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## Freedom of media and politics in India: The truth or a façade?

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### ABSTRACT

*Free press and media can be defined as tools provided to media organizations which are not controlled or restricted by government censorship in political or ideological matters. The Constitution of India provides freedom to the press so that they can express and criticize the government as well as their actions in a balanced manner. While the exact definition is variable, politics can be generally defined as a component of a nation, structured in a hierarchical order, with a responsibility to govern and ensure the well-being of the citizens. The main objective of the paper is to investigate the relationship between Media and politics and the impact they have on each other. In total, 208 people were received and were used for the final analysis and to explore the current socio-political scenario in the country due to the lockdown imposed during April- May, 2021. The sample size satisfies the requirements for the result analysis. The random sampling method was used to establish a link between media, politics and the people. The results revealed that there is a strong relationship between media and politics and they favour each other to further their own agenda and to strengthen their popularity and to remain in power and to dominate in the market. The study discovered a new dimension to the issue that even the people of this country are somewhat responsible for the present media crisis and political corruption. The media and the government are setting the trend of working together and are being accused of endorsing political propaganda instead of reporting the truth. The researchers dealt deeper into the reasons as to why the press had to incorporate politics and their agendas to survive and the impact the media has on people in sustaining democracy in a country like India. As this is a conceptual topic, one can find the application of a combination of both primary and secondary data for the study.*

**Keywords:** Free Press, Politics, Power Balance, Democracy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The researchers attempt to focus on the state of free press and media in India and the effects of politics and their agendas. The Constitution of India provides every citizen with the Freedom of Speech and Expression in Article 19 (1) (a), which also includes Freedom of Press. The cornerstone of any democracy is the presence of a media that is free, independent, and powerful. Media is one of the essential tools that helps in expressing one's views and developing a public opinion on several issues and agendas. Democracy is nothing but the rule of the people and the Indian society is based on three pillars—the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. However, unfortunately, the Indian society has become a bit unstable due to the three pillars not executing their roles in the manner that they should have but failed to do. Thus, the Constitution of India has bestowed upon what is called a fourth pillar and that is the press. Even though the press is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy and needs to be more sensitive to the needs and wants of the people, they are criticized for focusing on insignificant activities. Since India's early independence, people have risen together, and they realized that the press needs to understand and deal with any issues related to the government which, over the years, has given way to the increase in accountability on the part of the media organizations to work for the people.

Freedom of Press includes the liberty to be able to publish any kind of matter, or agenda, freedom to be able to access all sources of information as well as the freedom to circulate anywhere. It is said to also include the freedom of expression as well as to have opinions without any form of interference. However, there have been allegations regarding this in the press which will be discussed and substantiated later in the paper, where politicians have forcefully or through bribery bought off several news stories or stopped their broadcasting. This was the trend followed by the British before India's independence under the Vernacular Press Act (1878). This act imposed many restrictions on the press and exempted them from publishing any form of criticism towards the

British Government so that the people could not stand against them in a united front. The strict law made it impossible to exercise freedom of the press while working under a pretence of just a few restrictions on freedom.

Referring to the Press Council of India (PCI) and its role, PCI is a regulatory division of the government that keeps a strict eye on the press under the Press Council of India Act (1966). While one of the main objectives of PCI is to protect the freedom of the press on one hand, and on the other it has been failing to expose the government. This statement can be supported with evidence as to what Dr. B. R. Gupta, ex-member of PCI said before resigning from his post. He stated that "PCI has failed to perform its role actively at a time when the media needs it the most" as he handed in his resignation as a Member of the Council. Amongst many others that are similar, this statement stands as proof that there has been a disconnect between reporting what is right and what the people need.

