

COVID-19 Impact on News Media Workers in Delhi, India

Twinkle Siwach

Abstract

The paper explores the impact of COVID-19 on news media workers in Delhi, through direct structured, open-ended, in-depth telephonic interviews with six journalists, selected through snowball sampling; from print, visual and digital media platforms. We look at their experiences, especially during the lockdown period, as they worked at the frontlines, covering news from the ground and the sites of exposure to the virus such as hospitals, mortuaries, health centres, etc. The burden increases during public health emergencies with working hours becoming more dynamic and increased pressure to maintain work and life balance. They also had to adapt to 'the new normal' while ensuring the up-to-date informational flow. However, financial, professional and psychological hardships are inevitable in this uncertain period, and the paper attempts to study how their personal or professional lives were affected. It explores if such burden was exponentially higher on women workers, contributing to social reproductive labour.

Keywords: *COVID-19, Delhi, Knowledge Work, Media Workers, News Media.*

I

The impact of COVID-19 was on almost all professions. In this paper, we study how news media work and workers were affected, particularly in Delhi and generally, across other regions, nationally and globally. For the former, primary interviews were conducted, but for the latter, secondary sources have been studied to understand if the experiences were similar or worse. Delhi becomes an important site of investigation for various reasons. Prior to the pandemic, the media witnessed large scale protests against the citizenship amendment act, violence at two central universities and communal riots. And amidst relief and rehabilitation work, the pandemic had arrived causing a nation-wide sudden lockdown. Covering such news of despair and sufferings for this elated period can leave a long-lasting impact personally and emotionally, affecting an individual's psyche.

News media reporters deliver the knowledge from the ground and mediate knowledge in society through “claims made by experts, policymakers and the public” (Undurraga 2017, 1). Scholars like Manuel Castells have worked on media communications and its capacity “to influence and shape the human minds” (Castells 2009, 165). According to him, communication is the “central power”- it analyses and presents empirical examples drawing on data. Likewise, the knowledge of rise in the cases, deaths, widespread of the contagious disease was provided to the public by the news media. The rise of the internet-based communications has provided for new avenues of communication strategies, which Castells calls “mass self-communication” where the information “multiplies and diversifies the entry points in the processes of communication” (ibid.) However, 'access' to the technological tools of communication and the means and resources is limited.

Given the nature of the contagious disease; forms of communication are undoubtedly changing. New media technologies' dependence increased for work since many print outlets had to suspend print editions during the lockdown. From education to research, our ways of learning and interaction shaped a new social landscape where there is an increased shift in the use and dependence on digital media. To cite an example, the search for 'COVID-19' alone was about 60 percent across all generations (PAHO 2020). Moreover, people's anticipation, interest, and peculiarity towards news related to the virus and its cure are the new features of society due to which surfing on the Internet increased. Castells' (1996) concept of 'network society' is important here to understand how news media formed expert panels across the countries to share the experiences, challenges, and outcomes of collective efforts to build strategies for the future. Castells' 'informational society' is connected by the information and communication technologies. It was not just the news but also ways of occupying the audience by inviting them to share their videos, spending time with the family members, young children creativity, engagement with the hobbies, etc.

Media work and labour are different from other professions. The news media or the communication workers have to be out on the field to cover the news across the hours and give different stakeholders' perspectives. The labour of reporting the news round the clock, of gathering information is tedious and challenging. Besides, there was no prior training for such times, where one has to maintain physical distance, wear protective kits, and manage with skewed public transportation options. While we talked about frontline workers, the labour of media reporting has been ignored, in academic discussions and advocacy planning. News media workers covered the plight of health professionals dealing with the coronavirus affected patients, police officials ensuring the implementation of lockdown, the stories of loss of employment and earnings of the street vendors, daily based

wage workers, domestic workers, and milk or newspaper vendors. But we heard very little about their own working conditions during the pandemic and the challenges that they surfaced. Their accounts have not been recorded to a similar extent. However, their exposure to the risk was exponentially higher. One cannot deny the precarious nature of the job where labour wages are undermined, salaries were cut, and companies laid off the employees without any prior notifications. From a Marxist perspective, there is a feeling of alienation as well as exploitation as they had to work for long hours, for which the companies do not provide compensation. We also see the emergence of a 'new world of work' that takes shape and is based on 'individual' rather than 'collective' responsibilities (Deuze 2014). A case in point is to highlight the differences in the roles and responsibilities of news media workers.

