

Journalism And Covid 19: A Study Of How Indian Journalists Are Managing Their Work Amid The Pandemic

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Abstract: *The novel Corona Virus that casted a spell in China turned around and engulfed the whole globe. With nothing available to combat such a preposterous and deadly virus, India too surrendered to the virus. The Corona Virus outbreak has unleashed a terror which world could have hardly imagined of. It has engulfed every sector and every field into its helm. Journalism too hit a bad rock because of the virus. Media mostly thrives on the ground zero reports and stories but due to the virus it has paralyzed the activities thus crippled the ground level work. The present study will enlighten us how journalists of India are managing their work amid the Covid 19 outbreak.*

Keywords: *Covid-19, media, journalists, pandemic, media reporting.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Corona Virus is the biggest threat to the global economy, health and social welfare. It has been a threat to each and every stratum of life. More recent it has paralyzed the lives and forced people to remain indoors thus affected their physical and psychological well being. The novel Covid 19 which engulfed the entire globe into its fist has casted a great deal pertaining to business, education, media or politics. This Pandemic has spared nothing and has adversely affected everything. Originated from China, this virus rapidly engrossed almost every nation and infected people across boundaries. This plague touched every layer and level, it received massive public reaction after hitting the most rich and invulnerable personalities. For the first time in this century such a calamity struck entire globe and didn't spare anyone, whether rich, poor, homeless, migrated it has reached everywhere. The great WHO couldn't do anything instead provided new guidelines and rules to be followed, which are known to be safety rules. It has left everyone even the great scientists and researchers who failed to locate or create a vaccine for this deadly virus. It has engulfed the whole globe and there seems no way out for now. Researchers are oblivious about the scope of vaccine which could save people from the terrible virus as well as the terrible lockdown. It started with China, then Italy, then USA, then Brazil, England, India and then almost every country. Italy, USA and Brazil became worst hit and target of this virus. Lakhs of people infected and thousands and thousands died every week. Amid all the deaths and infections, economic destruction, it continues to howl. It impinged on every section and stratum and Media is being one of the affected and impinged strata. Covid-19 has bedraggled Journalism Industry. Media has always been the worst hit whether in a war or in a plague, though nowadays it played a cupid between people but at the same time it has given tough time to the reporters who work from ground zero. Media in these times have been continuously working, reporting and disseminating information among masses, keeping the people updated and informed

about the misfortune and nation's thickness and thinness. Amid that the service the most affected people besides the health department are journalists who fail to prevent the infection into their bodies due to the exposure to this virus.

Media Houses at a halt

In the recent article carried by BBC News India titled "Coronavirus, How Covid-19 is ravaging India's newsrooms" talks about journalists being one of the most affected beings, camerapersons and TV journalists are among the most affected. Article talks about how this contagion successfully shut down the studio newsrooms and how the employees right from the journalists to the technicians to the drivers and all the crew and staff who manage off screen work fall prey to this virus. More than 100 journalists have been tested positive and more are on the brink and exposed to this pandemic. In a recent interview with BBC Barkha Dutt, the famous and acclaimed Indian Journalist said we take all the necessary precautions formulated and drafted by the experts. She further mentioned how her crew and staff wear masks and gloves all the time and dispose off once they end the day's schedule. She said how they travel 4000 kms in a month from her Delhi base, drove 16 hours to and fro for the shoot of mere 5 or 6 hours. This Journalism is a genuinely an act of courage, bravery and hard work.

Reporters are more susceptible and exposed to this infection. Their work has affected to the core. Journalists are always on a hunt for a story and due to this pandemic their quest suffered, work came to standstill. Media is called to be the fourth pillar of democracy; it shows and highlights the truth, truth that devours lives across globe.

Journalists working from home

Since the government of India imposed a country wide lockdown and reincarnated curfew and ordered people to remain indoors therefore shutting down all the trade, commerce and transportation. It severely affected those who cannot afford to stay at home in which one of the biggest examples is Media. Though the studio room journalism wouldn't cast much trouble as much as on ground reporting does, because studio can be shifted to home but ground work will suffer. In recent news article carried by BBC it reports journalists are one of the most affected people besides health sector. Covid-19 has restricted field work thus resulted in the shifting of offices to personal spaces. Big or small media houses in India are shifting their bases to their personal spaces. Two third of the crew and staff of BBC India are working from their homes. Only the significant members of the channel make it to office. In one of the interview BBC managing editor Sanjoy Majumdar said, "We are following our director Tony Halls mandate of keeping our viewers updated in this critical time." Almost all media outlets are working from their houses. The Quint has been managing and working from home with only some members of the outlet coming to office. Renowned publications like The Hindu, The Indian Express, The Wire and The Hindustan Times too have shifted most of the official work to their houses.