The media plays a major role in the nation's demographic pursuits, such as policymakers' agendas, and influences voters' criteria to evaluate the candidates for elections. Hence, the way the media operates and performs in the society affects the country's overall development.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To discuss and examine the features and functions of the role of a free press in India.
- To analyse the importance of freedom of the press and people's access to news in a fair and balanced manner.
- To analyse the Role of PCI in ensuring freedom of the press as a regulatory body.
- To examine the relationship between media, politics, and the strain in this 'relationship' if any.
- To study the impact of biased news reporting on the citizens and democracy of a country.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the "Media and Politics, Annual Review of Economics, Vol. 7:173-205 (Volume publication dated August 2015)"<sup>1</sup> paper, the author mentions that the current day media carries a vital role among political activities of every kind, ranging from broadcasting of crucial political episodes and institutions to effects on plebiscites and campaigns. It also creates a significant impact on a person's life by delivering prospects for self-erudition as well as entertainment. The media has a robust part to play in a nation, as people have begun to consider television, newspaper, radio, magazines, tabloids, and the Internet as the basis on which to comprehend ideas and act in the world. Therefore, media has the ability and potential to impact people's attitude, opinions as well as behaviours around many radical issues such as gender, ethnicity and age.

The paper, "The Media's Role in Fighting Corruption: Media Effects on Governmental Accountability"<sup>2</sup> highlights the capacity of journalists to openly report on proceedings of public interest which is very important for survival of democracy. A free media can create awareness of their leaders' victories or wrongdoings, informs the administration regarding the necessities and aspirations of the people, and facilitates a ground for open interchange of propositions and ideas. A strong correlation between corruption and media freedom can be drawn from this observation- a low level of corruption leads to a high level of media freedom. This study also indicates that media freedom might have more significant indirect consequences on corruption when combined with strong insights into responsibility. According to the data of this study, the correlation between corrupt governments and freedom of media is much more significant in nations with parliamentary system than ones with other forms of government. This ramification builds up with an increase in judiciary independence.

In the "Timothy Besley, Robin Burgess, The Political Economy of Government Responsiveness: Theory and Evidence from India, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 117, Issue 4, November 2002"<sup>3</sup> paper, the authors have proven the need for active and responsible journalism for the betterment of the people. They created a model that proved this very point through the means of a survey. The model's ideas were tested on the people of India where it was noted that the government was more responsive and responsible in areas where the people had access to proper newspaper circulation. This showed that the government feels the need to be more responsible for their actions with a more informed public.

As per the analysis in the paper "W. Lance Benett & Steven Livingston (2003) Editors' Introduction: A Semi-Independent Press: Government Control and Journalistic Autonomy in the Political Construction of News, *Political Communication*, 20:4, 359-362, DOI: 10.1080/10584600390244086"<sup>4</sup>, the authors show concern over the freedom or autonomy of press and media in setting a political agenda. The authors have debated if and when can a journalist be free to write and report freely and without any pressure while there is not much space to publish hard news anymore, the little free and open space which is available is not being utilized to its full potential.

According to Roumeen Islam, Simeon Djankov, and Caralee McLeish "The Right to Tell - The Role of Mass Media in Economic Development"<sup>5</sup> a free press is said to be a basic right. The authors observe that the free press and media are the gateways to true democracy. They argue that by restricting the reach and freedom of the press, the development and betterment of the nation will also come to a halt. The paper gave several sources as examples proving this statement as the authors quoted examples regarding media reporting on corruption, acting as a mediator between the people and the government, enabling communication of ideas between the two.

In the Besley, Timothy and Andrea Prat. 2006. "Handcuffs for the Grabbing Hand? Media Capture and Government Accountability."<sup>6</sup> *American Economic Review*, 96(3):720-736. DOI: 10.1257/aer.96.3.720 paper, the authors observed a model of media capture which focuses on media bias that is influenced by political capture. The fundamental message made clear in this paper is that all the laws enshrined in the Constitution to safeguard media freedom still provide no assurance of a media industry

that is untouched by political involvement. The authors of the paper clearly state that even without injunction, the state can manipulate news by establishing a “cozy” bond with the media sector. In democratic politics, a government that exercises endogenous media capture can influence political outcomes.

In addition, certain types of news may be unregulated while other types of news may be highly regulated, for instance, economic news is way less regulated than purely political news. The government has manipulated laws not only to legitimize their actions against the media but also to safeguard the rights of the media. Opponents of public ownership of media argue that media can enable manipulation and tampering of information to favour the incumbent government.

