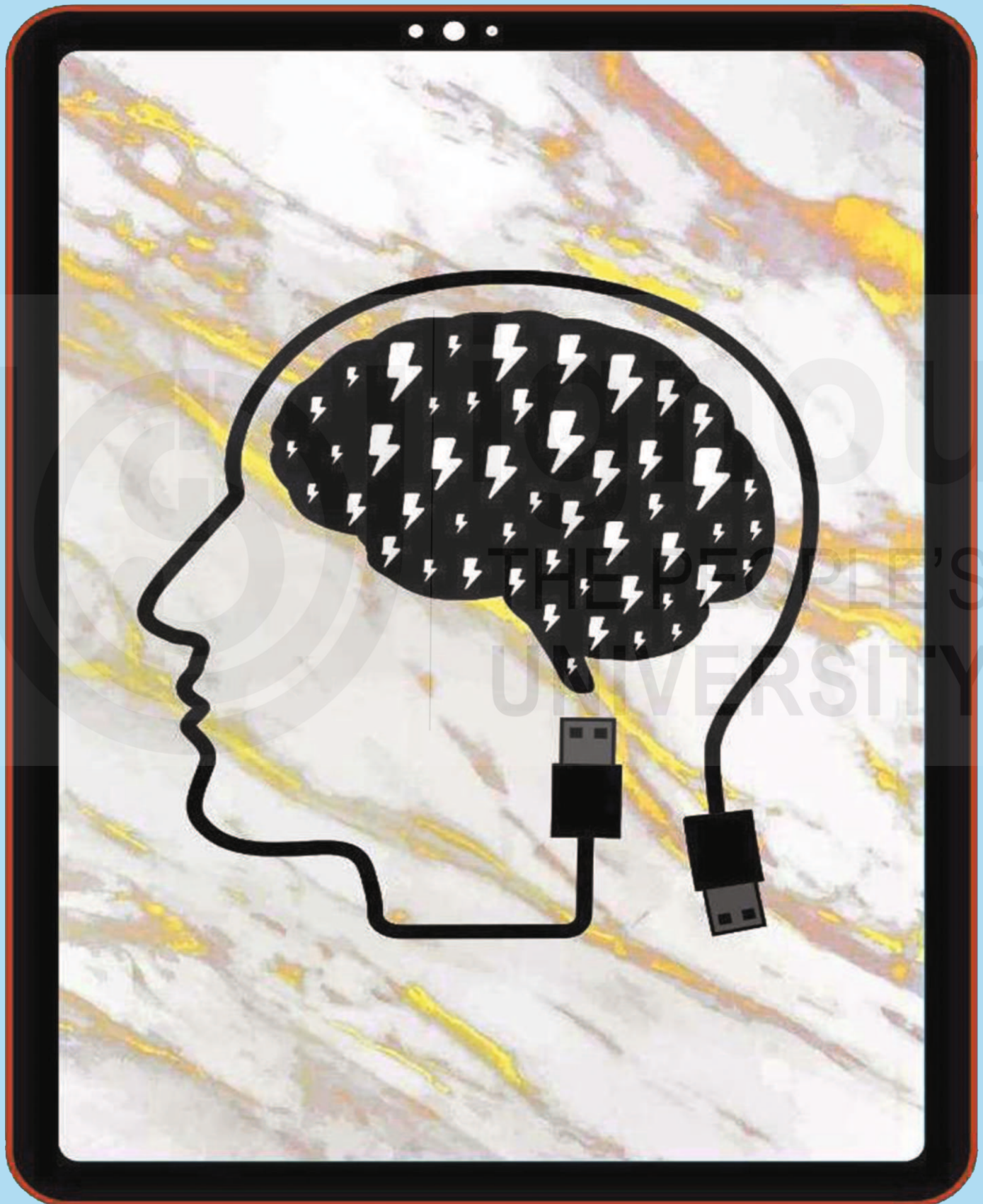




“शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

— इन्दिरा गांधी



“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

— Indira Gandhi

PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA

**School of Social Sciences
Indira Gandhi National Open University**

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PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA: HOW TO PROCEED IN THE COURSE?

The course on *Psychology and Media* (BPCG 174) is one of the Generic courses offered in the Undergraduate Programme of IGNOU. The course is of 06 Credits. The course is divided into five blocks. Each of these blocks represents a specific theme which is discussed in one to three units. The units are arranged in a logical sequence so as to cover the main aspects of each theme. Each unit contains a brief introduction in the beginning and a list of references and suggested reading, as well as, additional online resources in the end. The list of online resources has been mentioned for additional information on various topics. You are advised to read Course Introduction carefully, in order to know about the rationale and content of the course you have offered to read.

You have in your hands, all the five blocks and eleven units of this course. Before proceeding to read the units, you are advised to go through instructions about how to read the course material. Given below is the explanation of the organization and sequencing of the unit. We will tell you what is contained in various sections of a unit, and you should go about completing different tasks involved while reading the course material.

Organization and Sequencing of a Unit

The unit starts with,

- 1.0 Learning Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Section (Theme of the section)
 - 1.2.1 Subsection of 1
 -

Check your progress

- 1.3 Section (Theme of the section)
 - 1.3.1 Subsection of 2
 -

Check your progress

The numbering and length of each section and subsections may vary from one unit to the other unit, depending upon the depth of information in each unit. The last three sections in each unit with the following headings are also numbered. They are as follows,

- Review Questions
- References and Suggested Reading
- Additional Online Resources

As the scheme suggests, each unit is divided into sections for easy reading and better comprehension. Each section is indicated by **BOLD CAPITALS** and each sub-section by a **relatively smaller but bold typeface**. Divisions

within the sub-sections are in **relatively smaller bold typeface** so as to make it easy for you to understand.

Let us now discuss the **pedagogical features of a unit** as given in the self-learning material.

We begin each unit with the section **Learning Objectives**. It tells you briefly what we expect from you once you complete working on the unit. In the section **Introduction**, we specify, the relationship of the present unit to the previous unit (if any), theme of the present unit, and the order of presentation of all the sections in the unit from Introduction to Summary. The section of each unit under the heading **Summary**, encapsulates the whole unit for the purpose of ready reference and recapitulation.

Sometimes certain topics may deal with abstract ideas and related concepts, as well as some case studies. Thus, it becomes necessary to explain these related concepts in a separate enclosure, which is called **Box**, in our units. This is added information which is necessary to comprehend the main text. These boxes may include (i) explanatory notes regarding concepts, (ii) information about main works of scientists/psychologists who have contributed to a particular topic, (iii) certain case-studies that are related to the concepts being discussed, (iv) reflective exercises, etc.

There are several **illustrations** in each unit in the form of pictures, figures, diagrams and images. The main purpose of these illustrations is to make the study comprehensive and interesting. We have given self-check exercises under the caption **Check Your Progress** in between or at the end of main sections. To answer the Check Your Progress questions, you should, (i) write your answers using the space given below each question; (b) label the diagrams in the space provided (if asked). You will be tempted to have a glance of the main text as soon as you come across an exercise. But we do hope that you will resist this temptation and turn to the main text only after completing the answers. You should read each unit and note the important points in the margin provided in the course material. This will help in your study. It will also help you to answer the self-check exercises and the assignment questions, as well as help in revising your course before appearing for your Term End Examination.

Each unit has **Keywords** at the end of the unit, to explain the basic ideas, technical terms and difficult words. We have given a list of **References and Suggested Reading** at the end of each unit. This is a list of books and articles used by the course writers to prepare the units. This reflects that your course material is based on a wide spectrum of literature available on a particular theme, related to your course. This also informs you of the wide literature available in the particular area of study. If interested in widening your knowledge, you may look for the mentioned references. Each reference mentions the name of the author, year of publication, title of the book/article, name of publisher and place of publication. The readings will help you to increase your level of understanding of a particular theme in each unit, though it is not a compulsory reading.

In each Unit, we have given a list of **Additional Online Resources** on various topics. Apart from the text material, if you are interested in learning

more about the topic, then you may access the website as mentioned, for a particular topic.

Besides Check Your Progress, we have given **Review Questions** after Keywords section in each unit. You may practice these questions which will help you in answering assignments and Term End Examination, though the pattern and style of questions asked may be different.

