

Media and communication in times of crisis: Case study of Pune flood, 2019

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Abstract

Media plays a pivotal role in dissemination of information to the public during natural disasters. They act as mediators between public, affected people and civic authorities. This fourth pillar of society has a key role in building public awareness.

The research paper focusses on one such crisis situation that occurred in Pune city, in the Indian state of Maharashtra. A most unexpected situation arose when Pune witnessed flooding in September, 2019. The heavy rainfall took a toll on the lives of citizens, rescue of several people and threw life out of gear.

During this crisis situation, media got engaged and covered this deluge. The question here arises whether media played a responsible role? What were the challenges and constraints of journalists covering this flood? Did media fulfil the public service role? This research paper delves into these pertinent questions to analyse patterns of media reporting, the potential constructive role of the media, how media communicated the crisis and ethical standards and norms of journalism.

The paper further tries to obtain information from the reader's perspective on news stories that were covered related to Pune flood. Did media deliver stories on all aspects, use diverse sources and present the wider context? Did media perform a watchdog role and contribute in creating awareness? This study also investigates whether prominence was given by the media more on incident driven reports or on analysis based stories.

Key words

Crisis, Communication, Flood, Media, Journalism, Analysis, Incident, News, Stories, Information, Public, Reporting

Introduction

Pune city recorded 106 millimetres of rainfall on 26th September, 2019. The heavy downpour on the Katraj mountain filled the 250-year-old reservoir lake on 25th September. The overflowing water came down to the city through Amil Odha that caused havoc as the water broke the banks and entered the residential areas.

The flooded areas caused widespread destruction around Satara road, Sinhagad road, Sahakarnagar nagar and Katraj in Pune. Many houses and residential societies in low-lying areas were inundated. There were several reports of uprooting of trees, wall collapses and vehicles were swept away in the flood waters.

“The incessant downpour flooded nullahs and rivers, causing walls to collapse in several places across the district. The rain-related incidents have killed at least 21 people while five people are missing. Over 3,000 people were shifted to safety while 59 villages in the district were affected” (September 29, 2019, India Today). Maharashtra saw the most number of deaths with 338 people losing their lives (IFRC, 18 Oct 2019). The district administration and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) came to the rescue and rehabilitation of people.

Storm water management works for flash flood affecting areas in Pune city. After the flood, PMC estimated Rs 24,859.76 lakh for nullah development works (includes Ambil Odha) and Rs 3,242.69 lakh for cross drainage works. The cross drainage works includes Dattawadi Basin-Ambil Odha, Vadgaon BK Basin, Dhyari Basin, Hingane Basin (Source: Pune Municipal Corporation).

The cause of the flood was attributed by experts due to encroachments in the floodplains of the rivers Mula and Mutha. “Shrikant Gabale, an expert in Geographic Information Systems and the director of Unity Geospatial, from his study and observation noted that there was unauthorised and unplanned constructions, most of them near the stream, diversion of streams, deposition of construction debris in streams, no proper sewage system and waste being pumped into water bodies and increased runoff owing to cement and concrete roads ” (9th October, 2019, Down to Earth).

Media have a responsible role to play in any natural disaster. “Natural disaster comprise of any

natural event such as a flood, earthquake, or hurricane that causes great damage or loss of life "(Oxford). ``The media plays a critical role across each stage of the disaster cycle: preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. This includes the dissemination of early warning and larger public awareness," according to Principles of Disaster Reporting: Guidelines under NCRMP.

During this grim situation, media cannot create panic and disorder among the public. Rather journalists have to be sensitive, responsible and provide accurate and credible information. But there are examples where media was criticized for its insensitive coverage, exaggeration and unwanted importance to some issues, for instance, during the Nepal earthquake (2015) and Uttarakhand floods (2013).

According to the Principles of Disaster Reporting: Guidelines under NCRMP, coverage of local innovations and positive actions is encouraging and builds hope. It also serves as good examples that can be replicated elsewhere and as validation of efforts. When dealing with sensitive topics, always ensure that people's safety is not compromised.

Objective

The broader objective of the study is to assess the crucial role of journalists in times of crisis. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- To find out how journalists got engaged and covered Pune flood
- To analyze the responsibilities of media during natural calamity
- To study the public service role of media
- To understand the challenges faced by media during this crisis situation
- To understand the ethical standards and norms in journalism
- To find out the perspective of readers to news stories appeared during the flood
- To know the nature and extent of news coverage
- To find out whether readers could find news stories on all aspects and get a wider context

- To find out about incident driven and analysis based stories appeared during flood
- To understand the role of follow-up stories and aftermath news coverage

Research Methodology

The online survey method was adopted for this research paper to study the role of media during the Pune flood 2019. To gather further information, interviews were conducted face- to -face, on the phone and included chat interviews.

For this study, a questionnaire was created with relevant questions on the Google Forms. The data collected by this questionnaire using web survey and findings, and conclusions have been drawn based on the survey results.

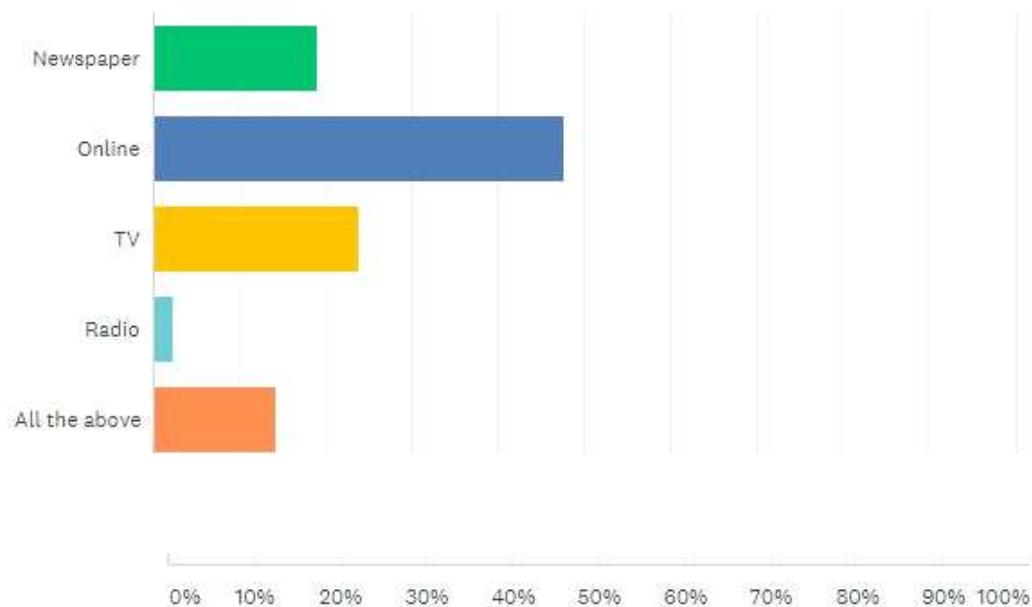
Opinion and views were taken from the readers, journalists and affected people. Readers gave their perspective on the media coverage during flood. Journalists and photographers working in Pune responded about the crucial role played by them, challenges and norms of journalism. Working journalists outside Pune gave an overall opinion about the role of media during times of crisis. The affected people described the impact of flood and the current scenario.

