Exploring the Nexus: A Study on Role and Use of Psychology in Communication

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Abstract

The research presents a study of the interrelationship between psychology and communication, with a focus on how the two influence each other. The aim of the research is to analyse the relationship between psychology and communication through a comprehensive literature review and the establishment of a theoretical framework. Historically, these subjects have been interconnected, sometimes merging as separate fields within the social sciences and sometimes separated. Along with this, the psychological effects of mass media content on youth have been studied. The research involves students of Lucknow University and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University. In which the practical implications of communication theories, such as cultivation theory, use and gratification theory, and agenda-setting theory have been verified.

Keywords: Nexus, Psychology, Communication, Media Influence, Youth Psychology

Introduction

Communication psychology is a field that has become increasingly significant due to the pervasive use of various forms of media in modern society. Sectors like education, healthcare, government, Défense, commerce, and journalism are all heavily dependent on media and digital technologies (*(PDF) The Transformation of Digital Technology*, n.d.). These fields not only conduct research and development to address ongoing challenges but also emphasize the role of communication in their investigations. Given that communication research is prevalent across diverse disciplines, communication psychology naturally becomes an integral aspect, helping understand how communication impacts behaviour and decision-making across sectors (Rajhans, 2009). Every time we talk about communication taking place, it is customary to think or talk about the effects it has on the audience. Almost all models of communication talk about feedback or effect, not having to mention, feedback stems from psychological effects of media and the message. When we combine two branches of social science, communication and psychology, we get a broader and more reliable view of the world and society. Psychology shapes our perception of the world and communication shapes our relation with the outside world. By definition, psychology is the "study of mind and behaviour" (Britannica, 2003)**.** If we have to study more objectively, psychology is often studied in relation with another subject/branch of social and/or life sciences. In such a case, psychology is defined as the *"study of mind and behaviour in relation to a particular field of knowledge or activity."* The above mentioned another field of study is communication. Therefore, it is important for us to define 'communication' under the light of psychology. Communication according to American Psychological Association is, "the transmission of information, which may be by verbal (oral or written) or nonverbal means. Humans communicate to relate and exchange ideas, knowledge, feelings, and experiences and for many other interpersonal and social purposes (American Psychological Association, 2018)." The topic of the research talks about a kind of 'nexuses of communication and psychology. One might wonder what a nexus is? Cambridge dictionary describes nexus as "an important connection between the parts of

a system or a group of things." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) It is a well-established fact that psychology and communication are intertwined with each other, so much so, that one cannot exist without the other. Both the fields have been well defined time and again individually and also with reference to each other. However, there has never been an approach to define what the connection between the two can actually be called. The researcher has refrained from doing so. But in her attempt to denote that connection with one word, for simplification of concepts, she popped up the word 'nexus'. Therefore, 'nexus' in the title of the research is simply the complex, entangled, and baffling relationship shared between psychology and communication.

With the fast pace growth and spreading of information and communication technologies, it is necessary to record, observe and analyse the psychological effects that present day media has on the youth population. Since, India holds the highest youth population, it is important to know the psychological effects of media on them and in turn use it to direct their minds onto the right direction. Therefore, the aim of the study is to find out psychological effects of media on the youth of India and suggest changes accordingly to harness their potential in country's development.

Background of Study

Psychology attained its status as an academic discipline in the year 1879, almost a century before communication. By the time, communication was accepted as an academic field, that is in 1980s, psychology had evolved much with many branches of its own. In the year 1870, Wilhelm Wundt, a German man, first attempted to treat psychology as a science. He attempted to study human mind by observing consciousness (Braisby N., 2012). His work was followed by Edward Titchener, who introduced structuralism. Then came the period of behaviourism. Behaviourism, dominated the psychology field from 1920s-1950s. It only studied observable behaviour (Birenbaum, n.d.).

During the 1950s, psychology was hit by an anti-behaviourism wave and cognitive psychology came into the picture. Contemporary psychology is often called the cognitive psychology, largely due to the reason of more and more theoretical framework being webbed around the field. Finally in the year 1990, Alan Newell came up with his work in Unified Theories of Cognition. The invention of computer systems gave the anti-behaviourists a conceptual framework where the human mind was compared with a computer processor and studied. This came as a result of Shannon's theorem in digital communications. This era was followed by cognitive neuroscience. Communication entered the field of psychology through the information processing theory. In 1950s, George Miller and some other psychologists came up with information processing theory, that compared human brain to a computer.

