

Journalist Practices during COVID-19 Lockdown with a Focus on Human Rights Reportage in Indian Media

Shaikh Chand Ahmed¹, K. Nageshwar²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Communication and Journalism, University College of Arts and Social Sciences, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India- 500007
Corresponding author Email: [chandphd23\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:chandphd23[at]gmail.com)

²Professor, Department of Communication and Journalism, University College of Arts and Social Sciences, Osmania University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India- 500007
Email: [knhyderabad\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:knhyderabad[at]gmail.com)

Abstract: *Human rights are a fundamental aspect of global society, ensuring the protection and dignity of individuals across the world. The concept of human rights is rooted in the belief that every person deserves to be treated with respect and fairness, regardless of their background or circumstances. However, reportage of human rights issues lags behind other subjects such as politics, entertainment, civic issues, etc. The media too has its own share of challenges when reporting human rights, ranging from lack of cooperation from authorities to lack of access to authentic information, and inability to communicate with the victims of such violations. The challenges faced by the media, especially print, were even more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic changed the way news was reported and how facts were represented, even by the print media. One of the major aspects that received attention during the pandemic was the lack of adequate reporting on human rights issues, though it was the very period of time the world over, which saw the greatest restrictions and violations of basic human rights. A similar scenario existed in India too at the time, especially during the first Covid wave. The purpose of this research is to study journalistic practices by Indian media during the three month period of the first lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. A survey of 100 respondents working for various media houses and publications in varied positions was undertaken using a questionnaire to determine their opinion regarding the trends of human rights reportage during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. Using 'agenda setting theory' as the theoretical basis, this study examines the journalistic practices that were generally followed during the COVID-19 period, with a special focus on the reportage of human rights issues, and the attitude of journalists towards the same. The study found that the majority of the respondents found the reportage of human rights during the chosen period lacking, especially when it came to reporting on violations of human rights. Lack of adequate access to healthcare and experiences of COVID-19 survivors were found to be more widely covered. The restraints on freedom of movement were a major constraint for journalists in carrying out their duty. The interference of the government was found to be instrumental in the agenda setting of the news items. Overall, the survey results pointed towards a general belief in the efficiency and fairness of journalist practices, but a general dissatisfaction about the overall reportage of human rights issues.*

Keywords: COVID-19, Human rights, Human rights reportage, Journalist practices

1. Introduction

With an incremental rise in the use of social media, it has become a major challenge to retain viewers/ readers for a particular channel/publication, leading to even the print media becoming prey to the current weaknesses plaguing the mediascape, thus reducing the quality and fairness of its output. The challenges faced by the media, especially print, were even more pronounced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic played havoc with not just the jobs of those working for print media, but also changed the quality and nature of reporting in the newspapers. Fake news, misinformation and viral Whatsapp forwards were considered more credible than actual news reported in the television or newspaper. Attention spans of people reduced drastically, with an increased affinity for shorts and briefs rather than in—depth news stories.

The pandemic changed the way news was reported and how facts were represented, even by the print media. One of the major aspects that received attention during the pandemic was the lack of adequate reporting on human rights issues, though it was the very period of time the world over, which

saw the greatest restrictions and violations of basic human rights. Human rights reporting were at an all time low both qualitatively and quantitatively in electronic, print and even digital media. Reporters and editors faced challenges which had never been imagined before, leading to new scenarios and skewed prioritizations in choosing news stories for sharing with the audience.

The world over, the media compromised on communicating stories that really mattered, especially in the area of human rights. A similar scenario existed in India too at the time, especially during the first Covid wave. The current study therefore, aims to analyze the reportage of human rights through a study of the journalistic practices by Indian media during that period. The current study has attempted to interpret the same with a focus on publications/journalists from the city of Hyderabad, Telangana state.

