

A Comparative Study on Coverage of COVID-19 Awareness in Daily Newspapers of Rajasthan.

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Abstract:

The mass media has a significant influence in shaping public opinion. The media distribute information to the public, which subsequently disseminates the information to make people more aware of or modify their views or values. The dispersion of news and information influencing societal structure is referred to as the media effect. The purpose of this study is to compare the coverage of COVID-19 awareness in Rajasthan's major four newspapers, namely Rajasthan Patrika, Dainik Bhaskar, Times of India, and Hindustan Times. The study will be done for the months of June, July, and August 2021. The study takes a step forward by measuring the COVID-19 awareness news coverage area with qualitative and quantitative data. This research offers the researcher a method for involving the media in promoting COVID-19 awareness in Rajasthan. The analysis of these four newspapers revealed that the English-language newspapers published more information-based pieces and spread awareness among the general public, but the Hindi-language newspapers published very little or no material about COVID-19 awareness.

Keywords: COVID-19, Awareness, News Coverage, Language, Coverage area, Newspapers

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the highly contagious SARS-CoV-2 virus, emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, with symptoms ranging from common cold manifestations to severe respiratory illnesses akin to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (SARS-CoV), as identified by the World Health Organization (Wang et al., 2020). This novel virus rapidly traversed global boundaries, causing widespread impact.

Initially, awareness regarding the devastating effects of the virus was limited, and as it traversed from China to countries worldwide, its ominous effects became apparent. India reported its first case on January 30, 2020, in Thrissur, Kerala, with subsequent cases involving students returning from Wuhan. The situation escalated rapidly, prompting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to institute a nationwide lockdown from March 24 to April 14, 2020, later extended to May 3, and subsequently to May 30, 2020. This unprecedented pandemic has underscored the potent threat posed by a microscopically visible virus when left uncontrolled (Andrews et al., 2020; Bhat et al., 2021).

The pandemic has not only impacted public health but has also affected various sectors, including print media. In an era dominated by the internet and social platforms for real-time information, print media faced challenges in sustaining its operations. Numerous small media and publication houses experienced temporary closures or ceased publication during the lockdown (Sadeghi Dousari et al., 2020).

Amidst the current crisis, the media has become very important since it plays a critical role in educating and informing the public, therefore helping to preserve social order. This study primarily aims to investigate the extent to which Rajasthan's leading newspapers contribute to fulfilling the crucial duty of disseminating information related to the coronavirus. The research rigorously evaluates the extent to which these famous newspapers contribute to the intellectual development of their audience. This is accomplished by doing a thorough examination of the number and characteristics

of news articles focused on teaching and enhancing awareness about the virus, grasping its effects on the human body, and understanding preventative methods (Bhat et al., 2021).

The primary aim of this study is to provide vital insights into the significant role that these newspapers have played throughout the unusual COVID-19 outbreak. The research aims to analyze the information produced by various media sources to understand the extent of their involvement in crisis communication and their impact on public awareness. The detailed analysis aims to clarify the many ways in which the media, namely via sharing information about the coronavirus, impacts public comprehension, actions, and compliance with preventative measures. The study ultimately seeks to enhance our knowledge of how the media influences public awareness and facilitates informed decision-making during times of crisis, particularly in the context of the worldwide epidemic.

Research Problem

Newspapers are committed to providing information and illuminating the COVID-19 pandemic. The efficacy of their role in disseminating information and enlightening readers about the pandemic prompts relevant inquiries. This leads an evaluation of the effectiveness of newspapers in distributing information and whether they adequately educate the public on virus avoidance.

The evaluation focuses on the newspapers' effectiveness in both delivering information and ensuring its comprehensive communication to the readership. A crucial feature of this examination is whether the information proficiently enlightens users about steps to mitigate the transmission of the infection. Hence, it is imperative to conduct a rigorous evaluation to ascertain the newspapers' efficacy in disseminating information and fostering awareness and preventive measures during the existing pandemic.

