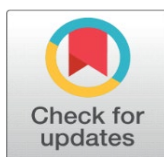
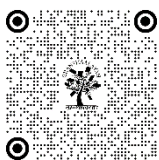


# MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: AN INSIGHT IN THE PRESENT INDIAN CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

Basic principle in journalism is to focus for development for public good and to uplift the society and transform the societal healthy practices. Media in its various capacity tries to inform, educate, and entertain the mass people for the benefit of human society and that should be the motto of media cutting across country line and geographical boundary. In Indian context how media focuses in its principle in the present set up that is interesting to be seen in the light of the critical perspective of freedom of expression as envisages in our constitution. In India journalistic freedom remained a million dollar question not only in pre-independence India but remained a valid question in post independence period and in the modern scenario too. In the present context if we speculate we observe that media organization and their key functionaries are vertically divided into pro and anti against any elected government and this phenomenon is not even permanent in them. They themselves frequently changes their colour for the reasons not best known by themselves alone but mass people are more knowledgeable these days and understand the very fact for this kind of shift. Off course for some time their survival question remains a valid point too in this competitive market scenario. In such a juncture this paper would like to discuss all those critical issues in this complex and media saturated condition more specifically in the light of journalistic freedom and their challenges in the current Indian situation.

**Keywords:** Freedom of Expression, Journalistic Freedom, Media Development

## 1. INTRODUCTION

If we look into the growth of media in the current phase we see that quantity wise there is exponential growth in all sphere of media activities such as in electronic media, social media use and such other modern media outlet. But their quality is a big issue so far content is taken into consideration though, the Press Council Act felt that the liberty of the press needed to be upheld by the press itself [Kumar \(1998\)](#), p. 59. With the globalization started since 1990s, growth in media started acceleration. Rival media organization do have their rampant competition to

take advantages in the media business side by side we notice rat race and competition among journalists even in the media organizations sometime they are violating the ethical basis on which media should function to get public taste and trust. Further corporate goals of media companies are also showing their push and pull factors. In this backdrop government is taking advantages to get rid from media surveillance and showing their biasness in licensing media related business so far regulating mechanism is taken into account. Thus to improve quality, healthy media competition is a must among media organization as competition is considered as key driver of media development, so in this regard we can say that company behavior is considered to have an impact so far as performance of media activities goes into its way in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Hence the objective of this paper is to empirically analyse the effect of media behavior and its performance in the changing global scenario along with other critical issues such as media development in the light of freedom of expression in present day's context. [Adrian \(2012\)](#)

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

For overall inclusive growth and development of media we are still facing many challenges in independent India in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. We had turmoil history in the pre-independent India we all know more or less the repressive measures taken by the colonial ruler to crush the media related development under their regime. A great transformation came in the official attitude to the Indian press after the Mutiny in 1857 (Parthasarathy, p. 39). But the sorry state of affairs is still plaguing in our current media history. Yes, physically mushrooming growth is noticeable so far development of media organization and outlet is taken into account in Indian context. In fact after the colonialism phase was over from almost all the third world countries, democratic government came to power but unfortunately political elites and corporate giants and also authoritarian rulers from time to time trying to control the political power thereby still they are manipulating and influencing the mind of the mass people. In this situation media development is continuously got affected so in the country like India media development goal and freedom of expression failed to attain a positive height. In such a situation in-depth study and analysis is a need of the hour for such issue. [Casey \(2002\)](#), [Rangaswami \(1997\)](#)

Interesting point to be noted here is that in the third world countries where authoritarian rule prevails there the government will never welcome media development and would never like to extend journalistic freedom knowing it very well that media always try to put questions which may not be favourable to the government. These are the reasons why media development gets affected. We the Indian too have noticed this type of challenges encountered in different phases including the emergency period. As such juncture actually the people's expectation goes high from media organisation. [Desai et al. \(2009\)](#)

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To speculate the current phase of media development
- To introspect the journalistic freedom of expression in the purview of the digital age

## 4. METHODOLOGY

For the convenient of this study exploratory research methodology has been applied since it has lots of flexibility since the issue of the study remains foggy on so

many accounts. As we know exploratory research is generally used to investigate a problem which is not clearly defined. It is believed that this type of research methodology helps us to have better understanding for the research problem like ours. Therefore, we cannot expect a clear and defined road map to get conclusive results. Though, we agree that this type of research methodology do have many advantages rather than disadvantages. [Gade \(2019\)](#), [Singhal & Rogers \(2001\)](#)

