



KARNATAK UNIVERSITY, DHARWAD  
ACADEMIC (S&T) SECTION

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಧಾರವಾಡ  
ವಿದ್ಯಾಮಂಡಳ (ಎಸ್ & ಟಿ) ವಿಭಾಗ



Tele: 0836-2215224  
e-mail: academic.st@kud.ac.in  
Pavate Nagar, Dharwad-580003  
ಪಾವಟೆ ನಗರ, ಧಾರವಾಡ - 580003

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website: kud.ac.in

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ಪರಿಷ್ಕೃತ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ

ವಿಷಯ: 2023-24ನೇ ಶೈಕ್ಷಣಿಕ ಸಾಲಿನಿಂದ ರಾಜ್ಯಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ ಸ್ನಾತಕ ಪದವಿ 5ನೇ ಸೆಮಿಸ್ಟರ್  
Employability Course (SEC) ಕೋರ್ಸಿನ ಪರಿಷ್ಕೃತ ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮ ಕುರಿತು.

- ಉಲ್ಲೇಖ: 1. ಕಚೇರಿ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ ಸಂ.KU/Aca(S&T)/JS/MGJ(Gen)/2023-24/59, ದಿ. 04.09.2023.  
2. ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರ ಪತ್ರ ಸಂ. KU/Pol.Sci/2023-24, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 21.11.2023.  
3. ಮಾನ್ಯ ಕುಲಪತಿಗಳ ಅನುಮೋದನೆ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 11-12-2023

ಮೇಲ್ಕಾಣಿಸಿದ ವಿಷಯಕ್ಕೆ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದಂತೆ, 2023-24ನೇ ಶೈಕ್ಷಣಿಕ ಸಾಲಿನಿಂದ ರಾಜ್ಯಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ ಸ್ನಾತಕ ಪದವಿ 5ನೇ ಸೆಮಿಸ್ಟರ್ Employability Course (SEC) ಕೋರ್ಸಿನ ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಉಲ್ಲೇಖಿತ 1ರ ಮೂಲಕ ಈಗಾಗಲೇ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ ಹೊರಡಿಸಲಾಗಿತ್ತು. ಆದರೆ ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಸ್ನಾತಕೋತ್ತರ ರಾಜ್ಯಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ ಅಧ್ಯಯನ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ ಇವರು ಅಲ್ಪ ತಿದ್ದುಪಡಿಯೊಂದಿಗೆ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಿದ ರಾಜ್ಯಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ ಸ್ನಾತಕ ಪದವಿ 5ನೇ ಸೆಮಿಸ್ಟರ್ Employability Course (SEC) ಕೋರ್ಸಿನ ಪರಿಷ್ಕೃತ ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಮುಂಬರುವ ವಿದ್ಯಾವಿಷಯಕ ಪರಿಷತ್ ಸಭೆಯ ಸ್ಥಿರೀಕರಣಕ್ಕೊಳಪಟ್ಟು (Pending approval of Academic Council) ಈ ಅಧಿಸೂಚನೆ ಪ್ರಕಟಿಸಿದೆ. ಅದರಂತೆ, ಪರಿಷ್ಕೃತ ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಅಂತರ್ಜಾಲ [www.kud.ac.in](http://www.kud.ac.in) ದಲ್ಲಿ ಭತ್ತರಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಸದರ ಪರಿಷ್ಕೃತ ಪಠ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಅಂತರ್ಜಾಲದಿಂದ ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಸೂಚಿಸುತ್ತ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದ ಎಲ್ಲ ಬೋಧಕರ ಗಮನಕ್ಕೆ ತಂದು ಅದರಂತೆ ಕಾರ್ಯಪ್ರವೃತ್ತರಾಗಲು ಸೂಚಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

*A. Channarayana*

ಅಡಕ: ಮೇಲಿನಂತೆ

ಕುಲಸಚಿವರು.

ಗೆ,

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯದ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಬರುವ ಎಲ್ಲ ಅಧೀನ ಹಾಗೂ ಸಂಲಗ್ನ ಮಹಾವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯಗಳ ಪ್ರಾಚಾರ್ಯರುಗಳು.

ಪ್ರತಿ:

1. ಡೀನರು, ಸಮಾಜವಿಜ್ಞಾನ ನಿಖಾಯ, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.
2. ಅಧ್ಯಕ್ಷರು, ಸ್ನಾತಕೋತ್ತರ ರಾಜ್ಯಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ ಅಧ್ಯಯನ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.
3. ನೊಡಲ್ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಗಳು, UUCMS ಘಟಕ, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.
4. ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು, ಐ.ಟಿ. ವಿಭಾಗ, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ ಇವರ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಮುಂದಿನ ಕ್ರಮಕ್ಕಾಗಿ.
5. ಕುಲಪತಿಗಳ ಆಪ್ತ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳು, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.
6. ಕುಲಸಚಿವರ ಆಪ್ತ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳು, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.
7. ಕುಲಸಚಿವರು (ಮೌಲ್ಯಮಾಪನ) ಆಪ್ತ ಕಾರ್ಯದರ್ಶಿಗಳು, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.
8. ಅಧೀಕ್ಷಕರು, ಪ್ರಶ್ನೆ ಪತ್ರಿಕೆ / ಗೌಪ್ಯ / ಜಿ.ಎ.ಡಿ. / ವಿದ್ಯಾಂಡಳ (ಪಿ.ಜಿ.ಪಿ.ಎಚ್.ಡಿ) ವಿಭಾಗ, ಸಂಬಂಧಿಸಿದ ಕೋರ್ಸುಗಳ ವಿಭಾಗಗಳು ಪರೀಕ್ಷಾ ವಿಭಾಗ, ಕ.ವಿ.ವಿ. ಧಾರವಾಡ.

<b>Course Title: Media and Politics</b>	
<b>Semester: V</b>	<b>Course Code: POLV1</b>
<b>Total Contact Hours (Including Practical's) : 30 Hours</b>	<b>Course Credits:2</b>
<b>Formative Assessment Marks:</b>	<b>Summative Assessment Marks:50</b>

**Unit -1**

**Module 1 : Readings:**

**1.Emily Kubin & Christian von Sikoski**, The role of (social) media in political polarization : systematic review, Pp 188-206 published online September 21,2021

**2.Saksham Vashistha & P.K.Agarwal**, An introduction-the impact of Media on Indian Politics, International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts ([IJCRT.ORG](http://www.ijcrt.org)), ISSN: 2320-2882, Vol. 11, issue 8, August 8, 2023.

**Deliverable:** You will by this know where you stand ideologically, what your moorings are, what drives you in studying this and how you make your preferences.

**Module 2:**

**Readings**

**1.Buroshiva Dasgupta**, Tackling ‘bias’ and fake coverage in the Indian Media, United world School of Liberal Arts, Karnavati University,

<https://commons.library.stonybrook.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=cnlglobalconference>

**2.Anirban Senetcal**, Analysis of Media Bias in Policy Discourse in India, ACM

ISBN 978- 1-4503-9347-8/22/06, 2022<https://www.cse.iitd.ac.in/~aseth/media-bias.pdf>

**Deliverable:** While working on this please link the contents of one of the social media in a strict word count of 150 words identifying the reasons for that posting, whether it was an opinion or a subjective statement, if it is useful to the lead article you plan to post, what has been the readers point of view of that (as you think) and why do you think they respond in such fashion?

**Model 3**

**Readings :**

1. Sanchita Hazra, The Role and Importance of Media in Indian Democracy, Volume 9, Issue 2 February 2021 | ISSN: 2320- 2882,<https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2102520.pdf>

2. **Sheikh Tajammul-ul-Islam**, Is Indian Media free from State Control? An appraisal, Policy Perspective (Journal), January 1, 2019, Pluto Journals (Publishers), <https://www.scienceopen.com/hosted-document?doi=10.13169/polipers.16.2.0027>

**Deliverable:** This shape up one’s writing bringing out his/her style, treatment of the content, vision, usage of words and expectations. Here it is expected of the candidate to understand the policy outcomes and the judicial decisions and link them with the opinions of the experts in the field through various media and find a method to quote or paraphrase them for the benefit of his writings to make it more impact full.

**Unit – II**

**Model I**

**Readings :** Readings:(note: all readings are meant for serious study by the students as questions in the examination may be based on the readings given)

1. **Ritu Gupta and B.M.Gupta**, Social Media Research in India: A Scientometric Assessment of Publications Output during 2004-13, SRELS Journal of Information and Management, Vol 52(4), August2015,pp233-243,ISSN(online)0976-2477,

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317206857\\_Social\\_Media\\_Research\\_in\\_India\\_A\\_Scientometric\\_Assessment\\_of\\_Publications\\_Output\\_during\\_2004-13](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317206857_Social_Media_Research_in_India_A_Scientometric_Assessment_of_Publications_Output_during_2004-13)

2. **Md. Sayeed Al- Zaman**, Social Media and Fake News in India, Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research, 9(1),pp25-47, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.15206/ajpor.2021.9.1.25>

**Deliverable:** This part will bring up students critical thinking and critical perspectives. .This will make them to rationalize their thoughts and economies words. They will be in a position to learn the need for organizing thoughts and executing them in a methodical way. they will learn the skill of using the digital mode of presentation and the technicalities of their presentation. They will learn through this to take a stance and form an opinion.

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## Model 2

### 1. Readings :

**1. Stephanie Tawa Lama-Rewal**, Studying Elections in India: Scientific and Political Debates, <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.2784>

**2. Swati Maheshwari and Colin Sparks**, Political elites and journalistic practices in India:

A case of institutionalized heteronomy, 2021, Vol. 22(1) 231

247, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/107.171/1774/61486488489419817876611630> [journals.sagepub.com/home/jou](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/jou)

**Deliverables:** Writing a report of 1-2 pages of three column summarizing the major three talking points of this noting down precisely their words and deliveries. Whom are these decisions aimed at? Whose interests are they protecting? How are they handling the situation? What are the legal or constitutional positions taken? Checking the tone and tenor, negative or positive impact are to be assessed here. Television being the most important tool of dissemination how do political leaders use it and how do they debate? Are to be observed. body language of these leaders speak a lot. That needs concentration. Spinning and marketing are here to be learnt for making an effective marketing of the news.

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## Model 3

### Readings :

**1. Teresa Man-Yee Chan**, Social Media and the 21st-Century Scholar: How you can Harness Social media and amplify your Career, Journal of the American College of Radiology, 12(6), 582-591, November 2017,

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321097431\\_Social\\_Media\\_and\\_the\\_21st-Century\\_Scholar\\_How\\_You\\_Can\\_Harness\\_Social\\_Media\\_to\\_Amplify\\_Your\\_Career](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321097431_Social_Media_and_the_21st-Century_Scholar_How_You_Can_Harness_Social_Media_to_Amplify_Your_Career)

**2. Kiran Bala**, Social Media and Changing Communication Patterns, Global Media Journal-Indian Edition, Sponsored by the University of

Calcutta/[www.caluniv.ac.in](http://www.caluniv.ac.in), Summer Issue/June 2014/Vol.5/No.1, ISSN 2249-5835

**Deliverables:** Post 200 words original reporting. Ask for comments from friends and post your comments on other friends writings. Compare and contrast those with other friends and have a collective discussion on selecting the best writing and reward it. Qualitative assessment so fit be announced and bringing out the various in two reporting will help the critical view to be developed. What multimedia links (videos, links, pictures, embeds) are used in one's reporting has to be brought out as guidance to others. It is important to use knowledge sources either secondary or primary in any good reporting



## The role of (social) media in political polarization: a systematic review

Emily Kubin & Christian von Sikorski

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## The role of (social) media in political polarization: a systematic review

Emily Kubin<sup>a,b</sup> and Christian von Sikorski<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Koblenz-Landau, Landau, Germany; <sup>b</sup>Center for the Science of Moral Understanding, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA

### ABSTRACT

Rising political polarization is, in part, attributed to the fragmentation of news media and the spread of misinformation on social media. Previous reviews have yet to assess the full breadth of research on media and polarization. We systematically examine 94 articles (121 studies) that assess the role of (social) media in shaping political polarization. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches, we find an increase in research over the past 10 years and consistently find that pro-attitudinal media exacerbates polarization. We find a hyperfocus on analyses of Twitter and American samples and a lack of research exploring ways (social) media can depolarize. Additionally, we find ideological and affective polarization are not clearly defined, nor consistently measured. Recommendations for future research are provided.

### KEYWORDS

Affective polarization; ideological polarization; depolarization; (social) media; political communication

## The role of (social) media in political polarization: a systematic review

Political polarization is on the rise not only in the United States (Arceneaux et al., 2013; see also Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2017), but also across the world (Gidron et al., 2019). Today political elites (Heaney et al., 2012), elected officials (Hare & Poole, 2014), and everyday people (Frimer et al., 2017) are polarized.<sup>1</sup> There are two distinct forms of political polarization. The first is *ideological polarization*, which is the divergence of political opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and stances of political adversaries (Dalton, 1987). The second is *affective polarization*, which is based on work considering the role of identity in politics (Mason, 2018), and how identity salience within groups (e.g. political parties) can exacerbate out-group animosity (e.g. Gaertner et al., 1993; Iyengar et al., 2012). Affective polarization assesses the extent to which people like (or feel warmth towards) their political allies and dislike (or feel lack of warmth towards) their political opponents (Iyengar et al., 2012).

Higher levels of polarization can be beneficial for society – predicting higher levels of political participation, and perceptions of electoral choice (Wagner, 2021). However, political polarization can also be bad for democracy, increasing the centralization of power (Lee, 2015), congressional gridlock (Jones, 2001), and making citizens less satisfied (Wagner, 2021). Previous work has also highlighted interpersonal implications of polarization, including an unwillingness to interact with (Frimer et al., 2017), and dehumanization towards (Mason, 2018) political adversaries.

Given that people are unwilling to engage in day-to-day interactions with their political adversaries, many build their impressions of opponents via the media – meaning (social) media is increasingly shaping how we perceive the political environment. As media has become more fragmented

**CONTACT** Christian von Sikorski  [vonsikorski@uni-landau.de](mailto:vonsikorski@uni-landau.de)  Department of Psychology, University of Koblenz-Landau, Fortstr. 7, 76829 Landau, Germany

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(Van Aelst et al., 2017) and partisan (DellaVigna & Kaplan, 2007), people have become more polarized both ideologically (Jones, 2002) and affectively (Lau et al., 2017). However, media may not always have a polarizing effect on viewers. Some suggest social media (Valenzuela et al., 2019) and traditional media (Udani et al., 2018) have no effect on political polarization. While others suggest in certain circumstances, political information can actually have a *depolarizing* effect on viewers (Beam et al., 2018; Kubin et al., 2021; Wojcieszak et al., 2020). These mixed results highlight our understanding of when and why media exacerbates polarization is murky, pointing to the need for assessment of the literature.

Scholars have reviewed the role of media and political polarization; however, some key gaps remain unanswered. For example, Prior's 2013 review provides a persuasive perspective on the ways in which media can influence political polarization – suggesting the media may not significantly influence the average persons' polarization. However, this review fails to make a distinction between *affective* and *ideological* polarization, rather grouping both into the overarching umbrella of 'political polarization.' Further, the political climate has drastically changed in the U.S. since this review, with greater polarization (Pew Research Center, 2017), increased social media use (Pew Research Center, 2019), more partisan news (Jurkowitz et al., 2020), and growing animosity between political opponents (Finkel et al., 2020). Finally, the review solely examined the effect of media on political polarization in the U.S. context, ignoring research from across the world (e.g. Chile (Valenzuela et al., 2019), Germany (Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2015), and Ghana (Conroy-Krutz & Moehler, 2015)).

A more recent review provides an informative assessment of the role of media on political polarization and addresses several gaps not addressed in Prior's review (Tucker et al., 2018). The authors distinguish between ideological and affective polarization and consider polarization outside of the American context. However, this review only focused on the role of social media in political polarization – thus not considering the well-documented polarizing effects of news media (e.g. McLaughlin, 2018).

While past reviews provide meaningful insights into the ways in which media shapes polarization, key questions remain unanswered. In our systematic review of the literature, we wish to close these research gaps and answer three central research questions. Our first research question (RQ1) is quantitatively oriented and asks: *How can the current state of research on media and political polarization be characterized regarding (a) the development of the field over time, and (b) the country of samples?* Our second research question (RQ2) is qualitatively orientated and asks: *What do we know about media and political polarization in regard to (a) media contents (e.g. is media coverage increasingly polarized?), (b) media exposure (e.g. do news consumers increasingly use politically polarized media contents?), and (c) media effects (e.g. how can certain types of media exacerbate (or inhibit) political polarization?)?* The third research question (RQ3) is both quantitatively and qualitatively oriented and asks: *How is polarization discussed and examined in the literature?*

In the present study, we employed a content-based analytical approach (e.g. Ahmed & Matthes, 2017). We conducted a systematic and extensive search of the literature and identified a total of 94 articles (121 studies) on media and polarization. Then we used a quantitative approach and examined various dimensions including time of publication, country samples come from, and type of polarization examined.<sup>2</sup> We also employed a qualitative approach, reviewing all studies in depth in order to identify the common themes and key findings. Taken together, our study provides insights and new perspectives on the role of media in political polarization. Furthermore, it fills persisting research gaps in the literature and offers new avenues for future research.

## Methodology

### Study retrieval

The goal of the current research was to examine all research articles relevant to the role of (social) media in political polarization. We theorized that researchers from various fields (e.g. political communication, political science, and psychology) have examined this topic. Due to this interdisciplinary

interest, we conducted a systematic search on Web of Science – aligned with previous reviews (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Tsfati et al., 2020; von Sikorski, 2018), as it provides access to multiple interdisciplinary databases, and is the leading science search platform in the world (Li et al., 2018).

For our search we entered three keywords: ‘Political,’ ‘Polarization,’<sup>3</sup> and ‘Media.’ Since we began this search at the beginning of August 2020, we set the search parameters to only access papers that were available as of 31 July 2020<sup>4</sup> or earlier and we limited our search to articles published in English. Our search produced 751 articles, see Figure 1.

### Study selection process

Selection for articles was based on two inclusion criterium; (1) articles had to be peer reviewed and quantitative, (2) articles had to be specifically focused on ideological or affective polarization and the main focus of the paper had to be on how media shapes (or relates to) political polarization. Papers whose main research question, or primary analysis, was based on how media relates to political polarization were deemed as having a main focus on this topic. With this inclusion criteria, we gathered 94 articles (121 studies) for our analyses (Figure 1).

After coding all studies, we examined the studies both quantitatively and qualitatively. For our qualitative analyses, we split all articles into three categories for understanding the role of media in political polarization – (1) media contents ( $n = 14$ ), (2) media exposure ( $n = 55$ ), (3) media effects ( $n = 25$ ). However, when qualitatively exploring how political polarization is measured (RQ3), we analyzed all articles together rather than in three separate groups.

### Quantitative coding process

Two coders coded the papers on a variety of dimensions following a systematic codebook (Appendix 1). A research assistant was extensively trained and then read through each paper – coding a variety

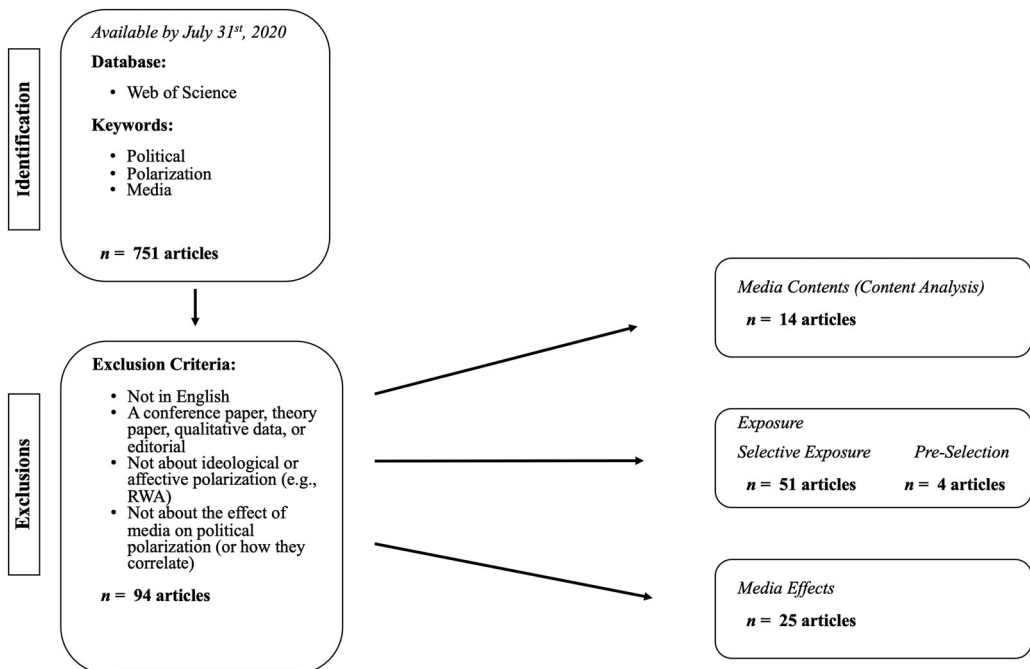


Figure 1. Literature search strategy.



of categories: year of publication, country of sample, whether the authors provided a definition of polarization, and if polarization was explicitly mentioned in hypotheses/research questions and/or in the methods section (e.g. as a measure). Finally, we coded what type of polarization was studied (i.e. ideological or affective).<sup>5</sup>

After the coder read all papers, the first author randomly selected 6 of the 94 articles using a random number generator, for each category that the research assistant coded for. This meant the first author randomly selected 6 articles and coded them on 1 category (e.g. Publication Year), then again randomly selected 6 articles and coded them on another dimension (e.g. Country of Sample), and so on. The first author coded approximately 6.38% of all codes. There was 93.94% agreement between the first author and research assistant (see Table 1). All articles included in this review and their codes can be found here: [https://osf.io/gb7z2/?view\\_only=4105ef9699d64887958da24d4785e69e](https://osf.io/gb7z2/?view_only=4105ef9699d64887958da24d4785e69e).

## Results

### Quantitative analysis

#### Analysis of time information

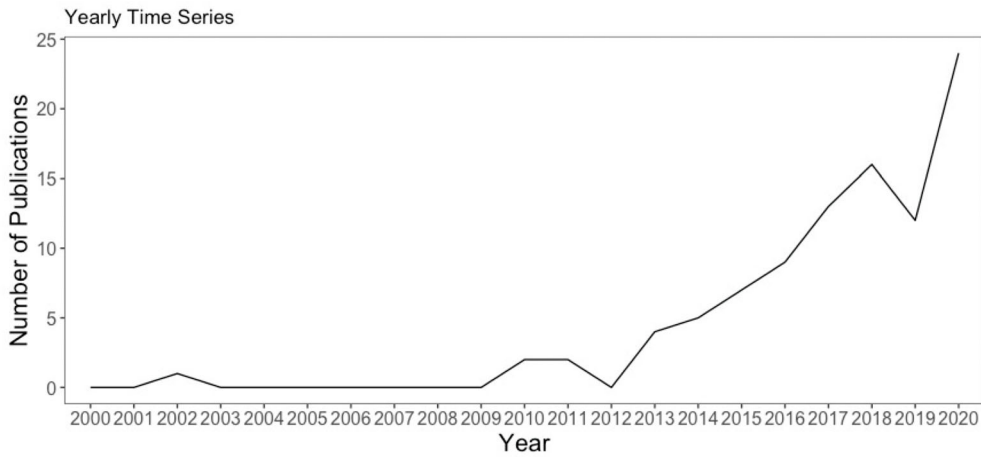
Answering RQ1a, the oldest relevant article was from 2002. Additionally, we observed a strong increase in publications in the last decade – suggesting growing interest in the academic community in exploring the role of media in political polarization,<sup>6</sup> see Figure 2. These trends in the increasing number of publications studying the role of media in political polarization could be based on the inherent yearly growth rate of published research (Bornmann & Mutz, 2015). However, we argue this increase is so large and abrupt (especially after 2012), that it may also be caused – in part – by increasing interest on the topic. We posit this increasing interest is related to the growing political divisions observed across many societies – especially the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017).

#### Country of sample

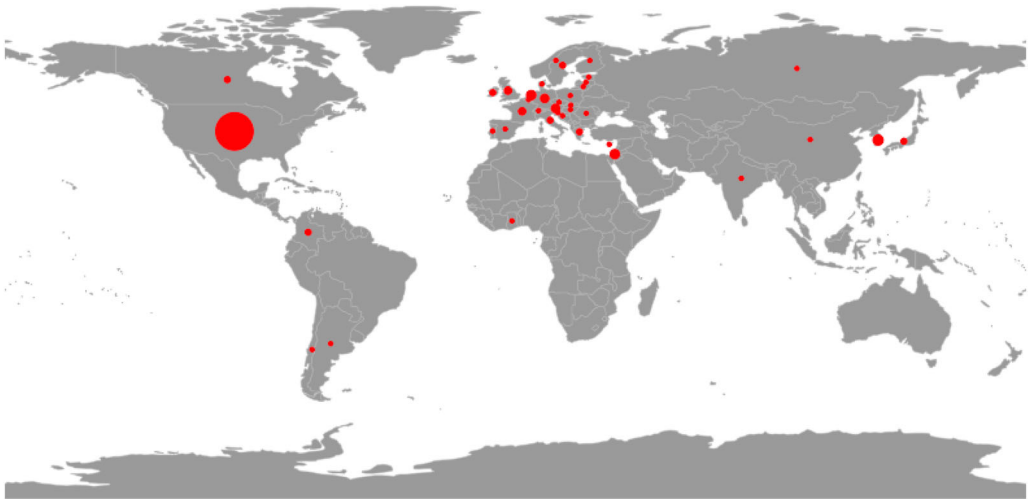
To assess RQ1b, we explored the types of samples used in this subset of studies. Our analysis revealed a hugely disproportional emphasis on samples from the United States ( $N = 81$ ) – a trend seen throughout social science research (Arnett, 2016). The second largest number of samples came from South Korea ( $n = 6$ ), a country known for polarization (Kim, 2015a), and partisan media (Lee, 2008). Additionally, there were many samples from European countries – where there is rising extremism (Koehler, 2016) and increasing use of social media by political campaigns (e.g. Baxter & Marcella, 2012; Jungherr, 2012). Countries included Germany ( $n = 4$ ), the United Kingdom ( $n = 3$ ), and Austria ( $n = 4$ ) (see Figure 3). These results suggest an overemphasis on participants from Western societies (see appendix Table A1 for additional results).

**Table 1.** Inter-coder agreement on 6 randomly selected articles from each coded dimension.

Rating Theme	% Agreement
Publication Year	100%
Country of Sample	100%
Continent	100%
Type of Sample	83.33%
Definition of Polarization	100%
Methodology	100%
Political Topic	83.33%
Type of Media	100%
Type of Polarization	100%
Mention Polarization in Hypothesis/ Methods	83.33%
How Polarization is Measured	83.33%
Average Rate of Agreement	93.94%



**Figure 2.** Number of publications by year in analysis. *Note:* The year 2020 only includes papers published by 31 July 2020.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of samples across countries. Red circles indicate samples from that country, the larger the circle, the more samples from that country. *Note:* Four studies were not included in this analysis due to incomplete or missing information regarding country of sample.

### *Analysis of political polarization*

To answer the quantitative component of RQ3, we assessed how polarization is defined and discussed in the literature. We found only about one-third of papers provided definitions of political polarization. We found that many did not make distinctions between ideological and affective polarization – rather using the term ‘political polarization’ to define either form of polarization.<sup>6</sup> This lack of a distinction makes the field’s understanding of political polarization muddled due to a lack of consensus in definitions of divergent forms of political polarization. We also examined the type of polarization assessed in each paper – finding a little more than half of the papers focused on ideological

polarization, approximately one-third on affective polarization, and the rest examined both ideological and affective polarization.

Finally, we explored whether papers explicitly mentioned political polarization in the hypotheses and/or methods sections. While all papers were assessing political polarization (hence why they were included in our analyses), there was great variation in how polarization was discussed. For example, while a paper may discuss political polarization throughout the paper, they use terms such as ‘ideological extremity,’ or ‘sentiment towards opponents,’ to assess polarization in their hypotheses and methodology sections. Overall, less than half of the papers explicitly mentioned polarization in both their hypotheses and methods (see Table 2). While it can be appropriate to use these synonyms, we encourage future researchers to use consistent terminology – ideally using terms like ideological or affective polarization – throughout their papers to aid in clarity for readers less familiar with the topic.

These quantitative analyses suggest that there has been a steep and abrupt increase in the last decade on research exploring the role of media in political polarization (especially within the United States), a trend in line with the increasing polarization plaguing many societies (e.g. many European societies). Additionally, results indicate a need for more clear differentiation between ideological and affective polarization in future research.

### Qualitative analysis

For the qualitative analyses, we explore overarching themes in results across papers, we break down the analyses into three subsections: media contents, media exposure, media effects. Also, we explore the ways political polarization is measured across all studies.

#### Media contents

Research related to media content focuses on exploring the content of media sources, we assessed this research to answer RQ2a. Fourteen articles focused on media contents – conducting content analyses of social media posts and news content. These analyses primarily focused on the extent to which media content is politically polarized.

*Social Media Content.* Many studies assessed the extent to which the content on social media was polarized. Some of these studies focused on whether there are differences in content across media platforms. Two studies found that over time the content on Twitter (i.e. Tweets) became more affectively and ideologically (Marozzo & Bessi, 2017) polarized. However, other social media platforms (i.e. WhatsApp and Facebook) were associated with *depolarization* over time (Yarchi et al., 2020).

Other papers focused on the content produced by politicians. For example, one conducted content analyses of tweets by American politicians finding that Republican politicians used more polarizing language and rhetoric than Democratic counterparts (e.g. Russell, 2020). Another content analysis revealed that when politicians tweet more ideologically polarizing content, they receive more readership on Twitter (Hong & Kim, 2016). This suggests politicians may be incentivized to proclaim polarizing rhetoric to increase the spread of their message.

Additionally, two-thirds of analyses used Twitter data. We posit this is likely because it is easier for researchers to scrape data from Twitter than other platforms. While this data may be easier to collect, it is not clear whether these findings can be generalized to other social media platforms, or whether the levels of polarization observed on Twitter are similar on other platforms. Therefore, future

**Table 2.** Rate of polarization mentioned in hypotheses and methods across papers.

Polarization Mentioned In ...	% of Papers
Hypotheses and Methods	46.81%
Only Hypotheses	17.02%
Only Methods	8.51%
Neither	25.53%

research should more thoroughly consider alternate social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

*Traditional Media Content.* Fewer studies focused on the polarizing nature of content within the traditional news media context. Some studies focused on the differences between media programs. For example, one study found the content on Fox News was highly polarized, while NBC was not polarized (Hyun & Moon, 2016).

Another study focused on which politicians are most frequently covered by news media. Results indicated ideologically polarized politicians (i.e. politicians with a track record of voting along partisan lines) receive more news coverage (Wagner & Gruszczynski, 2018). Suggesting, like in the social media context, that polarization benefits politicians who seek media attention.

Multiple content analyses tracked polarization of news media over time – all finding that media content has become more polarized in recent years. However, we discovered a hyperfocus on climate change in these analyses (e.g. Chinn et al., 2020), with 3 of the 4 articles assessing news articles about climate change. These consistent findings provide strong evidence that the media is increasingly reporting in a polarized manner – though further analysis outside of the climate change context is needed, as relevant proportions of media consumers still use classic media outlets like television for news and political information (Newman et al., 2021).

Taken together, analysis of papers assessing the content of social and traditional media suggests a heavy focus on analyses of social media sources (especially Twitter), with evidence of polarized content online. However, these trends seem to be Twitter specific. Contrarily analyses related to the polarization of content on traditional media suggest high levels of polarized news media content – however we observe a hyperfocus on analyzing content about climate change. Additionally, studies focused on both social media and traditional media suggested politicians may benefit from being polarizing figures. Overall, in answering RQ2a, we find that content on social media and traditional media is becoming increasingly polarized.

### *Media exposure*

While the content of media has an impact on political polarization, so too can ones' exposure to the media source. There are two types of media exposure; pre-selective exposure (decisions made outside of the viewers discretion; e.g. algorithms) and selective exposure (decisions made by the viewer). A minority of studies had a pre-selection focus. Taken together, the papers suggested increased traditional media penetration can reduce ideological polarization (e.g. Darr et al., 2018; Melki & Pickering, 2014). However, to answer RQ2b, we concentrate our attention on the much larger subset of media exposure effects – selective exposure.

*Social Media Use and Polarization.* A majority of papers focused on the effects of selectively exposing oneself to social media content on political polarization. These studies showed that social media use predicted both ideological and affective polarization (Cho et al., 2018). However, some suggest the effect of social media use and polarization is small (Johnson et al., 2017), and that it is not about what we see on social media, but rather what we choose to *share* on social media that drives political polarization (Johnson et al., 2020). Others find real-world implications for social media use, showing that social media use is linked to participation in polarizing political protests (Chang & Park, 2020). Also, some research suggests a reciprocal relationship between media exposure and increased political polarization (Chang & Park, 2020).

However, not all research supports this link between social media use and increased political polarization. Two studies suggest there is no effect of social media on polarization (e.g. Valenzuela et al., 2019). However, neither examined Twitter or Facebook, the two primary social media sites where people see political information (e.g. Stier et al., 2018). One study found evidence of *depolarizing* effects on social media (i.e. Facebook), due to exposure to diverse information (Beam et al., 2018).

Given these divergent findings, the true effect of social media exposure on political polarization remains unclear. It seems in some cases social media exposure may exacerbate polarization while in

other contexts or on certain platforms the effects are unobservable or even lead to depolarization. Future research should consider more clearly defining the conditions where selective exposure to social media exacerbates political polarization.

*Traditional Media Use and Polarization.* Selective exposure of traditional news media was also frequently linked to increased ideological (e.g. van Dalen, 2021) and affective (e.g. Kim & Zhou, 2020) political polarization. Additionally, all studies that focused specifically on selective exposure to partisan media found that these media sources predicted increased ideological and affective polarization (Melki & Sekeris, 2019). There was some evidence of a reciprocal effect between partisan news use and affective polarization (Stroud, 2010).

Yet not all findings were in agreement with this link between traditional media and political polarization. Several papers found no effect between traditional media and polarization (e.g. Udani et al., 2018), and one study suggested that while partisan media predicts affective polarization, mainstream media does not (Johnson & Lee, 2015).

Similar to the results related to selective exposure to social media, there is a lack of clarity regarding the impacts of selectively exposing oneself to traditional media content. While consistently exposure to partisan media predicted increased political polarization – there were inconsistent findings on the impact of mainstream media. Future research should consider further testing the conditions in which exposure to mainstream media predicts ideological and affective polarization.

*Selective Exposure to Pro-Attitudinal Information.* Some papers focused on the effects of selectively exposing oneself to like-minded (i.e. pro-attitudinal) media. All articles focused on these effects found it increased both ideological (e.g. Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2015) and affective (e.g. Kim, 2015b) polarization. No studies found a null effect (or a depolarization effect) between selective exposure to pro-attitudinal information and political polarization – suggesting widespread agreement regarding the impact of likeminded media. These findings provide consistent evidence that exposure to pro-attitudinal news content is a driving force in political polarization.

*Selective Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Information.* Some studies explored the effect of selective exposure to counter-attitudinal information. Results were more mixed than findings regarding pro-attitudinal information. Some suggested counter-attitudinal information exposure can help to decrease ideological and affective polarization (e.g. Kim, 2015b). However, others observe a backfire effect, where exposure to counter-attitudinal information actually increased ideological polarization (Kim, 2019), and under certain circumstances increased affective polarization (Garrett et al., 2014).

Taken together, and answering RQ2b the research suggests that selective exposure to (social) media tends to increase both ideological and affective polarization, and partisan media is especially polarizing. One finding is consistent – like-minded media makes people more ideologically and affectively polarized. Contrarily, it is less clear whether exposure to counter-attitudinal media increases (or hinders) polarization. Furthermore, we know very little about how media exposure influences depolarizing processes (Beam et al., 2018).

### Media effects

A third set of studies directly explored the effect of media on polarization, which helped us answer RQ2c. These articles employed experiments, manipulating media to explore how media can shape political polarization.

*Effects of Social Media.* Some studies experimentally explored how social media can predict polarization. All experiments found that social media can further ideologically polarize people. Studies found that exposure to negative Tweets about candidates (Banks et al., 2021), uncivil Facebook comments (Kim & Kim, 2019), and counter-attitudinal Twitter posts (Heiss et al., 2019) made people more ideologically polarized. Some studies explored ideological differences, finding Republicans, but not Democrats, exposed to counter-attitudinal content became more ideologically polarized (Bail et al., 2018). No experiments provided insights into ways social media can decrease (or have no effect) on ideological polarization.

Regarding affective polarization, nearly all experiments found that social media can further affectively polarize people. Researchers found that YouTube algorithm recommendations (Cho et al., 2020), and exposure to social media comments that derogate political adversaries (Suhay et al., 2018) increases affective polarization. Additionally, one study found those who deactivated their Facebook account in the lead up to the 2018 United States midterm election became less affectively polarized (Allcott et al., 2020). No experiments provided insights into ways social media can decrease (or have a null effect) on affective polarization.

Here we find agreement across studies that social media, in a variety of contexts, can exacerbate both ideological and affective political polarization.

*Effects of Traditional Media Reporting.* Multiple experiments also explored how traditional media can predict polarization. In terms of ideological polarization, ideological talk shows tend to increase this form of polarization (Arceneaux et al., 2013). However, hearing from fact checkers (Hameleers & van der Meer, 2020), and counter-attitudinal content (Lee, 2017) reduced ideological polarization.

Regarding affective polarization, most studies found that traditional media predicted increased affective polarization. Reading a news article about an in-party scandal (Rothschild et al., 2021), having a highly diverse media environment alongside exposure to negative political ads (Lau et al., 2017), being exposed to likeminded (vs. cross-cutting) news media (Levendusky, 2013), and incivility on news media from out-party sources (Druckman et al., 2019), were associated with increased affective polarization. However, some researchers' experimental manipulations *decreased* affective polarization. For example, highlighting group norms of open-mindedness incited increased willingness to read counter-attitudinal news articles, subsequently reducing affective polarization (Wojcieszak et al., 2020). Further, incivility from in-party news sources was associated with affective depolarization (Druckman et al., 2019). Others found no link between listening to like-minded radio shows and affective polarization (Conroy-Krutz & Moehler, 2015).

Several experiments assessed the effects of news coverage on polarization or partisan conflict, finding mixed results. Many found that news coverage of polarization or partisan conflict can actually make ideological and affective polarization worse (e.g. McLaughlin, 2018). However, others have found no such effects on ideological (Robinson & Mullinix, 2016) or affective (Kim & Zhou, 2020) polarization. The fact that media coverage on polarization (or partisan conflict) can actually cause people to become *more* polarized is a serious concern as journalists may unintentionally cause further political strife when attempting to highlight the effects of polarization on society.

Taken together, these results point to several key takeaway messages. First, the effect of social media on polarization seems consistent. In experimental settings, social media predicts both ideological and affective polarization. Additionally, in experimental settings, traditional media frequently predicts political polarization. However, some studies observe depolarization effects (Wojcieszak et al., 2020), shedding light on possible interventions for reducing polarization. Finally, when media discusses polarization (e.g. in news articles), frequently people become *even more* polarized, though these results are not consistent across papers. These results suggest a need for further exploration into what factors make media coverage about polarization, polarize viewers further and how media can be used to reduce political polarization.

### *Polarization measurement*

To answer the qualitative components of RQ3, we assess how researchers measure polarization, exploring whether there is consistency in the ways ideological and affective polarization are measured. In terms of how ideological polarization is measured in surveys and experiments, the most common types of measurement include Likert scales where people report the extent to which they are liberal or conservative (e.g. Melki & Sekeris, 2019), or the extent to which they support/agree or do not support/agree (with) a specific political topic (e.g. climate change; Newman et al., 2018). While a majority of articles measured ideological polarization either based on placement on an ideology scale or based on participant stance on a political topic, and both forms of measurement are well-established in the field (e.g. Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Fiorina

et al., 2005; Lelkes, 2016), these are distinct measures from one another. Ideological placement on a Likert scale is not necessarily synonymous with how one views a specific issue. One may feel they are slightly left leaning, and thus place themselves near the middle on a Likert ideology scale, and thereby be deemed as not ideologically polarized. Contrarily, that same individual may be strongly opinionated about a specific topic (e.g. abortion), and when asked whether they agree or disagree with abortion, could choose a much more extreme scale point, in turn being deemed as ideologically polarized. While we do not argue that either measurement has inherent flaws, and we know that increasingly people's ideological identities and issue positions are in-line with one another (Levendusky, 2009), we caution researchers from making direct comparisons between these distinct forms of measurement.

In terms of affective polarization, many followed standard measures developed by Iyengar and colleagues (2012), using warmth/favorability ratings of political allies vs. political opponents (e.g. Garrett et al., 2019). In some cases, participants were asked to rate groups of people (e.g. Democrats and Republicans, Beam et al., 2018), and in other cases they were asked to rate specific people (e.g. presidential candidates; Min & Yun, 2018). However, others used measures that diverged from this, including the extent to which people viewed gubernatorial candidates as 'a strong leader' (Johnson & Lee, 2015), and the positive and negative sentiment used in Tweets about political allies and opponents (Yarchi et al., 2020), or one's own positive/negative emotional valence before and after seeing a video of a politician (Cho et al., 2020). Additionally, Lau and colleagues (2017) focused on vote choice preference between candidates, a measure typically associated with assessing ideological polarization (e.g. van Dalen, 2021).

*Summary of Polarization Measurement.* While there is consistency in the ways in which ideological polarization is measured, we find great diversity in how affective polarization is assessed. We suggest future research focus on using more standard measures of affective polarization (e.g. warmth and favorability ratings), to ensure researchers measure the same construct, in order to make cross-study comparisons more reliable.

## Discussion

In this systematic review, we gathered articles assessing how (social) media shapes ideological and affective polarization. We find an increasing interest in the topic, with most articles being published since Prior's 2013 landmark review – highlighting the need for a re-assessment like the one we have done here. Based on our review, we have 4 takeaway messages.

First, our quantitative analyses revealed a steep increase in research on political polarization; especially, an abrupt increase in research starting in 2012. One explanation for this increasing interest is related to the growing political divisions observed across many societies in Asia, Europe, and the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017). That being said, interest in political polarization seems to be especially high in the United States, as we see an overabundance of American samples. While it is important to understand this phenomenon in a society as polarized as the United States, it remains unclear if the multitude of studies conducted in the American context are generalizable internationally. For instance, can such results be generalized to countries with less commercially dominated media systems and strong Public Service Broadcasting? (Bos et al., 2016). We encourage future research in this field to consider the role of media in polarization outside of the American context.

Second, and arguably one of the most intriguing findings of these analyses, is that political polarization is not consistently discussed, or measured, across the literature. Approximately two-thirds of the articles do not provide a definition of political polarization. Many do not explicitly state whether they are assessing *ideological* or *affective* polarization, rather just using the term 'political polarization.' We argue this differentiation matters, these constructs are distinct from one another, and thus should not be umbrellaed together. In line with these findings, less than half of the articles explicitly mentioned polarization in their hypotheses and methods sections – instead using other

terms (e.g. 'sentiment towards opponents,' or 'ideological extremity'). While it can be appropriate to use synonyms when describing political polarization, we encourage future research to use more consistent terminology (thus improving clarity) when describing their research.

In terms of measurement of political polarization, we found researchers consistently measure ideological polarization in one of two ways – either through ideological placement measures or through participants reporting their stance on a political topic. We caution future researchers from viewing these two constructs as entirely comparable. While often both constructs are related due to political sorting (Levendusky, 2009), this is not always the case – leading to ill-founded comparisons between research measuring ideological polarization in divergent ways. In terms of affective polarization, we find most use warmth/favorability ratings, however others use very different constructs (e.g. strength of leaders). Again, we caution researchers from assuming these measures are entirely comparable to one another.

Taken together, the variability of measurement highlights the benefits of a systematic review, rather than a meta-analysis examining effect sizes. While meta-analyses are useful for taking a snapshot of the current state of the literature, it is nearly impossible for us to do so due to inconsistencies in measurement, as we are unable to reliably compare studies' observed effects. Future work in this field should use more consistent measures of polarization so such meta-analyses are feasible.

Ideally future polarization research should include the following components:

- (1). terminology; explicitly mention (and define) what type of polarization is studied (e.g. ideological),
- (2). using this term explicitly in the hypotheses and methods sections (e.g. 'ideological polarization')
- (3). choosing a standard measurement based on previous literature (e.g. 7-point Likert assessing the extent to which participants support (or do not support) a policy).

Third, our quantitative analyses of the content of media highlighted an intense focus on analyzing Twitter. While this is likely due to the ease at which researchers can scrape data from Twitter as compared to other social networking sites – it makes it difficult to understand whether similar trends occur on other social media platforms. Future research should focus on the role other social media platforms have in shaping polarization. Given Facebook's penetration across the globe (Tankovska, 2021a), and much larger user base than Twitter (Tankovska, 2021b), we especially recommend further examination of how this platform shapes political polarization. Additionally, researchers exploring the content of traditional media outlets should consider conducting content analyses on newspaper articles and news on television that *do not* discuss climate change. Our analyses revealed a focus of assessing climate change news articles, leaving it unclear whether the increasing trend of polarized content in news extends to other political discussions.

Finally, our qualitative analysis revealed many studies exploring the key pillars of communication research; media content, media exposure (e.g. selective exposure), and media effects. We found the literature unanimously agrees that exposure to like-minded media increases polarization. However, there is less agreement on the role of counter-attitudinal media in political polarization. Some suggest counter-attitudinal content mitigates polarization (Kim, 2015b), by introducing viewers to diverging ideas that may make them reconsider their own attitudes – hence reducing polarization. Contrarily, others suggest this content exacerbates polarization (Kim, 2019), causing a backfire effect where people become even more entrenched in their belief systems, and thus more polarized. Future research should test in which circumstances counter-attitudinal media drives (or minimizes) polarization. We find that most studies find a link between selective exposure to (social) media and political polarization and that most experiments find that media exacerbates both ideological and affective polarization – though future research should also consider the effect of visuals in media contexts (von Sikorski, 2021). These results are concerning as all studies assessing the polarization of media content over time find that news media (e.g. Chinn et al., 2020) and social media (e.g. Marozzo & Bessi, 2017) are increasingly becoming partisan and polarized. This suggests that users



and viewers of media may continue to become increasingly ideologically and affectively polarized in the years to come.

While there is great diversity in the focus of studies exploring the role of (social) media on political polarization, there is one glaring gap in the literature – a focus on how media can *reduce* or at the very least *not increase* political polarization – though some experiments highlighted potential avenues (e.g. Wojcieszak et al., 2020). We recommend future research continues to explore ways media can be used as a tool to minimize polarization, rather than exacerbate it. Furthermore, precise knowledge about the ways that media coverage shapes polarization may be particularly beneficial to those working in the newsroom, as journalists may be unaware of how certain media coverage can further divide viewers.

While this review provides unique insights into the literature on media and polarization, it also has limitations. We focused solely on peer-reviewed quantitative articles, meaning theoretical and qualitative articles were not included in our assessment of the literature. Our focus on quantitative papers allowed for identical coding for each article (e.g. country of sample). However, this did not allow us to consider the full breadth of scholarly knowledge on this topic – a limitation that should be considered when interpreting our results.

## Conclusion

This review provides a valuable assessment of the state of the literature. We find an increased interest in examining the role of (social) media in political polarization and highlight the need to more clearly define (and measure) political polarization. Further, we call on future research to consider using (social) media as a tool to reduce political polarization in the public and to provide those in the newsroom with more insights and evidence-based information on how to prevent media coverage from unwittingly increasing polarization. Political polarization is a challenge likely to continue to affect society for the foreseeable future, however, we believe continuing to research the ways media can exacerbate (or hinder) political polarization can provide meaningful knowledge on the best ways to heal our political divisions.

## Notes

1. Political polarization can further be divided into elite polarization – where party elites (e.g. politicians and party leaders) are polarized (Hetherington, 2001) and mass polarization – where the greater public (e.g. average citizens) are polarized (Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008). While this is an important distinction to make, for the current research we do not focus on one form of polarization over the other. This is because elite and mass polarization can become intertwined within mediated contexts. For example, the (polarized) masses can read a news article about polarized political elites or a political elite can share a polarizing Tweet created by an average citizen.
2. We also coded for type of methodology used, type of sample (e.g. convenience), and media type and political topic assessed. Results for these findings can be found in the appendix.
3. We also searched for papers with the alternate spelling of “Polarisation”. This search produced the same 751 articles.
4. Several papers were published online by July 2020 however the printed version was published in 2021. We now cite the printed versions of these papers.
5. We additionally gathered more qualitative information. While coding each article, the research assistant also summarized each papers’ key findings in a few sentences. We used these summaries in our qualitative analysis – looking for overarching patterns (or inconsistencies) in the collected research articles.
6. While publishing papers exploring the role of media in political polarization seems to be a recent trend, years of data collection were much less homogenous. Multiple studies used longitudinal data spanning back into the twentieth century. However, a majority of data collected was still collected within the last 10 to 15 years – suggesting much of what we know about the role of media in political polarization is from recent data.
7. While we explore whether papers made a clear distinction between ideological and affective polarization – such a distinction was not possible for papers written before the concept of affective polarization was established in 2012 (Iyengar et al., 2012). Therefore, we also separately looked at papers written before 2012. All these papers focused on ideological polarization, and only 1 of these 5 papers provided a definition.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Codebook

Please see appendix Table A1 for a detailed breakdown of codes.

