Comprehensive Perspective of Media Biasness in India: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Media biasness is a pervasive issue in India's media landscape, where news coverage is often influenced by ownership, political affiliations, and ideological leanings. Media houses are often aligned with political parties, leading to accusations of taking sides during election cycles. The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few big corporations can also lead to bias towards certain political ideologies or parties. In addition, commercial pressures and regional biases can further exacerbate media biasness. Readers need to be aware of the potential biases of media outlets and consume news from a range of sources to obtain a more comprehensive perspective. Free and unbiased media is crucial for a healthy democracy and the promotion of informed decision-making. This paper explains the comprehensive perspective of media biasness in India.

Keywords: Media Biasness, Ownership, Political Affiliations, Ideology, Media Outlets

Introduction

Media biasness in India refers to the tendency of media outlets to present news and information from a particular perspective, which may be influenced by factors such as ownership, political affiliations, ideological leanings, commercial pressures, and regional biases. In India, the media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion, particularly during election cycles and major events. However, media biasness can undermine the credibility of the media and lead to the propagation of misinformation and fake news.

One of the primary factors that contribute to media biasness in India is ownership. The media is largely controlled by a few big corporations with close ties to political parties. This can often lead to media outlets being biased toward a particular political ideology or party. The

concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few also limits diversity in perspectives and news coverage.

Political affiliations are another significant factor that influences media biasness in India. Many media houses are closely aligned with political parties, and their news coverage often reflects this bias. Some media outlets are perceived to be pro-BJP, while others are seen as pro-Congress or pro-left. This can be particularly evident during election cycles when media outlets are accused of taking sides and influencing public opinion.

Ideology also plays a role in media biasness in India. Some media houses have a clear ideological leaning, such as left-leaning or right-leaning, and this can influence their news coverage. For example, a left-leaning media house may be more critical of the government's economic policies, while a right-leaning media house may focus more on issues of national security.

Commercial pressures are another significant factor that contributes to media biasness in India. Media houses are subject to the need to generate revenue through advertising, which can sometimes lead to sensationalism and the prioritization of entertainment over serious news coverage. It can also lead to media outlets shying away from controversial or sensitive issues for fear of offending advertisers or losing viewership.

Finally, regional biases are also a significant factor in media biasness in India. Many media outlets are concentrated in certain regions or languages, and their coverage can reflect local biases or prejudices. For example, media outlets in the Hindi belt may have a different perspective on issues compared to those in the South.

In conclusion, media biasness in India is a complex issue that is influenced by multiple factors. While biasness is not necessarily avoidable, it is essential to consume news from a range of sources and perspectives to navigate through the various biases and perspectives. It is also important for media houses to maintain editorial independence and integrity to ensure that their coverage is fair and objective.

Literature review

Sen, A. et.al, (2015) Media bias in policy discourse is a complex and multifaceted issue in India. It refers to the tendency of media outlets to report and analyze policy issues in a manner that is slanted toward specific political parties, ideologies, or interest groups. This bias can manifest in various forms, including selective reporting, sensationalism, and editorial opinions that align with a particular agenda. Several factors contribute to media bias in policy discourse in India. One of the most significant factors is the ownership structure of media outlets. This ownership can influence the editorial decisions of the outlet and lead to a bias in the reporting and analysis of policy issues. Another factor that contributes to media bias in policy discourse is the polarized political climate in India. The country has a highly competitive and divisive political environment, and media outlets may align themselves with specific parties or ideologies to gain a competitive advantage or cater to their audiences' preferences. Furthermore, the rise of social media and digital platforms has added another layer to the media bias discourse. Social media algorithms may promote content that reinforces users' existing beliefs, leading to further polarization and the spread of misinformation. Media bias in policy discourse is a prevalent issue in India, and it can have significant implications for policymaking and public opinion. Addressing this bias requires a multi-pronged approach, including promoting media literacy, encouraging independent and transparent media ownership, and creating a culture of accountability and responsible journalism.

Qayyum, A., Gilani, Z., et.al, (2018) highlights the prevalence of media bias and toxicity in the political discourse of four South Asian countries, namely India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine online news articles and social media posts related to political issues. The findings of the study reveal that media bias is often aligned with political affiliations, with media outlets favoring particular political parties or ideologies. The study also finds a high level of toxicity in the discourse, with the use of derogatory terms and ad hominem attacks being common in online news articles and social media posts. The study highlights the need for media literacy and responsible journalism to combat media bias and toxicity in South Asian political discourse. The paper emphasizes the importance of promoting diverse and pluralistic media environments that allow for a range of perspectives and opinions to be heard. It also suggests that media organizations need to adopt

self-regulatory mechanisms to ensure that their reporting is fair, balanced, and unbiased. The study concludes that addressing media bias and toxicity in South Asian political discourse requires a concerted effort from media professionals, policymakers, and civil society organizations to promote a more responsible and ethical media ecosystem.