Some Units have been selected for the **audio and video** programmes to supplement the printed material. This will help you to understand the units with greater clarity. Apart from this, you may also access IGNOU's FM radio channel, Gyanvani (105.6 FM) which is available across many cities in India, for regular programmes, related to themes on Psychology. You can listen to the live discussions by faculty and experts on the topic of the day and interact with them through telephone, email, and through chat mode. You may also watch Gyandarshan TV channel (free to air educational channel), for programmes related to topics on Psychology. The schedule of Gyanvani and Gyandarshan is displayed on www.ignou.ac.in. The radio and TV channels may also be accessed on Gyandhara, webcast facility for Gyanvani and Gyandarshan, provided by the University.

There are a set of **assignments** for the whole course uploaded on www.ignou.ac.in>downloads>assignments> BA CBCS New> Generic Courses. You need to check the course code and title of the course carefully, before downloading the assignment. These are Tutor Marked Assignments, which are to be submitted to the respective Study Centre after completion. These assignments will be evaluated by an academic counsellor from your Study Centre. Ensure that you complete all your assignments because the grades that you get in each of these assignments are included in the final evaluation of your degree (30%). Before answering the assignments, read all the units carefully. While working on the assignments, kindly ensure the following points,

- 1) Clearly write your enrollment number
- 2) Answer them in your handwriting and in your own words
- 3) Write clearly and neatly so that it is easy to read your answers
- 4) Leave margins on one side of your answer-sheets so that evaluator may write his/ her comments on your performance
- 5) You will submit the assignments at your Study Centre on or before the date mentioned as per the admission cycle. Kindly check the dates from www.ignou.ac.in or your Regional Centre website.

After reading and understanding the course material, you will be writing the **Term End Examination** (TEE) for the course. TEE carries 70% weightage in the evaluation scheme. Consider the following points while answering for TEE.

- 1) Questions should be replied in one's own words and should be focused.
- 2) Answer questions keeping in mind the word limit.

The syllabus of course material BPCG 174 is designed by an Expert Committee (see page 2 of this course) and prepared by **Course Preparation**

Team which comprises the author(s) of units, content editor(s), language editor, and the course coordinator. The expert committee selected the themes and sub-themes of the blocks and units, keeping in view the prescribed syllabi of UGC (CBCS model). The authors of units have provided their expertise in elaborating them in the form of the main text of each unit. The content editor has carefully examined the course contents and has made an attempt to make the material clear and comprehensible.

For any query or feedback related to the course, you may contact the Course Coordinator at,

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UNIVERSITY

COURSE INTRODUCTION: PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA

Can we imagine a life without media? A simple question to which the answer might be difficult. One cannot deny the fact that the print media has its own significant place aided by technology. However, in an era of innovation and advancement, electronic media has overtaken and most of us are completely immersed in it. Media have certainly impacted the social behaviour of humans in both the positive and negative ways. The effect on self-representation, self-image, and its contribution in health and education sector is well accepted. Media Psychology emerged as a branch of Psychology when *American Psychological Association* formed **Division 46 Media Psychology** in 1986. Taking into account the new technologies in media and their role in enhancing the quality of life and well-being, the Division was renamed as **Society for Media Psychology and Technology**.

What is media and social media? How does media influence behaviour? What are the research methods in studying media psychology? Are there any existing stereotypes in media representation? These questions and other related ones will be addressed in the course *Psychology and Media*. The course is an attempt to explore the uncanny relationship between psychology and media.

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

There are five blocks and eleven units that have been thematically arranged. The theme of **Block 1** is **An introduction to Psychology and Media**. There are two Units that focus on this theme. Unit 1 **Media and Social Media** presents an overview of media and social media. Media history, functions and significance of media are discussed. It will familiarize you to the concept of social media and the influence of media to human cognition and behaviour. Finally, it explains the theories explaining media influence. Unit 2 **Media and Psychology** will enable you to understand the relationship between media and psychology. The research methods employed in studying media psychology will be explained along with the ethical concerns in the area of media psychology research.

Block 2 has two Units that looks into the **Virtual World and Human Interactions**. Unit 3 deals with **Parasocial Behaviour and Gaming Behaviour**. The Unit focuses on the characteristics, changing landscapes, and the related factors to celebrity and parasocial relationships. The effects of parasocial relationships and the unique relationship between fans and media, popularly known as media fandom is also highlighted. The extreme form of parasocial relationship, that is celebrity worshipping is also described.

Unit 4 specifically talks about **Issues in Media Psychology**. It examines social construction of reality and media as an agent of socialization. Main theories related to media regulation of human behaviour are discussed.

Block 3 constitutes of three Units that give an account of **Persuasion and Influence of Media**. Unit 5 covers the **Positive Influence of Media**. It enables you to develop an understanding on media's role in health communication and health education. It explains the role of media in

stigmatizing or destigmatizing human behaviour. Specific case studies of media campaigns related to health awareness are discussed. Unit 6 explains the **Negative Influence of Media**. Media violence, and media's role in harbouring body image issues and eating disorders is highlighted in the Unit. Misuse of internet has raised issues like internet disorder and gaming addiction, which will be addressed. Unit 7 will focus on **Media and Advertising**. With the new media setting in, the landscape of advertising has changed immensely. The Unit will talk about the changing scenario of advertising in the contemporary times. Finally, the Unit will describe the steps for designing an effective advertising campaign which will be demonstrated with the help of a case study.

Next, the theme of **Block 4** is **Media Representation and Social Behaviour**. Unit 8 gives an account of **Stereotyping in Media: Gender, Politics and Ethnicity**. The Unit talks about stereotyping in media with reference to gender, older adults, ethnicity, mental illness and politics in media representation. Unit 9 focuses on **Relationship between Crime and Media**. It will help you analyse how crime in media is socially constructed. It will delve into the reasons of increasing crime-based content in media. The emergent problem of cybercrime will also be discussed. Finally, the theories related to media violence and strategies to reduce violence caused by media are explained. Unit 10 discusses **Media and Human Development**. It emphasizes on the positive and negative influence of media on human development. It will highlight the problems accruing from the negative influence as well as the positive side of media influence like sense of belongingness. Finally, psychosocial approaches will be discussed to combat negative effect of media on well-being.

The theme of **Block 5** is **Media and Education**. In this Block, Unit 11 **Media Influence in Education** will focus on the aspects like the role of media in the development of education and the usage of traditional methods and the new media as teaching aid. It will present an overview of the initiatives in Online/Virtual learning in the Indian education system like SWAYAM, NMEICT, ARPIT, to name a few. Learning through mobile applications like ePathshala, IGNOU student App and SWAYAM App are also highlighted. Thus, in the times of disruption of the teaching-learning process, the Unit urges to refocus techniques and media in terms of effectiveness.

Specific Case Studies, both from India and other countries, have been highlighted in the content by the unit writers at suitable places. The content thus, will help you in framing ideas and views of a domain which is part of the repertoire of one's daily functioning and that strongly influences human behaviour.

BLOCK 1
AN INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY
AND MEDIA

UNIT 1 MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA*

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Definition and Concept of Media
 - 1.1.1 Media History: How it all came to be?
 - 1.1.2 Functions and Significance of Media
- 1.2 Types of Media
- 1.3 Definition and Concept of Social Media
- 1.4 Influence of Media on Human Cognition and Behaviour
- 1.5 The Origins of Study in Media and its Influence on Human Cognition and Behaviour
- 1.6 Theories Explaining Media Influence on Human Cognition and Behaviour
- 1.7 Media and Social Media and its Influence on Human Cognition and Behaviour
- 1.8 Summary
- 1.9 Keywords
- 1.10 Review Questions
- 1.11 References and Suggested Reading
- 1.12 Additional Online Resources

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- define the concept of media,
- trace the emergence and the concept of social media,
- delineate new forms of electronic media and technology, and
- gauge the influence of media on human cognition and behaviour

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For many of us, the first thing that comes to our mind while thinking about media might include a mental image of television news channels. While that is technically correct, in reality, media is not just confined to television. It is, in simplest terms, defined as the means through which a large audience can be reached. This includes books, magazines, radio, newspapers, and the internet, along with television. In today's world, however, the most dominant

* Dr Shivantika Sharad, Department of Applied Psychology, Vivekananda College, University of Delhi, New Delhi.

form of media is the internet. It has grown tremendously in a matter of years, and its reach continues to ascent, along with people's dependency towards it.