#### Year of publication

The publication year of the paper was recorded with 1 count for that appropriate year. For example, if a paper was published in 2019, 1 count was added to 2019.

#### Country of sample

The country the sample was recruited from (by study) was recorded with 1 count for the appropriate country. For example, if a study's sample was from Austria, Austria would receive 1 count. If a paper had 2 studies, 1 in which the sample was from the U.S., and the other in which the sample was from Israel, each country would receive 1 count. Further, if a sample had 3 studies, and each study had a Dutch sample, 3 counts were added to the Netherlands, as we analyzed this dimension by a study rather than by paper. In analyses, there were several cases in which one study included both a content analysis (e.g. from the U.S.) and a survey (with U.S. participants), in these cases we only added 1 count to the United States instead of 2. In other studies, there were several samples from several countries, in these cases, 1 count was added to each of those countries. Several studies provided unclear or no information on where their sample was from, therefore in analyses we marked them as 'Unclear/Unidentified.'

### *Type of sample*

For all samples that included human participants (e.g. were not content analyses of Tweets or newspapers), we recorded what type of sample they were (i.e. representative vs convenience sample). As with the country of sample analysis, we analyzed this dimension by study rather than by paper. This meant if a paper had 2 studies, both of which were convenience samples, 2 counts would be added under convenience. If a paper had 2 studies, one of which was convenience and the other was a representative sample, 1 count would be added under convenience, and another under representative sample. If a paper had a study that included both a content analysis *and* a human sample in combination, 1 count would be added under the appropriate type of sample. Two studies used advanced analyses with multiple types of data and samples, making it impossible to categorize either of them, we marked these studies as 'Other.'

### *Type of methodology*

We coded methodology by study (rather than by paper). We recorded methodology type with the following options: content analysis, experiment, longitudinal/panel study, or survey. If a paper had two studies, 1 that was a survey and another that was an experiment, each methodology would receive 1 count. Some studies had multiple methodologies within 1 study (e.g. a content analysis in combination with a survey), in these cases both types of methodologies would receive a count (e.g. 1 count for content analysis and 1 count for survey). Two studies did not fit any of the aforementioned methodologies, in these cases we coded these options as 'Other.'

*Secondary Data.* Additionally, we considered whether the study used secondary data. For each study that used secondary data (even if there were multiple secondary data sources within that 1 study), we added 1 count to the total count of studies using secondary data sources. Further, if a paper, for example, had 2 studies, and both of those studies used different secondary data sources, we added 2 to a total count of studies using secondary data sources, again because we were interested in analyzing this by study rather than by paper.

### *Political topic*

We also evaluated the types of political issues studies focus on. For example, did the study analyze newspapers about climate change? Or experimentally manipulate Tweets about immigration? There were a wide variety of topics assessed or used by these studies, from the death penalty, to government spending, to political advertising, to candidate evaluations. We grouped studies with similar political themes together where appropriate. This analysis was done by a study rather than by paper. This means that if a paper had 2 studies, both of which focused on immigration, we would add 2 counts to the 'Immigration/Refugee' category. Further, some studies focused on multiple political issues, in these cases we added one count for each type of political topic.

### *Type of media*

Finally, we evaluated what type of media the paper focused on. For example, were they interested in selective exposure to social media sites? Did they manipulate news articles? Similarly, to the political topic analyses, this analysis was done by study rather than by paper. This means that if a paper had 2 studies, both of which focused on broadcast news, we would add 2 counts to the 'Broadcast News/Cable TV/ Political ad' category. Further, some studies focused on multiple types of media (e.g. selective exposure to broadcast news, newspapers, and social media), in these cases, we added one count to all types of media (e.g. broadcast news, newspapers, social media).

### *Analysis of political polarization*

For this dimension, we counted the number of papers that provided some kind of definition for polarization. During initial coding by the research assistant, it was coded whether a paper had a

definition using the following coding scheme (1=Yes, 2=No). During the analysis we then counted up the total number of papers that included a definition.

Additionally, we coded for the type of polarization each paper assessed (ideological polarization, affective polarization, or both). The type of polarization assessed was determined based on the measures used in the paper. Measures focused on favorability/and likeability of ingroup and outgroup were considered as measuring affective polarization. Measures focused on a political stance or ideological position were considered as measuring ideological polarization. During the analysis, we focused on the type of polarization assessed by paper rather than by study, so for example if a paper had two studies, both of which assessed ideological polarization, this paper would receive 1 count for measuring ideological polarization.

We also coded for whether papers mentioned polarization in their hypotheses and/or methods. When polarization was mentioned (i.e. 'ideological polarization,' 'affective polarization,' 'political polarization,' or 'polarization') in both hypotheses and methods, it was coded as a 'yes,' when polarization was mentioned in neither hypotheses or methods, it was coded as a 'no.' If a paper mentioned polarization in one but not the other (e.g. mentioned polarization in hypotheses but not in methods), this was noted by explicitly stating in which section polarization was mentioned and in which it was not (e.g. 'hypotheses yes, methods no').

## Additional results

### Appendix Table A1. Breakdown of codes for quantitative analysis

Category	Breakdown of Count					
Year of Publication (by Paper)	2020	23	2016	9	2011	2
	2019	12	2015	7	2010	2
	2018	16	2014	5	2002	1
	2017	13	2013	4		
Country of Sample (by Study)	United States:	81	Slovakia:			1
	South Korea:	6	Slovenia:			1
	The Netherlands:	5	Spain:			1
	Israel:	5	Russia:			1
	Germany:	4	Belgium:			1
	Austria:	4	Bulgaria:			1
	France:	3	Cyprus:			1
	United Kingdom:	3	Czech Republic:			1
	Ireland:	2	Denmark:			1
	Canada:	2	Estonia:			1
	Japan:	2	Finland:			1
	Sweden:	2	India:			1
	Italy:	2	Hong Kong:			1
	Colombia	2	Chile:			1
	Greece:	2	Norway:			1
	Hungary:	1	Switzerland:			1
	Latvia:	1	Argentina:			1
	Lithuania:	1	Ghana:			1
	Malta:	1	Portugal:			1
	Poland	1	Romania:			1
		Unclear/Unidentified:			4	
Type of Human Sample (By Study)	Convenience:					56
	Representative:					42
	Other:					2
Type of Methodology (By Study)	Content Analysis:					20
	Experiment:					44
	Longitudinal/ Panel Study:					26
	Survey:					28
	Other					2
Political Topic (By Study)	Use of Secondary Data					34

(Continued)

Continued.

Category	Breakdown of Count	
	Immigration/Refugees:	18
	Climate Change and Climate Policy:	11
	Elections, Voting, and Campaigning:	11
	Women and minority rights/issues:	8
	Healthcare:	8
	Government Regulation and Spending/Taxation:	7
	Politician/Political Party Evaluations:	6
	Foreign Policy & War/ Military:	6
	Protest:	5
	Welfare and Economic Inequality:	5
	Court Rulings, New Laws, Amendments:	5
	Support for/ Confidence in Government:	4
	Party Rhetoric:	3
	Gun Policy:	3
	Polarization/Partisan Conflict:	3
	Other:	12
Type of Media (By Study)	Specific Media	
	Twitter:	12
	Facebook:	5
	WhatsApp:	2
	Newspaper/Print Media/Online News Sites:	20
	Broadcast News/Cable TV/Political Ads:	11
	Radio:	7
	Online Blogs:	4
	Overall Media Usage	15
	Assessed Overall Social Media Use:	13
	Assessed Overall (Online) News Media Use:	5
	General Internet Use/Access:	23
	Media Manipulations	6
	Manipulated News Article/Transcript:	5
	Manipulated Social Media Posts:	1
	Manipulated Video Clips/News Shows:	4
	Manipulated Radio Show	
	Other:	
Type of Polarization (by Paper)	Ideological Polarization	50
	Affective Polarization	31
	Ideological and Affective Polarization	14
Mention Polarization in Hypotheses and Methods (by Paper)	Mention in both Hypotheses and Methods	44
	Mention in Hypotheses	16
	Mention in Methods	8
	Mention in neither Hypotheses nor Methods	26

### *Qualitative analytic strategy with coded articles*

As mentioned previously, we also conducted a more qualitative analysis in which the research assistant summarized the key findings from each paper in several sentences. With these summaries, we looked for overlapping themes to explore whether there were patterns in findings related to the role of media in political polarization. Note that for the qualitative analyses considered each of the paper categories separately (i.e. media contents, selective exposure, pre-selection, or media effects) to answer RQ2. This meant we looked for overarching patterns in findings of (1) papers that explored media contents, (2) papers that explored selective exposure to media, (3) papers focused on pre-selection, and (4) papers focused on media effects. Overall, we found consistency in findings, with very few results not being able to be grouped with findings from other papers.

To answer the qualitative component of RQ3, the research assistant copy and pasted the measurement of political polarization directly from the paper. We then looked for overlapping trends in how both ideological and affective polarization were measured throughout the literature.





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## An Introduction The Impact Of Media On Indian Politics

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### Introduction:-

The impact of media on Indian politics has been significant in recent years. With the rise of digital media and social networking platforms, political campaigns and messages can now reach a larger audience than ever before. This has led to an increase in political awareness and engagement among the Indian public, as well as a greater level of scrutiny and accountability for political leaders. Media coverage of political events, particularly in television news channels, has become increasingly influential in shaping public opinion. The way issues are framed and the tone of the coverage can have a significant impact on how the public perceives political leaders and their policies. The use of social media has also become a powerful tool for political campaigns in India. Political parties and leaders can use social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp to reach out to voters directly and mobilize support. This has led to a greater emphasis on digital campaigning, as parties try to leverage the power of social media to reach younger, tech-savvy voters. However, the influence of media on Indian politics is not without its challenges. Media outlets are often accused of bias, with some channels accused of being partial to particular political parties or candidates. This can lead to a lack of objectivity in reporting, which can ultimately undermine the credibility of the media as a whole. There is also concern about the spread of fake news and misinformation, particularly on social media platforms, which can be used to manipulate public opinion and create division. This has led to calls for greater regulation of social media platforms and increased media literacy among the general public. Overall, the impact of media on Indian politics is complex and multifaceted. While it has played an important role in increasing political awareness and engagement, it has also raised concerns about bias, objectivity, and the spread of misinformation. The impact of media on Indian politics has been significant over the years, especially with the growth of digital media and social media platforms. The media has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political outcomes in India. Here are some of the key ways in which media has impacted Indian politics:

- **Setting the Political Agenda:** The media has the power to set the political agenda by deciding which issues are important and which ones are not. This can have a major impact on elections, as politicians often focus on the issues that are getting the most media attention.
  - **Exposing Corruption:** The media has been instrumental in exposing corruption in Indian politics. Investigative journalism has helped uncover major corruption scandals, leading to public outrage and political change.
  - **Influencing Public Opinion:** The media has the power to influence public opinion through its reporting and commentary. This can sway voters in favor of a particular political party or candidate.
  - **Mobilizing Mass Protests:** Social media has played a significant role in mobilizing mass protests in India, such as the recent farmer protests. Digital media has made it easier for people to organize and spread information, making it easier to mobilize large numbers of people quickly.
  - **Holding Politicians Accountable:** The media has the power to hold politicians accountable for their actions. By reporting on their activities, the media can expose wrongdoing and force politicians to take responsibility for their actions.
  - **Shaping public opinion:** The media has the power to shape public opinion and influence the way people think about political issues. Through its coverage of news and current events, the media can sway public opinion and perception about political leaders and parties. The media has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion on various political issues. The news channels, newspapers, and online platforms have the power to influence people's views and perceptions about political parties and their leaders. This can impact electoral outcomes.
  - **Providing a platform for political discourse:** The media provides a platform for political discourse and debate, allowing different voices and perspectives to be heard. This can lead to the development of new ideas and policies.
  - **Exposing corruption and scandals:** The media plays a crucial role in exposing corruption and scandals in politics, which can lead to public outrage and demands for accountability. However, the impact of media on Indian politics is not always positive. Some of the negative impacts include:
    - **Sensationalism and bias:** The media can sometimes prioritize sensational news and promote a biased or one-sided view of political events, which can lead to a distorted representation of the truth.
    - **Manipulation of public opinion:** The media can also be used to manipulate public opinion by spreading false information or propaganda, which can have a negative impact on democratic processes.
  - **Exposing corruption and malpractices in the Indian political system:** Investigative journalism has led to the unearthing of many scams, and brought them to the attention of the public.
  - **Sensationalism:** Unfortunately, some sections of the media tend to focus on sensational news stories rather than substantive political issues. This can distract people from important policy debates and undermine the quality of political discourse.
  - **Polarization:** The media's coverage of political events can also contribute to polarization in Indian society. Some media outlets tend to take a partisan stance, which can further divide people on the basis of their political beliefs.
  - **Amplifying social movements:** On the other hand, the media has also played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of social movements and marginalized groups. Through their coverage, they have brought attention to issues such as caste-based discrimination, gender-based violence, and minority rights.
- Overemphasis on personalities: The media often focuses on personalities rather than policies, which can lead to a superficial understanding of political issues and a lack of substantive debate. Overall, the impact of media on Indian politics is complex and multifaceted, with both positive and negative aspects. However, as long as the media is free and independent, it has the potential to play a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and democracy in India.

**History Of Indian Media:-** Media history in India can be traced back to the 18th century when the first newspaper, the Bengal Gazette, was published in Calcutta in 1780. However, it was during the 19th century that the Indian media industry witnessed significant growth with the establishment of several newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses.

- The first Indian language newspaper, the Samachar Darpan, was published in 1818. The 1857 uprising against the British also played a significant role in shaping the Indian media industry as many newspapers emerged during this period, including the Amrita Bazar Patrika and The Hindu.

- In 1910, the first Indian-owned radio station, the Indian Broadcasting Company, was established. The 1920s saw the emergence of cinema in India, with the first silent film, Raja Harishchandra, released in 1913.
- The 1940s and 50s saw the establishment of several government-controlled media organizations such as All India Radio and Doordarshan, which dominated the media landscape for several decades. However, the 1990s witnessed a liberalization of the media industry, with the entry of private players and the emergence of satellite television.

Today, India has a vibrant and diverse media industry that includes television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and digital media. The country has a large number of media outlets, both in English and regional languages, and is considered one of the world's largest media markets.

**The History of Indian politics :-** The history of Indian politics dates back to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic period, where the state was primarily governed by a monarchy. Over time, various dynasties ruled over different parts of India, including the Mauryas, Guptas, Mughals, and the Marathas.

In the late 1800s, the Indian National Congress (INC) was formed, which aimed to advocate for Indian independence from British rule. The movement for independence gained momentum in the early 1900s, led by prominent figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The INC played a crucial role in India's struggle for independence, and India finally gained its freedom from British rule in 1947.

After independence, India became a republic with a parliamentary system of government. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India and played a significant role in shaping the country's political and economic policies. In the following years, India saw the emergence of various political parties, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI).

The period from the 1960s to the 1980s was marked by political instability and economic challenges, including food shortages and inflation. Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, became Prime Minister and implemented several reforms, including nationalizing banks and promoting the Green Revolution to boost agricultural productivity.

In 1991, India adopted economic liberalization policies, opening up its economy to foreign investment and reducing government control over the market. The liberalization policies led to significant economic growth and development, but also contributed to widening income inequality.

Since then, India has witnessed several changes in its political landscape, including the rise of regional parties and the formation of coalition governments. In recent years, issues such as corruption, communalism, and social inequality have dominated political discourse in India. The current Prime Minister of India is Narendra Modi, who was re-elected in 2019.

**Type of media:** There are various types of media, each with its own unique characteristics and methods of communication. Some of the major types of media include:

- **Print Media:** Print media includes newspapers, magazines, books, and other printed materials. This type of media is typically distributed in physical form and provides in-depth coverage of news, entertainment, and other topics.
- **Broadcast Media:** Broadcast media includes television and radio, which transmit information through airwaves to a large audience. This type of media provides news, entertainment, and other content in real-time and is accessible to a wide range of people.
- **Digital Media:** Digital media refers to online platforms such as social media, websites, blogs, and mobile apps. This type of media is rapidly growing in popularity and offers instant access to news, information, and entertainment.

- **Outdoor Media:** Outdoor media includes billboards, posters, and other forms of advertising that are displayed in public spaces. This type of media is designed to reach a large audience and create brand awareness.
- **Cinema:** Cinema refers to the film industry and includes movies, documentaries, and other forms of visual media. This type of media provides a powerful storytelling medium and is used to convey ideas, emotions, and messages.
- **Interactive Media:** Interactive media includes video games, virtual reality, and other forms of digital media that allow users to interact with the content. This type of media provides an immersive experience and engages users in a unique way.

### **Review of the literature :-**

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy, and its role in shaping political discourse cannot be underestimated. The media has the power to influence public opinion and can impact political decision-making. In recent years, the media landscape has undergone a transformation with the advent of social media and the proliferation of digital platforms. This has led to a proliferation of information sources, and the impact of media on politics has become more complex. The impact of media on Indian politics has been a topic of much debate and discussion in the academic and political spheres. A review of the literature on this topic reveals a complex relationship between media and politics in India, with both positive and negative effects on the political system.

- **"Media and Political Process in India" by A. Raghuramaraju** - This book explores the role of media in shaping Indian politics. The author argues that the media has become a critical player in Indian politics and has the power to shape public opinion and influence policy decisions. The book analyzes the changing dynamics of the relationship between the media and the political class in India.
- **"Media and Politics in India" by Shefali Roy** - This research paper examines the impact of media on Indian politics. The author argues that the media has a significant influence on shaping public opinion and can sway election outcomes. The paper also discusses the role of media in promoting democratic values and fostering public debate.
- **"The Media and Indian Politics" by S. Gurumurthy** - This article analyzes the relationship between media and politics in India. The author argues that the media has become an integral part of the political process and has the power to influence public opinion. The article also discusses the challenges faced by media in maintaining its independence and objectivity.
- **"Media and Elections in India" by Sanjay Kumar and Suhas Palshikar** - This research paper examines the impact of media on electoral outcomes in India. The authors argue that the media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior. The paper also discusses the challenges faced by the media in covering elections and maintaining its objectivity.
- **"Media and Political Participation in India" by Kanchan Chandra** - This article examines the role of media in promoting political participation in India. The author argues that the media can play a critical role in increasing political awareness and mobilizing citizens to participate in the democratic process. The article also discusses the challenges faced by the media in reaching out to marginalized communities and promoting their participation in politics.
- **"Politics and the Media in India" by Robin Jeffrey:** This book provides a comprehensive overview of the role of media in Indian politics. It discusses the evolution of media in India, the impact of media on political campaigns and elections, and the relationship between media and political power.

- **"Media and Democracy in India" by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta:** This book examines the role of media in promoting and sustaining democracy in India. It discusses the challenges faced by media in India, including censorship, commercialization, and political interference, and analyzes the impact of media on political discourse and public opinion.
- **"The Impact of Television on Indian Politics" by Ashok Kumar Malik:** This article examines the impact of television on Indian politics. It discusses the role of television in shaping public opinion, the influence of television on political campaigns and elections, and the relationship between television and political power.
- **"New Media and Indian Politics" by Biswajit Das:** This article examines the impact of new media, such as social media and digital platforms, on Indian politics. It discusses the role of new media in shaping public opinion, the influence of new media on political campaigns and elections, and the challenges and opportunities presented by new media for Indian democracy.
- **"Media and Democracy in India" by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and Kanchan Gupta:** This book explores the relationship between media and democracy in India. It examines the role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing political decision-making, as well as the impact of media ownership and control on the quality of democracy in India.
- **"The Indian Media and the Politics of Change" by Sanjay Baru:** This book provides an overview of the role of media in Indian politics, from the pre-independence era to the present day. It examines the impact of media on political campaigns, the role of media in shaping public opinion, and the challenges faced by media in a rapidly changing political landscape.
- **"Media and Politics in India" edited by Rajeev Bhargava and Sudha Pai:** This book is a collection of essays by various scholars on the relationship between media and politics in India. It covers a wide range of topics, including the role of media in elections, the impact of media on political scandals, and the use of social media by politicians.
- **"Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia" edited by Lawrence A. Babb and Susan S. Wadley:** This book explores the role of media in shaping religious identity and practices in South Asia, including India. It examines the impact of media on the Hindu nationalist movement and the rise of religious fundamentalism in India.
- **"The Indian Media Business" by Vanita Kohli-Khandekar:** This book provides an overview of the media industry in India, including its history, growth, and challenges. It examines the impact of media ownership and control on the quality of journalism in India, and the role of media in shaping public opinion and influencing political decision-making.
- **"Media and Politics in India" by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and Subi Chaturvedi (2008):** This book provides an overview of the history of media and politics in India and analyzes the impact of media on Indian democracy. It discusses how the media has helped to expose corruption and malpractices in politics, but also how it has been used by political parties to manipulate public opinion.
- **"The Role of Media in Indian Democracy" by Sangeeta Sharma (2013):** This paper examines the role of media in shaping Indian democracy, with a focus on the impact of television news channels. It argues that the rise of 24-hour news channels has had a significant impact on the way politics is reported and perceived in India.
- **"Social Media and Indian Politics" by Nidhi Gupta and Aditya Tripathi (2017):** This article discusses the impact of social media on Indian politics, particularly during the 2014 general election. It argues that social media played a significant role in shaping public opinion and mobilizing voters, particularly among young people.
- **"The Impact of Television on Indian Politics" by Smita Mishra Panda (2016):** This paper examines the impact of television news channels on Indian politics, with a focus on the coverage of political events and personalities. It argues

that the media's focus on sensationalism and entertainment has led to a decline in the quality of political discourse and a lack of substantive coverage of policy issues.

- **"Media and Politics in India: Some Reflections" by Sanjay Kumar (2015):** This article provides a critical assessment of the impact of media on Indian politics, arguing that the media has played a largely negative role in shaping public opinion and influencing electoral outcomes. It argues that the media's focus on sensationalism and entertainment has led to a decline in the quality of political discourse and a lack of substantive coverage of policy issues. Raghavan, V. (2019) argues that media has played a significant role in shaping the political discourse in India. The author argues that the media has become an important player in Indian politics, especially after the liberalization of the economy. The author suggests that the media has become a platform for the expression of diverse voices, leading to the democratization of politics.
- **Bajpai, N. (2017)** suggests that the media has played a crucial role in influencing the public opinion and voting behavior in India. The author argues that the media has the power to set the political agenda and shape the narrative, which in turn influences the public opinion. The author suggests that the media has become a powerful tool for political mobilization, and political parties use the media extensively to reach out to the voters.
- **Thakur, D. (2018)** argues that the media has a significant impact on the political culture in India. The author suggests that the media has become a site for the negotiation and contestation of political identities, leading to the fragmentation of the political culture. The author suggests that the media has contributed to the rise of identity politics in India.
- **Shukla, S. (2020)** suggests that the media has played a significant role in the emergence of a new political class in India. The author argues that the media has created a platform for the representation of new voices and ideas, which has led to the emergence of a new political class. The author suggests that the media has played a crucial role in the democratization of the political process in India.
- **Jha, P. (2016)** argues that the media has a significant impact on the political economy in India. The author suggests that the media has become an important site for the negotiation of economic policies, which has a significant impact on the political economy. The author suggests that the media has contributed to the emergence of a new neoliberal economic order in India.
- **"Media and Indian Democracy" by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta and Kalpana Sharma (2009)** - This study explores the role of media in Indian democracy and how it has changed over time. The authors argue that while the media has played a crucial role in promoting transparency and accountability, it has also contributed to the rise of sensationalism and a lack of critical analysis.
- **"Media and Politics in India" by P.N. Chopra (2007)** - This book provides a comprehensive overview of the relationship between media and politics in India. The author argues that the media has become an important player in the political arena and has the power to shape public opinion and influence policy decisions.
- **"Media, Politics and Democracy in India" by R.K. Raghavan (2012)** - This study examines the impact of media on Indian democracy and argues that the media has played a key role in promoting accountability and transparency. However, the author also notes that the media can be biased and sensationalist, which can undermine its role in promoting democracy.
- **"Media and Indian Politics" by Mahendra Prasad Singh (2010)** - This book provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between media and politics in India. The author argues that the media has become an important tool for politicians to promote their agenda and influence public opinion.

- **"Media and Political Processes in India" by Biswajit Das (2012)** - This study examines the impact of media on political processes in India and argues that the media has played a key role in shaping political discourse and promoting accountability. However, the author also notes that the media can be biased and sensationalist, which can undermine its role in promoting democracy.

One of the earliest studies on this topic was conducted by Rajeev Bhargava in 1986. He argued that the Indian media played a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing political outcomes. He noted that the media had the power to expose corruption and hold politicians accountable, but also warned that it could be used as a tool of propaganda by those in power. More recent studies have explored the impact of new media technologies, such as social media, on Indian politics. In a 2016 study, Priyanka Chopra and Amit Kumar Singh found that social media played a significant role in the 2014 Indian general election, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) using it effectively to mobilize supporters and disseminate its message. They also noted that social media was used to spread fake news and misinformation, which could have a negative impact on the democratic process. Another study by Anjali Gera Roy in 2015 examined the role of Bollywood films in shaping political consciousness in India. She argued that Bollywood films often reinforced dominant narratives about nationalism, gender, and religion, and that these narratives could have a significant impact on public opinion and political outcomes. One of the earliest studies on this topic was conducted by Robin Jeffrey in his book 'India's Newspaper Revolution'. The book highlights the crucial role that newspapers played in shaping public opinion during the pre-independence era. The book also suggests that newspapers played a significant role in building national identity and shaping India's political discourse. Another seminal work on this topic is the book 'The Television Revolution in India' by Nalin Mehta. The book analyzes the impact of television on Indian politics and suggests that television has played a crucial role in creating a new political culture in India. Mehta argues that television has provided a platform for citizens to participate in political discourse and has helped in creating a more informed and politically conscious electorate. Similarly, the book 'News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment' by Daya Kishan Thussu examines the impact of globalization and the rise of infotainment on Indian media. The book suggests that the commercialization of news has led to a decline in the quality of journalism and has affected the media's ability to act as a watchdog. A more recent study by Biswajit Das and Tariq Ashraf, titled 'Media and Politics in India: A Study on the Role of Social Media in the 2014 General Elections', examines the impact of social media on the 2014 general elections in India. The study suggests that social media played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and mobilizing voters during the elections. Similarly, a study by Vibodh Parthasarathi and Sweta Singh, titled 'Indian General Elections: Social Media and Political Communication', analyzes the impact of social media on the 2019 general elections in India. The study suggests that social media played a significant role in shaping public opinion and helped in mobilizing young voters. "Media, Political Parties, and Democratic Accountability in India" by Milan Vaishnav and Devesh Kapur: This paper examines the role of the media in shaping political accountability in India. The authors argue that the media has played a key role in exposing corruption scandals and holding politicians accountable, but also note that the media's influence is limited by its own biases and the fact that many media outlets are owned by political parties. "Media, Politics and Democracy in India" by Biswajit Das: This paper explores the role of media in the democratization of India. The author argues that the media has been instrumental in creating a more informed and engaged citizenry, but also notes that the media's power is limited by its reliance on government advertising and its own commercial interests. "Media and Democracy in India" by Robin Jeffrey: This book provides a comprehensive overview of the role of media in Indian democracy. The author argues that the media has played a critical role in promoting democratic values and exposing

corruption, but also notes that the media's influence is limited by its ownership structure and the lack of editorial independence. "Media and Political Culture in India" edited by Shakuntala Rao and Herman Wasserman: This book examines the relationship between media and political culture in India. The authors argue that the media has played a key role in shaping political discourse and promoting democratic values, but also note that the media's influence is limited by its reliance on advertising revenue and its own political biases. "The Media and Political Process in India" by R.K. Raghavan: This paper examines the role of the media in Indian politics, with a focus on the 2009 general election. The author argues that the media played a key role in shaping public opinion and influencing the outcome of the election, but also notes that the media's influence is limited by its own biases and the fact that many media outlets are owned by political parties. "Media and Indian Politics" by Pradeep Nair and Meena Prakash: This book provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of media in Indian politics. The authors argue that media has had a significant impact on shaping public opinion and influencing political decision-making in the country. "The Indian Media and the Changing Landscape of Indian Politics" by Kanchan Chandra: This article examines the changing relationship between the media and politics in India. The author argues that the rise of private media in the country has led to a shift in the balance of power between the government and the media, with the latter now exerting greater influence on public opinion. "Media and Democracy in India" by Paranjoy Guha Thakurta: This book explores the complex relationship between media and democracy in India. The author argues that while media has played a crucial role in exposing corruption and holding politicians accountable, it has also been accused of being biased and sensationalist. "The Impact of Media on Indian Politics: A Critical Analysis" by Jyoti Sharma: This article provides a critical analysis of the impact of media on Indian politics. The author argues that while media has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, it has also been accused of being overly sensationalist and lacking in objectivity. "Media and Politics in India: A Historical Perspective" by Sevanti Ninan: This book provides a historical perspective on the relationship between media and politics in India. The author argues that while media has always been an important player in Indian politics, the rise of private media in recent years has fundamentally changed the nature of this relationship.

### **Research Gap:**

While there is a significant body of literature on media and politics, there are also several research gaps that remain to be addressed. One area that has received relatively little attention is the impact of digital media platforms on political discourse and behavior. With the rise of social media and other digital platforms, there is a growing need to understand how these technologies are shaping political communication and public opinion. Another research gap is the role of media in shaping the behavior of non-state actors, such as civil society organizations and social movements. While much of the literature on media and politics has focused on elected officials and other formal political actors, there is a need to understand how media can affect the behavior of these informal actors, which can play an important role in shaping public opinion and political outcomes.

### **Need for the study:**

There is a need for more research on the interaction between media and political institutions in authoritarian regimes. While much of the existing literature has focused on democracies, there is a growing need to understand how media operate in contexts where political institutions are less transparent and more restrictive. This research aims to explore the impact of media on politics and identify research gaps in the existing literature.



## **Objectives of the study:**

The objectives of study are:

1. To examine the role of media in shaping public opinion on political issues.
2. To evaluate how the media influences the political process, including the behavior of political actors, the policy-making process, and the outcome of elections.
3. To investigate the impact of media ownership on political coverage and the role of media bias in shaping public opinion.
4. To analyze the effects of new media technologies, such as social media, on political discourse and the traditional media's role in shaping public opinion.
5. To explore the challenges facing the media in covering politics, including the ethical challenges of reporting on political issues, the impact of censorship and propaganda on media coverage, and the need for media literacy among citizens.
6. To assess the impact of media on political participation and citizen engagement, including the role of media in mobilizing voters and promoting political activism.
7. To examine the impact of media on political institutions, including the role of media in promoting transparency and accountability, and the impact of media on the legitimacy of political institutions.

## **HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY**

1. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant role of media in shaping public opinion on political issues.
2. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant media influences the political process, including the behavior of political actors, the policy-making process, and the outcome of elections.
3. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant the impact of media ownership on political coverage and the role of media bias in shaping public opinion.
4. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant effects of new media technologies, such as social media, on political discourse and the traditional media's role in shaping public opinion.
5. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant challenges facing the media in covering politics, including the ethical challenges of reporting on political issues, the impact of censorship and propaganda on media coverage, and the need for media literacy among citizens.
6. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant impact of media on political participation and citizen engagement, including the role of media in mobilizing voters and promoting political activism.
7. **H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant impact of media on political institutions, including the role of media in promoting transparency and accountability, and the impact of media on the legitimacy of political institutions.

## **Research Methodology:**

The research methodology will consist of a quantitative survey, with data collected from a sample of participants. The survey will be designed to investigate the research questions and objectives of the study. The data will be analyzed using statistical methods, including descriptive and inferential statistics.

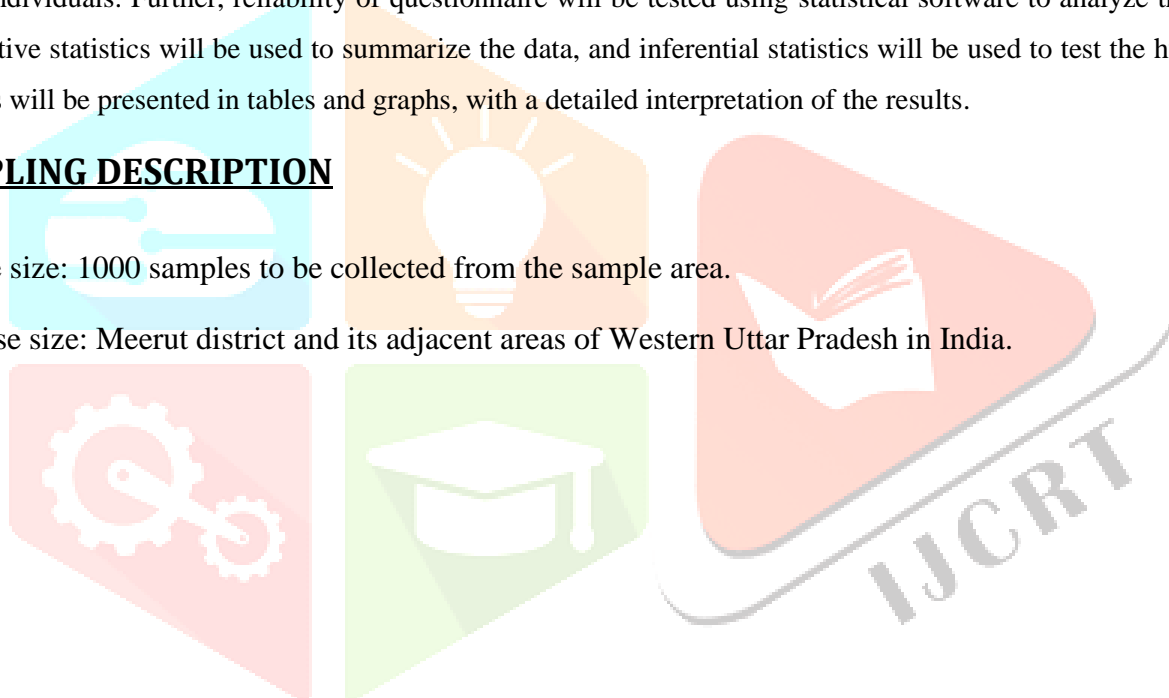
The first step in research is the formulation of research problem. It is the most important stage in applied research since poorly defined problems will not yields useful results. It is rightly said, "A problem defined is half solved ". The study will analyze the level of the impact of media on Indian politics of Meerut district and its adjacent areas of Western Uttar Pradesh in India. The present research work has been accomplished on two stages. Former stage of study is explanatory in nature. Already available literatures concerned to the impact of media on Indian politics were collected. This exploratory part of research forms basis for preparing questionnaire and research questions for the next stage.

## **SAMPLING TOOL**

A structured questionnaire will be developed for the study and analysis of financial literacy level & investment behavior of the individuals. Further, reliability of questionnaire will be tested using statistical software to analyze the survey data. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the data, and inferential statistics will be used to test the hypotheses. The findings will be presented in tables and graphs, with a detailed interpretation of the results.

## **SAMPLING DESCRIPTION**

- Sample size: 1000 samples to be collected from the sample area.
- Universe size: Meerut district and its adjacent areas of Western Uttar Pradesh in India.



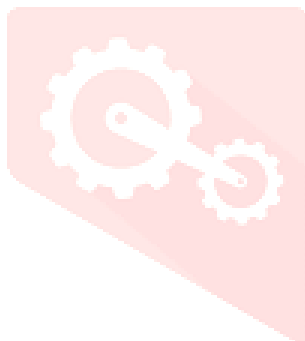
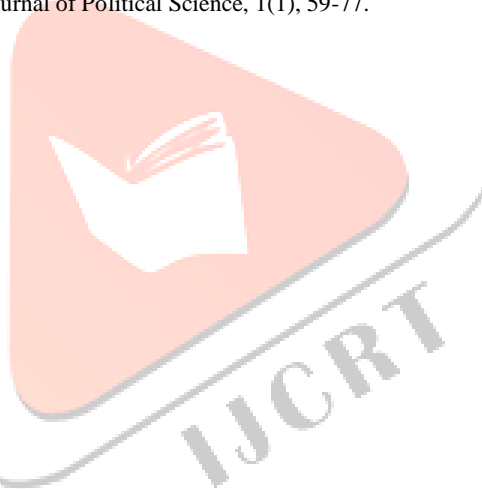
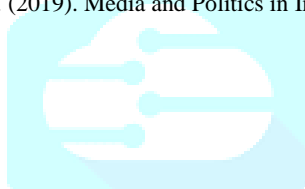
## **TENTATIVE CHAPTER SCHEME**

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>The impact of media on Indian politics</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Review of Literature</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Research Methodology</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Data Analysis &amp; Interpretation</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>:</b>	<b>Conclusion and Suggestions</b>

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# **Tackling ‘bias’ and fake coverage in the Indian media**

**Buroshiva Dasgupta**  
**Unitedworld School of Liberal Arts, Karnavati University**

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With a population over a billion, the Indian ‘republic’ has 29 states (and seven Union Territories), 22 official languages and a few hundred dialects. The country has about 100,000 registered publications, 1000 television channels, few hundred FM radio stations and 500 million internet users – and the numbers are growing.

In a free democratic set up like India without a proper media regulatory system in place, there remains the danger of creating a ‘babble’ out of all the content created through so many media outlets. A strong propaganda machinery, on the other hand, can mould the masses the way it wants to, as we now increasingly seem to witness in successive election campaigns. Both are in fact true today in the Indian media scene – an unregulated social media and an apparently ‘controlled’ mainstream media. Attempts are made to control the social media too.

In 1975-77 the Indian government made the mistake of declaring an emergency and gagged the press. Mrs. Indira Gandhi lost the elections. Today, under Narendra Modi, the general public is of the opinion that there is a ‘super emergency’ in India (a statement, in fact, made by a chief minister of a state) where there is no official announcement of gagging the press, but a strong invisible ‘control’ seems to exist, in a number of ways.

Indian media has suffered through the phase of ‘paid news’ in which advertisement was masquerading as news. There was a loud uproar; the courts and the Election Commission disqualified a few politicians for adopting this method and a few editors lost their jobs. But today, with social media becoming so popular, the line of distinction between paid news and unpaid news has disappeared. Everybody is a publisher. Added to this is the new phenomenon of ‘fake news’.

The present BJP government has hired a group of professionals for propaganda and, behind the scenes, created a machinery to control the media. The Prime Minister himself delivers a monthly radio programme “Maan Ki Baat” which has been made compulsory transmission for all radio stations. Not that earlier attempts were not made to control the media (the public broadcasting system in India has remained with the government since inception). But the campaigns today are more focused and deliberate. This focused attempt to ‘guide’ the media came to surface, in particular, during the Lok Sabha (Parliamentary) election of 2014. The advertising guru (Piyush Pandey) who masterminded the BJP campaign said “the brief we got from BJP said that Mr. Modi’s popularity was higher than the party and therefore they wanted to play it like a

presidential campaign. There is a grassroots way of looking at life and then is an intellectual way. Baggage is in the minds of the intellectuals”(The *Economic Times*, May 19, 2014). He disclosed how he and his team created 125 artworks every single night for two months, 10 films every night. “If you do 200 commercials and I have lost the count of the print ads for every nook and corner of the country, it ought to be the toughest campaigns,” he added.

A collaborative research project was conducted by NSHM Institute of Media and Design and the students of the Mass Communication Department of Burdwan University to assess the ‘bias’ and consequently the ‘credibility’ of the media coverage just after the Indian parliamentary elections of 2014. It was research done on the coverage of local newspapers, television channels and social media in the state of West Bengal. Unfortunately, most media departments in colleges/universities in India are not geared toward conducting such surveys and this project was certainly an exception. We hardly have organisations like Pew Research Institute to do serious analysis of media trends – which media institutes in India could have collectively done.

The research project revealed that the entire gamut of the media – print, television, radio and the social media – has been, especially during the elections, put to a severe test on its objectivity. The report quotes a professor at Chicago University (Mathew Gentzkow), who in an article in *The Hindu* (April 25, 2014), compares the Indian election with that in the US: “Just as ice cream makers give customers the flavours they want, newspapers give readers the stories and slant they want. It’s a market phenomenon ... Applied to cable and news channels and the Internet, these same forces polarize politics. This is most apparent on cable, where MSNBC and Fox news have staked out Liberal and conservative turfs. Similar pressures affect the Internet: Conservatives favour the Drudge Report; Liberals, the Huffington Post. By contrast, the shrinking mainstream media (newspapers, network television and news magazines) competed for more centrist audiences. Today technology contributes to political polarisation”.

The social media in India, as in the US, aggravates this political polarisation through biased comments and by generating 'fake' news. The newspaper houses and the television channels in India are privately owned (except the Doordarshan, the public sector broadcaster) and they are, as in the US, market-driven. But in recent times the trend is that many of these ailing media houses are being taken over by the big business houses (like the Ambanis and Adanis) who are ‘close’ to the ruling party. Hence the 'bias' is becoming predictable. In fact, some of the media owners have developed political ambitions and have become members of the parliament.

The report also reveals that the opinion polls and exit polls carried by almost all the print and TV media were been proved wrong when the results were declared. On one hand it reveals that the mainstream media is losing touch with the common man; and on the other raising suspicions about the media’s alignments with political parties. The research project reveals clear ‘biases’ in the media coverages. Contents of five regional newspapers and four television channels were analysed by a team of eight faculty members (from two institutions) and about fifty students

gathered the data. About 60 percent of the respondents (about 3000 in number and spread over three regions) said that the media was 'biased' while about 30 per cent said it was 'neutral'.

Another 'local touch' that was revealed through the survey was the fall in the quality of the language, especially in the vernacular media. The 'unparliamentary' languages that political leaders used in the campaigns were being published directly without any screening. The editorial rigour is being broken – possibly, one step away from the entry of false or 'fake' news that is flooding all media outlets.

Western researchers (as in *A Field Guide to Fake News*) have organised efforts not just to teach the methods of identifying fake news - and their sources - but also to understand the 'ecology' of the consumers of news. Fake news goes viral in social media because certain groups or political organisations want such news to thrive. Certain social situations make these examples of fake news believable - at least for sometime till the myth is exposed. Researchers have developed 'generative adversarial network' (GAN) - a type of machine-learning algorithm - that challenged the original image. "The adversarial software, knowing what the real world looked like, provided meaning and boundaries for its generative kin" (*The Economist*, July 1, 2017)

In the Indian context, the researchers are yet to be so well versed with the software to detect fake news, but they are working in their own indigenous ways to tackle the problem. A new website AltNews.in has been doing a commendable job of trying to identify the sources of fake news and analyse how they have been created. "Some of the techniques he uses are to break up videos into frames and then search for those images online, until he can zero in on the original sources. Sometimes a simple web search describing the actions in the video will often take a vigilant user to a news story about the video" (*The Wire* 4/2/2017).

In his own blog, the originator of AltNews.in, Pratik Sinha, describes how "an epidemic of fake videos (has) hit the Indian social media ecosystem" and gives several examples of how he has painstakingly detected them. His own political 'slant' is obvious; but his efforts to detect fake news are worth noting. A video circulated for quite some time with a caption saying that "a Hindu girl from Andhra Pradesh married to a Muslim was beaten up and burnt alive by a few people belonging to a certain community for not wearing burkha". According to AltNews.in research, the video is not from Andhra Pradesh but taken from Guatemala. The main aim of circulating such fake videos, says Sinha, is to portray an individual, a community, a political entity, or people of a particular ethnicity in bad light.

India is fast getting polarised, not just politically but socially as well, on religious and ethnic lines. Not that these divisions did not exist before; but since Narendra Modi and his political party BJP came to power in 2014, these fissures are getting wider with the help of trolling in social media. Fake news and videos are being circulated in social media with a deliberate plan – just in the way ad agencies were employed to develop an election campaign with a clear

mandate. Countering criticism of Modi on social media and running down the opposition is evident everywhere, apparently by a team with a hidden agenda.

The southern state of Kerala, a bastion of left forces, is always in conflict with the rightist parties like RSS. A video was circulating in the mainstream media showing a RSS man being stabbed by a member of the left. AltNews.in showed (March 2017) that the video was from Mexico where a gang member was stabbed to death. It had nothing to do with Kerala.

A student of Delhi University, Gurmehar Kaur, posted a video (March 2017) in her facebook page seeking peace between India and Pakistan. Multiple people, including film and cricket stars, launched a misinformed attack on the student based on a video which had gone viral showing a young woman drinking along her friends in a moving car - and the video claimed that it was Gurmehar. Indian society still looks down upon a woman drinking in public. AltNews.in showed that the video was available on YouTube long before the controversy broke out and it was not Gurmehar's.

Indian society is now in turmoil on the issue of the holiness of the 'cow'. The central government has already issued an ordinance banning the slaughter of the cow. The political 'volunteers' called 'gau rakshak' (protector of the cow) are on the prowl and several cases have been reported where beef eaters have been assaulted and even killed. As if to counter the indignation, a video became viral in the western state of Rajasthan where a Hindu was shown to be killed by a Muslim in the eastern state of West Bengal. Again, Alt News came to the rescue showing that the video was from Bangladesh and the incident happened in the Comilla district of Bangladesh (on April, 2017) where an Awami League supporter was attacked and killed by his rivals.

Kashmir is another area of turmoil. News on border conflicts between the Indian and Pakistani armies and internal fights between army personnel and rebels within Kashmir are stuff for daily 'breaking news' in the Indian media. Trending stories usually lead to fake videos, and at least sometime they seem to be convincing. For example, soon after a real event of two Indian jawans were reported to have been beheaded by Pakistani soldiers, a video depicting the beheading of a Brazilian bank robber was circulated as the beheading of the Indian jawans. When Pakistan won the Champions Trophy, misleading videos - as old as a December 2016 one from Gujarat, another from Bihar and another from Pakistan - were circulated as showing Indian Muslims celebrating Pakistan's win.

In the race for 'trending' contents, news editors of mainstream media are also misled and they in their eagerness to compete with rivals pick up fake news without a proper check. The classic case in the Indian media occurred when several news channels simultaneously ran footage, which was not shot by their own reporters, on students of JNU chanting 'anti-Indian' slogans. It was unverified footage and on these grounds a student leader was jailed. The video was later found to be spliced, with audio from some other clip, overlaid on the JNU clip. The 'splicing' activity was revealed in detail by another rival channel which apparently lost out in the 'race' for



news. Channels did not run the disclaimers that they had carried unverified reports nor did they offer an apology after the splicing incident came to light.

In Europe, consortiums across professional rivalries get their stories checked. *CrossCheck* is one such consortium where participants include the BBC, Channel 4, Le Monde, Agence France-Presse and BuzzFeed get their stories stamped ‘true’ or ‘false’. Some of the stories are marked ‘caution’ if they are found to be suspect even after cross checking. A German organisation *Correctiv* is an investigative journalism venture which has a four member team dedicated to busting fake news.

There is no such collaborative venture yet in India among the mainstream media houses, even though the ‘epidemic’ of fake news in India demands such a move. The only effort so far seems to have come from the individual who set up AltNews.in, with his indigenous ways to identifying fake news. He started debunking fake news from his Facebook page but then went on to create a separate website AltNews.in just for exposing fake news. Sinha is quite frank with his alignments saying “People can disagree with me on ideological grounds, but they cannot disagree with me on my fact checks”. He thinks his work is vindicated when he adds “I saw even right-wing people sharing my stories where I debunked right wing propaganda” (*The Wire* April, 2017).

Some workshops have been conducted in recent times in Southeast Asia – like in Myanmar and the Philippines – through the joint initiatives of Stony Brook University and Hong Kong University – to develop a course curriculum on “News Literacy” primarily to identify fake news - for the media students/researchers. Unfortunately, these efforts have not taken deep roots in the Indian academic structure which is very slow to change. No college or university has attempted to create a full paper on News Literacy as yet, though some stray workshop and classes have been conducted on the lines discussed at the Myanmar conference for media teachers and practitioners on how to identify fake news.

In some of the ‘awareness’ classes for media students and trainee journalists, attempts were made to transfer the knowledge gathered at these news literacy workshops for media teachers by defining what news literacy is as an ability in critical thinking; why news literacy is important in the changed environment of news ‘consumption’ (where the reader is a participant); learning to identify the different information ‘neighbourhoods’ ( by differentiating between news from propaganda and entertainment); learning to ‘deconstruct’ the source of news through the “IMVAIN” principle and finally trying to identify the ‘bias’ because of political alignment or payment.

