described this issue even more deeply; the issue of gender in the context of cultural differences and the rural-urban divide. Newspersons carry their prejudices which have their role in news making.

The input editor of *AajTak* accepted the fact about newspersons that they also carry their own sociology of knowledge. The input editor of *AajTak* described this issue as a comfort zone for newspersons, where they follow and report like-minded people and report with a certain inclination. News gatherers, especially beat reporters interact with a particular political party or ministry or department or any subject, or communities on a day to day basis, and knowingly or unknowingly news gatherers became an entity with a certain ideological inclination.

All interviewee editors/coordinators⁹ agreed on this issue that the relation of news reporters and news sources are very crucial, whether sources are situated in government, ministries, and civil communities or in a political party. Whenever news reporters are deployed or assigned to follow news sources, they want to sustain a harmonious relationship with them. Here, ideological manipulation often takes place. The executive editor of Republic TV, who has looked after the input and output together in the Delhi bureau, described this situation. He said that when a reporter files the story, the input editor has to find the embedded tilt in the reported news item towards any social-political-cultural way of facts or reporter's interpretation. The input editor of *AajTak* described the way out of this problem in terms of new working responsibility as the interchanging role of input and output. According to him, the input desk also filters or edits the copy of news reporters and this process did not exist earlier. Now the output works with input editors or news reporters. In these changed circumstances, the input department now has an additional role to filter the information. Covering the news and processing or reproduction of reported news items are two different levels. Reason being it goes through a process, where different facts and perception merged with each other and create a 'news product'. At the same time, input editors try to understand the sociology of knowledge of news reporters and also read the needs of the organization.

In a dominant political-economic ecology of a news organization, news channels have to deal with the issue of characteristics of a newsperson. The input editor of NDTV described this issue in a manner, where it is very difficult to segregate the facts and ideological comments when a newsperson reports from the field. He (Input editor of NDTV) also deliberated on the issue of ethnographic background in the newsroom and with the news reporters, and more specifically how the social-economic background tried to impose itself through the media text. In other words, social-economic learning and understanding do have an impact on information selection and rejection. According to the input editor of NDTV, the thought process also has a role in the selection and rejection of information, it even has its impact on input and output editors, sometimes even newspersons try to convince the gatekeepers to a certain extent. The input editor of NDTV shared some anecdotes about the situational conflict over the issue of selection and rejection of news stories with the reporters. But in an organizational setup, the final call would be taken by the input and output editors, that means the gatekeeper model does exist.

'Imagined Audience' and the newsroom

In the process of information selection and rejection or news-making, newsrooms imagine their audience. But why do they imagine it? This is an important question: whether, a newsperson knows his/her audience/viewers or not, especially at the time of processing the information. Philip Ronald Schlesinger (1975) described this question from the perspective of an organizational framework, where the relationship between

communicators and their clients (audience/viewers) through a setup of the organization or in other words through an editorial policy in the production of the news. The Newsperson is somewhere forced to draw on the concept of the *audience*. Schlesinger considers mass audiences as an abstraction (1975), which hardly makes any contact with a newsperson.

Television viewership ratings and its reach to all sections of the audience are two different things, but as far as private news channels are concerned, ratings matter the most. This issue needs little bit of elaboration because one cannot get TRP (Television rating points) without its reach to the people. In India, the public broadcaster, Doordarshan has been the most reached television channel compared to private channels (Kunhikrishnan, 2010). It is because of being a free to air channel and terrestrial broadcasting, which covers the remotest geographical location in the country. Doordarshan has reach but it lacks the television ratings. Because ratings belong to a sample survey done by private research firms. Our concern is how this issue of TRP affects news.

On the issue of television rating points, the output coordinator of *AajTak* had a clarification and he said that “many times we can easily become the part of a blind race, without much thinking in the pursuit of the television ratings”. The executive editor of Republic TV tried to convince this researcher that any selection or rejection of information takes place only on the basis of what people should and want to know and not on the basis of data of TRP. “If people would love to watch any particular news item covered by us then we automatically will get TRP.” On the contrary, the executive editor of Republic TV also accepted that his channel gets more rating points from the southern part of the country. He further elaborated on this and said that “Television ratings are very much segregated and detailed, so we know who our audience is”.

The issue of contention is, news channels identify their audience only through the Television Rating data. Like Republic TV in India gets half of the viewership (TRP) from southern India (according to executive editor of Republic TV). This data makes editors aware that they are watched more in the southern part of the country, it has an effect and impact on the selection of information and news output. The executive editor of Republic TV said that “we focus on the impact of the news. Many of the news items have a pan India impact and it is the relevance of the story and not the region. But yes we show southern news items more often compared to other competitor channels, at the same time our deployment and logistical presence also follows the same pattern (Tamilnadu and Karnataka)”. This insight is very significant to understand why there is a clear divide between English and Hindi channels, as far as the selection of topic, news, deployment, and future planning is concerned.

It is a clear indication that this channel does consider the TRP data in the process of selection and rejection of the news. The input editor of *AajTak* bluntly accepts the role

of ratings and says that “everything is TRP driven, and it has the role in news selection. We try to showcase the issue of the public or audience, the audience is very specific. If we could meet the gratification of the audience, and eventually, it reflects in the TRP”. *AajTak* is a Hindi news channel, which fundamentally belongs to the Hindi heartland in its character. The input editor of *AajTak* clearly defined that at the level of selection and broadcasting of the news content, Hindi and English channels are very different. Hindi channels barely go beyond the Hindi speaking states much. The deliberation of Input editor of *AajTak* on the pattern of news selection was not surprising and further described the process of identifying the audience. He said that “understanding the audience is key, the channel has to understand its target audience.” According to him, the audience became very categorical with their interests. They cannot bear unnecessary information or anything that they do not want. In other words, if the priority of the audience is to watch domestic news, they would not tolerate international news, because they have other options for a specific genre. The output coordinator of *AajTak* accepted the necessity for better television rating data every week. He further elaborated and said that “we (*AajTak*) have an area (state) or zone wise TRP data and it has an effect on the selection of news.” The channel continuously analyzes the area wise viewership data and resources deployment and input demands follow the viewership pattern.

NDTV India has been almost at the bottom in BARC television rating parameters for years, but this does not mean that this channel does have concern for the TRP. The output coordinator of NDTV draws this issue into an ideological realm. According to him, it is partially due to a pattern in the television news channel industry that those channels, which are anti-establishment, cannot get good television rating points. This point of view of the output coordinator of NDTV explains many things regarding the input and output of any channel. It explains a theme or structure, which is built by various stories and presentations of a channel that include all, even field sources and newsroom staffers as well. But the ideological structure decides overall policy, which ultimately gives the shape of the output of a channel. This output may be driven by market forces like an advertiser or maybe by ideological forces.

Television rating points are very much a deciding factor in locating and characterizing the audience. But it is not absolute, because different channels have different understandings regarding the audience. The input editor of NDTV emphasized the qualitative approach of audience feedback instead of quantitative data, which is supplied by rating agencies. Whereas editors from Republic TV and *AajTak* do consider the role of TRP data to be very important but only in terms of quantitative standing.

Conclusion

News making in television channels is a dynamic and multifaceted process which travels through various stages. These stages answer questions like ‘for whom and

why is television news produced – broadcast?’ This research reveals that the stages of processing of information in a television newsroom bring out the political-social-economical aspects of the production of news. The organizational structure plays a major role in deciding the news; it is quite obvious that television news organizations have to be a capital-driven organization along with the aspect of the political economy of the information and news output. Newsrooms and newsmen not only work in a given organizational ecology; but, they also go through a social framework. Meeting with identified people with camera, microphone, pre-decided specific questions, processing the information in a pre-assumed ideological way in news television is by and large the reality of today’s Indian television news functioning. In a typical newsroom, reporters and newsroom staffer newsmen are identified by editors to collect the sound bites and visuals and process the incoming information with visuals to serve the *manifest function* (Reese & Ballinger, 2001, p. 650) of getting it ready for broadcast. It is a tool to control and implement the editorial policy. The structure of an organizational set up itself becomes a tool for controlling the newsroom. News organizations work in a given political-economic environment and an organization runs on a predefined policy based on an editorial understanding of the selection of news and the output. News organizations manufacture an environment, which ultimately surrenders before the policy by newsroom staffers.

Objectivity is desirable, but it is still beyond the given policy conformity ecology in a newsroom, sociology of newsmen and information has much to say as far as selection of the information and its processing is concerned. Moreover, it is not primarily the audience that acts as a fundamental reason for news making. The most revealing part has been the conceptualization of an audience, which somehow shapes the working of the newsroom. But this paper establishes the concept of an audience engendered largely on the basis of assumption. Newsrooms exist in such a manner, where various gatekeepers like input and output editors ensure the larger policy conformity and have gradually become a subsidiary of the news management department. Precisely, the output desk or output process of a news channel becomes crucial because, at this stage of news making where practical construction of reality happens, the newsroom uses the extra elements to simulate a different reality for the audience.

Notes

1. Ownership: The size and the profit-seeking imperative of dominant media corporations create a bias. Sourcing: The mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest. Flak: It may take the form of letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches, and Bills before Congress and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action’. Business organizations regularly come together to form flak machines. Anti-Communism and fear: The way artificial fears are created with a dual purpose... partly to get rid of people you don’t like but partly to frighten the rest. Because if people are frightened, they will accept.
2. Gatekeepers are individuals in the television newsroom who choose which story copy is to be used for a given broadcast. Gatekeepers then decide in which format the content will air. Gatekeepers have the

power to affect the flow of information.

3. The incumbent will be responsible for gathering all inputs for the preparation of News. He/She must be aware of the current situation.
4. Output editors are usually responsible for the broadcast material or output of the news channel.
5. Interviewing is an effective method to learn from people what they believe, how they think, and how that affects their life.
6. The lists of participants' interviewees: Abhishek Kapoor, Executive editor of Republic TV in New Delhi (NCR), Mr. Kumar Kunal, Input editor of AajTak (NCR), Rajneesh Kumar Singh, Input editor of NDTV India, Sudhanshu Srivastav, Senior output desk coordinator of AajTak and Mihir Gautam, Output coordinator of NDTV India.
7. All interviews are conducted during January-February 2017
8. News meeting in a television news channel is a daily meeting in a newsroom or any other place in the organization among the reporters, desk people, and editors take part. It may be twice or more in a 24-hour cycle.
9. The lists of participants' interviewees: Abhishek Kapoor, Executive editor of Republic TV in New Delhi (NCR), Mr. Kumar Kunal, Input editor of AajTak (NCR), Rajneesh Kumar Singh, Input editor of NDTV India, Sudhanshu Srivastav, Senior output desk coordinator of AajTak and Mihir Gautam, Output coordinator of NDTV India.

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Annexure 1

The lists of participants interviewees (for this research):

1. Abhishek Kapoor, Executive editor of Republic TV in New Delhi (NCR)
Date: 1 March 2017
Place: Film City, Noida, Uttar Pradesh
2. Mr. Kumar Kunal, Input editor of AajTak (NCR)
Date: 3 March 2017
Place: Film City, Noida, Uttar Pradesh
3. Rajneesh Kumar Singh, Input editor of NDTV India
Date: 24 April 2017
Place: New Delhi

4. Sudhanshu Srivastav, Senior output desk coordinator of AajTak.
Date: 3 March 2017
Place: Film City, Noida, Uttar Pradesh
5. Mihir Gautam, Output coordinator of NDTV India
Date: 24 April 2017
Place: New Delhi

Accessibility of Reproductive Health Related Schemes for Pregnant and Lactating Rural Women: Some Reflections

Dr. Parveen Pannu¹, Dr. Nidhi Gulati² and Neha Yadav³

Abstract

The Government is making substantial efforts in addressing women's reproductive health concerns. Women in rural areas are reluctant to discuss their reproductive health issues. They experience a lack of autonomy because of financial dependence and socio-cultural norms. Most women in this study could not decide on or seek health care facilities without the approval of their husbands/in-laws. The study explored the experiences of women concerning their access and barriers to utilizing health schemes. It included networks that link the women to the schemes. This study problematizes certain assumptions and categories of qualitative research. It frames the biases that arise in the context of studying 'reproductive' health of 'rural' women. It also discusses the aspects and effectiveness of the Behaviour Communication BCC approach adopted by the Accredited Social Health Activist, or the ASHA Bahu/Didi. Besides the informal communication networks, it is the field level health workers that bridge the gap between rural women and government's initiatives. Further, the study puts forth suggestions needed in health care infrastructure, communication and transport.

Keywords: Reproductive health, Rural women, Health services, Narrative inquiry, Behaviour change communication

Introduction

The reproductive phase is an significant period in the life of women as it is associated with women's specific reproductive health issues such as menstruation, fertility, preg-

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nancy, child birth, contraception and menopause etc. Reproductive health care addresses the reproductive functions and systems at all stages of life. It encompasses the sexual health of both men and women, as well as maternal and child health (Suman & Asari, 2001).

In 2017, approximately 810 women died every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. The reasons for the death of pregnant women are severe haemorrhage, maternal infections, unsafe abortion, and hypertension-related disorders of pregnancy. Cardiac conditions, HIV/AIDS or diabetes complicating or complicated by pregnancy also lead to death. Approximately 94% of all maternal deaths occur in low and lower-middle-income countries. On average, 73.3 million induced (safe and unsafe) abortions occurred each year. There were 39 induced abortions per 1000 women aged between 15–49 years (WHO, 2019).

According to UNICEF (2018), in India, pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death among girls between 15 and 19 years of age. The number of women and girls who die each year due to issues related to pregnancy and childbirth has reduced from 103,000 in 2000 to 35,000 in 2017. This is a 55 per cent decrease. Yet, access to and utilization of life-saving health interventions and practices remains low. This is primarily due to gaps in knowledge, policies and availability of resources. Poverty and an urban-rural divide create a wedge between the government's intent and a scheme's utilization.

Maternal Mortality is higher in rural areas and among poorer and less educated communities (Srivastava et al, 2018). One of the main factors associated with this outcome is the unmet need for reproductive health services. To maintain one's reproductive health access to accurate information, safe, and effective, affordable reproductive health services are essential (Ayanore, Pavlova & Groot, 2016). Early marriage puts young women at risk of physical and sexual violence. Prevalence of both physical and sexual violence against women within marriage has been documented in India. In case of love marriage(s) and where there are dowry demands, the risk of experiencing violence is high in India (Rocca et al, 2009).

Rural women and reproductive health

Reproductive health services are crucial for women, especially during their pregnancy. But in rural areas, access to health care facilities is poor. Several socio-economic, cultural factors such as education, occupation, traditional beliefs and gender-related constraints have an impact on the reproductive health of women. These factors hinder women's ability to access reproductive health services. Women are not independent to make decisions about their health. They cannot travel to health facilities without accompanying husband/in-laws. They face greater risks during pregnancy and childbirth

due to limited access to basic health care facilities (Kifle et al, 2017). Adolescent and unmarried women are often not permitted to receive reproductive health services. This is due to the strict cultural beliefs about sexual activity (Ramana, 2014).

Poverty, lack of education, ignorance of the complications of pregnancy contribute to home-births. Women with less education from poor households are less likely to have access to quality care due to financial issues (Adu et al, 2013). When women lack access to safe and effective menstrual hygiene practices, effective methods of family planning, the consequences affect the women themselves and their families too. Challenges to reproductive health among rural women include menstrual hygiene-related problems, consequences of early marriage, unsafe abortions, low Antenatal care (ANC) attendance, lack of awareness about health issues and access to health services. These issues could be addressed by raising awareness about reproductive health issues. Also making the reproductive health services accessible, women-friendly and encouraging participation in these programmes would make them effective (Nath, 2008).

Government initiatives to address reproductive health issues

The state has invested efforts in addressing women's reproductive health. Community health workers play a vital role in disseminating government schemes to rural women.

Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) was introduced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2005. It aims to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among poor pregnant women. JSY integrates monetary assistance with delivery and post-delivery care. The *Yojana* identifies Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) as an effective link between the government and pregnant women. The ASHA is a health activist, who creates awareness on health and mobilises the community towards local health planning. They connect target beneficiaries in accessing health and health-related services which are available at the Anganwadi/sub-centre/primary health centres.

The *Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram* (JSSK), 2011 aims to provide free and cashless health care services to pregnant women. The scheme covers normal deliveries, caesarean section and sick newborn care (up to 30 days after birth) in Government health institutions. The scheme's scope includes both rural and urban areas. (National Rural Health Mission Guidelines for *Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram*, 2011).

To improve the antenatal checkup of women, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare introduced *Pradhan Mantri Matritva Abhiyan* in 2016. This programme focuses on providing quality based antenatal care to all pregnant women (in 2nd and 3rd trimester) on the 9th of every month.

Communication approaches

Many communication approaches have been used in promoting health to lead to the development of effective messages about health, the dissemination of health-related information, and the role of interpersonal relationships in health communities.