"Information processing theory (IPT) is a theoretical framework that seeks to understand how individuals acquire, process, store, and retrieve information. The theory posits that information is processed through a series of mental processes, including attention, perception, memory, and reasoning. IPT has been used to explain a variety of phenomena, including learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and cognitive development." (Theory Hub, n.d.) The Information processing theory contained three parts: Sensory memory, Short-term off memory, and Long-term off memory. Shannon and Weaver's model of communication is very closely related to the information processing theory. This is because it talks about an information source, a transmitter and a receiver, among other elements. This information source and the receiver were said to be human brain. A human being uses their brain to process any piece of information. Therefore, it was an interaction between one brain to another. The concept of using communication to persuade public has been in communication theories since the time of Aristotle. This can be concluded because his model of communication talks of 'effect' as one of the five components of a communication process. (Pumble, n.d.)Persuasion is one of the key aspects that connects communication with psychology. Nearly all communication that occur in our vicinity depends on persuasibility. Persuasibility, was discovered to be a part of people's personality, although varying in intensity. (Britannica, n.d.) Any individual's ability to get persuaded, relies heavily on their perception of reality and the world they live in. Perception of reality, makes an individual agree or disagree with any communication taking place. This again, in turn shapes the cognition and behaviour of the individual (Britannica, n.d.). The relationship of oneself with oneself and of oneself with others, and the interaction that occurs in between, comes under contemporary psychology and tool that helps us to connect with others and ourselves is communication

(NDHLOVU, 2020). And in the modern era, information is helpful in bringing about change in the behaviour of individuals. One such research paper has come to light in the field of water conservation (Kumar & Loknath, 2023). Therefore, it can be concluded that for communication to occur human brain works as the 'information processor' by encoding the messages in a language understandable to the receiver and by decoding the message at receiver's end.

Research Gap

India saw a huge surge in technological advancement in the past decade. From widespread use of mobile phones, to internet banking to the rise of OTT platforms, we witnessed it all. This rise in information and communication technology (ICT) had a huge impact on the minds and behavior of the countrymen too. Being a comparatively new development, not many researches have been done to study the effects of media on communication psychology. In a country like India, with such diverse and huge population, impact of ICT should be thoroughly studied to pave better paths of mass communication. With rise in technology, the mode of communication also underwent a significant change. With special focus on COVID-19, it can be easily said that world is dependent on virtual communication more than ever. This shift in communication channel has led to a negligence in considering non-verbal communication while studying communication psychology.

Objectives

1.   To analyse the role that psychology plays in communication.
2.   To study the psychological effects of current mass media on university and college students.
3.   To check practical implication of communication theories.
4.   To study and observe the awareness about media literacy and its importance.

Research Methodology

For this research, purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used, as we were looking for students with a particular quality of a particular place. The researcher decided to work with more than 100 respondents from both universities, through simple random sampling. We wanted to work with more than 100 respondents. We got responses from 103 students. So, we included all 103 responses as our sample size. We selected two universities, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and University of Lucknow, through simple random sampling (lottery method). for this research data was collected through Google Forms, a tool which helps in creating survey forms and circulating them online to the target respondents. There is a cause-and-effect relationship that has been studied in the research. Therefore, it falls under the umbrella of explanatory and descriptive research.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis of the data obtained for the research has been divided into the following points - whose demography is as follows-

103 students participated in the research whose distribution by university was 67 students (about 65%) were from Lucknow University. 36 students (about 35%) were from Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University.