Given the magnitude of the ‘bias’ that exists today in Indian media (and that is hurting its credibility) and the incursions of fake news and videos, it is time for media professionals and academics to work together to tackle the crisis. The crisis is of no mean order: the social media, which have empowered every common man to become a publisher, can threaten the very

existence of a media teacher or a practitioner if he or she cannot justify the professionalism. The professionalism, it is hoped, will be reinforced by increasing the number of these awareness workshops both in the classroom and in the workplace. At the moment, unfortunately, these attempts at orientation towards news literacy are few and far between.

Facebook, Google, and Twitter have all pledged to help tackle fake news and videos; but as Sinha of AltNews.in complain, many fake items continue to circulate in spite of their being pointed out by several individuals from different sources. The problem has grown to become huge and it is still growing. The malevolent campaigns that run through Whatsapp and Facebook messenger and personal emails are still more difficult to track down or check. The campaign before the elections in Kenya, for example, found the use of these ‘dark social’ apps particularly ‘harmful’. If any person or organisation is critical of the government, concerted hate campaigns are created through these personal social apps. African local media reports that President Kenyatta hired Cambridge Analytica, a company now at the centre of a controversy over the use of personal data to influence both the Brexit vote in the UK and the Donald Trump election in the US. The foreign company has acknowledged working for a “leading Kenyan political party” in 2013 to conduct and implement the largest political research project in East Africa but denied working on Kenyatta campaign for the forthcoming elections (*Quartz*, June 25, 2017)

Indian media is still to dig up how much of the ‘personal data’ is being used for the campaigns or whether foreign companies are being hired to make use of the personal data that lies dormant under the ‘privacy code’ of social media. But it is strongly suspected that the data is being used, at least indigenously.

Meanwhile India, because of the recent hate campaign against a community, is standing on a veritable tinderbox and the communal flare-ups are becoming more and more frequent across the country. And social media shoulders much of the blame in helping to polarise the country socially. After a communal flare up in West Bengal recently, the head of the state police was heard making a public appeal through the mainstream media not to circulate motivated statements or fake news through social media which might worsen the law and order situation in the state. These direct references by the administration to ‘social media’ as a prime mover of social unrest are something new and quite unheard of in the corridors of power. Usually, the administration avoids drawing the media into the controversy and pretends that ‘it does not matter’ in tackling a ‘serious’ issue like law and order. But the change in strategy is significant.

If the administration can change the strategy, so can the media think tanks. None will desire an outside regulator clamping down a set of rules on the media. In order to avoid such an undesirable thing to happen to the media, it should go in for self-regulation to clamp down on trolling and draw up a well planned strategy to check and weed out fake news. Here media practitioners and media academics have to work hand in hand. But so far there is no sign of such a thing happening while the crisis created by fake news has reached the tipping point.

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*(A collaborative Research Project of NSHM Institute of Media & Design and Department of Mass Communication, Burdwan University)*



# Analysis of Media Bias in Policy Discourse in India

Anirban Sen  
t-anirbansen@microsoft.com  
Microsoft Research  
Bengaluru, India

Debanjan Ghatak  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

Sanket Dhakate  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

Kumari Rekha  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

Mehak Gupta  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

Gurjeet Singh Khanuja  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

Kartikeya Sharma  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

Aaditeshwar Seth  
aseth@cse.iitd.ac.in  
IIT Delhi  
New Delhi, India

## ABSTRACT

Many citizens consume information on government policies from the mass media. Consequently, biases existing in the policy discourse in media sources may influence citizens' understanding of the policies, about how they may affect diverse communities. These biases may also get amplified further through social media if it simply echoes the biases of mass media content. We build methods to quantify media bias in terms of preferred treatment given to certain issues corresponding to four economic policies, and alignment observed with the ideological stance of different political parties. We also examine how the social media community of followers of these media houses contribute to the policy discourse. Other than being one of the first large scale studies in the Indian context, our work contributes towards creating a standardized methodology to assess the ideological stance of a news-source, and its alignment with the social media discourse of its follower community. We find that the Indian mass media exhibits bias towards certain aspects or topics related to policy events. It also provides a significantly high coverage to aspects concerning the middle class and to political statements, neglecting the aspects directly relevant to the poor. Additionally, we find evidence of bias also in the representation provided to different political parties in the media. Social media seems to echo these biases rather than mitigate them. The tools and methods developed in this work can be useful for media watchdog institutions to call out biases in the media, and advocate for more complete coverage of issues across different news sources.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Information systems** → **Information systems applications**;  
• **Social and professional topics** → **Computing / technology policy**; • **Applied computing** → **Computers in other domains**.

## KEYWORDS

Media bias analysis, Mass media bias, social media bias, social media analysis, content analysis

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

News media is known to inform public opinion on different government policies. It shapes how people think about these policies, and even what specific aspects (topics of discussion) of the policies people think about [31]. This influences the citizens' acceptability towards a policy. A biased media often prevents citizens from forming a balanced viewpoint related to government policies, which can skew voting decisions and impact public well being. Thus, analysis of media bias is an important area of study. Through this work, we intend to study the bias in the Indian news media.

Biases in media can take different forms such as coverage bias on how much attention is given to a policy or to its different aspects, selection bias on the amount of coverage given to different people or political parties, and sentiment bias on how positively or negatively different aspects and entities are represented in media [50]. Such biases inherently arise due to difference in ideologies, political affiliations, and commercial models of these outlets [18, 27, 43].

These biases influence the priorities that the readers place on various policies and their aspects. The biases in mass media, along with the impact they have on the prioritization of issues by the readers, is called *agenda setting*. To study this effect, we analyze different forms of biases in representation of the policy issues in Indian mass media, and compare it with the social media content on these policy

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issues to determine the concordance between these two spheres of expression of public opinion. We also study the effect of *framing* [12] in Indian mass media, by seeing how the newspapers talk about the policy from the perspective of five different constituencies of the *poor, middle class, informal sector, corporate, and government*. We use data from seven highly popular Indian news-sources in terms of circulation in this study, namely The Times of India (TOI), The Hindu (Hindu) Hindustan Times (HT), The Indian Express (IE), The Telegraph (TeleG), The New Indian Express (NIE), and Deccan Herald (DecH).

We examine the discourse on four economic policies in Indian mass media, and build a technological framework to quantify the bias existent in it. The policies considered in this study are *Demonetization* [32], *Aadhaar* [2], *GST* [14], and *Farmers' Protest* [29], each of which is an actively debated policy issue. We describe them briefly here: **(a) Demonetization:** A policy event where the government on 8 November, 2016 banned all 500 INR and 1000 INR banknotes with the motive of curtailing the use of illicit and counterfeit cash used to fund illegal activity and terrorism. The move was widely criticized owing to multiple problems caused to common people due to sudden depletion of liquidity, irregularities in norms of exchanging old currency notes, cash exhaustion in ATMs, etc. **(b) Aadhaar:** An initiative by the government to give every Indian resident a biometric-based unique identification number. The issue has been criticized owing to lack of security and privacy in citizens' data collection and storage mechanisms, and also because of an allegedly faulty implementation of the platform or use of the platform by different agencies. **(c) Farmers' protest:** A series of protests by farmers in India including the ones at Madhya Pradesh (Mandsaur protest) and Maharashtra (Kisan long march) demanding better prices for production of crops, loan waivers, and forest rights, among others. The issue is highly active politically with significant involvement of different politicians and political parties. **(d) Goods and Services Tax:** An indirect tax levied in India on the sale of goods and services at each step of the production value-chain with an effort towards formalization in the industry and simplification of multiple types of taxes which preceded the GST regime. Since its implementation there have been intense debates though on its complexity and problems in implementation which have impacted the overall growth of the economy.

We apply a mix of computational and qualitative analysis techniques to analyze the coverage, sentiment, and selection bias existent in mass media along three axes, namely ideological affiliation, political affiliation, and audience affiliation of news-sources. The first axis of ideological affiliation tells us the aspects or topics about policies that are dominantly covered by news-sources, and the different frames through which their articles are presented. With respect to this axis, we report the following research questions and findings: *(RQ-1a) Are news sources biased on the amount of coverage they give to different aspects about the policy?* Our analysis suggests that the mass media is significantly biased in terms of the coverage they provide to various aspects corresponding to each policy. *(RQ-1b) Do news-sources have a bias towards or against frames like pro/anti poor, pro/anti middle class, pro/anti government, pro/anti informal sector, and pro/anti corporate?* We do find evidence of mass media's bias towards the different frames that represent immediate

concerns of different sections of people. Except *Farmers' Protests*, the news-sources show a conspicuous lack of coverage to the immediate aspects of the poor. On the other hand, all the other policies exhibit preferential coverage of political statements and aspects immediately impacting the middle class. A likely factor contributing to this may be the primary audience of the mass media, which does not include the poor, due to issues of literacy and digital access [26]. Our findings of the lack of coverage provided to aspects related to the poor are also corroborated by other reports [7].

The second axis of political affiliation tells us if the news-sources mostly prefer to write for or against a political party, and along this axis, we address the following research question: *(RQ-2) Is the mass media biased towards one of the two major political parties?* We find that the news-sources vary in the biases shown towards the two largest political parties in India, with respect to the coverage provided to the statements by and about the politicians belonging to them. These biases are also corroborated by the commonly believed political affiliations of these sources.

Finally, the last axis of audience affiliation tells us how the readers or followers of news-sources present their content on social media, if they propagate similar biases on social media, and exhibit diversity in news consumption. Along this axis, we report the following research questions and findings: *(RQ-3a) Are some news-sources more closely aligned with their readers (followers on social media) than others?* The social media readership is seen to be strongly aligned to their favorite media houses in terms of the aspects that they post about on the four policies. *(RQ-3b) Do people tend to follow multiple news sources or just a single source on social media?* A significant number of readers are found to however diversify their news consumption in terms of the number of news-sources followed. *(RQ-3c) Among those who follow multiple news sources, do they follow those which have similar ideological or political affiliations, or different ones?* Readers are also found to diversify their news consumption in terms of the political and ideological affiliations of these sources. Thus, while social media tends to lead to echo chambers [8, 46], we find that a significant fraction of users do follow news-sources with diverse political and ideological affiliations. The answers to these research questions provide strong hints towards the agenda setting and framing effects exercised by the Indian mass media that might lead towards influencing public opinion on key government policies. Our findings are indicative of biases in mass media and social media, and are consistent across the four economic policies considered.

Our key technical contribution is a computational framework that can analyze different forms of media bias for any news event using large scale web data. The framework is generalizable and can be used to perform a similar analysis for any event, by adapting it to use data obtained from any web based source. Our bias analysis framework can serve to provide indicators to algorithm developers of search engines and content recommendation platforms, about the biases embedded in web based content. It can also aid news readers to ensure diversity in news consumption by informing them about the biases inherent in multiple news-sources.

## 2 RELATED WORK

We divide studies related to media bias into three parts based on the three axes of bias analysis presented: (a) Ideological bias in the mass media, (b) Political bias in mass media, and (c) Diversity of news consumption in web and social media.

**Ideological Bias in Mass Media:** Journalists and news-sources shape public opinion by intentionally or inadvertently creating bias in their selection, writing, and distribution of news content, thus being called *gatekeepers* [47]. Scheufele et al. [54] discuss the concepts of agenda setting, framing, and priming in mass media that news sources can impose through their editorial gatekeeping processes. These three effects together play a significant role in influencing public opinion on socio-political aspects. Some examples of studying such ideological biases are as follows.

Some papers find evidence of selection and coverage biases towards events or news stories redleading to ideological biases. Saez-Trumper et al. [51] study selection and coverage biases for 80 news-sources and their social media communities, and establish that these biases reflect the regional priorities of the communities, rather than their political inclination. The problem of countering such biases through consumption of news from diverse sources is addressed by Bourgeois et al. [9], who compare selection of events across news-sources, and recommend a set of sources to ensure a diverse coverage of events.

Some other works find evidence of framing biases in mass media. Mudliar and Pal [41] study the coverage of the Indian indigenous, low cost tablet *Akash* in both Indian and international news-sources, and find that the reporting chiefly follows four technologically deterministic frames of presentation. In one of our previous studies [56], we find evidence of framing bias in the coverage of ICTD policies, most of which were found to be presented through a technologically deterministic frame. News-sources frame stories so as to appeal to their readers, which can also lead to ideological biases. Papacharissi et al. [44] study various frames through which terrorist attacks are reported in prominent US and UK newspapers, and how these frames vary between the two geographies. They find that other than differences in media ideology and journalism standards between the two geographies, audience attention is one of the major factors in deciding these frames. Semetko et al. [55] use content analysis of newspaper and television stories related to European politics to identify the dominant frames in them. They find that news-sources vary in terms of the dominant frames to attract audience, depending on whether they are serious or sensationalist outlets.

Our work builds on these studies by not only analyzing the coverage, selection, and statement biases in Indian mass media, but also combining them to infer the overall ideological alignment of prominent news outlets. The ideological axes help us understand the different constituencies of people the media writes about, and the way they are represented with respect to some nationally prominent economic policy issues. The proposed framework uses a mixed method approach on large scale news data for this purpose.

**Political Bias in Mass Media:** While several previous works on media bias consider political bias of media outlets as part of their ideological bias, we consider political bias to be a separate axes. There exist several studies on media bias that study political

biases of media outlets. Chiang et al. [15] bring out evidence of endorsements provided to political candidates by mass media in the USA. Gentzkow et al. [25] similarly develop an index to define a measure of media slant by analyzing key phrases in news content specific to political ideologies. Munson et al. [48] assign a political bias score to each media outlet based on whether liberal or conservative candidates are over or under represented in these outlets. Budak et al. [11] use crowd-sourcing and machine learning techniques, and observe that the US media exhibits political biases by over-criticizing certain parties than others.

On similar lines, we develop a computational approach to study political affiliations of mass media. Given the objective nature of reporting of articles in the mainstream media houses considered, it is difficult to understand the political affiliation of news-sources at the article level. Thus, using a combination of dependency parsing (an NLP technique to identify grammatical dependencies in a sentence) and a recursive neural network (ReNN) based deep learning approach, we identify the political stance of the source at the statement level. We further aggregate them to obtain the political affiliation of the news-sources towards the two major political parties in India.

There have been several studies in the NLP domain on automatic ideology detection. Sim et al. [61] proposed a Hidden Markov Model (HMM) based model to understand the evolution of ideological rhetoric used by politicians during election campaigning, by inferring mixtures of ideological positions in documents. However, the model ignores intra-sentential contextual influences. Some other approaches [1, 33, 42] use topic models at the document level to analyze bias in news, blogs, and political speeches. Recent works use attention based models for ideology detection. Gangula et al. [22] detect political bias in news articles by using news headline attention using attention based mechanism alongside bidirectional LSTMs. Sanchez et al. [52] use attention based models like BERT, XLM-RoBERTa, and M-BERT to detect hyperpartisan news, using two different text masking techniques.

The advantage of using ReNNs for ideology detection is that they are capable of detecting bias polarity switches at higher levels in parse trees through phrase-level annotations. These phrase annotations allow ReNNs to detect bias in complex sentences by capturing intra-sentential contextual influences. Additionally, attention based models require a significant amount of ground truth data and computational cost to perform well. On the contrary, ReNNs can leverage phrase level annotations to reduce the volume of annotated data required in training.

**Diversity of News Consumption in Web and Social Media:** Social media sites like Twitter have enabled people to easily obtain news from multiple sources. An et al. [4] find that the follower network of users in social media enable them to receive news from multiple media outlets on the same topic, and on multiple topics through their connections to journalists. Scharnow et al. [53] study the web browsing histories of two large sets of users, and establish that users are subjected to a significant variety in news consumption on social media. However, while these studies focus on the number of news outlets followed by users, they do not consider diversity in terms of the dominant political or ideological alignment of news content consumed by users. In this direction, some studies

focus on studying the diversity in political alignment of the content presented to readers through web based or social media data. Fletcher and Nielsen [21] use data from *2017 Reuters Institute Digital News Report* to show that contrary to conventional wisdom, social media seems to add more diversity in terms of political affiliation, to the news consumed by users. They conduct a survey and divide the respondents into three groups of news users (those using social media for news), incidental users (those using social media for other purposes, but getting exposed to news on social media incidentally), and non-users (those who don't use social media). The authors find that compared to the non-users, not only do the incidental users get exposed to more news-sources on social media, but also tend to follow more sources from both left and right leaning ideological spectrum. Garrett [24] studies the users of two partisan online news sites, and claims that there is no evidence that readers abandon news with opposing political affiliations. Messing and Westwood [36] show that social media increases the probability that readers select news content with diverse political affiliations, reducing their chance of getting confined to partisan echo chambers.

However, there also exists a large body of work that contradict the claim that there exists significant diversity in the political alignment of web based news content. Bakshy et al. [6] study how Facebook users interact with socially shared news, and find that individual political affiliations play a strong role in limiting exposure to cross-cutting content. Dahlgren et al. [17] conduct a longitudinal study over a span of two years and find that in both print and online news media, people increasingly seek out news that is consistent with their political ideology. As argued by Feldman [19], political ideology is a highly stable characteristic in an individual, when considering the adult population. Our findings reveal that for the four policies considered, a significant number of followers of news-sources do tend to diversify both in terms of political and ideological affiliations of the sources they follow.

The studies mentioned in this section primarily focus on diversity in terms of political alignment of news content, we study diversity in terms of both political and ideological affiliations of news-sources. While political affiliation represents the preference of the source towards the two major ruling and opposition parties, ideological affiliation refers to the dominant frames through which these sources present their content.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

We developed a technological framework to analyze media bias along the three axes. The architecture is shown in Figure 1. We study biases present in the news presented by seven highly popular news-sources. These sources have been considered since all of them are national dailies in English, and the policy events studied in this work are nationally popular events with widespread coverage. The selected sources also provide us with a healthy mix of commonly believed political affiliations, which aids us in analyzing the biases across the political spectrum.

First, to understand the ideological affiliation of these sources, we see which aspects of a policy they cover dominantly, and the frames through which they are presented. We extract aspects from news articles for a policy using an automated method, calculate the coverage provided to them, and measure the sentiment slant of the

majority articles belonging to them. Next, we map these aspects to the dominant frames using qualitative analysis (coding schema). The results are finally aggregated for each news-source to calculate its frame alignment.

Second, to find the political affiliation of news-sources, we extract statements about political parties from news articles, and calculate their pro/anti political stance at the statement level, unlike the article level sentiment classification used to understand the ideological affiliation of news-sources. We aggregate these political stance scores for each news-source, to calculate its political affiliation.

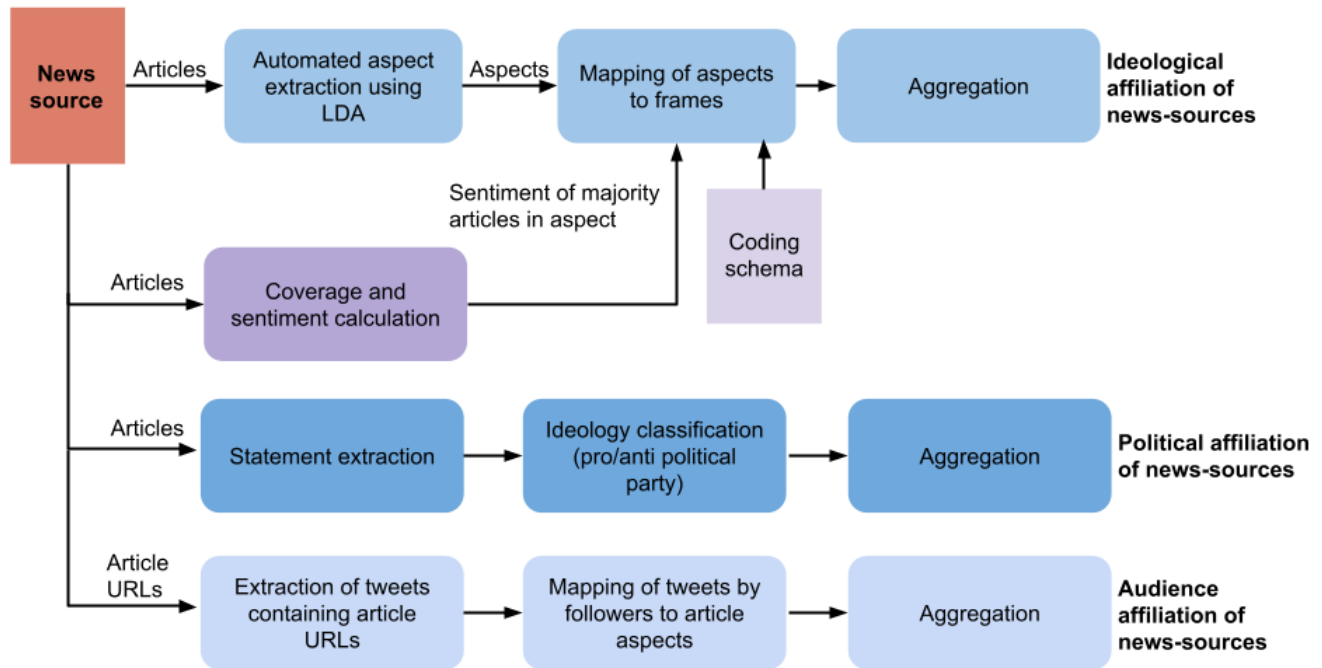
Finally, we find the audience affiliation of news-sources by extracting tweets posted by their followers that contain article URLs, and map these tweets to the aspects identified. We compare the aspect coverage of tweets with the news-sources' aspect coverage, helping us calculate the alignment of a news-source with its social media followers. We now elaborate each of these components in detail.

#### 3.1 Ideological Affiliation: Aspect Extraction using LDA

To understand the ideological affiliation of news-sources, we study the various topics of discussion or *aspects* related to the policies covered by the news-sources, and the coverage they provide to these aspects. This helps us understand on which topics a source prefers to discuss more compared to others, given a policy event. A news article can belong to multiple aspects simultaneously, depending on the issues it discusses. Since we do not have these aspects pre-identified, we use an unsupervised method named Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to identify them. LDA is a commonly used unsupervised statistical modeling method that maps a set of documents to unobserved topics, helping cluster similar documents into topic clusters that can be manually examined and labeled. Here, the documents refer to media articles, which are mapped to different topic clusters, or *aspects*. Our approach in this direction is similar to the work by Yigit et al. [67] where the authors use LDA to cluster news events to various aspects using both news articles on the events and the user comments on them.

A problem with unsupervised methods like LDA is to identify the optimal number of clusters (or aspects) to be supplied as input to the method. Since the number of aspects is not known beforehand in our case, we had to evaluate the clustering performance by experimenting with a different number of possible aspects. For this purpose, we used the best performing topic coherence measure as suggested in the paper by Roder et al. [49], in conjunction with the PyLDAVis package [60], to visualize and infer the optimal number of clusters to be specified for each policy. Since LDA maps documents to topics probabilistically, in our case, an article is mapped to clusters if the probability of its belongingness as indicated by LDA is greater than 0.3 (experimentally determined). We further merged some of the resultant clusters together based on manual analysis of their articles, and obtained 16 aspects for *Demonetization*, 14 aspects for *Farmers' Protest*, 11 aspects for *GST*, and 17 aspects for *Aadhar*. We also named these clusters after going through this manual analysis.





**Figure 1: Framework to analyze media bias: Mass media bias is analyzed based on the three axes of ideological, political, and audience affiliation**

To quantitatively see if the resultant clusters are accurate, we measure the aspect mapping accuracy, in which three annotators manually studied around 800 articles in total across the four policies. For each aspect in an event, the annotators went through majority articles in it to name the aspect unanimously. Next, they went through each article in the aspect to see if the article actually belonged to it. This exercise had an inter-coder agreement (measured using Cohen’s Kappa) of  $k \geq 0.8$  for all events. We considered majority decision to determine the belongingness of an article to an aspect. Finally, the proportion of articles that actually belong to the aspects was calculated for each policy to evaluate the mapping accuracy, which were 85% for Demonetization, 96% for Aadhaar, 81% for GST and 76% for Farmers’ Protest. Minimal manual analysis is required to evaluate the aspect mapping accuracy, since we start with LDA identified aspects, and evaluate a small subset of articles from them. We also mapped the tweets to the mass media aspects by studying the article URLs that they contain. First, tweets on a policy event are identified with the help of the media URLs. Next, these tweets are mapped to the aspects to which the articles in their URLs belong. Since tweets are concise and sometimes even grammatically incorrect, tweets without URLs are difficult to map to media aspects.

### 3.2 Ideological Affiliation: Article Level Sentiment Analysis

Alongside aspect coverage, we also need to see how news-sources write about the constituencies or sections of people, to understand their ideological affiliation. For this purpose, the sentiment slant of articles must be obtained. We use the Sentistrength tool for sentiment analysis of articles presented in the news-sources considered. This tool uses a lexicon based approach for sentiment analysis, and has often been used for sentiment analysis in political text [13]. While state of the art sentiment analysis methods use neural models like BERT for sentiment analysis, we used Sentistrength for this study since we do not have sufficient sentiment annotated data at the article level, and also since the tool provided satisfactory performance on the data collected. Sentistrength [65] reports TPOS (positivity) and TNEG (negativity) scores for each article. TPOS score is in the range of 1 (not positive) to 5 (extremely positive), and TNEG score is in the range of -1 (not negative) to -5 (extremely negative). The aggregate sentiment for an article is calculated as the sum of TPOS and TNEG. To evaluate the accuracy of Sentistrength in reflecting the article sentiments, we assigned three annotators the task of annotating the sentiment polarity of 200 articles from each policy to form the ground truth, using the labels *positive*, *negative*, and *neutral*. We discretized the Sentistrength scores to three polarity levels: positive ((1.5,5]), neutral ([-1.5,1.5]), and negative ([-5,-1.5)) based on manual analysis of 50 articles. The annotated

polarities were then cross checked with the Sentistrength polarity levels for these 800 articles. The agreement was found to be 84% for Demonetization, 76% for Aadhaar, 60% for GST and 84% for Farmers' Protest, indicative of a decent performance by Sentistrength. The evaluation of accuracy was done on content that was nearly balanced across the categories of positive and negative.

### 3.3 Ideological Affiliation: Article Level Framing Analysis

Framing is defined as "the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed" [35]. In other words, framing refers to the way the media houses shape information to help the audience process it. One of the ways in which news-sources engage in framing is by orienting the news content towards or against specific constituencies. We analyze the ideological affiliation of news-sources by studying their representation of various frames through which their articles are presented. This is done by first identifying some dominant constituencies on which media articles on the four economic policies are written.

We identify five dominant constituencies that Indian media houses mostly cover for the policies considered. News around Constituency #1 [poor] consists of aspects about marginalization of the poor, and their necessary concerns. News about Constituency #2 [middle class] consists of aspects around lifestyle of the middle class citizens. News about Constituency #3 [informal sector and small trades] consists of aspects related to the impact of policies on the informal sector and small traders. Under Constituency #4 [corporate], news-sources discuss the role of industries in development, and how tax breaks and benefits for corporations affect the society on a whole. Finally, for Constituency #5 [government], news-sources discuss rational government policies for growth and development, and approval or criticism of government interventions. Three annotators went through a set of 100 articles from each policy event, and agreed on these five constituencies as they dominantly represent the audience or the people towards whom the mass media presents information about the events, although there can be many other constituencies that are covered by mass media pertaining to other policies. The presence of these constituencies in the Indian media narrative of these policies is also corroborated by earlier papers [16, 20, 58]. News-sources may present policy events through different frames, by dominantly supporting or opposing the cause of these constituencies in their articles. Thus, while *corporate* is a constituency, news-sources may present policy news through the *pro-corporate* or *anti-corporate* frames.

For each policy event, we map each aspect to frames based on whether the aspect supports or opposes or is not applicable to the cause of the constituencies. For example, for the *Demonetization* policy, the aspect on *Queues at banks and ATMs* is classified as pro-middle class because most articles on this aspect were negatively writing about the problems caused to the common people in getting cash at ATMs, and thus helping the middle class by drawing attention to their concerns. The same aspect is classified as anti-government because negative articles on these aspects generally criticize the government's apathy and lack of foresightedness in

handling the issue. These aspect to frame mappings are then aggregated to obtain the dominant frames through which a news-source presents the constituencies, which tells us whether the way most articles are written in a news-source support or oppose the cause of a constituency.

We use qualitative analysis to map the aspects of a policy to one or more frames. This provides us information on whether majority articles in the aspect speak for or against the constituency. We developed a coding schema for each policy separately, for this purpose. The coding schema is a guide that helps the annotators to map policy aspects to one or more frames. The schema contains the normative definition of the constituencies, and example articles written on them. A snapshot of the coding schema for the policy Demonetization is presented in the appendix.

Using this schema, three annotators performed aspect to frame mapping for all policies, each of whom went through around 3000 articles in total (50 articles from each aspect for each policy event) for this exercise. The aspect to frame mapping is done in three steps: (a) We first find out the majority sentiment slant  $m$  of the articles in an aspect  $a$  (+1 indicates a majority positive or neutral sentiment, and -1 represents a negative majority), (b) A group of annotators manually determine if the majority articles of the aspect support or oppose the cause of a constituency  $c$  ( $stance(a,c)$ ). We divide  $stance(a,c)$  by the majority sentiment (+1/-1), to get the alignment score ( $U$ ) of the aspect w.r.t. the constituency.  $U$  can vary between -1, 0, and +1 for each (aspect, constituency) pair. These scores are presented in the appendix. (c) The alignment scores ( $U$ ) are finally multiplied with the aggregate sentiment offset of the aspect (average of sentiment offset from mean sentiment score of articles belonging to the aspect) to obtain the aspect to frame mapping. These aspect to frame mappings are finally aggregated to obtain the ideological positioning of news-sources w.r.t. the constituencies, or the frames through which they present policies. This step is detailed in the *Results* section.

We evaluated the inter-coder percentage agreement for step (b), i.e., determining the stance of majority articles in an aspect towards a constituency, using the percentage agreement calculation method as described in [63]. The initial mapping exercise had an inter-coder agreement of 61.33% for Demonetization, 76% for Aadhaar, 71% for GST, 74.3% for Farmers' Protests. We ran another round of moderation and due deliberation before coming up with the final mappings after this exercise. Our method of building the coding schema after rigorously going through the news articles by multiple annotators ensures that there is minimum bias and subjectivity in the mapping of aspects to frames. This process of mapping aspects to frames can be extended to any dataset – although the size of the entire data analyzed in this work is of the order of millions, the aspect to frame mapping has been done manually by studying just 3000 articles, i.e., randomly selecting 50 articles from each aspect for each event (there are around 15 aspects for each event). To build the coding schema, the annotators studied only 100 articles from each policy event (400 articles in total), which is a manageable number for qualitative analysis.

### 3.4 Political Affiliation: Statement Level Ideology Classification

Obtaining ideological affiliation of news sources, as described above, was done at an article level. We choose to determine the political affiliation by examining content at the sentence level, since a sentence level approach provides us a fine-grained understanding of a news-source's stance on a political party, which is difficult to obtain at article level.

We study the representation provided by the news-sources to the two major political parties in India with respect to these policies, by calculating the stance of the statements made by the news-sources about these political parties. The four policies considered in this study were either initiated or accelerated by BJP (the currently ruling party), while INC was in opposition. For this purpose, we first extracted sentences from articles where at least one of these parties was mentioned. Next, we built a dependency parse tree of each of these sentences using Stanford CoreNLP [34] to obtain the parts-of-speech (POS) tags. Rules based on POS tags and the dependency tree tags can be used to identify statements made about a party. If the statement is about a political party, the party name appears as an object (tags *dobj/pobj*) in the parse tree of the sentence. As reported in prior work [59], the accuracy of this method is reported to be more than 85% for the four policies considered.

The statements about political parties are next classified into *pro-party* and *anti-party*, using a Recursive Neural Network (ReNN) based ideology classifier developed by Sharma et al. [30]. While we use sentiment slant of media articles to analyze framing, we use the ReNN based ideology classifier for statements, since statements are short in length, and their sentiment slants often do not reflect their ideological stance towards or against a party. This occurs especially when they contain sarcasm, or complex phrases. The ReNN based classifier helps us capture such linguistic cues significantly better than sentiment analysis. The classifier provided an accuracy of 82% for the task of ideology classification, on a test set of 250 statements manually annotated for the four policies by the three annotators.

### 3.5 Audience Affiliation: Aspect Classification of Tweets

To understand the audience affiliation of mass media, we collect tweets related to the policy events using keywords pertinent to the policies (Appendix), and identify those made by the followers of the news-sources. Next, we select a subset of tweets that contain at least one article URL belonging to the set of policy articles collected from mass media. These tweets are then mapped to the aspects to which the article carried by them belongs. We study the coverage provided by these tweets to the various aspects corresponding to policies, to understand the audience affiliation of mass media houses.

## 4 IDEOLOGICAL AFFILIATION OF MASS MEDIA

This section covers our analysis of ideological affiliation of news-sources, in terms of their coverage bias towards various aspects and dominant frames of news presentation.

### 4.1 Aspect Coverage Bias

**Data and Method:** We attempt to answer the research question: *Are news sources biased on the amount of coverage they give to different aspects about the policies?* The question relates to the *agenda setting* effect of mass media as reported in literature [54]. Agenda setting is the idea that there exists a correlation between the emphasis placed by mass media on certain aspects, and the importance attributed by the readers to them. We study the emphasis that mass media places on various aspects in terms of the relative coverage given to these aspects.

We extract news articles corresponding to the four policies using a keyword based approach. Non-OpEd news articles belonging to categories like National, International, Regional, Sports, and Business are collected, along with the URLs and their meta-data. We first supply a set of manually selected keywords corresponding to each policy. After extracting articles containing these keywords, the keyword set is augmented with newer, relevant keywords (top 20% scored on TF-IDF) from these articles. These two steps are repeated until the keyword set becomes static, and the final set of articles is used to perform our analysis. The final set of augmented keywords for each policy is shown in the Appendix. We finally use 22302, 13908, 22179, and 85486 articles respectively for Demonetization (Nov 2016 to Oct 2019), Aadhaar (2011 to 2019), GST (2011 to 2019), and Farmers' Protest (Nov 2016 to Oct 2019).

Relative aspect coverage is defined as the proportion of words in articles belonging to an aspect with respect to the total number of words across all aspects for a news-source<sup>1</sup>.

**Analysis and Results:** The aggregate coverage distribution of aspects (plots reported in the appendix) shows that there is bias in aspect coverage across news-sources. While the top aspect gets a coverage of more than 10% for most policies, the least covered aspect has an insignificant coverage. We observe this trend even when we take a look at the highest covered aspects for each event, on a per-news-source basis. For all policies considered, the top five aspects covered by every news-source remain more or less consistent.

To also observe if there exists a significant difference in the treatment of policy aspects by different news-sources, for each source, we create a vector of the aspect coverage percentage for each policy. We then obtain the mean aspect coverage percentage for the policy across all sources, and calculate the Euclidean distance between the two distributions. Lower the distance, closer is the news-source to the mean aspect coverage distribution. The Euclidean distances for each source is shown in Figure 2. The highest deviation from mean aspect coverage is mostly shown by IE and Hindu, both of which are commonly believed to be pro-opposition news-sources [37] for the timelines considered. Apart from IE and Hindu, most sources lie significantly close to the mean aspect coverage trend, except in Aadhaar where a diversity of coverage seems to prevail across the different news-sources. These results are also corroborated by the Jensen-Shannon Divergence (JSD) between the aspect coverage and the mean aspect coverage distributions for each source. Considering all news-sources for each policy, we find the maximum values of JSD as 0.031 for Demonetization (IE), 0.04 for Aadhaar

<sup>1</sup>Thus, we normalize the count of words per aspect, which handles the case of different news-sources containing different length of articles (and aspects).

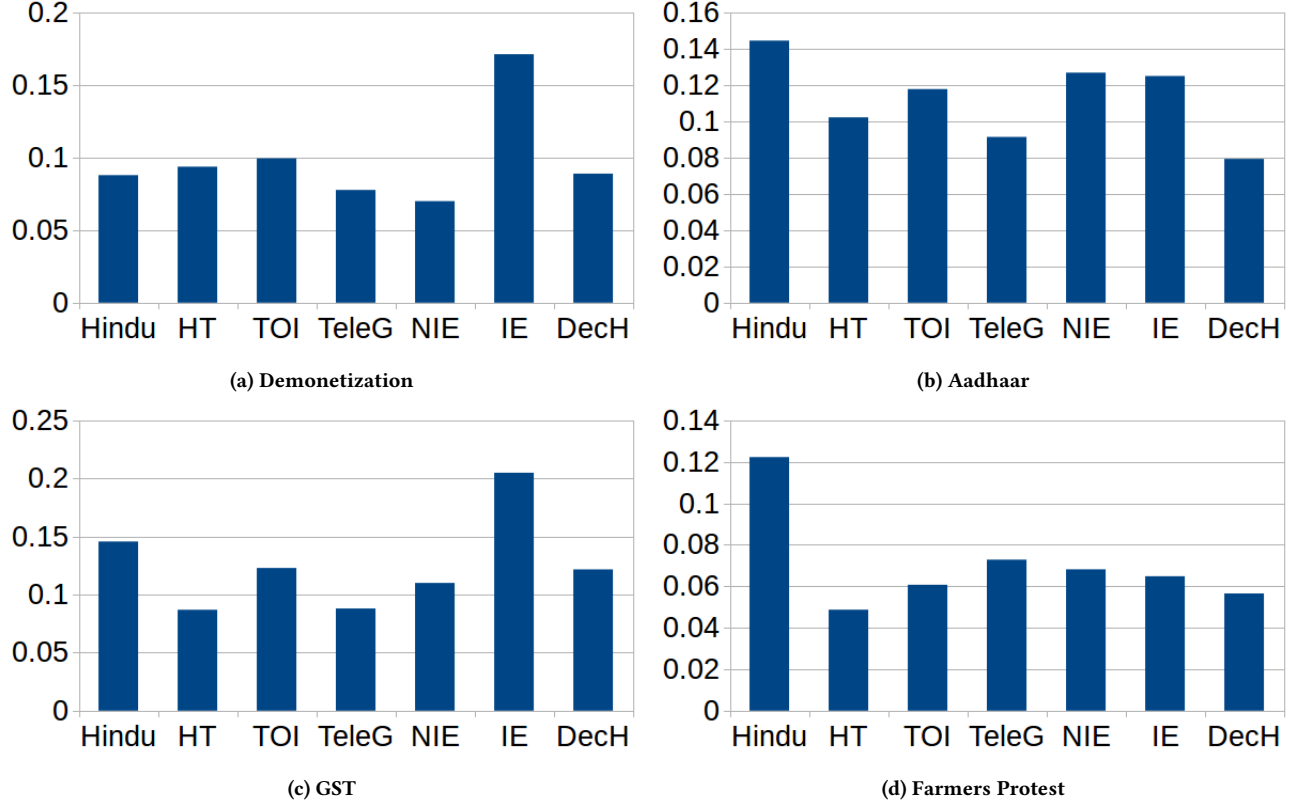


Figure 2: [RQ1a] Euclidean distance of relative coverage and mean relative coverage for the four policy events.

(Hindu), 0.054 for GST (IE), and 0.052 (Hindu). The significantly low values of JSD show the conformance of the sources with the mean trend, and also the maximum deviation exhibited by either IE or Hindu across policies. We also find the Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2-sample statistic for each news-source for each event, to see how significant the difference is between the news-source’s coverage of aspects and the mean relative coverage. We find that the p-values lie in the range of [0.58,0.99] for Demonetization, [0.19,0.99] for Aadhaar, [0.74,0.99] for GST, and [0.26,0.86] for Farmers’ Protest. The high p-values indicate that the difference between the relative coverage of aspects and the mean relative coverage is insignificant for all news-sources, indicating news-sources’ tendency to follow the mean trend of aspect coverage. Thus, we conclude that while most news-sources seem to closely follow the mean aspect coverage distribution, there exist differences in the coverage they individually provide to each aspect.

## 4.2 Framing Bias

**Data and Method:** Here, we answer the research question: *Do news-sources have a bias towards or against frames like pro/anti poor, pro/anti middle class, pro/anti government, pro/anti informal sector, and pro/anti corporate?* We try to analyze the effect of framing in mass media [54]. We analyze this effect by automatically extracting aspects from the news articles using LDA, and then manually linking the aspects with one or more frames as described in section

3.3. To map a news-source to a frame, we first calculate the sentiment offset of each aspect it covers (equation 2), by aggregating the weighted sentiment offset of the articles present in the aspect. Next, these sentiment offsets are aggregated across aspects for the news-source, by weighing them with the aspect’s alignment towards constituencies (equation 3 below). Thus, we aggregate the aspect to frame mappings to obtain the news-source to frame mapping. We calculate the (news-source,frame) alignment matrix  $M$  using the following equations:

$$C_{ian} = \frac{c_i}{\sum_{j \in (n,a)} c_j} \quad (1)$$

$$S_{an} = \sum_{i \in (n,a)} C_{ian} * (S_{ian} - S_{avg}(a)) \quad (2)$$

$$M(n, c) = \sum_{a \in c} U[a, c] * S_{an} \quad (3)$$

where  $n$  represents a news-source,  $a$  an aspect,  $C_{ian}$  the relative coverage for the  $i^{th}$  article in news-source  $n$  belonging to aspect  $a$ , and  $S_{ian}$  the compound sentiment score of the  $i^{th}$  article for aspect  $a$ .  $S_{avg}(a)$  is the average sentiment score of all articles in aspect  $a$  across all news-sources, and  $c$  is the constituency. Here,  $(S_{ian} - S_{avg}(a))$  is the offset of the sentiment of the  $i^{th}$  article from the mean sentiment.  $U[a, c]$  is the (aspect, constituency) alignment value  $\in [-1, 0, +1]$  (calculation of  $U$  has been explained in section 3.3). Thus, the matrix  $M$  tells us the different frames through which

the news-sources present their content by supporting or opposing the cause of a constituency.

**Analysis and Results:** To verify if there exists variations in terms of frame alignment of the sources, we perform a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) on the 5-dimensional mean frame vector (mean of the 5-dimensional frame vectors  $M(n, \cdot)$  across all policies) for each news-source, for the four events. Performing PCA on the  $7 \times 5$  matrix ( $M$ ) provides us with two matrices into which it is decomposed – a  $7 \times 2$  news-source matrix, and a  $2 \times 5$  constituency matrix. We plot both news-sources and constituencies in the same 2D vector space as seen in Figure 3. A factor analysis is then done to interpret the two principal components. We map the news-source vectors. The first component PC1 (x-axis) represents the *pro-informal sector*, *pro-middle class* and *pro-poor* frames on the positive side, and the *anti-government* and the *anti-corporate* frames on the negative side. The second component PC2 (y-axis) represents the *anti-government*, *anti-informal sector* and *anti-corporate*, frames to the negative side. We observe that TeleG, a commonly believed leftist news-source, is most aligned to the frames *pro-poor*, the *pro-informal sector*, and the *pro-middle class*, which is as expected. On the other hand, TOI is seen to be an outlier, and is aligned to *pro-government* and *pro-corporate* frames. DeCH, IE, HT, and NIE, being close to the origin, are relatively balanced news-sources. Hindu is aligned more towards the *anti-corporate* and *anti-government* frames. We compare the mean relative coverage provided to constituencies by mass media across news-sources (plots in the appendix), and find that the coverage is consistently higher for the *middle class* (more than 50% coverage for Demonetization, Aadhaar, and GST) and *government* (more than 90% coverage) constituencies, when compared to the *poor* (less than 50% coverage for Demonetization, Aadhaar, and GST). Thus, in terms of coverage of aspects, we find that mass media in general provides less coverage to aspects related to the poor, and more coverage to middle class and political aspects. Our analysis thus indicates the presence of *framing* effects in Indian mass media. We find that (a) The news-sources are biased w.r.t. the frames through which they present their content, and (b) they provide consistently less coverage to aspects of the poor in general.

## 5 POLITICAL AFFILIATION OF MASS MEDIA

**Data and Method:** To study if the media houses are biased towards one of the two major political parties in India – the currently ruling Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and the opposition Indian National Congress (INC), we address the question: *Is the mass media biased towards one of the two major political parties?* To measure the alignment of the news-sources towards the two parties, we detect the ideological stance of statements made about them in the news articles. These statements are extracted, and classified into pro and anti BJP/INC classes by the ideology classifier described in the Methodology section. For each news-source, we aggregate the pro and anti ideology scores for the two parties, which provides us with its overall ideological stance.

**Analysis and Results:** We show the plot for aggregate political ideology scores for the news-sources in Figure 4. We report the aggregate political ideology scores for the (BJP,INC) slant for each

news-source: Hindu (0.22,0.51), TOI (0.48,0.1), IE (-0.56,1), HT(-0.04,-0.25), TeleG (-0.56,-1.14), DeCH (-0.56,-1.14), NIE (1,0.93). TOI and NIE seem to be strongly aligned towards BJP. Hindu and IE are pro-INC. HT comes out as a relatively neutral source, although it shows a slight anti-INC leaning. TeleG and DeCH, while being more anti-INC, are against both parties. Thus, the Indian mass media indeed shows a bias in their political affiliation, based on the statements they cover about these parties.

## 6 AUDIENCE AFFILIATION OF MASS MEDIA

We try to understand the audience affiliation of news-sources from two perspectives, namely the alignment of sources with their follower community, and the political and ideological news preferences of these followers.

### 6.1 Alignment of Mass Media with the Audience

**Data and Method:** To answer the research question: *Are some news-sources more closely aligned with their readers (on social media) than others?* We analyze if the readers post more about those policy aspects that the mass media frequently covers. We consider the readership community of news-sources as the set of all followers of the news-source handles on Twitter (*TweetFol*). The number of tweets containing article URLs of the four events are 34521 for Aadhaar, 59489 for Demonetization, 38073 for GST, and 22820 for Farmers' Protest, which are used for analysis.

**Analysis and Results:** We take the followers of each source (even those who may be following other news sources in addition), and examine the URLs of the source that are tweeted by its followers. The euclidean distance between the coverage distributions of mass media and its social media followers (tweeted article URLs mapped to the aspects) is shown in Figure 5. The low values (less than 0.5 across all policies) indicate that the mass media and social media aspect coverages are significantly similar, although some media sources are closer than others to their followers in terms of aspect coverage. We also compute the Jensen-Shannon Divergence (JSD) between the distribution of a source's aspect coverage on a policy and that of its social media community. The JSD values for each news-source and policy are present in the appendix. We again find that the news-sources are significantly similar to their followers in terms of the aspect coverage distributions as is evident from the low values of JS divergence (ranging between 0.04 and 0.28).

To see if the differences in coverage are significant, we perform the Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2-sample test for each policy event, for mass media and social media coverage of aspects. We find that the p-values lie in the range of [0.30,0.89] for Demonetization, [0.19,0.99] for Aadhaar, [0.37,0.99] for GST, and [0.11,0.86] for Farmers' Protest. This shows that the coverage of aspects is significantly similar in mass media and social media, and that the most media houses align with their audience in terms of aspect coverage on policies.

### 6.2 Diversity in terms of Number of News-Sources Followed

**Data and Method:** The research question that we try to answer here is: *Do people tend to follow multiple news sources or just a single source on social media?* We measure the number of followers of

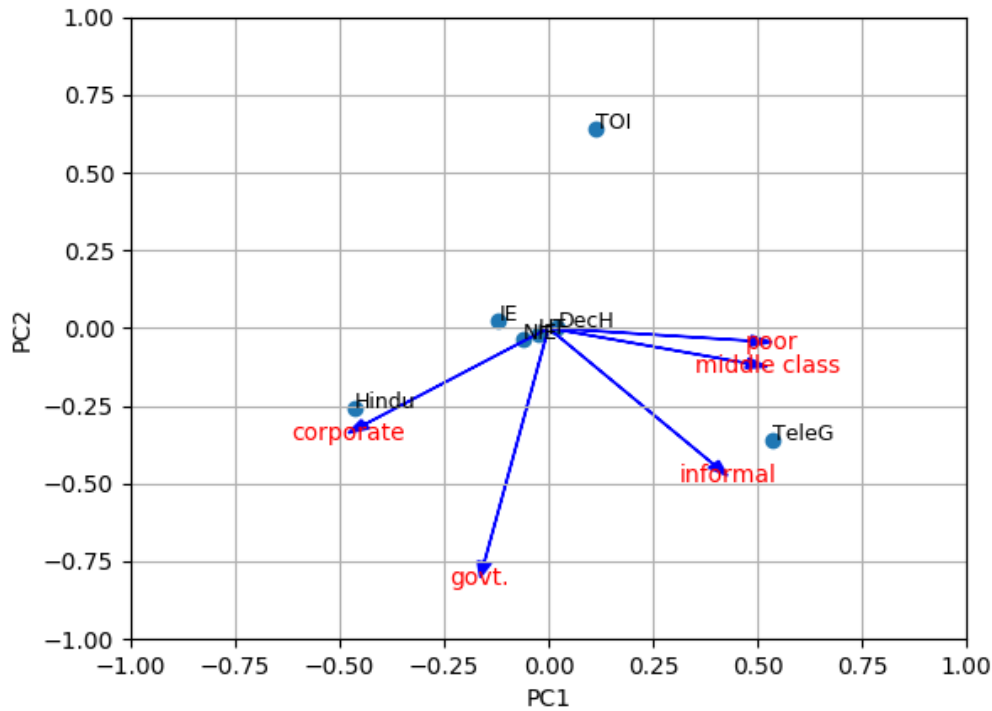


Figure 3: [RQ1b] PCA on frame vectors for the four events for all news-sources

each news-source, and the fraction of them who follow a single source (hereafter referred to as *dedicated followers*). We again use the *TweetFol* set for this analysis as described earlier.

