

EXPLORING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC NEWS MEDIA ON SOCIETY IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

In today's globalized world, the study of electronic news media holds significant importance due to its profound impact on society. Since the onset of liberalization in India during the 1990s, the functions of electronic news media have evolved in response to globalization and post-modernization. This study focuses on the Kannada language news channels in Karnataka, examining both their functional and dysfunctional aspects. Over time, these channels have exhibited increasing dysfunctionality. To address this, the research evaluates key theoretical perspectives and existing literature on electronic news media. A survey was conducted with 500 residents from both urban and rural areas of Bangalore, Karnataka. Additionally, the study employed observation and interviews with news channel reporters, their peers, and administrative staff. The findings reveal a notable rise in dysfunctionality within Kannada language news channels. The study dedicates significant attention to analyzing current trends in electronic news media in Karnataka, profiling major Kannada news channels, and exploring relevant sociological concepts related to media.

KEYWORDS: *Electronic News, Media, Society, Globalization, Post-Modernization, Karnataka*

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INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, electronic news media play a crucial role in integrating societies, fostering harmony, and facilitating socialization. Electronic news media, primarily delivered through television, have become a significant source of news and information. The roles of these media have evolved as the number of news channels has increased in India. The liberalization policies of the 1990s brought about substantial changes in the media landscape, particularly in electronic news media. Over the past two decades, the proliferation of private news channels has significantly influenced the Indian populace. As Giddens (2008) notes, "everyday life is experienced differently in a society in which television plays an important role." Although these news channels claim independence, they are shaped by a capitalistic and market-driven economy. In India, the rise in the number of news channels has paralleled a substantial increase in television viewership. By 2011, cable television subscriptions had reached over 50% of Indian households.

With over a hundred news channels available in languages such as Hindi, English, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Bengali, and other regional languages, these channels are both cost-effective and widely accessible. They play an active role in socializing everyday life by influencing viewers' interests, lifestyles, relationships, and personal preferences. While these represent the functional aspects of electronic news media, there is a growing concern about the increasing

dysfunctional aspects of these channels. This study aims to evaluate both the functional and dysfunctional aspects of Kannada language news channels in Karnataka, providing a comprehensive analysis of their impact on the local media landscape.

METHODOLOGY

This paper seeks to assess the functional and dysfunctional aspects of Kannada language news channels in Karnataka through empirical data. A survey was conducted with 500 residents from both urban and rural areas of Bangalore, Karnataka. Data was collected using a combination of personally distributed questionnaires and interviews. Additionally, the research involved direct and participatory observation of news channel reporters, their colleagues, and administrative staff. This observational approach provided valuable insights into the operational and content-related aspects of these news channels.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the functional and dysfunctional aspects of Kannada language news channels within Karnataka.
2. To examine key theoretical perspectives and existing literature related to electronic news media.

Theoretical Perspectives on Electronic News Media

The functionalistic perspective highlights how electronic news media contribute to the orderly functioning of society. This perspective suggests that media socializes individuals by transmitting norms, values, and beliefs to future generations, providing essential information, and helping to delineate right from wrong. Throughout a person's life, electronic news media play a vital role in their socialization and resocialization. Technological determinists argue that the inherent features of news media drive social change, facilitating new forms of communication and fostering unique skills and sensibilities, as noted by theorists like McLuhan and Eisenstein. Scholars like Charles Wright and Harold Carwell have observed how electronic news media integrate society by providing information, promoting socialization, and expressing dominant cultural values.

Jurgen Habermas explored the evolution of news media from the 18th century to the present, noting that public discourse initially emerged in the salons and coffee houses of cities like London and Paris. Today, however, he argues that public opinion within electronic news media is often shaped more by manipulation and control than by open, rational debate. In the 1960s, scholars studying social change suggested that advances in communication technology would lead to an "information society," impacting various institutional realms (Machlup 1962, Bell 1973). More recently, Manuel Castells has posited that we are entering an "information age," where digital technology underpins the widespread expansion of network-based organizational forms across social structures.

Conflict theorists view electronic news media from a different angle, emphasizing how wealth can buy media exposure. Wealthy individuals can use their resources to dominate media coverage, launch smear campaigns against rivals, and enhance their visibility, while those without financial means remain marginalized.

Feminist perspectives on electronic news media critique the limited portrayal of women, arguing that media representations often reinforce narrow stereotypes. Women in the media are frequently depicted within specific parameters, conforming to societal standards of beauty by being thin, light-skinned, attractive, and young. Feminists believe that these portrayals play a significant role in creating and perpetuating stereotypes.

The interactionist perspective examines how people construct and interpret reality, emphasizing that news media shape the public's perception of reality in various ways. Ultimately, electronic news media create and extend symbols that serve as the foundation for a shared understanding of society.

Assessment of Literature

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the impact of media, particularly electronic news media. A notable study by Jared W. Rutecki and Gregory W. Rutecki (2010) explored how media shapes public opinion. L. Rowell Huesmann (2007) investigated the impact of violent content in electronic media, suggesting that exposure to violence in television, movies, video games, cell phones, and the internet since the early 1960s has been linked to an increased risk of violent behavior among viewers, similar to growing up in a violent environment.

Sayantani Satpathi and Oindrila Roy (2011) analyzed the influence of electronic media on Indian voters, noting that the surge in media influence was catalyzed by economic liberalization in the early 1990s. This shift allowed citizens access to a broader range of news sources beyond the government-regulated channels of the pre-liberalization period. The internet revolution further amplified the reach and impact of electronic media, significantly affecting political participation and voting behavior.