These days, television has become a watchdog on the government’s movements as they wield significant power of influence over the government by pressurizing them. Television Rating Point (TRP) is the only aspect that the media seems to care about; for example, the untimely death of the Indian actress Sridevi in a Dubai hotel became a media frenzy, especially on television. The media have been using a person’s death for higher TRPs crossing the line and boundaries, which is very much evident as far as exploitation of a person’s life and their loved ones. In October of 2020, three news channels including Republic TV were charged for manipulating TRP ratings by the Mumbai Police. They did so by installing 2000 barometers in the city. Some of the people were also sent to households on behalf of these channels. They paid ₹400–500 a day to viewers to constantly operate these channels<sup>7</sup> Source- *Times of India* (TOI).

When we talk about fake news and manipulated information on Indian television, we have to mention the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June of 2020. The media botched the investigation of his death even before it was finished. Initially, police stated that it was a death caused by suicide. Multiple news channels sensationalized his death and made false allegations on people surrounding the circumstances of his death. Many conspiracy theories came about, alleging that he was murdered. The media even exposed personal details of the deceased such as his mental health situation before his demise, WhatsApp chats with his then-girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, and even his internal family matters. They also propagated false news regarding the cause of his death without sufficient evidence. Following the filing of an FIR by Sushant’s family on his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty and three of her family members, news channels and anchors penalized and shamed her on live television without much evidence. Interestingly, a politician’s son too was involved in this case as he had attended a party hosted by Sushant a day before his death. In conclusion, whatever the cause of his death might have been, the young actor was robbed of his dignity even during death, thanks to the incompetent and clout-hungry news media and journalists.

When the present government came to power in 2014, Prime Minister Modi essentially cut off all communication with the media. He only voiced his messages through tweets, staged interviews with appointed and inauthentic journalists, and radio programmes like “Mann Ki Baat.” To this day, PM Narendra Modi does not attend any of the Press Conferences. In yet another instance, the Government of India cut off Jammu and Kashmir from the world by blocking telecom and the Internet in August of 2019. This action was taken after the government revoked Article 370 which gave Jammu and Kashmir Autonomous status in India. This outright violation of Right to freedom of speech and expression against Kashmiri population was carried out to prevent Kashmiri Media Houses and journalists from passing on important information and reporting about the coercion, illegal detention, and use of brute force on peaceful protesters by the government officials and the Indian military. The government did not want to face scrutiny or take accountability for the disruption of peace and crimes carried out against the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir. The government cited the reasons for the restrictions on the Internet and media as a measure to avoid terrorism, the dispersion of false news, and militants organizing assaults.<sup>8</sup> This incident alone is enough to prove that independent media is collapsing drastically in India Source- *VOA News* (Article by Bilal Hussain).

Radio news on privately owned radio stations is banned in India. Current affairs, political or socio-economic news is only broadcasted on All India Radio (AIR) which is a state government-owned station. Private FM radio channels are allowed to broadcast any other form of content such as entertainment, music, and advertisements. Private FM channels were recently allowed to air unedited news segments taken from AIR, Doordarshan, Press Trust of India (PTI), etc., all of which are again, government owned. In 2013, an NGO wrote a letter to the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, questioning the government policy which bans airing of free news on privately owned radio channels; it also stated that the policy violates Fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression. When they failed to receive a response to this letter, it prompted them to file a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court. In response to this, the Indian government filed an affidavit that stated that banning news on privately owned FM broadcasting stations would promote anti-national ideas within the country and abroad. People can misuse the platform to promote their agenda which would be harmful to the national interest.

The above evidence proves that the government imposes control as well as manipulates all forms of mass media including the radio. It is essential to keep in mind that radio is one of the most widely used forms of mass media, exceeding even the TV or Internet. It reaches a vast majority of the Indian population including people living in rural areas. This gives the government more reason to impose restrictions on news broadcasting on the radio. In conclusion, a lot of the crucial information received in this country is manipulated to favour the ruling party which is elected by the people.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The present study was conducted on the free of media and politics in Bangalore. Further the data was collected from 208 people and a descriptive analysis was conducted as a part of the research study. Besides, the literature review was collected from various secondary resources including Newspaper articles, research journals, blogs, etc; . For the purpose of the study, the primary data were collected by online questionnaire using the random sampling method and Google forms were administered for the collection of primary sources of data from across various sections of the society.

