

7. Examining Relationship between Communalism & Mass Media during the Covid 19 Pandemic

Dr. Binoti Patro

Assistant Professor,
In the Department of Management Studies,
National Institute of Technology Silchar,
Assam.

Abstract:

Corona virus disease, more commonly, known as COVID 19 was discovered in Dec 2019 in Wuhan, China that rapidly spread across the globe and its outbreak was so intense that was declared a global pandemic which means global health emergency. The mass media played an indispensable role in bring the World into strict vigilance and keep posted about all the relevant news related to the issue. The study intends to examine the relationship between communalism and the mass media and it finds that the latter is the dominant and distinctive factor in spreading communal hatred. Global statistics reveal that the developing economy, India in particular, engages with very distressful results. Out of two broad categories of mass media, i.e., Indoor and Outdoor, the former plays the dominant role in impacting communal harmony, the Digital media to be precise.

Keywords: Mass media, communalism, COVID 19, information, communication.

7.1 Introduction:

The meaning of mass media communications is correspondence that ranges and impacts an enormous number of individuals. At some point in the past people use to turn on the radio for listening declaration information or get the paper for examining each day title writings and information to understand what's going on the planet all-around with some tea in their grip. However, with time, development has changed and there are other media familiar with give information to masses, for instance, Print media like Newspaper, Books & Magazines, Televisions, Radio, Internet, Films and so forth.

Traditional media incorporates the theaters, dramatizations, society appears, manikin shows and so forth. In Modern culture and condition, expansive interchanges has gotten one of the basic forces. A wide scope of wide correspondences exchanges whether oral, created or convey contacts a greater group. The print media are the paper, books, and magazines. Electronic media incorporates the TV, radio, phone and so on. The electronic media incorporates the sites, email, online life like Facebook, Tweeter, Instagram and so forth; Ecommerce, Videos on the web, Blogs, Video Blogs and so on. The Outdoor media are the banners, hoardings, bulletins, flags.

What's more, last yet not the least the travel media remembers notices for the trains, transports, aircrafts and so on. Mass media plays a significant role in Indian governmental issues and politics. Escalated utilization of Mass media has made simple to arrive at each edge of the globe. It helps in the advancement of products and enterprises. Illuminate, Educate and Entertain Masses is a fundamental target of broad communications.

7.2 Coronavirus (Covid 19) Pandemic:

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first identified in December, 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has since spread globally, resulting in an ongoing pandemic. And on 31st December 2019, Wuhan City of Hubei Province has passed the information to WHO regarding the critical situation going on in China. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an irresistible ailment brought about by a newfound coronavirus 2 (SARS COV-2) causing extreme intense respiratory issues. A great many people who fall wiped out with COVID-19 will encounter mild to moderate symptoms and recuperate with no additional standard treatment. The infection that causes COVID-19 is for the most part transmitted through droplets that is produced when an infected person, wheezes, coughs or breathes out.

These droplets are too overwhelming to even think about hanging noticeable all around, and rapidly fall on floors or surfaces. What's more, can keep going extremely long on these surfaces. One can get infected by taking in the infection in the event that he/she is inside nearness of somebody who has COVID-19, or by contacting a debased surface and afterward carrying the hands to the eyes, nose or mouth. Starting at 22nd May, 2020, more than 5.1 million cases have been accounted for across 188 nations and territories, bringing about in excess of 3,33,000 deaths.

More than 1.95 million individuals have recuperated. Among the most Common indications incorporate fever, cough, weakness, difficulty in breathing, and loss of smell and taste. While most of cases bring about gentle manifestations, some advancement to intense respiratory misery condition (ARDS), multi-organ failure, septic shock, and blood clumps. The time from introduction to beginning of manifestations is commonly around five days yet may extend from 2 to 14 days.

Suggested measures given by the WHO (World Health Organizations) to forestall contamination incorporate incessant hand washing with liquor based sanitizers or cleansers, keeping up physical good ways from others (particularly from those with side effects), isolate (particularly for those with manifestations), covering hacks, and getting unwashed hands far from the face. Also, the utilization of a face covering is suggested for the individuals who presume they have the infection and their parental figures.

