

THE IMPACT OF NEWS MEDIA ON SOCIETY- A STUDY

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Abstract

The News Media is the reflection of the society. News media whether print, electronic or web is the main source of medium, which helps in making people informed about current happenings. It has become the voice of our society. The research study, aims at analyzing the impact of the news media on society and its way of reporting the current happenings and its coverage. The main objective of this research work is to study the role of the news media and its ability to change the perceptions of the society. This article will help in studying the extent of fairness in reporting by the news media and the effect of negative coverage. A quantitative method of study was used to carry out the research. A survey of 100 people was conducted with the help of a questionnaire. It was evident from the survey that more than 75% of the respondents felt that the present news media is biased in its reporting and has failed to respect the emotions of the people. The research work focuses on the behaviour of the news media and tries to analyze its impact on society.

Keywords: News Media, unbiased reporting, alter perceptions, impact on society

Introduction

The news media plays an important role in the society. It makes people aware of the social, political and economic activities around the world. As Edmund Burke rightly coined, the news media is considered as the fourth pillar of a country. It has emerged as one of the main sources of knowledge about the happenings around the world. The news media connects different people from different geographical locations through various sources like newspapers, broadcast news and the internet.

According to Mcquail (2005), the News Media has the power to influence the perception of the people. The Media has strong and deep-rooted impact on the lives of the people as it has the power and ability to effect and build opinion and refine their thoughts and actions. "The media acts as a bridge between the people and the government and also acts as a powerful tool to make and break the opinion of the people. It has the capacity to change the perceptions or evoke the emotions of the society." (Jefferson, T. Role of Media in Indian Democracy).

Fair reporting is one of the fundamental principles of news media. Journalists must avoid inflating stories for sensation and must benefit the society through its transparent reporting and democratic functioning. Therefore it is the duty of the news media to report facts after critical evaluation and avoid biased reporting.

This Article focuses on the relationship between the news media and its impact on the people. A survey of 100 people was conducted with the help of a questionnaire. In this article a statistical data revealing the opinion of the people on the behaviour of the news media has been presented.

Literature Review

As Jefferson states that the media is a tremendous source of information for individuals as well as society. Media is the sword arm of democracy, the media has an educating role, which gives the institution of the press, a very high influence and the power. The press can be most important educative factor. "The media contribute to political agendas as well as to people's perceptions and interests in everyday life" (MacKuen & Coombs, 1981).

"At the current moment, Media is considered as the fourth pillar (Edmund Burke) of a state throughout the world. Media plays a vital role in providing information, education and entertainment to the masses" (Nazir, 2012). Thus the importance of the role of news media in this society is evident.

VanDijk (1996) claims that the Media has the power to change the perceptions of the people in the way they wished to. Media power is generally symbolic and persuasive, in the sense that the media primarily have the potential to control to some extent the minds of readers or viewers, but not directly their actions.

News Media and its Biased Nature:

However there are many cases where the news media remains biased and fail to follow its ethics. From the survey conducted it was found that more than 75% of the respondents felt that the present news media is biased and they wished to have an unbiased coverage of events. In addition to this, the behaviour of the news media has been mentioned by various people in different circumstances.

Altheide (1997) claims that news as a form of knowledge is transformed through news as entertainment into news as advertising. With the help of his study of media violence he establishes that violent content can lead viewers to perceive life as dangerous and fearful.

In addition to that, the news media tries to concentrate on sensational news rather than fair reporting of facts. With the help of a survey conducted, we find that 90% of people feel that the present news media distorts the facts and create sensation.

“Media hypes are triggered by unusual or shocking events, which are framed in such a way that the media shift into a higher gear, hunting for ‘newer’ news on the topic. Once a topic gains a certain level of attention in the media, it attracts more attention, and because it attracts more attention, it becomes more newsworthy (Vasterman, P., Yzermans, J.C., Dirkzwager, J.E. 2005). As Haskins, J.B., Miller, M.M., & Quarels, J. (1984) puts it the news channels profit more by serving sensational news practicing unethical behaviour. According to his study, 60% of news content could be considered as bad news in contrast to only 22% as good news in light of his analysis over a period of three months in United States.

Relationship with political personalities:

Eberl, J.M., Boomgaarden, G.H., Wagner, M. (2015) argue that bias in political news coverage may have a profound influence on voter opinions and preferences. “The visibility of political actors in media coverage will increase their accessibility to audiences, influencing subsequent political judgments especially because voters tend to infer a party’s political importance from its media salience” (Kiousis, S., & McCombs, M. (2004)). This evidences relationship between the Political figures and the news media.