A major reason behind the rise in this dependency can be traced back to the origins of social media. These are internet platforms, through which individuals share information, interact and collaborate with each other. Since the birth of the internet in the year 1990, internet users have increased to 4.1 billion (as on December 2018)¹. Around 49% of the whole world engages in sharing and consuming information through the internet and India is not far behind. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a surge in internet users. As of 2021, 45% of Indian population uses the internet (Simon Kemp, Datareportal, 2021). Such an exposure influences individual's behaviours and cognition. Media effect on human cognition and behaviour is not a recent concept, but at the same time is not ancient as well. The field started developing as the popularity of television increased during the 1950s. Researchers began studying the impact of television on children. It all eventually led to a new division in the American Psychological Association separately for Media Psychology, in the year 1986. Media psychologists focus on media and its effect on humans. In this unit we will be understanding the meaning and concept of media and social media in detail, its increase and evolution to its various forms, and finally, we will be going through theories and researches that shed light on how it all impacts the human behaviour and cognition.

1.1 DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF MEDIA

According to the Oxford dictionary, media is defined as “*the main means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the internet) regarded collectively.*” The term “*media*” is the plural form of “*medium*”, which is defined as the means through which something can be shared. But can you imagine how it all must have begun? Let us go through the past to gain some better understanding.

It is a known fact that humans have a desire to share knowledge in which they staunchly believe. We all do our bits of sharing our wisdom with the people around us. Some gain followers in doing so, while others might not. However, when a person has power and wants to share something in which s/he religiously believes, they find means to communicate it with all. From erecting statues and forts, to publishing books and paintings, the evidence of this desire can be found throughout history.

Box 1.1 The Beginning of Media

In 2nd century CE, an epicurean Greek named Diogenes, from the city Oinoanda, ensured that the philosophy of Epicurus was carved onto the portico walls. The inscription was about 25,000 words and included Epicurus's teachings on physics, epistemology, and ethics in which Diogenes believed. His idea was to erect this in a public square so the

people living in the city and those who visited would start understanding the importance of his philosophy and as a result, will begin following it.

In this way, the wall became the means through which he spread certain information to the masses.

A form of ancient media, would not you agree?

1.1.1 Media History: How it all came to be?

Media continued to evolve over the decades, and with the invention of paper, things started speeding up. The copies were still handwritten and thus, the reach was still limited. As time passed, 1500 years after the invention of paper, **Johannes Gutenberg** invented the first printing press. Mass production was no longer the biggest issue at hand. Nonetheless, was this medium successful at reaching a substantially larger audience? To a limit, yes. By 17th century CE, newspapers had started coming into the picture. However, not all people were literate; hence, the reach remained limited to those who were. By the early 1800s, newspapers were eventually holding huge readership. Furthermore, the development of railways helped paved the way for a wider reach, and thus, this growth took an unprecedented pace for that period.

Then came pictures into the frame, literally. The arrival of photography changed the face of media. The new technologies, that is, by 1900s was able to integrate newspapers and pictures together. Nevertheless, the fastest way people shared information with each other was through telegrams, the highest speed of the same was 55 Km/Hr. This changed in 1876, with the arrival of telephonic technology. Now people could share information instantly with one another. This rapid development of various media technologies continued, and soon radios came into existence. Communication through the medium of radio, with the absence of wires, was now a possibility. Television soon came into existence; the widespread use of the same began from the year 1950s. The development of television continued along with its reach around the globe.

Then during the 1960s, came what would change the world forever: the internet. It started in a lab inside the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as two computers were able to transmit information to each other. The refinement of this technology continued and in 1990, World Wide Web came into action. Within 3 years around 600 websites were up and running. Think about it, within just three years, human beings had begun sharing information at such a large scale. It cannot be compared to the present day, considering how people are always surrounded by technology and how much easier it has gotten. This became a revolutionary change and to see how it grew, shows just how much people had to share. In 1998, Google was invented which changed the way people surfed the internet. This could be considered the first jolt in how people engaged with this technology. The second came with the introduction to social media.

1.1.2 Functions and Significance of Media

Now that our awareness about the history of media is in place, there is no denying that media has played a vital role in people's lives. It made several things possible, made communication easier, more knowledge could be spread, and geographical boundaries would no longer stop one to know about each other's world. Media and mass communication, that is possible because of certain functions it plays. According to **Robert K. Merton**, an American sociologist, functions of mass communication can be of two types, they can either be manifest or latent. The former can be noticed more, whereas the latter is not easy to see the effects of, considering that they might be unintended. **Harold Lass well** (1948) and **Charles Wright** (1960) divided the functions of mass media into the following parts:

- **Surveillance of the environment:** It is the function of the media to spread awareness and knowledge of what is happening around us. It shares information on issues that the world/country/region might be facing, provides different sides of stories to eventually help reduce the confusion that people might be going through. Furthermore, announcements and information in the interest of the general public is raised through he means of media.

Example: When a natural disaster is about to strike, news channels, radio, internet, they all broadcast what might happen and how people can take precautions. Facebook, a major social media platform, developed a feature after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami that would help people share that they were safe².

- **The Correlation Function:** Initially, that is, before the presence of internet and social media, media channels that existed were the only ones that selected what news or information was broadcasted and how journalists and experts interpreted the same. This media functions sheds light on how certain news is selected over others to be broadcasted and how that can influence people in general.

Example: Hitler used media as a means to spread his propaganda in the World War II to influence the mass public².

- **Cultural Transmission and Influencing Societal Norms:** While the first two functions focus on how the information is shared and perceived, this function discusses how media plays a role in reiterating cultural and societal values. As norms evolve, so does media and portrayal of certain information.

Example: Children's cartoon programmes usually show main characters with values that the society considers as good and valuable. Disney's recent movies such as *Frozen* have started portraying a different perspective of love. It is not centred around romantic love, but gives higher value to love for family³.

- **Education and Entertainment:** This function was added later on by Wright. This function entails is how media educates and entertains people by letting them be a part of something they normally could not experience or by providing other means of entertainment.

Example: People sitting in the comforts of their homes can watch a major event live, related to sports, entertainment, etc.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Differentiate between media and social media.

.....

.....

.....

- 2) List some of the main functions of mass media.

.....

.....

.....

1.2 TYPES OF MEDIA

By definition anything that is used as a means of communication is media. Broadly, media can be classified in three categories, first Print Media which includes newspapers, and magazines. Second type is Electronic Media which includes television, radio, and films. Third type of media is New Age Media that includes mobile phones, computers, and internet.

- 1) **Print Media:** Newspapers, magazines, booklets and brochures, house magazines, periodicals or newsletters, direct mailers, handbills or flyers, billboards, press releases, and books are all part of print media.

- 2) **Electronic media/broadcast media (TV/Radio/Films):**As the category highlights, any and all types of media that use electronics or electromechanical audience to access the content, fall under the category of electronic media and technology. In the simplest terms, if your source of media works because of electricity, it will fall under this category. There are three basic types of electronic media: radio, internet, and television.

- **Radio:** Radio service stemmed from the discovery of electromagnetic waves that had the capacity to transmit music, speech, pictures, etc., literally through the thin air. Following is the image of an article, published shortly after the *phonograph* – a device that was able to record sound and play it back for the first time – was presented to the public. Now imagine their excitement when the radio came out!

THE PHONOGRAPH AT THE CAPITOL.—A large company of ladies and Senators gathered in the Senate committee-room of patents this morning to hear Edison, the inventor, explain and illustrate the principles of the phonograph. He went through a number of illustrations, and the phonograph mimicked sounds with wonderful accuracy, not only the singing and talking, but even the whispering. He frequently changed the tone of his voice very decidedly in one sentence, the phonograph repeating the precise changes each time. Senator Ransom asked the professor whether he could invent a machine that would automatically pick cotton. He replied he believed he could. He says he has 158 patents and 86 caveats.

Mr. Edison also exhibited the curiosities of his phonograph in the room of the committee on patents of the House, many members of Congress being spectators, and subsequently he occupied a seat in the reporters' gallery.

Figure 1.1 Article published after the phonograph was introduced.

Source: Image Provided by Library of Congress, Washington, DC⁴

Information could now be transmitted faster. It slowly began being used in ships, airplanes, emergency services, and eventually it became a normal part of people's lives. Around 600 stations were active in the US by 1922. People would wait in lines to receive their orders and 60% Americans got access to radio between the years 1923 to 1930.

RADIO OPERATORS! ATTENTION!