Objectives

- To understand the various approaches and trends in covering such news in the daily newspapers namely Rajasthan Patrika, Dainik Bhaskar, Times of India, and Hindustan Times.
- To analyze the contribution of the leading print media of Jaipur in spreading awareness of COVID-19

Review of Literature

In June 2020, Dr. Shivaji Jadhav did a study examining the effects of COVID-19 on the Indian print media. He examines the financial difficulty encountered by the Indian print media and the impact of the virus on the sector and journalists during the lockdown. In his analysis, he determined that a significant proportion of print media professionals were impacted by the circumstances, experiencing compensation reductions and temporary employment suspensions. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in the business, leading to temporary closures of numerous minor publication firms. He asserted that the survival of the Print media industry hinges solely on government assistance; otherwise, the situation may deteriorate further in the future. Additionally, he emphasized that the future of Print Media is contingent upon the government's response to the demands put forth by newspaper groups, journalist associations, and political parties.

In April 2020, Hemant Kumar Pandey and Dr. Subhash Kumar conducted a research study on the impact of print media in disseminating awareness about the COVID-19 pandemic. The study involved surveying media professionals, academicians, bankers, housewives, and students in Jaipur, Rajasthan, using a structured questionnaire. The study determined that the print media, specifically the Rajasthan Patrika newspaper, has significantly contributed to disseminating information and raising awareness among readers on COVID-19. Furthermore, it has provided commendable coverage of news related to the pandemic. A significant number of participants in the research study have said that they acquire knowledge and enhance their comprehension of the COVID-19 virus by reading newspapers.

Dutta, Ankuran (2020) Beliefs and superstitions regarding COVID-19 Observations in India under shutdown In his study, the author examines the varied social culture of India and primarily concentrates on the persistence of superstitious and unfounded beliefs in the country, similar to historical occurrences. The study reveals that social media disseminated

numerous false or spurious superstitious contents during the COVID-19 lockdown, lacking any foundation or reputable source. Such superstitious narratives can instill anxiety or dread among individuals who are uneducated or lack the ability to verify the credibility of the news outlet. The author stated that during the shutdown the mainstream media has performed the crucial role in informing and teaching people about the COVID-19 and creating awareness on preserving oneself from such bogus or superstitious contents circulating all over the social platforms.

Dhanashree, Garg H, Chauhan A, Bhatia M, Sethi G, Chauhan G. (2019) Investigating the influence of mass media on the general public during the COVID-19 epidemic in North India: An online evaluation. This research study finds out that the social media platform plays crucial role in sharing information among the mass. The dissemination of news or information on social media platforms is largely lacking in credibility. Therefore, it is imperative to implement measures to regulate these platforms in order to prevent the propagation of false or deceptive information. Such misinformation can lead to the creation of insensitive situations within the nation. Research has revealed a significant surge in the utilization of the internet, television, and social media by individuals during the lockdown, in contrast to the relatively lower usage of newspapers, radio, magazines, and similar mediums. This research enhances my comprehension of utilizing social media and the internet, emphasizing the importance of exercising caution before disseminating or forwarding any material on these platforms, since it has the potential to propagate erroneous or fabricated content. Also taking the advantage of such strong platform one can use it to motivate others and promote knowledge about COVID-19 among people.

Significance of the study

The importance of this study rests in its endeavor to comprehend the dynamics of COVID-19 news coverage inside the realm of newspapers. The project seeks to provide insights into the media's role in distributing information during a global health crisis by measuring the output of COVID-19 news stories and examining how they are handled within a specific timeframe. This inquiry is essential for evaluating the responsiveness, precision, and comprehensiveness of newspapers in addressing the ongoing pandemic, so promoting a better-informed public.

Moreover, the study examines the wider impact of newspapers in disseminating health-related information, focusing specifically on the issue of COVID-19. Through this approach, it aims to elucidate the complexities of how print media influences public perceptions and comprehension of health-related matters. Understanding this information is crucial, not just for assessing the influence of the media on society, but also for promoting ethical journalism, particularly during a public health crisis.