Interpretation of respondents demography

Pie Chart (Left): This shows the distribution of students by university. The majority (65%) of participants are from the University of Lucknow, while 35% are from Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University.
Bar Chart (Right): This displays the distribution of respondents by age group. Most participants (62.1%) are in the 22-27 age range, followed by 31.1% in the 17-22 age range. A small portion (6.8%) are in the 27-32 age range, that is mention in figure1.
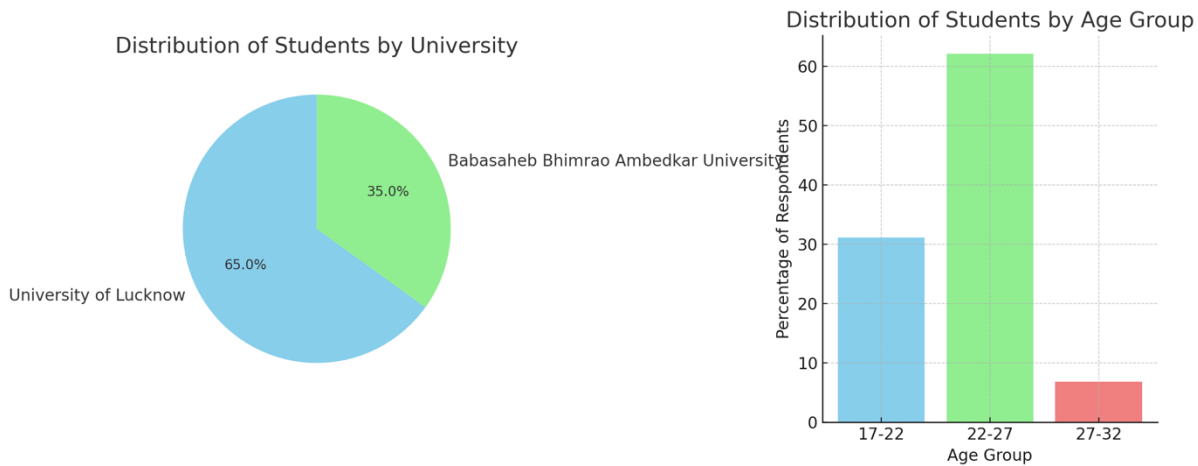
Figure 1: Demography of respondents

Sources of information

The objective of this analysis is to understand the preferences of information sources among respondents. The study focuses on various mediums such as social media, digital media, newspapers, television, radio, and folk media. The dataset consists of responses that indicate the sources each respondent uses to seek information, with many respondents using multiple sources-

Social Media / Digital Media: The dominant source of information, mentioned in 87 out of 103 responses (approximately 84%). This indicates the pervasive role of digital platforms in today's media landscape, especially among younger populations.

Newspapers: Mentioned in 54 out of 103 responses (approximately 52%), indicating that traditional print media remains a significant source of information. Many respondents combine newspaper reading with digital media consumption.

Television: Mentioned in 32 out of 103 responses (approximately 31%). Television still holds relevance, often combined with other sources like newspapers and social media.

Radio: Mentioned in only 6 responses, making it one of the least preferred sources among respondents. This reflects the declining use of radio, especially among younger audiences who gravitate more towards digital platforms.

Folk Media: Mentioned in 8 responses (approximately 8%). Although less common, folk media is still used in combination with other mediums like television, newspapers, and social media, particularly in regions where traditional methods are culturally significant.
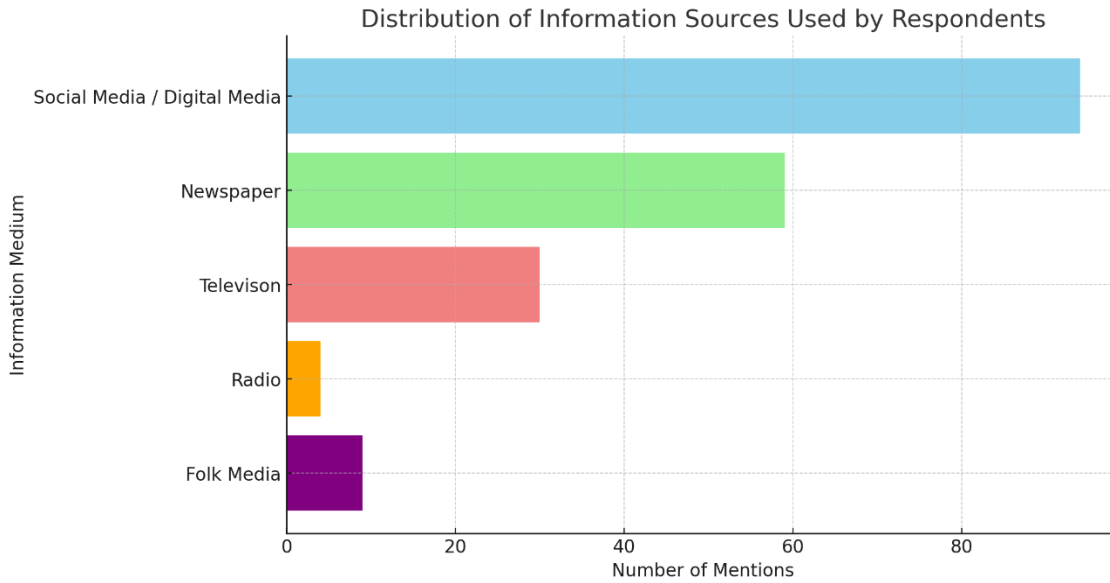
Figure 2 : Information Sources Used by Respondents