Pune journalists and photographers who responded are associated with The Times of India, Indian Express, The Hindustan Times and Maharashtra Times. The other journalists who responded are from Maharashtra, Karnataka, New Delhi and Middle East. They are associated with The Hindu, Deccan Herald, Deccan Chronicle, The Times of India and Media One Middle East Operations. All the respondents are established journalists working in national news publications.

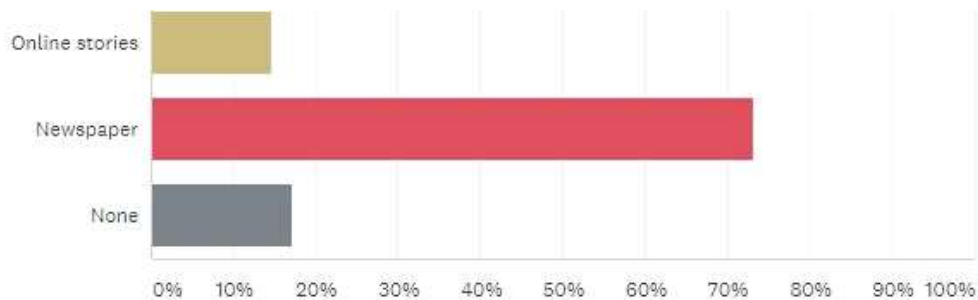
Both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended questions) methodology were used for this study. It led to collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, opinion and views was taken from the readers, journalists and affected people.

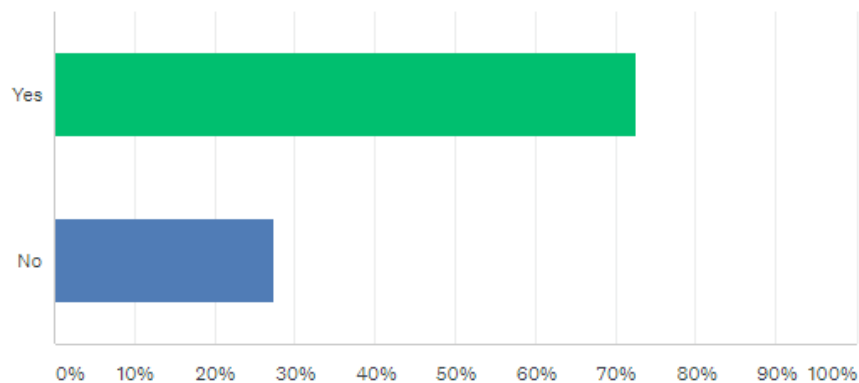
I. Response from readers:**Q1. What were your sources for news stories during the recent Pune flood?**

47.2% respondents said that online stories were their main source, followed by television (23.81%), and newspaper (19.05%).

Q2. Do you trust newspapers stories or online stories in terms of its accuracy and fairness?

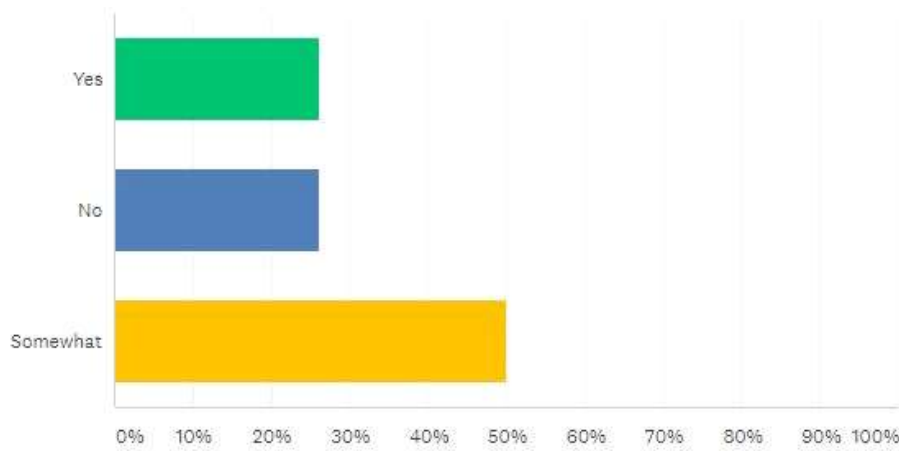
Majority of the respondents (73.17%) trust newspaper stories, followed by 14.63% trust online stories. Interestingly, 17.07% respondents said that they don't trust newspaper or online stories in terms of accuracy and fairness.

Q3. Did you ever feel that there was lack of flood related stories or some issues were missing in newspapers?