Here is the necessary data by use of which you may listen in tonight and get the election returns and hear a concert sent out by The Detroit News Radiophone:

FOR LISTENING: Use wave length of 200 metres.

FOR CALLING THE NEWS TO REPORT RESULTS: Use call "8 M K."

TRANSMITTING BEGINS 8 O'CLOCK TONIGHT.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS and music will be transmitted from 8 until 9 o'clock that operators may adjust instruments. Election bulletins begin at 9 o'clock and continue on the hour and half-hour until midnight.

WRITE LETTERS to Radiophone Department, The Detroit News, telling if you received messages and music and give all details that will tend to improve the service. All time mentioned is Detroit time.

Figure 1.2 Poster announcing radio broadcast in 1920

Source: Front Page Announcement on August 31, 1920 in Detroit News⁵

- **Television:** Television was designed by a 21 year old inventor, **Philo Taylor Farnsworth**, an individual who himself lived without electricity for a while during his childhood. It was demonstrated first in San Francisco on Sept. 7, 1927. Although, television soon started spreading worldwide, it was in the 1959 that it found its way to India, and since then, it has been apart and parcel of our lives.

Box 1.2 Fun Fact

The first image Farnsworth demonstrated on the screen was a straight line. He famously displayed a dollar sign next, after an investor had asked him “*When are we going to see some dollars in this thing?*”

According to the USA Today and Nielson Media Research, the average American house has 2.86 television sets and 2.5 people⁶. In other words, there are more television sets per house than the number of people living in them. In India, more than half of the population owns a television, with options for more than 800 different channels. A human being’s need for personal touch was somewhere satiated with this invention. The reach was increasing with each day, and television became a mammoth success until the internet came around, which would change and affect all the other media. Furthermore, it became an opportunity for far more options to emerge.

If we bring India into the perspective, before the present 800 channels running, the programmes were run by *Doordarshan*. It started in 1959, but only in 1965 regular daily transmission started. The telecast would take place twice a day and would cover topics such as agriculture, health, and family planning. Entertainment in the form of music, drama, folk was also included. The first major series to be produced were, *Humlog*, *Buniyaad*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* during 1980s, which had a lasting impact on the audience. By late 1980s, a greater number of people in India started owning television sets. In the year 1991, when new policies came into action, private and foreign broadcasters found their way in Indian television.

- **Films:** Did you know films were actually invented by accident? But we will get to that a bit later on in this section, let us first understand what we mean by “film”. According to **Craig Benzine**, an American video producer, videographer, and vlogger: “*It is a universal language that lets us tell stories about our collective hopes and fears, to make sense of the world around us and the people around us.*”⁷ How films began was by placing one picture after another and running them fast enough so as to create an illusion of them in motion. There were a few continuous innovations. However, the first projection of a movie, so that many could watch at the same time, was made possible by French inventors, The

Lumiere Brothers. These videos included actions of daily lives, such as train coming to its station, two children fighting, etc. Rumour has it, that the first time the Lumiere brothers screened the clip of the train coming to the station, people ran out screaming. That was because they thought the train would come out of the wall and crush them. As intriguing as it would be, there is a high chance that this story has been highly exaggerated. However, it is safe to say that this was an instant success. More and more people wanted to experience motion picture. Today, movies are a billion-dollar industry that does not just entertain but pushes us to think of unimaginable things. It often inspires us to do something positive in this world, and to make something of ourselves. It is, at the same time, also been known to influence violence and other non-welcoming and frowned upon behaviours.

When it comes to India, it should come as no surprise the mammoth sized role movies play in the lives of Indians. So much so, that many of the movie stars are broadly worshiped. Furthermore, the public is welcoming of them as leaders of political parties as well. India's diversity is one of the reasons why the industry is so vast and it shows no sign of slowing down.

- 3) **Internet/Digital Media:** Internet is most commonly defined as a means through which people are able to stay in touch with each other, through which one can shop, and even buy food. However, it is clearly much more than this. It is a comparatively new discovery but also one that has grown exponentially. It continues to invent concepts at a speed that not all human beings are able to grasp as quickly. It could be traced back to 1962 when a scientist, **JCR Licklider**, proposed the idea of a network of computers being able to communicate with each other. In 1969, the first message was sent across from one computer to another using the ARPANET (The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network), which was the government's computer network at the time. The message sent was the word 'Login', but only the first two letters were delivered. After this, inventions continued, but it was during the 1990s things started to take pace. In 1991, **Tim Berners-Lee** invented the World Wide Web.

World Wide Web was different because it was not just confined to a data sharing space for numbered scientists. It allowed anyone in the globe with an internet connection to access entire network of information that was available. There was a time when you could not access your internet and phone, through which your internet modem was connected, at the same time. If not for the World Wide Web, people would not be able to access information in seconds, they would not be able to stay connected to people who were not in close proximity. In simple words, the world became a smaller place, a much smaller place.

The WorldWideWeb (W3) is a wide-area [hypermedia](#) information retrieval initiative aiming to give universal access to a large universe of documents.

Everything there is online about W3 is linked directly or indirectly to this document, including an [executive summary](#) of the project, [Mailing lists](#), [Policy](#), November's [W3 news](#), [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

[What's out there?](#)

Pointers to the world's online information, [subjects](#), [W3 servers](#), etc.

[Help](#)

on the browser you are using

[Software Products](#)

A list of W3 project components and their current state. (e.g. [Line Mode](#), [X11 Viola](#), [NeXTStep](#), [Servers](#), [Tools](#), [Mail robot](#), [Library](#))

[Technical](#)

Details of protocols, formats, program internals etc

[Bibliography](#)

Paper documentation on W3 and references.

[People](#)

A list of some people involved in the project.

[History](#)

A summary of the history of the project.

[How can I help ?](#)

If you would like to support the web..

[Getting code](#)

Getting the code by [anonymous FTP](#), etc.

Figure 1.3 How the first ever Website looked like

Source: Business Insider⁸

With technology taking the front seat, quite literally, considering there exist automatic cars now, it is clear that internet has become a huge part of everyone's lives. It is something to which almost all individuals are connected for various reasons. If not for personal reasons, then for work related ones, but internet today has become a necessity.

When we look at the pivotal role that media plays, there are innumerable advantages that come with this facility, but at the same time we have the dark side of the same as well. There is no doubt that media's place is quite irreplaceable, considering the important function it plays in everyone's lives. If not for media, the world would still be unaware of each other's cultures, their similarities. We would be less connected with each other. However, it is not just about staying connected, because of media, emergency situations have been tackled in a much more efficient manner, people are able to help and reach out to others. The most prominent example could be how people all over the world are coming together to fight for climate change. This is possible primarily because of media and its outreach.

Nevertheless, this is only one side of the coin. While some use media as a means to connect, share, and spread positivity, there are some who use it for malevolent purposes. Media has been known to be used a means of

propaganda, manipulation, and fake news. Unfortunately, all these things are also on the rise in today's time. Thus, in the end, the discussion reaches to the question: How much can media influence human psychology and their actions?

According to the theory of *Technological Determinism*, which studies the link between technology and its influence on humans, proposes that technology defines the nature and state of a society. It changes the way people behave or think at the given time. For instance, with the technological advancement that brought computers into existence, the age of information was born. All in all, this theory and many scholars believe technology to be a fundamental reason, if not the sole reason, for how people behave in general. We shall address the positive and negative impact of media on general public in more detail in the coming units.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What are the different types of media?

.....
.....
.....

2) What do you mean by technological determinism?

.....
.....
.....

1.3 DEFINITION AND CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Before beginning with understanding social media from an academic perspective, let us answer the following question:

Box 1.3 Reflect!

Have you ever actively used social media? If yes, then what was your reason for using the same. If no, then what was your reason for not using the same.

When you experience extreme happiness, what do you do? Do you jump in excitement? Probably, yes. Nevertheless, as soon as you celebrate it with yourself, you want to share the news with your friends and family, so your happiness increases.

What happened with the emergence of social media was that individuals were given a platform where they could share these feelings with not just their loved ones, but with the world at large. This is probably why about 3.48

billion people out of the 7.67 billion in the world were active members of social media, data as per the Global Digital 2019 Report⁹. How did this all happen? To understand this let us now move on and comprehend the definition and concept of social media in a systematic manner.

Box 1.4 Exercise

Can you match the following Social Media Sites to the years in which they came out?