The data clearly highlights a shift towards digital consumption, with most respondents relying heavily on social media and online platforms for information. However, traditional sources like newspapers and television maintain a significant presence, indicating that media consumption remains multifaceted. For future research or campaigns, a balanced approach that integrates both digital and traditional methods would be most effective in reaching a broad audience.

Summary of Social Media Platforms Usage Data

Instagram and YouTube are the most used platforms, according to the data received. Facebook and Twitter/X are also popular, but less influential than Instagram and YouTube. LinkedIn is used primarily in professional contexts and often appears in combination with other platforms. Less common platforms such as WhatsApp, Reddit and Telegram are also used.
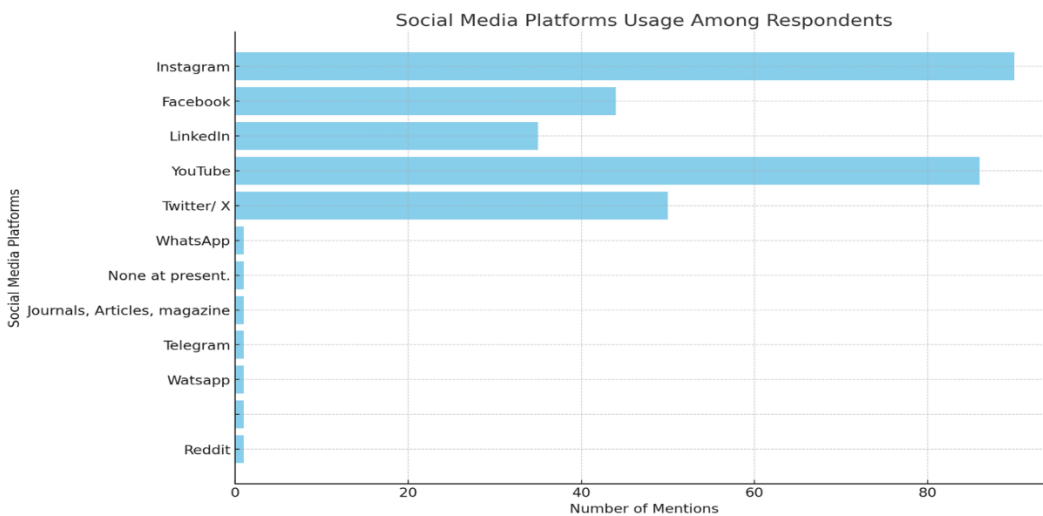

Figure 3: Social Media Platforms Usage

An analytical report of the social media activity times based

Time Slot	Frequency
9 - 12 AM	45
12 - 3 PM	12
3 - 6 PM	9
6 - 9 PM	16
9 - 12 PM	33
After 12 AM	33
Early Morning	1

Table 1 : Social media activity times

According to the results obtained from the presented data, early morning (9 - 12 am) and late evening (9 - 12 pm) are the most active times, and there is also a lot of activity till late night (after 12 am). Evening time (6 - 9 pm) also sees a lot of activity, but it is less prominent than the morning and late-night times. Afternoon time (12 pm - 3 pm and 3 pm - 6 pm) has relatively less engagement, and morning time is the least frequently reported.

This analysis shows that social media engagement peaks during early morning and late-night times, while activity declines around noon.

How often do you engage with emotionally charged (anger, violent, depressing, tragic, love, etc.) or controversial content

Frequency	Count
Very Rarely	17
Rarely	18
Sometimes	40
Moderately	43
Frequently	42
Very Frequently	21

Table 2: Frequency of Engagement

Emotional Impact: The data reveals a spectrum of engagement levels with emotionally charged or controversial content. Those who engage frequently or very frequently may experience stronger emotional reactions, which could be tied to their psychological needs or coping mechanisms.