Analytically, one needs to understand the power differentiation in 'who' writes 'what' news and from 'which' perspective. Power, ideological inclinations and the ownership patterns for the news are significant factors here. Moreover, 'system-supportive' propaganda is run out by the mass-mediated communication technologies (Herman and Chomsky 1988). For instance, on 24 March 2020, the Prime Minister approached 20 select media owners and editors to publish positive articles about the pandemic and act as a link between government and people (Sagar 2020). On the one hand, they asked to collect feedback on the government's handling of the COVID-19 crisis. On the other, the news media workers were subjected to legal charges for reporting the stories from the ground highlighting the state's failure or the loopholes. Media as an independent institution must speak truth to the power; especially in crisis times so that timely interventions and help can reach to those in dire need. The state's crackdown on news media workers curtails freedom of the press at one side and controls the public's right to Information on the other.

There is a question of intersectionality within news media workers given the power dynamics, hierarchies and inequalities. For instance, Newsroom reproduces the hierarchies in democratic societies of those who govern (politicians) and those who own capital (corporates). Besides, there are power imbalances that arise out of economic, social, and political differentiation. There is not much evidence from the respondents' accounts but the overall analysis indicates casualization and feminization of labour in the news media industry. The experiences of the workers based in Mumbai were much stark (studied through secondary reports) compared to our respondents in Delhi. In terms of fall back on the news media workers due to the kind of content they covered during the lockdown period, the state's, as well as the response of the troll army, is much worse for the women media workers, as the language of the troll is personalized, and sexualized.

The nature of news itself, in capitalist societies, is to be looked at critically, which is not a central focus in the paper but is closely linked with the nature of the job. Under the capitalist regime, the value of labour is reduced to achieve the highest profit margins. For instance, the capitalist market highlights the aspect of exploitation and casualization of labour. On the one hand, salaries were cut, and employees were forced to work with half-rate wages, and on the other, the state attacked for reporting the stories from the ground. Statistically, it is a trend observed worldwide, particularly during the lockdown period.

II

At first, the questions were sent to the respondents over electronic mails, and later responses were recorded over verbal telephonic calls in a twenty to thirty minutes long conversation. The respondents were asked about their experiences during the period of lockdown; to

assess the pandemic's effect on their work routines, while working from home. The next question inquired about the status of their pay and the problems or hardships that surfaced. The third question was about the accessibility of personal protective equipment kits and whether it was arranged by the organizations or themselves. Fourth, questions about the changes in the Newsroom, news practises and work were asked. Fifth, the respondents were asked if they or their colleagues were infected on the frontline. Sixth, their responses on press freedom and regulations were assessed, with particular focus on the lockdown period. Telephonic surveys often restrict the conversation in many ways; one does not have direct contact with the respondent in addition to time constraints. Some of the respondents, due to their work emergencies, could not complete the interview. Therefore, the sample size was limited but is representative.

Changing work routines and media infrastructure

First, the work routine is changing for the media workers as the process of news making (as a whole) is under transition. A task that appeared impossible earlier, that is, coverage of news while working from home has become feasible during the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns (personal communication, Rahul, 20 August 2020). The meaning of work changed overnight with the announcement of lockdowns. However, the irregular work shifts have led to a disturbing life balance, affecting overall productivity.

