

COVID 19: Impact on Nepali Media

Lal Bahadur Airi¹

lal.kantipur@gmail.com

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Abstract

Outbreaks appear to be exacerbated during the Coronavirus pandemic. This study studies the impact of the Corona pandemic in Nepalese media sector. Conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods, the study shows the short-term and long-term effects of the corona virus on media journalists and audiences. The media house collapsed, journalists were professionally insecure, and Corona had an impact on the overall media access and influence.

Keyword: Pandemic, Mainstream, Mufassal, Lockdown, Professional Organizations

Introduction

The world has been hit by the coronavirus, Covid-19, which has spread like a global pandemic. The coronavirus, which was confirmed in December(31) Last, 2020 in Wuhan, China, was confirmed to have come to Nepal from China on Magh 09, 2066. The infection has affected about 200 countries of the world and has affected the world. The world is in a state of captivity because of this transition. The death toll from the coronavirus is rising and the infection is out of control. The effects of the Corona pandemic, which has had a serious impact on the world's economy, have been felt in almost every region. The media sector through direct public relations is also not untouched by its impact. The crisis caused by the pandemic has forced the closure of media houses. Similarly, the professionalism of journalists has been challenged. Due to the compulsion to lose their job, there is a problem in the livelihood of the journalist. The pandemic has hampered the professionalism of media houses and journalists and the right to information of citizens was affected.

The direct impact on the media and its performance is linked to the citizen's right to information and freedom of expression. The closure of any media house is not only a matter of media investors but also a matter of civic concern. The Nepali media sector, which has been developing quantitatively and qualitatively after the establishment of democracy, also seems to have been greatly affected by the Corona pandemic. The Corona pandemic has affected media houses, journalists and media access. The basic theme of this study is the impact of these three aspects or areas.

Methodology

In order to achieve the answer the anthropological tools and techniques were used. The methodological framing of the study was based on the ideographic in nature to better understand the issues. For this research, 10 mainstream media houses, 20 media

¹ Mr. Airi is Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Baneshwor Multiple Campus, Kathmandu

personals and 30 individuals were selected from the Kathmandu for the in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews were analyzed on the basis of themes. Based on the analyzed qualitative data and secondary sources of information, the findings are presented in the text analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Covid-19 has had three effects on the media. First, in the media house, second, in the professional journalist, and third, in the media influence, that is, in the institutional role of the media. Corona has the biggest impact on the expanding media industry and professional journalism. Due to the fragile economy, the pandemic has shrunk the opportunities in the Nepali media sector, which has limited resources for media operations. The ultimate effect of which is on the right to information of citizens and democracy. 'The scope of this crisis seen in the media is now much deeper and longer lasting than we have seen or imagined. This crisis in the media not only narrows the 'public sphere' that has expanded in Nepal since 1946, but it also traps democracy '(Upreti, 2077). Facing this pandemic and its nature is new to the world. While social and material distances are the only way for children to get away from corona infection, there is a problem in getting the media sector content from mass production to the audience. Pandemic reporting is more challenging than disaster. Whose biggest blow is to the media? Pandemic s are much more complex for journalists in pandemic s than in wars, conflicts, or other natural disasters (Pathak, 2077).

Impact on Media House

As of mid-July last year, there were 912 newspapers, 750 radios, 102 TVs and online number 2149 (Press Council Nepal, 2077) in Nepal. The publication of the magazine was temporarily halted due to problems in reporting and circulation due to the government's lockdown since March 26, considering the risk of corona infection. Fearing a virus infection, the mainstream national magazine shut down the magazine, citing information and publishing. The publication of the magazine stopped due to the danger of increasing the infection due to the publication and distribution of the magazine. Due to the health protection of working journalists, staff and workers, the risk of infection among the readers due to the printing of papers and descriptions and the spread of infection from one place to another, the publication was stopped to fulfill the government's lockdown responsibly—(Sirohiya, 2076). Kantipur Media Group, the country's leading and largest media organization, stopped publishing Kantipur Daily and The Kathmandu Post from Chaitra 15, 2076 to Chaitra 21, 2076 (Kantipur Media Group, 2076).