**Analysis and Results:** We show in Table 1 the total number of followers and the fraction of dedicated followers for each news-source. We find that a majority of followers follow more than one news-source. TOI shows the highest dedicated follower count (48.5%), followed by NIE (30.5%) and DecH (29.5%). For all of the other sources, more than 80% of their followers follow multiple sources. This indicates that most social media followers are inclined to follow multiple sources on Twitter as also corroborated by previous work [53]. This may be because of the ease of following news-source handles on social media. However, it also indicates that news readers on social media have a tendency to diversify their news consumption in terms of the number of sources.

### 6.3 Diversity in terms of Political and Ideological Preferences

**Data and Method:** To observe the diversity in terms of the ideological and political preferences of the readers following multiple sources, we address the question: *Among those who follow multiple news sources, do they follow those which have similar ideological or political affiliations, or different ones?* Unlike many earlier studies, in

this work we differentiate between political and ideological affiliations of sources, and consider them as independent axes altogether – political affiliation refers to the alignment towards or against a set of political parties (section 5), while ideological affiliation refers to the alignment towards one or more frames through which content is presented in media (section 4.2).

From our analysis in sections 4.2 and 5, we first categorize the news-sources on their ideological and political affiliations as reported in Table 2. Followers of these sources can also be categorized based on the sources that they follow. We observe the follower community overlap for pairs of sources, and based on the political and ideological affiliations of the sources in these pairs, categorize their followers. We calculate the follower community overlap between pairs of news-sources as  $|F_i \cap F_j|/|F_i \cup F_j|$  where  $F_i$  and  $F_j$  are follower sets of news-sources  $i$  and  $j$ , respectively. Based on the affiliations of the news-sources, we can categorize their followers into four categories based on whether a given pair of news-sources followed by them has the same or different political affiliations, and same or different ideological affiliations. These categories are: [A] Followers following sources with similar ideological and political affiliations, [B] Followers following sources with similar political but different ideological affiliations, [C] Followers following sources with different political but similar ideological affiliations, and [D] Followers following sources with different political and ideological affiliations. We first enumerate 21 source pairs constructed

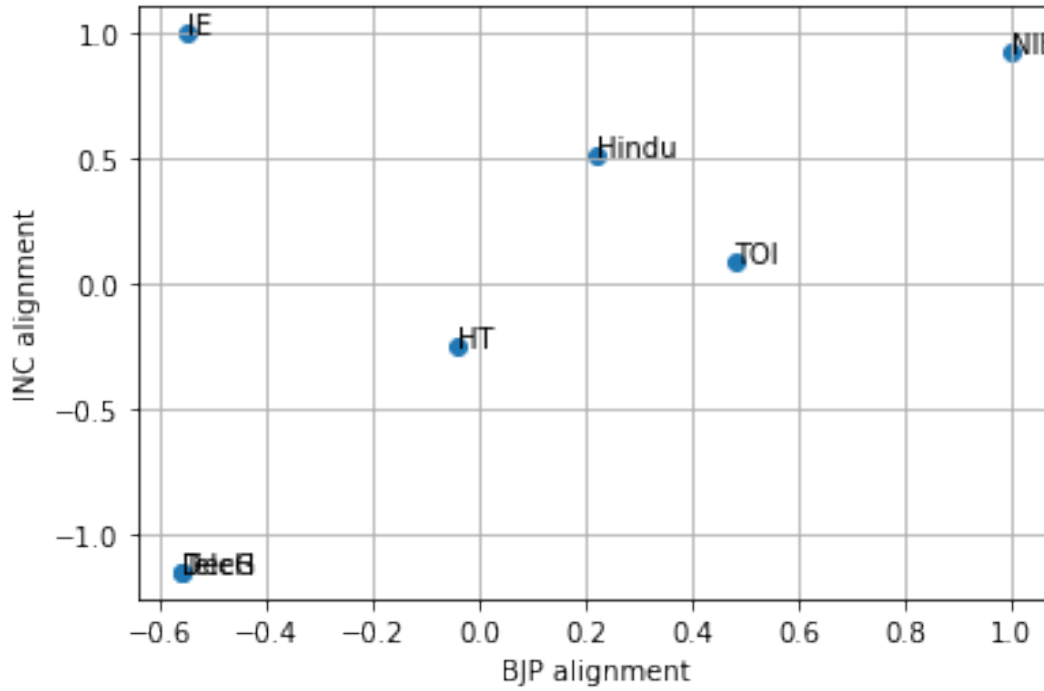


Figure 4: [RQ2] Aggregate political ideology scores of news-sources with respect to BJP and INC

Source	# Total Followers	# Followers Following a Single Source
TOI	11026375	5346622 (48.5%)
HT	6299717	1134958 (18.0%)
HINDU	4842235	899340 (18.6%)
IE	2742133	258610 (9.4 %)
NIE	347149	105749 (30.5%)
TeleG	51885	10057 (19.4%)
DecH	24897	7338 (29.5%)

Table 1: [RQ3b] The total number of followers and the number of dedicated followers (and their percentage) for each source.

Source	Ideological Affiliation	Pol. Affiliation
TOI	pro-corporate, pro-government	pro-BJP
HT	Neutral	anti-INC
HINDU	anti-corporate, anti-government	pro-INC
IE	Neutral	pro-INC
NIE	Neutral	pro-BJP
TeleG	pro-poor, pro-middle class, pro-informal sector	anti-BJP, anti-INC
DecH	pro-poor, pro-middle class, pro-informal sector	anti-BJP, anti-INC

Table 2: Ideological and political affiliations of news sources as obtained from our analysis

from the seven news-sources, and then map each pair to the four categories. We show the percentage of followers following both sources in these pairs, given the unique followers for each pair in

Table 3. We define a pair as a *dominant pair*, if the follower overlap percentage for the pair is more than 10% (decided based on the skew observed in each category and highlighted in blue in the table).

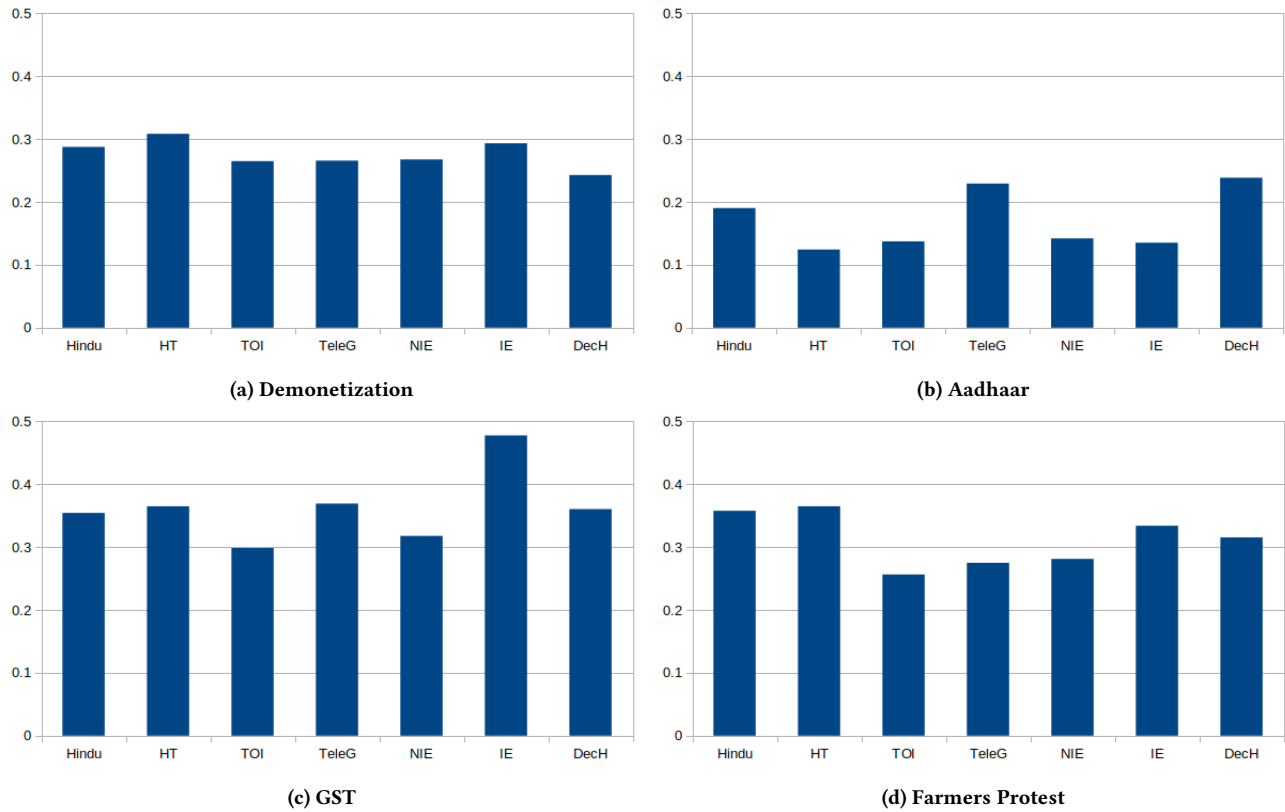


Figure 5: [RQ3a] Euclidean distance of relative coverage distributions between mass media and social media.

	Similar ideological	Different ideological
Similar political	<b>Category A</b> NIE,HT(163993,2.5%)	<b>Category B</b> TeleG,DecH(3123,4%) Hindu,IE(1874796,32.8%) TOI,HT(4538316,35.4%) TOI,NIE(178627,1.5%)
Different political	<b>Category C</b> DecH,NIE(20898,1.9%) DecH,IE(11300,0.4%) IE,NIE(161737,5.5%) DecH,HT(11460,0.1%) IE,HT(1910074,17.3%)	<b>Category D</b> TeleG,NIE(10449,2.6%) TeleG,IE(30712,1.1%) TeleG,Hindu(54233,0.6%) Hindu,DecH(12590,0.2%) Hindu,NIE(187217,3.7%) TeleG,HT(29626,0.4%) Hindu,HT(2887160,34.9%) DecH,TOI(13231,0.1%) TeleG,TOI(31976,0.2%) IE,TOI(2031058,17.3%) Hindu,TOI(3266012,25.9%)

Table 3: [RQ3c] Table showing the four categories of followers based on the affiliations of the news-sources they follow. The community size in terms of number of followers and percentage of total followers is indicated within braces.

**Analysis and Results:** We observe from Table 3 that the percentage overlap of followers, their absolute number, and the number of dominant pairs are all significantly higher for the category of followers following sources with different ideological affiliations

(categories B and D), when compared to the category of followers following sources with similar ideological affiliations (categories A and C), indicating that followers prefer to follow ideologically diverse sources more than ideologically similar ones. A similar trend



is found for political affiliation of sources as well (categories (C, D) and (A,B)). Thus, one of the reasons to follow multiple sources on social media may be to achieve ideological and political diversity in news consumption. From these two category groups, we also find that followers tend to diversify more in terms of ideological preferences than political preferences.

We also study if there exists any dependency between the political and ideological news preferences of followers. Table 3 shows that followers with similar ideological preferences do not vary much in terms of their political preferences (categories A and C), but the reverse is true (categories A and B). This observation may indicate that although some followers may have similar political preferences, they prefer to read the different frames through which a story is covered. These findings indicate that the political preferences of followers might depend on their ideological preferences.

We find the largest percentage and number of followers, for both overall and the dominant pairs for Category D, indicating that many followers want to break their echo chambers both ideologically and politically by diversifying news consumption. Therefore, there exist signs of diversity in the political and ideological preferences of social media followers of news-sources, who in general exhibit a weaker political than ideological diversity. Considering the ideological and political affiliation of sources as a proxy for followers' ideological and political preferences, we observe a dependency of political preference on ideological preference.

## 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research question that we try to answer in this paper is: *Is the mass media biased in how it represents different policies?* We study three different axes of media bias, namely ideological affiliation, political affiliation, and audience affiliation. Our analysis shows that the Indian media is indeed biased corresponding to all three of these axes. Comparing the findings of prior work and our own findings, we see that our work validates the different theories of mass media bias and the way social media aids in furthering these biases.

We observe that the Indian mass media is ideologically biased in terms of the coverage it provides to different policy aspects, and the frames through which they are presented (RQ-1a,b). These findings are in line with several previous works that show that news-sources fine-tune their coverage of events based on the ideological inclination of their audience. Boykoff [10] performed content analysis on the coverage of a set of events related to the global justice movement in some prominent and influential newspapers and television networks in the US. They found five dominant frames through which such events were presented. The authors argued that the reason behind this framing bias was the need for the dissidents' need to gain peoples' attention through mass media, and mass media's need to cover such movements. Smith et al. [62] studied protest events in two prominent newspapers in the US, and showed that the mass media packaged protest events through ideological frames to appeal to the general public and influential third parties. Morstatter et al. [40] found evidence of framing in news-sources across multiple geographies for an event related to European defense, and found that news-sources from multiple geographies use these frames to attract audience.

Our findings are in line with these works. We find that the media mostly reports through frames that target the middle class, which forms their primary target audience. Several media houses also provide a significant coverage to political statements and rhetoric, since this too brings audience attention. However, nearly all media houses provide an insignificant coverage to the frames corresponding to the poor, since the poor do not form the primary audience for English mainstream media in India. Thus, we find that ideological biases in mass media lead to a deficiency in coverage of issues related to the poor.

We also find that the difference between the distributions of mass media and social media coverage of aspects is insignificant. Additionally, since the mass media provides an insignificant coverage to the immediate aspects of the poor [57], the social media community reflects a similar behavior as well. The results hint towards the fact that the Twitter follower community chiefly consists of the middle class, and is less keen on talking about the immediate aspects impacting the poor. Additionally, the poor often not being present on social media (especially Twitter), are unable to represent their own issues on it.

Mass media also exhibits political biases w.r.t. the two largest political parties in India (RQ-2). Budak et al. [11] presented a similar finding in the US context, i.e., they found a majority of the considered news outlets to be biased, in terms of the criticism they exhibit with respect to the two major political parties, while maintaining an objective reporting style. We found that Indian news-sources covered both pro- and anti-statements corresponding to a party [30]. This may also reflect the long-term or short-term political affiliations of mass media based on their ownership networks. Our results are corroborated also by commonly believed political affiliations of news-sources [38], e.g., TeleG is known to be a leftist news-source, and it does exhibit an *anti* alignment towards both parties, which do not follow the leftist ideology. NIE and TOI are both known to be pro-BJP as also shown by our analysis. IE, believed to be supported by the INC, shows a clear pro-INC alignment.

As observed by Saez-Trumper et al. [51], the social media follower community is seen to further these biases for the news-sources considered in our study. Contrary to the existing literature on echo chambers in social media [8, 46], however, we find some signs of followers trying to diversify their news consumption on social media w.r.t. their political and ideological preferences (RQ-3a,b,c). We also see that the followers tend to diversify more in terms of their ideological than political preferences, indicating that the political preferences might take a considerable amount of time to change as discussed in previous studies [45]. Thus, even in cases of majoritarian politics (like in India where currently the centrally ruling party BJP is the single largest party in the Parliament), there are indications of ideological diversity among readers, which may even translate into a change in political preferences in the future.

Our research also poses some interesting questions for further investigation. We showed in this work that the social media community of followers tend to follow news sources with different ideological and political biases. As part of future work, we also wish to find out the relationship between biases existing in news content and user engagement on social media, i.e., how and what type of users interact with biased mass media content. There have been several early studies on these lines [28, 64], which established

users' tendencies to prefer polarized media outlets that suit their own political preferences. Garimella and Weber [23] established that the impact of this behavior is also reflected in social media, in the US context. The authors showed the steady increase in the following of polarized media houses by the social media audience, over a span of seven years.

The news-sources considered are all mainstream national dailies, and we do not currently consider opinions and editorials in this study. Thus, most of the articles that we analyzed exhibit an objective reporting. While we analyze the sentiment slant of articles to understand their ideological framing biases, this also motivates us to understand how the news-sources spin stories to frame them in a desired way. Recent work [5] on automated NLP based methods to detect issue specific and generic spin of political news can be leveraged in this respect. This analysis will be more relevant once we extend the current work to fringe outlets, opinions and editorials, and other regional news sources, which are known to exhibit a polar reporting style, and at times, to disseminate misinformation.

Our analysis of audience affiliation of news sources can also be extended to study the correlation between audience affiliation and the social media connections of the audience. For instance, to find out if followers of news sources with a particular political affiliation also tend to follow other social media users with the same affiliation, resulting in formation of polarized cohorts (tribalism in social media), and how these cohorts evolve over time, provided the occurrence of various political events. In this direction, Tokita et al. [66] established that social media gets increasingly sorted politically (leading to diminished cross-ideology connections among users), when media houses report differently on political issues. To understand the polarization among social media users, their social media connections, profile information, and the influential nodes that they are connected to can be leveraged. On similar lines, we can also study the role of Twitter bots in spreading biased news or misinformation in social media, and their impact on these cohorts. A similar study by Aldayel et al. [3] studied the roles of bots in polarizing the political discourse on social media.

Although we study economic policy aspects in this work, our methods are easily generalizable to any other domain of bias analysis like analysis of bias in policy documents, political speeches and debates, news belonging to other domains apart from politics, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first framework for automated bias analysis of media along multiple axes of ideological, political, and audience affiliation that uses longitudinally analyzed web data of large scale. We also developed a method to identify the dominant frames in media discourse on policy events, using a mix of qualitative and computational techniques, which can be used to identify dominant frames for any set of events with a gentle amount of manual intervention. This method of frame identification can help understand the position of media houses with respect to different sections of citizens, aiding in self-regulation of media and provisioning appropriate representation to all sections of people. Additionally, it can aid news readers in further diversifying their news consumption, by providing them signals of media bias along different axes, thereby reducing the impact of bias originating from a single set of sources.

**Limitations:** Our work has a few limitations with respect to the

study of audience affiliation of news sources. First, we have studied the news consumption preferences of only the social media follower community of the news-sources. Our findings thus cannot be generalized to the Indian population. Second, while we have studied the followers of the news-sources, and considered their followership as a proxy for their news consumption preferences, this is not necessarily true. It may be better to capture the engagement (reactions, retweets, and comments) of users with news handles on Twitter, or with tweets covered by news-sources to get a proper sense of their news consumption patterns.

There also exist some methodological limitations. The five constituencies studied in this work are determined by three annotators knowledgeable about the policies considered, after manually going through the news articles. This can still lead to subjectivity. A better approach might be to survey more readers to determine the constituencies in terms of topics and concerns. Another limitation is the limited amount of training data to identify statement/sentence level political biases of news sources. We can augment our dataset with other datasets that have been annotated for political affiliation at the sentence level. This will help us train our model with larger volume of data. Finally, since a large percentage of Indian readers consume news from regional sources, inclusion of regional and vernacular sources in our analysis is important.

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## A APPENDIX

### A.1 Keywords to Collect News Articles

The final set of keywords used to collect the articles pertaining to the four economic policies are shown in Table 4.

### A.2 Relative Coverage of Aspects

In this section, we present the relative aspect coverage provided by the mass media and social media to different policies. We look at the aggregate coverage distributions. Aggregate aspect coverage across all news-sources is calculated by summing up the number of words belonging to the aspect across these sources, and then dividing this number by the total number of words across all aspects in all news-sources for that policy. Figure 6 shows the distributions. From the plots, it is evident that the social media follower community closely follows the coverage trend of aspects in the mass media. This is also established in our main paper. The Pearson correlation coefficients for the aspect coverage distributions of mass media and social media are: 0.92 for Demonetization, 0.90 for Aadhaar, 0.94 for GST, and 0.66 for Farmers' Protest. The low correlation for the last event arises from just two aspects: *Irrigation concerns and water pollution* and *Crimes and suicides in farmer community*. These two aspects are much highly posted about on Twitter (compared to the mass media), being sensitive issues related to the farmers. For the other three policies, the high values of correlation indicate towards a high alignment between the mass media and social media aspect coverage. We obtain similar trends even when we do this analysis for individual news-sources, which we do not report in this paper.

From the plots, it is also clear that both mass media and social media are biased in terms of aspect coverage, i.e., there exists a significant imbalance in the coverage of aspects. To state empirically, for Demonetization, Aadhaar, GST, and Farmers' Protests, the relative coverages in mass media for the highest and lowest covered aspects are (15.9%,0.8%), (9.9%,1.4%), (19%,2.3%), and (18%,0.1%), respectively. For the social media follower community, these are (26%,0.5%), (13.6%,0.6%), (14.1%,0.06%), and (31.6%,0.03%), respectively. The high inequities observed in these ordered pairs are indicative of the bias in aspect coverage exhibited by both mass media and social media.

### A.3 Coverage of Constituencies by Mass Media

In this section, we analyze the relative coverage provided by mass media to the five constituencies of *poor*, *middle class*, *corporate*, *informal sector*, and *government*. For each constituency, we aggregate the relative coverages provided to the aspects belonging to the constituency using the following equation:

$$relative\_constituency\_coverage = \frac{\sum_{a \in const} w_a}{\sum_{asp \in A} w_{asp}} \quad (4)$$

where  $a$  and  $asp$  are aspects,  $A$  is the set of all aspects for a policy event, and  $w_a$  is the total number of words across all articles for aspect  $a$ . We show the constituency coverage for each policy even in figure 7. We observe from these plots that for Demonetization, Aadhaar, and GST, the coverage provided to the immediate problems of the poor are significantly lesser than that provided to the politics around a policy issue (represented by the *Government* constituency). Only in case of Farmers' Protests is the coverage provided to *poor*

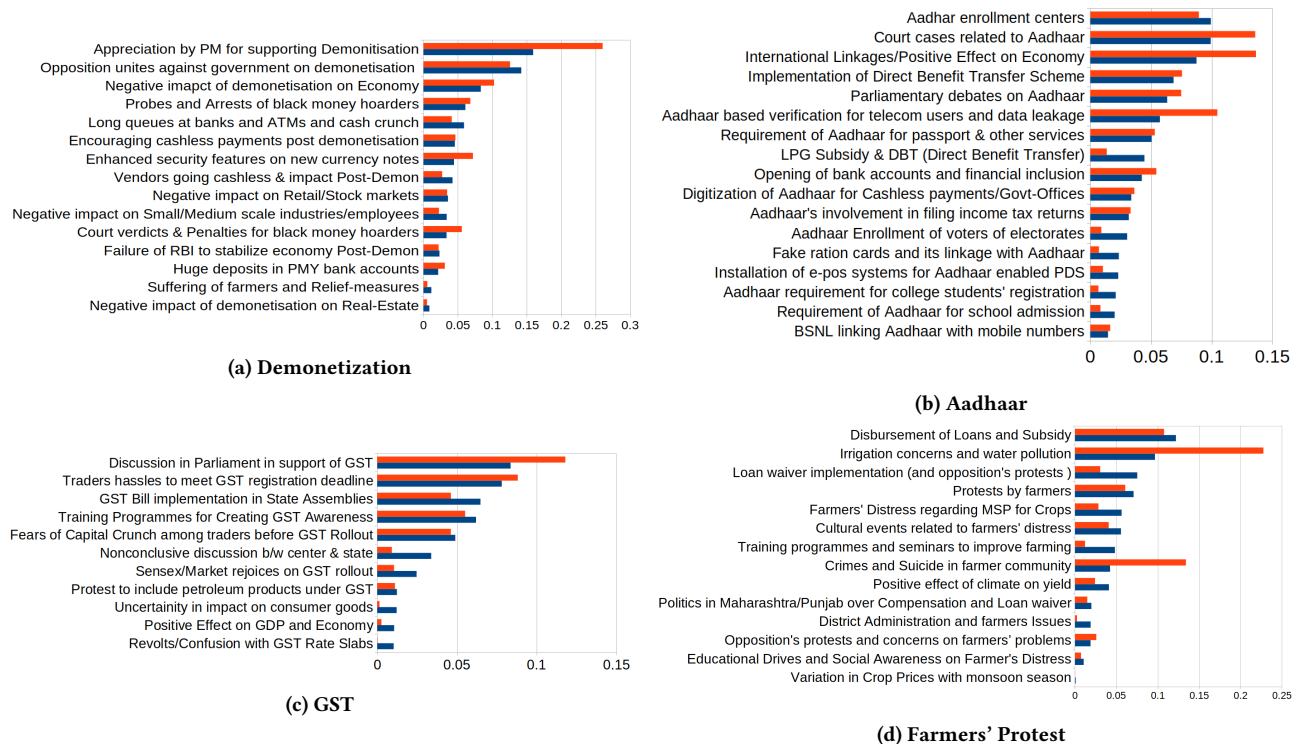
high. This is because most discussions on issues of farmers involve poor farmers and daily wagers, and both the ruling party and the opposition make a significant number of statements in the mass media on this sensitive issue. The least discussion happens for the constituency *informal sector*, which includes a significant portion of the total workforce in India [39], and includes workers, labourers, vendors, and small traders belonging to the unorganized sector with often low levels of income. In tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 we report the KS-statistics (2-sample test) of relative coverage for each pair of the five constituencies. The high values of KS-statistics along with the low p-values indicate that the difference in coverages are significant with above 99% significance level (that is, we can safely reject the null hypothesis that the coverages come from the same distribution for two different constituencies). This also indicates the existence of a constituency bias in mass media. The snapshot of our coding schema for Demonetization, and the aspect-to-constituency alignment matrices are shown in tables 11, 12, 13, and 14.

### A.4 Similarity between Mass Media and Social Media in terms of Aspect Coverage

Table 15 shows the JS Divergence between the aspect coverage distribution of mass media sources and their corresponding social media communities, for each policy.

Keywords (manually selected)
<b>Demonetization:</b> demonitisation, demonitization, denomination note, cash withdrawal, swipe machine, unaccounted money, withdrawal limit, pos machine, fake currency, digital payment, digital transaction, cash transaction, cashless economy, black money, cash crunch, currency switch, long queue, demonitised note, cashless transaction, note ban, currency switch
<b>Aadhaar:</b> aadhar, aadhaar, adhar, adharcard, aadhaarcard, uidai, aadhar card, public distribution system, pds, ration card, ration, e-pos
<b>GST:</b> gst, goods and service tax, goods & services tax, gabbar singh tax, goods service tax, goods and services tax
<b>Farmers' Protest:</b> farm loan, crop loan, farmer suicide, debt waiver, waiver scheme, farming community, farmer agitation, plight farmer, distressed farmer, farmer issue, farmers protest, farmers' protest, agrarian crisis, agrarian unrest, farmers protests, farmers' protests, loan waivers, loan waiver, agriculture protest, farmers' march

**Table 4: List of manually collected keywords used to extract articles (and tweets) corresponding to the economic policy events. Here, we only show the manually selected keywords after converting them to lowercase, and after pre-processing of the articles was done.**



**Figure 6: Aggregate relative coverage provided by the mass media and its social media follower community corresponding to each policy. The blue bars show the aggregate aspect coverage for mass media, while the red ones show the coverage for social media.**

	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Informal Sector	Govt.
Poor	0	0.43	0.86	0.86	1
Middle Class	0.43	0	1	0.86	1
Corporate	0.86	1	0	0.43	1
Informal Sector	0.86	0.86	0.43	0	1
Government	1	1	1	1	0

**Table 5: KS statistics (2-sample test) for relative coverage provided by the mass media to the five constituencies for Demonetization. All p-values lie below 0.05.**

	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Informal Sector	Govt.
Poor	0	1	0.71	1	1
Middle Class	1	0	1	1	1
Corporate	0.71	1	0	1	1
Informal Sector	1	1	1	0	1
Government	1	1	1	1	0

**Table 6: KS statistics (2-sample test) for relative coverage provided by the mass media to the five constituencies for Aadhaar. All p-values lie below 0.05.**

	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Informal Sector	Govt.
Poor	0	1	1	0.57	1
Middle Class	1	0	0.43	1	1
Corporate	1	0.43	0	1	1
Informal Sector	0.57	1	1	0	1
Government	1	1	1	1	0

**Table 7: KS statistics (2-sample test) for relative coverage provided by the mass media to the five constituencies for GST. All p-values lie below 0.05.**

	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Informal Sector	Govt.
Poor	0	1	1	1	1
Middle Class	1	0	1	1	1
Corporate	1	1	0	0.71	1
Informal Sector	1	1	0.71	0	1
Government	1	1	1	1	0

**Table 8: KS statistics (2-sample test) for relative coverage provided by the mass media to the five constituencies for Farmers' Protests. All p-values lie below 0.05.**

Constituency	Does the article primarily target:	Normative Definition
Poor	- Labourers, workers in factories and small mills (e.g., textile and diamond-cutting mills), migrant workers and labourers, poor people belonging to the lowest level of income, and workers without bank accounts	Poor people at the lowest levels of income. This includes labourers and factory workers without bank accounts. The welfare schemes which target the poor directly, like PMGKDS also come in the ambit of this class. Casual workers (working on contractual basis) with daily wage below 200 INR.
Middle class	- Workers employed in sectors with higher income range (e.g., daily wagers working in garment based activities like stitching), workers for whom absence of bank accounts is not specifically mentioned, ATMs, cash withdrawal limit, Note exchange at post offices, banks, customers, ...	Middle class people who suffered the immediate aftermath of the policy move like standing in long queues at ATMs, lack of money exchange at banks and post offices, and so on. Workers and daily wagers ...

**Table 9: Snapshot of coding schema for Demonetization (part 1): the schema is used to map aspects to the relevant constituencies accurately, with minimum subjectivity. The final schema has been updated after multiple rounds of discussion and due deliberation.**

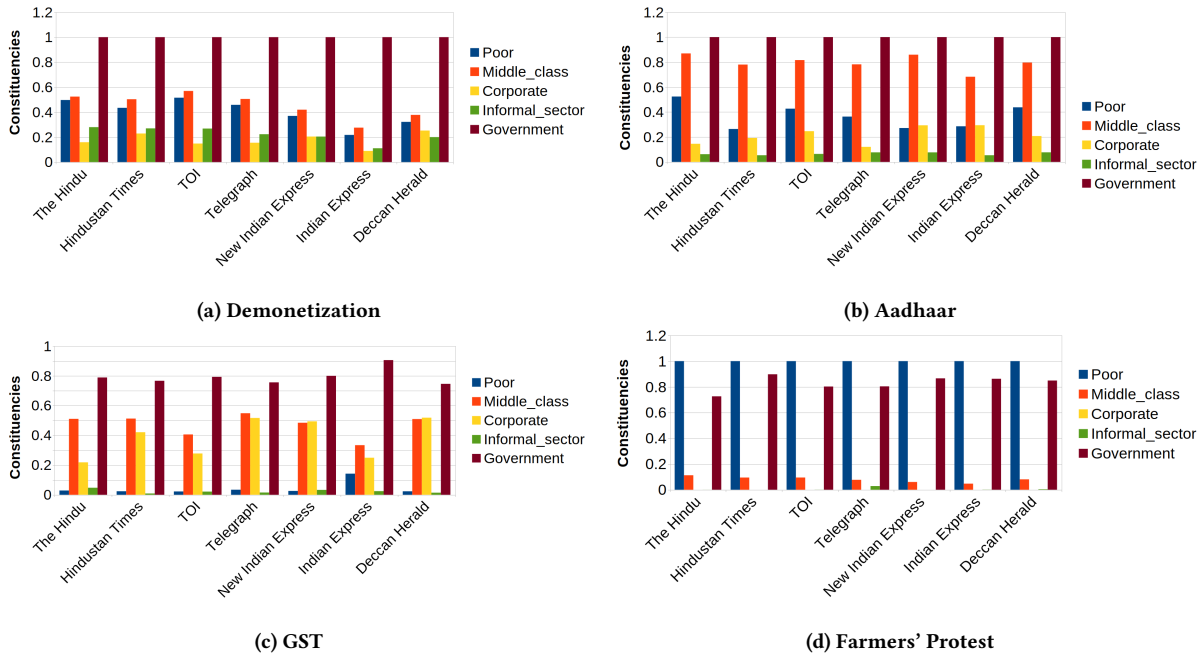


Figure 7: Relative coverage provided by the mass media to each of the five constituencies for the four policies. The news-sources are shown in the x-axis from left to right in the order: The Hindu, Hindustan Times, The Times of India, Telegraph, New Indian Express, Indian Express, and Deccan Herald

Constituency	Does the article primarily target:	Normative Definition
Corporate	Manufacturing companies, industries, MSMEs, factories, multinationals, businesses, big real estate companies, Entrepreneurs, businessmen, bizmen, Import, export, raw material, brands, marketing, Sensex, investors, NSE, NIFTY, BSE, foreign capital ...	Big business houses, industrialists, SMEs and MNCs, and corporate business houses in general.
Informal sector and small traders	Unorganized sector, informal sector, companies not registered, unregistered enterprises, Small vendors/businesses, ...	Unorganized sector, unregistered companies, small traders, and vendors.
Government	State/Central government, state, centre, Name of prominent politician, minister, ministry, MP/MLA, their relatives, Names/positions of important government officials and designations ...	State and central government, policy makers, ministers, ministries, MPs, MLAs, and their relatives. Discussions in Parliament or assemblies about the narrative on Demonetization also come in this class.

Table 10: Snapshot of coding schema for Demonetization (part 2): the schema is used to map aspects to the relevant constituencies accurately, with minimum subjectivity. The final schema has been updated after multiple rounds of discussion and due deliberation.

Aspect	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Inf. Sector	Govt.
Failure of RBI to answer questions raised post demonetisation	0	-1	-1	0	1
Negative impact of Demonetisation on small and medium scale industries and its employees	-1	-1	-1	-1	1
Long queues at banks and ATMs and cash crunch	0	1	1	1	0
Court verdicts related to demonetisation and penalties issued for black money hoarders	1	1	-1	0	1
Negative impact on retail and stock markets and suspicious deposits in bank accounts	-1	-1	-1	0	1

**Table 11: Snapshot of alignment matrix for Demonetization. We show only five aspects in this table out of the 16 aspects for Demonetization.**

Aspect	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Inf. Sector	Govt.
Positive effect of climatic conditions on agriculture yield	-1	0	0	0	0
Opposition's protests and concerns on problems related to farmers (including Demonetization)	1	0	0	0	-1
Educational Drives and Social Awareness on Farmer's Distress	-1	0	0	0	0
Politics in Maharashtra/Punjab over Compensation and Loan waiver for farmers	-1	0	0	0	1
Variation in Crop Prices with monsoon season	-1	-1	0	-1	0

**Table 12: Snapshot of alignment matrix for Farmers' Protests. We show only five aspects in this table out of the 14 aspects for Farmers' Protests.**



Aspect	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Inf. Sector	Govt.
Requirement of Aadhaar for passport and other services (concessions)	0	1	0	0	1
Fake ration cards caught due to Aadhaar linkage, aiding in the good of poor and middle class	1	1	0	0	1
Installation of e-pos systems for Aadhaar enabled PDS causing resentment among poor and middle class	-1	-1	0	0	1
Digitization of Aadhaar enabled employees' provident fund, attendance systems at public offices, and cashless payments helping the middle class	0	1	0	0	1
Requirement of Aadhaar for school admission and the middle class	0	1	0	0	1

Table 13: Snapshot of alignment matrix for Aadhaar. We show only five aspects in this table out of the 17 aspects for Aadhaar.

Aspect	Poor	Middle Class	Corporate	Informal Sector	Government
Sensex/Market rejoices on GST rollout	0	1	1	1	1
GST Bill implementation in State Legislative Assemblies	0	1	1	1	0
Traders hassles to meet GST registration deadline and changes in sensex/nifty	0	0	-1	-1	-1
Fears of Capital Crunch among traders before GST Rollout	0	0	1	0	1
Training Programmes for Creating GST Awareness	0	0	1	1	1

Table 14: Snapshot of alignment matrix for GST. We show only five aspects in this table out of the 11 aspects for GST.

News Source	Demonetization	Aadhaar	GST	Farmers Protest
	TweetFol	TweetFol	TweetFol	TweetFol
Hindu	0.12	0.08	0.17	0.15
HT	0.13	0.03	0.18	0.07
IE	0.14	0.03	0.28	0.08
NIE	0.11	0.04	0.13	0.07
TeleG	-	0.11	-	0.07
TOI	0.11	0.04	0.12	0.04
DecH	0.12	0.10	0.15	0.11

Table 15: [RQ3] JS divergence showing difference in aspect coverage between mass media and social media: for TeleG, we could not find any tweet for Demonetization and GST. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2-sample test also suggest that the aspect coverage are significantly similar between the mass media and social media.



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

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## The Role and Importance of Media in Indian Democracy

Sanchita Hazra,  
Assistant Professor of Political Science,  
Deshabandhu Mahavidyalaya,  
Chittaranjan, Paschim Bardhaman,  
West Bengal, India.

### Abstract

Media is sometimes referred to as the 4<sup>th</sup> branch of the government because its role is to serve Behalf of those they serve, the citizens. Media is a key linkage institution between the people and policy makers. Some people believe that not all media is objective and , in some cases , show bias in reporting by either not covering something it doesn't want the public to know or covering something in perhaps much greater detail than might be necessary. The cornerstone of our democracy is the unique privilege and responsibility of every citizen to be engaged through voting, public offices, representation in Parliament, assembly etc. Our free press protected by the first constitutional amendment, plays a critical role in ensuring that every Indian has constant access to important and trustworthy news. Most people rely on the media for all or most of their information regarding policies. Freedom of press is essential in a democracy in order to share ideas about how the government should operate and what agenda the government should pursue.

**Key Words:** media, evolution, constitutional status, globalization, impact in politics, conclusion.

### Introduction

Democracy is generally defined as the government of the people by the people and for the people. Freedom and democracy work together. Indian society recognizes democracy where the media plays a leading role in Indian democracy. The media is being considered as the fourth pillar of a democratic society after the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The media sometimes goes beyond or beyond the control and limitations of vital organs of government in the wider interests of the people. India is considered a quasi-federal democratic republic. From the 1980s to the present day, the Indian media has been embellished with various modes and methods and it too continues to burn with the instructions of various media giants. Truth always brings flying in different skies. Starting from newspapers, magazines, radio, television, movies, mobile, internet based web sites (social media, new media) as well as Indian media. The media of different developed countries are promoting themselves with time and situation.

The media acts as a watchdog of the government, carrying out reports of every activity of the administration and informing the public about the daily happenings around them. The Constitution has given massive freedom to the people and indeed a vigilant and free media is essential for the smooth running of the government. Not only economic progress but also human-social relations and other issues affecting the people are being covered by the media. That is why the media and Indian democracy have become accustomed to it and its effective functions cannot be imagined without independent media.

The media acts as a bridge between the people and the government and is an extremely powerful tool with the power to create and break public opinion. It has the ability to manage perceptions or blow up emotions. That is why it has gained the trust of the people. It controls people's hearts and minds through media, various magazines, television and movies. Transparency was strictly considered personal and accountability as the most appropriate function of a democratic system seems to have led the country into a hand of peace and tranquility in a coalition of administrations involved in politics.

Media democracy gives people the right to participate in the media, it expands the media's relationship with the media, where information is collected and people can view and share. The media is described as a network of public relations information and perspectives, which is reproduced through communication activities to the public. Media democracy and mass communication are spread across various mediums such as social media and mainstream media to help people communicate with each other through digital media and share the information they want to disclose to the public. Media democracy suggests that corporate ownership and commercial pressures affect media content, limiting access to fast news, opinions and entertainment citizens receive. As a result, they called for a more equitable distribution of economic, social, cultural and information resources, which would create more enlightened citizens as well as more enlightened representative political discourses.

This paper shows that media plays a big role in people's lives and it plays a colossal task in Indian Democracy.

## Evolution of radio in India

Mass communication technology started its journey in colonial India in the 1920s. Radio clubs were started in 1933 in Calcutta and Bombay. The British Indian government had several established methods for managing emerging technologies and the policy was formulated on the advice of British officers engaged in the same policy. Radio broadcasting networks were seen as a means of imitating and propagating an indigenous Indian culture (**Ghosh, 1998**). The story of Prasar Bharati's (Broadcasting Corporation of India) bill is a good example of the paralysis that has plagued Indian political parties since coming to power. The first committee was formed in 1964 to even ask about the possibility of future broadcasting. Radio broadcasting began in 1922. However, in 1937 it was renamed as All India Radio. And since 1957 it has been known as Akashvani. Prasar Bharati was a public service broadcast in 1997 as an autonomous body under the Campaign Act to oversee all-India radio and television. It started in Delhi in September 1959 as an experimental base with a small transmitter and a temporary studio; however, it started in 1965 as part of the regular performances of All India Radio. Indian media consists of different types of communication: television, radio, film, newspapers, magazines and internet based websites / portals. Indian media has been active since the late 18th century. Print media started in India in the early 1780s. Radio broadcasting started in 1927. Indian media is one of the oldest in the world. It foretells the reign of Asoka. The Indian media has been free and independent for most of its history. Radio broadcasting began in 1927 but became the responsibility of the state in the 1930s. It was renamed All India Radio in 1933 and since 1955 it has been known as Television, Akashvani. An autonomous body called Prasar Bharati was established to take care of broadcasting (**Mitra 1993**).

## The post-independence period and the media

In free India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister and a leading figure in the freedom struggle, made important contributions to the formation of the press. And the development of media in India since independence has been uninterrupted and healthy. In 1944, political independence came to a country that was socially and economically divided into hundreds of groups. Most of these groups, especially the upper class, upper-middle class and largely lower class, were influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress (INC). When Nehru was the Prime Minister the Indian media seemed to pursue a democratic agenda. Most newspapers believe in a multi-party system, even because of their allegiance to extreme political parties.

Freedom of the media is therefore not perfect even in ordinary times, when reasonable restrictions can be imposed on the freedom of the media by the state. A state of emergency can be declared on the basis of war or external aggression or internal unrest, which was originally issued under Article 352. Under Article 357, which was originally enacted, the fundamental rights under Article 19 were automatically suspended at the time of declaration (Bhambhri 2009).

In any event, after 19 months of national emergency and media control, Indira Gandhi became so confident of her continued success that Mrs. Gandhi called for parliamentary elections in March 1977. At the same time, Mrs. Gandhi also removed press censorship. The people's persuasive objections against the atrocities of Indira Gandhi's rule were brought by a coalition government of several small political parties. Faced with pressure from the Indian press after the imposition of the 'state of emergency', it may be tempting to consider it as a slight but completely unexpected pressure for independence: India was only involved with third world countries, so there was some doubt about its authenticity (Vaibhav, 2019)

## Constitutional Status of Freedom of Media in India

The Constitution of India recognizes certain rights of the citizens of India as fundamental because the individual cannot develop his personality. Basically, there are six fundamental rights in the constitution, which help to make Indian democracy more effective and meaningful. These fundamental rights guarantee the fundamental freedom of the industry. 19 (1). Of the six freedoms, Article 19 (1) (a) provides for freedom of speech and liberty.

In a democracy like India, the media has the following responsibilities:

- i) provide the citizen with neutral information. The media will not tarnish the truth; they will present them as they are.
- ii) To play an important role in disseminating the thoughts of the citizens through empowerment with knowledge. In countries like India where there is a significant rate of illiteracy, it is the responsibility of the media to impart knowledge and expand their perspective.
- iii) To justify any action is against the spirit of justice or the essence of democracy.
- iv) To play an important role in instructing and initiating conceptual exercises.
- v) The right way to take action against the accused for any anti-social activity irrespective of political opposition.

vi) To build unity and brotherhood among the people, and to believe in democracy and justice. If the media fulfills its responsibilities strictly, the citizens will truly enjoy democracy ( Vishal, 2018).

Increasing women's education and access to their employment has contributed to women's empowerment and poverty alleviation. The media plays an important role in creating awareness for women to achieve potential. Without the law, women can easily access services and facilities through laws, government schemes, banks and voluntary organizations. The distance between women and the media not only deprives women of their right to information and knowledge, but it can also keep them in the dark about women being abused and distorted. (Jain2007)

### **Freedom of the press in Indian democracy**

Freedom of the press is at the center of all freedom. Where there is no exchange of information and thought, no other freedom is secure. Freedom of the press is one of the pillars of a free society and a means of expanding the boundaries of freedom. In a democracy the free media has an integral right to the opposition role. In order to solve the problems of the people and the country in the public interest, the authorities at all levels should be criticized and the management of the government should be monitored. A free press can be suffocated through economic pressure. For example, the government has no right to set advertising rates for individual newspapers or to use government advertising as a form of sponsorship or to canalize the supply of newsprint through state monopolies.

### **Globalization and the media**

Globalization is understood as a process through which economic and cultural events that used to be at the national level in most cases become increasingly international. This process has accelerated in recent decades, led by U.S-based multinational corporations and imperialist centers. At the ideological level, corporate globalization initiatives are encouraged by neo-liberal arguments about the potential for "free trade." The Global Village often leads to the notion of globalization where the real beneficiaries are information and communication technology whose visual face is the media. However, critics of globalization never forget to mention the rise of the trend of cultural homogeneity as a new form of hegemonic-cultural imperialism.

### **Media in India**

After India became independent and after the drafting of the Constitution, the question arose before the frames of the Indian Constitution as to whether there should be a separate provision for newspapers like the US Constitution, or whether the right to freedom of speech should be included. In this context, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar the chairman of the draft committee told that there is no greater advantage in the media than this which should not be given or it should not be used by individual empowered voters. "Press executives or editors are all citizens and so when they want to write for a newspaper, they just exercise their freedom of speech and freedom of speech and I don't need to mention my freedom in my decision." The right of the press to freedom of speech was enshrined in Article 19 (1) (a) of the Indian Constitution. A free press democracy is needed and it is more important for a huge democracy like India( Arjun 2019).

## The role of media in Indian democracy

Considered as the backbone of media democracy, it plays a very important role in Indian democracy which includes the following:

1. The media acts as a watchdog of the government and informs the public about the happenings around them through every report of the administration's actions.
2. The media is considered the fourth pillar of democracy. It makes us aware of various activities like politics, sports, economic, social and cultural activities etc. It is like a mirror that shows the empty truth and sometimes it can be harsh.
3. The media in a democratic society also leaks gaps, which ultimately helps the government to fill the gaps and make a system more accountable, responsive and democratic friendly. So democracy without media is like a wheel less car.
4. The media serves as a bridge between the people and the government and as a powerful tool with the power to create and break public opinion. It has the ability to suppress perception or blow emotions. That is why it has gained the trust of the people. It controls people's hearts and minds through media, various magazines, television and movies.

## Election and Media

Media and politics are the most important and very integral part of democracy and one cannot be expected without the other. The media lets its citizens feel comfortable and potentially take part in it. Politics and media use the vehicle called democracy. With the advent of media made politics more possible than ever. And every information and conclusion can be informed Citizens at the right time and in the right situation. Politics cannot be expected without media and there can be no media without politics. The media serves as the most effective and most important part and it works much later. Flow from it Information between the government and its citizens is only possible for the reason of media . In the competition of globalization and the means of modernization must be developed and the media must to go in parallel otherwise one must be proficient. There will be a lack behind others and there may be some conflict ( **Noor, 2018**).

## Impact of Social Media in Indian Politics

In 2008, India used social media for the first time During the Mumbai attacks and this is the 2009 national election. With the advent of social media, the format of Indian politics equips yourself and help with the new format. Different political parties come up with their ideas and motives 34% of the youth as well as the rest are Indians. Social media Inspiration and the main tool in the hands of Indian politics Inform with ideas and information. The serene result of this 2014 Lok Sabha elections and 2015 Delhi Assembly elections. This can be noticed and the total liability goes to social media. Different types of social media can be categorized as such Blogs, micro blogs, photo sharing, social networks, videos Sharing, Virtual Worlds, Social Bookmaking, Product Review Etc.

## Conclusion:

The media touches on almost every aspect of our public life today. The media plays a very important and vital role in enlisting and educating the people. Engaging with the media and imparting knowledge, skills and technology to the people can raise awareness about various rural development programs, family planning can be promoted using media. It has made farmers aware of new and improved methods of agriculture and crop conservation. The media plays a very strong role in raising awareness in the society against child marriage, child murder, child labor, etc. Although it is an educational program, it can cover many students on many platforms. The University Grants Commission promotes educational programs for the benefit of school and college students across India. Media can ignite a scientific mood among students for the development of science. Governments can use media more effectively as a tool for social change. The media has published various corrupt practices, secret agreements, thus keeping an eye on cancer in the form of corruption in the society.