Furthermore, the research seeks to provide insight into the distribution of physical area and attention dedicated to health news in printed media. Assessing the prevalence of health-related subjects, namely those pertaining to COVID-19, in newspapers is crucial for evaluating the emphasis placed on health information. This insight can play a crucial role in improving media tactics, raising public health awareness, and shaping legislation to ensure that important health information receives the appropriate attention in the media landscape.

Research Methodology

Measures of the study: The study's methodology centers on a comprehensive comparative analysis of COVID-19 awareness news stories, employing specific metrics such as the quantity of news published and the geographical scope covered. The unit of analysis is defined by news stories directly related to the awareness of COVID-19. Various types of articles, including news briefings, features, and editorials, were systematically selected for examination to ensure a nuanced understanding of the diverse ways in which information is presented. Notably, the study excludes letters to the editor, advertorials, and advertisements, focusing solely on editorial content to maintain a focused and rigorous analysis of the substantive news coverage related to COVID-19 awareness. This methodological approach aims to provide a thorough examination of the chosen editorial content, offering valuable insights into the depth and nature of media coverage regarding COVID-19 awareness.

Sample: The research design involved the deliberate selection of two newspapers in English, namely The Times of India and Hindustan Times, and two newspapers in Hindi, namely Rajasthan Patrika and Dainik Bhaskar. The rationale behind this selection was rooted in considering the newspapers' prominence in Rajasthan, with a focus on both English and Hindi languages to capture a diverse readership. The chosen newspapers were strategically picked based on their significant readership and highest circulation within the region, ensuring that the study's analysis reflects a broad and representative spectrum of media influence in Rajasthan. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the COVID-19 awareness news coverage across different linguistic and readership segments within the selected newspapers, enhancing the study's overall relevance and applicability to diverse audience groups.

The Times of India: The newspaper is an English daily newspaper owned and published by The Times Group by Bennett Coleman & Co. Ltd. It is the third largest newspaper in India according to circulation. The first edition of the newspaper was published on 3 November 1838 in India and it is the second oldest Indian daily newspaper in circulation in the country.

The Hindu: The Hindu group owns the daily newspaper named The Hindu, and established their headquarters in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. At first, the newspaper started its publication as a weekly newspaper in the year 1878 but after seeing the increased demand and more news stories they started daily publication of the newspaper from year 1889. It is the second most circulated newspaper in India in the English language.

Rajasthan Patrika: Karpoor Chandra Kulish founded the newspaper on 7th March 1956 as an Indian Hindi language newspaper which started publishing as Rajasthan Patrika in two states i.e. Delhi and Rajasthan and as Patrika in 9 other states of India.

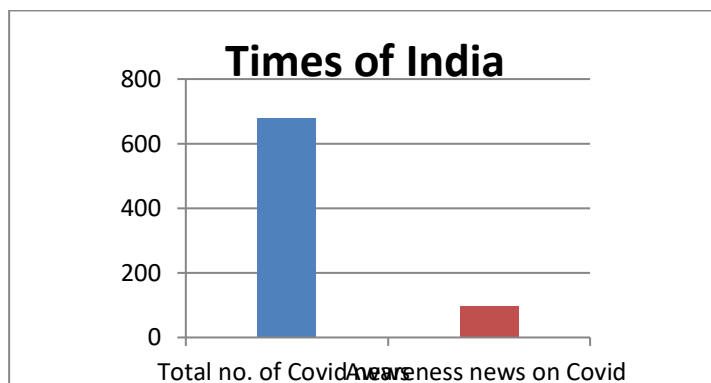
Dainik Bhaskar: The Dainik Bhaskar group owned the Dainik Bhaskar newspaper. The newspaper was founded 73 years ago in 1948 named Subah Savere in Bhopal and 10 years later in year 1958, it was finally named Dainik Bhaskar. The newspaper secured fourth place in the world according to circulation and ranked first in India in the circulation of the newspaper.