4. RESULT ANALYSIS

The questionnaire’s analysis helps to justify the objectives undertaken for this research paper. The online survey will help in establishing whether the media is being controlled by the government or it is free. It portrays the actual relationship between the media and the political scenario of the country through the primary survey and about 208 respondents responded to the questionnaire administered to elicit their views on freedom of media and politics to understand and analyse the current situation in the country.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

TABLE 1.1

AGE GROUP	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF RESPONSES
18–25	70.3%	174
26–35	8.6%	18
36–50	16.3%	34
51–70	3.8%	8
Prefer not to say	1%	2

TABLE 1.2

GENDER	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF RESPONSES
Male	52.2%	109
Female	45%	94
Prefer not to say.	2.8%	6

TABLE 1.3

OCCUPATION	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF RESPONSES
Students	58.3%	122
Employed	38.2%	80
Others	3.3%	7

The questionnaire targeted mainly the age group of 18–25 to find out whether the people in this age group were more inclined towards politics and considering the current age for voting. The survey revealed that the younger generation is more tech-savvy, whereas the older generation might not be comfortable with online surveys. Most males filled the questionnaire and females were few which may be attributed to the number of educated males being higher in proportion and better than their counterparts.

On examining the pattern of consumption of news, it was found that 59% of the respondents were very positive and trusted in the ballot box and showed interest in electing the government. This is also an indicator of youngsters’ involvement and need for good governance while studying the political situation in the country. It is also evident from the study that 84% of the people regularly follow political news as conveyed through the primary survey. People are following political news regularly which implies that they want to gain more knowledge on politics and be more politically aware, and almost 52% of the people prefer political/economic news over entertainment news. However, there is a close call between the preference as almost 48% of people prefer entertainment news. This may be because they just prefer to read entertainment news and after a day’s work, they prefer to remain stress-free.

Which of the following will you consider as your primary source of news and information?

209 responses

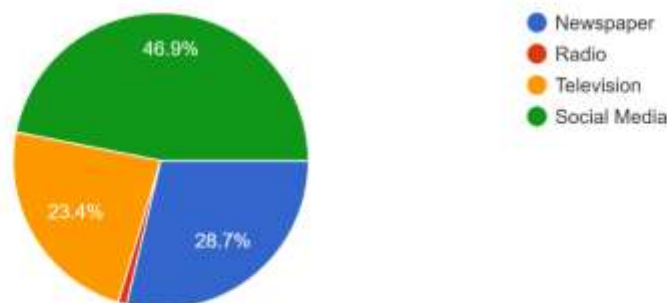


Fig. 1: Media Consumption Pattern among People as per the Survey

From the question which relates to social media and the question posed about “Should the press be given all the freedom or should restrictions be imposed?”, it was observed that almost 47% of the people from the age group 18–25 years like to get their information through social media followed by newspapers which is their second source of information, and which is evident in our analysis and is considered more reliable than television (which is trusted by 23% of people). However, radio has lost its relevance as only 2 people consider it to be their primary source of information.

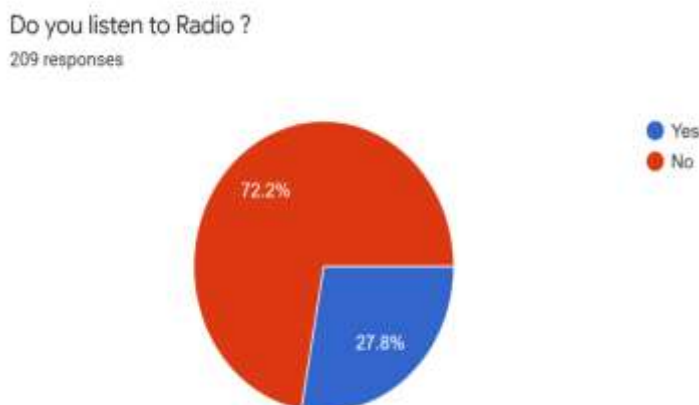
Further, when the researchers probed into the reliability of the media in today's world, the survey revealed that people are still dependent on reading newspapers to get more information of events they would like to gain more knowledge on and also, they trust the information provided in the newspapers rather than listening to the radio or watching the television. As per the survey records, almost 68% people read newspapers daily, whereas 32% people do not prefer reading newspapers. In the category of different types of newspapers catering to the information of subscribers, *The Times of India* (45.6%) stayed in the lead followed by *Deccan Herald*, which might be attributed to the two major newspapers being the oldest newspapers having established the trust and the faith people repose in their information provided, as well as reporting and presentation of the facts.