A respondent that serves the national news channel shared her 'work from home' experience (personal communication, Sarita, 24 July 2020). She pointed out that the pandemic outbreak is a reality for all, but the news is primarily a field-based work. Therefore, writing the news story from home through coordination over phone calls constituted a unique experience and turned out to be a time and energy restraining process. She added, for media workers, work in a

'habitus' that comprises an environment where news is discussed, debated, and delivered in a fixed timeframe. While working from home, they missed this exercise. Also, she had to multitask; managing professional work with home-schooling of the six-year-old child. Such experiences are quite common for women workers as they have to perform 'paid, professional work', with 'unpaid domestic work' (Deshpande 2020). Besides, she was not paid for one week for which she had taken leave due to sickness. This throws light on the notion of restrictions on women's participation in the workforce industry and further discouragements caused by inadequate wages. Concurrently, compensation for domestic chores and care work, along with unfavourable working conditions, are not provided.

Taking a break is also challenging as one is expected to stay online throughout the day. One never knows when the news will break out. In such a scenario, the working hours become fluid when work flows across the hours with no time left for one's leisure and relative productivity. The engagements with the new media technologies require a higher degree of labour, with the constant need to update news on the digital platform. Simultaneously, new forms of representation and agency are emerging, however, they are limited, but advanced in the labour markets. Anthony Feinstein (2020), a professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto opines that people from all professions during the pandemic are forced to work from home; however, it sets media workers apart due to the nature of work requirements that is to feed the news cycle across the hours. In such situations, their routines are abandoned, sleep sacrificed, exercising stops, family time is truncated or eliminated, and there is no life apart from work. The intensity of work ought to deepen until the medical vaccine is confirmed.

Second, Pandemic is a lived experience for even media workers.

They are equally feeling the impact at personal as well as professional level. Hitherto, a journalist while ethically reporting the news has to alienate from the subject and deliver the information objectively without inserting any biased opinions. A story can be emotionally inclined; however, the news reporter's prime responsibility is to report the news without being influenced yet highlight the complex intricacies of the situation (personal communication, Sreeraj, 29 July 2020). Recalling his experiences, he shared that one of his respondents had broken down into tears, due to which he had to hold on to the shoot, waiting for the person to calm down before answering his questions. One of the journalists in New Orleans had a similar experience and broke down on-air while reporting one of her respondents; another news anchor teared up remembering her colleague who could not recover from coronavirus (Clay 2020). In such situations, one is bound to be psychologically affected by work stress, while witnessing individual or collective moments of grief or pain. A memory about a group of stranded migrants who had pitched in a temporary shelter on the roadside had affected one of our respondents (personal communication, Kabir, 26 July 2020). They hardly had any resources left to survive and were waiting for help to reach them. However, given their location, it was difficult to notice them. As a journalist, he could report about their miserable condition, but his failure to make a difference in their lives left long-lasting psychological impressions on him.

Third, covering the pandemic constituted an exhausting exercise for all the respondents and the burden of work. As mentioned above, the epidemic appeared amid the simmering hopes of relief and rehabilitation for the riot-hit population, which had occurred in February. The earlier months were equally hectic with a series of protests. In January, two prominent universities had reported incidents of violence within their respective campuses. The regular reporting of violence, deaths, agony, and distress further exposed by

the epidemic left an indelible psychological impact.

Additionally, as the reverse migration crisis became a primary concern in India during the lockdown period, they interviewed people to document experiences, and various stories of hunger, pain and sufferings, not to mention cases of harassment and even deaths by suicides. Moreover, related events, such as climate change, natural disasters, cross border conflicts, terrorism, crime, and economic downfall, need to be covered simultaneously. Their job, nevertheless, is affected by the surge in online information that included fake news circulation, regarding which the World Health Organization (WHO) had raised concerns. The migrant workers exodus was also said to be triggered by the panic created by the misinformation over the social media, noted in the petition *Alakh Alok Srivastava vs Union of India* (PUCL 2020). Likewise, the news regarding lockdown extension was speculated over the social media websites triggering panic among students and others stranded workers in remote locations.

Fourth, there is a change in ‘workspace’. A respondent shared that the essential teams have been divided on different floors. Face-to-face interactions have reduced as the staff are expected to perform duties while following safe physical distancing (personal communication, Simar, 21 July 2020). Even during lunch hours, on each table maximum, two people can sit at a time. The cubicles have been divided and covered with plastic sheets. Filing the scripts with the news desks can be adapted to the online medium easily while working from home. Still, for video editing or writing promos, one has to be accompanied by content selection and writing assistance. While mapping the risk factor of exposure to the virus, respondents in Delhi were given a choice to work from home or the field. However, the news media work is possible to some extent from home, but to a large extent, it needs to be done either from the field or the office desk.