Effect of Negative Coverage:

Moreover the Negative Coverage by news media creates a huge impact on the minds of the people which has been proved by many researches. As Ayub establishes through her survey the transmission of live events and deteriorating images on news channels put lasting effects on most of the people. They become psychologically and socially disturbed as they perceive these programs. It is also very important to note that the negative coverage by the news media changes people’s way of thinking.

Ethics of News Media:

Journalism ethics is defined as a species of applied ethics that examines what journalists and news organizations should do, given their role in society. The main problem areas include editorial independence, verification, anonymous sources, the use of graphic or altered images, and norms for new forms of media.” (Ward, 2008).

As Ward (2008) states, truth and objectivity are the twin pillars of news media. It is important for them to follow its ethics. The most important complaint against the news media is its objectivity. However he claims that objectivity, even if possible, is undesirable because it forces writers to use restricted formats. A democracy is better served by a non-objective press where views compete in a marketplace of ideas.

According to Berger (2000), journalism ethics too often falls back on simplistic appeals to general concepts such as truth-seeking, freedom, serving the public and democracy. Thus we find the role of news media in this society and the importance of the ethics to be followed by them.

Methodology

The news media and the society are closely related. Media can create a strong impact on the society and has the ability to change its perceptions. The aim of this article is to find how news media impacts the society and to find the extent of its fair reporting.

Method of Research: A Quantitative method was used for the study. This methodology is used in order to ensure that the survey is more reliable and objective. The different ways in which the quantitative method could be approached are interviews, questionnaires and observations. In this article a survey was taken with the help of a questionnaire as it helps to collect the opinion of people of different age groups from various walks of life easily and efficiently.

Assessment Tool: A self- prepared questionnaire consisting of 11 questions was used to conduct the survey. The questions for the survey have been framed in such a way to elicit from the participants about their perception of news media and their impact on the society and to find a result for the hypothesis of this article.

Procedure: The survey form was created through Google Forms Application. The questionnaire was distributed as a link through Whatsapp and there were 100 responses. The questionnaire was distributed to people of different age groups so that the differences in opinion about the news media among different age group can be identified. The people who responded to the questionnaire were between the age group 16-75.

Statistical Analysis: Quantitative approach promotes statistical analysis which makes the intended readers easy to interpret the findings. After collecting the data, a statistical analysis was conducted to analyze the data. Percentages were calculated using simple pie charts and graphs with the help of Spreadsheets.

Analysis and Discussions

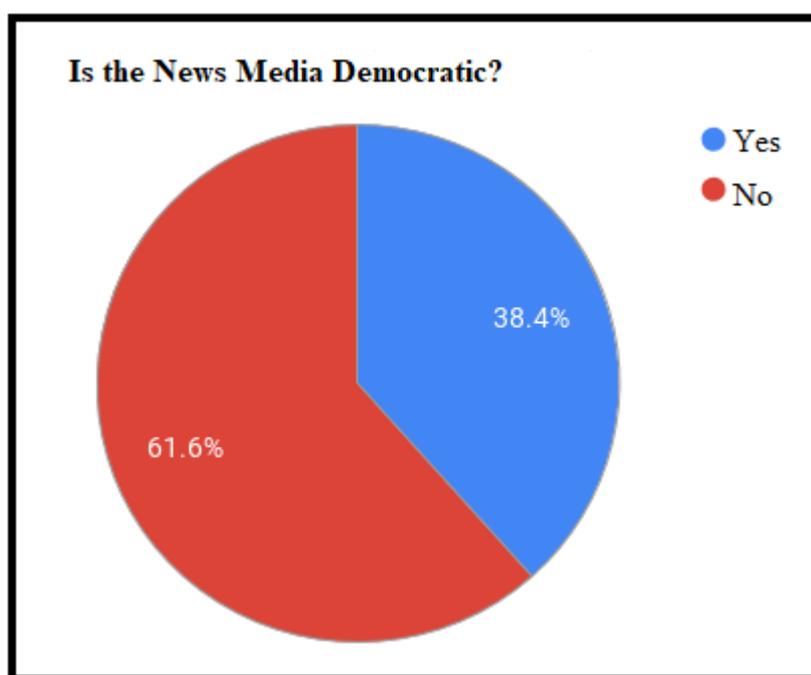
The news media serves as an important source through which one can get information related to daily life and current happenings. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines are the mass communication media which cater to various interest of a large audience. The results of the data collected through Google forms are presented after being analysed with the aid of spreadsheets and this helped in fulfilling the research objectives. Among the respondents 60% were male and rest 40% were female.