In their 1982 study, **Glennon and Butseh** examined the influence of media on social class lifestyles and family dynamics. **Tilak Wijesundara** (2011) provided a sociological analysis of current trends in Indian mass media, highlighting its role in communication and the exchange of information. His research covered various topics, including media's role in shaping public perceptions on technology, entertainment, education, politics, and social issues such as violence, gender, and family.

Krahe et al. (2011) demonstrated that exposure to violent media content has a desensitizing effect and correlates with aggressive thoughts. Similarly, **Gentile, Mathieson, and Crick** (2011) found that media violence exposure among children led to increased physical and relational aggression. However, a meta-analysis spanning four decades (**Savage, 2003**) did not conclusively link viewing violence to committing violent crimes.

Jean Baudrillard (1983) argued that television and other mass media create a "hyperreality," blurring the lines between reality and media representations. The Glasgow University Media Group (1973) suggested that media often reflects middle-class perspectives, aligning with the views of society's dominant groups. Additionally, studies suggest that the increase in media consumption may contribute to rising obesity rates due to decreased physical activity (**Kautiainen et al., 2011**). Some sociologists argue that this extensive media exposure leads to "narcotizing dysfunction," where people become overwhelmed with information, reducing their motivation to engage actively in societal issues (**Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1948**).

An outline of Electronic News Media in Karnataka State

Karnataka has a rich history in communication, marked by the establishment of the first private radio station in Mysore in 1935 and the publication of the first Kannada newspaper, Mangalooru Samachara, in 1843. The state-run broadcaster, Doordarshan, offers reliable news in Kannada through its dedicated channel, DD Chandana. The landscape of Kannada television news saw a significant shift with the launch of Udaya TV, the first private channel to broadcast in Kannada, initially one of the few channels to provide news content. Over the past decade, the number of Kannada news channels has grown to seven, each bringing unique perspectives and styles to news reporting:

TV9 (Kannada): Launched in 2006, TV9 is a 24-hour Kannada news channel owned by Sneha Television Network (founded by R. Ravi Prakash and V. Satyanarayana). Its headquarters is in Bangalore, and it has become one of the most popular news channels in Karnataka.

Public TV: This 24-hour Kannada news channel began broadcasting in 2012. Led by renowned journalist H.R. Ranganath, Public TV quickly became the seventh Kannada news channel in the state, offering comprehensive news coverage.

Udaya News: Part of the Sun Network, Udaya News is a Kannada language news channel. It was one of the earlier players in the regional news space, offering a mix of news and entertainment.

Suvarna News 24×7: A part of the Asianet News Network Pvt Ltd (a Jupiter Venture), Suvarna News 24×7 launched in 2008. The channel is known for its tagline, Nera Ditta Nirantara (Straight, Strong, and Continuous), emphasizing its commitment to delivering continuous and direct news.

Samaya News 24X7: Notably, Samaya News 24X7 was the first Kannada news channel owned by a Kannadiga, launching in 2010 with the tagline Naija Suddigaagi (For Real/True News). It quickly became popular, becoming the second most-watched news channel in Karnataka after TV9. The channel was later acquired by Karnataka's Industrial Minister, Murugesh Nirani.

Janashri: Launched in 2011, Janashri is a 24-hour Kannada news channel. With the tagline Jana Mana Dhani (People, Mind, Voice), it positions itself as a voice for the people. It was founded by Sanjeev V. Betageri and BKBN Murthy.

Kasthuri Newz 24: This channel also started in 2011 and is the sixth Kannada news channel. It is owned by Smt. Anitha Kumaraswamy, the wife of former Karnataka Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy, providing a blend of political news and local stories.

These channels play a significant role in the state's media landscape, offering a range of perspectives and contributing to the diversity of news coverage available to Kannada-speaking audiences.

Dysfunctional Aspects of Electronic News Media in Karnataka State

Empirical data indicates that many Kannada language news channels are increasingly failing to fulfill their expected roles. Over the years, the dysfunctional aspects of these channels have grown significantly. While the primary function of electronic news media is to socialize people by providing valuable information, research respondents suggest that Kannada news channels often fail to do this effectively. Instead of promoting proper socialization, these channels tend to disseminate misleading or undesirable information, which hinders the socialization process.

In the current postmodern era, much of the news broadcast by these channels is classified as "paid news." This means that news content is often influenced by financial transactions, where channels are paid to promote certain individuals or political parties. Consequently, these news channels rarely broadcast value-free or value-neutral content, and the news they do provide tends to be biased. In many cases, the content is not original but copied from other Hindi and English language news channels.

CONCLUSION

These Kannada news channels frequently show favoritism toward specific political parties, offering biased coverage that supports one party while sometimes spreading misleading information about others. Another significant trend in these

news channels is their shift toward entertainment-driven content to attract more viewers. Instead of focusing on delivering news, these channels increasingly emphasize entertainment, which is traditionally the role of dedicated entertainment channels.

In the past, news channels were seen as tools to free people from superstitions and guide them toward rational thinking. However, this perception no longer holds true, as many of these channels themselves are not free from superstitions. The programs they broadcast are often linked to religion or superstitions, inadvertently encouraging viewers to believe in such notions rather than dispelling them.

These emerging dysfunctional aspects of electronic news media present a serious threat to society. The evolving functions and impact of Kannada language news channels are drawing the attention of social scientists, who are particularly concerned about their influence on society. This study has highlighted the key dysfunctional aspects of these news channels and suggests the need for measures to regulate and control media practices.

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