The media cannot succeed without the free press. A free press is very necessary because it is the voice of the people, but the media will not fall prey to any financial or any other temptation and will truly serve the people. Media is playing an important role in shaping the human mind. It makes us aware of various activities like politics, sports, economic, social and cultural activities etc. It's like a mirror that shows blank truth and sometimes it can be harsh. However, it plays an important role in shaping the human mind. The media plays an important role in building democracy. This is called the backbone of democracy. It empowers citizens through information. The media arranges debates on current issues and controversial policies so that different views on the same issue can be brought to the fore.

This study also shows that there is a very close relationship between the struggle for social and political liberation in modern India and the growth and development of print media (press) in India. In the days when the state of emergency was relaxed, the press brought the state of emergency to the attention of the people and brought out the state of emergency. The survey found that the role of the press was a political catalyst that helped the people from their views against the emergency government that ultimately lifted the state of emergency in the general election and protected democracy.

For the development of social media squares must be added positive notes and with the help of every media the policies of political parties, ideas can easily spread to every level and corner of society. Earlier the selection process was conducted through or through. Support for print media and physical communication but nowadays the system has changed to a more modern and running system.

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# Is Indian Media Free from State Control? An Appraisal

*Sheikh Tajammul-ul-Islam\**

## **Abstract**

This paper argues that Indian media is state-controlled and biased in its reporting. It has become a tool in the hands of Indian government for spreading Hindutva agenda and jingoistic sentiments in people, consequently giving rise to communal riots. The paper also draws attention to the phenomenon of paid news and fake news. It discusses the increasing incidents of corruption in the Indian media industry, also highlighted by the Press Council of India (PCI). Citing some specific examples, the study contends that those media channels and journalists who refuse to toe government's line face reprisals. The paper also analyzes the coverage of Indian media vis-à-vis revocation of article 370 and 35 A of the Indian constitution; most media outlets in India described situation in the Occupied Valley as 'normal' and Kashmiris to be 'happy' which could not be more far from reality.

**Keywords:** Jingoism, Paid News, Fake News, Pulwama, *Cobrapost* Sting Operation, Revocation of Article 370 and 35 A, Indian Occupied Kashmir.

## **Introduction**

India claims to be the largest democracy of the world. It provides constitutional guarantees of freedom of press and boasts of the biggest and most diverse independent media industry in the world. The fact is that it is neither a democracy in real sense nor is its media free from state control. Indian media's notoriety for broadcasting fake news as well as paid news has increased over time. This paper looks at the increasing state control over India media and growing epidemic of biased, fake and sponsored content churned by media outlets in India. The paper also discusses Indian media's hype of 'airstrike' in Balakot claiming killings of 300 militants which were countered by reputed international media organizations with evidence. It discusses Sting operation conducted by *Cobrapost*, an Indian news website, which exposed key media persons accepting money for airing content to promote Hindutva. The article

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\* The paper is based on a presentation at a seminar "Post 5 August Reporting of Kashmir Issue with Special Reference to Indian Media" held by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in Islamabad on October 23, 2019.

\* Executive Director, Kashmir Media Service, Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

argues that those who do not conform to government's agenda incur state's wrath and are victimized. Indian media ranks 140<sup>th</sup> (falling two places) in 2019 in World Press Freedom Index, 'In India (down two at 140th), where critics of Hindu nationalism are branded as "anti-Indian" in online harassment campaigns, six journalists were murdered in 2018.'<sup>1</sup> The paper also highlights discrepancy in the coverage by Indian media in the wake of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir's (IOJ&K) annexation, which underscores that Indian government has stripped its media of integrity and autonomy.

### **Jingoistic and Biased Indian media**

One who has been watching Indian TV channels after February 14, 2019 Pulwama attack, Balakot air strike of February 26, 2019 and recently after Line of Control (LoC) clashes on October 20 will rightly arrive at the conclusion that 'independent' Indian journalism has taken a back seat and jingoistic journalism has taken its place and has proved itself to be war crazy. A day after the Pulwama attack, an aggressive Indian news anchor Arnab Goswami was found shouting on his channel that 'we want revenge, not condemnation. It is time for blood, the enemy's blood.'<sup>2</sup>

On the occasion of Indian military pilots', so called, airstrike in Pakistani town of Balakot, Indian media roused jingoistic sentiments in public, unquestioningly publishing in print and broadcasting on TV the government line that 300 militants had been killed.<sup>3</sup> Days later, *Reuters* and some other international media outlets challenged the government line and issued satellite images as evidence.<sup>4</sup>

Suchitra Vijayan and Vasundhara Sirnate Drennan in their article published in *Washington Post* on March 5, 2019 reveal the true picture of Indian media's reporting in the backdrop of Pulwama attack. They write:

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<sup>1</sup> RSF, "2019 World Press Freedom Index – A Cycle of Fear" (Paris: Reports Sans Frontiers [Reporters Without Borders], 2019), <https://rsf.org/en/2019-world-press-freedom-index-cycle-fear>.

<sup>2</sup> Vaishnavi Chandrashekar, "India's Media is War-Crazy," *Foreign Policy*, March 1, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/01/indias-media-is-war-crazy/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Indian Air Strike in Balakot Killed 300 Militants," *Economic Times*, February 26, 2019, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-air-strike-in-balakot-killed-300-militants-sources/articleshow/68165466.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=txt&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-air-strike-in-balakot-killed-300-militants-sources/articleshow/68165466.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=txt&utm_campaign=cppst).

<sup>4</sup> Simon Scarr, Chris Inton and Han Huang, "An Air Strike and its Aftermath," *Reuters Graphics*, March 6, 2019, <https://graphics.reuters.com/INDIA-KASHMIR/010090XM162/index.html>.

Our investigation into the Indian media's reporting on the Pulwama attack found that many reports were contradictory, biased, incendiary and uncorroborated. News organizations such as India Today, NDTV, News 18, the Indian Express, First Post, Mumbai Mirror, ANI and others routinely attributed their information to anonymous "government sources," "forensic experts," "police officers" and "intelligence officers." No independent investigations were conducted, and serious questions about intelligence failures were left unanswered.<sup>5</sup>

Vijayan and Drennan point out, 'this discrepancy is just one example of the confusion and misinformation spread to the public by deeply flawed media reports.'<sup>6</sup> They highlight how Indian media has become government's tool of propaganda and war-mongering:

...the Indian media has ascribed to itself the role of an amplifier of the government propaganda that took two nuclear states to the brink of war. Many TV newsrooms were transformed into caricatures of military command centers, with anchors assessing military technology and strategy (sometimes incorrectly). Some even dressed for the occasion in combat gear. Speculation and conjecture were repeated ad infinitum.<sup>7</sup>

Vijayan and Drennan highlight that Indian media legitimized the ideology which promotes violence, riots and lynching and is engaged in propagating Hindu majoritarianism, 'as such, very few media establishments in India have been able to stand against the influence of political leaders. Now, along with the media's legitimization of an ideology that promotes violence — including riots and lynching — its performance after Pulwama leaves severe doubts as to whether it is engaged in journalism or the propagation of Hindu majoritarianism.'<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, those media outlets which refused to conform to the government agenda and criticized government were either sacked or replaced. '[B]etween 2013 and 2019, editors of channels and

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<sup>5</sup> Suchitra Vijayan and Vasundhara Sirnate Drennan, "After Pulwama, the Indian Media Proves it is the BJP's Propaganda Machine," *Washington Post*, March 5, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/04/after-pulwama-indian-media-proves-it-is-bjps-propaganda-machine/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

publications have been sacked and replaced, primarily because of their criticism of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.<sup>9</sup>

Indian media has become notorious for presenting biased reports and spreading fake news. On October 20, 2019 the Indian news anchors could be seen euphorically reporting that Indian Army had killed 10 Pakistani army personnel destroying three terror camps in an action in Tangdhar and Keran sectors in Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>10</sup> Later, the news proved to be unfounded.<sup>11</sup>

All these instances indicate the extent to which the 'institutional', however unholy, 'nexus between mainstream media and the [BJP] government exists.'<sup>12</sup> The tone, choice of words, and nature of news aired by Indian media depicts the fascist tone of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

### **2018 Cobrapost Sting Operation 2018**

*Cobrapost.com* is an Indian news website known for its sting operations. It is working since 2005 and carries out investigative journalism. In its 2018 undercover operation, it offered a payment of up to Indian rupees 500 crore (US\$72 million) in cash to the Times Group, the publisher of 'The Times of India', the 'India Today group', the Hindustan Times group, the Zee group, the New Indian Express group and other media houses. As per *Cobrapost.com*, these outlets accepted to publish stories for the promotion of 'Hindutva agenda' for money. Under the sting operation they were approached by the *Cobrapost.com* under cover reporter, Srimad Bhagavad Gita Prachar Samiti, as a preacher of a fictitious organization. The above media houses agreed to the offer to air paid news to induce communal discord and polarize the Indian electorate.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "3 Terror Camps across LoC Destroyed, 6-10 Pak Soldiers Killed: Army Chief Gen Bipin Rawat," *Economic Times*, October 20, 2019, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/3-terror-camps-across-loc-destroyed-6-10-pak-soldiers-killed-army-chief-gen-bipin-rawat/articleshow/71676742.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cpst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/3-terror-camps-across-loc-destroyed-6-10-pak-soldiers-killed-army-chief-gen-bipin-rawat/articleshow/71676742.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cpst).

<sup>11</sup> "Pakistan Army Rejects India's Claim of Destroying Terror Camps in PoK," *India TV*, October 21, 2019, <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/world/pakistan-army-rejects-indian-claim-pok-terror-camp-558094>.

<sup>12</sup> Nikhil Inamdar, "How Narendra Modi has almost Killed the Indian Media," *Quartz India*, March 12, 2019, <https://qz.com/india/1570899/how-narendra-modi-has-almost-killed-indian-media/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Proposal Accepted for a 500 Crore Deal," *Times of India Blog-Cobrapost.com*, May 25, 2018, <https://cobrapost.com/blog/Timesof-India/1066>; Karnika Kohli, "At the Times Group, Cobrapost Sting Shows How Cash is King," *Wire*, May 26, 2018,

Later, after the release of the *Cobrapost.com* report in 2018, the Times Group, the New Indian Express Group and the India Group denied its claims but to the extent that their editorial teams never met the *Cobrapost.com* personnel rather their senior managements in the sales departments were approached.<sup>14</sup>

In June 2018, *Cobrapost.com* made it clear that it 'has not falsified, fabricated, concocted, tampered, doctored or altered in any manner whatsoever.'<sup>15</sup> Sting operation is another instance of how corruption prevails in Indian media and 'independent and free' Indian media is no more than a myth given its record of spreading propaganda, and certain Hindu ideology to fuel communal discord to manipulate electorate.

### **Paid News Phenomenon**

It is a common practice of the governments in India to bribe TV channels, media men and newspapers and pay huge amounts to the journalists and anchors to lure them in. The phenomenon is not new; *Bloomberg*, as far back as 2011, had said that '*paid news* was rotting India's democracy.'<sup>16</sup>

Earlier, in 2010, the Press Council of India (PCI) compiled a detailed 72-page report about the phenomenon of paid news in India. It was the result of an investigation into the matter conducted by a two-person panel of the Council. The report cited names and instances where paid pieces of information were published as genuine news. However, the Press council circulated an abridged form of the report and decided not to release it in full.<sup>17</sup>

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<https://thewire.in/media/times-group-vineet-jain-sting-operation-cobrapost>; and "Cobrapost Sting: Big Media Houses Say Yes to Hindutva, Black Money, Paid News," *Wire*, May 26, 2018, <https://thewire.in/media/cobrapost-sting-big-media-houses-say-yes-to-hindutva-black-money-paid-news>.

<sup>14</sup> Krishn Kaushik, "Cobrapost: Sting Claims Media Houses Open to 'Paid Hindutva Content', Firms Call it Misleading," *Indian Express*, May 27, 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/cobrapost-sting-media-houses-open-to-paid-hindutva-content-firms-call-it-misleading-times-group-india-today-ht-paytm-5192702/>; and "Cobrapost Sting: Big Media Houses Say Yes to Hindutva, Black Money, Paid News," *Wire*.

<sup>15</sup> *Cobrapost* quoted in, "As Zee Threatens Defamation on Sting, Cobrapost Sees Attack on Media Freedom," *Wire*, June 6, 2018, <https://thewire.in/media/zee-media-legal-notice-cobrapost-sting-operation>.

<sup>16</sup> Chandrahas Choudhury, "'Paid News' is Rotting India's Democracy: Choudhury," *Bloomberg*, October 26, 2011, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2011-10-25/-paid-news-is-rotting-india-s-democracy-choudhury>.

<sup>17</sup> PCI, *Report on Paid News* (New Delhi: Press Council of India, 2010), <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:NafFX3BIEBYJ:presscouncil.nic.in/OldWebsite/CouncilReport.pdf+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=pk>.

The PCI report said, paid news ranges from 'accepting gifts on various occasions, foreign and domestic junkets, various monetary and non-monetary benefits, besides direct payment of money.'<sup>18</sup> Agreements are also made between the media companies and other non-media companies in which certain shares are transferred for favorable coverage.<sup>19</sup>

It maintained that the media outlets plant information and views against favors received in cash or kind. The corruption has taken both institutionalized and organized forms. Newspapers and television channels receive funds for broadcasting required information mostly disguised as news.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has named hundreds of cases where Indian newspapers and TV channels received huge payments from politicians to compile favorable reports.

Therefore, since election-time "paid news" undermines free and fair elections, it is recommended that Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, should be suitably amended so as to declare any payment for the publication of news as a corrupt practice or an "electoral malpractice" and should be made a punishable offence.<sup>21</sup>

Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman, in their seminal work *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* contend that leading for profit media outlets are large conglomerates or parts of these companies, therefore, they must cater to 'financial interests of the owners.' The investors comfortably control productions and India is no exception.<sup>22</sup> Chomsky and Herman maintain:

Many of the large media companies are fully integrated into the market, and for the others, too, the pressures of stockholders, directors, and bankers to focus on the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> S. Y. Quraishi, "Elections and the Media," in *A Handbook of Journalism: Media in the Information Age*, eds. V. Eshwar Anand and K. Jayanthi (New Delhi: Sage, 2018), 88.

<sup>21</sup> PCI, *Report on Paid News*.

<sup>22</sup> Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002); and Sahil Wajid, "As India Heads for Polls, Does its Media Pass Chomsky's Five-Filter Test?" *Quartz India*, January 7, 2019, <https://qz.com/india/1516311/indian-media-can-learn-from-noam-chomsky-ahead-of-2019-elections/>.

bottom line are powerful. These pressures have intensified in recent years...<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, 'managements of media giant' have paid the price in terms of losing their autonomy.

They have lost some of their limited autonomy to bankers, institutional investors, and large individual investors whom they have had to solicit as potential 'white knights.'<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, the Network 18 Group is considered India's largest news conglomerate. It is owned by Reliance Industries, whose business interests cover a range from petroleum to telecom, many of which rely on government policy. Zee News owner Subhash Chandra's candidacy for election to the Rajya Sabha (the upper legislative house) was sponsored by the BJP. Similarly, one of the principal investors of the group running the *Republic TV* is a BJP parliamentarian. This indicates dependency of media corporations on government and how autonomy of the former is compromised, hence paid news phenomenon.<sup>25</sup>

## **Reprisals**

The media organizations and the media persons in India who do not toe the government's line face reprisals including vindictive actions, complaints, threats, lawsuits, illegal and punitive proceedings. The governments, advertisers, corporations, and private influence groups victimize them.

Reporters Without Borders in its study 'Attacked Online or Physically' claimed that the Hindu nationalists try to purge the national debate from so-called anti-national thoughts in India, 'Those who espouse Hindutva, the ideology that gave rise to Hindu nationalism, are trying to purge all manifestations of "anti-national" thought from the national debate.'<sup>26</sup> Self-censorship is growing in the mainstream media and the most radical nationalists target the journalists online by smear

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<sup>23</sup> Chomsky and Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Wajid, "As India Heads for Polls, Does its Media Pass Chomsky's Five-Filter Test?"

<sup>26</sup> RSF, "Attacked Online or Physically" (Paris: Reporters sans Frontiers [Reporters without Borders], 2018), <https://rsf.org/en/india>; "Deadly Threat to Journalists from Modi's Nationalism," *Citizen*, July 4, 2018, <https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/newsdetail/index/2/14292/deadly-threat-to-journalists-from-modis-nationalism>.

campaigns vilifying them and even threatening them with physical reprisals.<sup>27</sup>

In recent months, Anil Ambani-led Reliance Infrastructure filed many defamation suits against news media organizations for raising some pertinent questions about the Rafale, a controversial defense deal in which India acquired 36 fighter jets from France.<sup>28</sup> The deal put Narendra Modi in an awkward position as he has been blamed for corrupt practices in the deal.<sup>29</sup>

The human rights watchdog, Amnesty International and an NGO Greenpeace, in a statement in January 2019 condemned the Indian government for carrying out a concerted smear campaign in collusion with a few English news channels against veteran Bollywood actor Naseeruddin Shah for appearing in Amnesty International's appeal to uphold human rights and free speech in India.<sup>30</sup> Actor Naseeruddin Shah had appeared in an Amnesty India video, saying that walls of hate in the name of religion had been built, 'In the name of religion, walls of hate are being erected. Innocents are being killed. The country is awash with horrific hatred and cruelty.'<sup>31</sup> Shah claimed that crackdown was conducted on the freedom of expression in India and darkness had replaced law as journalists were being silenced, innocent people being killed, and human rights activists being imprisoned.<sup>32</sup>

The video came weeks after Shah had faced wrath from communal Hindu organizations for saying that he felt anxious for his children in present-day India. He had expressed worry that the death of

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Vijayta Lalwani, "Anil Ambani's Defamation Blitz: 28 Cases Filed by Reliance Group in Ahmedabad Courts this Year," *Scroll.in*, November 25, 2018, <https://scroll.in/article/903119/anil-ambanis-defamation-blitz-28-cases-filed-by-reliance-group-in-ahmedabad-courts-this-year>; and "Anil Ambani to Withdraw Defamation Suits against Cong, Herald," *Outlook India*, May 21, 2019, <https://www.outlookindia.com/newsscroll/anil-ambani-to-withdraw-defamation-suits-against-cong-herald/1539079>. Anil Ambani recently withdrew the defamation suits filed by Ambani Group against Congress Leaders.

<sup>29</sup> "Rafale Deal Biggest Issue of Corruption, Modi Changed Contract: Rahul Gandhi," *India Today*, February 10, 2018, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/rafale-deal-biggest-issue-of-corruption-today-modi-personally-changed-contract-rahul-gandhi-1166893-2018-02-10>.

<sup>30</sup> Wajid, "As India Heads for Polls, Does its Media Pass Chomsky's Five-Filter Test?"

<sup>31</sup> "Naseeruddin Shah Appears in Amnesty video, says 'Walls of Hatred Erected in The Name of Religion'," *Times of India*, January 4, 2019, [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/67384209.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/67384209.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



a cow was given more importance than that of a police officer today – a reference to an inspector's killing in mob violence in Bulandshahr.<sup>33</sup>

Like individuals, media outlets which refuse to toe government's line also face reprisals. NDTV is a case in point. Some BJP leaders have described it as 'the least friendly of India's television channels.' Therefore, in vindictive action it is being investigated for fraud by federal police and the NDTV has called it a witch-hunt. The BJP has officially carried out a boycott of the channel.<sup>34</sup>

One way in which the government exerts control over media is through freezing advertisements. In June, the BJP government stopped supply of state advertising to at least three prominent English newspapers. Senior executives of those groups and opposition leaders contended that the advertisements were frozen in retaliation for news reports critical of the government. These newspaper groups included *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, and *The Telegraph*.<sup>35</sup>

The episode of famous Indian television journalist and author Barkha Dutt is also pertinent to be mentioned. The BJP government was displeased with her and threatened her. Her following tweets dated June 7, 2018 indicate that:

Those who conveyed the message to me today- said a big meeting was held on how to stop me and my projects. I was told tools will include-tapping my phone, income tax cases, smear, and surveillance. Was advised debugging and personal security and to not proceed with my new work.<sup>36</sup>

In another tweet, she wrote:

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. He was speaking in the wake of a mob violence that erupted in Bulandshahr, Uttar Pradesh on December 3 over alleged cow slaughter in the Mahaw village. The violence led to the death of two men, including police inspector Subodh Kumar Singh.

<sup>34</sup> Raju Gopalakrishnan, "Indian Journalists say They Intimidated, Ostracized if They Criticize Modi and the BJP," *Reuters*, April 26, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-politics-media-analysis/indian-journalists-say-they-intimidated-ostracized-if-they-criticize-modi-and-the-bjp-idUSKBN1HX1F4>; and Inamdar, "How Narendra Modi has almost Killed the Indian Media."

<sup>35</sup> Devjyot Ghoshal, "Modi Government Freezes Ads Placed in Three Indian Newspaper Groups," *Reuters*, June 28, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-media/modi-government-freezes-ads-placed-in-three-indian-newspaper-groups-idUSKCN1TT1RG>.

<sup>36</sup> Barkha Dutt, tweet, June 7, 2018, 11:36AM, <https://twitter.com/bdutt/status/1004612940417253378?lang=en>.

All this while I thought Indian Democracy would keep me safe & keep my rights as a private citizen intact. Today it is conveyed to me that sections of the Establishment have decided to use any tool available to stop me from working. I am placing this in the public domain.<sup>37</sup>

Like Indian journalists, the Kashmiri journalists have also been victimized by the Indian governments. They have been continuously facing incarcerations, threats, beatings and even assassination. Sometimes, the publication of newspapers is also banned. Two Kashmiri editors, Qazi Shibli and Aasif Sultan are presently behind the bars under the black law, Public Safety Act.<sup>38</sup> The editors of Srinagar based newspapers *Greater Kashmir*<sup>39</sup> and *Kashmir Reader*<sup>40</sup> were summoned to New Delhi for interrogation by Indian National Investigation Agency (NIA). The purpose was to harass them. Editor of *Daily Afaq*, Ghulam Jeelani Qadri was arrested in a raid on his house in Srinagar.<sup>41</sup> The newspapers of Jammu and Kashmir could not update their online editions because they had no internet facilities that were snapped after August 5, 2019.<sup>42</sup>

Moving to social media, the Facebook has deactivated accounts in thousands on the complaint of Indian government.<sup>43</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), New York has revealed that at the behest of

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<sup>37</sup> "I was Told not to Do Journalism till 2019': Watch Barkha Dutt Speak about Bids to Intimidate Her," *Scroll.in*, June 8, 2018, <https://scroll.in/video/881970/i-was-told-not-to-do-journalism-till-2019-watch-barkha-dutt-speak-about-bids-to-intimidate-her>.

<sup>38</sup> "Indian Police Arrest a Journalist in IOK," *Kashmir Media Service*, August 2, 2019, <https://kmsnews.org/news/2019/08/02/indian-police-arrest-a-journalist-in-iok/>; and "News Behind The Barbed Wire: Kashmir's Information Blockade," *Free Speech Collective*, September 4, 2019, <https://freespeechcollective.in/2019/09/04/news-behind-the-barbed-wire-kashmirs-information-blockade/>.

<sup>39</sup> Sagrika Kissu, "Kashmiri Daily Editor Interrogated by NIA as Persecution of Journalists Continues," *News*, July 12, 2019, <https://www.newsclick.in/kashmiri-daily-editor-interrogated-nia-persecution-journalists-continues>. Fayaz Kaloo, editor-in-chief, *Greater Kashmir* was interrogated by NIA for continuous six days about funding sources to his organization. Both *Greater Kashmir* and *Kashmir Reader* faced ad-freeze from the government as reprisal.

<sup>40</sup> "NIA Quizzes Editor of Srinagar-Based English Daily," *Kashmir Media Service*, July 19, 2019, <https://kmsnews.org/news/2019/07/19/nia-quizzes-editor-of-srinagar-based-english-daily/>. NIA questioned the owner-cum-editor of a Srinagar-based daily English newspaper, Haji Mohammad Hayat Butt, at its headquarters in New Delhi.

<sup>41</sup> "Police Arrest Newspaper Publisher in Midnight Raid in Kashmir," *India Today*, June 26, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/police-arrest-newspaper-publisher-in-midnight-raid-in-kashmir-1556208-2019-06-26>.

<sup>42</sup> Laxmi Murthy and Geeta Seshu, "Silence in the Valley: Kashmiri Media after the Abrogation of Article 370," *Economic & Political Weekly* 54, no. 43 (2019), <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/silence-valley-kashmiri-media-after-abrogation>.

<sup>43</sup> "Facebook Removes Nearly 700 Pages Linked to Congress due to 'Inauthentic Behaviour,'" *Economic Times*, April 1, 2019, <https://m.economictimes.com/news/elections/lok-sabha/india/facebook-removes-687-pages-linked-to-congress-party-due-to-coordinated-inauthentic-behaviour/articleshow/68669174.cms>.

Indian government the Twitter blocked nearly a million tweets that focused on Kashmir, while almost 100 twitter accounts were rendered 'inaccessible' to the people of IOJ&K.<sup>44</sup>

This gives an overview of how Indian governments exercise control over artists, media corporations and journalists as well as public which refuse to conform to state's propaganda of Hindutva ideology and fake news and victimizes them.

### **Post Annexation of IOJ&K Indian Coverage**

In the wake of the revocation of articles 370 and 35 A of Indian constitution on August 5, 2019 and annexation of IOJ&K, Indian media resorted to fabricated and distorted news and reported 'normalcy' in the Occupied Valley. In this regard, I found suitable for reference a news clip of an Indian news website, *The Quint*. The website can be defined as one among those Indian media outlets, which are exception to the dominant mainstream media of India. This transcription of the clip is as follows: <sup>45</sup>

There has been a sharp difference between the reportage of the international media and Indian media on Kashmir since the govt revoked Art 370 on 5<sup>th</sup> of Aug. While the international media showed protests in Kashmir, the Indian media stressed on normalcy. On Friday, 9 Aug, Reuters, BBC and Al-Jazeera reported that a massive protest took place at Soura in Srinagar, and that the security forces fired on the protesters. No Indian channel covered this protest. Republic's Arnab Goswami called it 'fake news'.

The international media has brought out several troubling details from Kashmir, which Indian channels have largely ignored. For instance, Time Magazine and New York Times reported that over 2000 people have been detained in Kashmir, but 'Times Now' labeled many of the detainees as 'terrorists'.

UK-based newspaper, The Independent, reported that the authorities are refusing to give death certificates

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<sup>44</sup> "Almost Million Tweets on Kashmir Blocked at India's Behest: CPJ," *Kashmir Media Service*, October 26, 2019, <https://kmsnews.org/news/2019/10/26/almost-million-tweets-on-kashmir-blocked-at-indias-behest-cpj/>.

<sup>45</sup> Aditya Menon, "Kashmir Crisis: Are Indian & International Media Talking about the Same Place?" *Quint*, September 4, 2019, <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/kashmir-crisis-indian-international-media-bbc-aljazeera-arnab-goswami-ani>.

for those killed in clashes with security forces. But no Indian TV channel took up the story. American magazine *Foreign Policy* reported that security personnel forced Kashmiri civilians to chant 'Vande Mataram'. On the other hand, 'India TV' said that jawans are working to keep Kashmir safe.

Reuters reported on the difficulties faced by local Kashmiri reporters but *Open Magazine's* Rahul Pandita ridiculed them and said that if journalists can't find 5 minutes of internet every day, then they don't deserve to be journalists. BBC and AP even captured on camera security forces taking away a doctor just after he complained of a shortage of medicines. No Indian channel covered this story.

Sections of the Indian media also gave misleading information on several occasions. ANI presented a mosque in Jammu as a place of Eid prayers in Srinagar. Several publications carried ANI's videos and photos without verifying them. Many channels also showed a few Kashmiris interacting with NSA Ajit Doval in south Kashmir suggesting that they had no ill-will towards the PM's key advisor. But other media outlets pointed out that these people didn't know who Ajit Doval was at that time.

A few Indian journalists presented one Mohammad Ashraf Azad as a Kashmiri supporting the govt on Art 370 but they forgot to mention that he is a BJP leader. By failing to report several aspects of the Kashmir crisis, perhaps many channels are following the Press Council of India chairman's mantra 'some news is best not reported'.<sup>46</sup>

This indicates huge difference between reportage of Indian media and international media. It also reveals the extent to which Indian media fabricates, distorts and misreports the actual events to its audience under state control. Over time, Indian media has become notorious for spinning fake news and paid news as cited by various international media outlets, *The New York Times*, *Times Magazine*, *BBC*, *The Independent*, *Foreign Policy*, and *Reuters*.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

## **Post-August 5 Indian Media Themes vis-à-vis Kashmir**

Indian media has been focusing on the following themes regarding Kashmir after August 5, 2019. These depict the narratives of the BJP that are totally lies and fabrications about the current situation in IOJ&K.

- Kashmiris are happy with the abrogation of Article 370.<sup>47</sup>
- Special status has given nothing but terrorism, secessionism, nepotism and corruption.<sup>48</sup>
- With the abrogation of Article 370, violence has reduced, militant attacks and stone pelting incidents have decreased.<sup>49</sup>
- Kashmiris need not fear about their culture and identity; this is inherently protected in Indian constitution.<sup>50</sup>
- Article 370 and 35 A were revoked for the benefit of people.<sup>51</sup>
- Abrogation will bring development, jobs, investment and bright future for Kashmiris.<sup>52</sup>
- India will strengthen grassroots level democracy in Kashmir – Panchayat elections and BDC polls are some of the indicators.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Kashmir Situation Normal, People Happy with Article 370 Abrogation: Prakash Javadekar," *Times of India*, October 6, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/kashmir-situation-normal-people-happy-with-article-370-abrogation-prakash-javadekar/articleshow/71464893.cms>.

<sup>48</sup> "PM Modi Reaches Out to J&K, says Revocation of Article 370 'Historic'," *Economic Times*, August 8, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/article-370-has-given-separatism-terrorism-in-jk-pm-hails-its-revocation-historic/articleshow/70591996.cms?from=mdr>.

<sup>49</sup> "Violence in Kashmir Reduced after Abrogation of Art 370: Army," *Economic Times*, October 11, 2019, [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/violence-in-kashmir-reduced-after-abrogation-of-art-370-army/articleshow/71539925.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/violence-in-kashmir-reduced-after-abrogation-of-art-370-army/articleshow/71539925.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst).

<sup>50</sup> "J&K will Become State Again Once Security Situation Improves: Amit Shah," *Business Standard*, October 7, 2019, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/j-k-will-become-state-again-once-the-security-situation-improves-amit-shah-119100700914\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/j-k-will-become-state-again-once-the-security-situation-improves-amit-shah-119100700914_1.html).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> "In First Speech on Article 370, PM Modi Talks Development in J&K," *India Today*, August 8, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pm-narendra-modi-speech-article-370-highlights-development-agenda-jammu-kashmir-ladakh-1578882-2019-08-08>.

<sup>53</sup> "Sarpanches, Panches Term BDC Polls 'New Dawn of Grassroots Democracy' in JK," *Business Standard*, October 24, 2019, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/sarpanches-panches-term-bdc-polls-new-dawn-of-grassroots-democracy-in-jk-119102401513\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/sarpanches-panches-term-bdc-polls-new-dawn-of-grassroots-democracy-in-jk-119102401513_1.html).

- Whatever bad happens in Kashmir – killings, protests, etc., – is done at Pakistan’s behest.<sup>54</sup>
- Normalcy is returning to Kashmir, withdrawing of tourism advisory and holding of BDC polls are some of the instances.<sup>55</sup>

Various Indian media outlets did not report or give adequate coverage or portray actual picture of the lockdown and military siege of IOJ&K, imposition of curfew and restrictions besides people’s anger and resentment against India.

BJP’s control over the country’s media is about something more sinister. Control over the nation’s press is an attempt to promote a Hindu nationalist, or *Hindutva*, agenda across all institutions of India It is also an attempt to promote communal agenda of the RSS.<sup>56</sup>

The Sangh Parivar seeks to achieve a Hindu India, and the Sangh Parivar’s political arm, the BJP is in a position to use the state machinery to fulfill that vision, including control over the media.<sup>57</sup>

In order to achieve this, the government relies primarily on at least ten networks including *Republic TV*, *Zee News*, *India News*, *AajTak* and *Times Now*. In their jingoistic, overtly pro-BJP, anti-Pakistan and anti-Kashmir content their anchors regularly carry out shows with loud, brash, and derogatory rhetoric and post similar views on their social media accounts, which is far from the myth that Indian media is free from state control.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Amar Diwakar, “As Elections Loom, India’s Modi Vows to End Terrorism in Kashmir — with more Military Force,” *Public Radio International*, April 8, 2019, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-04-08/elections-loom-indias-modi-vows-end-terrorism-kashmir-more-military-force>; and Jitendra Bahadur Singh, “Pakistan Perpetrating Terror Activities in India through J&K, Punjab: Rajnath Singh,” *India Today*, December 20, 2018, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pakistan-perpetrating-terror-activities-in-india-through-j-k-punjab-rajnath-singh-1414095-2018-12-20>.

<sup>55</sup> “Tourists to Return to Kashmir, Advisory Lifted,” *Outlook India*, October 8, 2019, <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/tourists-to-return-to-kashmir-advisory-lifted/1635875>.

<sup>56</sup> Aman Madan, “India’s Not-So-Free Media” *Diplomat*, January 23, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/indias-not-so-free-media/>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Salil Tripathi, “How the Fog of War has Blinded Journalists to their Roles,” commentary, *Caravan*, March 2, 2019, <https://caravanmagazine.in/media/question-journalists-support-for-armed-forces>.

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# Social Media Research in India: A Scientometric Assessment of Publications Output during 2004-13

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# Social Media Research in India: A Scientometric Assessment of Publications Output during 2004-13

Ritu Gupta<sup>1</sup> and B. M. Gupta<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Shri Venkateshwar University, Tirupati, India; ritu7648@gmail.com  
<sup>2</sup>1173 Sector 15, Panchkula 134113, Haryana, India; bmgupta1@gmail.com

## Abstract

Examines 733 Indian publications on social media research, as covered in Scopus database during 2004-13, experiencing an annual average growth rate of 168.31% and citation impact of 1.27. The world social media research output came from several countries, of which the top 15 accounts for 81.95% share of the global output during 2004-13. India's global publication share was 1.97% during 2004-13 and hold 13<sup>th</sup> rank in global publication output. Only 37.38% of Indian publications on social media were cited one or more times since their publication till March 2015. India's social media research output came from several organizations and authors, of which the top 10 contributed 30.42% and 17.87% share respectively of its total output during 2004-13. India's international collaborative share in social media was 22.10% during 2004-13. The paper stressed the need for the development of a national social media policy by Indian government.

**Keywords:** Publications, Scientometric Assessment, Social Media Research

## 1. Introduction

The advent of social media is transforming the way in which people connect with each other and the manner in which information is shared and distributed. It is different from traditional media such as print, radio and television in two significant ways – first, the amount of content that can be generated by the users themselves far exceeds the content generated by news/opinion makers and second its “viral” ability for potential exponential spread of information by word of mouth and interlinking of the various social media platforms, thereby considerably reducing the control over spread of any such information. These characteristics denote the paradigm shift from Web 1.0 technologies that enabled simple information sharing and basic two-way transactions to Web 2.0 – where literally everyone is/can be a user as well as generator of content. Social media is redefining the way people communicate with one another<sup>1</sup>. Social media are the platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in, comment on and create content as means of communicating with their social graph, other

users and the public. Social media has the following characteristics: (i) Encompasses wide variety of content formats including text, video, photographs, audio, PDF and PowerPoint. (Social content is a by-product of creating content with your community.); (ii) Allows interactions to cross one or more platforms through social sharing, email and feeds; (iii) Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment or lurk on social media networks; (iv) Facilitates enhanced speed and breadth of information dissemination, (v) Provides for one to one, one too many and many to many communications (vi) Enables communication to take place in real time or asynchronously over time; (vi) Is device indifferent. It can take place via a computer (including laptops and net books), tablets (including iPods, it ouch and others) and mobile phones (particularly smart phones) and (vii) Extends engagement by creating real-time online events, extending online interactions offline, or augmenting live events online<sup>1</sup>.

Social media continues to grow around the world with active social media user accounts for 29% of the world

\*Author for correspondence



population as on January 2015. Monthly active users for the most active social networks in each country add up to almost 2.08 billion, a 12% increase since January 2014<sup>2</sup>.

Indian social media scene represents a fast emerging and influential domain for information exchange. The rising significance of social media in India is demonstrated by the fact that almost all the conventional media have registered their presence on the social networking websites. The growth in the number of social networking users can be attributed to the rising internet penetration in India, through increasing affordability of smart phones and consequently mobile internet use. As on January 2015, India has 1.265 billion populations, of which 243 million are active internet users (penetration rate 19%), 118 million active social media users accounts (penetration rate 8%) and 100 million active mobile social media accounts (penetration rate 7%). Since January 2014, there is a growth of 31% in active social media accounts and 39% on active social media mobile accounts. According to a survey of the users of social media sites by age groups in India: 16-24 years age group population use various social media sites from 35.1% to 60.3%, 25-34 years age group population use from 26.6% to 35.3%, 35-44 years age group population use 13.1% to 18.7%, 45-54 years age group population use from 3.7% to 11.3% and 55-64 years age group population use 1.2% to 2.8%. In terms of characteristics of Indian users, 52% are males and 48% females. The top 8 Indian metros including 53 cities represent more than 80% of the social media users. The rest belong to rural strata including smaller township and villages<sup>3-5</sup>.

Indians are very active on different social networks and 88% of users share content on their social profiles and as well are increasingly spending time on various social networking sites. Of the total Indian users, 52 percent are active on Face book, 35 percent on Google+ and 30 percent on Twitter, 23 percent on LinkedIn and 14 percent on Rout. Face book is the most browsed social network on social media with a largest base of around 100 million users More than 80% of those users access Facebook via their mobile phone. Total Twitter users in India are 33 million and from this base 76% of users access it via their mobile phone. LinkedIn has 26 million India users of its total 300+ million users. Of the total chunk of 70 million total users in Pinterest, 5.5 million comprise from India. Instagram's usage is more dominated by men in comparison to women; ratio being 75/25. It shows only 1/4th of the women population in India are on Instagram, looks like selfies are more appreciated by men than women. The most shared type of videos is film or movie trailers<sup>6</sup>.

The social media has been actively used by Indian companies for marketing, commerce and business applications. The business ventures in India rely on social network to understand their consumer base, for brand awareness and for interaction with the clients. E-commerce companies have been most active users of social media, be it for marketing their offers or to provide customers service. Service organizations such as banks and others financial organizations too use social media to provide regular updates on their latest offers and allow basic customer updates and allow basic operations through social media sites. Social media can also be leveraged by the government for various purposes including seeking feedback from citizens on policies—whether existing or proposed—re-pronouncement of public policy, feedback on services rendered, issue based interactions, generating awareness about its various programmes and policies. In fact, various departments and ministries of government of India as well as various state governments and local bodies have been using the social media platforms in recent past and the response to such usage has been encouraging and appreciated by public at large. Many Indian political parties are widely using social media sites for promotion of their party activities and programmes. Indian professional community has been using social media tools for professional networking either within a subject fields or across different disciplines and professions. Actively participating in social media networks allows scientists to disseminate research findings quickly and effectively as well as raise their own profile, of their research groups or institution. More importantly, the interactive nature of the medium can be highly beneficial for scientists by offering new perspectives on their own research through dialogue with peers and non-peers, and helping to establish new collaborations is using. Many other professionals such as librarians are using social media to promote their collections and services and get feedback for further improvements.

### 1.1 Literature Review

Only few studies have been conducted in the past on scientometric assessment of social media literature. Coursaris, and Van Osch<sup>7</sup> examined 610 global publications on social media from October 2004 to December 2012 and focused on the contribution and citation impact of individuals, institutions and countries. The publication productivity according to authors is exploding with emergence of leading authors, institutions, countries and a small set of foundational papers. Social media as a domain displays limited diversity and is still

heavily influenced by practitioners. The paper raises fundamental challenges facing the social media domain and its future advancement, namely the lack of academic maturity and the Matthew Effect. Another study by Gan and Wang<sup>8</sup> made a bibliometric assessment of 646 global social media research publications in journals under the subject category “Information Science & Library Science” of the *Social Science Citation Index*. The research performance and trends were analyzed with descriptors of types and languages, characteristics, countries, journals, authorships and author keywords.

## 2. Objectives

The study made a scientometric assessment of Indian publications on social media research, based on publications covered and indexed in Scopus international database during 2004-13. In particular, the study focuses on the following objectives:

- To study the growth and distribution of world and Indian literature on social media;
- To study the global contribution and citation impact of the of top 15 most productive countries;
- To study the pattern of distribution of citations received by Indian publications;
- To study the share of international collaborative publications and the contribution of major collaborative countries in India's output;
- To study the distribution of publication output by broad subject areas, social media site and identification of important keywords;
- To study the contribution and citation impact of 10 most productive organizations and authors;
- To study the medium of communication and the characteristics of its top high cited publications

## 3. Methodology

The global publications of top 15 most productive countries were identified using a set of significant keywords and retrieved from the publications covered in Scopus international bibliographical database (<http://www.scopus.com>) for 10 years from 2004 to 2013. A number of significant identified keywords (as shown in the main search string given below) were used in “title, abstract and keyword” tag and restricting it to the period 2003-14 in “date range tag” for searching the global publication data on social media. When this main search string was restricted to individual 15 most productive

countries in “country tag” (including India) one by one, the publication data on these countries were obtained. On further restricting the main search string to “subject area tag”, “country tag”, “source title tag”, “journal title name” and “affiliation tag”, statistics on distribution of publications by subject, collaborating countries, organization and author-wise and journal-wise, etc were obtained. For data on citations, a citation window of the three years (for publications during 2004-12) and two years (for publications of 2013) was used. The citation data is collected up to 2014. For 2012 publications, the citation data is collected for three years (2012 to 20-14). For 2013, the citation data is collected for two years (from 2013 to 2014). In addition, citations to publications were collected from date of publications till the end February 2015 for section on “citation pattern of research output” and “analysis of high cited publications”.

((TITLE-ABS-KEY(“social media”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(“social medium” or “social network site”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(“social networking site”) or “online social network”)) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2014) or ((TITLE-ABS-KEY(facebook) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(twitter or wikipedia or foursquare) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(linkedin or myspace or “google plus”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(instagram or pinterest or flickr) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(“academia.edu” or “researchgate”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(“you tube” or “youtube”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(slideshare)) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2014) or ((TITLE-ABS-KEY(“blog” or “blogs”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(“blogging” or “bloggers”) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY(“weblog” or “microblog”)) AND PUBYEAR > 2003 AND PUBYEAR < 2014))

## 4. Analysis

The world and Indian publications in social media have increased from 98 and 0 in 2004 to 10024 and 248 in 2014, witnessing an average annual publication growth rate of 75.43% and 168.31% during 2004-13. The cumulative number of world and Indian publications on social media has increased from 4758 and 36 during 2004-08 to 32412 and 697 during 2009-13. The average citation impact per publication of Indian publications was 1.27, which decreased from 2.25 during 2004-08 to 1.22 during 2009-13 (Table 1). Of the 733 Indian publications on social media, 73.53% (539) appeared as conference papers, 20.05% (147) as articles, 2.86% (21) as reviews, book chapters, 2.18% (16), editorials and letters, 0.54% (4 each) and short surveys, 0.27% (2) during 2004-13.

**Table 1.** World and India Publications: Growth, Citation and International Collaboration, 2004-13

Publication Year	World			India		
	TP	TP	TC	ACPP	ICP	%ICP
2004	98	0	0	0		
2005	309	1	0	0		
2006	696	2	2	1		
2007	1432	18	48	2.67	6	33.33
2008	2223	15	31	2.07	5	33.33
2009	3142	56	95	1.7	15	26.79
2010	4661	85	173	2.04	17	20.00
2011	6294	106	168	1.58	25	23.58
2012	8291	202	283	1.4	46	22.77
2013	10024	248	134	0.54	48	19.35
2004-08	4758	36	81	2.25	11	30.56
2009-13	32412	697	853	1.22	151	21.66
2004-13	37167	733	934	1.27	162	22.10

TP=Total Papers; TC=Total Citations; ACPP=Average Citations Per Paper; ICP=International Collaborative Papers

#### 4.1 Distribution of Citations

Citations received by 733 Indian publications on social media during 2004-13 were examined since the year of publication till March 2015. During this period, 1779 citations were received by 733 Indian publications, leading to the average citation per publication of 2.43. Around 62.62% of the total publications did not get any citations (zero citation) and the rest 37.38% publications were cited one or more times. Of the total cited publications, 33.02% publications (receiving 1 to 10 citations) contributed 39.24% citations share, 2.05% publications (receiving 11 to 20 citations) contributed 12.20% citations share, 0.68% publications each (receiving 21 to 30 and 31 to 40 citations) contributed 6.69% and 10.12% citation share, 0.27% publications (receiving 41 to 50 citations) contributed 5.23% citation share, 0.55% publications (receiving 51 to 100 citations) contributed 16.75% citation share and the rest 0.14% publications (receiving 101 to 200 citations) contributed 9.78% citations share (Table 2).

#### 4.2 International Collaboration

The share of international collaborative publications in India's publication output was 22.10%, which decreased from 30.56% during 2004-08 to 21.66% during 2009-13 (Table 1). The largest share (48.10%) in India's collaborative papers on social media was contributed by USA, followed by Australia (9.88%), Germany (8.02%), Brazil (7.41%),

Singapore (4.94%), etc. during 2004-13. The publication share has increased in Australia, Brazil, Singapore, China and Saudi Arabia, as against decrease in USA, Germany, and U.K. from 2004-08 to 2009-13 (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Citations Received by Indian Publications on Social Media during 2004-13

Range of Citations	No of Papers	No. of Citations	Share of Papers	Share of Citations
0	459	0	62.62	0.00
1-10	242	698	33.02	39.24
11-20	15	217	2.05	12.20
21-30	5	119	0.68	6.69
31-40	5	180	0.68	10.12
41-50	2	93	0.27	5.23
51-100	4	298	0.55	16.75
101-200	1	174	0.14	9.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>1779</b>		

**Table 3.** Share of Top 9 Countries in India's International Collaborative Papers on Social Media during 2004-13

S. No	Name of Collaborative Country	No. of Collaborative Publications			Share of Collaborative Publications		
		2004-08	2009-13	2004-13	2004-08	2009-13	2004-13
1	USA	7	71	78	63.64	47.02	48.10
2	Australia	1	15	16	9.09	9.93	9.88
3	Germany	2	11	13	18.18	7.28	8.02
4	Brazil	0	12	12	0.00	7.95	7.41
5	Singapore	0	8	8	0.00	5.30	4.94
6	Canada	2	4	6	18.18	2.65	3.70
7	China	0	5	5	0.00	3.31	3.09
8	Saudi Arabia	0	5	5	0.00	3.31	3.09
9	U.K.	1	4	5	9.09	2.65	3.09
	<b>Total of the country</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>162</b>			

#### 4.3 Global Publication Share and Citation Impact of Top 15 Most Productive Countries

The top 15 most productive countries on social media contributed individually from 643 to 12191 papers and together contributed 30459 papers, accounting for 81.95% of the global publications output during 2004-13.

The largest global publication share (32.80%) came from USA, followed by U.K. (7.55%), China (7.35%), Germany (5.06%), Australia (4.23%), Canada, Japan and Spain (from 3.09% to 3.51%), Italy, Taiwan, France and Netherlands (from 2.12% to 2.49%), and India, South Korea and Singapore (from 1.73% to 1.97%) during 2004-13. Except Japan, in all other countries, the global publication share increased by 3.92% in China, USA (1.58%), India (1.39%), Spain (1.20%), U.K. (0.95%), Italy (0.90%), Australia (0.88%), South Korea (0.82%) etc. from 2004-08 to 2009-13. The highest citation impact per paper (4.48) was made by USA among top 15 most productive countries, followed by UK (3.78), Netherland (3.52), Canada (3.27), Singapore (3.16), Italy (2.93), France (2.92), South Korea (2.81), Germany (2.80), Australia (2.63), Spain (2.44), Taiwan (2.13), China (2.05), Japan (1.43) and India (1.27) during 2004-13 (Table 4).

#### 4.4 Subject-Wise Distribution of Papers

The India's social media publications during 2004-13 has been published in the context of six subject sub-fields (as

reflected in Scopus database classification), with highest publications share (75.20%) coming from computer science, followed by engineering (14.10%), social sciences (12.00%), business, management & accounting (8.05%), decision science (4.23%) and medicine (3.14%). The research activity, as reflected in activity index, has witnessed increase in computer science and social sciences, as against decrease in engineering, business, management & accounting, decision science and medicine from 2004-09 to 2010-14. Amongst six subjects, medicine registered the highest citation impact per paper (5.48), followed by business, management & accounting (1.76), social sciences (1.66), decision science (1.64), computer science (1.03) and engineering (0.65) during 2004-13 (Table 5).