Big names and bigger struggle

Covid-19 outbreak bedraggled both electronic and print outlets/media. Indian publishers are cancelling their events, even dropping the pay walls and using technology for the extensive dissemination of news and information. Journalists are risking their lives but aren't compromising their quality. They are going and moving out in search of the stories thus are more exposed to this virus.

The Hindu

Almost all the employees of the renowned news paper The Hindu have been advised and

shifted to work from their homes. Only from the editorial team people associated with editing and publishing make it to office. Reporters of this newspaper have been told not to visit or come to the studio/newsroom but the publishing process is still going on though the number has been decreased.

The Indian Express

The newspaper has successfully broken up its production operations into several small units. The assigned editors are working from their houses in order to run the newspaper smoothly. They have software loaded in their systems which helps them in editing stories and making pages of the newspaper.

The Quint

The Quint has ordered and managed to send off their whole staff and employees to their respective homes and told them to work from home with only few people come to office for shoots and editing purposes. The employees who go to office have been provided the transportation both pickups and drops. The outlet has also curtailed on field reporting thus producing less video content.

The Wire

The staffs of The Wire who were suggested to remain at their homes were asked not to leave their abodes. Only those who have assigned the tasks will go out and perform them but with properly following the advisories issues by government and experts. Reporters have been alarmed when they leave for field work they must seek their heads permission. The office is being sanitized almost twice a day to avoid the spread of this virus.

Hindustan Times

HT has enabled its editors, reporters as well as people associated with the newspaper. They have been asked to work seven days a week and must be available on a phone call. They have been told to make good use of internet and dedicate themselves to the work from their homes.

BBC India

The 2/3 staff of BBC India has been informed to work from their houses only the decisive members of the channel have been allowed to come to office/newsroom with properly sanitized attires and gloves and masks on. The channels core content nowadays revolves around this pandemic alone.

In the pandemic all the news media outlets whether print or electronic, all have been affected but at the same time they widely used internet and the constant stream is getting overwhelming day by day. Their websites witnessed a massive increase in traffic. People read and view these websites like never before.

Journalists and their hard play

Covid-19 has proved to be catastrophic especially to those who have suffered a lot due to it. Noted publication like Business Standard, Indian Express and India Ahead News have informed and notified their employees of salary cuts. The Quint has forcibly asked employees to take leaves without any pay and some are pressurized to take a pay cut. So many known publications have asked their teammates to hand over their resignations in which News Nation is the glaring example where they laid off 15 Journalists from its English digital team. Big names including Forbes India and Outlook discontinued their print operations. There are many journalists who have lost their jobs, some are on the brink and some are still struggling to exist. They are living in fear and dejection organizations have wrecked on them due to the

closure of work environment (Zahid, 2020).

In the recent interview one of old and noted employee of Times of India Nona Walia said the entire team of Sunday Magazine has been forced to go on a leave. She further said she gave this company her 24 years and for a plague she was sacked.

2. CONCLUSION

For the ongoing crisis whether it is economic slowdown, financial instability, shattered stock markets, food starvation, migrant workers or even the deadly lockdown, Covid 19 is responsible for all of this. It has crippled rather paralyzed the normal life. With no Vaccine in hand there are more than good chances of persistence of above mentioned tribulations. Media even in these difficult times when the entire nation is under curfew and lockdown did not step back but is continuously doing the great and tricky work. Though the lockdown has affected its reach and activity but media will never stop working. It has always been the driven force and helping hand when miseries and sorrow struck nations. It is not in the Journalism industry where print and electronic media fail to show up or reciprocate when situations like curfew plague or war takes place. Journalists have been the worst hit even among the affected population. Journalists tend to do work amid tensions but corona virus has proved otherwise. This is the hard reality but a reality. We must take necessary precautions to work tirelessly amid the proliferation of this virus.

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