1.1 Human Rights

Human rights are a fundamental aspect of global society, ensuring the protection and dignity of individuals across the world. The concept of human rights is rooted in the belief

that every person deserves to be treated with respect and fairness, regardless of their background or circumstances. According to the website of the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, “Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings - they are not granted by any state. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. They range from the most fundamental - the right to life - to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health, and liberty.” (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>)

According to Halvorsen (1990), the concepts of human dignity and intrinsic value of a human being, combined with those of natural rights and social justice, have envisioned the same: “the emancipation and freedom of human beings”, with the values of equality and social justice also playing a part in the constitution of these rights. However, freedom has different meanings, and different means to attain social justice, equality and freedom exist – which has led to two different types of rights and conventions to be formulated by the United Nations (UN), where one convention emphasizes the “economic, social and cultural aspects of freedom and equality” and the other emphasizing the “civil and political aspects of freedom and equality”. Therefore, the definition of human rights can be in terms of the external, objective world, and also in terms of the subjective, social world (Halvorsen, 1990).

On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) also called as the International Magna Carta, was adopted by the 56 members of the United Nations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a Preamble and 30 articles. Its preamble states that “Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.” (<http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-1/short-history.htm>) In India, the concept of human rights are embedded in the Indian Constitution, in Chapter III as Fundamental Rights of the individual (Articles 12 to 35). Six basic freedoms are promised through these fundamental rights: (1) Right to equality (2) Right to freedom (3) Right against exploitation (4) Right to religious freedom (5) Cultural and educational rights (6) Right to constitutional remedies. The right to freedom includes right to life and liberty, right to freedom of speech and expression, right to freedom of movement, etc.

1.2 Human rights reportage in print media

Human rights journalism is commonly interpreted as the reporting of human rights abuses, which is mostly applied in the case of victims of political violence. In some cases, it is connected with freedom of expression, a fundamental human right, which may be “enjoyed, denied or abused” by journalists. The main focus of human rights journalism is the role of the journalist or reporter in exposing the violations of human rights and secondly, exercising the right to free speech to communicate about human rights related issues. (Shaw, 2012)

It has often been found that traditional media or print media are found to be more reliable when it comes to reporting human rights issues (Tanta et. al., 2017). However, this does not mean that print media does not face any challenges in its quest to ensure fair human rights reportage. Several challenges to human rights reporting were brought to the fore by the International Council on Human Rights Policy (2002), such as (1) ignorance of what human rights are – lack of knowledge among journalists about what human rights are, and lack of awareness regarding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international human rights treaties and mechanisms; (2) Confusion about where human rights are – Journalists are often unable to believe and accept the fact that human rights violations occur in their country or vicinity, and often consider these as issues in foreign countries, war-torn nations and under-developed nations. (3) Unawareness of the scope of human rights – the media often sees human rights in terms of a narrow spectrum of civil and political rights. (4) Fear of partisanship – Many journalists believe that they are obliged to report from a pro-human rights perspective; some others believe their job to be that of reporting facts objectively, which is more of a cautious approach to avoid sounding biased. (5) Battle for space- news space for human rights issues is far less than what is devoted to other issues. There is more “reporting” than “coverage” in the case of human rights (ICHRP, 2002).

1.3 Journalist practices and challenges faced during pandemic:

During the pandemic, journalistic practices focused more on communicating issues necessary for tackling the crisis (mitigation, information and research), whereas the actual consequences arising from the lockdown were ignored (Eisele et. al., 2022).

Further, during the pandemic, it was not just journalistic routines and working practices which were affected, but also audience behaviour, especially in the case of digital journalism. Implementation of work-from-home practices, lay-offs and the loss of revenue from advertising affected journalism as a whole, but there was also a ‘creative destruction’ brought about by the pandemic, where journalists saw “critical reporting under threat” and “feared a media extinction event in developing countries”, triggered further by the limited freedom of speech and movement imposed by various countries’ governments. This fatally damaged the information system in some countries, and stimulated restructuring processes in reporting in others. The suppression of critical voices in reporting saw the erosion of press freedom, forcing journalists to stick to ‘safe topics’ rather than critically report the events of the COVID-19 pandemic, and rely heavily on politicians as sources of news (Quandt and Jorgensen, 2021).