Sixth Sense	2002
MySpace	2010
Facebook	1997
LinkedIn	2006
Twitter	2003
Instagram	2004

Websites and other **online means** of communication that are used by large groups of people to **share information** and to develop social and professional contacts.

- Dictionary.com

Websites and **computer programs** that allow people to communicate and **share information** on the internet using a computer or mobile phone

- Cambridge Dictionary

Forms of **electronic communication** (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to **share information**, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)

- Merriam-Webster

Websites and **applications** that enable users to create and **share** content or to participate in social networking.

- Oxford Dictionary

Figure 1.4 Different Definitions of Social Media

Figure 1.4 provides the various definitions of social media by several of the well known dictionaries. They all may have used different terminologies, but after reading it a few times, you will realise they are all conceptually saying the same thing. Social Media is an online platform that helps individuals to share content.

Social Media initially became a possibility because of the internet, but its presence soon became a major reason why people wanted to surf the internet. The first social media to surface was known as “**Six Degrees**”, which was launched in the year 1997. It allowed people to create their own profile and also add others into theirs. A few years later, in 2002 emerged ‘Friendster’, which allowed the users to upload images, videos, and even comment on

their personal network's profiles. Sounds similar to Facebook, doesn't it? There were various sites that began (for example, Orkut) before the ultimate social media website, Facebook, emerged. Once it came into the market, things changed on a huge scale.

Facebook began as a social media site that was available to Harvard students but soon gained popularity, and by 2006 it could be used by anyone above the age of 13. Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, the other popular social media apps began in the years 2006, 2010, 2011 respectively. More and more people joined in and even more applications and websites that encouraged people to share, started coming up.

Social Media is not just limited to these social networking sites. It also includes blogs, forums, business networks, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming, microblogs, and chat apps. It is a part of the internet that is growing in an unprecedented speed. It is not just used for individual pleasure, but is a tool in which businesses highly invest as well.

In 2017, 71% of the internet using population were using social network, and this number is only rising. While it has some great advantages, there are cons to this aspect as well. Our purpose here is to understand to what extent does this influence affect an individual's thinking and behaviour patterns? How has it progressed throughout history, what are the positives and negatives, and what can be expected in the future? Let us begin by understanding how and when the study of media's influence on human cognition and behaviour began.

1.4 INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON HUMAN COGNITION AND BEHAVIOUR

As we see from the above discussion on technological determinism, media in its variety of forms has huge impact on human behaviour. Philosophically, media is a mediation of reality and our perception of reality is significantly shaped by media. The classic research on social learning by social psychologist **Bandura** on Bobo dolls is a case in point. Multitude of research have established that viewing of aggressive acts on television has profound influence on aggressive behaviour and emotional lives of the children.

Media is also an instrument of culture and influence. Haven't you heard your elders say how the present generation of youth is coming under the influence of Western culture, due to the sudden influx of new media technologies?

Now let us discuss how media impacts the way we think and solve problems, the way we perceive the world. How often do you research the data you read on social media? When you pick up a newspaper, or open a television channel, do you believe everything without counter questioning it? The answer to these questions would depend on how much you trust the source of the information. However, in today's world when the amount of information

floating around is extreme, can you say, with certainty, that you do not get influenced by the media? What if certain false information is being put out in the public domain continuously? Would you be able to avoid believing in it or would you fall for the phenomenon, psychologists call “*the illusion of truth*”. This is defined as a phenomenon where a lie is continuously repeated, until people start considering it true. This is a technique often used by advertisers, politicians, TV episodes, and even in news to influence human psychology. The role of media in creating panic and anxiety amongst the masses was widely seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, we also cannot deny how social media helped people out of their boredom, social isolation and facilitated social connection during the exceptional circumstances of lockdown.

Many positive effects of media on human cognition and behaviour also exist. Suffice it to say that there has been an increase in awareness about environmental issues, mental health issues, politics, education, LGBTQIA+ communities, economic and poverty related issues, etc., due to the reach of media as well. More and more people are willing to talk about and share their experiences, negative or positive, on different platforms to raise awareness about different causes. As a result, they are helping others lead a more comfortable life. Without any doubt, media plays an important role in each individual's life. It is from where we find out information about anything and everything. It is available to all, with barely any terms and conditions.

1.5 THE ORIGINS OF STUDY IN MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HUMAN COGNITION AND BEHAVIOUR

As media and technology advanced, the thought that individuals would believe anything and everything coming out of media also started growing. This eventually led to the **Direct Effects Model**, also known as the **Hypodermic Needle Theory** or **Magic Bullet Theory**, of media studies. This model, which was prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s, stated that people accept everything that was presented to them through the media. According to this model “*uniformly controlled by their biologically based 'instincts' and that they react more or less uniformly to whatever 'stimuli' came along*”. Thus, the model was based on assumptions of how human beings generally behave and therefore lacked data to support it. It was later disproved when research in this area concluded people's reactions were determined by different aspects and thus, the model's hypothesis could not be generalised. One major way that this helped in media studies was by making people realise the importance of empirical research. The cognitive approach to media research gained impetus and studied how media affected the thought processes, particularly memory and comprehension.

Movies and Conduct: A Payne Fund Study is considered as the first comprehensive study done on media and its effect on American youth. It was

conducted during the years 1929-1932 and was led by **Herbert Blumer**, with the following objectives:

- What sort of ideas do children get from the movies?
- How deeply are they affected emotionally?
- How many children go to the movies, and how often?
- Do the movies inspire criminal and delinquent tendencies?
- Do they affect children's sleep or nerves?

Studies showed effects of cinema on information acquisition, attitude change, emotion stimulation, health, and behaviour of children. The study caused panic among the public, even though, from a theoretical point of view, it was met with various criticisms. Albeit, the initial studies stated that media had a large role to play in influencing the public's behaviours and cognitions, there was not enough data to understand the gravity of this situation. The scope of media's influence, still remained an enigma, until the researches in this area improved and with it, the knowledge of its effect.

1.6 THEORIES EXPLAINING MEDIA INFLUENCE HUMAN COGNITION AND BEHAVIOUR

Between the years 1941 to 1945, during the World War II, the psychologist **Carl Iver Hovland** was working with the US military and overseeing researchers whose aim was to monitor the attitude change in the troops with war the movie called "Why We Fight". Its success would be defined as "*imparting information, [...] changing opinions in the direction of the interpretations presented, and [...] increasing men's motivation to serve*". Eventually, the research studied the resistance to attitude change and how can persuasion work in an effective manner.

According to Hovland, there are three factors of persuasion: the communicator, the communication, and the audience. The basic question that is being answered is, 'Who says what to whom with what effect?' All these factors play an important role in creating an influence. Researches further shed light on the how there were various factors along with the media that play a role in influencing. These are demographic attributes, social psychological factors, and different media use behaviours. Thus, media influence is correlated with other factors, and not just based on one.

During this time, **Paul Felix Lazarsfeld** (1944), **Bernard Berelson**, and **Hazel Gaudet** (1949) came up with **Two-Step Flow of Communication Model**, which explores how media affects the general population through interpersonal influence of opinion leaders.

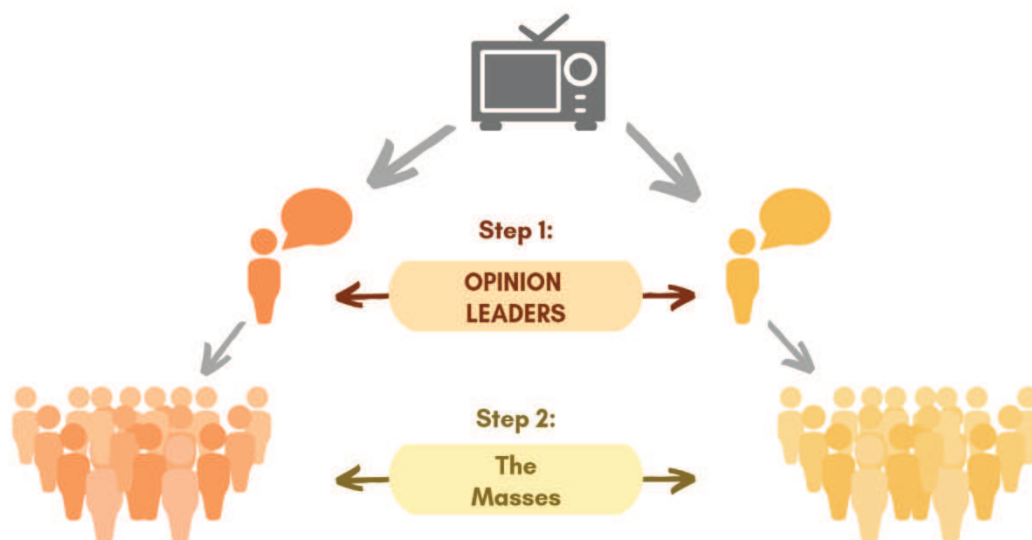


Figure 1.5 Two-Step Flow of Communication Model

This model shares how interpersonal interaction has more influence on people. The research for this model was conducted on the American voters' decisions during the 1940s presidential elections. This theory shifted the paradigm and concluded that there are two steps to the behavioural and cognitive influence. The active members, or the 'opinion leaders' are active members of the media. They are the ones who indulge in media information and then further spread their knowledge to those who interact less with the media. Through this, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet stated that information transmitted through word of mouth plays a more important role in the communication process than just media. Before this theory came out, it was almost strongly believed that media had a vast influence on the audience. This theory put a question to this thought process. Think about it, why do businesses have famous people as brand ambassadors? The idea is for people to associate their product with a certain admired personality, which eventually helps the business to sell its products.