Behavioural Patterns: These patterns may indicate that respondents find such content engaging or stimulating, which aligns with psychological theories that suggest people are drawn to content that elicits strong emotional responses.

Rare and Very Rare Engagement: Conversely, individuals who engage rarely or very rarely may avoid content that could cause distress or emotional discomfort, potentially reflecting a preference for maintaining emotional stability.

Overall : The analysis indicates varying levels of engagement with emotionally charged or controversial content. Most people engage moderately to frequently, while a significant portion engages less frequently or very rarely. This

variation underscores the importance of understanding psychological responses to content and adjusting communication strategies to align with the preferences and needs of different audiences.

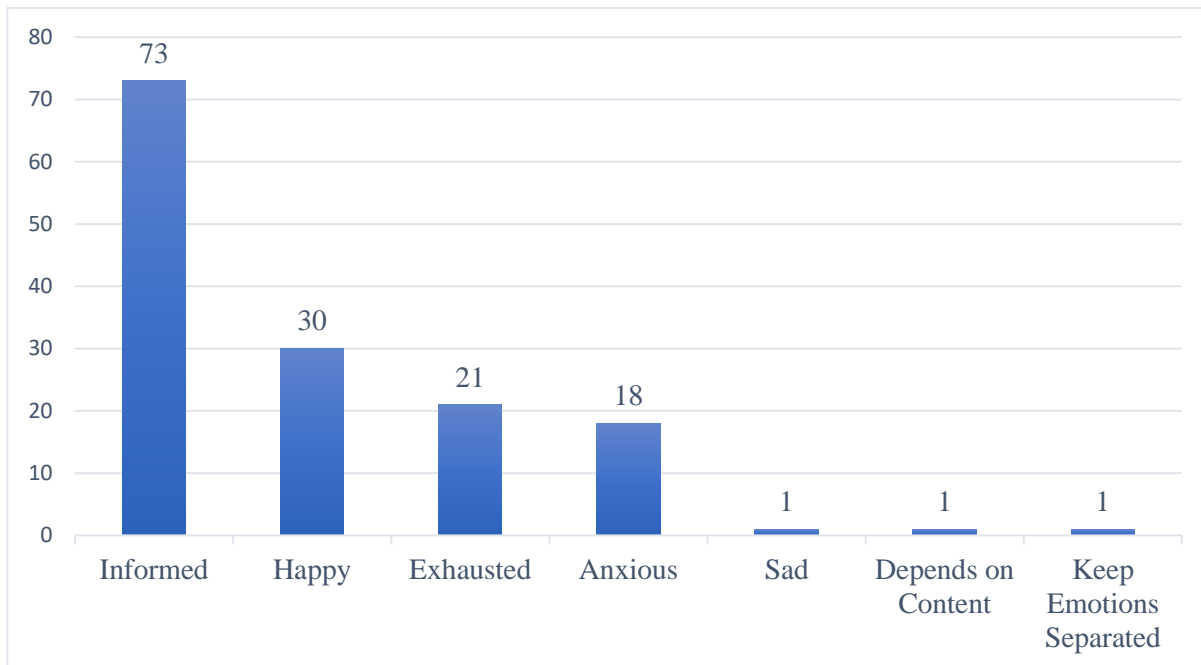## Feeling after consuming media content

Figure 4: feeling after consuming media content

The data presented in figure 4, shows the respondents (73 mentions) feel informed after consuming media content. This indicates that media content often provides valuable information and contributes to the respondents' knowledge base. A significant number of respondents (30 mentions) report feeling happy after media consumption. This suggests that media content can positively impact mood and well-being. Only one respondent felt sad, indicating that this is less common compared to other emotions. 21 respondents feel exhausted after consuming media content. This may reflect the cognitive or emotional load that media content can impose, potentially due to its intensity or volume. 18 respondents feel anxious, highlighting that media content can sometimes cause stress or worry. This may be related to the nature of the content or its impact on the viewer's emotional state.