2. Literature Review

Human rights advocacy organizations alone cannot uphold the sanctity of human rights. Though they can question the violators of human rights, the patterns of such violations unleashed by these perpetrators can be controlled only when the fourth pillar of democracy, i.e., the media, diligently

report and pursue such instances, lobbying for justice for the victims.

The media plays the role of an activist in trying to address such issues of human rights, and prod the system into taking action. This is precisely why the extent of reportage, and the kind of framing of human rights issues in the media, are of great importance, making this study relevant. Reporting of human rights issues in the print media is all the more relevant, as newspapers remain the primary source of news and information to a majority of Indians, and especially in regions where violation of human rights occurs more frequently.

Wright (2023) in an unpublished paper titled 'A Free Speech-based response to Media Polarization', available on the Social Sciences Research Network, argues that free speech is necessary for intervention of the greater good, and cannot be limited to self-protection and prevention of harm to others, and advocates for a broader moral framework. The author states that though social media is a victim of extreme polarization, distrust and animosity, measures to control it would require legal enforcement, which would again be counter-productive as it would interfere with freedom of speech and expression; instead, the author advocates for political social media reforms which are voluntary, pluralistic and critical (Wright, 2023).

The true expression of freedom was put to the test during the Covid pandemic and the lockdown. True numbers of Covid deaths, hardships caused to citizens in varying forms and unexpected effects on economy and society that had drastic impacts on humans either went unreported or under-reported by the media. Trends in media reportage showed patterns that were different from those observed in pre-Covid times, and have been studied extensively by research scholars.

A study by Rodrigues & Xu (2020) published in the *Media International Australia* studied the Indian and Chinese governments' response to the rise in fake news during the Covid pandemic. The study found that "China, with its authoritarian political system and stricter information control, has effectively restricted the circulation of fake news/rumours during COVID-19 outbreak". The Chinese government launched several campaigns to suppress fake news (called rumours) and in collaboration with search engines (companies), developed a "rumour reporting and reputation mechanism". Apart from punishing rumour mongers, the government used social media to give the public timely and authorized information. The study however, states that, "India as a democracy has had a mixed and chaotic track record in combatting fake news". Along with Internet shutdowns in the various parts of the country, the government attempted to control the information in the media, often shifting to an 'authoritarian regime'. In some cases, politicians belonging to the ruling party themselves doubted the government's effectiveness "by spreading unproven and inaccurate health information". (Rodrigues & Xu, 2020)

The reportage on issues related to fair wages, improved benefits, and better working conditions for social health activist workers during the Covid-19 epidemic by the Indian

media was explored by Raman & Kasturi (2023) in their review paper published in *Media and Communication*. The study covered accounts of a content analysis of COVID-19 related stories mentioning female nurses across three countries (the US, China, and India), a nationwide collaborative study of articles related to COVID-19 in 12 national newspapers, in seven languages by the NWMI, and the "framing of 'female organizing' during the pandemic to argue that the gaze employed by the media at the national and international levels tended to privilege existing hegemonies of caste and gender while local media 'confronted' this gaze", apart from several narratives from primary sources. The study concluded that "While a critical view of the media may place it in service of a capitalist market, there are elements within the journalistic enterprise that take on the task of social and political reform—particularly some online news outlets such as *The Wire* (<https://thewire.in>) and *Scroll.in* (<https://scroll.in>) that lie outside the corporatized structures and have maintained an adversarial or watchdog role". Except for a few opinion pieces, the mainstream media chose to go by its tried and tested routine reporting, ignoring the human rights issues angle in its coverage. (Raman & Kasturi, 2023)