Tyagi, S. (2017) aims to examine the perceptions and content of traditional and online news in India and analyze the extent of media biasness in the country. Traditional media outlets are perceived to be more credible than online news sources, both have a significant bias towards certain political parties and ideologies. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for media literacy and responsible journalism to combat media biasness in India. It suggests that media organizations should adopt self-regulation and transparency in their editorial policies and ownership, while audiences should be encouraged to critically evaluate news sources and fact-check information before sharing it on social media. Overall, the paper provides valuable insights into the complex issue of media biasness in India and offers recommendations for addressing it.

Dasgupta, B. (2017) concluded that media biasness and fake news are serious issues that can have far-reaching consequences on society, including eroding public trust in institutions, spreading misinformation, and stoking social and political tensions. Therefore, it is essential to tackle these issues systematically and collaboratively. In conclusion, tackling media biasness and fake news requires a multi-pronged approach that involves media professionals, regulatory bodies, civil society, and the public. While there are no easy solutions, promoting media literacy, self-regulation, independent watchdogs, transparency, and technology can help create a more accountable, trustworthy, and pluralistic media ecosystem in India.

Narayana, U., & Kapur, P. (2011) discussed the negative image portrayed by the media in the past has been known to reinforce the public's stereotypical and prejudiced perception of Muslims. This can be attributed to how media outlets have reported on issues related to the Muslim community, which has often been biased and sensationalized. For instance, news coverage of acts of terrorism or violence perpetrated by Muslims has often been framed in a way that suggests that such acts are inherently linked to the Muslim religion or culture. This kind of reporting can create a perception among the public that Muslims are inherently violent and prone to committing acts of terror. Similarly, media outlets have often used language that is derogatory

or stigmatizing when reporting on Muslims. This can contribute to negative stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims, which can then be reinforced by further media coverage that supports these stereotypes. The impact of such negative media coverage on public perceptions of Muslims cannot be overstated. It can lead to the stigmatization and marginalization of Muslims in society, as well as discrimination and even violence. This is particularly concerning given that India is a diverse country with many different religions and cultures, and all communities must be treated with respect and dignity.

McMillan, K., & Barker, F. (**2016**) analyzed the role of Chinese and Indian media in New Zealand's 2017 election, it is clear that ethnic media played a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior among these communities. The emergence of ethnic media as a force in political campaigning raises important questions about the nature of political discourse in diverse societies and the need to promote more inclusive and representative political communication. Chinese and Indian media in New Zealand are diverse and complex, reflecting the interests and concerns of their respective communities. The coverage of the election in these media outlets was extensive, with a focus on issues of particular importance to Chinese and Indian voters, such as immigration, education, and economic policy. Political advertising in ethnic media was effective in reaching these communities, with parties using language and imagery tailored to their interests and concerns. Therefore, there is a need for more transparent and ethical practices in political advertising, particularly in ethnic media outlets.

Objective of the Study

To study the Comprehensive perspective of Media Biasness in India

Methodology

The present study is based on a survey conducted with a structured questionnaire. In the analysis, there were 160 participants who took part. To identify the results, statistical techniques such as mean and t-test were employed. The research employed a convenience sampling method, where participants were selected based on their availability and accessibility.

Finding of the study

Table 1 provides information on the gender distribution of participants, where males account for 54.37% and females account for 45.62%. The table also presents data on the age distribution of participants, where 20 to 30-year-olds make up 21.87%, 30 to 40-year-olds make up 28.12%, 40 to 50-year-olds make up 18.21%, and those aged 50 and above account for 31.87%. The table also illustrates the various types of media consumed by the participants, where Television news channels account for 20.62%, Print newspapers account for 21.87%, Online news websites account for 16.25, Social media platforms account for 18.12%, Radio accounts for 14.37% and Others accounts for 8.75%. The table further indicates the frequency of media consumption among participants, where 38.75% of them consume media daily, 43.26% consume media once a week, 26.24% consume media monthly, and a few consume media rarely. Lastly, the table displays the participants' perception of media biasness, where 33.12% perceive the media to be completely unbiased, 36.25% perceive it to be moderately biased, and 30.62% perceive it to be highly biased.

