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THE IMPACT AND ROLE OF MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS TOWARDS THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

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INTRODUCTION:

The pandemic of COVID-19 has put health, education, business, economy and daily life of common people into crisis. This pandemic has delivered an unprecedented shock to local and global market of all goods and services. Both micro and macro changes can be visualized. Micro impacts are like flexibility in working, switching over to some other work (May it be temporary), migration of labour, increased digitalization, aggressive behaviour, online buying, changed life styles and preventive measures etc. Macro factors are related to monetary and fiscal distress, economic slowdown, losing employment and retrenchment, etc. Communication and Media industries are, perhaps, among those few who are well positioned during COVID-19. Mass media and social media are playing a crucial and vital role in supporting each and everyone, may it be government, general public, students, consumers or the businesses. Media is called the fourth pillar of democracy. Media and society are closely linked with each other as media is the mirror of society. The dependence of people on mass media and social media has increased during this period. The interactive work environment has shifted to virtual one. According to UNESCO, 850 million students are now learning and attending classes from home. The functioning of corporate sector has switched over to 'work from home'. There are different types of media such as print media, electronic media and web media. Social sites, blogs, you tube, twitter etc. have become voice of different age groups these days. Different researches have also concluded that usage of media has increased many times during period of pandemic in India as well as in abroad. 'Aarogya Setu' app is becoming popular these days. Moreover, media has been the only companion of the people in quarantine reducing their loneliness and anxiety.

MASS MEDIA:

It is the technology through which information is communicated to a large number of people. There are various outlets of mass media such as broadcast media (radio, television, films, recorded songs etc.), print media (newspapers, books, magazines etc.), digital media (mobile, internet etc.).

SOCIAL MEDIA:

It is a form of electronic communication in which internet and mobile phones are used. People share their photos, content and other information in no time with each other. Face book, YouTube, blog, twitter and different sites are examples of social media.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDE:

Attitude is how one perceives things, happening, environment, people etc. It is a subjective phenomenon. Psychology is the science of behaviour. There, psychological attitude is the how a person behaves in different situations and what are his emotions, beliefs and reaction towards that situation or object or person. It is related with affective domain, cognitive domain and behavioural component of a person. Attitude may be of two types- Explicit attitude (conscious); and, implicit attitude (unconscious).

BEHAVIOUR:

How we react and respond the things is our behaviour. Behaviour may be both inborn and acquired. Behaviour of a person is affected by his attitude.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR OF PEOPLE DURING COVID-19 AND ROLE OF MEDIA:

The spread of this global pandemic has changed the psychological attitude and behaviour of people. There is a feeling of fear, insecurity, loneliness, and anxiety among different age groups of people. The outbreak of this disease has more or less disturbed the mental health of people. The role and impact of mass media and social media can visualized in the following changes in attitude and behavioural pattern of people during this crucial period:

1. **Media & Education:** May changes have occurred in the field of education due to spread of COVID-19. The whole scenario of teaching and learning has been transformed. Some of them are as follows—
 - **Change in Teaching- Learning Pattern:** The teaching- learning patter has shifted from interactive to virtual. Zoom, Google classroom, Cisco WebEx Meeting, Whatsapp, Face book, Blogs, etc. are playing vital role to facilitate instructional programmes. Regular lectures for different classes by experts are also imparted through radio and television. The repositories of vast knowledge are at a click away with the help of Internet. Moreover, online assignments and tests are also given to the students.
 - **Preparation for Different competitive exams:** Online coaching classes for preparation different competitive exams are proving very fruitful for the students. Study material, mock tests and previous years question papers are easily available to the students with the help of media.
 - **Personality Development and Soft Skill Development Programmes:** Such programmes have been started to utilize lockdown period. The students can easily access to them through use of media.
 - **Faculty Development Programmes:** Different workshops, webinars and seminars of nation and international level are going on these days to update the faculty members,

researchers and students. This has become possible only through mass media and social media. Not only during this crisis, online refresher courses, short-term certificate courses and diploma & degree courses are being offered to public at large through mass media in normal days also.