A study by Pantic (2023), published in the *International Journal of Communication* analyzed news-gathering practices adopted by journalists during the Covid-19 pandemic, by conducting in-depth interviews with international journalists. The author coined the term 'Slippers journalism', "which accompanies working-from-home practices, suggesting that reporters primarily collected information for their stories online through social media, video apps, and other online sources", in contrast to the traditionally prevalent "shoe-leather" practices, which the author describes as more relevant in times of crisis. The collected data showed that "although reporters embraced digital alternatives in acquiring news, they stressed the importance of being on the ground, as it allows them to witness events, verify information, talk with sources, obtain unexpected facts, provide comprehensive coverage of diverse issues, and understand the context of events." The study further predicts journalism in the future to be a combination of the 'slippers' and 'shoe-leather' variety. (Pantic, 2023)

Mitchell (2023) surveyed the journalistic coverage of public health response to the pandemic in newspapers in the United States in a concept paper published in the journal "Societies". The study dwelt on the human rights angle, pointing out the under-reporting of the effect of lockdowns "in institutions for the disabled and elderly that ultimately changed little about public knowledge of the lives of disabled people who were always or already confined". Further, the study explored a critical journalism "revealed the mortality-dealing conditions of institutionalization beyond the acceleration of pandemic risk levels" where the government-run institutions and public care establishments let their disabled and elderly patients die without due care. The essay emphasizes the role of journalism in exposing "governmental miscounting, undercounting, and neglecting-to-count of disability deaths due to COVID-19" which would have prevented the same from being counted under the countless Covid-19 deaths under other categories. The

author argues that the opportunity to appropriately cover disability institutionalization and human rights of the elderly and disabled (who were at the highest risk) in the context of Covid was lost by the media, despite the widespread coverage and media saturation on topics related to Covid management and public health policy. (Mitchell, 2023)

Another study by Neureiter et. al. (2021) published in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*, studied the role of media in influencing people's behaviour in Austria during the Covid crisis, and the nature of media reporting in changing people's perception about the pandemic. The researchers conducted a two-wave panel survey between March/April 2020 and May 2020 with an interval of one month, using online polling as a tool. In the first wave, data was collected from 731 participants, and in the second wave, from 416 participants. The study found that citizens were displaying an "asymmetrical compliance" with regard to preventive measures, which can interfere with public health and safety. As per the data collected during that period, people exhibited this attitude as a result of the belief that the media coverage on pandemics was exaggerated, despite the important role played by media during such a serious health crisis. The results showed that the journalistic practices during that period led to information fatigue amongst the public, due to the focus on the dangers of the virus and the insistence on following safety measures. (Neuriter et. al., 2021)

3. Research Questions

- a) What kind of journalistic practices were in vogue during the first lockdown of the pandemic?
- b) What was the perception and attitude of journalists, whether reporters or editors, towards coverage of human rights during the Covid lockdown?

4. Theoretical Framework

The fact remains that media content cannot be expected to reflect reality in a statistically representative manner. As per the functionalist theory, where media is seen as agents of social control, media content would be expected to over-represent the "dominant social and economic values of the society" (McQuail, 2010). The social reality of inequality shifts attention of the media towards what or who, are more popular and more powerful – whether it is people, society or nations. (McQuail, 2010). This research study basically draws on the Agenda Setting theory, which is defined as "the process of the mass media presenting certain issues frequently and prominently with the result that large segments of the public come to perceive those issues as more important than others." (Wahl-Jorgensen, K., & Hanitzsch, 2009)

5. Research Methodology

The research method adopted for this study was the Survey method, modelled in the quantitative research design. The population for the study consisted of journalists (reporters, editors, other media professionals, those in media-related jobs) currently or previously working/ posted in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, with a majority posted in Hyderabad.

A sample of 100 respondents was chosen through the non-probability sampling technique of snowball sampling (as there is no specific list of journalists, it was not possible to do random sampling).