Data regarding whether media content has the power to influence mood

Perception of Media Influence, The high percentage of "Yes" responses supports the idea that media content is a significant factor in emotional and psychological responses. This could be due to the emotional intensity or the nature of the content consumed. The large number of "Maybe" responses suggests that the impact of media on mood can be inconsistent or context-dependent. Individuals may experience mood changes only with certain types of content or under specific circumstances. Those who responded "No" may either have a high level of emotional resilience, selective content consumption, or a different relationship with media that mitigates its emotional impact. The data are mention in figure
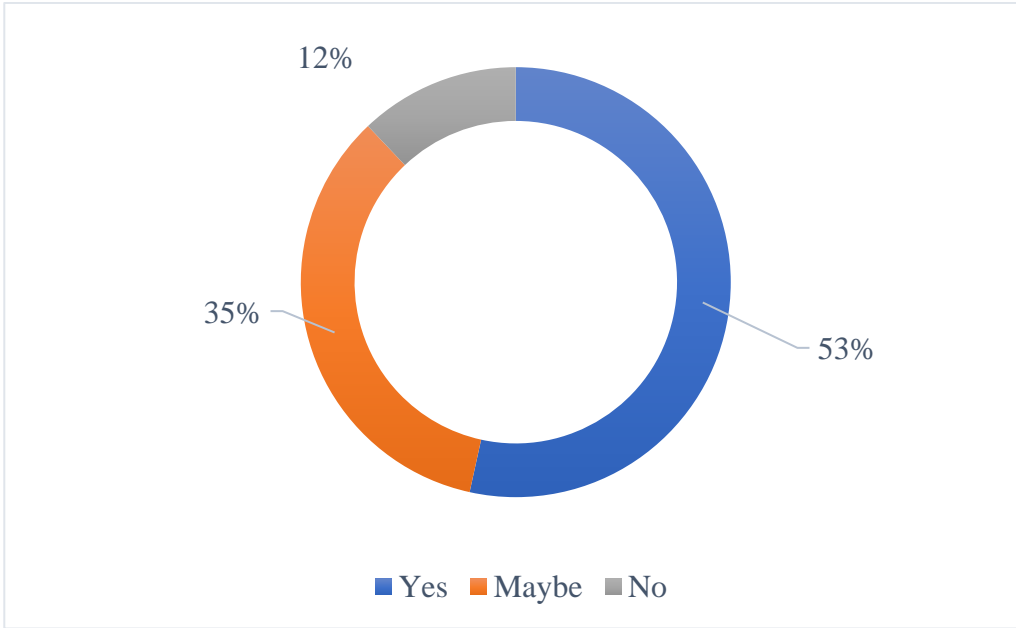
Figure 5: Media content has the power to influence mood

Media Influence on Public Perception:
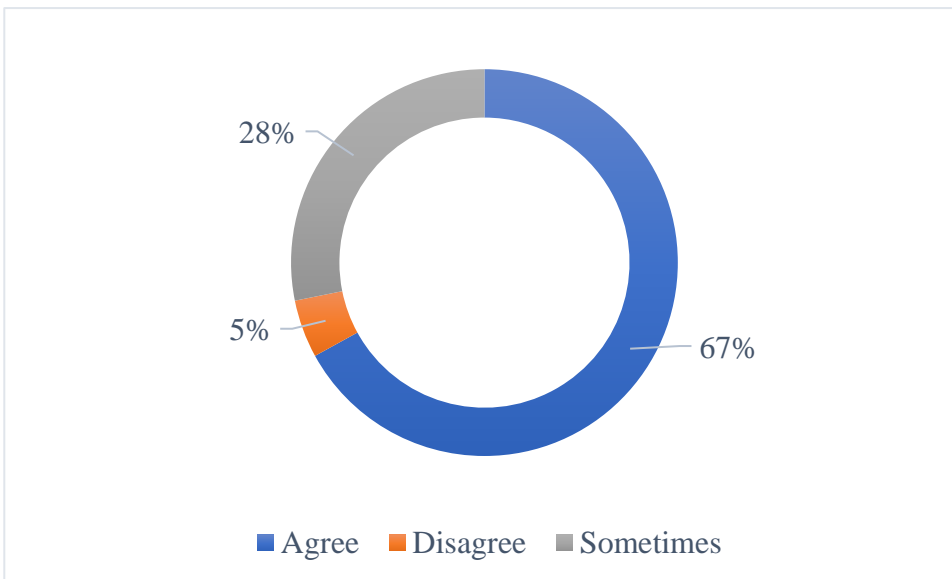
Figure 6 : Media Influence on Public Perception

The analysis reveals a strong belief in the power of media to change public perception, with 69 respondents agreeing that it does. A considerable portion acknowledges that this change occurs sometimes, indicating variability in media influence. A minority disagrees, suggesting skepticism or alternative views on the role of media. Overall, the data highlights a widespread recognition of media's impact on shaping public perceptions.