Another theory, known as the **Selective Exposure Theory**, brought a different factor into picture that affects the ability to be influenced. According to this theory, otherwise known as '**confirmation bias**', individuals tend to incline themselves towards information that supports their pre-existing beliefs, whereas they ignore information that contradicts those beliefs. For instance, if you believe *Hogwarts is real* (Hogwarts school of witchcraft and wizardry from Harry Potter series of fantasy novels written by british author J.K. Rowling), you will only listen to individuals who claim the same theory and thus, your opinions will become even stronger.

These early theories clearly show that media played a major role in influencing human psychology, but they mainly examined short-term effects. As the reach and popularity of the media grew, this thought process shifted its focus on the long-term effects that may be caused. In **McQuail's Mass Communication Theory**, "the way media select, process and shape content

for their own purposes can have a strong influence on how it is received and interpreted and thus on longer-term consequences". Denis McQuail (2002)¹³ explains the media effects by dividing it into four phases:

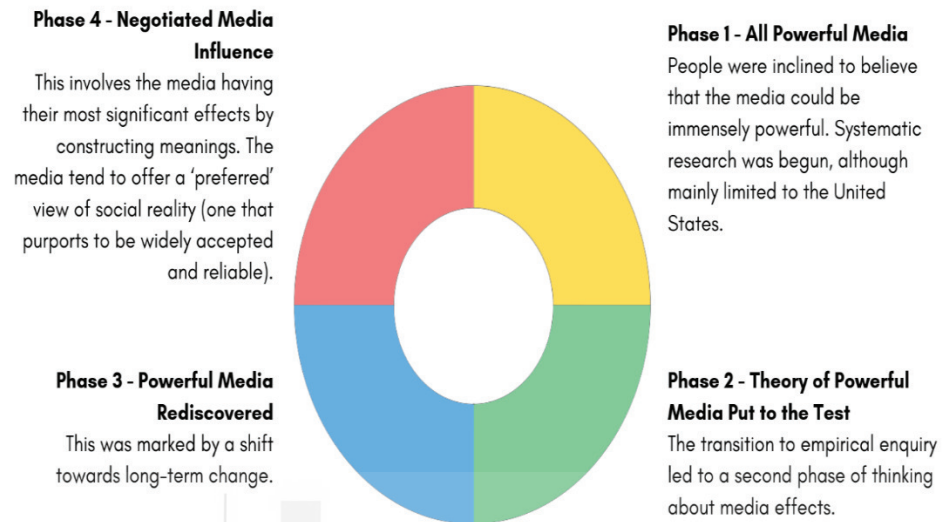


Figure 1.6 Media effects in four phases (McQuail's Mass Communication Theory)

These were theories and researches majorly before the internet came into action. Things changed in an unparalleled manner after the internet came and subsequently with the arrival of social media. Considering the usage of media increased in an amount never before seen, its effects on human cognition and behaviour also evolved. Let us move to the next section in this unit to understand Internet's effect more closely.

1.7 MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON HUMAN COGNITION AND BEHAVIOUR

About 4.1 Billion people are active users of the internet as on December 2018, 4 Million blog posts are published each day, and a staggering 5 Billion Google searches are made during a single day¹¹. If one thing is clear, it is that internet has become a necessity. The smallest of the doubts are clarified by taking help of the same. The doubts people search about range from one's studies, to physical/mental health, to relationship, to friendship, to work. Moreover, the list does not have an end. Have you ever noticed what you were looking for in Amazon, starts showing up in your Facebook feed?

That is because many of the algorithms in social media are set in a way that will lead to confirmation bias, wherein individuals tend to focus more on what matches their beliefs and purposely ignore others. The algorithms show people the content they engage with and prefer, thereby making their views on those matters stronger. When it comes to the psychological influences, some focus on the positives, whereas others on the negatives. But one thing is

clear that more research needs to be done to study the impact of internet use and screen time on cognitive functioning of children, adolescents and youth. Neuroplastic impacts (impact of internet media on brain) have been ascertained. The exposure leads to acquisition of new skills, which could also bring about neural changes. Simple interactions with the internet through smartphone bring about neurocognitive modifications due to neural changes in cortical regions of brain associated with sensory and motor processing of the hand and thumb (Gindrat et. al, 2015). Following are the viewpoints of various researches on how internet is affecting the human cognition and behaviour:

- Researchers at the University of California, Santa Cruz and University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign did a study where they found that people who rely on internet for solving something are more likely to choose the option more often. They are more likely to not take any moment to use their own memory to do the task. According to the lead author Dr Benjamin Storm commented, *"Memory is changing. Our research shows that as we use the Internet to support and extend our memory, we become more reliant on it. Whereas before we might have tried to recall something on our own, now we don't bother. As more information becomes available via smartphones and other devices, we become progressively more reliant on it in our daily lives."*¹²ⁿ
- Implicit cognitive process of upward social comparison is also impacted by the socially constructed social media, where everyone puts forth a successful and happy image of theirs for others to see. This could lead to poor self-concept, negative body image and diminished self-esteem in some.
- Studies point out the effect of watching television or videos in infants with language delays. In later years, educational television has a positive impact on cognitive development. Entertainment television and computer games, on the other hand, may have a negative impact, especially while children are learning to read. Certain computer games may enhance specific cognitive skills provided the game allows for exercising those skills. Overall, screen media have both beneficial and adverse effects on cognitive development depending on children's age and the type of content consumed (Anderson, Subrahmanyam et.al 2017).
- In research published by the University's International Centre for Media & the Public Agenda (ICMPA) and the Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change, which was conducted in 12 campuses and 10 countries concluded that *"most students... failed to go the full 24 hours without media"*. They admitted themselves that they could not voluntarily keep themselves away from media. The University of Maryland described how students admitted to having cravings, anxiety attacks, and even depression when forced to keep away from using media.

- After research done by certain German scientists, it was found that people who are constantly exposed to viewing other people's images might feel increased amount of envy, jealousy, frustration or even anger. This term has been named as 'Facebook Depression'. It concludes how there is a negative correlation between Facebook use and low sense of being.
- According to the paper published by the researchers at University of Oxford in England, risk of suicide and self-harming behaviour in adolescents is linked with the time they spend online. Dr. Paul Montgomery, one of the researchers and professor of psychosocial intervention states "*We are talking about vulnerable young people who are going online specifically to find out more about harming themselves or because they are considering suicide already. The question is whether the online content triggers a response so that they self-harm or take their own lives and we have found that there is a link.*"

The research focussing on internet and its effect is relatively new; and one cannot just eliminate the possibility of it being a major influencer for the generations that are coming up. While a lot has been focussed on the negative side when it comes to internet affecting human cognition and behaviour, not all impact is bad impact. According to research done in 2008, usage of search engines can actually boost older adults' brains functions. Dr Gary Small (2008), professor of neuroscience and human behaviour at UCLA states "*Internet searching engages complicated brain activity, which may help exercise and improve brain function.*" Thus, it may be concluded that there are both positive and negative influences of the use of social media.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) List one positive and one negative impact of media on cognition.

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- 2) Explain Two-Step Flow of Communication model.

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1.8 SUMMARY

Let us review what we have learnt in this unit.