Studies have revealed several types of health communication approaches are used regularly. These are 1) Persuasive/behavioural communication involving persuasive tactics to have the target audience adapt to a new idea or practices. It is a cognitive-rational process of understanding people's situations, social-cultural influences, developing strategies to persuade people to increase their knowledge. After augmentation of knowledge, people are open to change their behaviour and practices to attain better health (UNICEF, 2017). 2) Risk communication, which deals with helping people understand a serious issue and how to arrive at a decision which is best suited to handle that particular issue (WHO, 2018). 3) Media advocacy involves the use of mass media and social media. The purpose of media deployment is to advance social and public policy initiatives (UNICEF, 2017). 4) Edutainment involves the use of media products such as TV, radio, internet to deliver health-related messages through popular culture (Aksakal, 2015). 5) Interactive health communication involves the interaction of a patient or professional care provider through the use of inter personal media devices, particularly mobile phones. These enable the dissemination of public health messages (Fotheringham et al, 2000). 6) Development communication and participatory communication is used for development work and the society's participation in creating campaigns to relay these messages (Estrada et al, 2018). All these different types of health communication go into the developmental part of creating strategic messages to inform the audience about effective health-related concerns.

This study focuses on the Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) strategy adopted by the field health workers. BCC can be defined as, "a research-based consultative process of addressing knowledge, attitudes and practices through identifying, analyzing and segmenting audiences and participants in programmes by providing them with relevant information and motivation through well-defined strategies, using an audience-appropriate mix of interpersonal, group and mass-media channels, including participatory methods" (UNICEF, 2005). BCC strategies have been effective in bringing positive change in health behaviours of an individual or community which are appropriate to their settings (Ngigi & Busolo, 2018).

BCC has been effectively deployed in recent years and has been given preference over other approaches in enhancing the status of rural women's reproductive health. This has been tried out in Chattisgarh, Assam, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh to name a few. The core strategic input for the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) BCC strategy focuses on using interpersonal communication and community level BCC activities.

It uses the theory of communication, *Sadharanikaran*, which is an ancient theory of communication used to change health behaviors. Sadharanikaran means simplification without dilution; simplification while keeping the essence and meaning of the content that is to be communicated. The foundation for the success of any BCC strategy is contingent upon its effective and meaningful deployment of mass and social media and community mobilization interventions (Department of Health and Family Welfare, 2008).

Behavior change communication approaches can be an effective means of improving knowledge and perceptions of women about reproductive health. Traditional myths, misperceptions and lack of information impede women's access to reproductive health services. A study was carried out to assess the effectiveness of BCC in improving abortion-related awareness, knowledge and perception of married women in the districts of Bihar and Jharkhand. Further it revealed that women who were exposed to interpersonal communication, wall signs and street dramas showed the highest surges in knowledge about abortion (Banerjee et al, 2013). Similarly, a study of Bangladesh reported that BCC with pictorial cards during ANC visits is effective in improving knowledge of women about pregnancy danger signs and more importantly, the enhanced knowledge can significantly improve the institutional delivery rates (Rahman & Anwar, 2013).

Given this backdrop, we can assume that public health policies in India have had a concerted focus on the reproductive health status of women. Yet, there is a lack of consistent evidence about the reproductive health practices of pregnant and lactating women. Women's experiences of the government schemes and their deliverables have not been documented. The present study was conducted to address this gap in the field. It aimed to explore the factors involved in the access and utilization of the reproductive health care programmes targeted at pregnant and lactating women. The field locale was limited to rural women residing in the selected district of Uttar Pradesh.

Objectives

Primary objective: The present study explores the complex factors that affect the access and utilization of the reproductive health-related programmes for the rural pregnant and lactating women.

Specific objectives

1. To examine the programmes and schemes related to the reproductive health of pregnant and lactating (up to one-year age of child) rural women.
2. To examine the access and utilization of selected reproductive health-related government programmes (*Janani Suraksha Yojana, Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram and Pradhan Mantri Matritva Surakshit Abhiyan*) for pregnant and lactating women.

3. To study their experiences including benefits and barriers and suggestions for improvement.
4. To study and adapt the use of narrative inquiry, particularly personal experience approach, in examining the experience of rural women concerning reproductive health-related services.

Methodology

A qualitative study was designed to examine the accessibility of government reproductive health-related schemes for pregnant and lactating women. The exploratory research design attempted to explore the issues related to awareness, benefits accrued and experiences and challenges faced by rural women in availing these schemes. The barriers encountered and enablers to access and utilization are included.

The locale of the Study

The present study was conducted in the Ayodhya district of Uttar Pradesh. The total population of Uttar Pradesh as per 2011 census is 19.96 crore as compared to 16.62 crores in 2001. The sex ratio of the population is 995 females per 1,000 males. UP's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is 359 per 100,000 live births and India's MMR is at 212. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) of UP is 63 deaths per 1000 live births and under five mortality rate is 96 per 1000 live births, are among the highest in India. The State has one of the highest Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in India, 3.8, compared with India's 2.6 and use of family planning methods is low (National Family Health Survey-4, 2016).

Area of the Study: There are 75 districts in Uttar Pradesh state. District Ayodhya was selected for this study. Two villages Narayanpur and Madhupur, Ayodhya Districts were selected by purposive sampling. As per the Census (2011), the total population of Faizabad was 165,228. The total number of men and women were 85,620 and 79,608 respectively. Out of the total population, 13.8% of people lived in urban areas while 86.2% live in rural areas. The average literacy rate in urban areas is 80% while that in the rural areas is 66.8%. District Faizabad was renamed as Ayodhya by the Uttar Pradesh Government in 2018.

Sample: Fourteen women (pregnant and lactating) were contacted to share their lived experiences about their reproductive health issues. The paper is drawn from a larger study which includes thirty pregnant and lactating women. The sample size was chosen for non-parametric analysis. In this paper, narratives from fourteen women have been included. The reasons for the same are: first, this helps delimit the scope of the paper. Second, only those narratives have been included which are relevant to the paper.

Sampling: Anganwadi workers and ASHA workers at both the villages were contacted

to obtain a background profile of the village and its population. Non - probability sampling has been employed including purposive sampling which was followed by snowball sampling. These were employed to select pregnant and lactating women in the village as suggested by Anganwadi and ASHA workers for narrative enquiry. Before the initiation of data collection, the purpose of the study was explained and consent was taken from the respondents.

Narrative inquiry as a method: The use of narrative inquiry, particularly ‘personal experience’ was arrived at. This matched the complexity of the category the research attempted to explore. The social world, as humans experience it, is storied. In the act of narrating stories about selves and our experiences, we understand and interpret events, we categorize or classify our experience. Bochner and Riggs (2014) argue that we represent our lived experiences to others and ourselves through stories, in a narrative form. It is in this form that we make sense of our lives. They argue, “The human condition is largely a narrative condition. To study persons is to study beings existing in narrative and socially constituted by stories” (p 197).

The focus of our research is ‘reproductive health of rural women’. The category of ‘rural women’ alludes to married women living in rural villages of Uttar Pradesh. Some of them already have a child or have had miscarriage/s. Their lives and life experiences are not easily accessible to any researcher, as would be the case in the western or the urban educated milieu.

Since both these factors are deeply entwined with this research, the researchers felt that the qualitative interpretive methodology of ‘personal experience’ matched the objectives and the nature of categories and themes that researchers wanted to explore and examine. It was felt qualitative ‘personal experience’ descriptions would enable researchers to draw inductive generalizations, which would speak to policy.

Reflections from field data: Observations and analysis

Narrative inquiry as a method in qualitative research

The postmodern and the poststructuralist turn in the social sciences led to a shift in research towards deeply personal, emotional and storied forms of inquiry. This paper is drawn from research that deploys the personal experience methods developed by Clandinin & Connelly (1990). In this method, the accounts of the respondents are not mere representations or reflections of their experiences. Rather, their narratives or accounts or small stories are seen as fluid, co-constructed between the researcher and the respondent, and carrying meaning. This paper focuses on big and small stories respondents share about their banal, everyday life episodes or personal concerns, fears and issues that the respondents faced when they accessed government schemes.

The deployment of this method provided researchers with insight into the respondents' lives, their contingencies, problems and challenges of their lives as women in a rural context. The method privileged the lives of rural women from their standpoint. The researchers picked cues from the women's accounts to understand how policy links to live experience. The method permitted the researchers to be personal with the respondent's lives. As the researchers heard their accounts, they felt invited to their reality and could think and feel what the respondents felt. The researcher understood their concerns, issues and dilemmas.

The category of the 'rural woman who is/was pregnant and lactating

The subjective experience of the respondents in research can never be known or made accessible to the researcher. These are only available as 'narratives'... it is only in the recent past that communication studies have turned towards narrative inquiry putting human values and meanings at the core of understanding relational, political and performative endeavours (Bochner & Ellis, 1992; Bochner, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The complexity of the category

The complexity and limitations of the category are compounded by the nature of the theme that researchers attempted to study, viz. women's reproductive health. This is an area of their lives about which women are shy and reluctant to discuss unless it is in medical terminology. It is shrouded in secrecy and privacy.

It was difficult to get the women in the study to open up, some of them simply narrated what was conveyed to them by the health worker. This is evident in the narrative here:

"I had my first ANC at PHC when I was four months pregnant. My urine test, blood test, ultrasound, physical examinations were done. A mother-child Protection card (MCP) was provided which records, date of last menstrual period, expected date of delivery, no. of pregnancies and previous live birth, number of antenatal checkups, vaccinations need to be done. I was advised to bring the MCP card every time I visited the Anganwadi centre, health centre and the hospital". (a 25-year-old pregnant woman, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

"I was given complete counselling on diet, breastfeeding, hygiene, Iron-rich diet. [*Sab to bataya unhone, maine bhi samajha*- they told me everything and I, too, understood] Anganwadi's supervisor enriched us on the Iron diet. Earlier, I did not know that Iron tablets should not be taken with milk or tea as it hinders Iron's absorption" (a lactating mother, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

While discussing their experiences, women found it easier to discuss what was permitted to be made public knowledge and spoken about and what was not; how their experience panned out; the discussions they had with other women in the household and the community. For instance, they would not share their intimate feelings and desires but talk about things like the ‘godbharai’¹ or Iron Folic Acid tablets, information which already exists in the public realm.

Adapting the method to suit the phenomenon being studied

The act of talking to one another is built into the fabric of society. This is informed by the norms of propriety and shame. Following this, it is not possible to access the women directly and the researcher(s) had to talk to the women through the rural health workers, or the Asha *didis/bahus*. A researcher has limited access to a private conversation with these women. For instance, a researcher can walk into middle-income and higher-income homes or offices in urban areas to have conversations with women, albeit that is difficult too. However, in rural areas, women’s lives are always under scrutiny and open to the gaze of other women in the household and community.

The decisions of women about this personal and deeply private aspect of their lives are not taken individually. The other women (for instance the sister-in-law or the mother-in-law) in the household and the community collectively take over or decide for the woman. This is truer for respondents who were experiencing their first pregnancy or were young. This sense of women as a community is very cardinal to rural lives. Researchers did not want to breach the trust of the community by having conversations behind closed doors and yet, due to the sensitive and personal nature of conversations, they could not have it in the open. Thus, the method to have discussions where other women were present or could walk into the conversation was adapted. It was found that even though the respondents did most of the talking, other women pitched in and added to the conversation. For instance, a woman from the neighbourhood said, ‘*ye bhi to bata ki motorcycle per gayi tu fir*’ [also share that you went on a motorcycle] [field notes, while talking to respondent 5, age 29 years]. This made the dynamic of the conversations and defined by the immediate real lived context of women’s lives.

Whenever finding the space and the time to talk to women individually was not possible, the researcher spoke to these women when the Asha didi or bahu visited them, or at times and places where at least two-three women were together. Following Valsiner (2014), we built in our study a conscious and “explicit acceptance of the complexity of the phenomena, and adjust(ed) the methodology to it” rather than apply a ready-made pre-designed method (p 7).

Laying open the category of the ‘private’

The private details of rural women’s lives to be made privy to the researcher are an aspect

of the study which researchers were not only aware of but also apprehensive about. The respondents were reluctant to discuss their reproductive lives, though they opened up gradually as they realised that the researchers intended to examine the access and implementation of the policy initiatives. Researchers were also sensitive about probing women to gain more insight. All the probes used initially were, '*fir kya hua; is baare mein aur batao; aap ko kaisa laga; aap ko kya lagta hai kya badalan chahiye?*' [What happened next; tell us more about this; how did you feel; what do you think about the changes needed]. This way the respondents had control over the conversation and what and how much they wanted to share. The tweaking of the method to suit the category and the area of study at hand is particularly pertinent as it enabled the researcher to listen to the experience of the respondent, without imposing the researcher's notions, expectations and assumptions onto the interaction. The Researchers were sensitive about how to adapt their method and tweaked the method to the aspect as they were studying and not the reverse.

The proxy of the category under examination

An important concern is that while defining the contours of research, 'access to reproductive health services in rural areas' became a proxy for 'reproductive health of rural women' or rather, put more succinctly as 'the reproductive body of the rural women and its governmentality'. Governmentality is derived from 'government' and 'mentalite'. According to Foucault, government includes not only 'management by the state or the administration', but also signified problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul,' (Lemke, 2015, p 2)

The shared experiences, issues and concerns by rural women around their reproductive health care choices and decisions made by the respondent particularly about what they want to share and how they want to share. Thus an awareness that their real reproductive health concerns may be inaccessible to the researcher and that the researcher cannot be privy to their interactions with the health worker or the privacy of discussions at their homes; the sharing of experiences of access and utilization of government schemes stands in and is strongly related to concerns in 'reproductive lives of rural women'.

For instance, a respondent may not directly reveal that decision-making about the management of her pregnancy lay in the hands of her mother-in-law. However, while answering why she didn't talk to Asha bahu, she was able to reveal the persisting myths that surround pregnancy:

“My mother in law is a little conservative and she forced me to not reveal my pregnancy to health workers. I tried to convince her but she did not let me meet ASHA Bahu. My mother in law thinks if people see me in this period I would get

‘nazar’ [*evil eye*] and something bad can happen to me and my baby” (a 26-year-old pregnant woman, Uttar Pradesh).

Thus, the assumptions about methodology and the fixity of categories need to be problematised, in any qualitative research. This enables a better fit of the methodology to the ‘phenomenon’ that is being examined in the research.

The following part of the paper discusses the shared experiences of women as they discuss their concerns and issues related to accessibility to health schemes, the enablers and the deterrents and impediments in their ways to utilizing the services.

Experiences from the field: Ruminations and interpretations

The respondents discussed that they came to know about the health care services by word of mouth (*aas paas ki auraten baat karti hain, bata deti hain; maine radio per suna tha kaise madad milti hai; sarkar ishtihaar nikalti hai radio per; TV per dekha tha ki ASHA bahu hoti hai to maine poocha; mere pati ne TV per dekhkar samjha diya; itne padhe likhena hi nahi hum ki jo bhi TV per bolen wo sab hume samajh aa jaye - isliye gaon mein asha worker aati hain to unse detail mein pooch te hain ki is k alaav[sic] kaise milega*) [the women from the neighbourhood talk, they inform; I heard it over the radio that this is how help can be sought; government takes out the advertisement on the radio; I saw on TV that there’s an ASHA bahu who helps and so I asked around; my husband watched TV and explained it to me; I am not so educated that I understand everything that is on television, so I asked the ASHA worker from my village as to what help can I get]. A respondent said that she had seen the ASHA worker around in the village but did not know what work she does, and she asked around for information [*pehle gaon mein dekha tha, per pata nahin tha*].

The government’s mechanisms for dissemination are effective in arousing interest and curiosity of women about the schemes and their benefits. The easy language and easy access to information have also helped spread information. Thus, the dissemination services of the government and the community networks link them to the schemes.

Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) strategy as a means of healthcare delivery

In-depth interaction with the women provided an insight that field health workers are using BCC to promote health schemes in the villages. The ASHA worker is the frontline of the medical health care system. ASHA and Anganwadi workers often visit homes to create awareness about new schemes. They urge target beneficiaries to visit Anganwadi centres for detailed information. This often involves persuasion and negotiation with the family members, particularly the mother-in-law. These conversations often take place in the presence of other family members. They show attractive posters, magazines and distribute pamphlets to the women. These contain information related to complications

in pregnancy, diet to be taken during the pregnancy period, birth preparedness, Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices (IYCF), use of family planning methods, vaccination of expectant mother and infant and complementary feeding etc.

In essence, ASHA workers are effective BCC change agents. The ASHA worker uses all strategies viz., home visits, group meetings and participation in campaigns. The ‘*Saas-Bahu*’ (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) meeting used by the ASHA worker proselytizes lateral communication. The communication is facilitated between the women of a household and the community, in situ; which is different from the top-down or vertical communication.

Since ASHA and Anganwadi workers live in the community they serve, hence, play a key role in informing the villagers to reach out to government schemes. Interactions with women revealed that field health workers provide counseling and help them to get registered with the schemes to avail the benefits of the schemes. In rural areas, health workers identify the beneficiaries and act as a catalyst in molding their behaviour to adopt better health practices.

The BCC strategy document for National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Uttar Pradesh draws on field-based evidence. It deploys an atavistic theory of communication, *Sadharanikaran*. The BCC strategy is based on ground-level research of priority behaviours across the range of NRHM programs. By keeping the priority behaviour of the target audience at the focus, a communication strategy was developed for the study.

The Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Uttar Pradesh (2008), recognizes that there exist many gaps related to program availability and accessibility in the State. These are (1) lack of convergence across and within national programs, (2) lack of decentralized BCC planning at the district, block and village levels, (3) lack of socio-culturally driven BCC approaches which focus on change in behaviour and are informed by socio-cultural practices prevalent in the state, and (4) a concerted planned focus on mass media, particularly electronic. The NRHM BCC strategy shifts the emphasis of BCC programs from awareness to action.