Mumbai reported 53 out of 167 television journalists COVID-19 positive that created panic among journalists in Delhi and other states. In the case of Mumbai, a senior reporter who had tested positive had raised a concern about putting their lives in danger on an everyday basis while editors are forcing them to work from the field (Shantha 2020). None of the respondents in the case of Delhi reported having faced any forced pressure instead mostly were given voluntary choices. Zee News (Noida) office reported 28 COVID-19 positive patients for coronavirus (Chaurasia 2020). Subsequently, within five days, a total of 49 patients tested positive, following which, a significant number of employees volunteered for the sampling (Jha 2020). After the Mumbai episode, Delhi Government had set up a testing camp facility for the journalists. Among the respondents, only one female journalist had conducted the test. Others felt that they had taken enough precautions or were residing in distant areas and faced hurdles in coming to the testing camp during the lockdown.

The pandemic is the new frontline

First, there was a constant fear covering the shelter homes, designated hospitals, and quarantine centres. A respondent recalling her experience outside one of the hospitals in April shared difficulties in wearing personal protective equipment during the long duration shoots while being exposed to the sun in peak summers (personal communication, Poonam, 22 July 2020). Along with her camera person, she could not hold it for more than half an hour and preferred to shoot wearing gloves, masks, and headwear while holding microphones attached with a 1-3 feet extended stick. However, precautions like frequent hand washing became a routine habit multiple times a day for all the respondents.

Second, there is a change in eating patterns. Respondents recalling

earlier work practise shared that they could take breaks to eat and chat in between shoots that lasted longer than eight hours. However, now the aim is to wind up the work as cautiously and early as possible avoiding breaks in between. Extra attention is paid towards maintaining hygiene and cleaning hands with sanitizers. They prefer taking a meal either at home or office to prevent starving later amid shoot hours. A similar case is of Nasibo Kabale, a health journalist with the Nation Media Group (Africa), who reported to have missed her meals, especially with the family, even during the Ramadan period (Njeru 2020). For her, the meaning of workspace has blurred as she reported stories from her house, streets, isolation wards which caused a shift in her perspective. To protect her three-year-old daughter, she stays away even after cleaning herself well. While speaking to the patients, she realized that they seemed to share their pain like in a fellow friend. She also feels that a journalist should use the right terminology and prepare themselves well with the pandemic's technical and medical knowledge.

Third, Sreeraj shared that they outsourced the news stories from local journalists regarding the news collection practices. Few times during the lockdown, he also ventured out to cover information on his two-wheeler. However, he was concerned about health risks but felt it was essential to cover how different stakeholders (police and health workers) are working during the crisis. We also have the example of Barkha Dutt, an award-winning veteran journalist, who used new media platforms like *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *Facebook*, to post breaking stories. Her new media company, *Mojo Story*, was launched recently on YouTube and focused on 'shoe-leather journalism' (investigating and reporting on the ground rather than sitting indoors at a desk). She walked along the Delhi-Agra expressway to highlight the plight of migrant workers, covering stories from different parts of the nation. However, it was challenging for her to work across the hours, with no access to a room to sleep or rest (Siganporia 2020). She

was awarded the COVID-19 India Prize for noteworthy reporting during the lockdown period. But it is also due to her training, relative expertise, and access to resources that she could be on the field. Otherwise, in remote areas or rural locations, even in urban locations, such exposure is limited for many women media workers. And therefore, the question of heterogeneity of experience of news media workers across sections is significant. In her case, she is also performing the 'job' willingly, with informed choice and is aware of the challenges that she will have to face. Indeed, for women reporters, such adventures are limited due to safety concerns and increased work burden at home. It helps us make a point, which can be a subject of further research on how many female reporters contributed on-ground news articles compared to male reporters during the lockdown period. For instance, a research study conducted amongst academicians that mapped the submissions of research articles to a journal for publication witnessed a decline in women's papers (Fazackereley 2020).