Period: The timeframe for the study was determined using the purposive sampling method, with a specific focus on the months of June, July, and August 2021. The sample encompasses editions from The Times of India, Hindustan Times, Rajasthan Patrika, and Dainik Bhaskar newspapers during this period. This approach ensures a targeted and representative analysis of COVID-19 awareness news coverage, offering valuable insights into the media's portrayal of pandemic-related information during a crucial and dynamic timeframe.

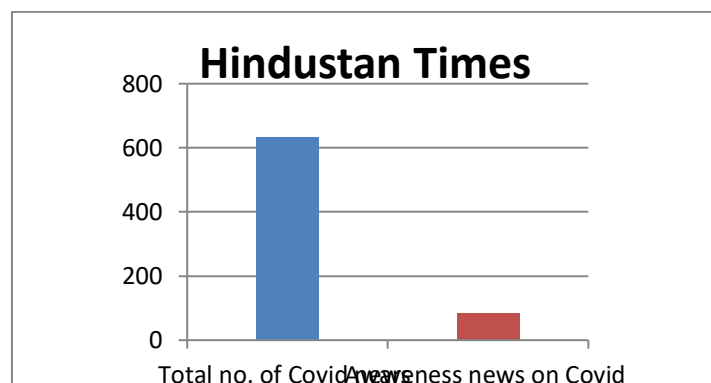
Results: The findings and analysis of four leading daily newspapers are as follows:

Newspaper	Total no. of news on COVID-19	Total news on awareness on COVID-19	Percentage%
Times Of India	678	97	14.30%
Hindustan Times	632	83	13.13%
Dainik Bhaskar	1125	63	5.6%
Rajasthan Patrika	1201	65	5.41%

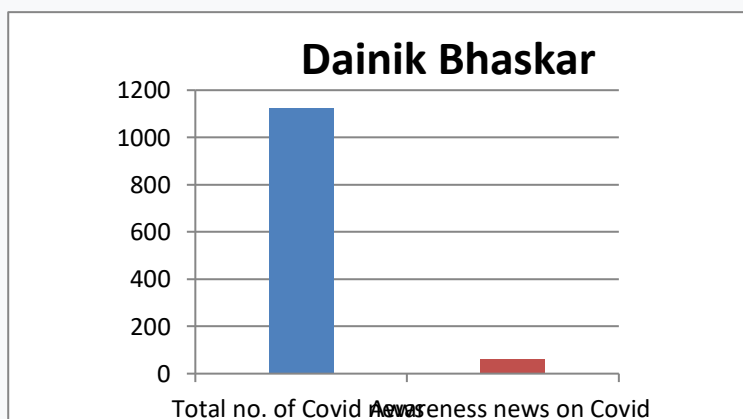
The above table states that the **Times of India** newspaper has published a total 678 no. of news on COVID-19 out of which 97 news are directly related to the awareness of COVID-19 including headlines like “Virus does not affect lungs but takes a toll on the heart too: experts” and “Speak Softly scatter fewer virus particles” etc. news that directly improving the knowledge on coronavirus and awaking the readers about its effect on human body. The newspapers have started a daily column named Corona Sutra in which the news or pictures related to awareness are published regularly.



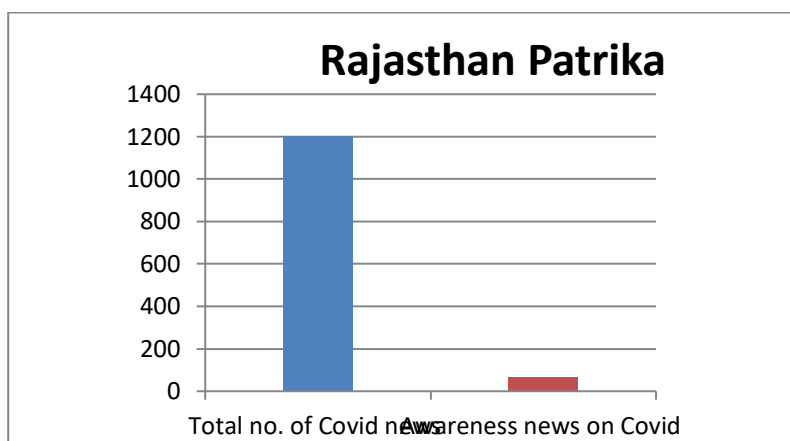
Hindustan Times newspapers published a total 632 number of news on COVID-19 out of which 83 news are directly related to awareness of COVID-19 including headlines like “COVID patients at risk of developing lung fibrosis” and “Obesity, diabetes raises risk of death due to COVID-19” etc. such news improves the knowledge of the readers about the virus. The newspaper has published a special edition on “immunity booster” with special reference to Coronavirus.