‘ASHA bahu ne madad ki’ [The ASHA bahu helped me]

The schemes rely on the ASHA *bahu* or anganwadi worker. These workers are from the community and given training in subjects related to women’s health and neonate and infant care. The workers have local knowledge of the community, its customs and practices. Earlier this information was indigenous knowledge shared by *dais* or mid-wives and older women in the community. These women were aware of the dietary and herbal ways and other precautions to be followed during pregnancy. Being from the same community, the ASHA *Bahu*/anganwadi worker carries this knowledge. Also, she is trained in ‘scientific’ knowledge by the government. She thus becomes the holder of both kinds

of knowledge(s) - the indigenous and the scientific.

ASHA *bahu* not only carries and holds this knowledge but also has the important function of ‘dispensing’ this knowledge. The BCC strategy of staying away from the cognitive-rational approach appears to be effective. The ASHA worker is “*Sahridaya*” (compassionate), where compassion and empathy are pertinent enablers for communication. “*Sahridaya*” is deployed by the ASHA Bahu in interpersonal contexts and mediated contexts.

All the respondents expressed their satisfaction levels with the knowledge the ASHA *bahu*/ Anganwadi worker told them to enable them, viz.:

“I was given complete counselling on diet, breastfeeding, hygiene, Iron-rich diet. Anganwadi’s supervisor enriched us on the Iron diet. Earlier, I did not know that Iron tablets should not be taken with milk or tea as it hinders Iron’s absorption” (a 29-year-old lactating mother, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

“Anganwadi didi counsel (sic) our queries and conveys crucial information on what precaution and diet should be taken during pregnancy.”(a 33-year-old lactating mother, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

“She helps out from beginning to end. She was with us while going to hospitals and also in the hospitals, communicating with doctors, helping in counseling and check-ups.” (a 25-year-old pregnant woman, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

The ASHA *bahu* not only imparts information but also negotiates with the pregnant woman, as one woman shared, viz.

“I received an iron-folic tablet from Anganwadi centre but stopped taking it. When I took Iron tablets, I started vomiting. One day ASHA didi elaborate the benefit of iron tablets, she said it is a must for your health. If you try it for one month and your blood level would increase. I took one for one month regularly and my hemoglobin level increased.” (a 21-year-old lactating mother, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

The government and the rural health schemes have used community-based insights and practices to their benefit. The ASHA worker organizes a ‘godbharai divas’ where a ‘poshanpotli’² is given to women.

“Every month, on 30th, for pregnant women, a programme ‘*GodBharai Divas*’ is organized at Anganwadi Centers, where all pregnant women are provided with ‘*PoshanPotli*’. This ‘*PoshanPotli*’ is full of ‘*Hari PattaedarSabjiyan*’, *Chana, Gud, Phal, Iron and folic acid ki goli*’. I had a wonderful experience on

my *Godbharai Divas*.” (a lactating mother, 33-year-old, resident of a village in District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

The *godbharai* is traditionally a baby shower, where the pregnant woman is showered with blessings and laden with gifts from the community and relatives. The government scheme utilizes this indigenous practice and marries it with scientific knowledge. The ‘godbharai’- a traditional celebration of a woman’s pregnancy has now transformed into an institutionalized practice. It becomes the pregnant woman’s day, giving her attention and gifts which are not money and clothes but things her body needs for the baby. The naming of this practice as ‘*godbharai*’ has led to its acceptance by all communities.

The ‘godbharai’ is another “KhushaliDiwas” representing the “rasa” (emotion) principle of *Sadharanikaran*. The BCC strategy adopted by the UP government is informed by the ancient Indian natyashastra practice of *Sadharanikaran* (means making things simple). A *godbharai divas* that induce positive emotions is an effective strategy for persuasion.

It is, thus, the coming together of the indigenous and the scientific, as pieces of knowledge (of culturally embedded practices and dietary intake), as support systems (through communication channels), as individuals (in the form of the ASHA worker and the Anganwadi worker) that have led to the acceptance and success of the reproductive health schemes in the community.

Issues of autonomy of the rural women

The respondents of the study expressed that even though schemes and services exist, they are not able to access them fully. The reason for this is the lack of infrastructure including poor quality of roads, inadequate transportation services, non-availability of ambulances in emergencies to travel from their residence to the Primary Health Centers.

“My husband tried calling Ambulance (102) for delivery. The ambulance was unable to reach on time. We managed to travel to the hospital by motorcycle. It was such a horrible experience for me. I could have been faster if the ambulance could have reached me early. It has been difficult to go through the roads. The road condition is also poor” (Babita, a 29-year-old, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

“Ambulance service needs to reach on time. We can’t go to centres every time.” (Savitri, a 36 years old, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

This difficulty gets exacerbated when it is juxtaposed by the dependence of the women on the male members of their household, particularly the husband to take them to the PHC.

“I have to keep looking at the mother-in-law’s face to approach her. She may say - what is the need to leave work and go to the PHC” (Shama, a 36-year-old, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

The autonomy of the conjugal couple that is assumed in the access to these services does not exist in the rural communities. The husband-wife are not separate units of the family and do not function or arrive at decisions independently of their larger family and community networks. Thus, a simple task of going to the PHC becomes complicated because the women have to depend on someone else to fix the date and be available to accompany them. The primary purpose of making women empowered and independent when it comes to their health is lost in such a scenario where there exist continued social restrictions on women’s mobility. The women cannot make these decisions on their own, and this becomes a barrier in their access to services available.

Women, even though they are pregnant, are excluded from decision-making because they lack information and knowledge about these complex and mysterious body processes. This lack of information is corroborated by the low level of literacy in rural areas of Ayodhya district of Uttar Pradesh among women. Thus, the barriers to access are not only the availability of transport services and ambulances but also social and cultural restrictions imposed on women’s mobility.

Persistence of myths

Despite persistent efforts and prioritisation of the reproductive health of women in rural areas by the government and non-government sectors, cultural myths about this sensitive aspect of women’s lives persist. The first myth is centred on hiding these aspects from men in the household. The respondent’s shared some of these, ‘*admi logon ke samne thodi na keh sakte hain, ye to humare auraton ki baten hain; jo saas kahengi wo to karna padega; inke ghar mein aisa hi hota hai*’. [We cannot share all this with men in our lives, these are women’s concerns; whatever my mother in law says I will have to follow; in the household where I live, these practices are followed]. The entire reproductive cycle of women’s lives, which includes menstruation, pregnancy, contraception, birth and lactation are considered to be ‘women’s business’. Men and outsiders are supposed to be away from these matters.

Another persisting myth is that of the evil eye. It is believed that there are many infertile women or women with daughters (and no sons) who are jealous of the pregnant woman. By making the knowledge of pregnancy public, the woman invites trouble or the nazar [evil-eye]. Several studies have corroborated these findings. Chawla writes that ‘exposure risked nazar or evil eye, curse and jealousy, and release of demonic forces detrimental to all’ (Chawla, undated., 8).

Three respondents shared that they were not permitted to share with the ASHA *Bahu*

the fact that they are pregnant before the first trimester of pregnancy. They say '*pehle teen mahine to baat ko chupaya jaye - ghar wale to yahi chahte hain*' [The people in my home want this only - that we hide this in the first three months]. The first trimester is considered to be an unsure period; there are chances that the woman may miscarry. Rather than focusing on her health, care and nutrition during that period, the 'uncertainty' factor takes precedence and pregnancy is not made public knowledge.

Taboos surrounding pregnancy exclude women from access to health care services. Sometimes women are also excluded from many aspects of social and cultural life.

Poverty compounds the problem

Most respondents in the study expressed that they cannot access health services because they are poor. One of them said,

"humari paise k istithi acchi nahin to hum baar baar chakkar nahin laga sakte bank aur PHC. Bank mein khata kholne keliye hum ek hazaar kahan se layen. Abhi to pata hi nah inki kuch paisa milna bhi hai ki nahin" [our financial condition is not good so we cannot continue going to the Bank or the PHC. Even to open an account, one needs money, about a thousand rupees. We do not even know yet whether we will get any money or not (from the government)] (Savitri, a 36 years old, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

"To receive CASH assistance under the JSY scheme, I have visited the health centre several times. I was always given a reason that my documents are incomplete. I have never opened a bank account. I need to deposit 1000/- to open a bank account. My husband was so fed up because we already have spent so much money on transportation to visit health centres and the bank to receive just 1400/-." (a 26-year-old pregnant woman, District Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh).

For these schemes to be fully accessible, their utilization needs to be seamless from the government to the doorstep of the woman, without demanding bureaucratic paperwork. It is evident that those who are poor are the ones who need the services and yet their poverty restricts their access to services.

Conclusion

Women's access to health services is an important factor in understanding and analysing of poverty and deprivation. This is also explained in various United Nations Development Indices such as the Human Development Index and Gender-related Development Index. Women's relative lack of financial independence and the poverty of the family itself compound the problem for women's reproductive health. Anand and Sen (1994) explain that gender equity and equality are fundamental to social development. As wom-

en's financial independence improves, their access to education and health services improves. Their agency, independence and decision-making power within the household also changes. Nussbaum and Sen's (1993) capabilities approach also sees life, bodily health and political and material control over one's environment as three of the ten central human capabilities. These capabilities are needed by every person in order to have human 'flourishing' and enjoy 'quality of life.' Access to basic health care during the reproductive phase is thus defined both by Sen and Nussbaum as crucial to a life with dignity. Sen argues that this access is a more apt indicator of a country's development than its economic indices.

Thus the complex but vicious cycle of poverty exacerbates gender disparity. It continues its detrimental effect on human flourishing and diminishing human capability. The government would need to sustain its focus and energy in improving the access and experience of health care services for women, in order to improve the nation's performance on any development index.

Cultural and institutional changes are relatively slow processes and accompany economic changes over a long drawn period. Till gender gaps in access to critical health care during the reproductive phase are addressed, the government needs to have a continued and concerted focus on improving the delivery of its services.

Notes

1. The godh bhara is a ceremony performed during the seventh month of pregnancy across most cultures in India. It is similar to a baby shower. The pregnant mother is blessed with gifts from relatives for the baby.
2. Poshanpotli is a potli (bag) of poshan (nutrition) nutritious foods, vitamin and mineral supplements

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TV Serials and their Impact on College Going Students: A Case Study of Silchar, Assam

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Abstract

Television is playing a significant role in developing awareness among the youth. Students use TV as an important medium for gathering information about national and international events. In modern society TV is considered as a significant source for entertainment and learning as well. The drifting of the young generation from traditional beliefs due to TV content, TV as an information and educational vehicle for adolescents and the impact of TV serials on family bonding and lifestyle (Morshed, 2012; Narayan, 1987; Daud, 2011) suggest that TV can be related to the various behavioral changes such as level of aggression, consumption patterns, mental health, socialization etc, to name a few. This study aims to trace the impact of daily soaps/serials, broadcast on TV channels on the college students of Silchar town of Assam. Researchers have investigated the reasons and patterns of watching TV serials of the college students from Silchar through a survey.

Keywords: Newsroom, TV news, Audience, Consumption, Assam

Introduction

Television is one of the popular mediums of communication which has both social and mental impact on the masses. It serves the purpose of educating as well as informing the masses. Since 1976, when the commercials were first allowed to be aired, Indian television was dominated by Hindi feature films and film-based programmes. Locally produced Indian-language television serials came into existence during the mid 1980s. Highly popular television soap operas, like *Hum Log* (We people) 1984, initiated a revolution in programming at Doordarshan (DD). It was the first long running TV soap opera on the national channel DD. The success of *Hum Log* has paved the way for TV serials in India.

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During that period, TV serials have penetrated a very large portion of our common household's viewership and thus they become part of our daily routine. People often become more interested in knowing what has happened to the hero or heroine in the next episode than they are interested in knowing about their own relatives. The TV serial does have an impact on the viewers which has been inbuilt in their making. "In view of the fact that television in India is developing as a major source of mass enlightenment, leisure and pleasure, it is essential that its impact in various areas needs to be analyzed. Indian audience research indicates that boys prefer to watch sports content while girls prefer soaps family dramas along with music videos and dance shows. (Singh, 1992).

Arguments about the pernicious effect of sexually explicit images and violence in movies and TV serials on the (mental and physical) health of today's youth are quite common. These arguments are often misinformed or represent a misinterpretation of research results (Slade & Christina, 2002).

Presently, Indian TV has blitz with a variety of serials on many entertainment channels such as Star Plus, Zee TV, Sony TV, Colors, Colors Bangla and Zee Bangla. For eg., a serial such as *Satyamev Jayete* inspire the people to provide amusement and laughter. Thus, from this example we can say that no doubt, serials have an impact on one's mind and it is one's mind that decides what to accept or not.

Literature review

Narayan's study (1987) revealed that one of the functions of TV as identified by adolescence was fulfilling the need for information as well as education. TV promotes various programmes which provide recreation and education, and serves the purpose of welfare as well as development. Serials and Chitrahaar (Chitrahaar was an extensively watched TV programme on DD National in the 1980s and 1990s that featured song clips from bollywood films) provide recreation and entertainment whereas, UGC (University Grants Commission) programmes as well as some other special programmes like Quiz, The world This Week provides information.

Dave and Paralikar (1991) in their study of reactions of the students of IPCL (Indian Petrochemical Corporation Limited) School, Baroda of the selected episodes of the serial *Aur Bhi Hai Rahen* for educational and vocational guidance activities in school revealed that the higher percentage of the respondents expressed that the video film oriented them to various educational and vocational fields and admission procedures for various courses. Brown, (1994) in his study says, "soaps allow us to linger, like the pleasure of a long conversation with an old friend."

Jensen and Oster, (2007) in their article on how TV soaps (a soap opera is a radio or TV serial that deals mainly with domestic affairs and is often characterized by melo-

drama, ensemble casts and sentimentality) are actually educating rural women in India and are changing rural India. Everyone is now dreaming of those lavish lifestyles and thinking of shifting to Metros. The serial *Udaan*, had a good impact on rural India and it really inspired the generation.

Also, the soap opera *Astitva* for example showed changing attitudes towards single and divorced women in a conservative India. A young girl from Bhopal interviewed by the author of this particular article said: 'Things are changing. You just have to watch TV, or read the news and you know the world is no longer the same as when my mother was my age'.

Daud et. al. (2011) in their study state that TV serials have huge and enduring impact on youngsters' family bonding and life styles. Daud et al state that few of the consequences are really affecting the society which is commonly based on cultural values and conventional religions.

Kanwal and Sukhmani (2011) conducted a study in 5 states of northern India i.e., Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Jharkhand to identify the TV viewing habits of the young population of India and their study reveals that most of the young Indians watch television either most often or sometimes and spend about 3-5 hours of their activity daily. Their study also highlights the various reasons for Indian youth to watch television which include, generation of knowledge and learning, medium of relaxation and passing time, upliftment of hidden talents and is a stress management tool.

A research study by Morshed, (2012) revealed that our society especially the young generation is drifting away from traditional beliefs and values because of the Indian TV serials. He suggested that youngsters should be conscious of such a crucial situation and try to prevent getting influenced by those serials.

Al-Helal, (2014) in his study pointed out that currently Bangladeshi people watch Indian TV programmes instead of Bangladeshi programmes. He said that these people are very fond of Indian TV serials as these serials mainly highlight extra-marital affairs, family conspiracies, personal feuds, jealousy, etc. The female characters of such serials are portrayed in revealing outfits. Young girls specially college going girls are mostly affected by these outfits. Also, many criminal non-fictional based Hindi serials teach people how to commit crime and wipe away the proof.

Research objectives, area of study and methodology

The specific objectives of this research paper are as follows:-

1. To find out the social background of the respondents.

2. To understand the viewing patterns of TV serials.
3. To investigate the reasons behind watching those TV serials.
4. To study the impact of TV serials on college students of Silchar town in Assam.

Silchar is the second important city, next to state capital Guwahati in Assam. Having a history of its own related to the colonial past, it represents the typical urban setting of a non-metropolitan city. It has a central university only 20 Km away from the town, a deemed university in the form of NIT (National Institute of Technology), and a medical college all located outside the municipal area. The town does not have any significant industry. The Silchar Municipality Board was constituted in 1998. In 2005, the Municipal area of the town covered 15.78 sq. Km. The total population of Silchar is 229,136 as per Census 2011. The Silchar municipal jurisdiction comprises 30 municipal wards as per Census 2011.

The present study to investigate the impact of TV serials was focused on the college students of Silchar town to know the impact of TV serials. For this purpose, an audience survey method was employed in two colleges, viz., Cachar College and Women College in order to collect the data. From each college, 50 respondents (total number of respondents 'n' were 100 i.e. $n = 100$) were selected belonging to the age group of 18-21 years. The method was convenience sampling and data were collected from them with the help of an interview schedule.

Variables and parameters

The social background of the respondents was studied in terms of their gender, age group, religion, caste, mother tongue, languages known, marital status, educational level of the respondents, parents' education, occupation of parents and monthly income, frequency of visiting markets/malls and household consumption pattern such as TV, refrigerator, washing machine, digital/ordinary camera, cordless phone/mobile, room cleaner/mop/vacuum cleaner, iron, bike/scooter, anti mosquito devices, water filter, cutlery set, dining set, etc.