The experiences and challenges are quite similar to news media workers in other countries. A multimedia journalist and author of the online project “On the frontlines of the pandemic” documented eight journalists' testimonies from different continents about their experiences of covering news from the frontline:

A photojournalist from Bangladesh felt like he was in a movie, and there was a fight against an invisible enemy that is everywhere. A freelance video journalist from China felt more harassed by the government than the virus. A freelance multimedia journalist from Mexico decided to report from the field to assess the ground situation from her own eyes rather than relying on phone calls. A journalist from the United States of America felt that phone calls and the Internet were the critical elements for reporting at this period. A producer on BBC Scotland's news programme introduced a two-

minute user-generated video to make the hard news a bit light for the audience. In Sweden, a television news reporter has been working non-stop, and a radio journalist from Lithuania has turned her room into a radio studio (Peseckyte 2020).

We get a clue here, about how media workers have adapted to the changing environment during the epidemic. In a survey conducted with 73 journalists from international news organizations who were working on stories directly related to the epidemic, revealed that 70 percent of them suffered psychological distress, more than a quarter had symptoms of worry, insomnia, low concentration, fatigue, stress and anxiety (Scire 2020). Therefore, there arises a need to develop awareness that instead of just moving on with work, one needs to share these traumatic experiences and seek help, if required.

Economic livelihoods and occupational safety

The news media workers work in a precarious environment. The pandemic has added to the concerns regarding job insecurities, with the additional threat of penal action as one needs to be careful of the content, writing, reporting, and publishing. Not all organizations have extended the help to cover the cost of personal protective equipment kits, masks, and sanitizers and added responsibility of working for longer hours, without breaks.

More than 100 journalists, which included reporters, sub-editors, other staff across various editions of *The Hindu* were asked to resign and were denied proper settlements due to hit in revenue that mainly took off 'post Rafale expose' (Mukherjee 2020). *Indian Express* has cut down the salaries from 10 percent to 30 percent. At the same time, *The Quint* asked about 45 employees to go on indefinite leave without pay that included reporters, copy editors, a bureau chief, production staff, and the entire technology team (Tiwari 2020). There is an

emerging issue of anxiety in journalism students over a shortage of jobs in the sector (Bachchan 2020). In a survey conducted by the Network of Women in Media India (NWMI) amongst the women news media workers; more than 40 percent either lost their jobs or experienced pay cuts or were not paid for the period served. As baffling as it sounds, about 35 percent were informed about their job loss over electronic mails, while 15 percent were informed over a phone call and only 10 percent in a personal meeting (NWMI 2020). Amongst our two male respondents, one of them was asked to resign over a phone call. For the other respondent, he was retained back on a much lower pay scale than his earlier pay scale, while his other colleagues were asked about their termination over emails. Such experiences were perhaps common across the gender among the employees. However, it does reflect the nature of casualization.

In Madhya Pradesh, over 300 newspapers were forced to suspend publications owing to these rumours and lack of transport facilities. In Mumbai, the printing and distribution of newspapers remained suspended from 23 to 31 March. In Noida, newspaper supplying vendors were refused to deliver in two societies, and the local depot also witnessed a dip from 19,000 to 3500 copies being sold (Dutta 2020). Pandemic hit vendors with dual side objections; the residents following distancing protocols and secondly, through the lockdown enforcement agencies. Subsequently, the revenues were hit for the print media outlets with business crumbling down as the audience also preferred the use of television news media and social media to gain knowledge.

The Times of India addressing the readers wrote on Twitter that picking up the newspaper does not mean picking up the virus and that only news is delivered to your doorstep. The World Health Organisation regarding flared panic around virus transmission issued a guideline clarifying that newspapers are safe to read. The

Information and Broadcast Minister of India wrote on *Twitter*, that the virus does not spread by reading newspapers. There were clear instructions from the Information and Broadcast Minister to continue the smooth functioning of print and electronic media. *The Outlook* temporarily suspended the print publication informing that desperate times require desperate measures. *India Today* Group ceased the publication of English language tabloid *Mail Today* on 10 August that impacted around 40 employees. *Hindustan Times* has temporarily suspended the publication of *Nandan* and *Kadambini* given the fall in revenues.