The research instrument used was an online questionnaire built through Google Forms made of three parts – Part A, B and C, where Part A collected demographic information like age, qualification, etc. The actual questions related to the study were included in Parts B and C, with 7 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) in Part B and 14 statements/questions on a 5-point Likert scale with the options (1) Strongly agree (2) Agree (3) Neither agree nor disagree (4) Disagree (5) Strongly disagree.

Respondents who answered the questionnaire mainly consisted of post-graduates (74%), followed by graduates (16%) and PhD holders (10%).

The age of the participants ranged between 25 and >55, of which the highest number of participants belonged to the '35-44' age bracket (49%), followed by those in '45-54' age bracket (32%).

About 54% of the respondents were working for print media, followed by 22% for digital media. The rest were distributed among radio, television and other government/non-government institutions.

6. Results and Discussion

When analyzing the answers to Part -B multiple choice questions, the following results were derived:-

- 1) According to the respondents, web/digital media carried out the most effective coverage of important issues during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown (38%) followed by television (29%) and thirdly, print media (25%). This shows not only the efficiency of web/digital media in covering issues, but also gives clues of their wide reach.
- 2) However, in the case of reporting human rights, traditional media triumphed over new media. Print media was considered the most effective in communicating stories on violations of human rights (40%) followed by web/digital media (35%) and then, television (25%).
- 3) Respondents opined that they came across human rights stories in the print media/newspaper of their choice only "sometimes" (34%), followed by "rarely" (24%), "often" (22%) and "very often" (20%). This shows that more often than not, human rights stories and reportage were missing from the most trusted/ followed news sources.
- 4) In most cases (41%), the response of the editorial team of the publication/media house that the journalists were working for, with reference to prioritizing reportage on human rights issues was "positive", followed by a 'neutral' stand ("neither positive, nor negative) (34%) and "very positive" (16%). This shows that media houses/ editorial teams were mostly in favour of investigating and publishing news stories on human rights.
- 5) The main issues that respondents felt had been most often reported during the lockdown include 'lack of

adequate access to healthcare” (41%) followed by ‘experiences of Covid victims/survivors’ (30%) and migrant labour issues (28%).

- 6) The issues that the respondents felt been under-reported or not reported at all included experiences of Covid victims/survivors (37%), lack of adequate access to healthcare (33%) and lack of education (30%). This is evidence of the fact that even the most often reported issues were lacking and not adequate enough to meet the target audience’s needs.
- 7) Of the challenges faced by the reporters/journalists during Covid -19 when reporting human rights issues, the major challenge identified was the “restraint on freedom of movement” (40%) followed by “lack of credible sources/ dependence on government press releases for information (26%).

When analyzing the answers to Part - C - Likert scale questions, the following results were derived:-

- a) Print media was able to comprehensively cover various issues of relevance during the first lockdown period of the Covid pandemic.
Results: Strongly agree-32 %, Agree- 36 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 20 % Disagree - 8 %, Strongly Disagree - 4 %.
- b) The coverage of human rights issues in print media during the Covid pandemic/lockdown was satisfactory.
Results: Strongly agree-12%, Agree- 51%, Neither agree nor disagree - 20% Disagree - 17 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- c) Investigative/ in-depth stories on human rights issues were favoured for publication by editors/reporters during the Covid pandemic/lockdown.
Results: Strongly agree- 28 %, Agree - 36 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 13% Disagree -23 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- d) There was adequate follow-up reporting carried out in print media on various human rights issues during the Covid pandemic/lockdown
Results: Strongly agree- 20 %, Agree - 44 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 16 % Disagree - 20 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- e) The reportage of human rights issues in newspapers during the Covid pandemic/lockdown was felt to be from reliable sources.
Results: Strongly agree- 24 %, Agree - 46 %, Neither agree nor disagree -26 % Disagree - 4 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- f) The reportage of human rights issues in newspapers during the Covid pandemic/ lockdown was felt to be fair and unbiased.
Results: Strongly agree- 4 %, Agree - 60 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 20% Disagree - 16 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- g) There is no difference in the reportage of human rights issues before the onset of Covid and after the imposition of lockdown during the pandemic’s first wave.