Media Consumption and Attitudes

Question	Response Count	Percentage	Notes
Does present-day media content accurately reflect real-life situations?			
Yes	26	15%	
No	51	31%	Majority do not believe media reflects real-life accurately.
Sometimes	95	54%	Majority find media portrayal sometimes accurate.
Does consumption of media have any effect on your attitude?			
Yes	63	38%	Many people believe media affects their attitude.
No	32	19%	Some believe media has no effect on their attitude.
Maybe	74	43%	A significant number are uncertain about the effect.
Do you think media portrayal of any topic affects public's perception on the issue?			
Yes	90	53%	Most believe media affects public perception.
No	22	13%	Few think media does not affect perception.
Sometimes	62	34%	Many find media portrayal sometimes affects perception.
Have you ever felt pressure to conform to certain standards portrayed in the media?			
Yes	63	38%	Many have felt pressured by media standards.
No	40	24%	Some have not felt any pressure.
Sometimes	81	48%	Significant number have felt pressure occasionally.

Table 3: Consumption and Attitudes

Accuracy of Media Reflection: A majority of respondents feel that media does not always reflect real-life accurately, with many considering it sometimes accurate.

Effect on Attitude: A significant number of people believe media has an effect on their attitude, while others are uncertain. A smaller portion feels media has no effect.

Impact on Public Perception: There is a general agreement that media portrayal affects public perception of issues, though some respondents see it as only occasional.

Pressure to Conform: Many respondents have experienced pressure to conform to media standards, although a notable number have not felt this pressure.

This table provides a clear view of the distribution of responses and highlights the varying perceptions about media's role in reflecting reality, influencing attitudes, and affecting societal standards.

Summarizing the responses to the questions about social interactions, communication effectiveness, cognitive abilities, attention span, media imitation, societal norms, media-induced anxiety, media regulation, and media literacy education

Question	Response Count	Percentage	Notes
Do you feel that media consumption affects your social interactions with peers?			
Yes	46	27%	A substantial number of respondents feel media affects their social interactions.
No	16	9%	Some do not feel media has an impact on social interactions.
Maybe	108	64%	Majority are uncertain or believe media may have an effect on their social interactions.
Does media consumption enhance or hinder your ability to communicate effectively with others?			
Enhances	71	43%	Many believe media enhances their communication ability.
Hinders	15	9%	Some feel media hinders their ability to communicate effectively.
No opinion	83	48%	A significant number have no opinion on the impact of media on communication.
Do you believe that media consumption has influenced your cognitive abilities?			
Yes	46	27%	Many believe media influences cognitive abilities.
No	21	12%	Some do not believe media affects cognitive abilities.
Maybe	113	61%	Majority are uncertain or believe media has an influence on cognitive abilities.
Have you noticed changes in your attention span or ability to			

focus after consuming media content for extended periods?			
Yes	78	46%	Many have noticed changes in attention span or focus after extended media consumption.
No	43	25%	Some have not noticed any change in their attention span or focus.
Have you ever imitated behaviors or actions seen in media content?			
Yes	57	33%	A notable number have imitated behaviours or actions seen in media.
No	44	25%	Some have not imitated any media behaviours.
Do you think media content has the power to influence societal norms and behaviours?			
Yes	92	54%	Most believe media content influences societal norms and behaviours.
No	14	8%	Few believe media does not influence societal norms.
Maybe	72	38%	A considerable number are unsure or believe media may influence societal norms.
Have you ever felt overwhelmed or anxious due to the amount of media you consume?			
Yes	80	47%	Many have felt overwhelmed or anxious due to media consumption.
No	40	23%	Some have not felt overwhelmed or anxious.
Do you actively try to regulate your media consumption to maintain mental well-being?			
Yes	76	45%	A significant number actively regulate their media consumption for mental well-being.
Sometimes	72	42%	Many try to regulate their media consumption occasionally.
No	24	13%	A smaller portion do not actively regulate their media consumption.
Do you believe that universities should play a role in educating students about media literacy and its potential effects?			