Press freedom in a democratic state

For a functioning democracy, Information and transparency are important keys (PUCL 2020). Inflammatory talks, communal debates were highlighted in some cases over genuine issues to divert the public attention from the government's accountability and its neglect in the public health care sector. A case in point is Tablighi Jamaat's telecast as the virus super-spreaders that highlighted the face of the biased and irresponsible reporting of the news media organisations. In print media alone, between March 20 and April 27, 11, 074 stories were detected from 271 media outlets, out of which 94 percent were printed in English (Iyer & Chakravarty 2020). It is either the ethical responsibility's failure, even after witnessing communal (Hindu-Muslim) riots, just a month prior on the one hand. While on the other, some of the news media channels used it as an opportunity to instigate hate against the minority group.

A serious crisis is there because of the weakening mechanisms of news-gathering with state's surveillance on news media workers. The highest number of arrests/charges, restrictions on access to information, excessive fake news regulation, and the verbal and physical attack has been in the Asia and Pacific Region followed by

Europe, as per the International Press Institute's Tracker of Press Freedom Violations. According to a report released by Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG), a Delhi based think tank, the state government registered 55 lawsuits against the media workers for the stories covered during 25 March and 31 May. They faced arrest, summons or show-cause notices for reporting stories on personal protective equipment kit, food distribution, corruption, mismanagement, and hunger. Uttar Pradesh amongst other states recorded the largest number of attacks on the news media workers, followed by Jammu and Kashmir (6), Himachal Pradesh (5), 4 each in Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha and Maharashtra and 2 each in Punjab, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala, and one each in Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Nagaland, Telangana, Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (RRAG, 2020).

Additionally, the falling rank of Indian Press in the World Freedom Index raises severe concerns about press freedom in a democratic state. The investigative reporters are facing the brunt. The online trolls and abuse over the new media platforms, poses another series of concerns and challenges, especially for women reporters. On 15 August 2020 (Independence Day), #StopMediaLockdown trended on Twitter for the first time with various journalists, independent reporters, freelancers and netizens coming together to condemn the attacks on media workers. However, an advisory was issued on 20 March 2020 to even social media platforms from the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information technology, "to inform users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that may affect public order and unlawful in any way" (PUCL 2020). Even State Governments of Delhi, Assam, Haryana, Maharashtra and Sikkim had issued guidelines over the circulation of unverified news over all media forms, particularly social media. One

such important guideline was issued on 23 May 2020 regarding the admin of the What's App group to be held accountable if any unverified news is circulated (ibid.)

A trend of the state's crackdown on media workers was felt by most of the respondents. However, its intensity had strengthened during this period which raises concerns for journalism practice in future. In such critical times, reporting is done for the public interest; however, journalists are under surveillance. Articles raising questions on government's accountability are under scrutiny. For instance, a critical piece about the government's response to COVID-19 published on the website of Indian Express on 8 May disappeared within a day (Pulla 2020). The report titled, 'Centre's COVID-19 Communication Plan: hold back data, gag agencies and scientists', discussed the government's reluctance to share outbreak-related data and attempts to muzzle scientists. In another instance, the state government registered First Information Report (FIR) against *Scroll's* executive editor Supriya Sharma for covering a story on Varanasi woman's lockdown misery in Domari village, a constituency adopted by Prime Minister under the *Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana* (Chakma 2020). Once, the stories highlighted complaints of inadequate food and protective gear at a hospital and corruption at the public distribution system; the Coimbatore police arrested the founder of a news website under the Epidemic Diseases Act.

For a respondent, having the freedom to write the news is different from arresting a news reporter for reporting the story because the latter is the repercussion when the former is not in place. According to another respondent, a news reporter's responsibility increases in times of crisis to make the government more accountable, responsible and answerable. After all, the pandemic itself is a story, a disaster unfolding in mysterious ways in society', and when

authorities try to control and hide facts with simultaneous attempts of throttling the media, the job of media workers becomes tougher (Ram 2020). Therefore, curbing media voices cannot go alongside democracy. In the current practice, when the factual information is reported, it hampers the ethical guideline of free and fair reporting.