Results: Strongly agree-12 %, Agree - 20 %, Neither agree nor disagree -29 % Disagree - 39 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.

- h) The interference of the government was instrumental in the agenda setting of news items/themes in the newspapers during the Covid-19 lockdown.
Results: Strongly agree- 17 %, Agree -55 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 20% Disagree - 8 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- i) Reportage of human rights issues was a priority for the editorial team of your publication/ media organization during the Covid-19 lockdown.
Results: Strongly agree-28 %, Agree - 44 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 12% Disagree - 16 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- j) Challenges of reporting human rights issues increased, compared to other issues, during the Covid-19 lockdown period.
Results: Strongly agree-26 %, Agree -46 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 16 % Disagree - 12 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- k) The human rights stories that appeared in newspapers during the Covid-19 lockdown period had high credibility.
Results: Strongly agree-32 %, Agree - 41 %, Neither agree nor disagree -23 % Disagree -4 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- l) Stories on human rights issues were often rejected/ killed due to reporting/editorial decisions
Results: Strongly agree-16%, Agree- 23%, Neither agree nor disagree- 37% Disagree - 20 %, Strongly Disagree - 4 %.
- m) Several violations of human rights went unreported during the Covid-19 lockdown period.
Results: Strongly agree- 32 %, Agree - 56 %, Neither agree nor disagree - 8 % Disagree - 4 %, Strongly Disagree - 0 %.
- n) There were higher editorial constraints when making decisions on reporting of human rights violations/ issues during the COVID -19 pandemic lockdown.
Results: Strongly agree-23 %, Agree- 49%, Neither agree nor disagree-16% Disagree- 12%, Strongly Disagree-0%.

By interpreting the results above, it is evident that 68% of respondents felt that print media was able to do justice to covid-19 coverage during the first lockdown, and 63% felt that human rights coverage was also satisfactory. But atleast 17% disagreed with this observation. Similarly, 64% journalists also felt that in-depth investigative pieces were favoured for publication during the first lockdown period, and 64% felt there was adequate follow-up reporting carried out, overall showing a positive attitude and perception to the coverage of human rights by print media. Further, 72% agree that reportage was from reliable sources and 64% felt such reportage was fair and unbiased. 72% of the

respondents also agreed that the challenges to covering human rights issues increased during the lockdown, even though they believe that the stories had high credibility. This shows that journalists' practices while reporting human rights issues during the Covid pandemic/lockdown was fair and unbiased, with credible sources preferred for reporting and the maximum possible done to include human rights reportage in the general news hole.

The attitude of media houses/editorial teams towards covering human rights stories prima-facie appears positive, with 72% agreeing that it was prioritized. 16% of journalists, however, disagree, showing that there were at least some publications which did not want to cover human rights issues on priority. Further, most journalists are non-committal (37%) regarding the fact that human rights stories were often killed/rejected due to reporting/ editorial decisions, while 49% agree that this scenario existed in discouraging human rights reportage. But 72% of the respondents also agree with the justification that there were higher editorial constraints when making decisions on reporting of human rights violations/ issues during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Despite the belief of journalists that the existing human rights reportage by themselves and their peers in the print media, and their respective media houses has been fair and factual, there is a huge percentage (88%) which feels that several violations of human rights went unreported during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

In fact, most journalists are either neutral (29%) or agree that there is not much difference in the reportage of human rights issues before the onset of Covid and after the imposition of lockdown during the pandemic's first wave. There is also a strong perception that the interference of the government was instrumental in the agenda setting of news items/themes in the newspapers during the COVID-19 lockdown, supported by 77% of the journalists.