In relation to this question of the survey “on what basis do you assess a political candidate?” the majority of responses suggested that most people look for educational background, credibility, honesty, and responsibility in a potential political candidate. We can decipher from the responses that the larger part of the people also looked for contributions made by the candidate in the past and his/her service-oriented approach to society. Knowledge, communication, public speaking skills, timely crisis management, and the candidate's leadership skills also play a major role in how people elect their leaders. Ethical and moral uprightness, clean image, principles, ideologies, and emotional quotient of the candidate also dictate the election of a leader. Other than this, the political party that the candidate belongs to, his/her persona, and charm influence how people elect their candidates. People's familial party preferences and representation of minority communities by the candidate also impact the public's decision-making. The willingness of the candidate to empower the people and work towards exponential progress of all sectors of the society is taken into account before bringing the candidate to power.

When the respondents were probed on “Do you think the press should be given all the freedom or should Government control and restrictions be applied on the media?” the majority of the people suggested that they believe that the free press should exist with complete freedom and liability only to the public, and with no government involvement or restrictions. The reason for this is that Right to Information (RTI)—Article 19 (1)(a)—is a fundamental right according to the Indian Constitution, and it cannot be infringed under any circumstance. A free press also brings out the ground reality about the actual role and functioning of a government, especially in a democracy. However, some people believe that a certain number of reasonable restrictions need to be applied to the media to prevent the spread of false news, propagation of anti-national agendas, TRP manipulations, and fearmongering among the public. The respondents view that an independent statutory body must exist to check the misuse of freedom in the media and ensure that only ethical news is being published.

The majority of the people we surveyed considered social media to be their primary source of news and information, followed by newspapers, television, and radio, respectively, but on the contrary, most respondents in the survey believe that free press does not exist in the true sense of the word. Mainstream media is by and large in the hands of corporate and political ownership. Political party alliances/affiliations, Media House compulsions, governmental ad spending, etc. deny the ability of any media to be free. The government, powerful lobbyists, and major political parties control the media mainly through capital power, to publish manipulated news that is biased towards the State/Centre and the ruling party. It portrays them in a positive light without giving scope or any room for criticism. This, in a way adversely affects public opinion, especially when it comes to elections in a democratic country like India. Few respondents mentioned the recent instance of Mamata Banerjee winning the elections in West Bengal which led to the assault and murder of many BJP Party workers. Media and Journalists were restricted from writing or publishing any news regarding this atrocity. India is ranked 142<sup>nd</sup> in the World Press Freedom Index, and in this analysis, it is revealed that Free/ neutral Press absolutely does not exist in India.

When we analysed whether there is fair and balanced reporting on government and political issues, more than half of the respondents felt that the press is giving fair and balanced reporting on government and politics. However, many others are of the opinion that the press acts as a puppet for the government. The media is divided between left- and right-leaning organizations. The left is critical of the government while the right is on the defensive all the time. This bias is prominent in online journalism and TV news channels. Therefore, it is hard to find news that is both fair and balanced. Even journalists who are ethical and who would like to present unbiased and authentic news are threatened and those who meet stiff opposition are killed, and there are many instances whereby they are murdered by those in power. Thus, in most cases, media houses provide biased news favouring the government either due to fear, bribery/corruption, or the race in TRP ratings.



**Fig. 2: Media Consumption Pattern among People as per the Survey**

The majority of people do not listen to the radio as per our analysis. They have shifted their preferences of consumption to other forms of media. The majority of news listeners prefer to watch general news, political news, and other news on television, social media, and news websites. They find these platforms to be more viable than the radio. This shows that radio has become irrelevant in recent years, and huge numbers of its listeners do not find it credible anymore. It also concludes that radio was the least preferred medium for consumption of news out of all the other options available in this survey.