Media exposure of the respondents was studied in order to understand the viewing patterns of TV serials and was studied in terms of exposure to the television, access to television channels (ownership, kind of channels they are being exposed to, time spent on watching TV, place of watching, language preferences, mode of watching, choice of programmes they watched, etc. The dimension of impact of TV serials on college students was operationalised with the help of dependent variables such as by finding out the various reasons for watching TV serials. These were analysed to find out whether TV serials have an impact on the college students.

Data analysis and interpretation

The data gathered for this study is analyzed with simple nominal scale, frequencies and percentage. It is then further explained with the help of tables and charts.

Socio-economic profile of the respondents

Table 1: Distribution on the basis of gender

Sl. No.	Gender	Percentage
1	Female	58
2	Male	42
Total		100

In the table 1 the demographic profile of the samples reflects that majority of the respondents (58%) are female while (42%) are male.

Table 2: Distribution on the basis of age

Sl. No.	Age Groups	Percentage
1.	18-19 years	68
2.	20-21 years	32
Total		100

The table 2 shows that regarding their age group majority (68%) of the respondents belong to 18-19 yrs. of age group whereas little less than one-third (32%) belongs to 20-21 yrs. of age group.

Table 3: Distribution on the basis of religion

Sl. No.	Religion	Percentage
1	Hinduism	88
2	Islam	12
3	Christianity	0
4	Other	0
Total		100

The table 3 shows that majority (88%) of the respondents belong to Hinduism, followed by Islam (12%). Respondents do not belong to any other religion.

Table 4: Distribution on the basis of caste

Sl. No.	Caste	Percentage
1	General	45
2	Scheduled Caste	34
3	OBC	14
4	Scheduled Tribe	7
Total		100

From the table 4 and it is seen that less than half (45%) belong to the general caste, (34%) comprises scheduled caste, OBC (14%) and (7%) comprises of scheduled tribe.

Table 5: Distribution on the basis of mother tongue

Sl. No.	Mother Tongue	Percentage
1	Bengali	62
2	Hindi	28
3	Manipuri	7
4	Others (Assamese)	3
Total		100

The table 5 discloses that majority (62%) of the respondents mother tongue is Bengali, followed by Hindi and Manipuri (28%) and (7%) respectively. However, the others category includes few Assamese speaking people. Thus, the data show that most of the respondents are Bengali speaking people.

Table 6: Distribution on the basis of languages known

Sl. No.	Languages Known	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bengali	100	100
2	Hindi	100	100
3	English	100	100
4	Manipuri	7	7
5	Others (Assamese)	5	5

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as respondents may know more than one language.

As seen in the table 6 above (100%) of the respondents can speak Bengali, Hindi and English. A few can also speak Manipuri. And lastly, the rest in others category can speak Assamese.

Table 7: Distribution on the basis of marital status

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Percentage
1	Unmarried	99
2	Married	1
Total		100

The table no 7 shows that the majority (99%) respondents are unmarried while only (1%) female respondents are married.

Table 8: Distribution on the basis of educational qualification

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Percentage
1	Degree 1 st Year	50
2	Degree 2 nd year	38
3	Degree 3 rd year	12
Total		100

The table 8 shows that half of the respondents belong to Degree 1st Year, more than one-third i.e., (38%) belong to Degree 2nd year and a few (12%) respondents belong to Degree 3rd year.

Table 9: Educational qualification of respondent's father

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Percentage
1	Graduate	63
2	Higher Secondary	21
3	Technical (Diploma holder from Polytechnic/ITI, etc.)	6
4	Professional (MBBS, LLB, B. Tech, MBA, MCA, MMC, M.Phil, Ph.D., etc.)	5
5	High School	3
6	Post Graduate	2
Total		100

The table 9 discloses that regarding the respondent's father's education level majority (63%) of the respondents' fathers are graduates. Also, a good number of respondent's fathers have acquired higher secondary level of education and a few possessed professional degree and postgraduate.

Table 10: Educational qualification of respondent's mother

Sl. No.	Educational Qualification	Percentage
1	Graduate	55
2	Higher Secondary	29
3	Professional (MBBS, LLB, B. Tech, MBA, MCA, MMC, M.Phil, Ph.D., etc.)	4
4	High School	7
5	Post Graduate	3
6	Technical (Diploma holder from Polytechnic/ITI, etc.)	2
Total		100

The table 10 reveals that more than half (55%) of the respondents' mothers are graduates. Also, a good number of respondent's mothers have acquired higher secondary level of education and a few possessed professional degree and postgraduate degrees.

A comparative analysis of the respondent's father and mother indicates that the level of education of both the father and mother is almost same which an indicator of upward feminine education.

Table 11: Occupation of respondent's father

Sl. No.	Occupation	Percentage
1	Business	53
2	Service	35
3	Expired	7
4	Professional	5
Total		100

The table 11 discloses that regarding their parents' occupation majority (53%) of the father's occupation is business followed by (35%) who are government or non-govern-

ment service holder. However, very few (7%) of the respondent's father were expired and (5%) of the respondent's fathers are professional. Thus, the data show that most of the respondent's fathers are engaged in business.

Table 12: Occupation of respondent's mother

Sl. No.	Occupation	Percentage
1.	Housewife	45
2	Service	26
3	Self-employed	14
4	Expired	11
5	Professional	4
Total		100

The table 12 shows that majority (45%) of the respondent's mothers are housewives followed by government or non-government service holder with (26%), self-employed (14%), (11%) were expired and a very few (4%) of the respondent's mothers are professional.

Table 13: Distribution on the basis of monthly family income

Sl. No.	Monthly Family Income	Percentage
1	Rs. 10, 001 - Rs. 15, 000	53
2	Rs. 15, 001 - Rs. 25, 000	23
3	Rs. 25, 001 - Rs. 40, 000	16
4	Above Rs. 40, 000	7
5	Rs. 5, 001 - Rs. 10, 000	1
Total		100

As seen in the table 13 above more than half (53%) of the respondents family income were between Rs. 10, 001 - Rs. 15, 000, (23%) of the respondents family income were between Rs. 15, 001 - Rs. 25, 000 and (16%) said that their family income were between Rs. 25, 001 - Rs. 40, 000. However, very few (7%) of the respondents said that their family income were above Rs. 40, 000 and only (1%) of the respondents said that they have a family monthly income in the range of Rs. Rs. 5, 001 - Rs. 10, 000.

Table 14: Distribution of male respondents on the basis of their visit to markets/malls

Sl. No.	Visit to markets/malls	Percentage
1	Frequently	71
2	Very often	29
3	Sometimes	0
4	Rarely	0
Total		100

The table 14 reveals that (71%) of the male respondents visit markets/malls frequently while (29%) of the respondents visit very often.

Table 15: Distribution of female respondents on the basis of their visit to markets/malls

Sl. No.	Visit to markets/malls	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequently	49	85
2	Very often	7	12
3	Sometimes	2	3
4	Rarely	0	0
Total		58	100

As per table 15 it is seen that (85%) of the respondents visit market/malls frequently while (12%) of the respondents visit very often. However, only (3%) of the female respondents visit markets/malls sometimes.

Table 16: Distribution on the basis of household consumer goods scenario

Sl. No.	Household Resources	Frequency	Percentage
1	TV set	100	100
2	Refrigerator	100	100
3	Mobile	100	100
4	Water filter	100	100
5	Electric Fan	100	100
6	Wall clock	100	100
7	Cooking Gas	100	100
8	Pressure Cooker	100	100
9	Cable Connection/DTH	100	100
10	Dressing Table	92	92
11	Almirah	86	86

12	Dining Table	78	78
13	Sofa Set	69	69
14	Shower	68	68
15	Show Case	52	52
16	Emergency Light	52	52
17	Scooty/Scooter/Motor Cycle	51	51
18	Computer	46	46
19	Calculator	42	42
20	Kerosene Stove	42	42
21	Mixer Grinder	37	37
22	Inverter	37	37
23	Music Instruments	32	32
24	Immersion Rod	28	28
25	Torch	22	22
26	Iron	17	17
27	Dining Set	17	17
28	Cutlery set	17	17
29	Electric mosquito repellent	17	17
30	Aqua fresh	16	16
31	Digital/ordinary camera,	16	16
32	Washing Machine	16	16
33	Room cleaner/mop/vacuum cleaner	16	16
34	Bicycle	15	15
35	Sewing Machine	12	12
36	Cordless phone	12	12
37	Car	11	11
38	Air Conditioner House	11	11
39	VCD Player	7	7
40	Radio Set	7	7
41	VCR/VCP	2	2
42	Heavy Commercial Vehicle	2	2

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as household may have more than one commodity.

The table 16 establishes that the majority of the respondents have a TV set, refrigerator, mobile, water filter, electric fan, wall clock, cooking gas, pressure cooker and cable connection/DTH (100%) followed by dressing table (92%), almirah (86%), dining table (78%), sofa set (69%) and shower (68%). Also, little more than half of the respondents have showcase and emergency light (52%) and scooty/scooter/motor cycle (51%). (46%) of the respondents have computer, calculator and kerosene stove (42%), more than one-third of the respondents have a mixer, a grinder, inverter and music instruments, (28%) have an immersion rod, torch (22%), one-sixth of the respondents have an iron, dining set, cutlery set, electric mosquito repellent, aqua fresh, digital/ordinary camera, washing machine and room cleaner/mop/vacuum cleaner.

Besides these a few respondents also have a bicycle, sewing machine, cordless phone, car, air conditioned house, VCD player, radio set, VCR/VCP and heavy commercial vehicle. Thus, the data shows that most of the respondents possess common everyday household appliances:

Media exposure of the respondents

Table 17: Possess television set

Sl. No.	Response	Percentage
1	Yes	100
2	No	0
Total		100

The table 17 reveals that (100%) of the respondents possess television set which proves that television is a very popular mass medium in Silchar town.

Table 18: Place of watching television

Sl. No.	Place of watching	Frequency	Percentage
1	At home	99	99
2	Relative's/friend's house	12	12
3	Hostel	1	1

Note: Total need not be equal to 100 percent as some respondents have preferred more than one place for watching.

The table 18 reveals that majority (99%) of the respondents prefer to watch television at home. But, apart from this obvious fact there is a sizeable amount (12%) of respondents who also like to watch TV in their relative's/friend's house and only (1%) of the respondent watch TV in the hostel.

Table 19: Type of connection to watch television

Sl. No.	Type of connection	Percentage
1	Cable Connection	82
2	DTH (Tata Sky, Reliance, etc)	18
3	Ordinary Antenna	0
Total		100

The table 19 shows that majority (82%) of the respondents have cable connection while more than one-sixth (18%) have DTH. None of the respondents rely on the ordinary antenna to watch terrestrial broadcasts. On the basis of data shown in the above table and graph we can say that private satellite television channels are very common among the respondents and they like to watch them through cable and Direct-To-Home services.

Table 20: Frequency of viewing television in a week

Sl. No.	Days of viewing (weekly)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Regularly (daily)	68	68
2	5-6 days	19	19
3	3-4 days	12	12
4	1-2 days	1	1
Total		100	100

As seen in the table 20 maximum i.e. 68% respondents watch television daily, 19% watch 5 to 6 days in a week, 12% 3 to 4 days while only 1% of the respondents watch television 1 to day in a week.

Table 21: Preference of time for viewing television

Sl. No.	Preference of time	Frequency	Percentage
1	Anytime	82	82
2	Late night (After 12 am)	20	20
3	Night (6-11 pm)	18	18
4	Evening (4-6 pm)	4	4

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have preferred more than one time schedule.

The table 21 establishes that majority i.e. (82%) respondents prefer to watch television at anytime during the 24 hours of a day. However, (20%) respondents prefer to watch television during late night i.e., after 12 am followed by (18%) during night time.

Lastly, very few (4%) respondents prefer to watch television during evening hours as they do not have much time to watch TV in the morning due to college schedule and studies during late night.

Table 22: Time devoted to watching television

Sl. No.	Time devoted	Percentage
1	1-2 hours	73
2	3-4 hours	15
3	Less than one hour	12
4	More than 4 hours	0
Total		100

As per table 22 it is seen that the majority (73%) of respondents watch TV for 1-2 hours a day, followed by (15%) for 3-4 hours a day while (12%) of the respondents watch TV for less than 1 hour a day.

Table 23: Preference of programmes

Sl. No.	Types of programmes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Reality shows	88	88
2	Feature film	88	88
3	Dance programme	74	74
4	Documentary	74	74
5	Advertisements	68	68
6	Serials	63	63
7	Music	62	62
8	Comedy shows	52	52
9	Sports	50	50
10	Drama	45	45
11	News	42	42
12	Fashion/Interior designing	42	42
13	Mythological	22	22
14	Children's programme	7	7
15	Health programme	4	4
16	Agriculture	2	2
17	Rural Development programme	2	2
18	Others (Business/Marketing Trading and debates)	11	11

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one TV programme.

Table 23 shows that maximum i.e., (88%) respondents prefer to watch feature films and reality shows followed by dance programme and documentary (74%), advertisements (68%), music (62%) and comedy shows (52%). A good number of respondents i.e. (45%) prefer drama, news and fashion/interior designing (42%). However, (22%) respondents prefer mythological and a few respondents prefer children's programmes, health programme, agriculture and rural development programmes. In others category (11%) respondents prefer to watch programmes such as business/marketing trading and debates. Interestingly, it is found that all the female respondents prefer to watch serials/daily soaps while a very few male respondents watch the serials/daily soaps very rarely whereas sports are preferred by all the male respondents while a very few female respondents watch sports.

Table 24: Preference of language to watch television programmes

Sl. No.	Preference of language	Frequency	Percentage
1	Hindi	100	100
2	English	54	54
3	Bengali	28	28
4	Assamese	5	5
5	Manipuri	4	4

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one language.

The table 24 reveals that all the respondents prefer to watch TV in Hindi language, followed by (54%) preferring English and Bengali (28%). However, a very few respondents also prefer to watch in Assamese and Manipuri language. Thus, it is found that although Silchar is dominated by Bengali people but still all the respondents prefer to watch TV in Hindi language.

Table 25: Choice of watching television serials

Sl. No.	Choice of watching	Percentage
1	Both random and selective	57
2	Selective	43
3	Random	0
Total		100

As per the above table (25) and figure it is seen that majority (57%) of the respondents prefer to watch both random and selective serials, while (43%) prefer to watch only selective serial.

Table 26: Preference of channels

Sl. No.	Name of the channel	Frequency	Percentage
1	Zee TV	95	95
2	Star Bharat	90	90
3	Life OK	85	85
4	Sony	85	85
5	Star Plus	75	75
6	Movies OK	75	75
7	Discovery Channel	74	74
8	Colors	70	70
9	Travel and Living	68	68
10	The History Channel	68	68
11	National Geographic	65	65
12	MTV	64	64
13	Animal Planet	56	56
14	Sony Max	55	55
15	B4U Music	55	55
16	Zee Music	54	54
17	Star Movies	52	52
18	Filmy	50	50
19	Channel V	48	48
20	SAB TV	48	48
21	Aaj Tak	42	42
22	Zee News	40	40
23	Star Gold	40	40
24	STAR SPORTS 1	40	40
25	Ten Cricket	35	35
26	STAR SPORTS 2	32	32
27	Star News	32	32
28	UTV	30	30
29	ESPN	30	30
30	Ten Sports	30	30
31	Zee Cinema	28	28
32	Zee Bangla	25	25
33	Star Jalsa	20	20
34	Zee Bangla Cinema	15	15
35	9XM	15	15
36	DD-Sports	14	14

37	HBO	12	12
38	VH1	8	8
39	NEWS LIVE	5	5
40	Aastha	4	4
41	Zee etc	2	2
42	Neo Sports	2	2
43	CNN IBN	2	2
44	Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha	2	2
45	Others (Dangal, Bindass, Set Max 2, Movies Now, Sony Mix, Comedy Central, Sangeet Bangla, Pogo, Cartoon Network, CNN, Animax2, BTN, DD Imphal, DY 365)	44	44

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one TV channel.

The above table 26 reveals that majority (95%) respondents prefer Zee TV followed by (90%) Star Bharat, Life OK and Sony (85%), Star Plus ad Movies OK (75%), Discovery Channel (74%), Colors (70%), Travel and Living and The History Channel (68%), National Geographic (65%), MTV (64%), Animal Planet (56%), Sony Max and B4U Music (55%), Zee Music (54%), Star Movies (52%), Filmy (50%), Channel V and SAB TV (48%), Aaj Tak (42%), Zee News, Star Gold and STAR SPORTS 1 (40%) and Ten Cricket (35%). However, a good number of respondents also prefer STAR SPORTS 2, Star News, UTV, ESPN, Ten Sports, Zee Cinema, Zee Bangla, Star Jalsa, Zee Bangla Cinema, 9XM, DD-Sports and HBO and a few respondents prefer VH1, NEWS LIVE, Aastha, Zee etc, Neo Sports, CNN IBN and Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha. In others category (44%) prefer various other channels such as Dangal, Bindass, Set Max 2, Movies Now, Sony Mix, Comedy Central, Sangeet Bangla, Pogo, Cartoon Network, CNN, Animax2, BTN, DD Imphal and DY 365.