Due to the crisis created by the Corona, this period was not only partial, but the electronic and print media were shut down forever. Nepal Magazine, Weekly and other magazines were closed. Nepal Republic Media has closed its English publication Republica from Baisakh 3, 2077. Eight hundred magazines were shut down across the country (Shobha Sharma, many journalists lost their jobs from the main media house, Setopati, Ashad 24, 2077). As the effects of the pandemic continue, the exact facts of the

closed media have not been determined. According to the data of the Freedom Forum, an organization that has been studying and exploring in the field of media, the media has been shut down all over the country so far. The number of pages in the magazine was reduced. The mainstream daily newspaper, which is published up to 24 pages, has dropped to eight pages. Kantipur, Nagarik Dainik, Annapurna, Naya Patrika, Rajdhani, Nepal Newspaper, The Kathmandu Post, Himalaya Times, Gorkhapatra Dainik fell to eight pages during the lockdown period except when the publication was closed. Radio and TV reduced their broadcasting time. Similarly, there has been a decrease in the number of online updates.

The impact on the country's economy due to the Covid 19 infection and lockdown for control has led to a decline in advertising, the main source of income for the media. Lockdown has not been able to deliver the bill of the advertisement that the media house has already broadcast to the customer and they have not been able to get the payment. Nepal's advertising market is worth Rs.12 billion annually. The media alone handles transactions worth Rs. 6 billion. The rest are hoarding boards, digit boards, calendars and other expenses. Due to this pandemic, the advertising market has declined by 30 percent in the last fiscal year. Lockdown: The media has lost Rs 2 billion from Chaitra 11 to Ashad 5 alone. (Basnet, 2077). Media houses have been shut down as a short-term effect of such an impact on the media economy, while the media market has shrunk in the long run. This is likely to affect the institutional development of the media in the long run. The media has collapsed due to the Corona pandemic. The media has lost the competitive opportunity. Challenges have been added to quantitative and qualitative development.

Impact on Journalists

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the professional lives of journalists around the world. Journalists also have to work on the frontline. Even in Nepal, despite limited resources, they are in a position to put information at risk by putting themselves at risk of infection. There are not enough security precautions. Professional insecurity of journalists is seen when personal security is at risk. At the beginning of the lockdown, some media outlets called work from home, but it was not possible for electronic media. Television journalists had to reach the field. However, to some extent, the alternative to the field is to take the white from the vibrator, put the photo and use the white in the audio. Some journalists became infected themselves due to the compulsion to work in the field. The exact number of infected journalists could not be ascertained as their names had to be kept secret.

According to the preliminary data of the federation of Nepali Journalists, two dozen journalists have been infected so far. They have recovered and returned to work. If a journalist has to lose his job due to professional insecurity, he has to take paid leave, not get paid, and has to endure various kinds of harassment. Journalists working in media outlets closed due to the pandemic have lost their jobs. Leading journalists of Kantipur Daily, Annapurna Post, NayaPatrika, Himalaya Times, Ujyaalo 90 Network, News 24, Avenues Television and other mainstream media houses had to stay on force leave and

not pay on time. Apart from this, journalists became unemployed when newspapers and radios were closed in Mufassal (Federation of Nepali Journalists, 2077). The media house has unilaterally posted the information on the phone and asked the journalist to take leave. This has made it difficult for journalists to make a living in times of crisis. Journalists working in self-employed media with small investment are not in a position to continue their business in the off-season when the mainstream media has collapsed (Federation of Nepali Journalists, 2077).

Complaints lodged by journalists in professional organizations including the Federation of Nepali Journalists and the Minimum Wage Determination Committee have also confirmed the problem of working journalists fleeing due to corona. Complaints of dismissal, forced leave, unpaid leave, non-payment of wages, non-payment of remuneration and service facilities as per the Working Journalists Act, and inconvenient working conditions by the management have been lodged with the regulatory body. In the two months of the pandemic period, 12 complaints were received in Ashad and Shrawan, respectively, and 15 complaints were received. In which more than two hundred journalists are victims. Given the nature of the complaint, many have been fired from the service (Minimum Wage Determination Committee, 2077).