#### 4.5 Distribution of Papers by Social Media

Among the 15 most active social media researched by Indian scholars, the largest number of papers (265 and 36.15% share) was on Blogs, followed by Twitter (147 papers and 20.05% share), Facebook (118 papers and 16.10% share), Wikipedia (111 papers and 15.14% share),

**Table 4.** Contribution, Global Share and Citation Impact of Top 15 Countries on Social Media during 2004-13

Name of the Country	Number of Papers			Share of Papers			TC	ACPP
	2004-08	2009-13	2004-13	2004-08	2009-13	2004-13	2004-13	2004-13
USA	1495	10696	12191	31.4	33.00	32.80	54616	4.48
U.K.	320	2487	2807	6.73	7.67	7.55	10601	3.78
China	187	2545	2732	3.93	7.85	7.35	5612	2.05
Germany	231	1651	1882	4.85	5.09	5.064	5278	2.8
Australia	165	1409	1574	3.47	4.35	4.23	4139	2.63
Canada	135	1170	1305	2.84	3.61	3.51	4268	3.27
Japan	209	996	1205	4.39	3.07	3.24	1721	1.43
Spain	97	1051	1148	2.04	3.24	3.09	2800	2.44
Italy	81	845	926	1.7	2.61	2.49	2710	2.93
Taiwan	98	803	901	2.06	2.48	2.42	1918	2.13
France	100	795	895	2.1	2.45	2.41	2615	2.92
Netherlands	96	693	789	2.02	2.14	2.12	2780	3.52
India	36	697	733	0.76	2.15	1.97	934	1.27
South Korea	59	669	728	1.24	2.06	1.96	2044	2.81
Singapore	53	590	643	1.11	1.82	1.73	2034	3.16
World	4758	32412	37167					

TC=Total Citations; ACPP=Average Citations Per Paper

**Table 5.** Subject-Wise Break-up of India's Publications in Social Media during 2004-13

Name of the Subject	Number of Papers			Activity Index		TC	ACPP	% TP
	2004-08	2009-13	2004-13	2004-08	2009-13	2004-13	2004-13	2004-13
Computer Science	19	532	551	70.21	101.53	568	1.03	75.2
Engineering	13	90	103	256.98	91.89	67	0.65	14.1
Social Science	3	85	88	69.41	101.58	146	1.66	12.0
Business, Management & Accounting	5	54	59	172.55	96.25	104	1.76	8.05
Decision Science	3	28	31	197.04	94.98	51	1.64	4.23
Medicine	2	21	23	177.05	96.02	126	5.48	3.14
<b>Total of the country</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>733</b>					

YouTube (64 papers and 8.73% share), Flickr (30 papers and 4.09% share) and 9 other social media sites have less than 20 papers each during 2004-13. YouTube registered the highest citation impact per paper (2.67) among 15 social media sites followed by ResearchGate (2.50), (2.38), Orkut (1.80), Blogs (1.34), Twitter (1.28), LinkedIn (1.27), MySpace (1.15), Wikipedia (1.08) etc. during 2004-13 (Table 6). The annual growth of Indian publications by social media is shown in Table 7.

### 4.6 Significant Keywords

The 28 most frequently used keywords identified (along with their frequency of occurrence) in India's social media output during 2004-13 are as follows: online social

**Table 6.** Social Media: Distribution of World and Indian Papers during 2004-13

S. No	Name of Social Media	World, 2004-13		India, 2004-13	
		TP	TP	TC	ACPP
1	Blogs	10767	265	354	1.34
2	Twitter	5492	147	188	1.28
3	Facebook	5997	118	88	0.75
4	Wikipedia	4311	111	120	1.08
5	You Tube	2772	64	171	2.67
6	Flickr	1604	30	34	1.13
7	Linkedin	426	15	19	1.27
8	MySpace	768	13	15	1.15
9	Orkut	98	10	18	1.80
10	Foursquare	314	8	19	2.38
11	Google Plus	19	2	1	0.50
12	Instantgram	38	1	0	0.00

13	Research Gate	6	2	5	2.50
14	Pinterest	58	1	1	1.00
15	Slideshare	18	1	1	1.00
Total of the country		17167	733		

TP=Total Papers; TC=Total Citations; ACPP=Average Citations Per Paper

networks (251), followed by social network (129), social media (91), internet (109), Facebook (85), Wikipedia (79), World Wide Web (74), data mining (73), social networking sites (70), blogs (63), information retrieval (58), artificial intelligence (48), Twitter (44), sentiment analysis (42), Web 2.0 (39), information technology (38), natural language processing systems (38), knowledge management (32), information systems (31), online systems (30), You Tube (30), opinion mining (22), behavioral research (21), blogging (20), microblog (11), Flickr (7), LinkedIn (5) and FourSquare (3)

### 4.7 Institutional Contribution

A large number of Indian organizations contributed to social media research in India. Of the total Indian participating organizations, the top 106 most productive have contributed 542 publications, which accounted for 73.94% share of its total output during 2004-13. Of these 106 Indian organizations, 35 were universities which have contributed 152 publications (with 20.74% share), 38 engineering colleges having 139 publications (with 18.86% share), 19 industrial enterprises having 136 publications (18.55% share) and 14 institutes of national importance with 115 publications (with 15.69%) during 2004-13.

**Table 7.** Annual Growth of Indian Publications by Social Media during 2004-13

Social Media Site	Number of Papers									
	2005-13	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Blogs	265	1	2	11	6	22	41	40	74	68
Twitter	147					2	9	21	49	66
Facebook	118					6	10	12	32	58
Wikipedia	111	1		5	5	17	16	18	26	23
You Tube	64			3	1	3	6	13	12	26
Flickr	30					3	3	4	9	9
Linkedin	15						2	1	3	9
MySpace	13				1	1	2	0	4	5
Orkut	10				1	1	2	2	1	3
Foursquare	8							1	4	3
Google Plus	1									1
Instantgram	1									1
Research Gate	2								1	1
Pinterest	1									1
Slideshare	1									1

#### 4.8 Scientometric Profile of Top 10 Most Productive Organizations

A large number of Indian organizations participated in research on social media during 2004-13. The top 10 most productive Indian participatory organizations on social media contributed 16 to 35 papers and together 223 publications, accounting for 30.42% share of the Indian output during 2003-14. Amongst the top 10 most productive organizations, 5 organizations have contributed more than the average productivity (22.3) per organization: IBM Research (35 papers), Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (26 papers), International Business Machines (24 papers), International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad and Anna University, Chennai (23 papers each) during 2004-13. Four organizations out of 10 have registered more than the average citation per paper of 1.35: Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (2.27), International Business Machines (2.08), IBM Research and Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (1.60 each). Five organizations out of 10 have received more than average h-index of 3.7: Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and International Business Machines (6 each), IBM Research (5), Jadavpur University, Kolkata and Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (4 each) during 2004-13. Five organizations have registered more than the average share of international collaborative papers of 25.56%: Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi (60.00%), Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (42.31%), International Business Machines (41.67%), IBM Research (37.14%) and Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (35.00%) during 2004-13 (Table 8).

#### 4.9 Scientometric Profile of Top 10 Most Productive Authors

It is found that a good number of Indian authors participated in social media research in India. The top 10 most productive Indian authors in social media contributed 7 to 22 papers and together contributed 131 publications, which accounted for 17.87% share of the Indian output during 2003-14. Amongst the top 10 authors, four authors have contributed more than the average productivity per author (13.10): V. Verma (22 papers), P. Kumaraguru and S. Banddyopadhyay (18 papers each) and D. Das (14 papers) during 2004-13. Three authors out of 10 have registered more than the average citations per author of 2.40: S .Ghosh (5.67), N. Ganguly (4.64) and P. Kumaraguru (4.39). Six authors out of 10 have received more than average h-index of 2.8 per author: P. Kumaraguru and N. Ganguly (4 each), V. Verma, S. Banddyopadhyay, D. Das, V.K. Singh and S .Ghosh (3 each) during 2004-13. Four authors have registered more than the average share of international collaborative papers per author of 26.72%: N. Ganguly (72.73%), P. Kumaraguru (72.22%), M. Abulaish and S .Ghosh (66.67%) during 2004-13 (Table 9).

#### 4.10 Communication Channels

Of the 733 Indian publications on social media, 59.62% (437) appeared in conference proceedings, 23.87% (175) in journals, 14.05% (103) in book series, 2.18% (16) as books and 0.27% as trade publications. The most productive sources of publications under conference proceedings, journals and book series are shown in Table 10.

**Table 8.** Scientometric Profile of Top 10 Most Productive Organizations in India's Social Media Output, 2004-13

S.No	Name of the Organization	TP	TC	ACPP	HI	ICP	%ICP
1	IBM Research	35	56	1.60	5	13	37.14
2	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi	26	59	2.27	6	11	42.31
3	International Business Machines	24	50	2.08	6	10	41.67
4	International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad	23	17	0.74	3	0	0.00
5	Anna University, Chennai	23	13	0.57	2	0	0.00
6	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	20	21	1.05	3	7	35.00
7	Jadavpur University, Kolkata	20	27	1.35	4	0	0.00
8	Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi	20	32	1.60	4	12	60.00
9	Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore	16	9	0.56	1	3	18.75
10	Tata Consultancy Services	16	16	1.00	3	1	6.25
Total of 10 organizations		223	300	1.35	3.7	57	25.56
Total of the country		733					
Share of top 10 organizations in country output		30.42					
The average productivity per organization (Sum total of 10 organizations/number of organizations)		22.3					

TP=Total Papers; TC=Total Citations; ACPP=Average Citations Per Paper; HI = h-index ICP=International Collaborative Papers

### 4.11 High Cited Papers

The top 10 most highly cited Indian publications are shown in Table 11 and the citations received by them vary from 34 to 94 and together consist of 538 citations, with an average citation per paper of 53.8 during 2004-13. Of the 10 high cited papers, 5 have appeared in conference proceedings and 5 in journals and 4 appeared as single institution papers (zero collaborative), 2 national collaborative and 4 international collaborative.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

India's publications on social media during 2004-13 witnessed a cumulative publication growth from 36 papers during 2004-08 to 697 papers during 2009-13 and registering an average citation impact per publication of 1.27, which decreased from 2.25 during 2004-08 to 1.22 during 2009-13. India's global publication share was 1.97% during 2004-13, which increased from 0.76% to 2.15%

**Table 9.** Scientometric Profile of Top 10 Most Productive Authors in India's Social Media Output, 2004-13

S. No	Name of the Author	Affiliation of the Author	TP	TC	ACPP	HI	ICP	%ICP
1	V. Verma	International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad	22	49	2.23	3	0	0
2	P. Kumaraguru	Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, Delhi	18	79	4.39	4	13	72.22
3	S. Bandyopadhyay	Jadavpur University, Kolkata	18	22	1.22	3	0	0
4	D. Das	Jadavpur University, Kolkata	14	23	1.64	3	0	0
5	V.K. Singh	Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi	12	13	1.08	3	1	8.333
6	L. Dey	Tata Consultancy Services	11	10	0.91	2	1	9.091
7	N. Ganguly	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	11	51	4.64	4	8	72.73
8	M. Abulaish	Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi	9	3	0.33	1	6	66.67
9	S. Ghosh	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur	9	51	5.67	3	6	66.67
10	S Banerjee	Hewlett Packard Laboratories, Bangalore	7	13	1.86	2	0	0
Total of the 10 authors			131	314	2.4	2.8	35	26.72
Total of the country			733					
Share of 10 authors in country output			17.87					

TP=Total Papers; TC=Total Citations; ACPP=Average Citations Per Paper; HI = h-index ICP=International Collaborative Papers

**Table 10.** Most Productive Medium under Different Type of Publications, 2004-13

Name of Conference Series	No. of Papers	Name of the Journal	No of Papers
ACM International Conference Proceeding Series	26	DESIDOC Journal of Library and Information Technology	6
International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management Proceedings	19	Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology	5
Ceur Workshop Proceedings	11	Journal of Computer Science	5
Proceedings of the 2013 International Conference on Advances in Computing Communications and Informatics Iccaci 2013	10	European Journal of Scientific Research	5
Www 2013 Companion Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on World Wide Web	9	International Journal of Engineering and Technology	4
Proceedings of the 2013 IEEE ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining Asonam 2013	6	Library Review	3
2013 4th International Conference on Computing Communications and Networking Technologies Icccnt 2013	5	Annals of Library and Information Studies	3

Name of the Book Series		International Information and Library Review	3
Lecture Notes in Computer Science Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics	64	Library Hi Tech News	3
Communications in Computer and Information Science	21	Electronic Library	2
Advances in Intelligent and Soft Computing	4	International Journal of Intelligent Systems	2
Lecture Notes of the Institute for Computer Sciences Social Informatics and Telecommunications Engineering Lnicst	2	Library Philosophy and Practice	2

**Table 11.** List of Top 10 High Cited Indian Papers on Social Media during 2004-13

S.No	Name of Authors	Affiliation of Authors	Title of the Publication	Source	No. of Citations
1	Banerjee S., Ramathan K., Gupta A.	Hewlett-Packard Labs., Bangalore, India	Clustering short texts using Wikipedia	Proceedings of the 30th Annual International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval, SIGIR'07, 2007, 787-788	94
2	Kulkarni S., Singh A., Ramakrishnan G. et al	IIT Bombay, India	Collective annotation of wikipedia entities in web text	Proceedings of the ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining, 2009, 457-465	83
3	Mislove A., Koppula H. S., Gummadi K. P., Druschel P., Bhattacharjee B.	MPI-SWS, Saarbrücken, Germany; IIT Kharagpur, India; University of Maryland, Computer Science Department, USA	Growth of the Flickr social network	Proceedings of the ACM SIGCOMM 2008 Conference on Computer Communications -1st Workshop on Online Social Networks, WOSP'08, 2008, 25-30	66
4	Pandey A., Patni N., Singh M., Sood A., Singh G.	All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi	YouTube As a Source of Information on the H1N1 Influenza Pandemic	American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2010, 38 (3), e1-e3	55
5	Limaye G., Sarawagi S., Chakrabarti S.	IIT Bombay, India	Annotating and searching web tables using entities, types and relationships	Proceedings of the VLDB Endowment, 2010, 3(1), 1338-47	50
6	Harinarayana N. S., Raju N.V.	University of Mysore, Department of Library and Information Science, Mysore; Government First Grade College, Periyapatna, India	Web 2.0 features in university library web sites	Electronic Library, 2010, 8 (1), pp. 69-88	43
7	Chen L., Roy A.	Leibniz University L3S Research Center, Hannover, Germany; Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, India	Event detection from Flickr data through wavelet-based spatial analysis	International Conference on Information and Knowledge Management, Proceedings, 2009, 523-532	40



8	Tripathi M., Kumar S.	Central Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India; Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi	Use of Web 2.0 tools in academic libraries: A reconnaissance of the international landscape	International Information and Library Review, 2010, 2 (3), 195-207	37
9	Sood A., Sarangi S., Pandey A., Murugiah K.	All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India; Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA; AECOM Jacobi Medical Center, New York, USA	YouTube as a source of information on kidney stone disease	Urology, 2011, 77 (3), 558-562	36
10	Murugiah K., Vallakati A., Rajput K., Sood A., Challa N.R.	AECOM-Jacobi Medical Center, Bronx, NY, USA; Medical Center, New York, USA; Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, USA; United States and All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center, New York, USA	YouTube as a source of information on cardiopulmonary resuscitation	Resuscitation, 2011, 82 (3), 332-34	34

from 2004-08 to 2009-13. The share of India's international collaborative publications was 22.10% during 2004-13, which has seen a decrease from 30.56% during 2004-08 to 21.66% during 2009-13. Only 37.38% of the total Indian publications on social media were cited one or more times during 2004-13, of which 33.02% publications contributed 39.24% citations share, 2.05% publications 12.20% citations share, 0.68% publications each 6.69% and 10.12% citation share, 0.27% publications 5.23% citation share, 0.55% publications 16.75% citation share and the rest 0.14% publications 9.78% citations share. Among the various subject fields contributing to social media, computer science contributed the largest publications share (75.20%), followed by engineering (4.10%), social sciences (12.00%), business, management & accounting (8.05%), decision science (4.23%) and medicine (3.14%) during 2004-13. Research activity witnessed increase in computer science and social sciences, as against decrease in engineering, business, management & accounting,

decision science and medicine from 2004-09 to 2010-14. Medicine made the highest citation impact per paper (5.48), followed by business, management & accounting (1.76), social sciences (1.66), decision science (1.64), computer science (1.03) and engineering (0.65) during 2004-13. The top 10 most productive Indian organizations and authors together contributed 30.42% and 17.87% share respectively of its total output during 2004-13, with an average productivity of 22.3 and 13.10, average citation impact of 1.35 and 2.40, average h-index of 3.7 and 2.8 and average share of international collaborative papers of 25.56% and 26.72%.

Social media is a rapidly evolving media both at national and international level. There are many challenges in the adoption of social media, but the technological advances have negated some challenges. The appropriate use of social media for proper communication can ensure that it can function both as a market and a medium. Technology will enable social media manifest in all areas.

Therefore, social impact of social media will be high. The possibilities of social media will be extraordinary in a few years from now, as technology will amplify the value of social media. With the growth of social media, time gets squeezed and resources get optimized. The common citizens are openly airing their views on the shortcomings of governmental policies and functioning on social media from time to time. Obviously, governments cannot afford to take such criticisms casually. This is the reason why many countries including India need to develop a national social media for governmental departments and for its employees.

Information and communication technology has changed the way we communicate and share information. Social media is disruptive and potentially revolutionary in nature because it can connect large numbers of people with relative ease. Thus, it becomes important for the governments to have a separate social media wing that can communicate with its citizens in a timely and friendly manner. The aim of any future social media policy of India must be to put citizens firmly at the centre of government service delivery and information distribution. Social media technologies can support this aim because they are intrinsically about dialogue and engagement within and between individuals and communities. Besides governments, Indian organizations and industrial enterprises need to have a social media presence by implementing a concrete, manageable social media strategy to engage with customer and spread your brand awareness.

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# Social Media Fake News in India

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## Social Media Fake News in India

Md. Sayeed Al-Zaman<sup>1</sup>  <sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Jahangirnagar University

Keywords: fact-check, misinformation, disinformation, india, social media, fake news

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### Asian Journal for Public Opinion Research

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This study analyzes 419 fake news items published in India, a fake-news-prone country, to identify the major themes, content types, and sources of social media fake news. The results show that fake news shared on social media has six major themes: health, religion, politics, crime, entertainment, and miscellaneous; eight types of content: text, photo, audio, and video, text & photo, text & video, photo & video, and text & photo & video; and two main sources: online sources and the mainstream media. Health-related fake news is more common only during a health crisis, whereas fake news related to religion and politics seems more prevalent, emerging from online media. Text & photo and text & video have three-fourths of the total share of fake news, and most of them are from online media: online media is the main source of fake news on social media as well. On the other hand, mainstream media mostly produces political fake news. This study, presenting some novel findings that may help researchers to understand and policymakers to control fake news on social media, invites more academic investigations of religious and political fake news in India. Two important limitations of this study are related to the data source and data collection period, which may have an impact on the results.

This study aims to explore the themes, content types, and sources of fake news shared on social media in India. Although fake news is an old phenomenon, it has become a buzzword after the 2016 US election (Quandt et al., 2019). Scholars define the term in many ways. Some definitions echo rumor, while some echo misinformation and disinformation (Duffy et al., 2019; Meel & Vishwakarma, 2019; Muigai, 2019; Tandoc et al., 2018, 2020). Rumor is unverified information that emerges in ambiguous and threatening situations and when information is scarce and people feel a psychological need for understanding or security (Difonzo & Bordia, 2006; Watson & Hill, 2006). Misinformation is the unintentional false or misleading information that mainly emerges from knowledge-gaps. Disinformation is false or misleading information constructed deliberately to mislead people (Derczynski et al., 2015). Fake news can be both false (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017) or true information (Jaster & Lanius, 2018), and it misleads people intentionally or unintentionally. Due to such conceptual proximity, separating fake news from rumor, misinformation, and disinformation is often difficult. With the growing popularity of social media worldwide, the online fake news problem attracts many researchers. However, fake news literature focuses on the Western countries more than others: around 200 Scopus-indexed papers deal

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<sup>a</sup> Md. Sayeed Al-Zaman is a lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Jahangirnagar University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Within the broad area of media and communication studies, a few of his research interests are the Internet, digital information, and digital sociology/humanities. His current research focuses on online misinformation in South Asian countries. He can be reached at 4th floor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, New Arts Building, Faculty of Arts, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka-1342, Bangladesh or by e-mail at msalzaman@juniv.edu.

with a single issue, i.e., fake news in the 2016 US election, whereas South Asia did not get proper attention from scholars to date. For example, online fake news in Bangladesh has been disturbing social peace and interreligious congruence chiefly since 2012 after the Ramu Violence (Al-Zaman, 2020; Al-Zaman et al., 2020). In Myanmar, Buddhists nationalists are weaponizing social media to produce and spread fake news against the Rohingya minorities (The Economist, 2020). In recent years, India has become a land of online fake news as well. However, these phenomena are yet to be acknowledged in academia with the proper importance. To bridge this existing gap, the present study focuses on the online fake news problem in India. Although a few studies have already been published dealing with Indian fake news, they have at least two limitations: they hardly explain the comprehensive themes, content types, and sources of social media fake news (Banaji et al., 2019; Sutaria, 2020), and they mainly deal with the religious and political aspects of fake news (Arun, 2015; Banaji et al., 2019; Farooq, 2018).

India now has approximately 376.1 million active social media users (Keelery, 2020b), and the country's four most popular social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and YouTube. With the increasing social media users, online fake news is becoming widespread: WhatsApp, according to the previous studies, is its main source (Arun, 2015; Banaji et al., 2019). Previous literature hints that online fake news in India serves mainly two purposes: political and religious, utilized by two groups: the Bhartiya Janata Party's (BJP) digital army and digital archiving as history-making to support the Hindu-nationalist government (Chaturvedi, 2016; Udupa, 2017), and *gau-rakshaks* ("cow protectors" or "cow vigilantes") to harass or lynch the minorities, mainly the Muslims (Mukherjee, 2020). For example, the Modi government benefitted from the digital army's electoral disinformation campaigns in 2015 and 2019 (Rodrigues, 2020), and vigilante mobs lynched hundreds of Muslims from 2009 to 2019 based on WhatsApp-based religious fake news (Arun, 2015; Banaji et al., 2019). Four reasons may be helpful to define India's current fake news problem: (a) higher social media penetration (Keelery, 2020b); (b) a growing number of Internet-illiterate people using social media (Raj & Goswami, 2020); (c) the existing law that makes tracing fake news producers difficult (Farooq, 2018); (d) the rise of *Hindutva* (an ideology of Hindu-domination) and religious nationalism (Al-Zaman, 2019).

Against this backdrop, understanding major fake news themes is imperative to learn about Indian netizens' issues of interest. Also, fake news content may hint at what forms fake news take and how popular they are among netizens. Lastly, source identification of social media fake news is mainly important for policymakers to determine which source should be dealt with more seriously to control the fake news problem. The following three sections discuss the variables of this research in light of previous literature.

## Literature Review

### Definition of Fake News

Previous literature offers at least eight popular typologies of fake news from different aspects. Analyzing 34 fake news studies, Tandoc et al. (2018) identified six types of fake news: news satire, news parody, fabrication, manipulation, propaganda, and advertising. Each of them can be defined in terms of facticity and intention: while some of them have a higher level of facticity and deceptive intentions, some have a lower level of facticity and deceptive intentions. Three similar typologies are recognized by communication scholars. According to Wardle (2017), fake news has seven types: satire or parody, misleading content, imposter content, fabricated content, false connection, false context, and manipulated content. Studying the 2016 US election, Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) identified seven types of fake news: “unintentional reporting mistakes, fake news that does not originate from a particular news article, conspiracy theories, a satire that is unlikely to be misconstrued as factual false statements by politicians, and reports that are slanted or misleading but not outright false.” Nielsen and Graves (2017) explored five types of fake news: satire, poor journalism, propaganda, advertising, and false news. These typologies have two major limitations: they are very proximate, sharing some common types (e.g., satire and false news) to define fake news, and they are more concerned about the claims rather than the themes of fake news. Two more studies proposed fake news typologies, making connections between fake news and rumor, misinformation, and disinformation. According to Haque (2019), fake news has four types: disinformation, misinformation, hoax, and rumor. Ouedraogo (2020) divided social media fake news into six types: maliciously false news, neutral false news, satire news, disinformation, misinformation, and rumor. Like the previous four studies, these two studies are also less concerned about the thematic issues of fake news. A thematic analysis by Khan et al. (2019) suggests that fake news has five types of content: clickbait, satire and parody, propaganda, sloppy news, and biased or partisan news. This typology echoes the fake news typology of Tandoc et al. (2018) and defines fake news from a more journalistic perspective.

### Themes of Fake News

A few studies presented thematic typologies of fake news that are relevant to the present research. Based on the critical-historical lens of media ecology analysis, Higdon (2020) explored four prominent themes of fake news: nationalism, hate, celebrity gossip, and fear. Although this study attempted to provide better insights regarding the themes, it failed to acknowledge the complexity of fake news, without incorporating more essential themes like politics, crime, and miscellaneous. In a separate study, Wu and Liu (2018) identified four themes of social media fake news: business, science and technology, entertainment, and medical. This study has four limitations: it limits its extent within a more technical genre, i.e., computer science; its categories are limited in number; it does not offer details about the categories;

it does not focus on the Indian context. Banaji et al. (2019) proposed five themes based on WhatsApp fake news in India: overwhelming amount of content, nationalism, religion, gender, and miscellaneous. This typology failed to perceive the prominent issues of public interest, contains a few overlapping subthemes, and emphasizes negative fake news more. Overall, the previous studies have at least one of the three following limitations: (a) their findings are not based on the Indian context; (b) their findings are not related to social media; (c) their findings are not inclusive enough to consider diverse fake news themes.

**RQ1:** What are the main themes of social media fake news?

### **Fake News Contents**

Social media fake news has become a topic of interest for more researchers from various disciplines, but a comprehensive typology of fake news content is still absent. An analysis of fake news content types would help us to understand how true news is different from fake news. Although some studies attempt to provide content types, they end up having one or more limitations. I found a few studies more relevant to the present research. For example, Sukhodolov and Bychkova (2017) mentioned the digital communication content responsible for fake news, emphasizing the role of social networks in fake news production and distribution. Fake news can be found in fake texts, photos, video, and audio files (Sukhodolov & Bychkova, 2017). Although Guacho et al. (2018) discussed about three fake news contents: text, image, and video, their study focused only on the textual analysis of fake news articles. Similarly, Wheaton (2018) addressed text, image, and video as the major fake news contents, but focused only on textual analysis. A few more studies analyzed different types of fake news contents, such as text (e.g., Guacho et al., 2018; Wheaton, 2018), image (e.g., Carlson, 2009), video (e.g., Mezaris et al., 2019), text and image (e.g., Zhou & Zafarani, 2020). However, Parikh and Atrey (2018) presented the most comprehensive typology of fake news content by analyzing different news stories. They categorized fake news data into four types: (a) text data from the linguistic aspect (i.e., article, written post, blog); (b) multimedia data indicating multiple forms of media (i.e., image, video, audio, and graphics); (c) hyperlinks that connect different sources, such as a websites, snapshots, sound clips; (d) audio as a standalone category, such as podcasts. This study has a few limitations. First, the types overlap: If audio can be a standalone type, then why not video and image? Second, a hyperlink may not be a major content type of fake news as it depends on the other primary contents. Third, this typology is somewhat affected by redundancy: *Multimedia* itself includes several media contents. It is important to note that online fake news can take more than one form at a specific time and previous studies did not acknowledge this uniqueness. Moreover, almost no or very few studies focused on social media fake news content types and the Indian context.

**RQ2:** What are the content types of social media fake news?

## Sources of Fake News

Apart from typology, sources are equally important in the study of fake news, although this aspect has received less attention from scholars to date. Kapferer (1992), in his micro-level analysis, discussed eight primary sources of rumor based on their origins: experts' opinions, confidential information, troubling facts, testimony, fantasies, urban legends, misunderstandings, and manipulation. As social media did not exist during that period, this study could not analyze or discuss media sources of social media fake news. In a more relevant study, Jo (2002) categorized the sources of Internet rumors into two main types: the Internet itself and traditional mass media. The Internet as a medium, according to the study, includes different online information sources, such as websites and social media, and traditional media includes television, newspapers, and radio. The study also shows that rumors from online sources increase with time, while rumors from traditional media decrease. In another relevant study, Shin et al. (2018) explored the two main sources of misinformation by analyzing their Twitter dataset: As most of the misinformation on Twitter is from *non*-traditional media, a few are from traditional media. They defined *non*-traditional media as websites, social media, and other Internet sources. Similarly, Muigai (2019) found two sources of social media rumors: online media and mainstream media. The study further suggests that most of the social media rumors originate from online media. While previous studies identified sources of fake news, most of them did not take either social media or the Indian context into account.

**RQ3:** What are the main media sources of social media fake news?

### Methodology

In this study, I analyzed Indian online fake news. I collected the fake news data from Alt News (<http://altnews.in>), an Indian fact-checking website. It was selected purposefully for three reasons: (a) its wide recognition and credibility; (b) its strategic fact-checking procedures; (c) its structured and clean data. First, Alt News is a wing of the Pravda Media Foundation, a non-profit organization, and run by professional journalists and media specialists. Also, this website is certified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), a part of the Poynter Institute, analyzing six relevant aspects: organization, nonpartisanship and fairness, transparency of sources, transparency of funding and organization, transparency of methodology, and open and honest correction policy (see Kaur, 2019). It is also listed in the database of The Reporters' Lab at Duke University, managed by Bill Adair and Mark Stencel. Bill Adair is also the founder of PolitiFact (<http://politifact.com>), a Pulitzer-winner nonprofit fact-checking website. Second, the website has three clearly stated editorial policies: (a) no political affiliations; (b) evidence-based fact-checking; (c) a detailed explanation of how a claim is debunked. Also, it details its methodology for the five-step process used to debunk a claim: selection of a claim to debunk, researching the claim, the evaluation of the claim, writing the fact-check, and updating the articles (see Alt News, n.d.). Third, the website is comprehensive with a rich fake news



Table 1: Brief Descriptions of the Themes

Theme	Definition	Example
Health	Mainly deals with medicine, medical and healthcare facilities, viral infection, doctor-patient issues, quarantine, and lifestyle.	"Dead bodies in Mecca shared as corona victims," "Medicine will be sprayed in the air to kill coronavirus."
Religion	Includes both religious and religiopolitical (a combination of religion and politics) news, dealing with spirituality, practices, and divinity, religious policy, and communalism.	"Trump offers Islamic prayers amid corona," "Muslims are being buried alive in India."
Politics	Related to institutional politics, political issues, and political figures.	"Kejriwal admits of having family ties with RSS," "Rahul Gandhi blames PM Modi."
Crime	Related to killing, violence, stealing, harassing, and other forms of criminal activities.	"Woman is murdered in Tahir Hussain's house," "Minor girl's death in Madhya Pradesh is linked to Delhi riots."
Entertainment	Linked to celebrities and popular culture.	"Salman Khan gifts an apartment to Ranu Mondol," "Korean drama predicted COVID-19."
Miscellaneous	Includes the fake news that did not fit in the other five categories, mainly related to military, technology, education, and economy.	"Tata Group of companies will not recruit JNU Student," "Mysterious apocalyptic planet spotted in the sky."

*Note.* The definitions are based on the collected fake news data and codes, and the examples provided here are taken from the dataset.

list, including structured data that requires less effort to clean and prepare for the final analysis. Moreover, social media platforms often remove flagged and/or distorted information if it violates the platforms' policies, so that many examples fake news cannot be found by searching the platforms (Mosseri, 2017). Due to various advantages, many researchers are using fact-checking websites as their data sources (see "Another Facebook Disinformation Election?," 2019; Brennen et al., 2020).

Alt News has been debunking Indian fake news since April 2016. As of April 2020, it had debunked around 2,028 instances of fake news. Every article on this website debunks a single piece of fake news, including some specific information: the statement/claim of the fake news accompanied by a detailed context, the sources of the information along with links, screenshots, or contents (if available), and a decision explained in detail and backed up by evidence. As per my instructions, two graduate students studied the articles published on this website from November 2019 to April 2020 and collected the relevant data based on the three research questions. The website debunked 419 social media fake news items during this 6-month period, which was the sample for this study. The four fake-news-prone social media platforms are Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, which are the most popular platforms in India. However, the frequency of fake news appearing on each source was not identified.

Two students coded the collected data. In this study, codes for RQ1 and RQ2 were newly generated, mostly through inductive coding, while codes for RQ3 were taken from the previous studies with little modification. For RQ1, we used six codes: health, religion, politics, crime, entertainment, and miscellaneous (see [Table 1](#)). Note that some fake news items could be included in more than one category, making the categorization difficult. For example, coders had to decide whether the story "Muslim youths refuse corona testing

Table 2: Themes of Fake News

No.	Themes	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	Health	114	27.2	27.2
2	Religion	105	25.1	52.3
3	Politics	102	24.3	76.6
4	Crime	45	10.7	87.4
5	Miscellaneous	32	7.6	95.0
6	Entertainment	21	5.0	100.0
	Total	419	100.0	

for ‘religious reasons’” should be classified as health or religious fake news. The coders resolved such issues based on mutual agreement. For RQ2, we used eight codes: text, photo, audio, video, text & photo, text & video, photo & video, and text & photo & video; the first four codes were borrowed from previous literature (Carlson, 2009; Guacho et al., 2018; Parikh & Atrey, 2018; Sukhodolov & Bychkova, 2017; Wheaton, 2018; Zhou & Zafarani, 2020). For RQ3, we borrowed two codes from previous studies with a little modification: online media and mainstream media (Jo, 2002; Muigai, 2019; Shin et al., 2018). The coders resolved all coding issues based on the mutual agreement and thus, made the codes reliable.

## Results

### Themes

The results show that fake news on social media has six dominant themes: health, religion, politics, crime, entertainment, and miscellaneous ([Table 2](#)). Health-related fake news is on the top of the list with a frequency of 114 (27.2%), followed by fake news about religion ( $n=105$ ; 25.1%) and political fake news ( $n=102$ ; 24.3%). These three themes make up 76.6% of the fake news stories in this study. Entertainment fake news is on the bottom of the list ( $n=21$ ; 5%). Interestingly, fake news about religion was second on the list, indicating religion’s significant role in fake news. In religious fake news, text & video has the highest share ( $n=44$ ; 41.9%), followed by text & photo ( $n=39$ ; 37.1%), whereas audio and video have the lowest shares (both  $n=1$  and 1%) ([Table 3](#)). Stories that include text & photo made up the largest share of fake news stories about politics, miscellaneous, health, and entertainment, 39.2% ( $n=40$ ), 43.8% ( $n=14$ ), 36.8% ( $n=42$ ), and 61.9% ( $n=13$ ) of stories, respectively. In crime-related fake news, text & video has the highest share ( $n=18$ ; 40%). Of the six themes, crime-related fake news has the highest percentage (97.8%) in online media, followed by health (93%) and religious fake news (87.6%), while entertainment fake news is the lowest (66.7%) ([Table 4](#)).

## Contents

Fake news in social media can take eight forms: text, photo, audio, video, text & photo, text & video, photo & video, and text & photo & video ([Table 5](#)). While the first four are the primary content, the other four are combinations of one or more primary content. These combination categories are needed because a single piece of fake news can be found in two or more forms at a specific time. For example, “Muslim youths refuse corona testing for ‘religious reasons’” was found in text, photo, and video: therefore, it should be a combination of the primary content to indicate its various forms. In this typology, text & photo appears more often than the others with 165 of the stories analyzed (39.4%), followed by text & video ( $n=126$ ; 30.1%). These two categories make up 69.5% of the total sample. Notice that the gaps between both the second and the third content types and the third and fourth content types are very large. Text is in the third position with 75 stories (17.9%), followed by photo ( $n=19$ ; 4.5%). Photo & video is at the bottom of this list with only 2 (0.5%) stories. Audio (57.1%), text (32%), and text & photo (25.5%) have their highest percentages in health category; photo & video (100%) and text & video (34.9%) have their highest percentages in religion category; and text & photo & video (61.5%), video (50%), and photo (31.6%) have their highest percentages in the politics category ([Table 3](#)). It is observable that no content types have their highest percentages in entertainment, crime, and miscellaneous categories. Audio (100%) and photo & audio (100%) appeared only in online media ([Table 6](#)). The six other content types have also their highest shares in online media rather than mainstream media: text & video (94.4%) is the highest of them, followed by text & photo & video (92.3%). Of the eight content types, text (17.3%) has the highest percentage in mainstream media, followed by video (16.7%) and text & photo (16.4%).





Table 5: Content Types of Fake News

No.	Content types	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	Text & Photo	165	39.4	39.4
2	Text & Video	126	30.1	69.5
3	Text	75	17.9	87.4
4	Photo	19	4.5	91.9
5	Text & photo & video	13	3.1	95.0
6	Video	12	2.9	97.9
7	Audio	7	1.7	99.5
8	Photo & Video	2	.5	100.0
	Total	419	100.0	

Table 6: Contents and Sources of Fake News

Contents		Sources		Total
		Mainstream media	Online media	
Video	Count	2	10	12
	% within Contents	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within Sources	3.8%	2.7%	2.9%
Text & photo & video	Count	1	12	13
	% within Contents	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
	% within Sources	1.9%	3.3%	3.1%
Text & Video	Count	7	119	126
	% within Contents	5.6%	94.4%	100.0%
	% within Sources	13.2%	32.5%	30.1%
Text & Photo	Count	27	138	165
	% within Contents	16.4%	83.6%	100.0%
	% within Sources	50.9%	37.7%	39.4%
Text	Count	13	62	75
	% within Contents	17.3%	82.7%	100.0%
	% within Sources	24.5%	16.9%	17.9%
Photo & Video	Count	0	2	2
	% within Contents	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within Sources	0.0%	0.5%	0.5%
Photo	Count	3	16	19
	% within Contents	15.8%	84.2%	100.0%
	% within Sources	5.7%	4.4%	4.5%
Audio	Count	0	7	7
	% within Contents	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within Sources	0.0%	1.9%	1.7%
Total	Count	53	366	419
	% within Contents	12.6%	87.4%	100.0%
	% within Sources	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7: Sources of Fake News

No.	Sources	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1	Online media	366	87.4	87.4
2	Mainstream media	53	12.6	100.0
	Total	419	100.0	

## Sources

Two main sources of social media fake news are online media and mainstream media. Mainstream media mainly includes television channels, newspapers, and radio stations. They are mostly national media outlets. In contrast, online media includes online versions of mainstream television channels and newspapers, online news portals, blogs, various websites, and social media platforms. Of the two, online media ( $n=366$ ; 87.4%) produces a larger share of fake news than mainstream media ( $n=53$ ; 12.6%) (Table 7). Of online media, four social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp are responsible for all fake news. In online media, health-related fake news ( $n=106$ ; 29%) is on the top of the list, followed by religious fake news ( $n=92$ ; 25.1%), whereas entertainment-related fake news ( $n=14$ ; 3.8%) remains on the bottom (Table 4). In the mainstream media, political fake news ( $n=19$ ; 35.8%) is the highest, while crime-related fake news ( $n=1$ ; 1.9%) remains the lowest. If we take fake news contents into account, Table 6 shows that text & photo ( $n=138$ ; 37.7%) is the dominant content in online media, followed by text & video ( $n=119$ ; 32.5%); photo & video ( $n=2$ ; 0.5%) is on the bottom of the list. Like online media, text & photo ( $n=27$ ; 50.9%) is also the most popular content in mainstream media, followed by text ( $n=13$ ; 24.5%) with a huge gap in between.

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Main Objectives

This study aimed to analyze Indian social media fake news. The specific focuses of this research were to identify the main themes, content types, and sources of fake news. An analysis of 419 social media fake news collected from an Indian fact-checking website produced some novel findings.

### Key Findings

This study has three key findings. First, fake news has the six following themes, organized according to their prominence: health, religion, politics, crime, entertainment, and miscellaneous. Why health, religion, and political fake news have higher frequencies may be explained with a few specific reasons. The data collection period for this research was November 2019 to April 2020, and the first COVID-19 case in India was identified on January 31, 2020. As a result, most of the health fake news ( $n=110$ ; 96.49%) in this sample was directly linked to the pandemic. The Indian healthcare system is poor compared to developed countries like the United States (US) and European

nations. For example, in a report published by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2000, India secured 112<sup>th</sup> position among 191 countries in terms of quality healthcare services. In 2018, the Healthcare Access and Quality (HAQ) Index published another report where India was positioned 145<sup>th</sup> among 195 countries. Therefore, it is predictable that the pandemic as a crisis would bring health-related ambiguity and uncertainty in India, which is conducive to fake news production as well (Difonzo & Bordia, 2006; Watson & Hill, 2006).

On the other hand, several reasons can explain the contemporary growth of religious and political fake news in India: the rise of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism inspired and/or patronized by the BJP-government is perhaps the most prominent one (Al-Zaman, 2019; Arun, 2015; Banaji et al., 2019; Mukherjee, 2020; Udupa, 2017, 2017). Recently, the pandemic brings a new opportunity for the rumor-spreaders to produce and disseminate ample religious and political fake news along with health-related fake news in social media (Menon, 2020; Sutaria, 2020). The contribution of BJP's digital army in political fake news production cannot be underestimated as well (Chaturvedi, 2016). Social media is used widely in India to mobilize political activists for assembly and/or demonstration, and general public and vigilante groups for religious vigilantism and/or mob lynching (Farooq, 2018). Religion and politics often intertwine, creating a new type of fake news: religiopolitical, and WhatsApp is mostly used for such fake news propagation because of its instant messaging capacity, easier usability, and wide reach (Bali & Desai, 2019). For example, WhatsApp fake news triggered the Muzaffarnagar Riot in Uttar Pradesh in 2017, eight months before the federal election, and had both political and religious purposes.

Second, Indian fake news has eight major content types: text, photo, audio, video, text & photo, text & video, photo & video, and text & photo & video. Text & photo and text & video are the most-popular fake news contents. This may have been caused by the changes in users' content consumption patterns during the pandemic: consumption of mostly visual contents in India increased by 61-71%, and social media use increased by 75% (Keelery, 2020a). Previous studies failed to explain the major content types of fake news in India and their consumption patterns (Guacho et al., 2018; Parikh & Atrey, 2018; Sukhodolov & Bychkova, 2017; Wheaton, 2018). The pandemic caused a surge in the sale of fake medicine and created an artificial crisis for healthcare equipment, such as masks and sanitizers (ToI, 2020), which might have been driven by economic benefits (Tandoc et al., 2018). Fake prescriptions are mainly text- and photo-based. Also, fake, doctored, and old videos and photo are mainly used in creating religious and political misinformation in India. For these reasons, visual contents are responsible for many of India's health, religious, and political fake news. Previous studies also stated that Indian fake news is mostly WhatsApp-based, which is conducive for visual contents (Arun, 2015; Bali & Desai, 2019; Banaji et al., 2019; Farooq, 2018; Mukherjee, 2020). More empirical research should explore the underlying causes of particular content consumption for the particular themes of fake news.



Third, fake news has two main sources: online media and mainstream media. Online media produces almost seven times more fake news compared to mainstream media: previous studies suggested similar results (Muigai, 2019; Shin et al., 2018). However, Jo (2002) finding seems more conclusive which suggested that online fake news increases with time, unlike fake news from mainstream media, which seems true for India as well. Why online media produces more fake news than mainstream media may be explained by at least two reasons. One, from 2014 to 2019, the Internet users in India increased by 65%, surpassing the appeal of mainstream media (Ninan, 2019). In addition, thanks to social media's political benefits, the BJP government promotes Internet-based alternative media that helps to reduce the effects of mainstream media to some extent. Social media has a wider reach: 19% of Dalits, the most underprivileged community in India, have access to water, but 65% of them have access to the Internet (Farooq, 2018). It is easy to manipulate content and mobilize people: digital archiving is used in history-making in favor of BJP's Hindu nationalism and other political agendas (Udupa, 2017). Although it has been said that social media has democratized India (Farooq, 2018), it makes unregulated information production and dissemination commonplace (Bali & Desai, 2019). Also, a large share of the users lack digital literacy, which makes them more susceptible to fake news (Raj & Goswami, 2020). These factors cumulatively expedite online fake news production that outshines mainstream media as well.

Mainstream media produces more text- and photo-based fake news, which is a feature of print media. It produces more political fake news as well. Therefore, it can be inferred that print media (e.g., newspapers) produces more political fake news than other types of fake news. Unlike mainstream media, online media produces more health and religious fake news. The surge in health-related online misinformation is a global problem during the pandemic (Islam et al., 2020), and it is intense in India thanks to the higher Internet penetration rate and a lack of users' Internet literacy. Consequently, health misinformation is creating panic and claiming lives (Kadam & Atre, 2020; Raj & Goswami, 2020). No audio content in mainstream media suggests that radio is *not* likely to produce fake news. Of online media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp produce many instances of fake news, although this study does not provide their frequencies, which is another limitation of this research. This study is also unable to show the timeline of the different fake news to understand their fluctuations over the selected period and to predict their future trends.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

This study has a few limitations. First, it analyzed fake news data collected from a fact-checking website: such websites usually have limited resources to debunk popular fake news stories (Brennen et al., 2020). Therefore, the results may not be representative of all fake news. Second, previous studies were insufficient to guide the analysis of the results, so some explanations may sound like assumptions. In this regard, further studies are required to understand

the multidimensional characteristics of fake news in India. Third, this study considered a smaller time span for fake news data compared to India's long-standing online fake news problem. Further, India's online participants' demographic characteristics and information consumption patterns are different, as well as unique. These issues may create a generalization problem of the findings.

Apart from these limitations, the study bridges a few knowledge-gaps and presents some novel findings that may help provide a better understanding of social media fake news in India. First, this study utilizes a fact-checking website as the data source for content analysis: this methodology is uncommon and can guide future research in this area. Second, although previous studies tried to emphasize political and religious fake news in India, this study empirically shows their frequencies, content types, and sources, substantiating that these topics should be prioritized in academic scholarship, as well as in policymaking. Third, some COVID-19-related insights have also been identified, which could be important to understand the pandemic-related fake news. Fourth, cross tables between the variables unravel some features, such as prevalent content types according to themes and their sources, which sources produce what type of contents, and so on: these would help to extend the academic understanding of fake news. It would also help decision-makers to determine which themes, content types, and sources should be dealt with and what measures to control the fake news problem should be utilized. As previously stated, this study has limitations, including the data collection period and timelines of the variables; therefore, further studies should overcome these limitations. Moreover, future studies should also provide platform-based frequencies to make the knowledge more in-depth. Lastly, the novel findings of this research might be helpful to explain social media fake news of India and other mostly-homogenous South Asian countries (e.g., Bangladesh; Al-Zaman, 2019) as well.

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## Studying Elections in India: Scientific and Political Debates

Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal

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# *Studying Elections in India: Scientific and Political Debates*

Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal

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- 1 Studying elections in the largest democracy in the world is bound to be a challenge: given the size of the country and of its population, Indian national elections have been the largest electoral exercise in the world ever since the first national elections in 1952. Moreover the cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity of the Indian society, as well as the federal nature of the Indian state, make this event a particularly complex one. What, then, have been the methodologies and approaches deployed to study this major political event? What have been the disciplines and foci of election studies? Who have been the main authors? In what form have these studies been publicized, and what type of readership have they targeted? Reading the available literature with these questions in mind, I have tried to identify some major shifts over time, and to grasp their meaning and implications; a few interviews with specialists of the field have allowed me to test some of the interpretations suggested by the readings. Through a review of the literature on Indian elections since the 1980s, this paper aims at mapping the scientific and political debates around election studies.
- 2 Election studies are here defined as scholarly work focusing on the major phases of the electoral process, *i.e.* the campaign, the vote, the announcement of results and subsequent government formation.<sup>1</sup> This is a restrictive definition: elections are obviously a central institution of representative democracy, and as such they are connected to every aspect of the polity. Yet election studies constitute a distinct sub-genre of studies on democracy, which focuses, so to speak, on the 'mechanics' more than on the 'substance' of representative democracy.<sup>2</sup> This sub-genre, being relatively more visible than other studies of representative democracy, has specific implications, in the academic but also in the political arena, which will be the focus of this critical review. This paper will argue that election studies are really in between science and politics, and that it is important, therefore, to contextualize them.



- 3 The paper starts with a quick overview of the different types of election studies which have been produced on India, and goes on to analyze a series of dilemmas and debates attached to election studies, which highlight the intricate nature of the political and scientific issues at stake.

## The study of Indian elections: an overview

- 4 At least three previous reviews of election studies have been realized, by Narain (1978), Brass (1985), and Kondo (2007). Both Narain and Kondo provide a fairly exhaustive list of publications in this field, and discuss their relevance and quality. Brass' review also offers a detailed discussion of the advantages and limitations of ecological approaches, to which I will later return.
- 5 There is no need to repeat this exercise here. But in view of situating the debates described in the next section of the paper, I simply want to sketch a broad typology of election studies published since the late 1980s—a moment which can be considered as the emergence of the new configuration of the Indian political scene, characterized by (i) the importance of regional parties and regional politics; (ii) the formation of ruling coalitions at the national and regional levels; and (iii) the polarization of national politics around the Congress, the BJP, and the 'third space'.
- 6 All three reviews of the literature highlight the diversity of disciplines, methods, authors, institutions, and publication support of studies of Indian elections. But a major dividing line appears today between case studies and survey research (which largely match a distinction between qualitative and quantitative studies), with a number of publications, however, combining elements of both.