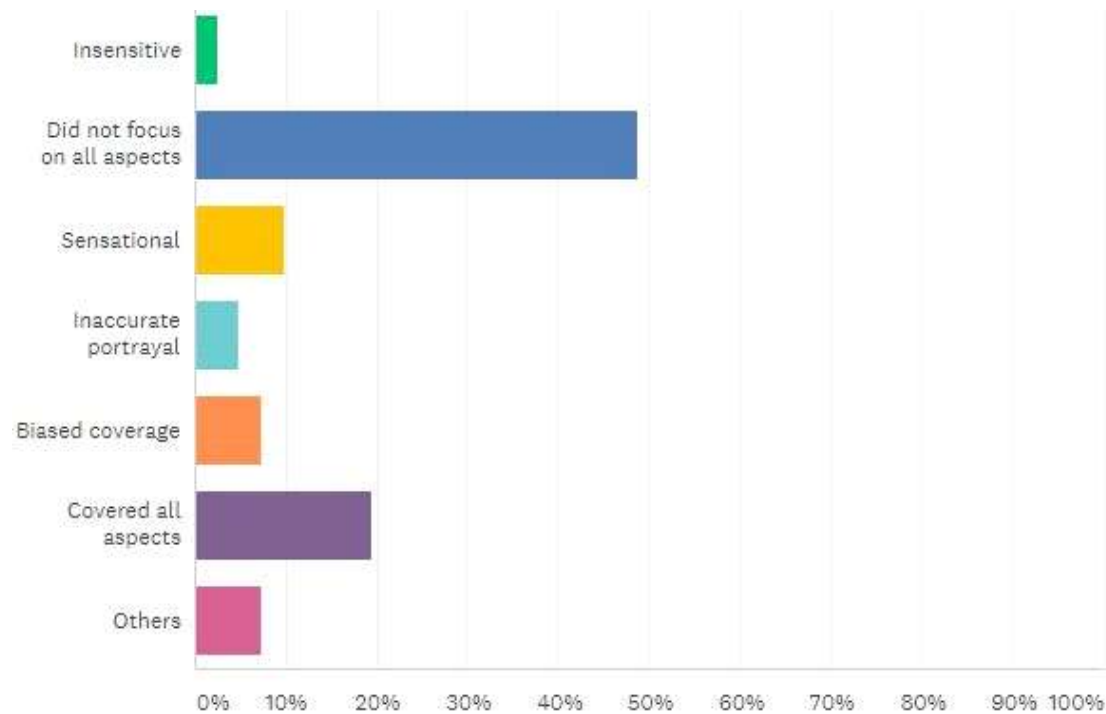


Majority of the respondents (72.50%) said that there was lack of flood related stories or some issues were missing in newspapers. Whereas 27.50% of them were satisfied with the stories published in newspapers.

Q4. Did you get a complete coverage of news stories reading newspapers during Pune flood?

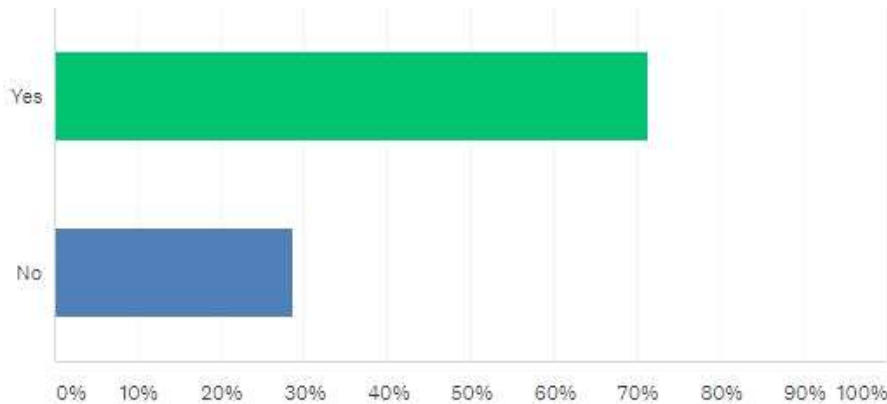


50% of the respondents expressed that they received somewhat coverage of news stories reading newspapers during the flood. Whereas 26.19 % of respondent said that they didn't get a complete coverage and another 26.19% said they got a complete coverage.

Q5. Did you find media coverage during flood –

Options	Percentage of respondents
Did not focus on all aspects	48.7
Covered all aspects	19.5
Sensational	9.7
Inaccurate portrayal	4.8
Biased coverage	7
others	7
Insensitive	2

Q6. Did you find that newspaper coverage for stories was more incident-driven (immediate news of the disaster), rather than investigative or analysis based stories (cause, reason, what can be done)?



71% of the respondents agreed that newspaper coverage for stories was more incident-driven, rather than investigative or analysis based stories. The remaining respondents (28.5%) didn't agree to it.

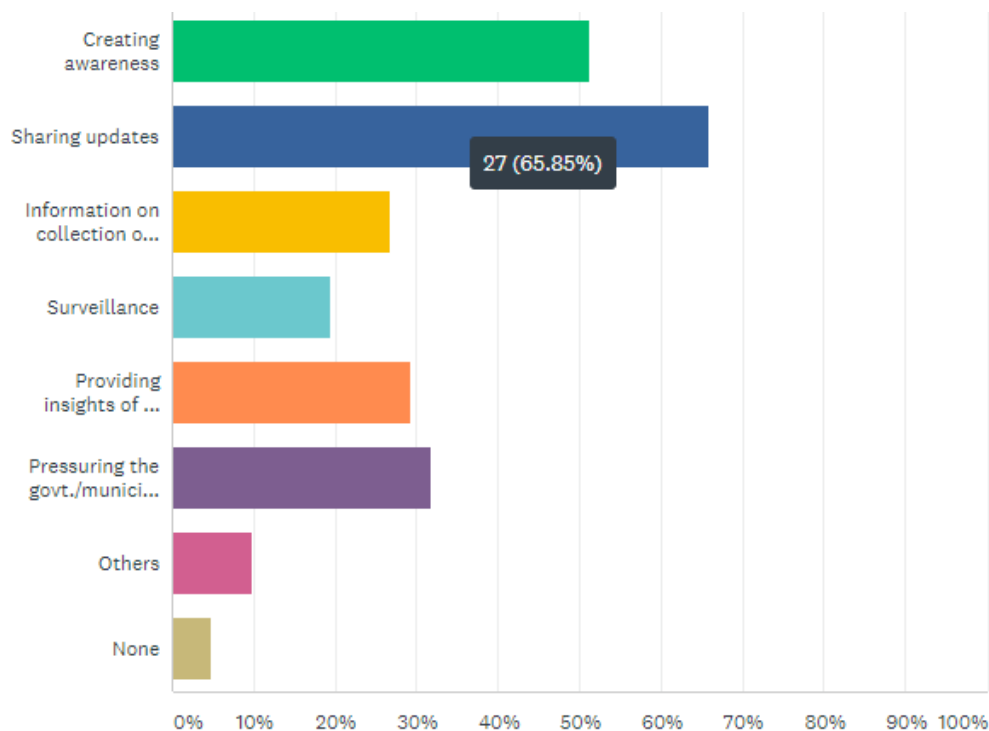
Q7. If yes, what kind of stories that you were looking for in newspapers?