Reasons for watching TV serials/daily soaps and their Impact

Table 27: Method for watching TV serial

Sl. No.	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
1	Watch the repeat telecast	44	44
2	Miss the serial	42	42
3	Don't miss the TV serial	14	14
Total		100	100

From the above table 27 it establishes that (44%) of the female respondents says they don't want to miss a single episode and thus, watch the repeat telecast while (42%)

of the male respondents says they are not interested to watch the TV serial/daily soaps. However, a few (14%) of the female respondents says they don't miss the serial but delay the mealtime.

Table 28: Viewers perception about reasons behind liking of the serial

Sl. No.	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
1	Instrument of time pass, recreation and relaxation	49	49
2	Source of entertainment	49	49
3	Favourite actors and actresses	37	37
4	Full of romance	33	33
5	Due to the costumes and jewellery used	28	28
6	Reflects own culture and traditional set up, etc	7	7

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one reason

As per table 28 it suggests that (49%) of the female respondents said they watch TV serials/daily soaps for entertainment, pleasure seeking and relaxation, (37%) said they watch due to their favourite actors and actresses, (33%) said they watch as some family based serials/daily soaps depicts love, romance, etc. However, (28%) of the female respondents said they watch serials/daily soaps as they get new ideas about the costumes and jewellery after watching the serials/daily soaps and thus, they can exchange their ideas with their friends, while a very few said they watch as it generates knowledge about various cultures, rituals and tradition.

Table 29: Patterns of watching TV serials

Sl. No.	Patterns of watching	Percentage
1	Choice	58
2	Neutral	35
3	Compulsion	7
Total		100

The above table indicates that all the female respondents watch TV serials/daily soaps on their choice basis while (35%) of the male respondents were neutral to the question. However, a very few (7%) male respondents said they watch TV serials/daily soaps only in compulsion i.e., when the female members turn on the TV channel for serials/daily soaps. Thus, we can say that male respondents don't have much interest to watch TV serials/daily soaps based on family issues or themes.

Table 30: Kind of serial liked the most

Sl. No.	Category of serial	Frequency	Percentage
1	Romantic serial	47	47
2	Family based serial	34	34
3	Comedy serial	22	22
4	Mythological serial	22	22
5	Spiritual or Religious serial	12	12

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one category

From the above table it is revealed that majority (47%) of the female respondents like to watch romantic serials, (34%) female respondents like family based serial related to family issues, (22%) respondents like comedy and mythological serials while (12%) female respondents like spiritual or religious serials.

Table 31: Messages conveyed through TV serials

Sl. No.	Messages decoded	Frequency	Percentage
1	Depict conspiracy and weaken family bonds	58	58
2	Depict domestic violence	54	54
3	Highlight extra-marital affairs	47	47
4	Highlight women empowerment	12	12
5	Promote Indian culture	8	8

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one messages

The table 31 discloses that (58%) of the respondents said that the family based TV serials/daily soaps depicts conspiracy and weaken family bonds and relationship, followed by (54%) respondents who said it depicts domestic violence and (47%) said it highlights extra-marital affairs, divorce, etc. However, (12%) respondents said serials/daily soaps also sometimes highlights women empowerment while a few respondents said it also sometimes promotes Indian culture.

Table 32: Viewers perception on whether TV serials are importing Western values

Sl. No.	Response	Percentage
1	Neutral	53
2	Yes	47
3	No	0
Total		100

As per table 32 more than half i.e., (53%) of the respondents were neutral on the question whereas (47%) of the respondents said TV serials/daily soaps are importing Western values into the lives of common people.

Table 33: Viewers perception on whether TV serials changes life or thought

Sl. No.	Level of impact	Percentage
1	To a great extent	38
2	Neutral	30
3	To some extent	14
4	Not so much	12
5	To a very great extent	6
Total		100

Regarding viewers perception, a good amount of female respondents said that TV serials have changed their life or thought to a great extent, few female respondents said it has changed their life or thought to some extent while a very few female respondents said TV serials/daily soaps have changed their life or thought to a very great extent. However, the majority of the male respondents were neutral to the question while a few male respondents agree that TV serials have changes their life or thought but not so much.

Table 34: Changes decoded by the Respondents

Sl. No.	Changes decoded	Frequency	Percentage
1	Change in costumes and jewellery	44	44
2	Change in life styles	44	44
3	Increase in social mobility	25	25
4	Change in traditional and cultural practises	25	25
5	Change in self-presentation	25	25

Note: Total need not be equal to 100% as some respondents have mentioned more than one changes

The above table indicates that the majority of the female respondents feel that TV serials have brought changes in their life styles, they prefer same design of costumes and jewellery the actresses wear in the serials/daily soaps. Also, a good number of respondents feel that TV serials have increased social mobility as they feel free to speak in public and serials have also brought changes in traditional and cultural practises and self-presentation as they are now interest to organize their parents, grand-father and grand-mother's birthday party, marriage anniversary, etc. and have get-together of the family members after watching those serials. Thus, according to the respondents TV serials have brought many changes in their life and thought.

Conclusion

It is seen that preference for TV serials/daily soaps is greater among the female respondents than the male respondents. A very few male respondents said they watch TV serials/daily soaps only in compulsion i.e., when the female members turn on the TV channel for such shows. Thus, it shows that male respondents are not having much interest in such programmes. But on the other hand, the female respondents are so interested in the TV serials/daily soaps that they don't miss a single episode and thus, watch the repeat telecast as well. The female respondents said they watch the TV serials/daily soaps for entertainment, pleasure seeking and relaxation. They also said that they watch serials/daily soaps due to their favourite actors and actresses and get new ideas about the costumes and jewellery after watching those serials/daily soaps. Few female respondents said they watch the serials/daily soaps because it highlights women empowerment and also at the same time generates knowledge about various cultures, rituals and traditions. Few of them said that after watching TV serials they have insisted that their parents change the interiors, curtains, cutlery, toiletries, etc. as shown in TV serials/daily soaps. Some said that after watching the serials they are now interested to organize their parents, grand-father and grand-mother, mother's birthday party, marriage anniversary, etc as shown in the serials. Both the female and male respondents prefer to watch TV reality shows. But the male respondents do not show any interest in watching serials related to family issues whereas, the female respondents prefer serials related to family issues. Both female and male respondents said family based TV serials/daily soaps depicts conspiracy and weaken family bonds and relationship. They also said serials/daily soaps depicts domestic violence and also imports western values into the lives of common people. Also, the female respondents said serials/daily soaps highlights extra-marital affairs, divorce, etc.

Thus, from the above discussion it can be concluded that serials/daily soaps have both positive and negative aspects but negative things are outgrowing the positive effects. Now-a-days good concepts serials/daily soaps are very rare. Serials/daily soaps makers show maximum number of negative things. Hence, serials/daily soaps have a wide negative impact on the mind and thought of the people especially the young generation.

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The #MeToo Movement in India and Gender Stereotypes in the Creative Media Industries

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Abstract

The #MeToo movement has brought forward not only the sexual harassment but also the gender stereotype issue. Gender stereotyping is a serious issue happening in many organisations. This article examines if there are any changes in gender stereotypes in the Indian media industry after the #MeToo movement of 2018. The research methods used are qualitative narrative and thematic analysis both. With the help of in-depth interviews, this research has illustrated what changes have taken place in the media industry in India after the #MeToo movement in terms of gender stereotypes.

Keywords: Me too, Gender, Media, India, Social Media

Introduction

Although, ‘the #MeToo movement may have its origin in Hollywood’ relating to sexual harassment (West, 2019). “#MeToo has an earlier history” (Pellegrini, 2018, p.262). The campaign was first launched by an African-American activist, Tarana Burke, in 2006 which ‘aimed at supporting girls and women of color who had experienced sexual violence’ (Pellegrini, 2018, p. 262). Tarana Burke coined the term ‘Me Too sans hashtag’ when Twitter had just started its journey and the term has gained prominence ‘some 10 years later’ (p.262). The #MeToo movement came into the limelight ‘when Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was the focus of a New York Times report on sexual harassment within the film industry in autumn 2017’ (LSE, 2018, no pagination).

The digital campaign governed salience on October 15, 2017 when a tweet from the actress Alyssa Milano urged women to write on ‘social media with words’ #MeToo stating their own experience on sexual harassment (Powell, 2017). The #MeToo movement in Hollywood had a major impact in India. “2018 saw the rise of the #MeToo movement in India” (Roy, 2019). This started in the month of October 2018 when Bollywood actress Tanushree Dutta raised the alarm on social media related to ‘sexual harassment’

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(Roy, 2019). After that #MeToo posts and tweets gained momentum and mostly touched the media industries starting from Bollywood to the journalism sector.

All over India, from top directors to renowned journalists and authors were accused of sexual misconduct on various social media platforms with the hashtag Me Too. “India’s #MeToo movement arrived in a cascade of allegations as women took to Twitter to call out comedians, journalists, authors, actors and filmmakers” (Alluri, 2018). “The allegations have made it to the front page of national dailies, forcing newsrooms to not just take notice but to respond” (Alluri, 2018).

With this sexual harassment issue, other things related to women come up. Like ‘a ripple effect around the world, drawing attention to gender inequality, discrimination’, also needs to be given importance (West, 2019). This #MeToo movement ‘has thrown a glaring spotlight on the gender gap in the workplace’ (Fuhrmans, 2018). Also, this movement has also raised issues like gender stereotypes and so companies are reviewing the ‘pay policies’ (Carpenter, 2018).

This study is related to the present scenario of the gender stereotypes in the media industries in India after the #MeToo movement. As highlighted above, it is quite important to look into this ‘gender stereotype’ issue which the movement has also highlighted. This project focuses on the media industries in relation to gender stereotypes in order to know the prevalence of the idea ‘think manager, think male’ after #MeToo movement (Mihail, 2006, p.375).

With this #MeToo movement many gender stereotypes have come to the fore like pay gaps, the glass ceiling, fixed areas of work for women etc. These issues need to be addressed properly. Also, these ‘gender stereotypes give rise to gender bias and the conditions that regulate its occurrence’ and are required to be understood in the current scenarios (Heilman, 2012, p.114). This is a big problem which is bringing differentiation between genders.

This research is important as the gender stereotypes in the media industries often get ignored because they are not properly identified. Also, insufficient research has been conducted relating to gender stereotypes in India. Mostly, the research done after the #MeToo movement were related to sexual harassment, and not into the matter of gender stereotypes. Most of them are related to the ‘revision of laws on sexual harassment’ and how the #MeToo movement grew through social media (Hasunuma & Shin, 2019, p.97). Also, there is a lacuna in the literature regarding the #MeToo movement and the Indian media’s gender stereotypes scenario.

This study aims to examine the gender stereotypes scenario in the Indian media industries before and after the #MeToo movement. The Research methodology involves interviewing people from the media industries and then analyzing them. The study has

tried to observe if after The #MeToo movement there has been any real change in the perception of gender stereotypes in the media industry, which is believed to have a mentality of ‘masculine workplace style of command-and-control’ (Bentley, 2019). Also, this study has its value for future research in the gender stereotypes in the media industries by providing insights into this particular area in relation to #MeToo.

Literature review

In society, the gender stereotype is quite prevalent in the Indian context. This pattern can be realised in the media sector as well. In the year 2018, the #MeToo movement in India pointed out this issue more strongly. The existence of gender stereotypes has been a cause of worry in the media field. In a survey by Global Advancement Management (GNAM, 2019) it is seen that ‘for instance, 36 % of respondents said that they were more likely to recommend a person for promotion if they were able to work at any time, including nights and weekends- which clearly affects women, who are also still expected to bear the primary burden of child care’ (West, 2019). It can also be seen that there is a major difference in the salary between males and females. “Today the gender pay gap in the media remains endemic” (Whyte, 2018). Still, no proper steps have been taken and there is a lack of seriousness about this issue. Usually, it is the practice that ‘brings the issue to the company board, asking members to prioritize fixing the pay gap’ (Carpenter, 2018). It is said that ‘most management positions are occupied by men’ and are not ‘free from bias’ (Schneider, 2019). In media, the picture is also the same.

“The workplace has been evolving over many years; we saw a more significant shift in 2018 after #MeToo” (Bentley, 2019). It seems that the situation is quite similar in the media industry. How much has it benefitted in the area related to gender stereotypes? This is required to be seen. The ‘#MeToo movement’ has helped in the ‘improvements on gender equality’, but the question is how much? (LSE, 2018, para. 13). It is believed that ‘feminist hashtags’ like #MeToo have brought ‘changes’ in ‘mainstream narratives’ (Jackson, 2019, para.1 . This study has tried to look into the areas of gender stereotype in the media sector in India rather than the sexual harassment issue.

In the studies by Reskin (2000) and Ridgeway & England (2007), it can be seen that people have the tendency to classify each other by gender which in turn triggers gender stereotypes. This is quite a common thing which is felt in the media sector but needs to be dealt with seriously. Also, Burgess and Borgida (1999) have expressed descriptive stereotypes as the beliefs regarding the nature women have and prescriptive stereotypes as the beliefs regarding nature women should have. All these build our way of thinking. These things still prevail in the media sector.

All these stereotypical thoughts stay as a characteristic of gender ideology (Luep-tow, 2001) which is quite harmful. However most of the studies have not dealt with the

gender stereotype in the media field specifically. Most of them are like 'how gender stereotyping combines in predictable ways with sex composition of workplaces and organizational policies' and relates it with gender discrimination (Zeher, 2011, p.764).

In most of the research, it has been investigated about how gender stereotypes have affected something or resulted in something else. Like in the research work of Heilman (2012), it has been discussed 'how descriptive gender stereotypes promote gender bias'. But rarely has it been studied about the existence of gender stereotypes in the media. However questions like what is the pattern and what is the scenario of gender stereotypes serious discussion.

Basically, 'gender stereotypes are generalizations about the attributes of men and women' (Heilman, 2012, p.114). A few important aspects have been mentioned in this study. "Both descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes, and the expectations they produce, can compromise a woman's career progress" (p.114). It has also been mentioned that 'gender stereotypes not only affect how women are related to by others but also affect how women evaluate themselves' (p.120). This study shows how these things are still prevailing in the media sector. In the research paper by DeArmond et al (2006), the area of study was 'age and gender stereotypes in relation to adaptive performance'. 'Think manager-think male' has been mentioned (p.2186). In this study, it has been mentioned that 'future research should assess the degree to which various stereotypes are held across different industries and workforces' (DeArmond, 2006, p.2207).

In a study by Catalyst (2002), it can be seen that in the corporate sector in Greece the recruitment of women has been mostly in 'contingent job positions' and 'lower-managerial ranks'. But there has been no specific study for the media industry to highlight the gender stereotype issue. In the work by Mihail (2006) it has been mentioned, 'stereotyping is detrimental to women's advancement in the workplace' as it influences 'how their employees perceive them, how other managers perceive their work, how they are selected for further training and development'. Also, 'how they rapidly advance' (Mihail, 2006, p.375). So, here also it can be seen how serious the issue of gender stereotyping is.

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2015), in their research study have observed that there is "work 'segregation' by sex in the cultural industries". It has also been said that 'gender stereotypes matter hugely in the division of labour by sex' (Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p.23). It can be seen how gender stereotypes affects cultural industries. It can also be seen in the research paper that there is a mention of 'domination by men of more prestigious creative roles' and 'domination by men of technical jobs' (p.26).

Verhoeven et al. (2019) in their study observed it is, "women directors have collectively experienced significant and multiple barriers to industry entry and sustainable success in a way that men have not" (p.137). They have examined how things are in

the film industries in relation to gender. But it is not about the overall media industry. This study has talked about #MeToo in relation to ‘sexism’ and ‘gender discrimination’, but the project has not discussed gender stereotypes in the media industry in India after #MeToo movement in 2018 (p.135).

The research study by Jackson et al. (2019), mentions that “the widely observed ‘#MeToo moment’ is not so much a moment but a loud chorus of voices that has, for years, been using Twitter and other social networks to tell women’s stories about violence in a way that challenges the simplistic frames relied on by mainstream media and politicians”. So, it is not just about violence in physical terms which this paper has mentioned but also other key issues like gender stereotypes.

Aire (2018) says “Too many of us live with the deeply ingrained sexist belief that if we present ourselves a certain way, speak a certain way, behave a certain way, we will insulate ourselves from sexual advances in the workplace”. Here also it can be realised that in this paper on #MeToo sexual harassment has been discussed and the gap of gender stereotypes remained.

Hasunuma and Shin (2019), believe that: “testimonies of #MeToo demonstrate the patriarchal and social and cultural structures that had kept victims silent have not changed much even today”. It also said that “the nature of media coverage dampened the #MeToo movement in Japan, whereas it amplified women’s voices and the movement in South Korea” (p.104). In the work by Heilman and Eagly (2008), it is stated: “Landy would have made us believe that overriding stereotypes is an uncomplicated process and a common event”. Also, the opposite is mentioned.

“Optimistic vision attaches great significance to the liberating potential of new office technologies, seeing in them a solution to women’s traditionally limited and limiting work opportunities” (Wajcman, 1991, p.29). It has also been mentioned that “gender stereotyping of jobs has remained remarkably stable even when the nature of work and skills required to perform it have been radically transformed” (p.33). How relevant is it in the case of Indian media after #MeToo campaign? “The work of women is often deemed inferior simply because it is the women who do it” (p.37). In previous studies it has been mentioned and whether the situation has changed or not at present times will be checked. As not much work related to the gender stereotypes in the Indian media has been done, this research has focused on that.