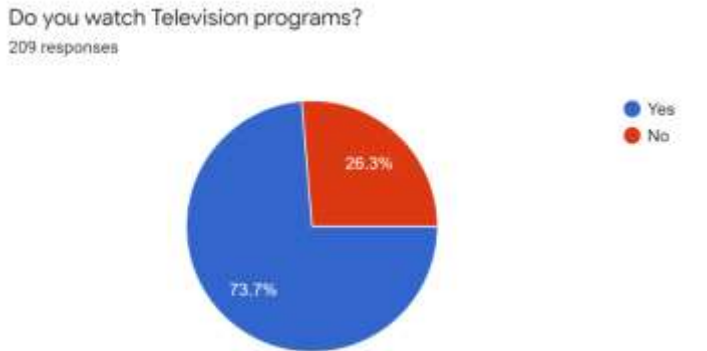


Fig. 3: Media Consumption Pattern among People as per the Survey

In the process of our analysis, it was also observed that a greater part of the respondents were positive towards consuming their news via television. This may be an indication that television channels are one of the most influential and trusted mediums of news and information. We also saw that there is not much difference when it comes to having a preferred channel as a huge number of people do not have a preferred channel.

Television viewers consume news primarily on a regular basis, and the most subscribed channels in India are NDTV, TIMES NOW, BBC, CNN, and REPUBLIC TV followed by AAJ TAK and DOORDARSHAN.

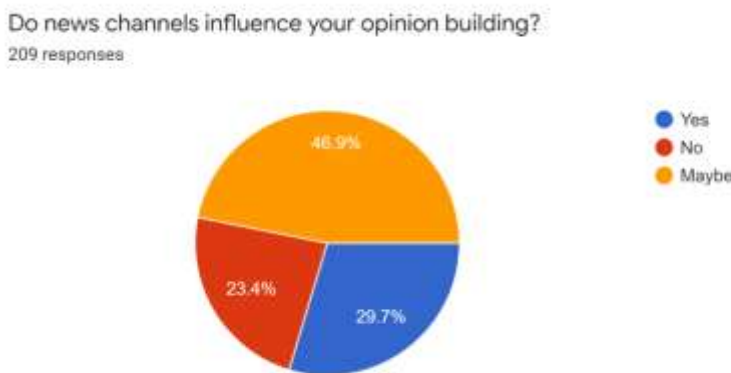


Fig. 4: Media Influence Pattern among People as per the Survey

While surveying the respondents, the researchers inferred that most people believe that news channels do influence their opinion building. The general public believes and agrees that their opinions could be moulded by the news channels that they watch. However, a portion of people do not rely on news channels to build their opinions. They often turn to other sources of information.

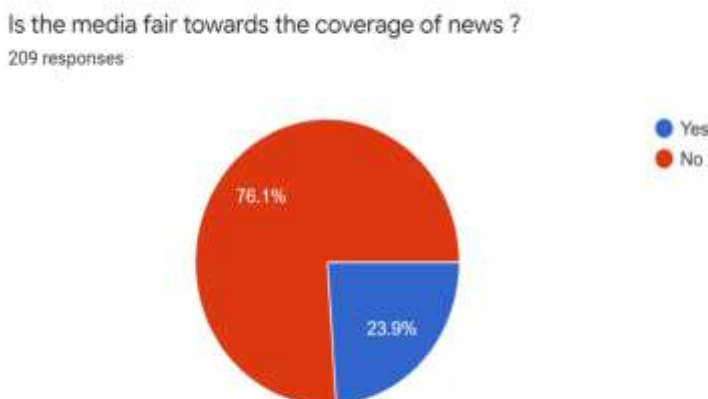
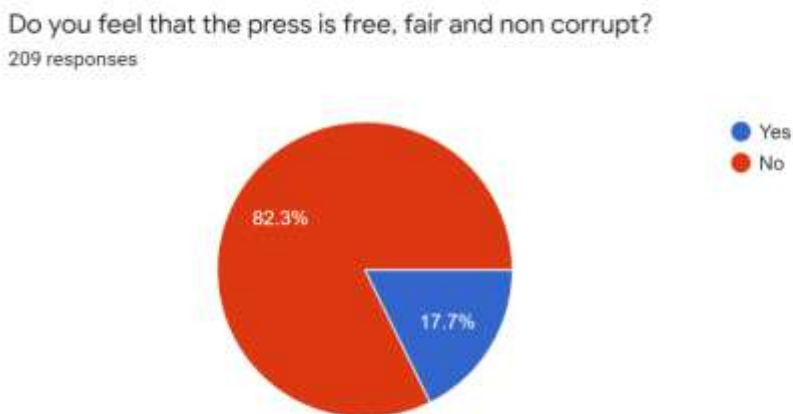