Suggestions for face covering use by the overall population differ, with certain specialists suggesting for them, some suggesting against them, and others requiring their utilization. There is constrained proof possibly in support of the utilization of veils (clinical or other) in solid people in the more extensive network.

As per the World Health Organization, there are no accessible antibodies nor explicit antiviral medicines for COVID-19. The board includes the treatment of side effects, strong consideration, separation, and test measures.

7.2.1 Scenario of India:

The primary instance of the COVID-19 pandemic in India was accounted for on 30 January 2020, starting from China.

The number of confirmed cases have been increasing drastically and numbers have even crossed more than the epicenter China amidst the lockdown in the whole nation.

On 22 March, the Government of India chose to totally lockdown 82 locale in 22 states and Union Territories of nation where affirmed cases have been accounted for till 31 March 2020. On 23 March, Delhi was put under lockdown till at any rate 31st of March. Essential services & commodities were to continue however. 80 urban areas including significant urban communities, for example, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, Chandigarh and Kolkata were likewise put under lockdown. Inter-state developments are permitted during the lockdown time frame. Anyway a few states have shut their borders. On 23rd of March, association and state governments declared the lockdown of 75 locale where cases were reported. On 24th of March, PM Narendra Modi reported a total across the country lockdown, beginning from 12 PM for 21 days. By 6th of April, the development pace of the pandemic had eased back to one of multiplying at regular intervals, from a pace of multiplying at regular intervals earlier. As the finish of the lockdown time frame drew nearer, a few state governments suggested broadening the lockdown. The legislatures Odisha, Punjab, Maharashtra, and West Bengal governments have stretched out the state lockdowns to 30th of April. On 14th of April, PM Narendra Modi broadened across the nation lockdown till 3 May, with a restrictive unwinding from 20th April for the zones that have had the option to contain the spread. On 29th April, Punjab government reported for expansion of curfew till 17th of May. On 1st of May, the Government of India broadened across the nation lockdown further by about fourteen days until 17th May. On 5th of May, Telangana government declared for augmentation of lockdown till 29 May in their state. Similarly, Punjab government has also declared for augmentation of lockdown till 31st May. On 17th of May, NDMA expanded the lockdown till 31 May in every single Indian state.

7.2.1 Zone Wise Division:

The Government divided the whole country into three zones –

1. Green Zone,
2. Red Zone,
3. Orange Zone
4. Red zone (Hotspots)





7.3 Literature Review:

A study based in UK undertaken by Hilton S, Hunt K (2010) find that the newspaper coverage of swine flu pandemic was immense. And due to that, number of articles on swine flu has increased. Saxon B et al. (2018) studied about how in America the local newspapers were used in order to communicate the information so as to communicate the risk factors and it was found that media plays a big role in communicating information that helps in removing the fear of the risks.

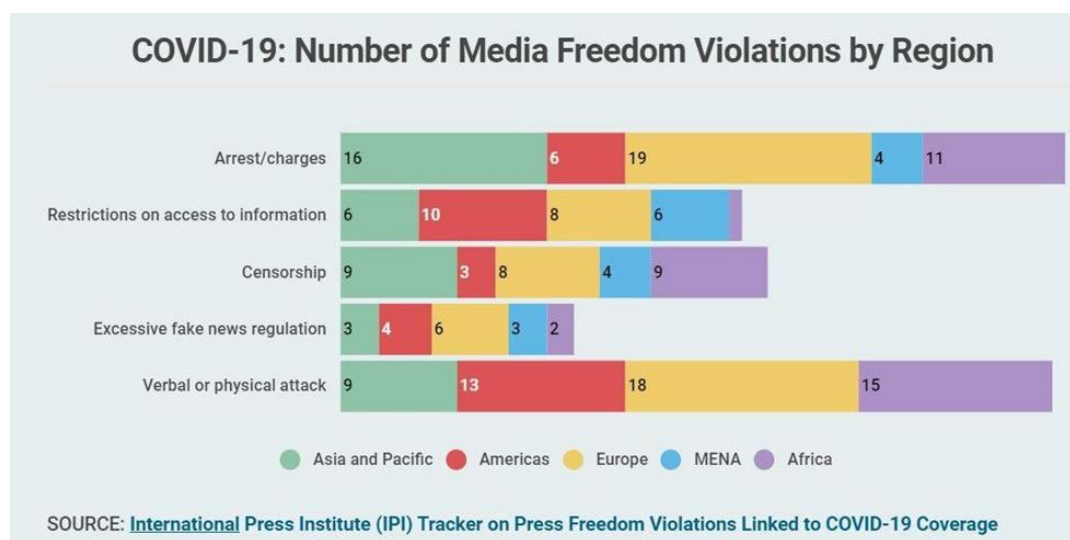
Mejia R. C et al. (2020) examines the perception of media and their effectiveness in passing their information during the Covid-19 situation and found that distortion of the media, created fear and data got from health personnel, family, and companions, which could all have some impact as indicated by how they illuminate individuals about the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.4 How the Mass Media is playing the Role in Communicating the News of the Covid 19 Pandemic:

As the Indian Media houses are working hard in communicating the news all over the nation and journalists are bearing the risk of becoming a victim of Covid-19 by coming in contact with the infected ones, there are few media houses which are taking the advantage of playing a communal game, as a result creating nuisance and hatred among the general public.

The mass media are doing their level best in keeping us well informed about the situations all round and the initiatives taken by the government without whom we wouldn't be able to get the information that is happening during this crisis situation, thanks to the media houses in that prospective. Also very saddened to know that on 20th of April at least 53 media persons tested positive of Corona Virus as published on The Hindu.

Before the lock down began on 25th of March PM, Narendra Modi has announced that “Newspapers carry tremendous credibility and the local page of a region is widely read by people,” and the Union Home Ministry guidelines include media in the list of essential services permitted to operate during the lockdown. According to the International Press Institute, “amid the Covid 19 pandemic, the free flow of news and information is more essential than ever, ensuring open dialogue and the exchange of vital information. IPL is closely monitoring press freedom restrictions in this exceptional situation.” Some media persons were also being attacked around the globe amidst the Covid 19 situation as per the IPL:



7.5 How Some Media Houses Played The Communal Game?

The coronavirus pandemic is the most basic crisis the world has looked since World War II, yet a portion of the traditionalist media in India has found somebody to fault and they are the Indian Muslims. Particularly an association called Tablighi Jamaat. Tablighi Jamaat is an Islamic fundamentalist evangelist advancement that fixates on asking Muslims and asking people to return to practicing their religion as it was taken a shot at during the lifetime of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, and particularly in issues of custom, dress and individual lead.

The Tablighi Jamaat expected to coordinate the program some spot in Vasai, Maharashtra. After the erupt of COVID-19 in Maharashtra, the Government of Maharashtra and Mumbai Police collected off the gathering. After the excusal from the Government of Maharashtra, the Nizamuddin gathering of the Tablighi Jamaat held the exacting congregational program (Ijtema) in Nizamuddin West, Delhi. The Delhi Government's solicitation for 13 March that no classes, get-togethers or any enormous event (past 200 people) are to be held was clearly disregarded by the affiliation, and the Delhi Police also fail to maintain it. There were in like manner other encroachment of rules by remote speakers including maltreatment of guest visa for minister practices and not taking 14-day home confine for voyagers from abroad.

At any rate 24 of the members had attempted positive for the disease among the 300 who showed reactions by 31 March 2020. It is acknowledged that the wellsprings of pollution were pastors from Indonesia. Many had returned to their states and moreover offered shelter to remote speakers without the data on close by governments.

Furthermore, at long last started neighborhood transmissions especially in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir and Assam. The entire Nizamuddin West zone has been cordoned off by the Police beginning at 30 March, and clinical camps have been set up. After takeoff from the markaz, of the scores of jamaat members, 167 of them were segregated in a railroad office in south east Delhi amidst stresses over their security and transmission of the disease. The Tablighi Jamaat gathering rose as one of India's major coronavirus hotspots in India, after more that 1400 out of 4067 cases were associated with members as showed by the Health Ministry.