- Each form of media brought the revolutionary changes to the people, and how everyone was fascinated by the smallest of the technological changes. Media evolved over the decades from the invention of paper to

the internet in the recent times. Media psychology focuses on the media and its effects on humans. American Psychological Association established a new division of Media Psychology in the year 1986.

- According to Laswell and Wright, some of the important functions of media are surveillance of the event, the correlation function, cultural transmission and influencing societal norms, and education and entertainment.
- There are different types of media, like print media, electronic media/broadcast media (TV/radio/films), and internet/digital media.
- Social media is an online platform that helps the individual to share the content through blogs, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming, microblogs, business networks, and chat apps.
- Theory of technological determinism posits that technology defines the nature and state of a society and studies the links between technology and its influence on the humans.
- Media has an immense effect on human cognition and behaviour and many theories have been put forward exploring various aspects. According to hypodermic needle theory, people accept everything that is presented to them. The two-step flow of communication media explores how media effects the general population through interpersonal influence of opinion leaders.
- McQuails's theory on communication asserts long-term impact of media. The effects are divided into four phases: all powerful phase; theory of powerful media put to test; powerful media rediscovered; and finally negotiated media influence.
- Hovland posited three factors of persuasion: the communicator, the communication and the audience.
- Research in media affecting the human cognition and behaviour have given conclusive results on both the positive and negative influences.

1.9 KEYWORDS

Confirmation Bias Individual tends to incline themselves towards information that supports their pre-existing beliefs, whereas they ignore information that contradicts those beliefs

Media Plural form of “*medium*”, which is defined as the means through which something can be shared.

Social Media An online platform that helps individuals to share content.

Technological Determinism Studies the link between technology and its influence on human beings. It proposes that technology defines the nature and state of a society.

1.10 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Why do you think media is important and relevant?
- 2) Is social media making us less social? Comment.
- 3) How can the media influence human cognition and behaviour?
- 4) How has the advent of smart phones changed life in general?

1.11 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

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- 2) <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/how-people-turn-to-social-media-during-0natural-disasters-49587>(Facebook Safety Feature and Hitler using media for propagandas)
- 3) <https://aeon.co/essays/how-disney-took-to-subverting-its-own-romantic-ideals>(Disney changing idea of love)
- 4) <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1878-04-19/ed-1/seq-1/> (Edison first phonograph article)
- 5) [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/WWJ_\(AM\)](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/WWJ_(AM)) (Detroit News, Front page Announcement)
- 6) <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2009/more-than-half-the-homes-in-us-have-three-or-more-tvs.html> (No. of television sets more than people in the US)
- 7) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsNB4iBb78o&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtN-Bd-H_TGq72CN50Fpv_JX&index=2 (Craig's Definition of Film)
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- 17) Anderson, D.R., Subrahmanyam, K. on behalf of the Cognitive Impacts of Digital Media Workgroup. (2017). Digital Screen Media and Cognitive Development, *Pediatrics*, 140 (Supplement 2), S57-S61.

1.12 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- [2018-new_media_society-seesaw.pdf \(harvard.edu\)](#)
- [The Psychology of Social Media | King University Online](#)
- [6 Ways Social Media Affects Our Mental Health \(forbes.com\)](#)

UNIT 2 MEDIA AND PSYCHOLOGY*

Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Relationship Between Media and Psychology
- 2.2 Roles of a Media Psychologist
- 2.3 Introduction to Research Methods in Media Psychology
 - 2.3.1 Why is Research in Media Psychology complex?
 - 2.3.2 Research Methods Used
- 2.4 Ethical Issues in Media Psychology Research
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 Keywords
- 2.7 Review Questions
- 2.8 References and Suggested Reading
- 2.9 Additional Online Resources

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the correlation between media and psychology,
- identify the functions of a media psychologist,
- summarize the research methods used in media psychology, and
- elucidate the ethical issues in media psychology research.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

By now, you are well acquainted with the concept of media and social media, and how it is considered as a benefactor to influence human psychology. We read in the last unit that American Psychological Association (APA) recognised media psychology in 1986. Although, it is a separate study, it includes media studies, communication science, sociology, political psychology, and certain other topics under psychology as well. This could be one of the underlying reasons behind media psychology being recognised later than it should have been ideally. It was not until researchers concluded through various research, that a distinct category was developed specifically for this.

However, considering the various commonalities with other fields, the APA changed its name during the 1990s from Division of Media Psychology to the

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Division of Media Psychology and Communications Technology. The distinction may seem miniscule; however, from an academic standpoint, it makes concepts clearer. It takes into account the importance of technology in shaping newer forms of media and thereby, its impact on human psychology. We discussed this briefly in the previous unit under Technological Determinism, on how technology shapes society. According to **Marshall McLuhan**, a media scholar, “media” can never clearly be defined for it is constantly changing; he defines media as an “extension of ourselves”. What he meant was that media itself does not possess any ability to influence, that is, it has no meaning in itself. Rather, it is the individual who perceives the information as per their ability and then uses that information to shape the world around them. Some might agree, and many might also disagree with him. However, all will acknowledge the fact that media and psychology do share a relationship. If you observe, you will notice how advertisements, movies, politics, etc., use the understanding of human psychology to influence or move them. Similarly, psychology aims to understand to what level this impact is possible. Thus, research under this topic becomes crucial in understanding the scope of media’s effect on human psychology. Furthermore, it can generate awareness among people and make them more conscious of what they are consuming.

Thus, leading to a more educated and aware public that will less likely be manipulated. In this unit, we will begin by understanding the complicated relationship that media and psychology share, and will then consequently move on to decode the different types of research under media psychology, their success, and the ethical issues they face.

2.1 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA AND PSYCHOLOGY

Box 2.1 Reflect!

Before going any further, answer the following:

- 1) On an average, how much time do you spend on media? Can you give it up for a whole day?
- 2) How much time on social media are you doing something productive (that is, something that is adding value to your life/knowledge/wisdom)?
- 3) Do you get the urge to reduce your media usage? If yes, then why?

Have you ever wondered why you always want to visit your social media pages; or why is it so hard for you to leave such platforms for good? Is it because you do not want to miss the updates from people you have befriended or followed? Not entirely. The sole purpose is not to stay connected with people you know. It has become much more than that.

Similarly, how often do you switch from one media to another? From TV to your surfing internet on phone or on your laptop, these are all constantly providing you with information that can get overwhelming. It has become a platform for businesses to sell, has given individuals the chance to become ‘influencers’, for people to find entertainment, and many more reasons.

Media is not just something that people around the world use for entertainment purposes. It is the source of information about the world, it keeps one updated on the news, it is a means for people to find work, and for many such essential features, without which many of our comforts will be taken away. Furthermore, newer forms of media have given a voice to the general public, which has had positive as well as negative effects.

The interaction between media and human beings is high, and so is the relationship between human beings and psychology. In a way, what is pivotal in the relationship between media and psychology is their connection with humans (Figure 2.1). In the last unit, we established how media plays a role in our lives, now let us move on to understand the relationship that these two share together.

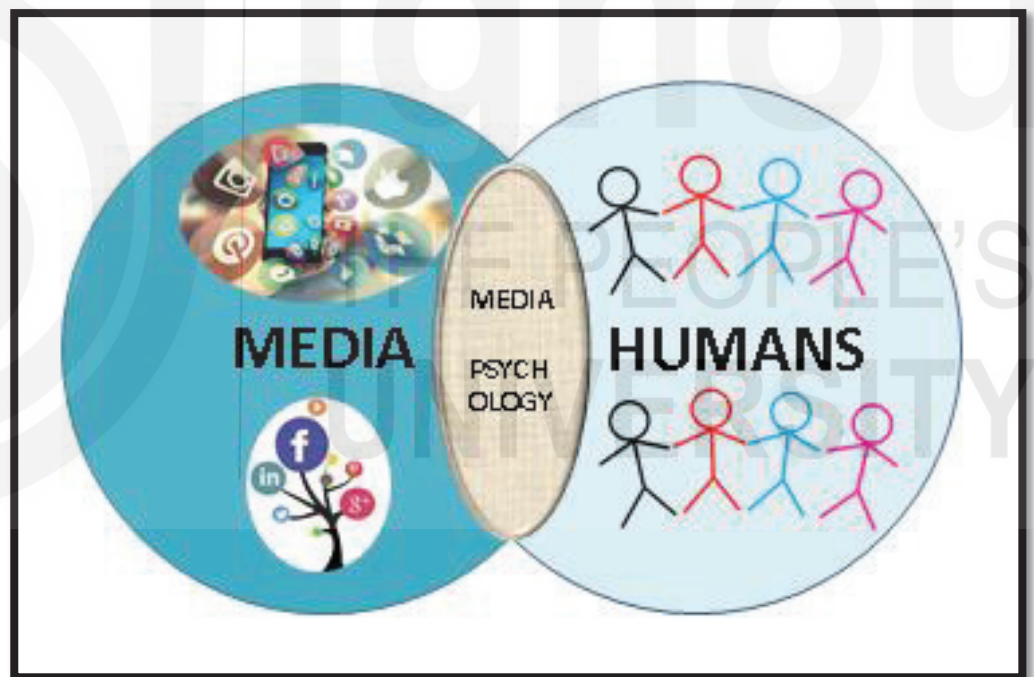


Figure 2.1 Media psychology as the interaction of human behaviour with media and technology

Media Psychology Purview

As is evident, media psychology is the interface between media and technology, with human beings, their responses and behaviour. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two. As a sub-discipline in psychology, media psychology uses the theories, conceptual frameworks and research methods of psychology to examine the impact of mass media on individuals, groups, societies and cultures.