According to a study by the Freedom Forum, 50 percent of journalists in Nepal have lost their jobs due to the Corona pandemic. At present, the number of journalists losing their jobs is between 3,000 and 4,000. Ninety percent of the media outlets operating in Mufasal have not been able to regularize, 20 to 25 percent of the national level presses have been shut down and 75 percent of the dailies have reduced the number of pages. Television has reduced production by up to 60 percent. The pressure of all these is on the job security of the journalist (Freedom Forum, 2077). The corona infection has been used by some media houses as an opportunity to fire journalists. On the one hand, journalists are at risk of losing their jobs due to their own health virus, on the other hand, they are forced to take leave, are not paid, are deprived of facilities and are being transferred. The environment of professional insecurity of journalists has affected the development of journalism while working amidst challenges.

Impact on Media Access and Institutional Development

Media development has a positive impact on overall social and economic development. The development of social consciousness also lies in the effective role of the media. Therefore, the media is the measure of any open or democratic society. When we look at the state of development of a society, we also have to look at the presence of the media. The strong presence of media in national crises or disasters and pandemic s also contributes positively to the solution of problems. The media has made an authentic contribution in making the citizens aware and making the state accountable for avoiding various pandemics. In this context, the role of media in Nepal in the context of Covid-19 is itself an area of study.

During the Corona transition, the content of the Nepali media, especially among

the citizens, was seen to be more like spreading awareness. This seems to have helped to protect the citizens from the risk in one way or another. In addition, the media played a role in creating pressure on the state and responsible bodies to be sensitive to civic health. Nepali media did not fail to provide information to the citizens in crisis by protecting the right to information of the people even in adverse circumstances. This will definitely help in the institutional development of Nepali media in the future (Federation of Nepali Journalists, 2077).

On the other hand, when the media house collapses due to the pandemic and the professional insecurity of journalists increases, the freedom of press and expression and the right to information are curtailed. It affects the transformation of the state system. The pandemic has also eliminated the risk of Nepal falling victim to it. When the corona infection closes the media, the media effect decreases as the product content decreases. The role of journalism as an institution is weakened. The professional development, quality and competitiveness of journalism has declined. It has affected the overall journalism sector. Prosperous democracy requires, first, a wide 'space' where multiple ideas can be exchanged. Second, there is a need for a means by which citizens can be informed on issues of public concern.

And third, there is a need for independent oversight of every state activity and decision-making process. All this is possible only if independent journalism is strengthened. That is, when the field of journalism is in turmoil, it has a direct impact on democracy. And, this is what is happening now (Upreti, 2077). After the media was shut down due to the pandemic, the opportunity to read, listen and watch has been lost. Magazine circulation was shut down for fear of transmitting the virus. Page numbers and product content decreased. This created a stalemate in maximum information flow. The circle of access to information has been narrowed and the practice of journalism has to be displaced from the profession, which has a long-term impact on the development of journalism.

Conclusion

The Corona pandemic has had short-term and long-term effects on Nepal's media sector. In the field of media 1) Media House 2) Journalists 3) Institutionally, the access and impact of journalism were directly affected by this pandemic. Media houses have been closed due to the impact of the pandemic. From the mainstream to the self-employed media of Mufasal. Similarly, the production of media content has declined. Magazines have reduced page numbers, while radio and TV have reduced time and programs. Page 24 of the mainstream media has dropped to 8 pages. Magazines reduced pages in this way into 75 percent. Hard copy of print media has not reached the hands of the customer. Magazine publication and distribution became irregular. The media economy has also been affected by the impact of Corona on the overall economy. There has been a 30 percent decline in advertising. The media house could not recover the money for the advertisement published or broadcast from the market last year. Media sources have been lost due to the decline in advertisements. As the transition drags on, the continuity of the media has become uncertain.

When a journalist loses his job, he has to be displaced from his profession. Up to 50 percent of journalists have lost their jobs. The crisis caused by the pandemic has resulted in loss of jobs, non-payment of wages, non-payment of minimum wage and forced leave and forced leave. During the crisis, there has been a problem in the livelihood of the journalist. The media has also used the pandemic as an opportunity to expel journalists and close down media houses. Journalists have been exploited in various ways. Due to the compulsion to work in the frontline, journalists themselves have fallen victim to corona infection and the risks are the same. When the flow of information is not stopped, the media collapses and the lack of professional security of journalists has affected the impact and access of journalism. The development of the Nepali media sector, which has just begun to take a commercial form, has been hampered. The lack of options to guarantee the right to information of the society has the effect of social transformation. On the whole, Nepali media has shrunk due to Covid, journalists have become professionally insecure and the institutional development of journalism has been hampered.

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