“Although there has been an expansion of job opportunities for women in some of the new information services, ‘women’s jobs’ and ‘men’s jobs’ areas are as strongly demarcated as ever” (Wajcman, 1991, p.52). It is still believed to be so. Gender stereotypes are still prevailing in the job area. But what about the media sector in India? Have there been any changes in that part in the Indian media after 2018?

This research work will focus on what happened after the #MeToo campaign in India in the area of gender stereotypes. Has there been any real change? So, there appears to be a gap in the previous studies which have been conducted. It can also be felt that there have been limited studies in relation to gender stereotype in the media sector. So, this research work has tried to concentrate on gender stereotypes in the media workplaces in India. Also, to focus on the changes that happened to this particular area after the #MeToo movement as there have been not many studies related to it and the gender stereotype factor is quite a serious factor at workplaces.

Research methodology

Methods: Qualitative narrative analysis, thematic analysis

For this project which has examined whether there are any changes on the issue of gender stereotypes at workplaces in the Indian media sector after the #MeToo campaign, the qualitative research methods have been used. It has tried to analyse what is the existing scenario in the media zone in terms of gender stereotypes. In other words, it has attempted to show if gender stereotype still exist in the media workplaces in India in 2019. It has tried to evaluate the impact of #MeToo on gender stereotypical thinking which is present at the media workplaces in India.

Qualitative research has been chosen for this work because it ‘is concerned with the qualitative phenomenon, i.e., phenomena relating to or involving quality or kind’ (Kothari, 2004, p.3). Also, it helps in ‘discovering the underlying motives and desires, using in-depth interviews for the purpose. Through such research, we can analyse the various factors which motivate people to behave in a particular manner or which make people like or dislike a particular thing’ (p.3).

As qualitative research, ‘refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things’, it has helped the researcher to understand what the present scenario in India media workplaces in relation to gender stereotype is (Berg, 2007, p.3). This qualitative research can ‘properly seek answers to questions by various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings’ (p.8). Also, it helps to understand ‘how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth’ (p.8). It has helped ‘in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives’ (p. 8-9).

Narrative analysis has been used as a research method as “narrative analysis is a genre of analytic frames whereby researchers interpret stories that are told within the context of research and/or as shared in everyday life. Scholars who conduct this type of analysis make diverse - yet equally substantial and meaningful - interpretations and

conclusions by focusing on different elements” (Allen, 2017).

It is said, “narrative analysis refers to a cluster of analytic methods for interpreting a text or visual data that have a storied form. A common assumption of narrative methods that people tell stories to help organise and make sense of their lives and their storied accounts are functional and purposeful” (Figgou & Pavlopoulos, 2015, para.15). So, it can be seen that this has helped in understanding the interviews better and therefore in fulfilling the aims of the project. “Narrative methods can be considered ‘real-world measures’ that are appropriate when ‘real-life problems’ are investigated” (Narrative Research, para. 2). So, as interviews of people have been conducted it is better to use this narrative analysis. In addition, some thematic analysis was used. ‘Thematic analysis is a flexible data analysis plan’ which was used ‘to generate themes from interview data’ (“Thematic Analysis”, 2019 para.1).

Thematic and narrative analysis both, “attend to the content of talk and texts, to what is said, whilst the analyst keeps in mind how the data is generated, attending to context to aid interpretation. This analysis of patterns, themes and narratives may be case-based-within an individual transcript or set of interviews” (Shukla et al., 2014, p.3). So, a combination of both these approaches has helped to get a better outcome from this research work on gender stereotypes in the Indian media industry.

Research interview

For this research on gender stereotypes, interviews have been conducted and then analysed in the ways mentioned above. ‘Interviewing may be defined simply as a conversation with a purpose’ but it has a deeper meaning, feature and function (Berg, 2007, p.89). As mentioned in, ‘interview is an especially effective method of collecting information for certain types of research questions’ and ‘for addressing certain types of assumptions’ (p.97). Also, the reason for using it is to understand the point of view of respondents as interviews give a good scope to acquire more information (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p.98).

Semi-standardized interviews or semi-structured interviews were performed where the questions were not fully structured (Berg, 2007, p.93). They were made in such a way because there were participants who were not fully aware of the issue related to the research topic. Also, other than the English language, Bengali was used. Moreover, interviewees were from various backgrounds, work fields, positions and gender as well. So, questions were reordered and changed.

It was used as ‘the semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks respondents a series of predetermined but open-ended questions’ which helped in getting more candid replies (Given, 2008). It also helped the interviewee to talk at ease and express their opinion in a much better way. Telephonic

interviews were done because ‘qualitative telephone interviews are likely to be best when the researcher has fairly specific questions in mind’ (Berg, 2007, p.108). Also telephone interviews were used as, they have ‘greater cost-efficiency’ and ‘reduced interviewer effects’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p.178). In addition participants can stay anonymous (Berg, 2007). Some interviews were taken by ‘asynchronous environments’ i.e. e-mail as ‘e-mail interviews eliminate’ factors like ‘meeting times’ and help ‘by permitting subjects to answer in their own time and literally from across the country or even the world’ (Berg, 2007, p.113). Also, problems like no clear voice or network issue while conducting telephonic interview were easily avoided in email interviews. So, this process was also used.

Sample design

‘Deliberate Sampling’ was used which ‘is also known as purposive or non-probability sampling’ (Kothari, 2004, p.15). This method was selected as ‘purposive or deliberate selection of particular units of the universe’ to build ‘a sample which represents the universe’ Also, ‘convenience sampling’ was done for ‘ease of access’ in selecting participants (p.15). In simple words, participants were selected in a way from whom response can be received easily. There were 10 participants and among them 9 of them were female and 1 was male. Female participants were selected because the issue of #MeToo is related to women and the research is on gender stereotypes which looks at any change at the workplace after the campaign. All of the respondents work for different media. The male interviewee was in a senior position, so he had been selected. The interviewees were a mixture of novice and experienced candidates. They were between the age groups of 21-35. They were selected because of the comfort level to talk with them about this issue. Mostly, the participants have work experience in between six months to six years.

Among the participants, few were working in the same place. Few were working in the same field or had started working a few months back. So, they knew each other. It might seem that the findings might be biased as they are more or less known to the researcher, but the researcher has never discussed anything about their work before this conversation. The email was sent to two participants as they were unable to give enough time to talk over the telephone. Others whom the researcher had approached for the interview didn’t reply due to reasons which were personal. Demerits of a telephone interview are that little time was given to respondents which were not likely to exceed five minutes. This was avoided by giving them enough scope and time to respond. The difference in time zone became a factor but was avoided by responding at the time that the participants wanted to talk.

Ethics

For conducting this research verbal consent was taken stating that the call will be recorded and emails will be kept. It was also stated that no names will be used, and everything

will be anonymous. Also, the participants were informed that everything would be deleted later after completing the research.

The information sheet having details of the research work was sent along with the consent form by email. Everything related to the participants has been kept anonymous and special care has been taken so that no texts reveal their identity. The research has been conducted as per the ethics followed by the university (University of Leeds, U.K.), since it was undertaken when the researcher was pursuing a master's program in journalism at the university. No vulnerable people were asked to participate in this research, and nothing related to sexual harassment was talked about in the interviews.

Findings and discussion

Profile of Participants

Overall 10 participants were selected for the interviews. All of them are Indians and worked for the media industry in India. Among them, most of them worked for advertising agencies. One is from the film industry. Others work in news media. The interviewees are composed of content writers, designers, journalists, marketing persons, production assistants and managing head. Some of them are still working and, also there were people who were looking for new jobs. The participants have been named as alphabets to keep their identity confidential. Also, their work position has not been revealed wholly. Even the company they work for was not revealed for maintaining an ethical standard and to keep their identity safe.

Results and exploration

First, the narrative analysis was used for which each response from the respondents was discussed and findings outlined.

Participant A, who is a male and works in a senior position said in the interview that some practices are 'still valid' against a gender i.e. female. And depicted that as a 'gender stereotype'. This shows that it still exists. Also, he said that 'right from a pink-coloured toy for a baby girl to an expectation that the female in the house will do the chores' which reveals that he can feel gender stereotypes in everything. He has even mentioned that in the interview. But when asked if it is present in his office or not, he is quite cautious and interestingly said 'no'. He feels that there have been no changes in the gender stereotype even after 2018 #MeToo. He mentioned that the difference in salary still exists but not in his company. He has also pointed out that it is difficult for a female to find a place in a male-dominated area in the media industry, which indicates the situation of gender stereotype in this particular industry. It seems as the person is a male, there was a lack of proper answers related to leadership positions and scope to take risks in relation to female. So, from the point of view of the first respondent, it can be

seen that there is a presence of gender stereotypes in the media industry even in 2019. The interview was conducted through email.

Participant B works as a content writer. She has said that she has faced gender stereotype issue and has been ‘verbally told’ she will not be able to manage both the household and office work. Also, she feels that after 2018, women have been more successful in balancing work life and family life. It shows that something has changed in this factor and there has been some positive impact. Also, she has said there are positive outcomes in relation to working shifts. But she feels still there is a difference in the salary of men and women even if they are working in the same position. It reveals that there haven’t been many changes. Also, she responded that ‘a general trend of a lady being a boss’ is present in these days, which shows the positive impact. She has also stated that woman unity is there to stand against gender disparity. She feels even in ‘male-dominated areas’ women are getting chances. The stronger comment made by her is that too much of male privileges at her earlier office almost forced her to join a women-oriented organisation. All these show how much gender stereotypes are present in the media industry. It also shows that some good changes after 2018 have occurred. Her response has been quite detailed and has shown that women are not in a position to be dominated but to dominate. Her interview was also taken by email.

The following interviews were conducted over the telephone.

Participant C is a journalist. She feels that there is a lack of equality. She feels if not fully but partially there is a presence of gender stereotypes at the office where she works. She revealed it not with full confidence though which shows that either she is taking things like gender stereotype as normal or she doesn’t have much awareness about it. She has also said that there has been segregation of work as per male and female which reveals that gender stereotype is still there in the media in 2019. She also said that in the society, work is judged on the basis of gender as she said that journalism is still considered as a men’s job. She said that she has heard there is a difference in the wage rate between males and females but hasn’t experienced it yet. From her statements, it can be felt that there have been some changes after 2018 in gender stereotypes, but the rate of change has not been as high as she expected. This can be understood from the experiences and feelings she has shared in relation to opportunities in male-dominated areas, leadership positions, and women’s support. Also, she still believes that in risky situations women are still not sent and male are preferred as they are thought to be stronger. Her experience shows more can be expected in the future and changes that have happened are a very slow process. She feels that changes in perception and workplace policies can play a better role in bringing positive changes.

Participant D is a designer. She has also faced negative gender stereotypes and was told designing is for males and household work is for females. Also, from one of her

answers, it was revealed that she does not have full knowledge about gender stereotypes which shows that it can also be a factor that gender stereotypes are still there. She said that she has faced a lot of comparisons in relation to her work. She has highlighted certain scenarios where she was rejected from jobs showing certain factors like timing which reveals how much the gender stereotype stills exists and is causing harm. This reveals that gender stereotypes are still there in the media industry in 2019. But she feels that salary doesn't depend on gender stereotypes, rather on experience. She feels women have started taking the top position in the creative industry but still it is in most cases captured by males and can be considered as a male dominated position. She feels that gender stereotypes still exist because of women only as sometimes they are reluctant to work in the field jobs. Also, they don't try to support each other in fear of losing their job. Her words reveal that she is in a much better position than earlier and been given more serious responsibilities. Her voice was quite confident and revealed her viewpoint quite clearly stating that gender stereotypes are still there with some hint of changes. She is not fully sure as she has changed her organisation.

Participant E is also a designer but with more experience. She has a strong viewpoint that gender stereotypes are present in the media industry in India. From her answers, it can be understood that it is still believed that males are far better in the creative field than females. Also, the client feels much happier if there is a male designer as they have pre-conceived thinking about it. Her words also reveal that for job timings factor males are still given preference which shows the existence of gender stereotypes in the creative industry even in 2018. But she feels there have been some changes in 2019 after the 2018 #MeToo, though very small. She feels women do not get much support from each other and also believes that the salary issue is there. On the positive side, she thinks that women have started progressing as there has been an intention to break traditional thinking. So, this shows that in 2019 though there has been some change but not a satisfactory one. She has also mentioned that currently her boss is a lady and so she faces less gender stereotype issue. This implies that even if a woman is present in the top position and still gender stereotypes remain, it has become so normal.

Participant F has worked as a journalist and is also a designer. Her answers reveal that there have been some changes in 2019 but that is not enough. She has given a positive response to the factors like more opportunities in male-dominated areas, leadership positions, women's support for each other. Her words 'long way to go' state that there has not been much change in the gender stereotype issue in the Indian media industry even after the 2018 #MeToo. Although her voice was not that confident when she was responding. She has doubt in her mind. But overall, she expresses that change was not much.

Participant G works for the Indian film industry. She has revealed that it is a male-dominated industry and her words show that there has been some change in 2019

which has given her some hope. She thinks there has been no change in risk-taking opportunities. Her words revealed that not much change has happened as she said ‘eventually, gender stereotype is going away’. Also, ‘nothing for me’ says that she did not personally experience much change. She feels there have been some changes in the leadership position which she feels is good. Her way of answering suggested that she knows the situation quite well and can be relied upon in regards to her years of experience.

Participant H is also a designer. She says she did not face much problems about gender stereotypes as she has always worked under ‘women bosses’. But her voice was not confident. It seemed she did not want to reveal the truth and sounded phoney. Every time she talked about what others have experienced or what she has heard about such issues from other colleagues. It was also felt that she was very reluctant to answer directly. But she said there were no changes in the media industry in 2019. She said that she cannot feel any changes in getting jobs in male-dominated areas and work shifts. Also, she believes that the salary is higher for males than for females. So, her words revealed that there have been hardly any changes in the gender stereotype issue in the Indian media industry in 2019 after #MeToo.

Participant I worked as a marketing person in an advertising firm. She revealed that she has experienced gender related problems. She believes that there have been no changes yet in gender stereotypes in the media industry. She also, believes that for leadership positions males get more preference than females. She said that she found no change in getting jobs which are considered as jobs for males. Her statements suggest that risk-taking opportunities are still not available for women. It seems there have not been many changes in gender stereotypes in 2019 in the Indian media sector, according to her.

Participant J was a journalist and is planning to work as a media academician. She thinks nothing has changed much. She believes that she didn’t experience much of gender stereotypes in the media industry. But she has observed that the shift pattern changed in 2019 as night shifts were less for her. But she believed that there has been a change in the thinking pattern. Also, salary depends not on gender but on the relation which is quite interesting. But she thinks that the habit of getting jobs demarcated as male is still very hard to break. Her words reveal that there has been very little change as she was talking with a depressed tone and even talked about changing her career aims. Also, she said that news media has seen both men and women work equally and work shifts used to be equal for all. Although her points are somewhat contradictory to each other, but it still shows that there is not enough change in the Indian media industry in 2019 on the issue of gender stereotypes.

It can be said that “people can be disadvantaged (or advantaged) in how they are viewed not because of what they are like or what they have done, but because of the

gender group to which they belong” (Heilman, 2012, p.115). “People make inferences about women who are highly successful in traditionally male dominated arenas. They not only assume that these women possess the agentic attributes required for success, but also assume that they lack the communal attributes that are the ‘shoulds’ for women” (Heilman, 2012, p.126). So, it can be seen that still gender stereotypes exist and there has been very little change and women are adjusting to such situations at the workplace in the media industry even after the #MeToo campaign in 2018.

The thematic analysis regarding the responses given by the participants follows. The themes are leadership position, risk, shift, salary, career change, women support, gender stereotypes.

Table 1: Responses of participants on the leadership position

Theme	Leadership
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, they are taking risks and moving ahead to break glass ceilings compared to 2018”. • “Yes, I think so. Like in every other field in media also it has started to happen slowly. Women are getting success. If one has quality, then it is possible”. • “Yes, quite a lot. Women are progressing. Although in big houses it can be seen senior positions like art director are managed by a male. It is still there in everyone’s perception that the stress which a man will take a woman just cannot. Also, from the point of view of a woman, her family, children come into play when considering senior positions”. • “Yes, women are progressing. We have started working beyond office hours so have reached good positions”. • “I think this is the place where women have led. And it has changed for a better way”. • “I think for leadership position, male is given preference”.

Table 2: Responses of participants on the risk factor

Theme	Risk factor
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, they are given enough freedom but at places where there is a chance of collision or fights, still it is not preferred to send a woman to such places. I am not sure about the reason. It is said a man will be able to handle it, but a woman just can’t”. • “Yes, women are getting more responsibilities and risk-taking options”.

Table 3: Responses of participants on the shift preferences

Theme	Shift preferences
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, I have got preference being a woman not to go beyond the office timings”. • “Yes, the night shift was not much in 2019”. • “Yes. It has happened”. • “No. Nothing as such”. • “I haven’t faced it. But other people I think have faced”.