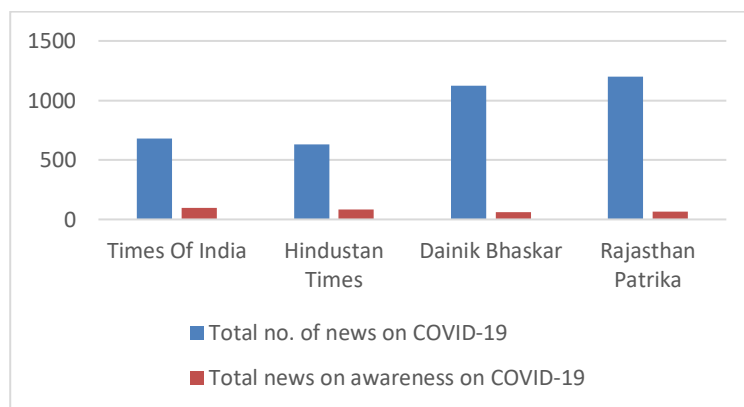
Dainik Bhaskar newspapers published total 1125 number of news on COVID-19 out of which 63 news are directly related to the awareness on COVID-19 including headlines like “विटामिन डी से कोरोना वायरस संक्रमण से बचाव के कमजोर सबूत”, “दिल को संभालिये क्योंकि कोरोना नेगेटिव रिपोर्ट के बाद भी रहता है क्लॉटिंग का खतरा” etc. as headlines suggest that how corona virus is effecting on human body.



Rajasthan Patrika newspapers published total 1201 number of news on COVID-19 out of which 65 news are directly related to the awareness on COVID-19 including headlines like “कोविड के दौरान फेफड़ों का रखें खास ध्यान”, “चश्मा भी करता है कोरोना वायरस के संक्रमण से आपका बचाव” etc. as headlines awaking about virus and precautions to safeguard from virus.



Comparative analysis of the news coverage :



Conclusion:

English media have a crucial role in informing readers about the complexities of COVID-19 and its effects on the human body. The transmission of information takes place via the publishing of news and articles specifically aimed at increasing awareness about the unique coronavirus illness. English media have made significant efforts to promote a better understanding of COVID-19 by publishing a variety of pieces, including interviews with experts and comments from professionals in health communication.

The research has identified a significant lack of coverage in Hindi newspapers about COVID-19 awareness, which is in sharp contrast to other sources of information. The quantitative research indicates a significant decrease in the number of news stories and publications discussing this important topic. Therefore, Hindi newspapers must prioritise and dedicate more attention to publishing educational articles and news stories that aim to enlighten, educate, and increase awareness among their readers about the intricacies of Covid-19.

Efforts should be made to prioritise the transmission of awareness-related information in Hindi publications, to promote a full grasp of preventative actions and tactics to protect oneself from infection. Expanding the reporting on COVID-19 in Hindi publications is a wonderful chance to make a substantial contribution to public health education and empowerment among the Hindi-speaking people.

Limitations of the study:

The research was limited by a limitation that restricted its attention only to the quantitative evaluation of published news pieces. The purposeful restriction was made by limiting the scope of study strictly to the numerical count of news items.

The purpose of this purposeful segmentation was to simplify the complexity of the study outputs and enable a more focused analysis of the defined parameter.

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