### Case studies

- 7 Case studies analyze elections from the vantage point of a relatively limited political territory, which can be the village (for instance Somjee 1959), the city (or, within the city, the *mohalla*, the *basti*), the constituency, the district, or the state. The major discipline involved in this type of research has been political science. Indeed elections have been the object par excellence of political science worldwide. In India as elsewhere, as we will see below, election studies reveal characteristic features of this relatively recent discipline, insofar as they embody some tensions between science and politics.
- 8 Paul Brass developed the case study method in the course of his long interest for politics in Uttar Pradesh. His monograph on the 1977 and 1980 elections focuses on Uttar Pradesh (he justifies this choice saying that this election was largely decided in North India). His research is based on fieldwork in five selected constituencies whose 'electoral history' is minutely recalled. Here the choice of the unit of analysis is linked to pedagogical considerations: 'Each constituency chosen illustrates a different aspect of the main social conflicts that have been prominent in UP politics', he writes (Brass 1985: 175). Indeed in the case study approach, the detailed observation of elections in a particular area aims at uncovering processes and dynamics which are relevant for a much wider territory.<sup>3</sup>
- 9 Beside political science, anthropology has also approached elections in a manner close to case studies.<sup>4</sup> But anthropological studies are usually focused on a more limited political territory (typically, the village), and more importantly, they are centered on a

questioning of the meaning of the electoral process<sup>5</sup> for voters: why do people vote? More precisely, why do they bother, what is the meaning of voting for them? Thus anthropologists often focus on the symbolic dimension of elections:

From this [symbolic] perspective, democracy is really an untrue but vitally important myth in support of social cohesion, with elections as its central and regular ritual enactment that helps maintain and restore equilibrium (Banerjee 2007: 1556).

- 10 Taking the ritual as a central metaphor in their accounts of elections, anthropologists help us see the various ‘ceremonies’ and ‘performances’ that constitute the electoral process:

To define [the] cultural qualities of Indian democracy, it is important to view the ritual of the election process through four consecutive ceremonies [:] Party endorsement [...], the actual campaign [...], the day of polling [and the] public announcement [of winners] (Hauser & Singer 1986: 945).

- 11 On the basis of their observations of two elections in Bihar in the 1980s, Hauser and Singer define the electoral process as a ‘cycle’. They describe the successive phases of this cycle, and draw parallels with religious rituals, noting for instance that the electoral process involves a series of processions. Their likening of the electoral campaign to a ‘pilgrimage’ manifesting the ‘inversion of power from the hands of the politicians back to the hands of the voters’ (Hauser & Singer 1986: 947) goes a long way in explaining the festive dimension of Indian elections.

- 12 Anthropological studies of elections also clearly show how elections precipitate, or at least highlight, otherwise latent political dynamics. The long fieldwork characteristic of the discipline makes it possible to concretely demonstrate how elections render visible otherwise subtle, if not invisible, relationships of influence:

[...] election day was when the complexity of the village’s social life was distilled into moments of structure and clarity, when diffuse tensions and loyalties were made unusually manifest (Banerjee 2007: 1561).

- 13 For Banerjee, who studied politics from the standpoint of a village in West Bengal, an election is a celebration in two ways: (i) it is a festive social event; (ii) it involves a sense of democracy as sacred. Therefore she understands ‘elections as sacred expressions of citizenship’ (Banerjee 2007: 1561).
- 14 For all their evocative strength, one can regret that anthropological studies of Indian elections deal mostly with villages and with traditional electoral practices. However one must also note that elections elsewhere have attracted even less attention from anthropologists. Indeed, a recent issue of *Qualitative Sociology* deplored that ‘at a time when few, if any, objects are beyond the reach and scrutiny of ethnographers, it is quite surprising that politics and its main protagonists (state officials, politicians and activists) remain largely un(der)studied by ethnography’s mainstream’ (Auyero 2006: 257).

## Other approaches

- 15 A number of articles and books on Indian elections combine different methodological approaches. Thus some of Banerjee’s conclusions are shared by the political scientists Ahuja and Chibber (*n.d.*), in an interesting study combining quantitative and qualitative methods (*i.e.* election surveys (1989-2004) and a series of focus group discussions) in three large Indian states. In order to understand the particular pattern of electoral turnout described by Yadav as characteristic of the ‘second democratic upsurge’ (Yadav 2000),

Ahuja and Chibber identify three broad social groups, defined by three distinct 'interpretations' of voting. They argue that 'differences in the voting patterns of opposite ends of the social spectrum exist because each group interprets the act of voting differently'. Thus the act of voting is considered as a 'right' by the groups who are on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum—the 'marginalized'; as an 'instrument [...] to gain access to the state and its resources' by those in the middle of that spectrum—the 'State's clients'; and as 'civic duty' by those at the top—the 'elite' (Ahuja & Chibber 2009: 1-9).

- 16 Among the 'other approaches' of elections, one also finds a number of monographs devoted to a single election<sup>6</sup>. For instance Myron Weiner's study of the 1977 election constitutes an interesting, contemporary account of the beginning of the end of Congress dominance over Indian politics, with the first part devoted to the campaign and the second part to the analysis of results, on the basis on a medley of methods typical of political science:

In four widely scattered cities - Bombay [...], Calcutta, Hyderabad, and New Delhi [...]—[the author] talked to civil servants, candidates, campaign workers, newspaper editors, and people in the streets, attended campaign rallies and visited ward offices, collected campaign literature, listened to the radio, and followed the local press (Weiner 1978: 21)

- 17 In the 1990, a series of collective volume were published on parliamentary elections (for instance Roy & Wallace 1999). Often based on aggregate data such as those published by the Election Commission of India, they offer a series of papers that are interpretative, speculative, critical in nature.
- 18 I have found one single book of electoral geography (Dikshit 1993),<sup>7</sup> which presents election results (crossed with census data) as a series of maps. This particular method highlights unexpected regional contrasts and similarities, which stimulates the production of explanatory hypotheses.
- 19 Finally, a recent book by Wendy Singer (2007) makes a case for an application of social history to elections. Going through a large material relating to elections (national, state, local) from 1952 to the 1990s, she shows how some details of the electoral process reveal important social changes over time.<sup>8</sup>
- 20 The gathering of the above mentioned writings in a single, residual category is not meant to suggest that they are less effective than case studies or survey research in describing and explaining elections. On the contrary, the variety of methodologies that they mobilize shows the richness of elections as an object of scientific enquiry. But these studies eschew the strong methodological choices which define the other two categories and which point to the political stakes specific to election studies.

## Survey research

- 21 Survey research has been dominating election studies since the 1990s for a variety of reasons. I will here use Yadav's definition of this particular method:
- [...] a technique of data gathering in which a sample of respondents is asked questions about their political preferences and beliefs to draw conclusions about political opinions, attitudes and behavior of a wider population of citizens (Yadav 2008: 5).

- 22 Survey research exemplifies the close relationship between the media and political science. It was introduced in India in the late 1950s by an economist turned journalist, Eric Da Costa, considered ‘the father of opinion polling in India’ (Butler et al. 1995: 41),<sup>9</sup> who went on to work with the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO) created in 1956—but it was political scientists such as Bashiruddin Ahmed, Ramashray Roy and Rajni Kothari who gave it a scientific grounding. In his Memoirs (2002), Kothari recalls how he went to Michigan University—which had developed an expertise in psephology, *i.e.* the statistical analysis of elections - to get trained in survey research. When he came back to India, Kothari applied this new method in his work at the Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), which he had founded a few years earlier, in 1963.<sup>10</sup> The first election to which he applied this newly acquired expertise was the Kerala state election in 1965 (Lokniti team 2004: 5373). The CSDS team then went on to study general elections in 1967, 1971 and 1980, but it seems to have progressively lost interest for election studies—hence the gap between this first series<sup>11</sup> and the new series which started in 1996—in a new political context, as we will see further.
- 23 The renaissance, so to speak, of electoral surveys, came from another academic turned journalist: Prannoy Roy. An economist by training, Roy learnt survey research in the United Kingdom. After coming back to India in the early 1980s, he applied this method to Indian elections. He co-produced a series of volumes, with Butler and Lahiri, he conducted a series of all India opinion polls for the magazine India Today, but more importantly in 1998 he founded a new television channel, New Delhi Television (NDTV) on which he anchored shows devoted to the statistical analysis of elections—thus popularizing psephology.
- 24 The link between these two pioneering institutions of psephology, CSDS and NDTV, was provided by Yogendra Yadav, a young political scientist who was brought from Chandigarh University to the CSDS by Rajni Kothari. Yadav revived the data unit of the CSDS and went on to supervise an uninterrupted series of electoral studies which have been financially supported and publicized by the print media, but also by NDTV. Yadav’s expertise, his great ability to explain psephological analyses both in English and Hindi, made him a star of TV shows devoted to elections, first on NDTV, and then on the channel co-founded by the star anchor Rajdeep Sardesai after he left NDTV: CNN-IBN.<sup>12</sup> In 1995, the CSDS team around Yogendra Yadav created Lokniti, a network of scholars based in the various Indian states, working on democracy in general and on elections in particular. The Lokniti network has been expanding both in sheer numbers and in terms of disciplines, and it has consistently observed elections since 1996.
- 25 In a landmark volume published in 1995 by Roy along with two other scholars, David Butler and Ashok Lahiri, the authors had made a strong statement in favour of psephology, even while acknowledging its limits: ‘This book [...] offers the ‘What?’ of the electoral record; it does not deal with the ‘Why?’” (Butler *et al.* 1995: 4). In this regard, the CSDS data unit has strived, from 1996 onwards, to improve its data gathering in order to capture more of the ‘Why?’, *i.e.* to capture with increasing accuracy the electoral behaviour of Indians and its explanatory factors. More generally, it has aimed ‘to use elections as an occasion or as a window to making sense of trends and patterns in democratic politics’ (Lokniti Team 2004: 5373).
- 26 The CSDS election studies have also been published in academic supports such as the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) in India, or Electoral Studies on the international

level<sup>13</sup>, and they have been used by a large number of academic works in political sociology (for instance Jaffrelot (2008) on the vote of the urban middle classes). Recently, the Lokniti network has published a series of state election studies in Hindi and in English, with academic publishing houses (Mohan 2009, Shastri 2009).

## Scientific and political debates

- 27 Debates around the study of Indian elections involve political and scientific arguments which are sometimes difficult to disentangle. These debates underline that no method is politically neutral, and they illustrate the particularly problematic relationship of one discipline, political science, with the political sphere and with the media.

### Scientific dilemmas

- 28 The opposition between case studies and survey research can be broken into a series of dilemmas and choices.
- 29 The first dilemma concerns the most relevant unit of analysis: should one privilege width or depth? The central difficulty here is often to combine feasibility and relevance. In his introduction to a series of case studies done in the 1960s and 1970s, Shah writes:
- A major limitation of the survey method is its inability to capture the influence of local politics on the electoral behavior of small communities. A questionnaire administered to individual voters can elicit information about individual attitudes and opinions but cannot capture the larger reality of events involving a collectivity of individuals acting over a longer period of time. A fieldworker who knows the community is better equipped to capture that reality (Shah 2007: 12).
- 30 As we saw, case studies, focusing on a limited area,<sup>14</sup> do offer historical depth, for example in Brass (1985). The anthropological brand of case studies also offers ‘cultural’ depth, through a wealth of concrete details which suggest the multiple meanings of elections for voters. However survey research allows generalizations; and it contextualizes results by identifying patterns, linked to regions or social groups.
- 31 The second dilemma concerns quantitative vs. qualitative methods. This opposition cannot be reduced to the use of figures vs. words. While many case studies involve some quantified description of the vote, they are deeply qualitative in nature, insofar as they aim at uncovering the *qualities* of *particular* political trajectories—of a community, a party, a constituency, a state etc. Survey research on the contrary aims at revealing *general* patterns. Here again the question of feasibility is central: while surveys are expensive, case studies are time intensive.
- 32 An important dimension of that dilemma relates, again, to the capacity of these two types of methods to capture the meaning of elections for voters. Survey research, functioning with closed questions, conveys only the meanings that the survey design has anticipated, and risks perpetuating the prejudices of its authors.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, qualitative methods such as open interviews and direct observation are more likely to bring out unexpected interpretations.
- 33 However one large consensus appears to bridge the divide between survey research *a la* CSDS and case studies: the ‘ecological’ approach is preferred to the ‘strategic’ approach of elections. Ecological analyses ‘correlate electoral with other kind of aggregate data’ (Brass 1985: 3). They focus on ‘the sociological characteristics of voters, which determine

the construction of their representation of politics and their social solidarity' (Hermet *et al.* 2001: 31), whereas the 'economical' or strategic approach is based on methodological individualism and the problematic of the rational voter. Already in 1985 Paul Brass argued that 'ecological analyses had a 'useful place in India electoral studies' (*ibid*)—indeed he expanded on their advantages and limitations, through a detailed discussion of the methodological issues arising from the difficulty of relating electoral and census data, and of the technical solutions found by a number of works which he reviewed.

- 34 The evolution of National Election Studies (NES) conducted by the CSDS since 1996 shows an attempt to develop increasingly ecological types of analysis, by introducing more and more variables in their considerations. Indeed the latest surveys come close to meeting the advantages of ecological approaches as explained by Brass: 'Identifying the underlying structural properties of party systems, [...] presenting time series data to discover trends in voting behaviour, [...] identifying distinctive regional contexts in which voting choices occur, and [...] discovering unthought of relationships through the manipulation of available data' (Brass 1985: 4).
- 35 A recent exception vis-à-vis this consensus is Kanchan Chandra's work on 'ethnic voting' (Chandra 2008), which analyses electoral mobilization as a mode of negotiation used by marginal groups. Chandra argues that the poorer groups in India use their vote as 'their primary channel of influence'. In a description of 'elections as auctions', she argues that the 'purchasing power of small groups of voters' depends 'upon the degree to which electoral contests are competitive' (Chandra 2004: 4). Her interpretation of the relatively high turnout in Indian elections, even as one government after the other fails the poor, is a materialist one:

When survival goods are allotted by the political market rather than as entitlements, voters who need these goods have no option but to participate. [...] Voters do not themselves have control over the distribution of goods. But by voting *strategically* and voting often, they can increase their chances of obtaining these goods (Chandra 2004: 5).<sup>16</sup>

## Academic rivalries

- 36 The above dilemmas are extremely widespread, but in the Indian context they also correspond, to some extent, to academic rivalries between scholars and institutions, which might explain their persistence over time.
- 37 One can identify, to start with, an implicit rivalry between political science and psephology—even though the latter can be considered as a sub-discipline of the former.<sup>17</sup> A few texts, but also interviews, reveal a mutual distrust, both in scientific and political terms. Indian political science values theoretical work more than empirical research; qualitative more than quantitative methods;<sup>18</sup> politically, it favours a radical critique of the political system.<sup>19</sup> Survey research, of course, is essentially empirical, quantitative and 'status quoist'. Yogendra Yadav thus sums up the situation that prevailed in the late 1980s:
- The label 'survey research' stood for what was considered most inappropriate in the third world imitation of American science of politics: it was methodologically naïve, politically conservative and culturally inauthentic (Yadav 2008: 3).
- 38 Even today, quantitative methods, which are much fashionable in American (and more lately in French) political science, are hardly taught in the political science curriculum of Indian universities. Thus Kothari's endeavour to launch a 'so-called 'new political

science” in the CSDS in the 1960s—this was the time of the behaviorist revolution in social sciences—was a lonely one. He describes this ambition thus:

[It] was mainly based on the empirical method leading to detailed analytical understanding of the political processes [...] The ‘people’ came within that framework, as voters and citizens with desires, attitudes and opinions; our task as academics was to build from there towards a macro-theory of democracy, largely through empirical surveys of political behavior (by and large limited to electoral choices) but also through broader surveys of social and political change (Kothari 2002: 60-61).

39 This project actually seems to be realized through the Lokniti network which links the CSDS data unit with a number of colleges or universities across the country (and thus contributes to training an increasingly large number of students who are then hired as investigators for National and State Election studies).

40 As far as the political agenda of survey research is concerned, Yadav makes a passionate plea for ‘transfer as transformation’ (Yadav 2008: 16) *i.e.* for an adaptation of survey research to the political culture of countries of the global South, with a double objective: (i) to make survey research more relevant scientifically; (ii) to use it as a politically empowering device, that is ‘[...] to ensure that subaltern and suppressed opinions are made public’ (Yadav 2008: 18).

41 Much of the latent opposition between psephologists and other political scientists is probably due to the disproportionate visibility of psephologists when compared to other social scientists working on elections. But the close connection between psephology and the media is a double edged sword. On the one hand, it offers researchers a much needed financial support:

Some of the leading media publications like the *Hindu*, *India Today*, *Frontline* and the *Economist* supported [National Election Studies] between 1996 and 1999 (Lokniti team 2004: 5375).

42 On the other hand, it forces them to engage with the scientifically dubious, and economically risky, exercise of predicting results,<sup>20</sup> or explaining them immediately after their publication. However, the consistent transparency and critical self-appraisal of surveys conducted by the CSDS goes a long way in asserting their scientific credibility:

Within India, the NES series has sought to distinguish itself from the growing industry of pre-election opinion polls [...] The difficulties of obtaining independent support for NES made the Lokniti group turn to media support which in turn required the group to carry out some pre-election opinion polls and even exit polls linked to seats forecast. The experiment yielded mixed results, some reasonably accurate forecasts along with some embarrassing ones (Lokniti team 2004: 5380)

43 A more explicit and constructive debate has been taking place, lately, between psephology and anthropology. Notwithstanding his refusal to ‘participate in methodological crusades on social sciences’ (Yadav 2008: 4), Yadav has consistently sought to situate, explain, improve and diffuse his brand of survey research on elections<sup>21</sup>. His call for a ‘dialogue’, elaborated upon by Palshikar (‘how to integrate the methods and insights of field study and survey research’ 2007: 25) has been answered by Mukulika Banerjee, who is currently directing, along with Lokniti, an unprecedented project of Comparative Electoral Ethnography, which aims at ‘bringing together the strengths of large-scale and local-level investigations’ ([www.lokniti.org/comparative\\_electoral\\_ethnography.html](http://www.lokniti.org/comparative_electoral_ethnography.html) accessed in May 2009).

## Political issues

- 44 One can distinguish three types of relationship between elections studies and politics, which correspond to three distinct, if related, questions. Firstly, how do elections studies meet the need of political actors? Secondly, to what extent are they an offshoot of American political science? And thirdly, what representation of democracy do they support?
- 45 Firstly, the development of survey research is directly linked to Indian political life:  
 In the 1950s there were virtually no market research organizations in India. The dominance of the Congress diminished any incentive to develop political polls (Butler *et al.* 1995: 41).
- 46 At the time of the second non-Congress government at the Centre (1989-1991), political parties started commissioning surveys which they used to build their electoral strategy (Rao 2009). Indian elections have been decided at the state level since the 1990s, and the proliferation of national pre-poll survey from the 1991 election onwards can be linked to the uncertainty of the electoral results in a context of increasing assertion of regional parties (Rao 2009). The fact that the CSDS resumed its elections series in 1996 is doubtlessly linked to the transformations that have been characterizing the Indian political scene since the beginning of that decade. The rise to power of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh and its emergence in other North Indian states, and more generally the fragmentation of political representation, with new parties representing increasingly smaller social groups, has made it increasingly necessary to know who votes for which party in which state—and why.
- 47 Furthermore the decentralization policy adopted in 1992 has generated a lot of interest both from actors and observers of Indian politics. Today the newfound interest for ethnographic, locally rooted types of election studies may well have to do with the fact that the national scale is increasingly challenged as the most relevant one to understand Indian politics.
- 48 Secondly, a more covert, but no less important aspect of the debate relates to what could be roughly called the ‘Western domination’ of survey research. Methods have been learnt by leading Indian figures in the United States or in the United Kingdom (even in the 2000s, CSDS members get trained in the summer school in survey research in Michigan University). Authors are often American (or working in the American academia). Funding often involves foreign funding agencies.
- 49 More importantly, the key concepts of survey research are often drawn from the rich field of American election studies,<sup>22</sup> and particularly from behaviourism, a school of thought which is rejected by part of the Indian academia. Lastly, the general (and often implicit) reference to which the Indian scenario is compared is actually the United States and Western Europe. On the one hand, these comparative efforts<sup>23</sup> testify to the fact that India is not an outsider any more as far as democracies are concerned. On the other hand, one can regret an excessive focus, in comparisons, on the West, insofar as it skews the assessment of the Indian case (for instance the Indian pattern of voter turnout, which is qualified as ‘exceptional’ by Yadav because it breaks from the trend observed in North America and Western Europe, might appear less so if it was compared, say, to post-Apartheid South Africa).<sup>24</sup>



50 Thirdly, all election studies support a (more or less implicit) discourse on Indian democracy; they can always be read as a 'state of democracy report' (Jayal 2006). In this regard, one of the criticisms addressed to psephological studies is that their narrow focus tends to convey a rosy picture, since elections are usually considered as 'free and fair' in the Indian democracy, which is often qualified as 'procedural', i.e. which conforms to democratic procedures (regular elections and political alternance, a free press) but not to democratic values (starting with equality). The sheer magnitude of the logistics involved in conducting national elections is bound to evoke admiring appraisals, which tend to obliterate the limits of procedural democracy. Thus Jayal criticizes the 'the fallacy of electoralism':

The scholars who subscribe to the limited, proceduralist view of democracy, are generally buoyant about Indian democracy... Their analyses emphatically exclude the many social and economic inequalities that make it difficult for even formal participation to be effective (Jayal 2001: 3).

51 Moreover the huge costs involved in conducting sample surveys on ever larger samples imply that the funders—which include the media—can put pressure on the team conducting the survey. And one can see two reasons why survey research is so media friendly: one, its (supposed) ability to predict results makes it an indispensable component of the horse-race, entertaining aspect of elections; two, it contributes to the 'feel good' factor as it shows, election after election, that the turnout is high and that results are unpredictable; it thus gives credit to the idea of democratic choice.

52 To this positive assessment, some Indian political scientists oppose the more critical vision offered by case studies of Indian politics focusing not on the mainstream, but on the margins. Here anthropology offers a way out, since the informed perspective of the long time fieldworker allows a simultaneous perception of the mainstream and of the margins. Thus the works of Hauser and Singer or that of Banerjee, offering a minute description of the various 'ceremonies' that together constitute the election process from the vantage point of voters, highlight both the empowering and the coercive dimensions of voting. Their studies suggest that when it comes to elections, the relationship between celebration and alienation is a very subtle one.

## Conclusion

53 Elections are a complex, multi-dimensional social and political event which can be captured only through a variety of methods: this literature review underlines how the different approaches complete each other and are therefore equally necessary. While Indian election studies, at least at the national and state levels, have been dominated, since the 1990s, by survey research, the Lokniti based project of 'Comparative Electoral Ethnography' should contribute to restoring some balance between various types of studies. Also, academic debates around the scientific and political implications and limitations of election studies seem to lead to a convergence: while questionnaire-based surveys evolve towards a finer apprehension of the opinions and attitudes of Indian voters, anthropological studies strive to overcome the limitations of fieldwork based on a single, limited area.

54 One can regret that studies of Indian elections, by all disciplines, tend to focus exclusively on the vote, which certainly is a climactic moment of the electoral process, but by no means the only interesting one.<sup>25</sup> Indeed a recent attempt by the CSDS team to

understand participation beyond voting, in order to qualify the 'second democratic upsurge' (Yadav 2000) through a state wise analysis of the 2004 Lok Sabha elections, suggests that a broader definition of the electoral process might significantly contribute to solving the 'puzzle of Indian democracy' (Chibber & Petrocik 1989, Lijphart 1996). They conclude that 'comparison across social sections shows that a broader entry of the underprivileged into the political arena is much more limited, even today, than the entry of the more privileged social sections' (Palshikar & Kumar 2004: 5414). The complementarities of different approaches are here glaring: ethnographic work is much needed to understand the implications of the fact that 'over the years there is a steady increase in the number of people who participated in election campaign activity' (Palshikar & Kumar 2004: 5415).

- 55 One wishes also that anthropological studies of future elections deal not only with the traditional elements of voting (the campaign procession, the inking of the finger etc.), but also with newer elements of the process: what has been the impact of the model code of conduct, or of the increasing use of SMS and internet in the campaign, on electoral rituals? What about the collective watching of TV shows focusing on elections, both before and after the results are known?
- 56 Finally, at a time when election surveys have acquired an unprecedented visibility, due to their relationship with the mass media, one can only lament the absence of rigorous studies on the role of the media, both print and audio-visual, in funding, shaping and publicizing election studies.

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## NOTES

1. Most works considered here deal with national elections, but some of them also focus on state elections.
2. I owe this formulation to Amit Prakash, whose comments on a previous version of this paper were very helpful.
3. Another example is a study of parliamentary and state elections in a village in Orissa at the end of Emergency, in which S. Mitra describes the caste dynamics in the village and the way it plays out during electoral times to show how 'elections are used as instruments by various sections of the society to convert their political resources and power into authority' (Mitra 1979: 419).
4. In the early years of independent India, the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) commissioned a series of case studies, some of which are reviewed by Narain (1978). A more recently published volume offers a sample of such studies, conducted in the late 1960s by the sociology department of Delhi University under the supervision of M.N.Srinivas and A.M.Shah (Shah 2007).

5. One must note that among the various disciplines producing case studies, anthropology uses the largest definition of political participation, to include not only voting, but also participating in meetings, supporting the campaign of a particular party or candidate etc.
6. One must also mention the 'Chronicle of an Impossible Election'—i.e. the 2002 Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir - as told by the then Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh (2004), which provides an insider's view of how election procedures are the result of a series of (sometimes minute) decisions—aiming at asserting that the Election Commission does not represent the Indian government.
7. This is in sharp contrast with France, where electoral geographers such as André Siegfried have been the founding fathers of political science. For an illustration of how geography enriches our understanding of elections, see Lefèbvre and Robin in this volume.
8. This inventory of 'other' election studies, that is, studies of elections that fall neither in the 'case study' nor in the 'survey research' type, would obviously become much more complex and large if we were to include in it the large body of literature on the party system, or on the federal structure as they evolve over time in India. However that literature does take elections as its *main* focus, and has therefore not been considered here.
9. Eric Da Costa founded the *Journal of Public Opinion*.
10. The CSDS was meant, in Kothari's own words: 'One, to give a truly empirical base to political science [...] Two, to engage in a persistent set of writings through which our broad conceptualisation of democracy in India was laid out [...] And three, institutionalise not just the Centre as a place of learning but as part of the larger intellectual process itself' (Kothari 2002: 39-40). Over the years, the CSDS has retained a unique place in the Indian academia, as it remains distinct from universities even while engaging in a number of collaborations with their faculty—Lokniti being a case in point.
11. The CSDS did not even study the 1977 election, on which we fortunately have Myron Weiner's monograph.
12. The CSDS entered into a stable partnership with the new channel six months before it went on air, which testifies to the saleability of this brand of research. One week before the results of the Fifteenth election were announced, huge signboards bore a picture of the star anchor of CNN-IBN along with Yogendra Yadav, asserting the latter's increasing popularity.
13. The 'notes on elections' published in *Electoral Studies* favour a strongly institutional perspective, concerned almost exclusively with political parties (the alliances they form, the issues they raise, the candidates they select etc.) Interestingly, nothing is said about voters.
14. Both Brass (1985) and Palshikar (2007) make a forceful argument in favour of taking the constituency as a unit of analysis.
15. For instance, the first National Election Study, conducted by the CSDS in 1967, did not take women voters into account! (Lokniti team 2004: 5374).
16. Emphasis mine.
17. The debate on the scientific legitimacy of survey research as opposed to more theoretical, or more qualitative, approaches is by no means restricted to India. Political science is a relatively young discipline, defined more by its objects than by its methods, and by a scientific community that strives to assert its scientific credentials. In this regard, electoral surveys have an ambiguous record. On the one hand, the highly technical aspect of quantitative methods gives an image of 'scientificity'; on the other hand, the proximity (in terms of sponsors, institutions and publication supports) of electoral surveys to opinion polls (characterized by a large margin of error, and a close association with marketing techniques) maintains a doubt on the scientificity of this sub-discipline.
18. The preference for qualitative methods actually extends to other disciplines among social sciences in India: 'A tabulation of articles in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* and the *Sociological Bulletin* [...], though not a comprehensive account of scholarship in sociology and social

anthropology, did nevertheless seem to substantiate the fact that ethnographic methods far outpaced any other kind of research method' (Sundar *et al.* 2000: 2000).

19. In this regard, Mukherji's account of State elections in the early 1980s in a constituency of West Bengal dominated by Naxalites is an exception among monographic studies of elections. The book offers a candid evocation of the methodological dilemmas, constraints and solutions inherent in studying elections, and particularly of the political agenda behind election studies (in this particular case, the author, engaged in a study of the Naxalite movement, presents himself early on as a Naxalite) (Mukherji 1983).

20. Thus in spite of the continuing efforts of NES to improve its methods, it failed to accurately predict the results of elections, both in 2004 and in 2009.

21. See, for instance, Lokniti Team 2004, in which the methodological flaws and evolutions (in terms of sample size, number of languages used, decentralization of data entry and analysis etc.) of National Election Studies are discussed in detail.

22. This problem is not restricted to survey research alone: thus Mitra evokes the 'Americanisation of [the study of] ethnic politics in the Indian context' (Mitra 2005: 327)

23. Linz, Stepan and Yadav 2007 represents a good example of the changing status of the Indian case in comparative studies of democracy—from an exception to a major case.

24. See Fauvelle 2008.

25. For instance anthropological studies tend to focus on the short period comprised between the beginning of the electoral campaign and the announcement of results. A larger timeframe is needed if we are to understand how clientelism operates through the electoral process.

## ABSTRACTS

Election studies (which are here defined as scholarly work focusing on the major phases of the electoral process, *i.e.* the campaign, the vote, the announcement of results and subsequent government formation) constitute a distinct sub-genre of studies on democracy, which focuses, so to speak, on the 'mechanics' more than on the 'substance' of representative democracy. This sub-genre, being relatively more visible than other studies of representative democracy, has specific implications, in the academic but also in the political arena, which are the focus of this critical review of the literature on Indian elections since the 1980s. The paper argues that election studies are really in between science and politics, and that it is important, therefore, to contextualize them.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** elections, political science, India, media, democracy, methodology

## AUTHOR

STÉPHANIE TAWA LAMA-REWAL

Research fellow, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris

# Political elites and journalistic practices in India: A case of institutionalized heteronomy

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**Swati Maheshwari**

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

**Colin Sparks**

Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

## Abstract

The national elections in India in 2014 that swept the controversial leader Narendra Modi to power have generated a great deal of scholarship on their transformative impact with regard to the Indian polity. This article argues that, in fact, the elections demonstrate a continuity in the media's relationship with dominant members of the political elite. Favourable, partisan reporting of dominant figures or families has a long history in India since the journalistic field reorients its subservience towards the new power structure. This research examines the similarities and differences in how authoritative and populist leaders like the Gandhis and Modi manipulate media power. While scholars have noted a close correspondence between politics and media in India, there is a research deficit in the analysis of the architecture of the media's subservience to selected members of national significance, in the world's largest democracy. This research draws into dialogue two influential theories – Field and New Institutionalism theory – to assert that the natural state of the Indian journalistic field is heteronomy in its relationship with hegemonic members of the political elite. This is occasionally pierced by limits imposed by populist politics in an electoral democracy. The relationship between the news media and individuals of the political elite, thus, can be conceptualized as that of contingent heteronomy.

## Keywords

Heteronomy, India, journalism, political elite, political institution, leadership, press freedom/censorship, sociology of news

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## Corresponding author:

Swati Maheshwari, Hong Kong Baptist University, 5 Hereford Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong.  
Email: [Swati.maheshwari@gmail.com](mailto:Swati.maheshwari@gmail.com)

## Introduction

This article examines a major shift in political reporting in India. Between 2012 and 2014, the long-standing deference of the Indian press towards the Gandhi dynasty broke down, and scandals that had previously been concealed from public knowledge were extensively covered in the media. In its immediate aftermath, a new culture of deference was built around the incoming Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, whose right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) defeated a centrist coalition led by the Gandhi family in a general election in 2014, resulting in concerns that Modi was elected with the *help* of a neo-liberal media (Rao and Mudgal, 2015: 621). This shift in the relationship between the media and members of the political elite, it is argued, illuminates important factors about the structural position of the media in Indian society and the culture of journalism that it encourages.

The national elections in 2014 that swept the controversial leader Narendra Modi to power have generated a great deal of scholarship on their transformative impact on the Indian polity. This article argues that, in fact, the elections demonstrate a continuity in the media's relationship with dominant members of the political elite (Chakravarty and Roy, 2015; Rajagopal, 2016; Sardesai, 2014). While the nature and source of political authority changed in 2014, the favourable reporting of dominant figures or families has a long history in India since the journalistic field reorients its subservience towards the new power structure.

We examine the similarities and differences in how authoritative and populist leaders like the Gandhis and Modi manipulate media power. While scholars have noted a close correspondence between politics and media in India (Thomas, 2014), there is little analysis on the architecture of the media's subservience, otherwise seen as free, in the world's largest democracy. While field theory provides the predominant framework for analysis, this article argues that assimilation of some additional concepts from the new institutional theory enhances the understanding of the extraordinary endurance and homogeneity of the institutional subordination, albeit punctuated by occasional episodes of contestation between the media and the political elite. This research, situated in contexts significantly different from where field theory originated, argues that heteronomy rather than autonomy is a salient feature of the journalistic field in its relationship with the political elite.

We draw upon interviews with 40 Indian journalists, who were unequivocal about the extent to which they and their peers were consciously prepared not to cover stories about selected individuals of the national political elite which were evidently newsworthy. Their forthrightness was enhanced by the breakdown of institutionalized obeisance to the Gandhis that had come to constitute journalistic doxa, denaturalizing those routinized practices, catalysed by the external power shift.

Once the rise of the Modi regime looked imminent, a new orthodoxy began to be constructed with strong elements of continuity. The news media's subordination to dominant political figures transformed into genuflection, as evidenced in the run up to the 2014 election. Modi's pro-market image led to an unprecedented interlocking of political and economic interests, a convergence that has intensified since India's neo-liberal shift (Chandrasekhar, 2010). However, the compulsions of populist politics in an electoral democracy impose limits on this heteronomous relationship (Thomas, 2014). The



relationship between the news media and individuals of the political elite, thus, can be conceptualized as that of contingent heteronomy.

## Evolution with contested trajectories

The Indian media industry's exponential growth, a result of the economic liberalization in 1991, has been well documented, making it one of the biggest and fastest growing in the world (Jeffrey, 2000; Kohli-Khandekar, 2010; Mehta, 2015; Ninan, 2007; Thussu, 2007). India is home to the largest concentration of round-the-clock news channels in the world, and more than 90,000 newspapers in 20 languages (Chakravarty and Roy, 2015). This has been accompanied by hyper-commercialization and concentration, triggering fears of diminution of news media's independence (Thakurta, 2014). This crowded and rambunctious media landscape framed, even defined, the national elections of 2014 (Chakravarty and Roy, 2015; Sardesai, 2014).

Some scholars have argued that this proliferation of media has increased political accountability, enhancing democratic participation in the country (Mehta, 2008; Rao, 2008, 2010). However, this research contests that assertion, suggesting instead that the apparently complex and heterogeneous media landscape obscures homogeneity and partisanship to the dominant power hierarchy. We contend that certain influential members of the power structure exert sustained heteronomous pressure such that they unify the disjunctive Indian journalistic field.

## Methodological approach

These findings are based on face-to-face interviews with 40 political journalists in Delhi. The lead author, a former journalist, began by interviewing former colleagues. A non-probabilistic, purposive sample was used to contact reporters on the Congress and BJP beats, using the snowball sampling method. The purposive sampling of interview subjects was considered most appropriate since the aim of the project was to interview experienced political journalists who had covered the Gandhis and Modi.

Most of the interviewees were senior journalists and editors with an average industry experience of 15 years, predominantly employed by leading national mainstream English language media such as *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express*, *The Economic Times*, *DNA*, *Outlook Magazine*, *Open Magazine*, New Delhi Television (NDTV), CNN IBN, and TV Today. Six of the journalists were drawn from Hindi and other regional language media like NDTV India, Aaj Tak, Amar Ujala, and PTC. Many of the interviewees had worked for both print and television media.

This is far from exhaustive in a country where there are significant ruptures and tensions between national and subnational media, television, and newspapers that led Rajagopal (2001) to allude to a 'split public' (p. 151). The divide has particular relevance here as the elitist English language media has been accused of favouring the Western-educated, English-speaking Gandhis. Modi exploited this perception to portray himself as a meritocratic, son-of-the-soil nationalist. He accentuated the cleavage, recruiting the more compliant Hindi language media to 'fashion a Hindu public' (Rajagopal, 2001: 1).

However, these divisions may be overstated, particularly when examining the news media's relationship with certain members of the political elite. Besides coercive political and economic pressures, the trend of commercialization and regionalization crosscuts both the English and vernacular language media in their pursuit of profits since liberalization resulted in greater similarity than is often assumed (Rao, 2010). Chadha and Koliska's (2016) study of regional television channels reinforces this picture of corrosive interpenetration of political and business interests resulting in significant censorial pressures and highly insecure working conditions for journalists. Additionally, journalists of the national press corps based in Delhi communicate with each other sharing information, having had long-standing professional relationships. While the English language media questioned Modi's role in the 2002 communal massacre in the Indian state of Gujarat, the 2014 elections were remarkable for the 'erasure' of Modi's association with violent Hinduism, indicating that the news media capitulated irrespective of the language division (Chakravarty and Roy, 2015: 318).

The in-depth, open-ended interviews often lasted 2–3 hours. The interviews have been anonymized, as most subjects feared reprisals from bosses and political leaders in case any comments were attributed to them. The findings include the general themes discussed in these semi-structured interviews and reproduce extracts from these conversations, which provide valuable insights into the relationship between the journalistic field and the political elite.

The article begins with a brief discussion of the theoretical issues involved in this study before the specificities of the Indian situation are discussed. The mechanisms by which deference to the Gandhi family was sustained are outlined and the reasons for its collapse examined. The emergence of the new orthodoxy, and the challenges it faces, are then detailed. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings presented here.

## Theoretical underpinnings

Bourdieu's field theory is widely used in the analysis of journalism and to illuminate its practice in a range of different contexts (Benson, 2004, 2006; Benson and Hallin, 2007; Benson and Saguy, 2005; Bourdieu, 1977, 2005). Additionally, the article deploys some ideas afforded by the new institutionalism theoretical approach. These are used to broaden and deepen analysis of how institutional arrangements shape journalistic practice and outcome. These approaches share a great deal in common, notably their starting point of conceptualizing the journalistic field or institution as a mezzo-level unit of analysis (Benson and Neveu, 2005; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Martin, 2003). New institutionalism, however, differs from field theory in the relative emphasis it places on micro- and macro-forces.

Field theory helps illuminate the underlying unifying assumptions upon which a specific social practice rests, and conceptualizes this social sphere as a partially autonomous field or institution that 'obeys its own laws' free from external pressures (Bourdieu, 1998: 39). In the case of journalism, what Bourdieu (1998a, 1998b, 2005) calls the *doxa* differs from the formally articulated canons of journalistic practice and is better understood as a shared, implicit set of assumptions about the conduct of journalism, which both define the boundaries of the practice and are conditions for its practice.

Bourdieu's (1993, 1998b, 2004) approach is also concerned with the extent to which a particular set of social practices are influenced by their relationships with their social environment (Benson, 1999; Martin, 2003). In Bourdieu's terms, if the constitution of a field rests upon a doxa that constrains and enables its practices, it is also and always subject to the pressure of other fields that pull it away from autonomy and subject it to the logic of another force. For Bourdieu, it was the economic field that exercised an increasing heteronomous force upon the French media (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Thus, field theory leans towards economic determinism, underestimating the contribution of politics in influencing the field of journalism. This is a significant omission, particularly in the Indian context where a developmentalist state has been highly interventionist. Its pivot from a socialist agenda to a pro-capitalist, neo-liberal one has not been accompanied by a significant reduction in its role (Kohli, 1989).

Here, new institutional theory fills a gap in Bourdieu's model, treating political influence as analytically distinct and conceptualizing journalism as a political institution (Benson, 2006; Cook, 1998; Kaplan, 2002; Ryfe, 2006). In the case under review, the shape of political power was revised rather radically by Modi's victory in the 2014 election and there were concomitant changes in the economic structure of the media. Therefore, alongside the evident case of a disruption in the field itself, it is also necessary to consider the extent to which that disruption was the product of an autonomous logic of the journalistic field and how much it was a response to the pressures exerted by exogenous forces and, if the latter was the case, the extent to which political and economic pressures were distinct.

In addition, new institutionalism supplements the domain of field theory in its conception of the institutional homogeneity and the persistence of news regimes (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999). Environmental uncertainty, according to new institutionalists, results in 'startling homogeneity' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 148). In the Indian case, a highly uncertain environment arises from a combination of weakly developed rational-legal authority resulting in fear of retribution through defamation cases, a feeble regulatory framework, precarious labour conditions which make it easy to get rid of editors who may refuse to toe the line, and hyper-commercialization. These are the kinds of conditions which, according to new institutionalist theories, give rise to homogenized news regimes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This insight is borne out in the uniformly favourable coverage of different national leaders despite the highly contentious and fragmented media landscape.

Overall, this article employs the conceptual pillars of field theory to analyse the relationship of Indian journalism with the political elite. The new institutionalism approach supplements this framework at its weakest points, helping build a theoretical domain adequate to analyse the issue at hand.

## **The Gandhi family and the media**

Indian journalists generally have close relations with powerful political figures but this necessary relation is often disguised by 'performance of distance' (Rao, 2010: 117). In the case of the Gandhi family, even this charade of independence was absent. The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty as the face of the centrist political party, the Congress, has long enjoyed

a hegemonic position in Indian society and politics. Party president Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul who represent the third and fourth generations of the dynasty led the election campaign for the Congress in the most recent national elections. After 10 years of being in government, in coalitions called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), which were dubbed UPA 1 and UPA 2 by the press, the Congress was defeated in the 2014 elections by the right-wing political party, the BJP, led by Narendra Modi.

Woven into this narrative of the Gandhis as embodiments of the nation is the theme of the sacrifices the Gandhi family has made for the country. Two generations of Gandhis, Indira and her son Rajiv, both Prime Ministers, were assassinated by extremists. Many Indians have internalized this narrative of tragic service to the country, as is evident from this senior journalist's views: 'The Gandhi family enjoys that mystique, that aura. After all, would there be an Indian narrative without Nehru, Indira, Rajiv, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel?' (Journalist 17, 2015, personal communication). As a result, the media contributed to justifying the paternalistic system the Gandhis built around themselves.

There were exceptions, like the media's harsh critique of Rajiv Gandhi over his alleged role in the Bofors gun corruption scandal when a series of missteps turned the tide of public opinion overwhelmingly against him (Badhwar and Chawla, 1989). The Indian press' relationship with his mother, Indira Gandhi, was more complex, but a political leader, L. K. Advani, famously remarked that 'the press crawled when asked to bend' during her 1975 suspension of civil rights and imposition of authoritarian rule.

For its part, the family has treated the press with lofty indifference. They seldom grant interviews to the media (Dhume, 2014). According to Sonia Gandhi's biographer, this reticence made her 'something regal' in the rambunctious Indian political landscape (Kidwai, 2009). The sycophantic culture of the Congress Party itself was such that it allowed the Nehru-Gandhis to 'float like royalty above the muck of day-to-day politics' while other Congress party members outdid each other in trying to defend them and speak on their behalf (Dhume, 2014).

The rare interviews they granted were to 'friendly' journalists who knew that the prerequisite to getting an interview was to steer clear of uncomfortable questions. According to a high-profile television journalist, 'none of us has been able to do a hard hitting interview with Sonia Gandhi in the twenty years of her political life' (Journalist 1, 2015, personal communication). According to him, there was a 'durbari [feudal] culture' in Delhi and when he did manage to get an interview and ask a tough question, her reaction was hostile. In general, the media were 'almost grateful if they [members of the Gandhi family] even spoke a word to them'. Given the dominant position of the family in Indian politics before 2014, the threat of being excluded from the Gandhi circle meant being denied access to important sources and information (Bhushan, 2016).

As the party that dominated the political landscape in India for half a century, they were also in a position to dispense favours and build a loyal coterie of journalists and editors, many in gate-keeping positions, who reinforced this self-censorship of the media. A journalist recounted his experience of working in India's second largest English language national newspaper, well known for its pro-Congress stance, alluding to the structural links between family-owned media businesses and the Gandhi family in a heavily regulated command economy:

I remember doing a story on Rahul Gandhi in 2007-8. They [the Congress Party] started a cleansing process shunting out people older than Rahul. My Political Editor told me face to face that the owner doesn't like these kind of stories. It was a common refrain in the paper that this political editor was more loyal than the king. (Journalist 32, 2014, personal communication)

As Breed (1955) observed long ago in the literature on social control within a newsroom, this is how unwritten, tacit rules come to constitute unstated editorial policies.

Another senior political reporter adds that much of this reverence for the Gandhis was built on material favours taken by journalists from successive Congress governments:

... there is a whole culture in Delhi where people have got so many favours from the Congress as it has been in power so long. The whole idea of covering politics is to be embedded in a party. (Journalist 15, 2015, personal communication)

Thus, the professional norms in the journalistic field need to be situated in the national cultural and social field where clientelism is pervasive (Rao, 2010).

This preparedness to cover the Gandhis with great circumspection was not, of course, complete. There would occasionally be critical coverage of the Gandhi family, particularly by the smaller but more adversarial publications. In such cases, when self-censorship by the media proved inadequate, it was shored up by coercive pressures from the political field. A political editor of *Outlook*, a small but independent magazine, told this researcher that a highly critical piece she did on Sonia Gandhi provoked a visit from an aide of the Gandhis to the magazine's editor warning them that the Gandhi family was sacrosanct (Journalist 15, 2015, personal communication). She wrote the critical article anyway, knowing she had her magazine's support. This attempt at direct pressure was not unique where Gandhi family's 'chamchas' [loyal retainers] would underscore the message about staying off the Gandhi family to erring journalists or editors.

State intervention through recourse to legal proceedings acted as an additional deterrent. The Indian legal system is favourable to plaintiffs alleging offence or defamation (Shainin, 2013). Although the Gandhis themselves did not resort to this extreme tactic, their loyalists had litigious reputations: 'No one wants to be sued for 100 crores (USD 160,000). People want to avoid all the agony, and these are people in power. They have obvious influence' (Journalist 24, 2014, personal communication).

This entrenched system of power led to the institutionalization of conformity in Indian journalism and, for many years, the entire Gandhi family enjoyed what many called 'kid-glove treatment from the press' which, it was sometimes claimed, amounted to 'omerta' – a code of silence observed by almost everyone (Srinivasan, 2012). How effective this code of silence could be can be illustrated by an example from as late as 2011. By this date, the family's hold on power was already weakening as the result of a series of graft scandals, among which were rumours of the questionable business transactions of one of the members of the Gandhi family, Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law, Robert Vadra (Singh and Sruthijith, 2011). Given his proximity to the Gandhi family and the fact that the Congress party was in government, it was evidently newsworthy but the news media chose to throw a cloak of invisibility over the story. In this case, another dimension to this 'omerta' was the involvement of the country's largest real estate company DLF, a big advertiser in most media houses. As the editor of a leading national newspaper told this researcher, 'Real

estate is a big component in advertising. Almost a third of media's advertising revenue comes from real estate companies' (Journalist 21, 2015, personal communication). This suggests a combination of political and economic pressures on the journalistic field.

### **The code of silence cracks**

By 2011, the Congress' dominance was diminishing. The country witnessed the rise of a civil society movement called 'India Against Corruption' (IAC) that exposed collusion between the political and economic elite. This movement resonated with rising popular anger and led to demonstrations against widespread corruption, inflation and slowing economic growth (Burke, 2011). IAC mobilizations got blanket television coverage as media outlets found this issue evinced a surge in viewership, led by the newly founded television news channel Times Now, keen to establish itself in a highly competitive field. With a radical shift in political discourse, the media did a volte face and highlighted systemic crony capitalism epitomized by Vadra.

Bottom up democratization had resulted in a profound change in the social landscape of Indian society. This was articulated by pressure groups turned political parties like the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which loosened the influence of the Gandhis over political institutions (Varshney, 2000). The scale and visibility of discontent was such that the media had no choice but to reflect it. Faced with several corruption scandals and palpable popular anger, the decades of censorship around the Gandhi family began to unravel. By this time, it was evident that the Congress was headed for defeat, and it seemed the media threw its weight behind Narendra Modi in the run up to the elections.