Conclusion and Suggestions

News media workers are the frontline workers while building knowledge in society, despite facing the fear of the risk of the virus and the psychological and emotional turbulences.

The lines are blurring between work and home, personal and professional life. The influence of increased workload is drastic on women specifically. There is a constant health risk, along with financial, occupational and psychological hardships. The work value, assessment of productivity, knowledge sharing are frequently changing with new work practices emerging in compliance with the new normal. With vaccines being ensured to combat the virus, pandemic appears to stay. Till then, there is imminent pressure on media workers to produce knowledge in society. Additionally, there should be a councillor available at the workspace to address such issues.

The fall in advertisements revenues has made an impact on the media workforce and their salaries. The work hour's regulation could create vacancies in the sector. Due to a halt in publication or supply of print media, we do not have enough evidence at the moment to conclude if the readership has shifted online. Yet, we know that the advertisement companies are turning to digital platforms. It indicates chances of a significant transformation in business models. The solution then lies in depending on public-funded mechanisms rather than privatizing the 'news' and increased subscription of print media outlets by the readers.

Note:

Interviews:

Kabir works with a bi-lingual digital news media platform, 26 July 2020.

Poonam works with English digital news media platform, 22 July 2020.

Rahul works with a print English tabloid, 20 August 2020.

Sarita (name changed) works with national news media agency, 24 July 2020.

Simar works with a national bi-lingual visual media platform, 21 July 2020.

Sreeraj works with a national English print media platform, 29 July 2020.

References:

Bachchan, Vasudha. (2020). "As the coronavirus pandemic starts to hurt Indian media, journalism students worry about job prospects." *Newslaundry*. April 15. <https://www.newslaundry.com/2020/04/15/as-the-coronavirus-pandemic-starts-to-hurt-indian-media-journalism-students-worry-about-job-prospects>

Castells, Manuel. (2009). *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.- (1996). *The Network Society. The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, 1*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Chakma, Suhas. (2020). "FIR against Supriya Sharma is emblematic of how the law is abused to throttle press freedom." *The Wire*. June

22. <https://thewire.in/media/supriya-sharma-fir-abuse-law-press-freedom>

Chaurasia, Atul. (2020). “The inside story of Zee News becoming a COVID-19 hotspot.” *News Laundry*. May 20. <https://www.newslaundry.com/2020/05/20/the-inside-story-of-zee-news-becoming-a-covid-19-hotspot>

Clay, Rebecca. A. (2020). “Journalists as vicarious first responders”. *American Psychological Association*. April 17. <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/journalists-first-responders>

Deshpande, Ashwini. (2020). What does Work-from-Home Mean for Women? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 55(21). <https://www.epw.in/engage/article/what-does-work-home-mean-women>

Deuze, Mark. (2014). Work in the Media. *Media Industries*. 1 (2). DOI: 10.3998/mij.15031809.0001.201.

Dutta, Amrita N. (2020). “COVID-19 hits print media hard—ads and circulation dip, editions see a major digital push.” *The Print*. March 27. <https://theprint.in/india/covid-19-hits-print-media-hard-ads-and-circulation-dip-editions-see-major-digital-push/388514/>

Fazackereley, Anna. (2020). “Women’s research plummets during lockdown –but articles from men increase.” *The Guardian*. May 12. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/may/12/womens-research-plummets-during-lockdown-but-articles-from-men-increase>

Feinstein, Anthony. (2020). “Journalists covering the pandemic are paying a steep price.” *The Globe and Mail*. April 27. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-journalists-covering-the-pandemic-are-paying-a-steep-price/>

Herman, E. and Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Iyer, S. and Chakravarty, S. (2020). “Tablighi Jamaat: Impact of media narratives”, *Business Line, The Hindu*. August 7. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/tablighi-jamaat-impact-of-media-narratives/article32297022.ece>