Majority of the respondents said that they were seeking for more analytical stories related to :

- Cause of the flood
- Solutions to avert flood in future
- Accurate facts
- Research based stories
- Action taken by PMC
- Disaster management plan
- Climate change
- Marginalised people who suffered the most
- Precautionary measures
- Details about the relief work

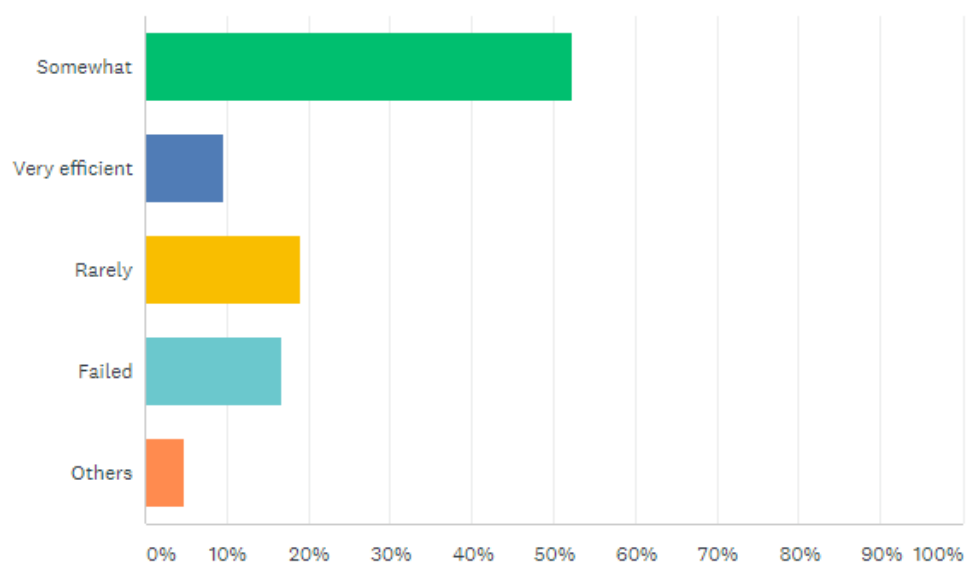
- Data driven stories
- Comparison of past and present flood
- Facts and figures (waterlogging/road blockage/dams)
- Use of rain water harvesting
- Construction industry and its impact on the environment
- Rules and regulation that has been compromised
- Plan of river line
- Future consequences and its preparation

Q8. Do you think media played a crucial role during flood in -



Options		Percentage of respondents
Sharing updates		65.8 %
Creating awareness		51%
Pressuring the govt./municipality to work towards it		31.7%
Providing insights of the situation		29.27%
Information on collection of funds		26.8%
Surveillance		19.51% ⁸
Others		9.76% ⁴
None		4.88% ²

Q9. Do you think Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) handled this crisis situation effeciently?



Most of the respondents (52%) agreed that PMC somewhat could handle this crisis situation effeciently. 19% said that rarely PMC could tackle this situation. 16.6% felt that PMC has failed to do it. Only 9.5% felt PMC was effecient.

Q10. Sometimes professional urgency is given precedence over humanistic angle in journalism? If you agree with this statement, what could be the probable reasons behind it?

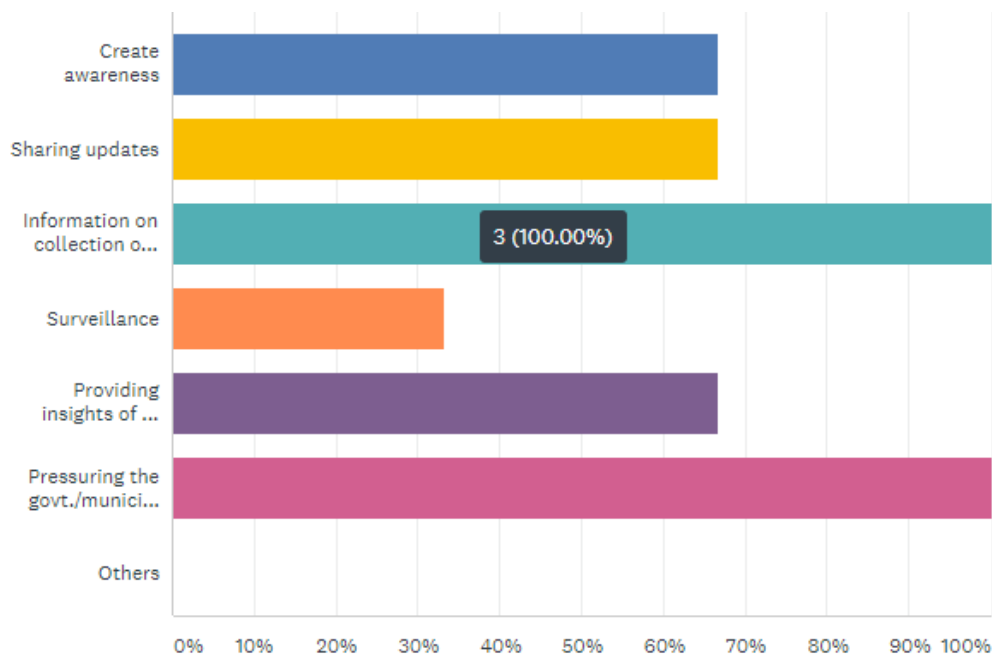
Majority of the respondents said that sometimes professional urgency is given precedence over humanistic angle in journalism. It is due to -

- Media is extremely commercialised
- Abundant information and multiple sources
- Lack of empathy towards affected people
- Deliver news that appeals people
- Intend to break news and gain highest TRP
- Journalists work under deadline pressure

Respondents emphasised that there is cut-throat competition amongst media and it is unhealthy. This situation needs to come to an end. It is leading to more damage than good. There is a dearth of grass root level information.