The survey shows that 79% of respondents who are familiar with the current news media are not satisfied with its performance. When the reason was asked, more than three fourth of them mentioned the lack of unbiased coverage of events by the news media and the control of news media by political figures while the rest 21% of the respondents were satisfied with the performance of the news media. The respondents who are satisfied with the present news media are between the age group 25-35 years.

Democracy of Media:

The democracy of the news media is very important for it to cover/report events in an unbiased manner. Only when it functions democratically it will be able to deliver the news fairly without any bias.

With the help of the survey taken as seen below, 61.6% of the respondents have an opinion that the news media doesn't function democratically which is significant as the fair presentation of facts depends on the democracy of the news media while the rest finds it to be democratic.

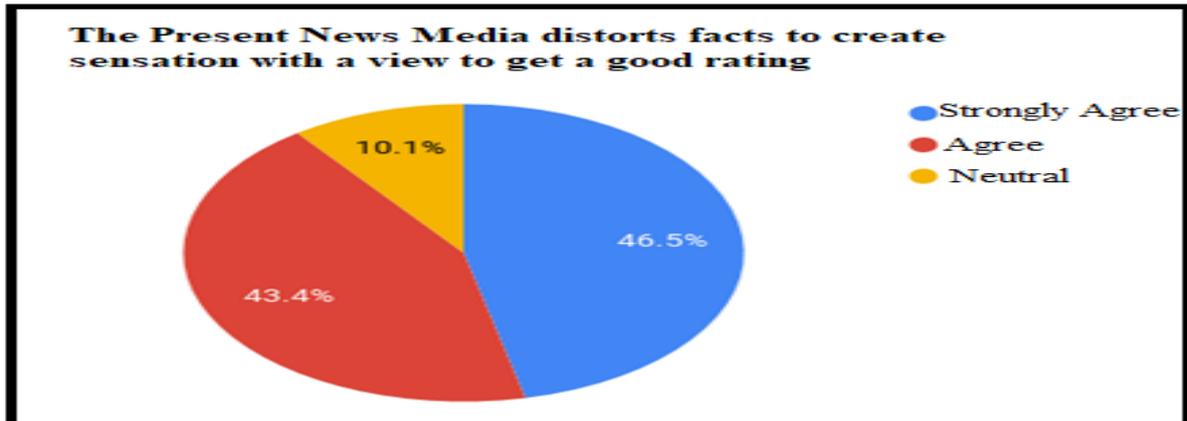


Relationship with political personalities:

As stated earlier, more than 75% of the respondents who are not satisfied with the performance of the news media mention the political control over it as a reason for their dissatisfaction.

There is also additional information from the survey that the news media is under political influences. This statement was accepted with positive responses by *more than 3/4th* of the people leading to the fact that the news provided by the media is not unbiased. In order to provide the news in an unbiased manner, respondents felt the need for a reduction of influence by the political parties.

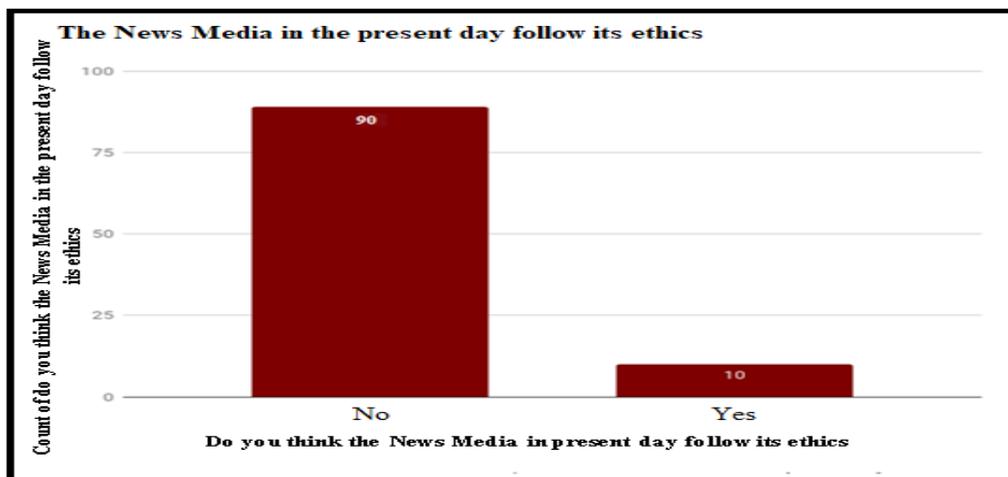
Fair Reporting: It is important for the news media to ensure that there is a fair reporting of facts. The survey helped us to know whether the news media exaggerates facts and tries to create false impression among people. The following graph shows the respondents view.