Table 4: Responses of participants on the salary

Theme	Salary
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Not really. On the basis of experience or quality of work the salary depends. Not on the gender factor”. • “I have not understood it much. But I believe it was there and still continuing. I have faced it”. • “It has always been there. It is still there. I have heard people saying that men colleagues are getting more than the female colleagues”. • “Yes, it is completely based on the relation one is having with the senior staff. It is quite the same”.

Table 5: Responses of participants on Career change

Theme	Career change
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No, I haven’t ever taken any career changing decision thinking about gender stereotype issue. But when I had decided to study journalism, relatives told me that this is not a subject for a female and might be problem etc”. • “No, I haven’t ever thought of changing my career because of gender”. • “No, I haven’t because I have not come across anything as such”. • “Yes, it has come to mind quite often. I have planned to be in teaching. Even now I am deciding to go for it. I have already started teaching”.

Table 6: Responses of participants on Women support

Theme	Women support
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I have always stood up for me. And cared for nobody. Then got some support from my co-workers. Actually, everybody is afraid of losing job and getting humiliated. I never quarrel and keep it in simple terms”. • “Yes, but not much. But got more support from female colleagues than male ones”. • “Yes, there is support. Of course. Not only from women but from men as well”. • “Yes. Female cooperation is always there”. • “Yes, nowadays there’s some support. People have tendencies to break this gender stereotype issue”.

Table 7: Responses of participants on the Gender stereotypes

Theme	Gender stereotypes
Interview quotes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I don’t feel any change in the overall circumstances”. • “There is no gender stereotype where I am working currently. I haven’t felt anything like that. But in my previous office I have experienced gender stereotype quite a lot. I am not sure if there is any change or not. But it totally depends from agency to agency. Every office has a different work culture”. • “Yes, surely changes are there. There is still a long way to go. But we have come a long way. Now the young generation is empowered. I am glad that I belong to that generation”. • “Yes, there is some change. But not much. People are quite aware. But nothing for me as a whole”.

In the leadership position, it can be seen that most of the responses were that women are progressing towards it in the media sector but in a very slow manner after 2018 which is not healthy and steady. It is still believed “they are still thought to require an achievement-oriented aggressiveness and emotional toughness that is contrary to the stereotyped view of what women are like. As a result, women are thought to be deficient in the qualities required for success at upper-level positions” (Heilman, 2012, p.116). People generally have the perception that women do not have a strong character for which they cannot be in the leadership role. So, it can be seen that there is less progress in that area of hierarchy which the respondents have mentioned in the interviews. Also, there are reasons for not much progress by a woman in the top positions like, “women

are penalized for engaging in leadership behaviours that are effective for men” (p.124). So, still, not much change has come in the thought process to make women leaders in the media industry.

In the area of risk-taking scope for women, most of the participants have said that it is still not enough for a female compared to a male. Males are still given more chances to take risks and go in to risky situations. Analysing the responses, it has emerged that still, ‘in contrast, women often are seen as emotionally unstable, weak, and timid’ whereas ‘men are judged to be emotionally stable, strong, assertive’ (DeArmond et al., 2006, p. 2186). Also, the respondents are of the opinion that ‘men were perceived as being better equipped to handle stressful situations and to adapt physically than were females’ (p. 2204). It was felt from their words that still women cannot be assigned to risky tasks and are considered weaker in risk-taking abilities than a man. The participants believed that the change has not been that sufficient in this segment and was considered less than the change in leadership roles. It was also understood from their words that women are also responsible for this because they also sometimes do not want to take chances or be involved in too many risky and stressful situations.

While talking about the work shifts, most of them said there were some changes which suggest that women are still believed to be in managing household more than office work. So, they were assigned fewer night shifts or had to spend less time beyond office hours at their workplace than their male colleagues. Even they said they need to spend more time with family than males which depicts that this difference of change in shifts in comparison to males might be the reason why gender stereotypes still exist in the media industry. In general women are still required to do more household work than men. It can be concluded that ‘this appears most clearly in explicit expressions that suggest women’s personal lives and roles as wives and mothers make them less invested and less reliable workers’ (Zeher, 2011, p.771). So, it indicates that gender stereotypes are still existent in the media industry in India even after 2018.

When asked if there is any difference in wage or salary rate between male and female, most of the participants have said that it exists everywhere. It can be felt that “one of the ways that gender divisions interact with technological change is through the price of labour, in that women’s wage labour generally costs considerably less than men’s” (Wajcman, 1991, p.48). It can be understood even for doing the same amount of work and having the same type of skills and experience; women are paid less in the media industry than men because they are still considered to be less capable in skilled or unskilled work than men. Even after the 2018 #MeToo campaign, it didn’t change at all for women. Women are undervalued in the media industry as well, so the payment is quite low if compared with men’s salary.

There was a strong response when asked if they have ever thought of changing their

career because of the presence of gender stereotypes. Most of them answered that they never thought of it but those who responded negatively seemed too depressed with the gender stereotype factor in the media industry. The reason can be ‘lack of confidence in one’s own competence can have very corrosive effects’ (Heilman, 2012, p.120). Also, “research has verified that women approach male gender-typed tasks with less confidence and more trepidation than do men and that without being given reason to think otherwise, their sense of competence in such tasks is low” (Heilman, 2012, p.120). It states that gender stereotypes still exist for which career-changing decisions are made.

When the interviewees were asked if they got enough support from women it was a mixed response. They said when such gender stereotype issues are faced by them then there is a chance of getting women support. Everyone has the fear of getting thrown out of the job. The reason most of them who did not support can be ‘sometimes concerned about doing the right thing is not really an expression of personal values but rather a concern about doing what is socially desirable and making a good impression’ (Heilman, 2012, p.122). So, just to remain socially acceptable women sometimes do not stand by each other which is strange but quite true. This is still valid in 2019 as per the words of the participants which show how much gender stereotypes are existent in the Indian media industry even after 2018 #MeToo.

Finally, when asked if they have experienced or are experiencing gender stereotypes in 2019 or not, most of them have responded ‘yes’. Even the male participant accepted that gender stereotypes are present in the media industry like any other profession. Few believed that there have been some changes related to gender stereotypes but that is not enough and will take a long time to change things. From their words, it came out how women are still considered in the media industry which is, ‘discrimination narratives paint a picture of women workers as viewed first as women, second as workers’ (Zehner, 2011, p.771). It shows that women are still not considered as workers in the first place, which is an existing gender stereotype scenario in the Indian media industry even in 2019. It is felt from the participants’ words that, women are understood as better in ‘adapting interpersonally and culturally’ than men (DeArmond et al., 2006, p. 2204-2205). It is a typical example of the existence of gender stereotypes in the work field. In a typical gender stereotype scenario, ‘lack of fit should only create negative performance expectations and subsequent negative evaluative outcomes for women when the job is deemed to be male’ (Heilman, 2012, p.117). It is very harmful to the work culture. In the media industry, it is also seen as a part of gender stereotypes that, ‘negative reactions have consistently been documented when women violate gender norms by engaging in stereotype-inconsistent behaviours’ (p.123).

So, overall all of these create an impression that gender stereotypes still exist in the media industry in India 2019 even after the 2018 #MeToo campaign.

Conclusion

This study has been conducted keeping in mind the #MeToo campaign in India in 2018 and the gender stereotype factor at the workplace. So, the prime question was to see if there has been any real change at the workplace in the media sector concerning the 'gender stereotype factor' in 2019 i.e. after #MeToo movement in 2018.

This study has indicated many aspects of gender stereotype at the workplace in the media industry in India. From the interviewees, it was understood that "this relates closely to the third area of occupational segregation: that 'creative' jobs tend to be taken by men" (Hesmondhalgh, 2015, p.27). This says still 'creative' work is considered to be men's work which is an example of typical gender stereotype scenario in the Indian media industry. The study suggests that "conceptions of men and women not only are different, but they tend to be oppositional, with women seen as lacking what is thought to be most prevalent in men, and men seen as lacking what is most prevalent in women" (Heilman, 2012, p.115). Through the interviews, it was revealed that there is a gap between the understanding of males and females. Also, from the words of the respondents it was understood, "the expectation that women are ill-equipped to handle male gender-typed tasks and positions is likely to affect whether they are selected for such jobs and, if they are, the responsibilities they are given and the career track on which they are placed" (p.117). And this 'selective attention' affects judgements of 'women's performance' in a negative way and 'their opportunities for advancement and attainment of organizational rewards thwarted' (p.117).

It was understood from the responses given by the interviewees, "stereotype-based expectations are likely to influence this inferential process, leading to inferences that conform to the original expectation. Research has supported this idea, demonstrating that when a woman works together with a man on a joint task that is a male gender-type, she becomes the victim of 'attributional rationalization' and is given less credit for a successful joint outcome and viewed as having a smaller contribution to it" (Heilman, 2012, p.120). This is the main scenario in the Indian media industry. From the responses of the interviewees, it was understood that "if women are to succeed in upper-level work settings they have to violate gender stereotypic prescriptions" but that always has 'negative consequences' (p.123). It shows how gender stereotypes are ruling in the media industry as well. In the media industry, this belief also exists which the respondents have agreed with which is "the communication behaviours that are successful for men are disadvantageous for women" (p.124).

Through the words of the respondents it emerged that, "much as there is a gender prescription for women to be kind and considerate, there is a gender prescription for them to be helpful and cooperative. This suggests that women, who choose not to be collaborative, but rather to be individualistic or competitive in their orientation, will not

be regarded favourably” (Heilman, 2012, p.125).

It was also understood that “women are still not given equal consideration based on the skills and abilities because of the expectations that they are ill-equipped to do traditionally man’s work. They are still punished when they step out of line with the ‘should’ and ‘should not’ prescribed for their gender, forcing them to act in ways that do not advance their careers and causing them to be disliked and repudiated when they achieve success in an area deemed to be gender inappropriate” (p.130).

While talking about the hierarchical position in the media industry something similar to this was depicted, “stereotypes and preconceptions of women’s roles and abilities are top barriers for female managers’ promotion in Europe across regions and countries” (Mihail, 2006, p.374). Also, “the job of a manager is seen as ‘male’ thus requiring an achievement-oriented aggressiveness and an emotional toughness, which are typically masculine traits. On the other hand, the stereotype continues, women just do not have the personality traits commonly assumed to be characteristics of managers” (p.375).

So it can be seen how things like gender stereotype are still there in the Indian media industry in 2019 and there is very little evidence of change. It is also seen that “women may well have considerable knowledge about the machine that they work on, but the key to power is flexible, transferable skills and these are still the property of men” (Wajcman, 1991, p.39). So, still, women are not taken seriously in skilled jobs. Even in the media industry this happens, “skilled status has thus been traditionally identified with masculinity and like work that women don’t do, while women’s skills have been defined as non-technical and undervalued” (p.38). So, it can be understood that “men predominate among professionals, such as managerial staff, computer programmers and systems analysts, while women are the great majority of clerical workers” and are restrained from creative works(Wajcman, 1991). This same thing prevails in the Indian media industry in 2019.

There are obviously some limitations like sample size could have been bigger and more male opinions could have been considered. Even, the third gender was not taken into account. Also, participants from the Public Relations sector could have been interviewed. Because of time and distance interviews was taken on the telephone and by email, face to face interview may have given a clearer picture. Also, due to ethical issues, the research study had to be done in a way not dealing with other things which could be a factor for gender stereotype in the media industry. Also, few of the participants were not working and were looking for a new job which might have led to a biased and unclear vision of gender stereotypes in the Indian media industry. But this research study might have helped to understand the existence of gender stereotype in the Indian creative media industry and could lead to doing more studies on it as there have been hardly any studies like this after #MeToo. This might bring more things in to the limelight and give better

solutions. Organisations could be made to understand that gender stereotypes should be removed from the media industry through proper work policies. In future studies on this topic, one can work with bigger data sets and use mixed-methods approach and take interviews, do surveys and understand the gender stereotype scenario by quantitative research methods. Also, separate studies can be done for each of the sectors in the media industry like journalism, advertising, film etc. Also, the future researchers can reach media organisations' and ask for their work policies which might help in getting unbiased results. Also, the research can be done considering different age groups, regions. The future research can investigate more broadly taking into consideration all which have been mentioned and depict more detailed findings.

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Effectiveness and Future of Community Radio Stations in India

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Background

The foundation of Community Radio is built on the principles of access, participation and the ability to represent one's voice. We have numerous examples from all across India that underscore the transformative role that the Community Radio Stations (CRSs) play in the matters of inclusion, diversity and promoting the rights and participation of the marginalized community.

The Community Radio Policy Guidelines 2006 states that:

“The programmes should be of immediate relevance to the community. The emphasis should be on developmental, agricultural, health, educational, environmental, social welfare, community development and cultural programmes. The programming should reflect the special interests and needs of the local community. At least 50% of content shall be generated with the participation of the local community, for which the station has been set up. Programmes should preferably be in the local language and dialect(s).”

In December 2002, Government of India approved a policy for granting licenses for setting up of CRSs at well-established educational institutions, including Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institute of Management (IIMs). The guideline was expanded in 2006 to broad base the policy by bringing 'non-profit' organizations, like civil society and voluntary organizations, etc. under its ambit in order to allow greater participation by the civil society on issues relating to development and social change. In India, the CRS licenses are granted to only the not-for-profit organizations which are rooted in the local community. This gives the CRSs a distinct advantage to focus on local developmental issues of health, nutrition, education, etc. Further, as the broadcast is done in the local languages, people are able to relate to it instantly. As such the CRSs have the potential to strengthen people's participation in developmental programmes in the country.

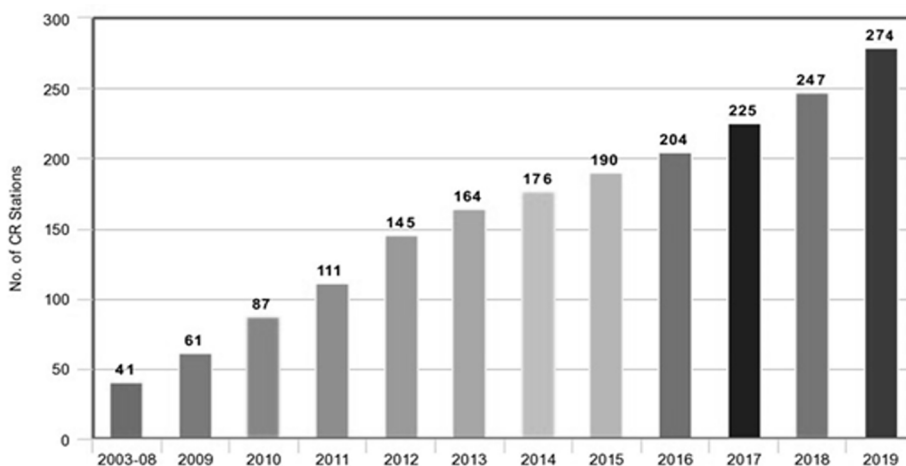
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In the year 2019, with nearly 274 Community Radio Stations across India, broadcasting in various languages including local dialects, gives marginalized communities an opportunity to express their views even when it is not so in the mainstream media.

A study conducted by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the year 2018, titled ‘Listenership, Reach and Effectiveness of Community Radio Stations in India,’ shows that CRSs in India have emerged as a means of enabling rural people and marginalized sections of the society to have greater access to information including opportunities to participate. Given the vast impact of CRSs on improvement in overall well-being of an individual as well as society, there is vast potential of CRSs in India which needs to be nurtured and supported. Further, CRSs should be used as a prime means of communication where other modes fail. The study also reveals that overall satisfaction levels with CRS programs are high – with listeners rating CRS being highly effective on overall development of the community.

Therefore, it’s clear that CRS can play a vital role in the development and democratization of a society by enabling communities to articulate their experiences and to critically examine the issues, processes and policies affecting their lives. This can be done by educating and mobilizing communities around development initiatives and strategies that will result in an enhanced life for the listeners. It has been used by the farmers to negotiate better prices at local markets, for villages to become beneficiaries of various Government schemes/programmes and to access knowledge on relevant issues and service initiatives. Gradually, the changes brought by CRSs are being recognized across the board.

Figure 1 Year wise growth of Community Radio Stations in India



Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, list of operational Community Radio Stations as on 31.10.2019

Financial obstacles being faced by CRSs

Stations of all categories have raised the issue of financial sustainability of CRSs in various events organized by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It is an issue that applies to all categories of CRSs, namely, NGOs, Educational Institutions and Krishi Vikas Kendras (KVKs). Even though the parent body of the CRS may be resource rich, a large number of NGO-run CRSs are facing problems regarding purchase of equipment and meeting their daily expenses, while educational institution run stations are largely facing problems to meet daily expenses. Various stations have also expressed their concern that their parent bodies are applying pressure on them to make this a profit-making venture.

CRSs are also facing challenges in the purchase of equipment. However, with the introduction of the scheme, 'Supporting Community Radio Movement in India' during the 12th Five Year Plan, there is support of Rs. 7.5 lakh for purchase and upgradation of equipment. However, as a sector at large, we also need to examine the possibility of commercial concessions for technologies used by CRSs, so that the costs of setting up and maintaining CR stations become considerably lower.

To improve sustainability, guidelines were amended in August 2018 to enable CRSs to get more advertisements. Thus, timing of the advertisements was increased from 5 to 7 minutes per hour of broadcast. However, it has been learnt that stations have not been able to generate advertisements even for 5 minutes except during the time of festivals, when advertisements for 5-7 minutes are generated.