On 18 April 2020, Central Government said that 4291 cases (or 29.8% of the full scale 14,378 avowed occurrences of Covid-19 in India) were associated with the Tablighi Jamaat, and these cases were spread across 23 states and Union Territories. Different inquiries have been raised concerning how the Delhi Police allowed this event to proceed in the midst of a pandemic, while a similar event was denied in Mumbai by the Maharashtra Police. When the COVID lockdown occurred in Delhi from 22 March onwards, the evangelists remaining in the Nizamuddin Markaz were gotten, and the functionaries began to search for help from the specialists for their departure. As of fourth of April, more than 1000 cases, addressing 30% every affirmed case in India, were associated with the Nizamuddin event. Around 22,000 people that collaborated with the Tablighi Jamaat evangelists must be isolated. On 31 March 2020, a FIR was archived against Muhammad Saad Kandhlawi and others by Delhi Police Crime Branch under Section 3 (discipline for offense) of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and Sections 269 (Negligent act obligated to spread tainting of ailment), 270 (destructive act subject to spread illness of ailment), 271 (resistance to segregate rule) and 120b (control of criminal interest) of the IPC. On eighth of April 2020, the Delhi Police followed Tablighi Jamaat pioneer Maulana Saad Kandhalvi in Zakirnagar in South-East Delhi, where he maintained to be under self-isolate. A wide range of people from the instructor pack have similarly been held for purportedly helping spread the illness, fusing by stowing endlessly in mosques, a police official declared. Regardless, the Government of India has denied that it is singling out Muslims.

Thereby some of the media houses took the advantage of blaming the Indian Muslims directly by publishing various news all over. And after the spread of such news all over the nation, the communal virus is becoming more dangerous than the Covid 19 itself.

Regardless of whether the Tablighi Jamaat acted wrongfully, there can be no two sentiments about the way that it acted unreliably and absurdly by sorting out a social affair of a few thousand individuals at its home office in Nizamuddin in Delhi. Many individuals from a few nations and a few States of India gathered there; several returned homes with infection, making a transmission affix that gives off an impression of being the single longest for coronavirus in India since its episode. Tablighi's blinding fixation on the great beyond and incapacitating obliviousness of this present reality are stunning yet not special. Likewise, there is nothing only Islamic about consolidating obliviousness and imprudence; on the off chance that anything, this is a common quality across religions.

Similarly a day after the PM went ahead TV and required every single strict assembly to end, Chief Minister of U.P. Yogi Adityanath, drove a strict occasion in Ayodhya. Unexpectedly, when the devotees were congregating at the Nizamuddin, the U.P. organization was all the while proceeding with its groundwork for the Ram Navami festivities in Ayodhya from March 25, where lakhs would have assembled.

A few journey places stayed open well after COVID-19 had gotten a worldwide pandemic. But these news media targeted only the Islamic religion and blamed them which is totally communalism. And this not the proper time to play the blame game.

The Indian authorities had connected many instances of COVID-19 to a Muslim group that held its yearly gathering in Delhi toward the beginning of March, and wellbeing authorities were dashing to find any individual who had contact with the members. Coronavirus fears and strict pressure were at that point at a fever contribute India, and it didn't take long for the two powers to blend.

Recordings erroneously professing to show individuals from the evangelist bunch spitting on police and went viral on social media, compounding an effectively risky air for Muslims.