Fig. 5: Observation Patterns among People of the Media as per the Survey

It was noted that the respondents hold the opinion that the media is extremely biased in their reporting. The reason for this might be that people as an audience of multiple news sources have witnessed and observed disparities in the reporting of incidents and news pieces that may be politically controversial. In recent years, people have noticed that the media is not necessarily reporting facts and manipulating reports to their liking or benefit. The recent narratives of several news reports are largely contradicting the reality of the situation in the nation. People are starting to realize that they can no longer turn a blind eye towards fake and manipulative news.

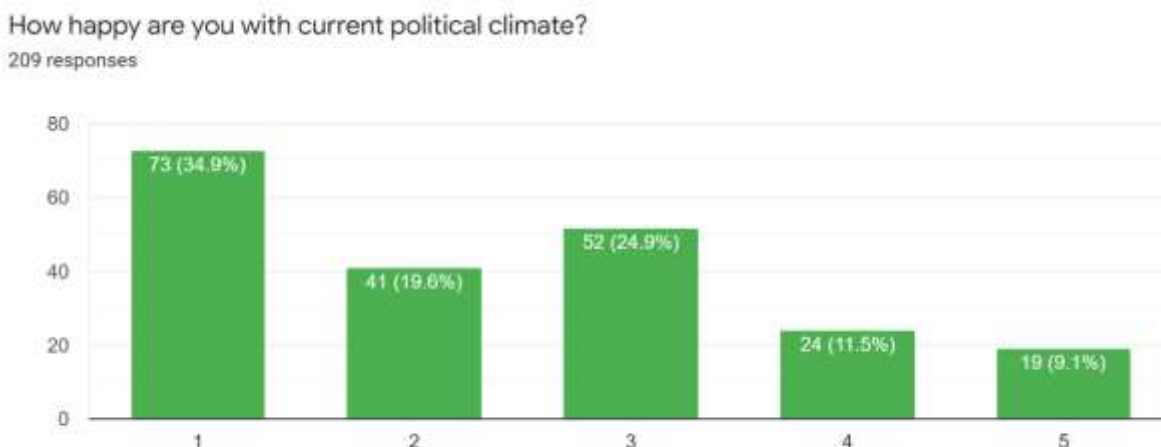
**5. FINDINGS**

Based on these findings, an overwhelming majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the press is absolutely not free, fair, and non-corrupt. The most significant reason for this belief is that people feel that the news they receive is controlled by various political parties and popular political figures as well as large corporates who chase TRP ratings. Even when authentic journalists want to report factual news, they are bogged down by the threat of being killed or end up giving in to unethical ways due to political pressure. In conclusion, most of the media industry and agencies are not being true to their roles as unbiased mediums of information to the public.



**Fig. 6: Observation Patterns among People of the Media as per the Survey**

A clear analysis can be drawn that the people are not happy with the country’s political climate and have started taking matters into their own hands. The people have begun to express their views openly on social media, have been active voters in the past, and this survey has proven that most of them will take part in the coming elections too. They are also putting forward their political opinions and needs in public, be it arguing with fellow voters about their opinions and rights or expressing how unsatisfied the people are with the government. The public is rising to the occasion by being vigorous participants of the democratic politics in the country.



**Fig. 7: Political Opinion among People as per the Survey**

1=Very Dissatisfied

5= Very Satisfied

One of the fundamental agendas of our survey was to figure out whether people feel that media is biased towards a particular political party or the party in power. Through these findings, it was observed that a whopping majority of the respondents feel that news channels and newspapers are partial to a political party and have themselves encountered such instances in real time. They feel that many news platforms only disclose information that favours a particular political party or figure and protects their image, but the public is quick to notice that in reality, the situation is different from what is to be envisaged..