### **The election campaign**

While censorship in the coverage of the Gandhi family broke down, questions about the role the media played in getting Modi elected arose almost immediately. Journalists observed the 'star struck' coverage conspicuous by the absence of any critical scrutiny (Ghose, 2014). The economic elite has always tended to ally itself with political power in a country characterized by clientelism, but their support for Modi was unprecedented: 'Never before have big business houses and industrial groups so openly advocated the candidature of an individual' (Guha, 2014). With the BJP proclaiming themselves champions of market-led growth, big capital's enthusiasm for Modi was not surprising (Rajagopal, 2016). Privatization needed a more, not less effective, state, which Modi's credentials of an efficient administrator promised to provide. While promising 'achehe din' [better days] to an aspirational consumerist, predominantly youth electorate, Modi discarded the Congress party's cloak of socialist rhetoric.

Corporate media ownership was not the sole determinant of the emerging pattern of partisanship. There was an array of factors that mutually reinforced each other. According to one leading television journalist, television was responsible for the exaggerated coverage. The BJP provided live coverage of Modi's speeches at rallies and broadcasters were happy to use them unaltered. Content analyses of television programming indicate disproportionate coverage of the BJP leader Modi in the elections (Mudgal, 2015). The use of

the media has been central to BJP's historical project of political mobilization based on the construction of an imagined community defined by Hindu nationalism (Brosius, 2002; Rajagopal, 1999). As such, media has been far more integral to BJP's politics than to Congress.

Another interviewee, a leading television journalist heading an English language news channel at the time, refutes the widely held perception that there were substantial exogenous pressures to promote Modi. He asserts that the televisual attraction of his campaign enabled him to dominate press coverage:

The reason Modi was covered so extensively was just that he was selling, he was getting us the viewership and also that he was setting the agenda ... The BJP had a clear, coherent and effective media strategy. We saw the benefit in TRP [viewership] terms of following Modi. (Journalist 1, 2015, personal communication)

Another senior television reporter reiterated this view that the media, largely television, 'rode Modi's popularity wave rather than created it' (Journalist 8, 2015, personal communication). Modi's manifesto of good governance resonated with an electorate tired of the UPA's corruption and lack of performance, and his sophisticated publicity machine provided broadcasters with compelling material. The BJP's mobilization of social media was vital in the constitution of Modi's populist appeal, enabling him to cloak divisiveness of the Hindutva agenda in a narrative of development (Sinha, 2017). That is not to say that corporate ownership did not exacerbate this trend. According to one interviewee, 'Certain sections of the media ... went out of their way to support Modi. Some television network owners were seen in public rallies with Modi' (Journalist 1, 2015, personal communication). The economic elite saw Modi as a strong proponent of big business and free markets.

Thus, many journalists found it expedient to give up their accountability role as the interests of their media owners coincided with the majority of the public opinion. They could claim they were reflecting public sentiment in suspending critical judgement about the BJP leader and his campaign. One of the interviewees gave a detailed description of how pressure from proprietors and media's overreliance on advertising intersected. According to him, the well-endowed Modi campaign traded advertising for favourable reportage, and editors who were not prepared to co-operate were replaced. As the then-editor of *Forbes India* described, he resisted giving Modi undue prominence and was unceremoniously sacked for his stance (Journalist 20, 2014, personal communication). He later discovered that the owners of *Forbes India*, Network 18, had just been bought by Reliance, India's largest business conglomerate, which had publicly shifted its support from Congress to Modi. This takeover was a marked move towards increasing concentration in media ownership, resulting in fears of an ideological narrowing of the news.

Overall, the BJP engineered a decisive shift in the political discourse in the run up to the historic 2014 elections such that perceptions of Modi as an incomparable visionary were rendered common sense, obscuring his close association with violent Hindu nationalism (Chakravarty and Roy, 2015). And in this, the news media played a salient role, pre-empting, reflecting and magnifying enthusiasm for Modi (Rajagopal, 2014).

## Building a new order

The combination of the failings of Congress, the vigour of Modi's campaign, buttressed by heavy media support, won the BJP an overwhelming electoral victory. This landslide win seemed to have validated the media's adulatory portrayal of Modi as a strong, decisive leader, spawning a new culture of journalistic deference (*The Hoot*, 2014). Concomitantly, the new government sent out an unambiguous message that it did not welcome critical scrutiny and dissent (Thakurta, 2014). Media control was multi-layered though exogenous pressures exerted by the political and economic field were salient. In the political field, the trend of an enfeebled opposition has coincided with a sharp centralization of power in Modi's hands and his trusted lieutenants.

Modi had always exerted tight control over media coverage of himself, isolating himself further after he became Prime Minister (Ohm, 2015). He did away with traditional routines like taking journalists with him on official trips overseas, holding press conferences or even appointing a press advisor. Modi has been publicly contemptuous of the press, particularly the English language national press that chastised him for his role in the anti-Muslim pogrom (Ohm, 2015) in Gujarat 2002. Echoing the strategy of other populist leaders, Modi portrayed himself as the victim of an elite 'pseudo-secular' English language media, historically partisan towards deracinated Congress politicians like the Gandhis 'dismissive of native traditions and eager to cultivate minority vote banks' (Rajagopal, 1999: 8). Not surprisingly, the BJP first sought to employ a more sympathetic Hindi language media to set the agenda, circumventing the English language media's historical role of defining the terms of national elections (Chakravartty and Roy, 2015; Sardesai, 2014). However, as the inevitability of Modi's ascension became evident, the nature of subordination of the English language and Hindi language media was similar though arguably different in extent:

No question that they have a contempt for the media that is beyond bizarre. A serving minister calls us 'presstitutes', the Prime Minister calls us press traders. He, in fact, backs that minister who calls us 'presstitutes'. He doesn't need a press advisor. We in the media don't know who to reach out to if we need a comment from the Prime Minister's Office. (Journalist 19, 2015, personal communication)

By cutting off these traditional means of access along with disparaging remarks about it, the government sought to delegitimize the traditional media and bypass it, with Modi taking to social media like Twitter to reach out to the public directly (Chadha and Guha, 2016; Sinha, 2017).

The concentration of political power in so few hands has implications for the media as a business since:

The Finance Minister was also the Information & Broadcasting Minister. Which corporate house is going to follow journalistic policies that will offend the Finance Minister of the country when licenses and permissions are at stake? When clearances are at stake? (Journalist 19, 2015, personal communication)



However, the same interviewee delineates a sharp difference in the basis of the new code governing coverage of Modi versus the code that prevailed under the Gandhis in previous years:

In the case of the Gandhis, there was ideological kinship between Congress's left liberal values and the journalists of that time. There was some reverence for the Gandhis. It was really about losing access and being part of the charmed circle. Here it is the effect of the triumphalism that is emerging because of a Hindu right wing leader. It is fear at work. (Journalist 19, 2015, personal communication)

One concrete example of this new climate is provided by a well-known TV anchor who recounted how the owner of the news channel she worked for made it evident that her kind of journalism, associated with left liberal, secular values, was discordant with the popular sentiment: 'Post this huge Modi victory, I got the sense that I was on the sack list. The minute Modi came with that kind of majority they wanted me out' (Journalist 8, 2014, personal communication). The anchor had previously produced critical coverage about Modi's role in communal riots and allegations of him having abandoned his wife. One of the programmes she moderated, on whether this new government would tolerate dissent, triggered her immediate dismissal. One of India's largest business conglomerates, Reliance, had recently taken over her television network; she asserted that political and commercial pressures were so intertwined, it is hard to tell which one led to her dismissal (Journalist 8, 2015, personal communication). Concentration of power has coincided with concentration of media ownership, resulting in narrowing political consensus and aggressive majoritarianism.

The nexus between the politicians and leaders of Indian business has had a deterrent effect throughout the media. This environment was assisted by a new breed of journalists, nurtured in the post-liberalization, consumerist era coincident with the rise of a political Hindu nationalist ideology (Rajagopal, 2001). A journalist described the wider ideological shift in the journalistic field:

Modi faced intense scrutiny [in the past] by the pro left journalists. This Westernized school of journalists were being replaced in the last 15 years or so. In the 2000s, a new generation of largely right wing journalists were being recruited and many of them are ideologically very close to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [BJP's parent organization]. (Journalist 26, 2015, personal communication)

A combination of political and economic pressures, together with a generational change within the journalistic field, thus allowed the new government to construct a self-stifling system similar to the one long practised by the Gandhis. It is distinguished by being much less long-established, and thus much less thoroughly internalized by journalists, than the old order. As a consequence, it relies more heavily on overt threats rather than a tacit understanding of the limits of reporting to ensure conformity (*The Wire*, 2017).

## **Weaknesses in the new structure**

The weakness of this new order was illustrated during the 2015 provincial elections in the national capital Delhi. Before the elections, there was a concerted effort to black out

the insurgent political party, AAP. The AAP relentlessly exposed crony capitalism and corporate corruption embedded in the power structure, causing anxiety among corporate bosses who also own media houses (Hasan, 2013). Mainstream media's attempts to ignore AAP's campaign against crony capitalism reflected the intense economic and political pressure they were experiencing as a result of its campaign. A Delhi reporter in the *Times of India* said that until three days before the Delhi elections in 2013, they were projecting that the BJP would emerge victorious, deliberately ignoring the groundswell of popular support for the AAP. It was made clear in editorial meetings that any story suggesting AAP was ahead in the electoral race would not be published (Journalist 9, 2015, personal communication). There was a similar story in broadcasting, with some channels taking the 'extreme step of blanking him (Kejriwal – the AAP leader) and his party out of their channels' (Sardesai, 2016). Defying predictions, AAP decimated the BJP in the elections.

For most of the campaign, the political role of the media was to constrain rather than facilitate democratic consolidation, but the pressure of a popular mobilization forced them belatedly to change the character of their reporting. The pressure from the political and economic elite was not countered from within the journalistic field itself: it was only neutralized by another external force. As one interviewee remarked, the election illustrated the limit upon the complete instrumentalization of the press by the political and economic elite in a democratic structure:

That omerta around the Gandhis is much stronger than anything I have seen around Modi ... It took a long time to break, but when there is a change in public mood, institutionally the media starts to reflect that. We are corporatized and compromised but we are not controlled or destroyed. There is still that distinction. (Journalist 11, 2015, personal communication)

## Conclusion

The evidence presented here suggests that Indian journalism has been historically subject to immense pressure from corporate ownership and political power in its relationship with the political elite. These exogenous factors are so persistent and insidious that, over time, journalists came to accept the limitations they impose upon their daily practices as constitutive of the field of journalism. Over decades, these constraints became so thoroughly internalized by journalists that they no longer operated externally. The Gandhis seldom needed to intervene to threaten journalists, and the invisibility of their corrupt practices was largely due to the self-censorship by the journalists themselves. There was implicit acceptance that this particular family was off-limits. It was not, however, the BJP that succeeded in exposing corrupt practices concerning the members of the Gandhi family but an 'outside' popular political force in the shape of the IAC, whose mobilization of public anger broke the established code of silence.

In the aftermath of the revelations, the weakening political power of the Gandhis coincided with, and was hastened by, the ascension of Modi. Journalistic deference towards the Gandhis, undergirded by structural pressures, reoriented itself towards the new power structure. The source and nature of these heteronomous pressures may have changed but there was continuity in the subordination of the journalistic field. Although

there was a pronounced tendency for the media to provide flattering and extensive coverage of Modi, this was partially explicable in terms of the logic of media technologies. The BJP, historically adroit at exploiting media technology, ran an extremely media-friendly, television-driven campaign to promise decisive, corruption-free, meritocratic governance, imbued with strong undertones of Hindu nationalism (Sardesai, 2014). The role of capital and the public shift in allegiance of the corporate owners of major media organizations from Congress and the Gandhis to Modi and BJP materially assisted the positive coverage of the latter.

After Modi's victory, economic and political power combined to consolidate the subordination of journalistic field to heteronomous forces. Modi and his coterie were as contemptuous of the media as the Gandhis had been and attempted to bypass them to get their message directly to the population. The Modi regime has made frequent overt censorial interventions reminiscent of authoritarian structures (*The Indian Express*, 2016) in an effort to achieve the required 'chilling effect' (Gans, 1980: 249). For their part, the owners of the major media made it very clear to their employees that acquiescence to the new political elite was now the preferred mode for reporting, and at least some dissidents lost their jobs for refusing to comply.

This new code of silence, however, differed from the old regime in two important ways. In the first place, the ready acceptance of deference to the BJP had not yet established itself as the common sense of journalistic practices, and invited minor acts of rebellion by some journalists. This was a window of ideological contestation between the left, liberal values that had dominated the intellectual and journalistic elite and the neo-liberal, right-wing elite aligned to the new dispensation. Secondly, the journalistic field today is populated with a variety of different media, some of which are more participatory and interactive in nature than the mainstream media. The latter no longer control communication in the public sphere, and have found their silences and biases challenged. When, as in the 2015 Delhi elections, a popular external force challenged the BJP, even those media that were normally closely allied with Modi were, eventually, obliged to reflect public opinion that was massively opposed to the government in order to avoid a significant loss of credibility.

These considerations suggest that applying influential theories like those of Bourdieu to the Indian case requires rather significant modifications. The overarching narrative is that of intense structural pressures on the journalistic field due to a convergence of economic and political interests, resulting in media's conformity vis-a-vis selected individuals of the political elite. An array of mutually reinforcing factors consolidated the deference built over decades. What new institutional theory calls the process of isomorphism constructed a strongly homogeneous system of self-censorship that was rarely penetrated.

Bourdieu conceptualizes fields as possessing some autonomy from external pressures (Benson, 2006). Bourdieu (2005) insists that even the journalistic field, weakly autonomous though it may be, possesses a degree of autonomy and is best understood as a microcosm set within the macrocosm – 'it obeys its own laws, its own nomos' (p. 39). This case demonstrates that the heteronomous power of the dominant political elite, whether that of the Gandhis or Modi, usually in parallel with pressures from the economic field, emasculated the media logic of the field. In the Indian case, at least, the

coverage of the power elite demonstrates that the journalistic field does become reducible to external forces. The heteronomy-autonomy dualism does not hold in this case and is certainly less than universal.

New institutional theory tends to argue that it is necessary to separate the influence of political and economic forces, since these may not always work in tandem (Cook, 1998; Kaplan, 2006; Sparrow, 1999). The evidence presented here suggests the need for a further refinement of this formulation. While it was indeed a popular political mobilization, originating outside of the traditional hierarchy of power, that provided the stimulus for both the collapse of the Gandhi's 'omerta' and the eventual ending of press silence over public support for the AAP in the Delhi election, both the established political and economic powers acted together to impose their will upon the media. In a country like India, with weak rational-legal authority, economic power needs to ally itself with political power. They tend to be intertwined to a much higher degree than in a developed country.

An electoral democracy imposes constraints on the press' institutionalized subservience towards the dominant political elite by throwing up variables that disrupt this consensus. It is only in circumstances where there are conflicting macro-forces acting upon the journalistic field that this relationship of subordination is revised. These circumstances can arise in periods when the shape of the alliance between economic forces and political actors is changing, as in the case of Reliance shifting their allegiance from the Congress to the BJP. They can also arise when a third, external, force, in the shape of massive popular opposition to the business-politics alliance, renders complete subservience to the latter impossible to reconcile with the continued credibility of the journalistic field as a whole.

This case demonstrates that the news media was not merely shaped by but is deeply embedded in and is central to the political structure and culture in India. Thus, the new institutionalism argument that news media acts as a political institution enables a framework to analyse how the press plays a central role in propagating a partisan political culture eroding democracy. It also brings into sharper relief the media's salient role in the current political regime's project of engineering a discursive shift in the existing understanding of the Indian polity. However, this needs to be seen as part of a long-standing, deep embrace of politics and the news media, overlooked by recent scholarship that privileges a discourse of change.

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### Author biographies

**Swati Maheshwari** is a doctoral candidate in the Media Studies Department at Hong Kong Baptist University and a former journalist. The focus of her work is the sociology and political economy of journalism. Her doctoral thesis explores the discursive processes of censorship in Indian journalism. More broadly, her research interests centre on freedom of the press in hybrid democracies.

**Colin Sparks** is Professor of Media Studies in the Department of Journalism at Hong Kong Baptist University and an Editor of *Media, Culture & Society*. His doctoral degree is in cultural studies, but his main work is on the political economy of media. He is working on the media in societies experiencing rapid social change, and in particular the ways in which such transformations impact upon journalistic practices.

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# Social Media and the 21st-Century Scholar: How You Can Harness Social Media to Amplify Your Career

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# Social Media and the 21st-Century Scholar: How You Can Harness Social Media to Amplify Your Career

Teresa M. Chan, MD, MHPE<sup>a</sup>, David Stukus, MD<sup>b</sup>, Jimmie Leppink, PhD<sup>c</sup>, Lina Duque, MBA<sup>d</sup>, Blair L. Bigham, ACPf, MSc, MD<sup>a</sup>, Neil Mehta, MBBS, MS<sup>e</sup>, Brent Thoma, MA, MD, MSc<sup>f</sup>

## Abstract

To many physicians and professionals, social media seems to be a risky business. However, recent literature has shown that there is potential to enhance your scholarly brand by engaging your stakeholders online. In this article, we discuss the opportunities presented to modern scholars by social media. Using case studies, we highlight two success stories around how scientists and scholars might use social media to enhance their careers. We also outline five key steps you can follow to build and manage your scholarly presence online.

**Key Words:** Social media, branding, modern scholar, career enhancement

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## INTRODUCTION

Social media is ubiquitous in the 21st century but remains a vague construct. Merriam-Webster defines social media as “forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro-blogging) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content” [1]. To many health care professionals, social media is an unfamiliar space. They perceive social media activities as being fraught with risk, a waste of time, or both [2]. Certainly, the amplification of certain messages can damage a career

[3], and there are aspects of social media that provide no tangible benefit to health care practitioners. These negative perceptions may dissuade scholars from attempting to engage in social media.

An essential goal of medical research and scholarship, however, is to improve health care, which requires dissemination of new knowledge quickly and effectively to practitioners, patients, and the public. Traditional publishing can take months to years from the completion of data analysis until the results are made available [4]. The time-honored peer-review process attempts to ensure quality with high editorial standards and strict formatting requirements. After publication, it can take a long time (up to 17 years) to effect changes in clinician behavior [5]. Moreover, health information is one of the top reasons for searching the World Wide Web and social media and for finding answers or support [6], yet third parties may distort or misrepresent the truth. Many of the general and medical news media services can publish conflicting or inaccurate information [7,8]. If their conflicts of interest are not obvious, they may exploit a vulnerable population [7].

Considering the great barriers that already prevent effective knowledge translation and patient engagement, it is incumbent on scientists and scholars to use every tool in their armamentarium, including social media, to reach their intended audiences.

<sup>a</sup>Division of Emergency Medicine, Department of Medicine, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

<sup>b</sup>Division of Allergy and Immunology, Nationwide Children’s Hospital and The Ohio State University College of Medicine, Columbus, Ohio.

<sup>c</sup>School of Health Professions Education, Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands.

<sup>d</sup>Lina Duque Consulting, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

<sup>e</sup>Department of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

<sup>f</sup>Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Corresponding author and reprints: Teresa M. Chan, MD, MHPE, McMaster University, Division of Emergency Medicine, Department of Medicine, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8L 2X2; e-mail: [teresa.chan@medportal.ca](mailto:teresa.chan@medportal.ca).

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## GETTING ONLINE: A GREAT (AND TERRIBLE) OPPORTUNITY

There are plenty of reasons academics should consider creating an online presence. It can be used to summarize their own and others' research in areas of their expertise and thus provide a source for timely, authentic, and trustworthy information. It does not have to be an entirely altruistic activity, because a robust online presence will allow the authors to reach others interested in their research area, build communities of practice [9-13] (ie, a community of individuals who share a common interest and interact on an ongoing basis to deepen their knowledge and expertise in it) to promote discussions, and drive further research. Communications with the public will ensure that this research is grounded in real needs of the target groups with potential to make meaningful contributions to health care. As their online presence grows, scholars have the potential to become powerful influencers of opinion, driving funding for research and education and policies supported by scientific evidence.

In this article we review two case studies to provide our readers with examples: (1) Brent Thoma, MD, who developed an online identity as a resident, which has propelled his career, and (2) David Stukus, MD, who works tirelessly to dispel myths about allergies.

### CASE STUDY 1: AN ONLINE EDUCATOR

Brent Thoma (@Brent\_Thoma) is now an emergency physician in Saskatchewan, Canada. However, as a third-year resident, he struggled on parts of his annual in-training examination that he found less exciting and concluded that this was, at least in part, a result of the resources that he used to prepare for the examination. An early adopter of online educational resources, he frequently used blogs and podcasts to enhance his own education, but noted that most focused on only the most intriguing questions and concepts that the field had to offer [14].

In December 2012, the BoringEM website (now a multi-author blog known as <https://CanadiEM.org/>) was born. The blog, which focused on the aspects of emergency medicine that Thoma felt were the least interesting (eg, the first blog post was entitled "Urinalysis Voodoo" and examined the subtleties on diagnostic urinalyses) became a hit. Within months an Australian physician named Mike Cadogan (@sandnsurf) had taken Dr Thoma under his wing,

assisting him with the updating and hosting of his new website [14].

Fortuitously, Dr Thoma's online exploits were embraced by a forward-thinking program director, Robert Woods (@robwoodsuofo). This, combined with the warm greeting of the online community of practice [13], soon made him comfortable enough to identify himself openly. From the relative isolation of Saskatchewan, he fostered an international network of mentors—many of whom he had never met! Several of these mentors had an interest in studying the phenomenon of online education in emergency medicine and over the next 4 years he published >50 peer-reviewed articles describing, investigating, and innovating within online medical education. Dr Thoma's story is an example of how social media can be used to amplify the impact of a scholar's work.

### CASE STUDY 2: THE ONLINE CLINICIAN ADVOCATE

David Stukus is an academic pediatric allergist who joined Twitter (Twitter Inc, San Francisco, California, USA) in 2013 using the handle @AllergyKidsDoc. His initial reasoning for becoming active on social media was to dispel common misconceptions about allergic conditions, which aligned with his research and quality improvement interests. His initial target audience included parents and patients who had allergies, but soon after, he developed a following that included primary care clinicians, researchers, and even other allergists. Dr Stukus also uses Twitter to disperse information from national conferences, opine on the latest research presented in journals and mainstream media, join live tweet chats, interact with colleagues, and ultimately to promote his own research [15].

Within a few years, @AllergyKidsDoc had earned Dr Stukus recognition from professional organizations, resulting in dozens of media interviews and invitations to write for *Huffington Post*, all of which helped him establish a national reputation for his work and which led to further opportunities to present on this topic at national meetings to train other physicians on how to use social media. He has published research regarding the use of Twitter at academic meetings [15] and helped establish curriculum at his institution for an elective rotation in health care social media.

Dr Stukus is one example of how social media can be utilized to help grow an academic career by converting "likes" and "follows" into metrics more traditionally

valued on one's curriculum vitae, such as publications and citations. His article for *KevinMD* titled "How I Used Twitter to Get Promoted in Academic Medicine" [16] has served as a blueprint for other physicians in academia to follow.

## HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA IN YOUR SCHOLARSHIP

In this section, we outline five steps that you can take to develop your online scholarly presence.

### Step 1: Determine Your Goals and Target Audience for Your Social Media Presence (aka Your Brand)

When beginning to incorporate social media into your scholarly endeavors, the first step is to define your goals for being online. A brand is your unique value proposition communicated in a clear, concise, and specific way [17-19]. Consider writing a personal branding statement to ensure that you are clear about who you are and what impressions you want to convey. Creating a strategic and targeted personal brand will allow you to focus your social media presence [17,18].

### Step 2: Get Online

After you have determined your *raison d'être*, it is time to get online. One of the best ways to begin is to start with the social media platform that is most familiar to you. If you are already using social media for personal use, then use the same platform to establish a professional presence. It is important at the outset to spend time updating one's profile page with relevant pictures, logos, and any information that can be of value to your audience.

Initially, you may want to start highlighting your research output and activities. Generally, the use of social media can be divided into three types, which are relevant to researchers and research groups: (1) creating an online presence; (2) research output and activities (eg, publications, training, workshops, projects, and consultation); and (3) networking (eg, connecting with researchers, and professional communities).

**How to Get Started.** The following paragraphs provide hints for developing your online identity using specific social media platforms as examples. We recommend picking a platform that you wish to start with and then expanding into other social media.

For Twitter and Instagram:

- *Choose a name or handle.* When choosing a username

for your social media profile, keep it simple. For example, on Twitter, you can consider incorporating your name (eg, @SarahChen\_MD) or some aspect of your personal brand (eg, @AllergyKidsDoc). In your social media profile bio, include your title, area of expertise, and university or organization. Finally, consider adding a hashtag that you frequently use. For example, if you are engaged in encouraging women to get into the STEM fields, then include the relevant hashtag #womeninSTEM in your bio.

- *Harness the power of a hashtag on Twitter or Instagram (San Francisco, California, USA).* Make sure to know the lay of the land for your online community, and harness existing hashtags. For instance, if you are a medical educator, you may want to use a hashtag like #MedEd. Some individuals may choose to create a hashtag for specific events or conferences or tweet chats (eg, #HMIchat, which is run by the Harvard-Macy Institute). If one does not exist, consider creating a specific hashtag that could help create a community.

For Facebook (Facebook, Inc, Menlo Park, California, USA), Twitter, Instagram, and Reddit (Reddit Inc, Medford, Massachusetts, USA):

- *Curate targeted content.* If creating content is king, curating content is queen. With your personal brand defined, share content that fulfills your personal branding statement while adding value to your audience. Posting targeted content about your area of expertise is a powerful way to raise your profile.
- *Professional networking.* Building a robust presence will require regular posts of authentic and useful content and meaningful discussions with target audience members. The format of the content is also critical. Infographics [20], visual abstracts [21], and short videos can help with engagement. Adding relevant tags (eg, hashtags and mentioning appropriate thought leaders) will help with dissemination.

For personal websites, blogs, and podcasts:

- Blogs can be thought of as a modern version of a newsletter, whereas podcasts can be viewed as a new version of the radio broadcast [22]. The International Clinician Educators' blog (ICE Blog) is a good example of a successful blog.
- Blogs can be hosted on a researcher's or research group's website as well as linked to from platforms like

Twitter (eg, automatic tweet once new content has been shared on the blog, podcast, or vlog), LinkedIn (Sunnyvale, California, USA), and Facebook. A good strategy is to select a robust site that allows freedom in formatting and post length, multimedia embedding, navigation, tagging and searching, sharing, and discovery via search engines that is accessible by common browsers without specific apps or plug-ins. WordPress (San Francisco, California, USA) or Blogger (Mountainview, California, USA) are examples of such sites. Your primary blogging platform can develop into a legacy product that provides an enduring source of trustworthy information that is tied to you.

- Some bloggers use their posts as general reflections and public diaries. Others use blogs as a place to discuss new ideas or to spread the word about their latest work or may run a multi-author blog (eg, CanadiEM's Brent Thoma or editors-in-chief of the *Incidental Economist* blog, Austin Frakt and Aaron Carroll) and highlight both their own and others' work. Choose whom you would like to emulate.
- With an active research group, you may wish to blog about the group's research activity on a weekly or monthly basis.

For scientific networks for researchers:

- Many researchers have heard of *Google Scholar* for citation metrics. Apart from having an individual *Google Scholar* account, it is possible to set up a *Google Scholar* account for a research group in which all output is collected. Similar to *Google Scholar*, *ORCID* and *ImpactStory* can provide metrics for research output, but some platforms are associated with the publishing conglomerates and wrought with controversy.

### Step 3: View, Engage, Interact, and Eventually Create Content

At first, it is acceptable to view without engaging. Begin by following other accounts with messaging and a use of social media that you would like to emulate. Posting or reposting content from other accounts that your followers may find worthwhile is also a great way to get started [23]. In addition to providing quality content, the content producer may notice and follow back. Reposting content from vetted sources such as professional organizations helps to establish a presence and consistent, trusted messaging [24].

At some point, new users will need to engage. Joining conversations, commenting on posts from other accounts, participating in tweet chats, or simply posting informa-

tion about scholarly interests can serve as ways to be involved with social media [25-27]. Posting new content, or reposting content from others at least several times a week, should be seen as baseline involvement. Remember that opening up (and possibly being vulnerable) can increase interest; being too sterile and not being authentic are barriers to engagement.

Lastly, patience is important because it takes time to find your voice and build a target audience while respecting the institutions in which we work and the patients that we serve. Table 1 outlines some best practice suggestions for engaging on social media aggregated from our authorship team.

### Step 4: Expand to Other Platforms

Michael Hyatt distinguishes between three components of social media [28] (home bases, embassies, and outposts) and advocates that a good social media strategy uses all three [28,29]. *Home bases* are controlled by the user, and include personal websites and blogs. *Embassies* are external websites, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, that you are provided a page or section of for your own use. From embassies, you are able to direct traffic to and from your home base and raise awareness of your ideas and products among wider audiences. Finally, *outposts* are analytic tools such as Google Alerts and Altmetrics [30] (tracking where your published articles are mentioned and what was said) that allow people and networks to scan the environment for communications about home bases and make it easy to engage in conversation.

After developing a presence with an audience, one may want to grow a wider viewership. Producing content and sharing it across multiple platforms can be a helpful way to meet this goal. For example, a blog post written for a medical subspecialty can be shared on Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn with a visual abstract [21] (aka, an infographic) or a simplified summary for the general public. When doing this, the author must be prepared to engage with the audience on each platform. It is critical for the scholar to go beyond just posting because a one-way stream of posts may serve a broadcast function but will not allow the scholar to gain the benefits from interacting on social media.

### Step 5: Anticipate Problems and Reactions

As noted previously, living life via an open forum may be daunting for some clinicians. Hospitals, universities, and other national organizations have had varying perspectives on the role of social media in clinician's lives. Much of the literature to date focuses on threats to professionalism,

Table 1. Best practices for establishing a robust social media presence

What To Do	How To Do It
Engage in social media on a daily basis.	Making social media engagement a daily habit is key to creating a strong and strategic online presence. For it to work effectively, social media has to be done on the go. Make it part of your daily routine, perhaps while you wait in line at the coffee shop or over your lunch break. The recommendation is to spend a short period of time everyday versus one hour every now and then; 10 to 15 minutes everyday goes a long way on social media.
Be authentic.	All throughout your interactions on social media, make sure you stay true to who you are as a researcher and professional. Engage in genuine conversations about topics you are passionate about—that is when relationship building takes place. Build trust with your audience by curating content that adds value but is also aligned with your brand and what you are trying to achieve on social media.
Schedule postings but not all the time.	There is a wide range of tools to help you manage your social media platforms—for example, <i>Hootsuite</i> (Vancouver, BC, Canada) or <i>Bufferapp</i> (San Francisco, California, USA). These tools allow you to schedule your postings in advance, especially when you are looking to promote an initiative or event and plan to post about it more than once.  It is also important to know when not to schedule postings. It is advisable to turn scheduled postings off on days of big news or during times of crises, such as the Paris attacks in November 2015. Posting a scheduled article to social media while the world is mourning loss of human life would be perceived as insensitive and out of touch and may attract negative attention.
Check and abide by your group, university, hospital, or employer's social media policy.	Familiarize yourself with your organization's social media policy before engaging. If your organization does not have a social media policy, use your common sense and personal judgment. Do not post opinions or statements that are averse to your organization or its stakeholders. Avoid controversial topics, such as political commentary, and stick to your area of expertise. Keep your content aligned with your personal branding statement.
Safeguard your online reputation.	If you do not create an online brand, search engines will do it for you—and it may not be a brand that you like. Google your name on a regular basis. As social media profiles often garner high rankings on Google (Menlo Park, California, USA), your social media profiles, such as Twitter (Twitter Inc, San Francisco, California, USA) and LinkedIn (Sunnyvale, California, USA), are likely to appear on the first page of a search. Creating a thoughtful online presence can influence the information that others discover about you when seeking information online.  To keep track of your online footprint, make use of <i>outposts</i> [17]. For instance, create a Google alert ( <a href="http://google.com/alerts">google.com/alerts</a> ) so you receive an e-mail every time you are mentioned on Google.

rather than on how to utilize these media for effective outreach [31-37]. However, it is important to remember that both online and offline, we must respect patient privacy and our colleagues' dignity [34]. We must also determine how to teach members of our profession to express our opinions while acknowledging the complexities of having a visible online presence [34]. Teachers should be role models and guide trainees in active brand management. A recent study suggests the presence of an online teacher may decrease the incidence of unprofessionalism [38].

Although some organizations are liberal with the only restriction being academia's moral code, others are not. Mayo Clinic is a more liberal institution that has a simple 12-word social media policy: "Don't Lie, Don't Pry, Don't Cheat, Can't Delete, Don't Steal, Don't Reveal" [39]. Other organizations are more prescriptive when it comes to the conduct of their members, although many times this may be because of reactions to sentinel events [20].

It is advisable to adhere to local social media policies or become active in establishing such guidelines [40]. For those in a leadership capacity, creating, amending (eg, if

**Table 2.** Common problems and objections to social media usage and how to overcome them

Common Objections or Problems	Suggestions for Overcoming
Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop local guidelines [40].</li> <li>Discuss what constitutes professionalism both online and offline [37].</li> </ul>
Comfort with digital media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build a support network [26].</li> <li>Find a “Twibe” [42] or an online community of practice [12].</li> <li>Consider inviting collaborators who specialize in knowledge translation via social media means [27].</li> </ul>
Suspiciousness about quality of online resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss acceptability of online platforms.</li> <li>Show exemplars (eg, Mayo Clinic) [39,46].</li> </ul>
Groupthink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow those who have opposing views.</li> <li>Have open, courteous, academic discourse.</li> <li>Use “cognitive diversity” as an antidote to groupthink [47].</li> </ul>
Being “picked up” by the press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reaching out to institutional press officers for advice or guidance.</li> <li>Have a strategy for dealing with traditional media outlets (ie, a designated point person, a way to direct the press toward this person).</li> <li>Know what you should say and how you should say it in advance.</li> </ul>

the social media policies are overly restrictive or out of date), and educating those within your circle of influence may be of value. A useful guide has been previously published about what a set of social media guidelines might include [40]. One recent study [41] on perceived professionalism on social media showed that that medical students, faculty members, and the public all viewed social media postings differently; faculty members indicated significantly lower appropriateness and comfort levels than medical students, suggesting a mismatch in perceptions [41]. Guidelines will be useful to define common ground, but involving stakeholders such as trainees and members of the public may be advisable to ensure that these policies are not too stringent [26,42].

Members of different generational cohorts may view the usefulness of social media platforms differently [43], but frank discussions around what is a quality online platform may create a shared mental model [41,44,45]. More progressive institutions have begun to consider social media materials in their promotions processes [46], so it may be useful to highlight these institutions in discussions [46,47].

Although social media can become a place where like-minded people connect, this may be problematic for a modern academic. As part of a homogeneous group, scholars tend to hold a rather unified view of the world, leading to the phenomena of “groupthink” [48], which may prevent them from understanding or interacting with more diverse perspectives.

In summary, there are many problems and objections that scholars entering into social media should consider. However, they can be overcome with some advanced planning. Table 2 contains common objections or

problems we have identified previously and some suggestions for overcoming these barriers.

## CONCLUSION

Social media is a tool that the modern scholar and scientist should have in their armamentarium. Those that choose to use it should be aware of potential pitfalls and problems that they could encounter as they enter this world, but should not shy away from them because they can greatly increase the reach and impact of their work.

## TAKE-HOME POINTS

- Being engaged in social media can assist you in your academic work by cultivating mentors, raising awareness of your research and scholarship, and facilitating scholarly collaborations.
- A prominent social media presence has the potential to influence public opinion and could drive funding for research and education or support policies consistent with scientific evidence.
- Carefully designing your social media plan with local policies in mind can ensure that you stay “on message” and consistent with your intended online “brand.”

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## SOCIAL MEDIA AND CHANGING COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

**Dr Kiran Bala**

Associate Professor,  
Jagannath International Management School, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, India  
Email: kirankhanna\_jims@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** *Given the pace we are encountering new media as a democratic means of communication, the prospect of NICTs being most indispensable part of our lives is not really far away. In this perspective, paper attempts to study the changing communication patterns of 21<sup>st</sup> century tech savvy generation. It has been argued that new media has brought sea changes in intrapersonal, interpersonal, group and mass communication processes and content. Once upon a time traditional media was setting agenda of public discourse is looking forward to new media for breaking news. In the absence of a proper content regulatory authority new media is diminishing the gate keeping function in media thus making it more participatory yet less authentic in terms of content. In the virtual world, youth is living a virtual life rather than virtuous life. The paper explores how new media is redefining social roles that are more vulnerable to dissolution as interpersonal communication is taking place on public platforms. In the crowd of hundreds and thousands of friends of social media, youths find themselves alienated in the real world. Author concludes that in the age of over communication a new kind of social order is being developed that is strengthening public and mass communication but weakening interpersonal communication.*

**Keywords:** *Social media, communication patterns, Vanity Fair, netizens, alienation*

### **Introduction**

What's app! Follow me on twitter! Check my status on facebook page! These are the buzz words of today's generation. In the age of Information and communication Technologies whosoever is unaware of these terms is considered illiterate or outdated. Once obsessed with capital intensive mass media technologies development planners as well as advertisers are finding new means and tools to reach out their tech savvy target audience. Educators are engrossed in new means to use the updated technology in their class rooms. In an age when there are one billion users inter connected through facebook this is one of the most powerful participatory medium of



communication. In this scenario whosoever is educated and is having means to use this simple technology can't ignore it.

Social media is emerging as a most vital tool of different kinds of communication which is equipped with the ability to share information, mould opinion, connecting individuals and communities and tool of active participation. Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist, & Halonen, 2008). Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010). Furthermore, social media is available on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals (Kietzmann, & Hermkens, 2011).

In India, the number of people actively using Social Media is about 66 million but it is growing faster with the availability of cheaper broadband connection and internet enabled handsets at very low prices. Social media is transforming the contours of social interaction. Emotions like love, friendship, family bonding, intimacy and language and are finding various platforms and forms of expression.

No other media has become so popular in such a short period of time as social media. Credit of this tremendous success goes to user friendly features of Social Media. According to Nielsen, internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC and mobile devices increased by 37 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 as compared to 88 billion minutes in July 2011 (State of media report, 2012). It has been observed that Facebook is now the primary method for communication by college students in the U.S (Harris, 2008). According to Nielsen, global consumers spend more than six hours on social networking sites. "Social Media Revolution" produced by *Socialnomics* author Erik Qualman contains numerous statistics on social media including the fact that 93% of businesses use it for marketing and that if Facebook were a country it would be the third largest (Youtube 2011). Several colleges and universities such as Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Columbia and Stanford among others have even introduced classes on best social media practices, preparing students for potential careers as digital strategists.

Various functions performed by different techniques and tools used by media are social networking, web publishing, virtual reality, creating virtual relationships, Interpersonal and community interaction, sharing of text, sounds and AVs, Gaming etc. With the advent of Web 3.0 technology more features and sophisticated tools are being added.

#### Reasons of the growth of use of Social Media in India

No other technology has seen such an unprecedented growth, the telecommunication has seen. Now, the question arises, why the India, which is considered to be developing economy, is experiencing the tremendous growth in this sector? The reason lies in the following factors:

1. Booming economy - The economy of India is the tenth-largest in the world by nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP) (Wikipedia, 2013). The country is one of the G-20 major economies and a member of BRICS. On a per-capita-income basis, India ranked 141st by nominal GDP and 130th by GDP (PPP) in 2012, according to the IMF (Wikipedia, 2013). India is the 19th-largest exporter and the 10th-largest importer in the world. The economy slowed to around 5.0% for the 2012–13 fiscal year compared with 6.2% in the previous fiscal (Wikipedia, 2013). These facts support the fact that Indian middle and lower class is capable of spending on consumer goods more and more at present.
2. Rapid expansion in country's middle class – With one of the fastest growing economies in the world, clocked at a growth rate of 8.3% in 2010, India is fast on its way to becoming a large and globally

important consumer economy. The Indian middle class was estimated to be 250 million people in 2007, by McKinsey & Company (Wikipedia, 2013). It will reach 600 million by 2030. According to Deutsche Research the estimates are nearly 300 million people for all Middle Class (Wikipedia, 2013). If current trends continue, Indian per capita purchasing power parity will significantly increase from 4.7 to 6.1 percent of the world share by 2015 (Wikipedia, 2013).

3. Inexpensive technology – According to AC Nielson’s *The Social Media Report 2012* assesses that, “More people are using smart phones and tablets to access social media .....With more connectivity, consumers have more freedom to use social media wherever and whenever they want.”
4. Telecom expansion Telephony introduced in India in 1882. The total number of telephones in the country stands at 960.9 million, while the overall tele-density has increased to 79.28% as of May 31, 2012 and the total numbers of mobile phone subscribers have reached 929.37 million as of May 2012 (Wikipedia, 2013). The mobile tele-density has increased to 76.68% in May 2012. In the wireless segment, 8.35 million subscribers were added in May 2012 (Wikipedia, 2013). The wire line segment subscriber base stood at 31.53 million(Wikipedia, 2013). Indian telecom operators added a staggering 227.27 million wireless subscribers in the 12 months between Mar 2010 and Mar 2011 (Wikipedia, 2013). According to Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) report, the number of active social media user base in India is 32.5 million (82% of active mobile internet base) (IAMAI, 2012).
5. Internet expansion - The report, ‘Internet in Rural India’, prepared by IAMAI and the Indian Market Research Bureau, states rural India has 38 million claimed internet users and 31 million active internet users (Business Standard, 2013). Active users are those who access internet at least once a month, while claimed users are those who have used internet at least once in their lifetime.

### **Impact on various communication levels**

When telegram was invented, the importance of pigeon-courier started undermining. The same way when television arrived in communication foray, radio went the back stage. History of communication demonstrates that whenever any new medium arrives on the communication stage it affects the communication patterns of society.

#### **Intrapersonal communication**

Social media has become an important tool of self expression and self presentation. Whatever we think important we are communicating it to others. Be it birthday party, marriage ceremony, outings, dinners and even shopping. This expression to build image in the eyes of other is leading to narcissism. We want to project as we are living the best life irrespective of reality we keep on posting the real, created or edited pictures of ourselves and surroundings. The desire of self gratification is leading to peer pressure. The desire of posting and checking comments after every moment is making youth addict towards the social media. The presence and affordability of smart phones is catalysing this phenomenon of addiction. When someone finds that others are so happy on ‘face book’ he/she finds his life miserable as the kind of happiness other are portraying is not possible in every body’s life. The depiction of fake happiness reminds of 16<sup>th</sup> century ‘vanity fair’ of UK public life. This ‘Vanity Fair’ is leading to a life which is full of envy and jealous and at times fake pride as well.

Besides this, various researches support the fact that too much use of internet to seek the information leads to decrease in creativity, concentration span and originality of thought. Nicholas Carr’s *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* “While internet improves our cognitive ability to skim and scan, it diminishes our intellectual capacity to concentrate and contemplate. Internet gradually makes us incapable of long form reading and long hours of intellectual focus.”

#### **Interpersonal communication**

Social media was created for social interaction and it is serving its purpose fully. It has enabled the communication, faster, cheaper and anytime anywhere. This very feature which seems to be useful is becoming a problem in interpersonal communication. People are virtually connected all the time with updated status on social media sites. But due to over obsession of update in virtual world is leading to 'not communication' in real world. Most of the time netizens are so much engrossed in their virtual communication they hardly find time to talk to those near and dear one who are present in their physical surroundings. In the world of over-communication we are moving away from the real world and living a virtual world of fake identities and intimacies. Those who are not really using them due to lack of knowledge, access or disinterest find themselves alienated.

Not only it is affecting the quantity and quality of communication but it is also affecting the kind of language we are using in our informal and formal written communication. Like on Twitter one can post messages in limited number of characters, netizens have innovated a variety of acronyms. This is affecting the language of present generation in various ways. Students have started using these acronyms in their examination answer sheets and many of them have forgotten the actual words for those.

#### Group communication

Once upon a time there used to be hardly 15-20 friends of a person with whom he used to interact regularly, but with the development of social media the number of friends whose update one can have is running into hundreds. Something that was shared amongst friends in inner circle, the very information gets disclosed instantly. Earlier relationships were maintained in secrecy and break ups were having silent tone. With changing times people have started committing on facebook and that commitment is broken on facebook itself. Earlier these all were matter of embarrassment and people used to hide such instances. Now people announce them on face book with fanfare. Now the concept of Interpersonal communication is fading as people have created many groups on face book. Anything and everything is communicated amongst all the group members.

#### Public communication

Indian TV channels started election campaigns on TV recently. But Narendra Modi became the first leader who effectively connected with its youth voters on Internet. He gave love chat on Google plus that attracted youth and middle class net users. Not only is he an active user of social networking sites he knows the capability of new media and how to use in its favour while moulding the opinion of masses.

Now when there is an interface between new and traditional media, politicians have started understanding the importance of being present on new media. All the major political parties and leaders have their facebook pages and they keep on posting their messages on Twitter. Arvind Kejriwal's entry on Indian political front is a pertinent example of the power of this media in political arena.

#### Mass communication

In comparison to the age of mass communication which is more than four centuries old social media is in infancy. Despite the fact, it is influencing traditional mass media in every aspect – programmed formats, content, treatment and language. Most of the big newspapers, TV channels and radio channels monitor the content of popular social networking sites Facebook and Twitter to get the latest update of happening around the world. The 24X7 update of the information on various news sites is giving immense competition to traditional media. Despite the rise in competition, new media and traditional media are shaking hands in reaching the masses and reinforcing the communication messages in the interest of target audience.

Earlier journalists were dependent on the discretion of editors for the space and time they were getting in newspapers and TV channels, now new media is giving them more space in terms of blogs. A few of them are leaving their jobs and are sticking to blogging where not only they are getting more readers and audience but they are earning advertising revenue sans interference of management.

Traditional media has always been accused of not giving space to its readers and audience but now anyone who knows how to use internet can give voice to its thoughts. Even the voice of marginalised sections like eunuchs, gays, lesbians etc are not only finding platforms of expression but also finding supporters on different websites.

Media has always been considered as watchdog of society. New media is acting as “watchdog of watchdogs” in the sense when something controversial does not find space in traditional media, someone from the general public highlights on social media sites or micro blogs and mass media has to cover the issue. The buzz created on social media sites sets the agenda for traditional media.

Traditional media has always suffered the wrath of higher authorities. In India there have been many landmark court cases that have change the history of freedom and speech and expression. Govt of various countries like India, China and Iran have faced criticism for controlling the social media yet the kind of freedom social media is enjoying mass media can never has such privilege that is still dependent on state for licensing and other facilities.

Audience research cell of the media used to collect data from opinion polls and surveys etc in 20<sup>th</sup> century, now mass media gets ready made latest data from social networking sites that can be instantly used and used from different perspectives.

The hard core readers of paper editions of newspapers used to say that in 21<sup>st</sup> century people will stop subscribing newspapers as news is available free of cost on different sites. But the data has broken the myth as the number of titles of publications is increasing everywhere and their circulation figures are going north.

### **Future of Social media**

Despite a billion users are registered on social networking sites yet as per its social media is still an infant. Once a popular networking site ‘Orkut’ it has lost its identity in virtual world. Same may happen to other sites as well. Facebook is considered more a social burden than a loved networking site by young users. A recent study by Pew research Centre on teen agers has found that facebook was losing its crucial demographic, which long fuelled to its success. According to *Huffington Post*, teens are increasingly abandoning facebook and turning to Instagram, Twitter, MySpace where they tend to have more privacy. Teens consider that site has become overrun by parents and leads to unnecessary ‘social drama’(Hindustan Times, 2013).

With tremendous use of new media to seek information readers are prone to post unauthentic information on serious academic issues. It is very difficult for users to rely on the information. As teenagers use their maximum time on online communication readers are using online information for their studies and there is a big question mark on their understanding of critical issues.

British-American entrepreneur and author Andrew Keen criticizes social media in his book *The Cult of the Amateur*, writing, "Out of this anarchy, it suddenly became clear that what was governing the infinite monkeys is now putting away on the Internet was the law of digital Darwinism, the survival of the loudest and most opinionated. Under these rules, the only way to intellectually prevail is by infinite filibustering"(Keen, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

A big source of information, education, communication and of course entertainment social media is going to be next big challenge for the different aspects of our social and personal lives. Social media is creating a new kind of social order it is strengthening social network but weakening inter-personal relations. User-generated content will lead to more plagiarism i.e. new challenge for IPR, a new form of addiction for younger generation (difficult to rehabilitate), an age of over communication (24 hrs messaging and chat) and alienation on the other hand (leading to psychological disorder). Degradation of ethics in various sectors may prove a cultural shock for the generation of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mass media’s dependency on new media may lead to new media’s supremacy, leading to more representation and more participation in public sphere.

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