Yes	122	70%	Majority believe universities should educate students about media literacy and its effects.
No	14	8%	Few do not believe universities should have this role.
No opinion	40	22%	Some have no opinion on the role of universities in media literacy education.

Social Interactions: Many people are unsure whether media affects their social interactions, but a significant portion believes it does.

Communication Effectiveness: Most respondents feel media enhances their ability to communicate, though many are unsure.

Cognitive Abilities: There is a general uncertainty about media's influence on cognitive abilities, with a notable number believing it does have an effect.

Attention Span: Many report changes in attention span or focus after extended media use, while others do not.

Behaviour Imitation: A significant number have imitated behaviours seen in media, though many have not.

Societal Norms: A majority believe media content influences societal norms and behaviours, with some uncertainty.

Media-Induced Anxiety: Many have felt overwhelmed or anxious due to media consumption, while some have not.

Media Regulation: A notable portion actively regulates media consumption for mental well-being, with many doing so occasionally.

Media Literacy Education: Most believe universities should educate students on media literacy, though some have no opinion or disagree.

Conclusion

This analysis delves into how media consumption influences individual attitudes, social interactions, cognitive abilities, and communication efficacy. Here's a summary of the key findings:

Media Reflection of Real-Life Situations:

Perception of Accuracy: The majority of respondents view contemporary media as sometimes inaccurate in reflecting real-life situations. This highlights a critical gap between media portrayals and actual experiences, suggesting a potential area for increased media literacy and critical consumption.

Impact of Media Consumption on Attitudes:

Influence on Attitudes: A significant number of respondents believe that media consumption affects their attitudes, though many remain unsure. This indicates a complex relationship where media content can shape attitudes but also suggests variability in individual responses to media influence.

Effect on Social Interactions:

Social Impact: Responses are mixed regarding the impact of media consumption on social interactions. While some individuals feel it enhances their social interactions, others perceive it as a hindrance. This underscores the diverse effects media can have on interpersonal relationships and communication dynamics.

Communication Effectiveness:

Enhancement vs. Hindrance: The majority of respondents feel that media consumption enhances their ability to communicate effectively. However, there are notable differences in opinions, with some perceiving it as a hindrance. This suggests that media's impact on communication is not uniform and may depend on the nature of media content and individual usage patterns.

Influence on Cognitive Abilities:

Cognitive Impact: There is a divided perspective on whether media consumption influences cognitive abilities. While some individuals acknowledge its impact on skills such as critical thinking and creativity, others are uncertain. This points to an ongoing debate about the cognitive benefits and drawbacks of media exposure.

Attention Span and Focus:

Changes in Attention: A considerable portion of respondents report noticing changes in their attention span and focus after extended media consumption. This highlights a potential concern about media's role in altering cognitive functions, emphasizing the need for mindful consumption practices.

Imitation of Media Behaviours:

Behavioural Imitation: Many respondents have imitated behaviours seen in media content. This suggests that media can influence behaviour patterns, aligning with psychological theories on social learning and modelling.

Influence on Societal Norms and Behaviours:

Societal Influence: The consensus is that media content has a significant power to influence societal norms and behaviours. This aligns with the psychological understanding of media's role in shaping public perceptions and norms.

Regulation of Media Consumption:

Mental Well-being: There is a general awareness of the need to regulate media consumption to maintain mental well-being, although practices vary. This indicates a growing recognition of the psychological impact of media and the importance of self-regulation.

Educational Role of Universities:

Media Literacy Education: There is strong support for universities playing a role in educating students about media literacy and its effects. This reflects a need for structured educational interventions to enhance understanding and critical engagement with media.

The findings underscore the complex interplay between media consumption and psychological processes. Media can influence attitudes, social interactions, cognitive abilities, and societal norms, but the effects are nuanced and vary across individuals. There is a need for increased media literacy, mindful consumption, and further research to fully understand and address these impacts. Integrating psychological principles into communication strategies and media education can help mitigate potential negative effects and harness media's positive potential.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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