It's also found in the analysis of the responses that the generation of authentic information and news is on a massive decline in our country which goes against the norms of democracy. Hence, India is a democratic country only in theory and not put in actual practise which defying the norms of what we call Press as fourth pillar of democracy- but independent press is in a situation of a major crisis.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Freedom of media and politics has definitely proven to be a facade in India. Although, in theory press and politics reign as two independent bodies and function on their own, it is very evident through the findings that the situation in the country is far from reality. The current situation in the media and political climate in India is such that media and politics work in unison to propagate each other's agendas, instead of checking and balancing one another.

The media and government need to exist in the first place to serve the people and look after their best interests. Yet, over the last two decades, this fundamental responsibility of the supposed free media has taken a backseat, and this is happening by establishing personal ties with corrupt politicians and political parties who are also protected by large corporates as well through their funding. Compared to other democratic nations, India holds a very low rank when it comes to Freedom of press which is a worrying factor which needs a urgent solution. This rank has declined exponentially over the last few years, the main reasons for this being brutal murders of many famous journalists, existence of a sedition law in India which promotes self-censorship especially in times of heightened nationalism, and media outlets being subjected as targets. Journalism exists but only within the realms of government-regulated reports, and journalists too function in a state of constant paranoia of being executed or harmed for reporting truthful news. Hence, most journalists, willingly or unwillingly (by threats and coercion) only report news that is favourable to the government.

Free press and media play a major role in influencing how people view their political representatives as well as who they choose to elect to or evict from power. The structure of a democracy is based on elections and ballot system where in people vote for their preferred representatives from the opposition or ruling party. When people are being provided with false and manipulated narratives about these politicians or the parties itself, it is almost impossible for them to make a wise and informed choice for the betterment of the nation. Thus, manipulation of free press and media can directly be linked to the decline of democracy.

PCI is considered as a statutory quasi-judicial body that acts as a supervisor of the press. However, in many instances, PCI has been called a "toothless tiger" because the powers vested in it are only verbal and non-active. Never has PCI stopped news channels that sensationalize news or indulge in tabloids instead of providing factual information.

Through the findings of this research paper and the survey conducted, it is pretty evident that the people are very unhappy with the situation of press in India and most of them do not agree that freedom of media exists in this country. Most of the youth are confused and misinformed about the political climate of the country and are aware that they are being provided inauthentic and inadequate information yet feel helpless about the situation. Although they want to actively take part in politics and voting, they do not have enough credible sources to make informed choices. In this paper, the researchers have pointed out many instances from the recent past where brutal crimes were committed against the people as a result of media and political parties favouring one another and pursuing ulterior motives. As of 2021, the people of India also face the threat of the government banning or censoring all social media in the near future, such as Twitter, Facebook as well as OTT platforms, which as the paper has stated is another primary source of information to the people, according to the survey. This pattern of distortion and censorship of primary sources of information is a characteristic feature of a dictatorship. Is that where the nation is heading towards?

Hence, with neither the media nor the government being held accountable by any statutory body, are the people accountable for the infringement of their right to freedom of speech, expression, and information? Are people directly or indirectly responsible for the kind of news they receive? The researchers of this paper feel that the people too are somewhat responsible for the decline of free press in the nation. Without a market or demand, the news media would not have an audience to cater fake news to; it takes two to Tango. Since the people of this country do indulge in biased news consumption, while favouring a particular political leader or party, due to personal sentiments and the purposeful ignorance of its wrong doings, they too are to be held accountable for the decline of free press. Even the citizens who want fair and balanced media and press are not vocal enough about their needs and infringement of their rights, although that narrative has been changing as more and more people especially from the younger population have been voicing their opinions regarding free media on platforms social networking. Many independently run digital news platforms are also gaining popularity.

In conclusion, the people have the power to ensure that their rights are not being infringed. They also have the freedom to fight for justice and these rights to be restored in cases where they have been snatched from them. The people of a democracy can collectively overthrow any individual, government, or corporation. It is only a matter of time, willingness, and efforts of the people before the narrative of free press in India changes. Only by deciding to boycott inauthentic media outlets and corrupt political parties and leaders can we see a change in the system. This is the need of the hour for the brighter future of India. The researchers hope that this paper can aid the public in speeding up the process of the fight to regain freedom of media and make it a reality for India in the foreseeable future.

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