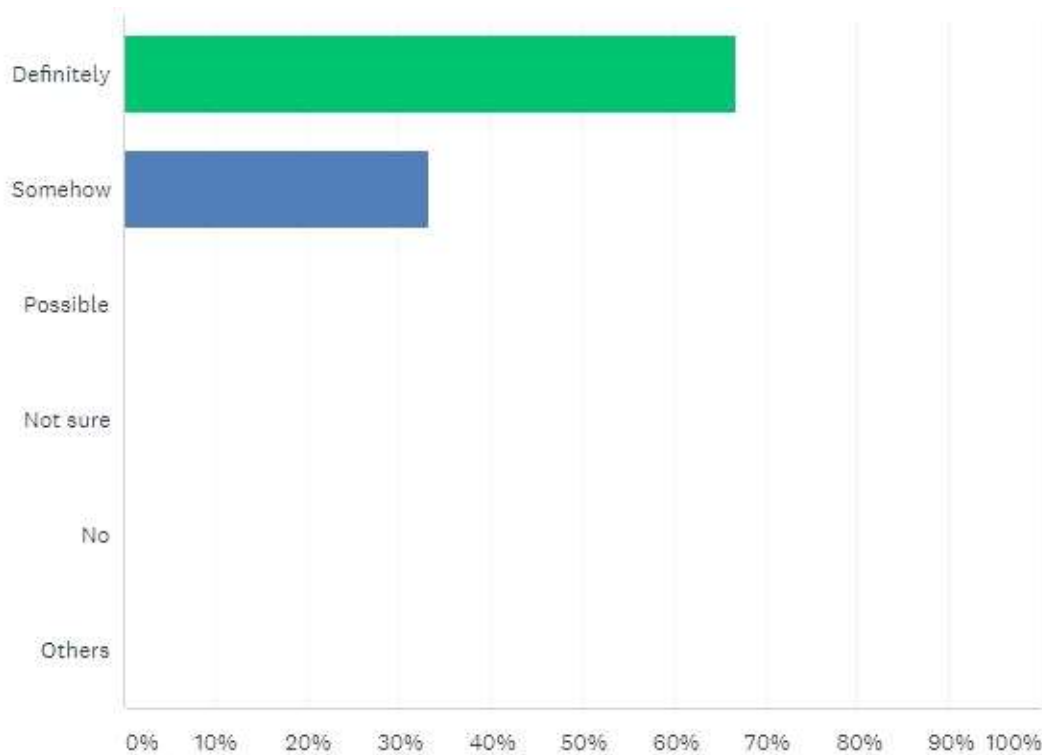
II. Views from Journalists

Q11. What were the roles of journalists covering the recent Pune flood?



Majority of the journalists emphasised that the role should be pressuring the government or municipality to work towards disaster management and information on collection of funds. The other roles are to create awareness (66.6%), providing insights of the situation (66.6%), sharing updates (66.6%) and surveillance (33%).

Q12. Do you think your published stories could influence the government to upgrade disaster management on priority basis or help in some other ways?



Majority of the journalists (66.67%) said that published stories could influence the government to upgrade disaster management on priority basis or help in some other way. Whereas 33% of them said somehow to it.

Q12. If yes, please share the topic of the story that had an impact.

Ajay Khape, Special correspondent of Indian Express said ``stories about rehabilitation of people alongside the nullahs of Ambil Odha and providing necessary items for the rehabilitated people created an impact on the readers and the municipality.

Prasad Kulkarni, Principal Correspondent of The Times of India said that the impactful story was about the redevelopment of Ambil odha.

Abhay Khairnar, Senior Correspondent of Hindustan Times said ``PMC had decided to appoint a committee headed by retired judge to study the nullahs marked in Development Plan a few years back. But it was still pending. Encroachment of nullahs and any construction premission near it came under its ambit. The story about this committee created an impact. PMC has now appointed

an committee to check all these things. Officers would think twice before giving any building permission."

Arul Horizon, The Indian Express special photographer was awarded the first prize in the 10th Southern Naval Command Military Photography Exhibition, 2019. "It was a photograph of Army personnel from Southern Command rescuing an elderly person during the Sangli flood. It was adjudged the best out of the total 96 entries received from photojournalists from across the country," he said.

Q13. Do you agree that the stories published in media were more incident based, rather than analysis based? What are the probable reasons for incident driven stories?

Majority of the journalists agreed that stories were more incident based. The probable reasons given by them includes-

- Meet the deadline
- Intention to do more stories
- Lack of time
- Byline stories

Vinay Madhav, Specifically Correspondent, Deccan Chronicle said that most disaster reporting in media is often distracted with political and bureaucracy visits and statements. Media lacks scientific perspective and long term socioeconomic adversaries caused by disasters. It just concentrates on extent of damage and compensation released.

R Krishnakumar an independent journalist said that he agrees to it. "It also depends on the resources at hand. In print, it becomes easier for a team of five reporters to report comprehensively, covering diverse angles of the disaster, than an outstation correspondent who has to bring all of that in his stories while meeting a deadline. Ground reporting as and when the disaster strikes has to focus more on the then and now but it cannot look away from the why. Sustained, reflective reporting can come at a later stage and is an extended work even a year after the disaster, there is room for stock-taking," he pointed out.

According to Rishikesh Bahadur Desai, Special Correspondent, The Hindu, incidents take most of the time of the reporter and space in the paper or air time. That is because of the shock value of the images or stories. Very less time is devoted to understanding the reasons behind the event and the possible solutions to end the cycle of devastation. Also because scribes tend to get busy in other routine news gathering like VIP visits, government response and political reactions. Little time is devoted to follow up.

A senior journalist working with a national newspaper emphasised that news reporting should be sustained backed with statistics. This helps officials to be serious about their job and about the progress. The knee jerk reporting and reaction should be avoided to save the city and citizens from the disasters.

According to Mohammed Sharif, Consulting Editor, MediaOne, journalists just cannot rely on police and administrative version. It should go beyond that to find the reasoning and execution process of the authorities. One should take the feels of victims and propagate what victims want, he added.