As the license of CR stations are being given to non-profit making organizations, it does not mean that this initiative cannot be operated along business lines to generate commercial revenues (for instance, from advertisement.). It rather means that any surplus income generated has to be ploughed back into the project into the development of the station. This has been clearly defined in the Grant of Permission Agreement (GoPA), signed between Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the permission holder. In the interests of building a strong institution, CRS must seek guidance from their peers as well as from other organizations in areas on which they could build their skills and understanding. CRS stations should also find out a way to generate multiple sources of funding to avoid being over dependent on one source of funding.

Future of Community Radio Stations

The numbers of CR stations in India are far less given its vast geographical spread. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has been concerned to keep the CR movement in India at its fastest pace. To pursue this, amendments were made in the CR Policy guidelines in January 2017 and August 2018. This has widened the scope

and ownership of the sector. The Amendments of January 2017 allowed stations to re-locate their transmitter at the time of natural disaster, permitted them to air All India Radio news and broadcast certain non-news information related to weather, employment opportunities, public announcements, etc.

The amendments of August 2018 permitted more than one license to Government Institutions while educational institutions were allowed to establish CRS outside their campuses. These changes were highly appreciated by the sector at large. Amendments were also made in the CRS scheme 'Supporting Community Radio Movement in India' in the grants release process for purchase of equipment.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has been conducting awareness and capacity building workshops to raise awareness about Community Radio Policy Guidelines across India. So far 88 workshops have been conducted and 8 were planned in the financial year of 2019 targeting CR Dark Areas and CR Dark Aspirational Areas. Besides this, Ministry also conducts a Regional and National Sammelan of operational CRSs every year along with presenting National Community Radio Awards to CRSs in various categories. However, it is also the responsibility of the communication practitioners and experts to create awareness about the potential and effectiveness of CRs, especially among the rural community, NGOs and CSOs.

Figure 2: State/UT wise details of operational community radio station in India

Sr. No.	Name of state	Operational CRs	Sr. No.	Name of state	Operational CRs
1	Andhra Pradesh	6	16	Manipur	2
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1	17	Meghalaya	0
3	Assam	4	18	Mizoram	0
4	Bihar	8	19	Nagaland	0
5	Chhattisgarh	6	20	Orissa	13
6	Goa	0	21	Punjab	6
7	Gujarat	9	22	Rajasthan	12
8	Haryana	13	23	Sikkim	1
9	Himachal Pradesh	4	24	Tamil Nadu	34
10	Jammu and Kashmir	1	25	Telangana	11
11	Jharkhand	2	26	Tripura	1
12	Karnataka	19	27	Uttarakhand	10
13	Kerala	12	28	Uttar Pradesh	34
14	Madhya Pradesh	22	29	West Bengal	6
15	Maharashtra	23			
Sr. No.	Union Territories	Operational CRs	5 states with highest Nos. of CRs		
30	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	0	1	Tamil Nadu	34
31	Chandigarh	4	2	Uttar Pradesh	34
32	Delhi	6	3	Maharashtra	23
33	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	0	4	Madhya Pradesh	22
34	Daman and Diu	0	5	Karnataka	19
35	Lakshadweep	0			
36	Pondicherry	4			
	Grand Total	274		Nos. of states/UTs with no CRs	8

Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, list of operational Community Radio Stations as on 31.10.2019

The best practice methods and cases in respect of CRS also need to be highlighted as examples so that various organizations, Ministries/ Departments can come forward and learn from it. Though there are some organizations which are actively working on various issues in different areas, the eagerness for CRS to take it forward in a collective manner is still not there. Advocacy workshops can be organized by these organizations. This is one of the major works at this moment, which will increase the number of able CRSs in the country.

Innovative ideas to be adopted in the sector

It is also important to keep on exploring ways to strengthen the sector. In the process, Peer Review as an innovative idea was mooted by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting by involving stakeholders, experts, community radio associations, and practitioners that was put into action in the year 2014. The purpose of Peer Review was to help CRS to learn from each other and build mechanisms to provide better services to the communities they seek to serve by:

- Appreciating each other's strengths and to collate them for a repository.
- Identifying challenges and engagement in collective problem solving.
- Empowering community radio stations by building their capacities across a host of issues.
- Facilitating the development of a Peer-to-Peer network for engaging in dialogues to move forward towards achieving a common goal.

Around 70 CR stations took part in the peer-review process. Such initiatives should be done on a continuous basis. Few stations have shared that they have developed community listening clubs, which have increasingly gained popularity. The members of the clubs, mostly women, assemble at a local centre and listen to the radio programme. Thereafter, the members debate on the broadcast. They also raise any other issues of concern to them, which are recorded in the same manner. It is the responsibility of the sector to keep on exploring such ideas and exercising it.

Conclusion

Access to information for vulnerable groups in rural areas in a country like ours is critical. If poor are on the wrong side of the digital divide, there is every possibility that they would be further marginalized. It is, therefore, essential that we bring in place instruments for empowering community voices. Hence, the relevance of Community Radio which becomes the most important medium of communication which is deeply associated with daily lives of people in India.

Also, the modern concept of development emphasizes not only economic progress but also gives equal importance to human and social development. It has also been accepted that there cannot be any sustainable development unless people can become the agents of their own development process and do not remain just a beneficiary. They are required to participate in every stage of the development and decision-making process.

Community Radio can come forward to give development a human face. It can also be a platform for bringing accountability to the development process, ultimately making the system more transparent and ensuring good governance.

To conclude, radio programmes are both cheap to produce and to receive. Among all the mass communication media it is the cheapest and most universal as well as the most flexible and immediate. Therefore, the existence of Community Radio Stations in coming years will remain to be as relevant as it is today.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Understanding Media Cultures: Social Theory and Mass Communication [2nd Edition]

Authors: Nick Stevenson

Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd

Year: 2002; Price: \$69; Pages: 255

The second edition of the book *Understanding Media Culture* is an adequate work by Nick Stevenson which contains a proper outline of social theories in relation to mass communication. With new information and the fairly well developed phenomenon of mass communication discipline, this edition is widely referred to, both by media scholars and teachers. The scope of the new edition is to cover the recent media theories and research including the development of new media and its cultural aspect.

The emergence of mass communication as an important and separate discipline, from Sociology and Psychology, has provided the media scholars with a number of standpoints to explore. Since the publication of the first edition of this book in 1995, there has been a tremendous amount of innovative reasoning with respect to the role of cultural theories in media studies. The author has tried to include a valuable analysis of these cultural theories in the text. He tried to explore the debate about the transit of the new modern society or post-industrial society into the information age by scrutinizing the advancement in Information and Communication Technologies.

A crisp overview of the sociology of the media is available in this text with the citation of important researchers and scholars. This book also traces how the development in sociology and social theories has helped the scholars to study the impact of new media on culture. It also demonstrated how a strong grounding in social theory remains the key concept in media studies. Stevenson addresses the diversity of perspectives and significant issues in the discipline of mass communication. A clear and insightful explanation about the repetitive structures of daily news presentation, reconstructing Marxism or deconstructing postmodernism or even discussing the gratification and pleasures of soap opera is also available in the book.

The author critically examines the key social theories of media and communication that highlights the work of individual theorists including Williams, Fiske, Habermas, Hall, McLuhan, Jameson, and Baudrillard. All the important traditions of media analysis

from cultural studies to feminism and audience research are substantially mentioned in the text. Besides this, it also includes a discussion of recent perspectives developed by Castells, Virilio, Haraway and Schiller. Stevenson discusses the media culture in his work by addressing three major standpoints mentioned below:

Significance of Media Cultures Today

A strong and informed debate about the important aspects of social theory, that have taken the media seriously, is in the root of *Understanding Media Cultures*. This text is also concerned with the link between mass communication and other social practices accommodated within the public and the private. It is also of the opinion that media studies are attached to the field of historical and spatial practice as well. This book is also concerned with the specificity of media practices. It demonstrates how social theory became interested in understanding the impact of the mass media on society because it became impossible to ignore it.

Social Theory and Mass Communication

The discipline of media studies is now extensively correlated with social theory. Each and every dimension of this co-relation is explored and analyzed by researchers in order to upturn every possible stone that can contribute to the knowledge sphere of this subject. Most of the theorists discussed within this text build up a picture of the media out of a greater analysis of post-industrial cultural processes. The views of several theories discussed in the text are also integrated with wider cultural concerns.

This book has a Eurocentric bias as it concentrates upon contributors from Britain, France, Germany and Spain although it does have theories from American and Canadian authors as well. It comprises of selected engagement with particular intellectual fields of theoretical practice and criticism including but not limited to hermeneutics, post-structuralism, critical theory, Marxism etc. The author has achieved the aim of furnishing a critical space that permits various traditions to be compared with a clear account of their interconnections.

Paradigms of Mass Communication Research

An advanced overview of both British and German research that has taken mass communications to be an important source of social power is presented at a length in this work. Viewpoints such as the political economy of mass communication along with the related concerns about ideology and the public sphere are mainly focused. Then the author progresses from a critical approach to mass communication towards the audience's relationship with media cultures. It also highlights the research concerned with the processes of unconscious identification, power relations within the home and the semiotic production of meaning.

Hybridity and the restructuring of time and space are briefly mentioned in the book. Stevenson's effort to explain emerging cultural practices around postmodernism terrain is noticeable. The engaging feature of the book is that it has an elaborated segment on information society and the development of new media of communication in the digital age. The author has tried to present a complex view of the field that is constantly evolving. He has also listed the need to reconnect cultural to economic and political practices in such a way that their specificity is deeply and adequately respected in all dimensions.

Stevenson has tried to provide a few of the theoretical tools that are needed to analyze the changes taking place in media practice and to point to ways in which it could be reconnected with more democratic understandings. Readers can effortlessly outline wider structural changes that have several impacts on media cultures and acquire a broad critical knowledge of the subject area. One of the major aims of this book is to present an intelligibly written narrative of a complex field of theoretical practice.

As a whole, this book is a significant and notable work in compiling the widely accepted and critically acclaimed cultural media theories. Starting from the mass culture theory to the modern cultural paradigms related to the information age and networked society it comprises a wide spectrum of critical and cultural theories. Any reader who wants to explore the media discipline from the viewpoint of the cultural theorists should definitely go for this fine work.

By Sukhpreet Kaur
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Telly-Guillotined: How Television Changed India

Author: Amrita Shah

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With her background as a journalist spanning the crucial decades when India's media landscape went through a total transformation, and her ability to stand outside of events to give them meaning in the socio-cultural context, Amrita Shah is uniquely positioned to give us the big picture on Indian television. In this book, she sets out to trace the journey of television in India till now and looks at the connections between politics, economics, society and media. The book is a must-have for all students of mass communication, though the coverage of the recent years needed a more in-depth treatment. Admittedly, television as a broadcaster, in some respects, has lost its primacy lately, being dominated by digital media, but the kind of changes happening in the 21st century to our media probably needs a book of its own.

What she discovers of the early years of television in India (till satellite television came to the country in the 90s), is what we all know by now – that the story of expansion of television was fuelled by the desire for political propaganda (and diplomatic gain) of the ruling government. Her unique skill lies in the fact that she makes you experience the unfolding of events as a bystander to the happenings. For instance, when she talks of the first transmission in 1972 in Mumbai, where she evokes memories of the strong pull of the new medium which emboldened kids enough in her residential area to overcome the dread of their next-door “smuggler”, just to have a glimpse of television. Or the coming of colour television in 1982, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination and the subsequent telecast of the reluctant political heir, Rajiv Gandhi, lighting her pyre – the imagery conjured is redolent of that era when the young nation was a centralised entity, trying to stand on its own feet, saving, scrimping for a future less burdened, but idealistic and hopeful. Mapping the change in content from the dull and “preachy” programming on Doordarshan during this era, Shah tells the story of Hum Log, Buniyaad, Karamchand, Ye Jo Hai Zindagi etc and the serials that followed, as an example of the shift from education-heavy programming to an entertainment-oriented approach by the public broadcaster in the 1980s, the only broadcaster in the country then. The control over broadcasting by the government was so complete that even after Rajiv Gandhi came to power in 1985, he was quoted as saying that “India is not ready for it (media autonomy)”

Meanwhile, she records that in response to the state's "stranglehold" on television, the cable industry sprang up in the late 1980s. Video productions became an alternative to reaching out to the masses for all that did not find place in Doordarshan. Whether it was porn, or political campaigning by opposition leaders, or showcasing of a documentary rejected by the public broadcaster, or footage exposing corruption etc, video productions, projected through cable or video vans, became a source for "entertainment, leisure alternatives and information."

Then came satellite television in the early 90s which totally changed the broadcast landscape. Shah herself had visited Hong Kong around that time and saw the studios of Star TV, a pioneer in beaming its programming to India. She says she found the general population, including Non-Resident Indians based in Hong Kong, mostly overlooking India as being of importance to the colony; instead, their focus was on China and other east Asian countries. But the kind of response Star TV elicited in India woke them up to the potential of this country.

If the 1980s for television in India was about infrastructure expansion, or hardware in other words, in the 1990s the focus shifted to the content, or software. As the economy opened up following the liberalisation of the early 1990s, public service goals and consumer demand came into conflict. The broadcaster was in the hands of the government but television owners came mostly from the more privileged class and the demand was for entertainment. Doordarshan found itself determinedly following entertainment and profit rather than its avowed public service goals, even though Prasar Bharati was created in 1997, giving autonomy to All India Radio and Doordarshan. From here on, the market became the predominant determiner of content on television.

The subservience to the market meant the rise of mediocrity and "exaggerated emphasis on entertainment" which further devalued the work of a journalist. The blurring of boundaries between media, politics and industry was brought to the fore in the Nira Radia tapes incident where a public relations practitioner was heard blithely peddling influence over the media. When media houses turned into business entities, "journalism itself was in peril."

However, Shah believes it was the response to the televisation of serials like Ramayan and Mahabharat which ushered in a different kind of impact on India. On the trail of the 78-week long telecast of Ramayan came BJP President L K Advani's rath yatra, seeking support from the general public for building a Ram temple in Ayodhya. The rath or chariot was merely a converted vehicle adorned with Hindu symbols and the party's lotus symbol used to ferry Advani from place to place across the country for the campaign, but the momentum behind the journey was created in some measure by using video productions to present the point of view of the Hindutva or Hindu funda-

mentalist brigade. Among these were Bhaye Prakat Kripala, Pran Jaye Par Vachan Na Jaye, and others, which were instrumental in spreading the narrative of the Hindutva forces. Shah opines that the entire episode leading to the destruction of the Babri masjid (said to be standing on the Hindu god Rama's birthplace where a temple is said to have existed previously) in early Dec 1992 and the riots following brought home that "in a country unused to free and immediate access to information, the satellite television channels, in the highly volatile situation, made news as much as they reported it." The riots in Mumbai a month after the demolition of the Babri masjid seemed to not have an explanation though. Shah believes that "it became increasingly clear that the riots had little to do with religion." It was to mostly "effect an economic takeover" with the prize – space.

Another way the influence of media could be seen around the mid-90s was the "increasingly crucial role of money in matters of love and matrimony." Valentine's Day celebrations became costly affairs and matrimonial bureaus sprang up everywhere. A more vocal feminine gender was a corollary of the developments. The author also believes that television had had an "alienating and desensitising" effect on the youth who turned their focus on money and "in a world without consequences, pragmatism was the new god" then. Aspirations zoomed and led to more frustrations for the average Indian who was also angry watching scams being exposed daily under the then ruling Congress.

This anger and frustration led to spontaneous public rallies like those in 2006 & 2008. Then in 2011 came Anna Hazare's public fast which sparked off a nation-wide movement against corruption. The movement fed the media's insatiable appetite for stories and in turn was mobilised by the media, including digital media. Western television practices such as day-long coverages of events had also been adopted by Indian media, giving such events wall to wall coverage and pushing up ratings for media houses too.

Though television was used as a tool for propaganda for leaders of the ruling governments before, the coming of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister at the head of a Bhartiya Janata Party, BJP government in 2014 ushered in even finer detailing of the exercise. With even a "politico-religious appeal" created around his persona, Narendra Modi "positioned himself not just as a leader, but also as an object of mass consumption", says Shah.

Meanwhile, the media space in India was going through another churning in the period 2012-16 which resulted in media houses being taken over by industrial houses that had their allegiances well known. News television came to be seen as "partisan" and Shah says, this development took India right back to the "time of state-run and monopolised television" despite the number of channels beaming into India.

In the years following 2011 which brought the “Arab Spring”, “Occupy Wall Street” and other such movements in the west triggered by social media, India too witnessed such protests. But the internet brought with it the problem of fake news and loss of credibility of the media which further eroded faith in the media. In Shah’s words: “Presumably, a public which had once demanded television autonomy and vociferously condemned press censorship during the Emergency was resigned to instances of extreme irresponsibility on the part of the media....Declining public support in turn also increased the vulnerability of the media in India, or at least those sections of it that still believed in the media’s role as a guardian of citizens’ rights.”

Shah believes that combined with the seeming lack of freedom for journalists and the “process of trivialisation and dumbing down...in the pursuit of profit” over three decades, “protecting the media’s purpose to advance the human urge for truth and justice in the new ethos is a challenge for our times.”

By Shalini Narayanan
Media Trainer

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