Table1 Participant's Details

Variable	No. of respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	87	54.37%
Female	73	45.62%
Total	**160**	**100%**
Participant's Age		
20 to 30 years	35	21.87%
30 to 40 years	45	28.12%
40 to 50 years	29	18.21%
50 years above	51	31.87%

Total	160	100%
Type of media consumed		
Television news channels	33	20.62%
Print newspapers	35	21.87%
Online news websites	26	16.25%
Social media platforms	29	18.12%
Radio	23	14.37%
Others	14	8.75%
Total	160	100%
Frequency of media consumption		
Daily	59	36.87%
Once a week	43	26.87%
Monthly	39	24.37%
Rarely	19	11.87%
Total	160	100%
Perception of media biasness		
Completely unbiased	53	33.12%
Moderately biased	58	36.25%
Highly biased	49	30.62%
Total	160	100%

Table2 Comprehensive perspective of Media Biasness in India

Serial No.	Statement of Survey	Mean Value	t-Value	Sig.
1.	Tackling media biasness and fake news requires a multi-pronged approach that involves media professionals, regulatory bodies, civil society, and the public.	4.27	9.911	0.000
2.	The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few big corporations can lead to bias towards certain political ideologies or parties.	4.32	9.927	0.000
3.	Media houses need to maintain editorial independence and adopt self-regulatory mechanisms to ensure that their reporting is fair, balanced, and unbiased.	4.37	10.271	0.000
4.	Commercial pressures and regional biases can exacerbate media biasness.	4.29	7.966	0.000
5.	Media bias cannot spread misinformation and propaganda, which can mislead the public and undermine democracy.	3.97	4.974	0.000
6.	Media biasness can undermine the credibility of the media and lead to the propagation of misinformation and fake news.	4.49	11.815	0.000
7.	Media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion, particularly during election cycles and major events.	4.43	11.531	0.000
8.	There is a need for media literacy and responsible journalism to combat media biasness in India.	4.30	9.463	0.000
9.	Media biasness supports understanding and communication between different groups in society.	3.85	4.568	0.000
10.	There is a need for more transparent and ethical practices in political advertising in ethnic media outlets.	4.41	11.952	0.000

Table 2 summarizes the mean values for various statements related to the study of Comprehensive perspective of Media Biasness in India, and the highest mean score of 4.49 was obtained by the statement "Media biasness can undermine the credibility of the media and lead to the propagation of misinformation and fake news". The second highest mean score of 4.43 was obtained by the statement "Media plays a critical role in shaping public opinion, particularly during election cycles and major events". The study found that the media outlets had an impact on advertisements, as shown by the mean value of 4.41 for the statement "There is a need for more transparent and ethical practices in political advertising in ethnic media outlets". Another concern was fair and unbiased reporting due to "Media houses need to maintain editorial independence and adopt self-regulatory mechanisms to ensure that their reporting is fair, balanced, and unbiased", which had a mean score of 4.37, and the statement "The concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few big corporations can lead to bias towards certain political ideologies or parties" had a mean value of 4.32. The mean score for the statement "There is a need for media literacy and responsible journalism to combat media biasness in India" was 4.30, while the mean value of 4.29 was obtained for the statement "Commercial pressures and regional biases can exacerbate media biasness". And the mean value for the statement "Tackling media biasness and fake news requires a multi-pronged approach that involves media professionals, regulatory bodies, civil society, and the public" was 4.27. The last two statements, "Media bias cannot spread misinformation and propaganda, which can mislead the public and undermine democracy" and "Media biasness supports understanding and communication between different groups in society", had the lowest mean scores of 3.97 and 3.85, respectively. All statements had a significant t-value, indicating a positive impact on the Comprehensive perspective of Media Biasness in India, with a significance value of less than 0.05.

Conclusion

Media biasness is a complex and ongoing issue in India, and it requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach to address it. It is crucial for media outlets to maintain their objectivity and impartiality, as they play a critical role in shaping public opinion and informing the masses. However, the pressure to generate revenue and compete in a crowded media landscape can make it challenging to maintain these standards. In today's digital age, it is easier than ever for readers

to access news from a variety of sources and perspectives. This can help to counteract the effects of media biasness and ensure that readers are getting a more comprehensive picture of the issues at hand. As citizens, it is essential to be aware of media biasness and to approach news consumption with a critical eye, seeking out a diversity of viewpoints and opinions to form informed opinions on the issues that matter.

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