Vijayasimha V, news editor, Deccan Herald pointed out that media must go beyond official versions and investigate independently, highlighting personal stories.

Q14. What were the challenges you faced while covering the flood?

Ajay Khape Special correspondent of Indian Express said that the first difficulty was reaching the spot. "We had to ensure safety as well. We could not give inputs for our stories through mobile phone because of connectivity issue. Spot reporting was the biggest challenge. It was difficult to reach out to the victims and the rehabilitation centres during the incessant rainfall," he added.

According to Prasad Kulkarni Principal Correspondent of The Times of India, the hurdles comprised of lack of support from authorities, massive quantum of flood and large area of impact.

On similar lines, Abhay Khairnar Senior Correspondent of Hindustan Times said "floods in urban areas is a rare case. The areas are densely populated. The floods in Kolhapur and Sangli were different from Pune. Pune flood is more related to urban life. Many individual properties

got damaged but we are not able to give justice to these people. People were cleaning their homes for more than a week on their own. Media was not able to reach these people nor they were represented in the media."

Sadanand Godse chief photographer of The Times of India pointed out that worst affected areas were Satara Road and Katraj. ``The biggest challenge was to reach the spot. It made it all the more difficult to reach Lake Town, Katraj as the sewer pipeline was broken. Gururaj Society was the worst affected. One can see the debris accumulated from the wall collapse and piled up vehicles even after the flood. The construction work of the compound wall has not yet begun. The cracks are visible on the ground floor," he added.

About the affected people, Godse pointed out that delay in rehabilitation by PMC angered the residents. One could see the helplessness and anger among the affected people as there was no electricity, food or drinking water who were residing near Ambil Odha. They were later shifted to PMC's school. When asked about his heart rendering moment, he said ``when I saw the school books damaged due to flood at a school in Janta Vasahat. They were all kept in one place for drying."

Pratham Gokhale photojournalist of Hindustan Times shared his experience while covering Sangli flood in Maharashtra. ``The most difficult task was to reach the flood area in Sangli. We used rescue boats and had to find new ways to reach the spot. We couldn't go all the places as the rescue boats couldn't reach there. Our first priority was to rescue the civilian and show the world what was happening in Sangli," he said.

In regards to aftermath of the flood, Gokhale said that they visited the flood affected area in Sangli and Kolhapur after a week and saw the havoc. The houses were damaged, people lost their belongings and destruction was visible throughout. His heart rendering moment was to find a homeless boy with a dog in a rehabilitation shelter. ``The boy went back home after flood in a rescue boat. He found a female dog who had delivered recently but the puppies did not survive due to flood. He brought the dog back with him to the rehabilitation centre and gave him food and shelter. This dog now follows the boy wherever he goes," he added.

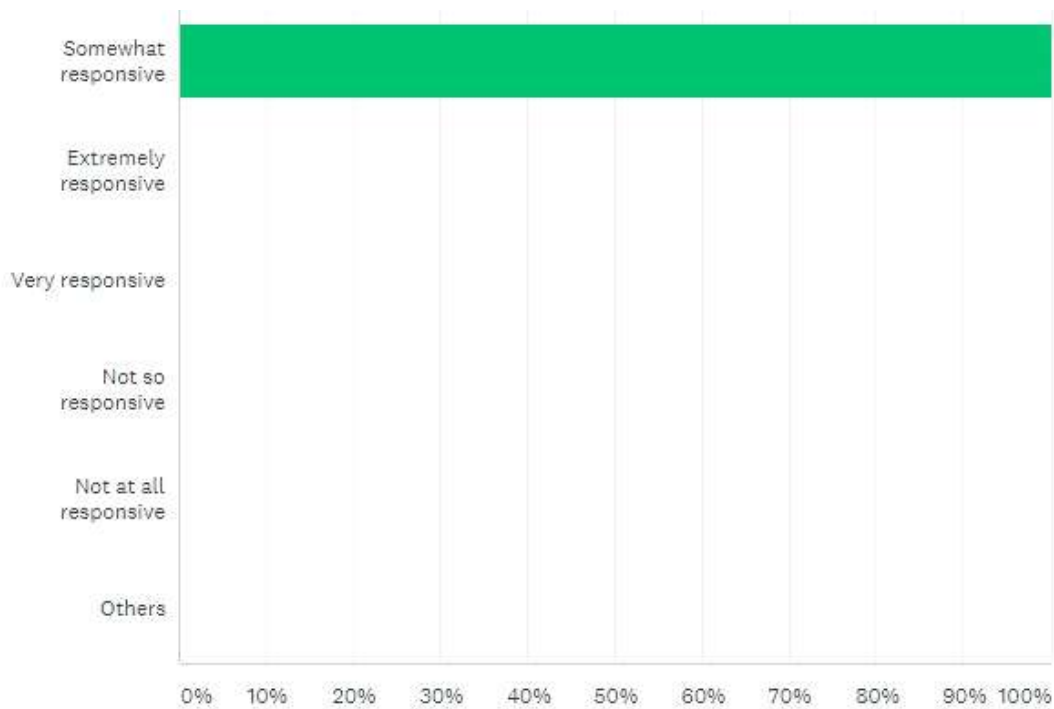
Arul Horizon special photographer of Indian Express said that roads leading to affected areas were difficult to reach in Pune, Sangli and Kolhapur. ``Highways were flooded on both sides and

trucks were parked on the road. We had to take the help of Army personnel in army vehicles to reach the spot. Highways opened after 7-8 days. We took images amidst 10-15 feet water and incessant rainfall. People stayed in 2nd or 3rd floor despite their first floor was flooded with water. Food supplies were provided to the affected people. The other challenge was to send the photographs and images back to office. These days photographs have to be sent in real time too," he added.