## 5. DISCUSSION

Over and above journalism must serve public interest rather political and commercial interest in a given situation that too without considering geographical territory. But the danger is noticeable in every corner of the globe what type of erosion is taking place. Company, government and corporate interest are helping in shaping the business models of media. Therefore, media sustainability and its freedom has become a global phenomenon. To chalk out this type of crisis global response by the media fraternity in a comprehensive manner needed to be taken before the situation goes out of control. Global data available shows that more than 80% world's population has started experiencing a stiff shrink to enjoy press freedom in some countries. Countries having strong foundation to serve people by genuine media activities such as feeding with the right kind of information as part of their afford to serve as individual journalism are also facing tremendous crisis and also forced to shut down their media activities. This type of problem is emerging sometime because readership and advertising markets are shifting towards online mode these days. Global recession due to COVID-19 pandemic added fuel to such problems and remained as contributing factors. Recent study by the UNESCO on such phenomenon substantiate the very fact of this upcoming problem and challenges. [Khandekar \(2010\)](#)

## 6. MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN DIGITAL AGE

Media related development and freedom of expression had started encountering many issue in the past and in the current phase it has been intensified because media these days facing many issues and challenges especially in the current phase of digitalization right from regulation to control of growing online media. There is no balanced way to handle to check and monitor online media. In India we are still to go a long way to formulate standard operating procedure and acceptable norms. If things are not properly judged then our freedom of expression will be jeopardized. Not having proper and effective mechanism the misinformation, false information and disinformation syndrome creating social unrest and affecting our social fabric. Rumour-monger and hate speech campaigner becoming champion to break the social and religious integrity. India is witnessing and bearing the burnt due to this kind of acts and deeds in the recent past. Media is also going to be affected and so is the freedom of speech and expression got diluted. Further this kind of issues are getting attention by the international forum and sometime creating embarrassing situation to the national government in the world stage of affairs. This is interesting to note that proliferation of false and misinformation as well as hate speech is intensified in India before and after each and every elections. [McQuail \(2010\)](#), [Mehta \(2008\)](#)

When we talk about media freedom we mean liberty to express free from any kind of repressive measures by any quarters so that seamless distribution of contents takes place on any platform. For this no censorship or harassment should

take place. Media organization must use their conscience for self censorship and must create healthy atmosphere and should remain impartial while disseminating information in the public domain. Global forum recognizes proper environment and free flow of information so that mass people cutting across caste, creed and political line do have their proper access for freedom of expression having social and constitutional safety nets to protect confidentiality of journalists' sources of information and give justice to their whistleblowers. It's a fact that media development, media freedom and freedom of expression witnessing a declining trends which is not globally uniform among Asian countries, Middle-East countries, African countries and even among Western countries. In Indian scenario too we see major transformation in the media landscape if we see online growth of misinformation and disinformation syndrome. But when the government is responding by bringing new laws, regulations, and policies then if these policies and measures are not carefully drawn then indirectly it will bring more trouble than solutions. [Menon \(2010\)](#)

These days we witness blanket ban on internet service and such other digital platform if there is any social unrest in any corner of our country. Presently Indian state Manipur is undergoing such problem randomly thus curtailing our digital freedom. So the interest of our right to express and internet facilities are being deprived to a larger section of people from sharing their experience in such situation and dissemination information to those people who are trying to help the society in a healthy manner by using this digital platform. They cannot do so only because some rumour-monger are trying to spread misinformation and false information to break the social fabric. So, in one hand we have facilities on the other hand we have some kind of government censorship on our media freedom. It has been seen that internet shutdowns have become a regular phenomenon in the name of controlling social tension and unrest to check violence related activities. This has been even noted by the international bodies like U.N. Human Rights Council which according to the body is a key human rights challenge's which is showing rising trends. As such it is seen that international laws and national laws and regulation that safeguards our freedom of expression and overall media freedom is facing lots of challenges today. [Mukherjee \(2016\)](#)

## 7. CONCLUSION

World is facing many challenges today in maintaining healthy growth and development of media as well as journalistic freedom of expression. If we compare the global trends it is seen that the third world countries are facing more problem as their business model and political nexus with media organization and control of journalistic freedom of expression to the individual journalists are being controlled indirectly by the business class and political lobby. Hence in such a scenario sustainable growth and development of media as well as journalistic freedom of expressions remains a far cry. In India we see that there has many fold quantitative development but at the same time quality has become a big question. There is a rat race syndrome among Indian media organizations including digital platforms in this direction. International body like the UNESCO and the U.N. Human Rights Council are viewing this type of global problem seriously. [Pavrala & Malik \(2007\)](#)

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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