7. Conclusion

The results of the study overall point to a better coverage of the Covid-19 issues on web/digital media, but a more sincere reportage of human rights issues in the traditional print media. The study shows that journalistic practices during the Covid-19 lockdown have been fair, relying on credible sources and covering issues of relevance despite increased challenges of lack of freedom of movement. However, media houses, though generally supportive towards human rights coverage, had their hands tied with editorial constraints and could not encourage further focus on human rights reportage. The agenda setting by the government is also found to be instrumental in deciding the news reportage that reaches the target audience. Though the coverage of human rights issues during the selected period was sincere and extensive, it could not cover the entire range of human rights violations occurring during that period, with several major violations being ignored, overlooked, or going unnoticed and some human rights stories being killed rejected by editorial decisions. Therefore, this study shows that though efforts were on by journalists to cover human

rights issues, the actual coverage was mostly lacking and inadequate to be able to meet the true reality of human rights violations faced during that period by the common man. There is a need, therefore, to sensitize both media houses and journalists to seek out and cover human rights issues, especially times of crisis, in order to bring to the fore the various human rights violations and abuse happening locally and globally, to ensure a safer and more just environment for all human beings to thrive in.

References

- [1] A short history of human rights. (n.d.). <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/hereandnow/Part-1/short-history.htm>
- [2] Eisele, O., Litvyak, O., Brändle, V. K., Balluff, P., Fischeneder, A., Sotirakou, C., Syed Ali, P., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2022). An emotional rally: exploring commenters' responses to online news coverage of the COVID-19 crisis in Austria. *Digital Journalism*, 10(6), 952-975.
- [3] Halvorsen, K. (1990). Notes on the Realization of the Human Right to Education. *Hum. Rts. Q.*, 12, 341.
- [4] International Council on Human Rights Policy. (2002). *Journalism, media and the challenge of human rights reporting*. ICHRP.
- [5] McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. Sage publications.
- [6] Mitchell, D. T. (2023). Disability Ghosting in the Double Lockdown Institution of COVID-19. *Societies*, 13(7), 170.
- [7] Neureiter, A., Stubenvoll, M., Kaskelveciute, R., & Matthes, J. (2021). Trust in science, perceived media exaggeration about COVID-19, and social distancing behavior. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 670485.
- [8] Pantic, M. (2023). Reporting in the Age of Coronavirus: Alternating Between "Shoe-Leather" and "Slippers" Journalism. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 18.
- [9] Quandt, T., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2021). The coronavirus pandemic as a critical moment for digital journalism: Introduction to special issue: Covering Covid-19: The coronavirus pandemic as a critical moment for digital journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 9(9), 1199-1207.
- [10] Raman, U., & Kasturi, S. (2023). The frontlines and margins: Gendered care and Covid-19 in the Indian media. *Media and Communication*, 11(1), 102-113.
- [11] Rodrigues, U. M., & Xu, J. (2020). Regulation of COVID-19 fake news infodemic in China and India. *Media International Australia*, 177 (1), 125-131.
- [12] Shaw, I. S. (2012). Human rights journalism. *Advances in Reporting Humanitarian Interventions*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- [13] Tanta, I., Barić-Šelmić, S., & Levak, T. (2017). The level of credibility of traditional and new media in reporting on human rights issues. *Collegium antropologicum*, 41(3), 215-229.
- [14] Wahl-Jorgensen, K., & Hanitzsch, T. (Eds.). (2009). *The handbook of journalism studies*. Routledge.
- [15] What are human rights? | ohchr. (n.d.). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/what-are-human-rights>

- [16] Wright, R. G. (2023). A Free Speech-Based Response to Media Polarization. *Available at SSRN*.

Author Profile



Shaik Chand Ahmed has completed his B. Tech and M.A. in Mass Communication and Journalism. He is currently a research scholar pursuing his PhD in Mass Communication and Journalism at Osmania University.



K. Nageshwar is an Indian professor, politician, and political analyst. He served as member of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council and subsequently in Telangana Legislative Council during 2007 to 2015. Nageshwar is a professor at the Department of Communication & Journalism, Osmania University, Hyderabad, India.