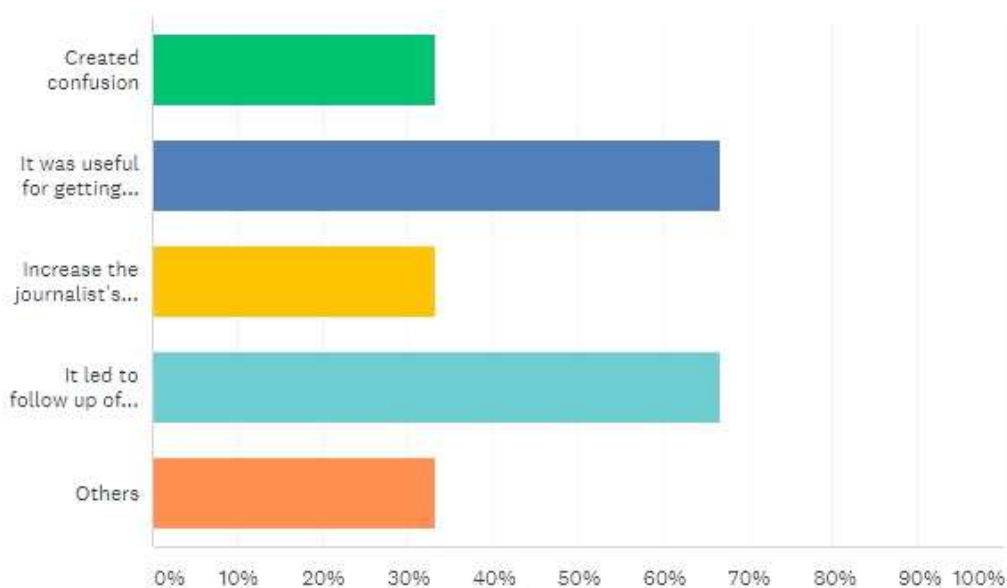
Recalling the 25th September night, Prashant Aher Senior Correspondent of Maharashtra Times who covered Pune flood said ``waterlogging in Pune city started around 10.30 pm. Satara road, Sawarkar nagar and Sinhagad road was blocked. There was traffic issues in several parts of the city. Around 12.30 am, the area around Ambil Odha was flooded. We started getting phone calls from residents. Initially, no one was sure what was happening or about the source of water and there was no information from PMC. It was a chaotic situation. Casualties were reported in the next morning."

``We carried the flood stories and images for the late night edition with a deadline of 12.30 am on 25th September. For meeting this deadline, we got information from the spot over phone and images from citizens. Online edition news appeared on 26th September. For other newspapers, stories were published on 27th September," he added.

He pointed out that the worst affected were the slum dwellers around Aryaneshwar, Dandekar pool and Ambil Odha. The families were rendered homeless. In Lake Town, the basement parking was flooded for three days. Majority of the vehicles were damaged. Gururaj society was badly affected too. In Treasure Park Housing Society, the entire parking space was submerged in floods with about 500 four wheelers and around 2,000 two wheelers. The houses were filled with slush. There was no electricity or water supply.

Q15. Did PMC cooperate while divulging details on the floods?

Majority of the journalists felt that PMC's responsiveness to queries could have been better.

Q16. How did the online social media stories on Pune flood impact journalist's work -

Majority of the respondents (66.6%) said that it was useful for getting ideas for more newspaper stories and another 66.6% of respondents said that it led to follow up of those online stories. Journalists (33%) said it created confusion and it increase the journalist's workload (33%).

Q17. Do you think sometimes professional urgency is given precedence over humanistic angle in journalism while covering any disaster ? b) If yes, what could be the probable reasons behind it?

Majority of the journalists agreed to the fact that sometimes professional urgency is given precedence over humanistic angle in journalism while covering any disaster. The reasons cited were:

- Intention to do more stories
- Byline stories
- Competition in the media industry
- Meeting deadlines

Pratham Gokhale photojournalist of Hindustan Times who covered Sangli and Kohlapur flood

(2019) says ``we took rescue boats to cover flood stories and we had to come back around 6 pm. Rescue operation cannot take place in the dark. Due to limited boats, we had to request the people to let us take the boats first and reach Sangli city to file our stories and meet the deadline. It was a difficult situation convincing people and make them understand that the photos and stories are to create awareness among the public and government."

``Our profession compels us to take photographs and interact with people for stories in times of adversaries. In one instance, I came across Anita Patil (45) who was sitting on the debris of her destroyed house by floods in Prayag Chikhali village in Kohlapur. She was sitting there with her one hand on the forehead. It is a tragic moment. I stayed there for sometime but I have to do my job. I have to think of what angle to click to get that intensity. I have to change lens and my angle. I have to look for the right moment during this difficult times where people are suffering or are in danger," he added.

Gokhale pointed out ``it is insensitive to hold the camera and start taking photographs of the affected people. Unfortunately, not many understand our job. I have to spread the word and shoot in this situation. I have come across journalists who are insensitive and ask mindless questions."

Arul Horizon Special Photographer of Indian Express says ``there are times where you have to lend a helping hand. Any help during disaster is useful. Many a time I have called the police and fire brigade for others or acted as a traffic man. It doesn't take much time to take a photograph if your camera is ready. You can do both. Take images as well as help people around you."

Q18. What is the need of the hour in terms of ethical journalism? Please give your view in this regard.

Krishna Kumar an independent journalist said `ethical' is unfortunately, an abstract in these times, especially in a media climate where extreme competitiveness is rewarded. ``Fairness in reporting, independence and accountability are prerequisites that the journalist, the individual, has to work on internally. It's a personal choice. How effectively he or she puts it all in practice depends on how far he or she can go to stand by their own convictions. I don't believe we can influence the workings of a highly commercialised, politically polarised industry with a blanket code of ethics," he added.

Mohammad Sharif Consulting Editor, MediaOne opined that the need of the hour in terms of ethical journalism is to speak to the people and be on the ground. ``Do not try to convince the authorities or boss. Do your journalism even if it is against your personal ideology. Let the truth be truth and fake be fake. Spell out what is correct and what is wrong," he added.

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai, Special Correspondent, The Hindu emphasised that the need of the hour is to speak the language of the public, to bring out issues related to them, and not to work under fear or favour.

``Ethical journalism gives clear picture of the situation rather than get carried away by what officials say. The officials must be made responsible to share the information to media. More often they dodge or give half baked information to media," says a senior journalist who is working with a national daily.