- **Organising Co- curricular Activities:** Different co- curricular activities like slogan writing, essay writing, poster making etc are being organized for different classes with the help of media. The engagement of children in such creative works lessens their boredom as well as reduces anxiety and feeling of loneliness.
 - **Online Summer Training and Placement:** These activities have become possible through mass media and social media. Both educational institutions and students are benefitted by this.
2. **Media and Professionals:** Media has proved a boon to professionals. It has become possible for them to conduct meeting, give directions and sharing plans & policies with subordinates only with the help of media—
- **Work from Home:** The work of corporate sector is smoothly going on (in a changed style- work from home) during this critical period only with the help of mass media and social media. With the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), life has become fast and comfortable.
 - **Online Interviews:** Conducting online interviews has become possible for the employers with the use of media.
 - **E- Commerce & E- Marketing:** People want to avoid going market and face to face interaction due to this outbreak. E- Commerce and E- marketing is an alternative in this regard.
 - **Local-Vocal- Global:** The Prime Minister's call for making India self reliant can become a reality only if local production is given priority and advertise it up to global level. Media is the only medium for advertisement at national and international level. People are showing their interest in 'made in India' products now.
 - Industries come to know about different plans, policies, rebate, support and economic package offered by government to them through media. For example, government's emphasis on MSME has given a motivation to investors.
3. **Media and General Public:** Awareness of general public is must if we want overcome this situation. Even people came to know about this outbreak of COVID-19 through media. It was media only that made people aware about the seriousness of the disease. As a result, attitude and behaviour of people has changed.
- **Making People aware about Notices and Advisories issued by Government:** Government issues advisories, guidelines and notices from time to time related to this emergency situation. These informations reach to general public only through media.
 - **Spreading Awareness about Precautions:** Media made the people aware about the precautionary measures i.e. frequently washing hands, maintaining social distance, wearing mask etc. which people are adopting as life habits. This attitudinal change has become possible only due to media.
 - **Change in Attitude regarding Health:** Different medium of media are conveying message that those having strong immunity are less vulnerary to the corona virus.

Following this, people are giving more emphasis on yoga, meditation, exercises and healthy food.

- **Medium of Entertainment:** During the tough time of lockdown, media has proved as a boon for people making them relaxed through different programmes of entertainment. For example, telecast of popular serials such as Ramayana and Mahabharata was restarted on public demand. Moreover, people felt anxiety, depression, fear and loneliness during this outbreak. Motivational lectures, videos, articles, live chat with doctors; psychologists and physicians were there on different mediums of media. News channels did their job marvellously during the situation of pandemic.
- 4. **MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT:** Media is called the fourth pillar of democracy. There is a close relation between media and government. In other words, it can be said that media acts like a bridge between government and people--
 - A co-ordination among all levels of governments is required for successful implementation of plan of action and policies, especially at this time. May it be implementation of lockdown, decision regarding transport and other services, problem of migrant labourers, bringing back the Indians from foreign countries, opening or closure of interstate borders, offices, educational institutions announcement of relief packages and so on, a proper communication and coordination at administrative level is needed which is possible through media.
 - Government wants to attract those MNCs in India which have windup their businesses from the countries that are most hit by this pandemic like China. The communications and meetings with their top authorities can be held through different modes of media.
- 5. **MEDIA AND FIELD OF MEDICAL:** The doctors and medical scientists all over the world are trying hard to find some medicine or vaccine of this disease. A healthy communication and exchange of ideas among them is needed to work in collaboration. Again it can be possible through media--
 - **In the Field of Research:** Media helps researchers and doctors to work in collaboration, exchange of ideas and addressing people's queries. Also media presents data report, research reports, case studies etc. to people regarding treatment or vaccination of this disease.
 - **Live Talk with Experts and Doctors:** Media has facilitated the direct talks with doctors and health experts to impart reliable information to people about this disease and reduce stigma and prejudices. People have different myths related to use of different medicines and alcohol to prevent from this disease. Media make them aware about these misconceptions.
 - With the help of media, people come to know about steps taken by government in this regard, available medical facilities, importance of testing and giving samples, and how medical staff and other frontline warriors (police, media person and cleaners etc.) are working restlessly to save the people.

Challenges before Media:

As the duties of media have multiplied during the outbreak of pandemic, it has to face multi folded challenges also. Some main are the following:

- Media has to communicate credible news and information across all levels at the earliest which is not an easy task.

- The employees of media work under stress due their own safety issues from the disease. They are out of home so that people can remain in home updated with global situation.
- People demand these days high speed connectivity and in- home entertainment with new content every time. This really a big challenge before media.
- Advertisements are a big source of income for media. But people are less interested in watching advertisements. This deterioration in advertisement demand results in fall in income of media leading to financial crisis.
- The supply chain of new material and content is interrupted due to outbreak of pandemic hence continuous production and relay of content of different age group peoples' interest is not an easy task.

CONCLUSION

When there is some problematic situation or calamity before us, we have to either fight or flight. Here, in this pandemic situation, we have no option other than to fight against corona virus. But this is not an easy battle. We can cope up with the situation by adopting some changes in our life style, working habits, eating habits and educational process. We have to maintain physical social distance. So, mass media and social media are the only medium of connectivity among people. Media is definitely at the central place during this crisis. No sector, may it be education, social life, working of corporate sectors and offices, entertainment, government sector, medical sector or any else, would have been able to run smoothly without media. Therefore, the area of responsibilities of media also has widened these days. So, it expected from media it will address people only with reliable and credible information. Social media should also take care of imparting and spreading only credible information. Sometimes, some fake news or rumours run on media which can prove very harmful to society, nation or even at global level. All this should be taken care of and responsible person for spreading false news should be punished. Media should carefully check the truth behind any news or information and credibility of its source before presenting it before public.

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