Jha, Sanjeev, K. (2020). “Zee News channel’s office sealed in Noida, 14 new cases reported.” *Hindustan Times*. May 25. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/noida/zee-news-channel-s-office-sealed-in-noida-14-new-cases-reported/story-XiiXvREeNF3950yQA5nwyK.html>

Mukherjee, Mitali. (2020). “N. Ram: The Hindu Took a Big Hit on Ad revenue Post Rafale Expose, But Will Not Bend.” *The Wire*. July 29. <https://thewire.in/media/n-ram-the-hindu-rafale-expose-ad-revenue>

Njeru, Lilys. (2020). “My Story: Covering COVID-19 as a news reporter.” *Nation*. May 01. <https://nation.africa/kenya/life-and-style/saturday-magazine/my-story-covering-covid-19-as-a-news-reporter--493040>

NWMI. (2020) The COVID-19 pandemic and the media’s comorbidities. <https://www.nwmindia.org/component/k2/the-covid-19-pandemic-and-the-media-s-comorbidities>

PAHO. (2020). Understanding the infodemic and information in the fight against COVID-19. Pan American Health Organization. https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/52052/Factsheet-infodemic_eng.pdf?sequence=14,%20

PUCL. (2020). *The Double Siege: News Media in the Time of COVID-19*. India: People’s Union for Civil Liberties.

http://www.pucl.org/sites/default/files/reports/the_double_siege_pucl.pdf

Peseckyte, Giedre. (2020). "The hidden impact of reporting on COVID-19 from the frontline." *Journalism*. July 14. <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/hidden-impact-of-reporting-on-covid-19-from-the-frontline/s2/a758343/>

Pulla, Priyanka. (2020). "When a News Article Vanishes, We have more than Just a Pandemic to worry about." *The Wire*. May 13. <https://science.thewire.in/health/new-indian-express-article-takedown-health-ministry-icmr-secrecy/>

Ram, Arun. (2020). "Journalism in the time of COVID-19 pandemic." *The Times of India*. May 04. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/chennaitalkies/journalism-in-the-time-of-covid-19-pandemic/>

RRAG. (2020). Media's crackdown during COVID-19 lockdown. India: Rights and Risks Analysis Group. <http://www.rightsrisks.org/banner/india-medias-crackdown-during-covid-19-lockdown-2/>

Sagar. (2020). "Speaking Positivity to Power", *The Caravan*. <https://caravanmagazine.in/media/hours-before-lockdown-modi-asked-print-media-owners-editors-refrain-negative-covid-coverage> (accessed 03 January 2021).

Scire, Sarah. (2020). "Journalists are suffering mental health consequences from covering COVID-19." *Neiman Lab*. July 20. <https://www.niemanlab.org/2020/07/journalists-are-suffering-mental-health-consequences-from-covering-covid-19-according-to-a-new-survey/>

Shantha, Sukanya. (2020). "Mumbai: 53 Of 167 TV Reporters test Positive for COVID-19, Say Media Houses not doing enough." *The Wire*. April 21. <https://thewire.in/media/covid-19-mumbai-tv-journalists>

Siganporia, Shahnaz. (2020). "Vogue Warriors: Meet the frontline journalist who is keeping us informed through the pandemic." *Vogue*. April 24. <https://www.vogue.in/culture-and-living/content/vogue-warriors-barkha-dutt-journalist-keeping-people-informed-through-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

Tiwari, Ayush. (2020). "The Quint sends 45 staffers on indefinite leave without pay, TOI lays off 3 from Sunday magazine." *NewsLaundry*. April 13 <https://www.newsLaundry.com/2020/04/13/the-quint-sends-45-staffers-on-indefinite-leave-without-pay-toi-lays-off-3-from-sunday-magazine>

Undurraga, Tomas. (2017). Knowledge-production in Journalism: Translation, mediation and authorship in Brazil, *The Sociological Review*, 66 (1): 58-74. DOI: 10.1177/0038026117704832

Twinkle Siwach is a PhD research scholar in the Centre for Media Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.