According to Ajay Khape, Special correspondent of Indian Express, the need of the hour is to maintain credibility, authenticate information and verify it before publishing the story. Online stories are not verified. Stories create an impact and bring in change. Thus, one has to be accurate and verify the sources, he added.

``No pressure should be given to reporters for getting advertisements, receiving gifts or other favours," said Prasad Kulkarni, Special Correspondent of The Times of India.

According to Abhay Khairnar, Senior Correspondent of Hindustan Times, said that there is lack of time for a journalist to think of story angles and do justice to a story due to online pressure.

``The reporting head expects to do a follow up of the online stories and hardly accepts new angles. For ethical journalist, he needs to get a good salary and time to read and think," he added.

Vinay Madhav, Specifically Correspondent, Deccan Chronicle said ``at times, as time passes, media house also become insensitive to older issues. As part of ethical journalism, one can support victims or affected areas by keeping the issue alive on social media."

Vijayasimha V, News Editor of Deccan Herald emphasised that there should be a self-regulating mechanism where the various media houses have to draw up a code of ethics and stick to it.

There should be a monitoring system which includes media, social organisations, women and minority groups which monitor the media and flag any violation of the code. There should be no

government role in it, he added.

III. Views from affected people:

Shashank Laxmikant Wagh who is a resident of Gururaj Society on Satara Road said ``I am staying here for the last 25 years. Ambil Odha canal is just 100 metres away from the society. This was the first time we faced this kind of situation. As the retaining wall collapsed, the water couldn't be stopped. I stay in ground floor and there was 7 feet water inside my house. The furniture, TV, washing machine and other electrical appliances got damaged as the water was there for 8 hours for around 10 pm to 7.30 am next morning. Two vehicles (two-wheeler) were damaged. I had insurance for one vehicle and the remaining amount I had to pay from my pocket. The encroachment near Ambil Odha has caused this havoc."

Yogesh Parale who visited the Gururaj society to meet his uncle after the flood said ``floodwater inundated the premises as well as apartment. Electric poles and vehicles were damaged. My uncle stays in the society and it was a challenge for me to enter the society after the flood. There was 10-12 feet water. Residents are worried as the monsoon is 6 months away. PMC and society could not come to conclusion who would fund in the construction of the retaining wall.

Citizens pointed out that the flood was totally unexpected and came without any warning. They want the concerned authority to take it as a priority to avert such flood in future.

Findings and Observation

The study findings show that most of the people got their news information online during flood. But when it comes to trust, majority of them trust newspaper stories over online stories. A small percentage of people say that neither they trust online or newspaper stories in terms of accuracy and fairness.

Most of the respondents felt that there were some issues missing or not elaborated related to flood stories in newspapers. Only a small percentage of people were satisfied with it. Most of the people felt that media did not focus on all aspects and there was a dearth of analytical stories on the cause of the flood, how flood can be averted in future, accurate facts, expert opinion and research based stories. The other stories that they searched for relates to PMC's role and future action plan, role of the construction industry, climate change and about marginalised people.

Instead the new stories particularly focussed on spot stories like wall collapse, casualty, accidents, damage, compensation, traffic snarl and evacuation.

In regards to Pune Municipal Corporation's (PMC) role, only a small percentage of people felt that PMC could handle this crisis situation.

Majority of the people agreed that sometimes professional urgency is given precedence over humanistic angle in journalism. They felt that it was due to unhealthy media house competition, it is the pressure on journalists to break stories and deliver stories that appeals people. According to journalists, at the beginning of a crisis, they focus on incident based stories and later come up with more indepth and investigative stories. Majority of them agreed that it was due to lack of time, intention to do more stories and meeting the deadline.

During flood, there were news stories published that had an impact on society or authorities. Journalists from different newspaper said that those stories were on rehabilitation of people along the nullah of Ambil Odha, necessary supplies to rehabilitate people, redevelopment of Ambil Odha, scope of the committee to study nullahs marked in the development plan and its present status.

In regards to focus of stories on incident driven versus analysis based, majority of the journalists agreed that the incident driven focus is due to intention to do more stories, byline stories, competition in the media market and meeting deadlines. They pointed out that disaster reporting is often distracted with political and bureaucracy visits and statements and they get busy in routine news gathering and government response. Less time is devoted to understand the cause of the event and possible solutions to it. They felt that one should go beyond the official version to understand and investigate a story with facts.

On the impact of online stories, journalists expressed that the online media stories increases their workload to do follow up of the online stories, authenticate and verify the sources.

In regards to challenges faced by media, journalists emphasised that it was spot reporting. Firstly, it was difficult for them to reach the spot, lack of information from the authorities, reach out to affected people, gather information from affected people at the time of adversity, face the anger and helplessness of the homeless people and take photographs or quotes from them for

stories.

In regards to ethical journalism, journalists pointed out that the need of the hour is to speak the language of the public, highlight the issues of public interest, not work under fear or favour and not get carried away with what officials say. One should provide credible, authentic information and verify before it gets published. A self-regulating mechanism with a code of ethics drawn by various media houses along with a monitoring system can be the order of the day.

Conclusion

Media plays a significant role in covering a natural disaster in regards to public interest. It has a wider reach and inform the actual intensity of a crisis situation. Unfortunately it is being compromised in terms of its content, selection and sources. Here, media somewhat underperforms and falls short of people's expectation to a certain extent to form an informed opinion about the crisis situation.

It was observed that journalists did a excellent job in regards to spot reporting but some major issues related to public interest was either missing or minimal. Journalists sometimes delivered stories that were easier to gather and report, stories that they thought was important and focussed more on incident driven stories. This led to lack of elaboration of certain issues and its context. Analytical stories would have helped citizens to better understand the crisis situation as well as make the authority accountable.

The readers need to understand that there are certain constraints of the media too. Media faced all odds for spot reporting or get stories from the affected area. They work under pressure to deliver stories, meet deadline and are under staffed. As the crisis unfolded, journalists have more covered routine stories, instead of sustained and reflective stories.

The road ahead to support victims or affected areas during disaster and its aftermath, media should keep the issue alive through their coverage. Follow-up stories backed with statistics, stories beyond official versions and articles with possible solutions can help to end the cycle of devastation, push the officials to take a note and work towards its progress.

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