Till March 28, various tweets with hashtag #Corona Jihad have showed up almost multiple times and conceivably observed by 165 million individuals on Twitter, as per information imparted to TIME by Equality Labs, a computerized human rights group. Coming only weeks after strict massacres directed by Hindu patriots left 36 Muslims dead in Delhi, the flood in disdainful tweets exhibits how tensions over the coronavirus have converged with longstanding Islamophobia in India, when the Muslim minority 200 million individuals in a country of 1.3 billion feels progressively focused by the decision Hindu patriots. One of the most well-known false news #Corona Jihad tweets professes to show a Muslim man from the Delhi assemblage deliberately hacking on someone. The tweet alluded to Muslims as "such vile minded people" and recorded hashtags including #Corona Jihad & #TablighiJamatVirus, a reference to the strict gathering that met in Delhi. In any case, the video included in the viral tweet was really shot in Thailand, not India, and there is no confirmation that the man was an individual from the Delhi assemblage. The tweet was as yet online as of 3rd of April, with more than 4,200 retweets and 503 ans. Another video shared on both Facebook and Twitter indicating to show Muslims purposefully wheezing on one another was exposed by the reality checking association AltNews. Another tweet, which reached around 2,000 retweets before it was expelled for damaging Twitter's standards, included a drawing of a personified Muslim man marked "Corona Jihad" attempting to push a Hindu off a bluff." Corona jihad is this new idea that Muslims are weaponing the coronavirus to target Hindus," says Thenmozhi Soundarajan, official executive of Equality Labs. The tweet has since been expelled for abusing Twitter's principles, yet a few different kid's shows connecting Muslims to the coronavirus, shared by a similar record with in excess of 15,000 devotees, were as yet online as of April 3rd. Amidst the Coronavirus pandemic that keeps on costing many lives each day and the impact of the lockdown has left many jobless, Bhartiya Janata Party MLA in Uttar Pradesh has asked individuals not to purchase vegetables from Muslim merchants. A video floated on the social media that shows BJP MLA, Suresh Tiwari conversing with a gathering of individuals, purportedly in Deoria area, and offering the comments that numerous social media users portrayed as 'communal'. The lawmaker from the Barhaj supporters can be heard saying: "I am telling everyone openly. Nobody should buy vegetables from Muslims." Hate speeches against the Muslims saw an uptick after Tablighi Jamaat central station in Delhi's Nizamuddin was proclaimed as the hotspot of the Coronavirus. A few BJP pioneers censured the Jamaat for spreading the infection in the nation. In the repercussions of these comments, a few occurrences were accounted for where Muslim sellers were refused from entering a few neighborhoods on the doubt that they may spread the infection. The social media was buzzing with rumors that Muslim sellers spit on foods grown from the ground so as to spread the Coronavirus.

In such a case Kerala police have filed a FIR against the reporter of ZEE News, Sudhir Chaudhary for explaining different types of Jihad in his television show using flow charts. On 1st April 2020 Supreme Court has announced their concern on circulation of fake news all over. Media ought to keep up a solid awareness of other's expectations, while dispersing news on corona virus and ought to guarantee that unconfirmed and counterfeit news isn't distributed, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday after the focal government caused the court to notice the chance of individuals freezing because of "counterfeit" news associated with Covid-19.

7.6 Conclusion:

Mass media plays a great role in rendering us with humongous and varied information. So, the type of information that they communicate highly matters. The information should be genuine and clear. Because there would be thousands of viewers and receivers who would be getting those news and if false or fake news are being published it has high risk of creating nuisances among the general public. And mass media shouldn't promote posting communal news by blaming any individual that may create riots and hatred among the public.

The Govt. should take strict actions and measures against spreading of such spurious news. And book under section 505(1) of Indian Penal Code, 1860. The punishment for making, publishing or circulating any statement, rumor or report which may cause fear or alarm to the public, or to any section of the public.

7.7 References:

1. Hilton, S., Hunt, K. (2010). UK Newspapers' Representations of the 2009-10 Outbreak of Swine Flu: One Health Scare Not Over-Hyped by the Media? *Journal of Epidemiol Community Health*, 65 (10), 941-6.
2. Saxon B., Bass, S.B., Wright, D., & Panick, J. (2019). Ebola and the rhetoric of US newspapers: assessing quality risk communication in public health emergencies. *Journal of Risk Research*, 22(10), 1309-1322.
3. Mejia CR, Ticona D, Rodriguez-Alarcon JF, Campos-Urbina AM, Catay-Medina JB, Porta-Quinto T, Garayar-Peceros H, Ignacio-Quinte C, Carranza Esteban RF, Ruiz Mamani PG, Tovani-Palone MR. The Media and their Informative Role in the Face of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Validation of Fear Perception and Magnitude of the Issue (MED-COVID-19). *Electron J Gen Med*. 2020; 17(6): em239