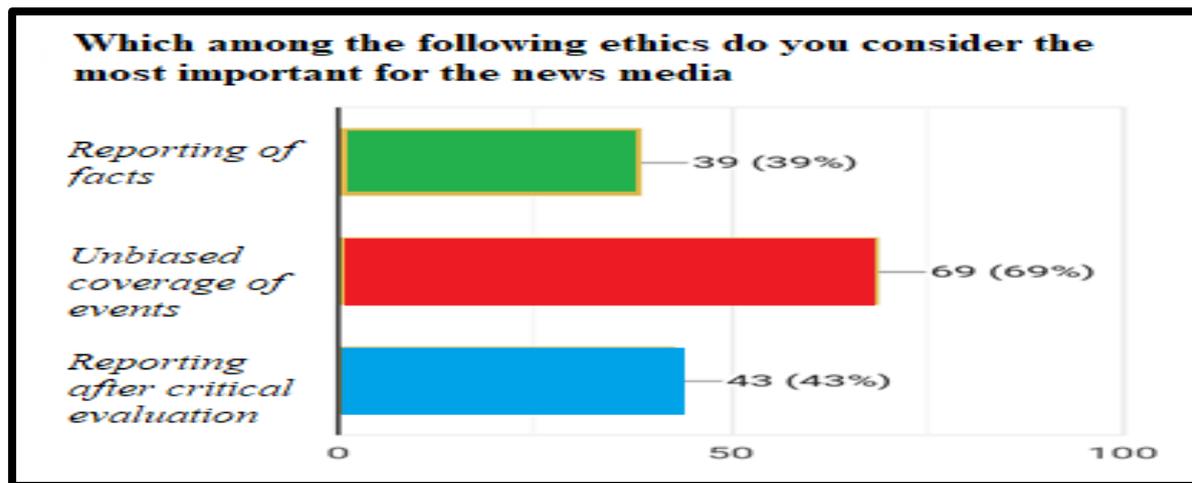
It is evident from the above chart that a major portion of respondents (i.e. 89.9%) consider that the present media fails in fair reporting of the facts in order to create sensation and to gain high ratings.

Ethics of News Media:

The news media has a responsibility of promoting civic, health and education. The survey shows that 98% respondents have welcomed this idea that the news media should take this responsibility. This makes it more socially responsible and contributes to the welfare of the society. In addition to this, it is important for the news media to respect the emotions of the people during catastrophes. It is unfair to cause psychological disturbances to the society through its news coverage or reporting. With the help of the survey taken, we find that 74% of the respondents felt that the present news media does not follow its ethics which needs attention to take measures.



It is evident from the graph that around 90% of the respondents opine that the present news media does not follow its ethics while the rest of them feel that the news media follows its ethics. This makes it evident that the present news media doesn't follow its ethics and try involving in practices like exaggerating facts to create false impression in the minds of people and to create sensation to seek attention thus impacting the society.



This survey was conducted to seek opinion of respondents regarding the most important ethics to be followed by the current news media. Three options were provided to the respondents and they were free to choose more than one option to this question. It was found that 69% of the respondents felt that unbiased coverage of events is the most important ethic to be followed by the present news media. It is also equally important to note that 43% of the respondents voted for reporting after critical evaluation and 39% voted for proper reporting of facts.

Thus we find the importance of ethics which has to be followed by the news media. An unbiased coverage and fair reporting are the two important things that are lacking with the present news media which needs attention.

Findings and Conclusion

One of the significant functions of news media is to inform the public about the current happenings that directly or indirectly affect their daily life. The survey reveals that the news media in the present day is not democratic and most of the people are not satisfied with the performance of the new media due to its bias reporting and non-transparent coverage of events. The results support the hypothesis that media create hype just to get higher rating among the competitors, misleading the people and thus affecting the society. Media channels spread a feeling of disappointment amongst the public by sensationalizing the minor issues, which are not directly associated to the problems of common people. This is one of the reasons that people are not satisfied with the performance of News Channels.

The news media has the responsibility of promoting civic, health and education and they are also bound to respect the emotions of the people in its coverage which people think to be lacking with them. This has impacted the society at large and is seen as a serious concern. It is clear that people are highly disappointed and are in a confused state as the truth is unknown. Thus it is important for the news media to follow its ethics. According to the survey taken, 90% of the respondents opine that the present news media does not follow its ethics which has to be noted significantly. The key aspects like reporting of facts and unbiased coverage should be followed by them.

Thus we may conclude that the news media should deliver information that makes people aware of the happenings and try to avoid creating sensationalism that misleads the society.

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