What media psychology is concerned with?	What media psychology is not concerned with?
Social and psychological aspects of communications between people (groups or organizations) that are mediated by some technology	Face-to-face, oral-aural communication
Impact of media on human behaviour (Socio-psychomedia effect)	Science and technology behind devices for mediated communications as such.
Understanding the physical, cognitive and emotional aspects of brain-media interface	Dynamics of speech and language development

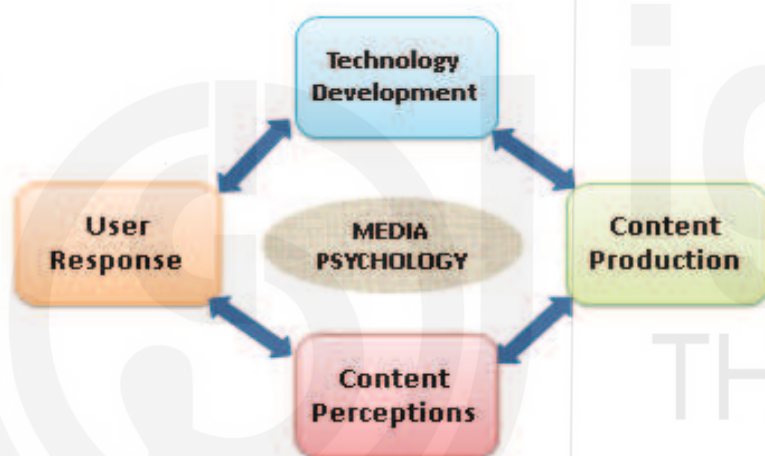


Figure 2.2 A whole system model of Media Psychology (Rutledge, 2010)

According to Rutledge (2010) media psychology takes into consideration the whole system, which is a continual loop consisting of technological developments (i-pads and tablets), production of content (books, news, music), perception and consumption of that content (listening to music of choice or availability of news 24X7) and response of the consumer (internet addiction). Each of these components coexist, interact and coevolve with each other.

Box 2.2 How social media became a tool for Arab Spring?

The ‘Arab Spring’ is a term used to define pro-democracy protests and rebellious actions the public took against their government. It started back in 2010 in Tunisia (Africa), when one street vendor named Sidi Bouazizi, set himself on fire when an official confiscated his vegetable cart and went on to humiliate him in public. The poor vendor’s ‘mistake’ was that he refused to pay bribes to the police. He set himself on fire and the whole country felt the jitters of pain, from which emerged a revolution that the Bouazizi incident

sparked. This was labelled *Jasmine revolution*.

The public was already aware of the rampant corruption, nepotism, election manipulation, and oppression. However, it seems, in retrospect, people were just waiting for an event that would surpass their limit of tolerance. The self-immolation of Bouazizi stirred the public, who then was in an armed revolution against their oppressors. The death of the vendor took place on 17th December, 2010, and on 14th January, 2011, Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (the then President of Tunisia against whose oppressive regimes people were protesting) fled the country in fear.



Aden (Yemen) Protestors in 2011 in support of Mohamed Bouazizi

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Protest_Aden_Arab_Spring_2011.jpg

Now, the important question: *How did social media help stir the protests?*

It was the pictures and videos of Bouazizi's incident through social media that ignited fire in the hearts of all individuals who then came to the streets to fight for the ongoing oppression. The government tried to hinder the spreading of the same, however, it eventually reached media and showed it to the people who did not have access to the internet. International journalists were reached through social media.

Inspired by Tunisia, similar protests started in other countries including Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain and Libya. In Egypt too, the revolution, which was organized mainly through the social media, was successful in removing the then President Hosni Mubarak.

Conclusion

Social media evidently and undoubtedly played a pivotal role in the uprising of the revolution to overthrow a government that *was not for the people*. It gave people a platform to organise and come together to work towards a common cause, which was for the good of everyone.

The case study (Box 2.2) helps us to understand how media can influence or rouse a large majority of people into taking an action that otherwise might not have been possible. The fact of the matter, however, is that this could be used for the good of the public on one hand, and on the other can negatively impact the society. As on today, there is a rising concern over the spreading of fake news, due to which people have even lost their lives. Geysa Gonzalez (2018), associate director for the Eurasia centre at the Atlantic Council, stated that the challenge of fake news is old and has been around as long as humans have been on Earth to spread rumours and gossip. With the arrival of new platforms, false information spread gets viral. In India, for example, use of false information via messaging app led to some mob lynching incidents in which innocent people lost their lives.

There are many such examples that will further add support to the argument that media influences human psychology in many different ways. The relationship between media and psychology can thus, be described as an uneasy one, as David Giles (2003) states. This is because of Psychology's caution on studying media in more detail, as media is not generally given a token of academic study. In other words, it is neither given much importance nor the respect and attention it deserves. While there have been researches and studies that did study the effect of media and human psychology (recall the Payne Fund studies that we discussed in Unit 1), they were motivated more by a problem driven approach rather than curiosity to understand how media in general might influence behaviour.

With the rising dependence and exposure to media, the importance of media psychology is increasing by the day. We are constantly surrounded by media through television, internet, our mobile phones and many other technologies. Media is consumed by people of all ages, especially the young and it is going to stay. Its impact on cultures cannot be undermined. Media provides people with a lot of positives and to discard it is not the solution. However, it is imperative to understand how these work together. Media Psychology helps individuals in understanding to what level it can influence or affect them. Once this knowledge is developed, the negative impacts of media can also be controlled. Research in media psychology is not an easy task. The extremely fast pace of technology change makes it difficult for researchers to cope with in a very effective way, considering it takes time to do experiments and see the effects of the hypothesis. However, it is still equally as important to work towards understanding this subject better and its impact on humans. Hence media research and media psychologists become important, which we will be discussing ahead.

2.2 ROLES OF A MEDIA PSYCHOLOGIST

Box 2.3 Reflect!

Which of the following do you think is **NOT** a function of a media psychologist?

- Helping people understand their relationship with media and how it can affect them

- Telling people how they should interact with different media platforms
- Educating people about the positive and negative impact of media

Division 46 of American Psychological Association states media psychologists can be communicators, researchers, mental health providers, consultants, educators or developers. If we look at what media psychologists' study, we can understand in what they will contribute academically. Media psychologists study the effects of media upon the individual and society, and find out how psychology can be applied to enhance media design and understand media consumption. Issues of ethics, accessibility of media, diversity of audiences, and constructive uses of media also come under the purview of media psychologists.

Media Psychology, as discussed previously, is a study that has been given recognition comparatively recently. Furthermore, it is developing at a fast pace, which makes it harder to understand what falls under the bracket of Media Psychology. Many of the researches and theories that lead for people to see the importance of Media Psychology was undertaken by individuals from different fields of psychology, sociology, communication studies, etc. This is where the role of media psychologist comes to play. In a world that is so dependent on media, we need media psychologists to study the intricacies and make the people at large understand what comes with this dependence. According to Pamela Rutledge (2010), a media psychologist has the following roles to perform:

- 1) Helping people adapt to the fast pace of technological advancement
- 2) Increasing the accountability of authors and journalists to professional standards
- 3) Explicating how correlation between media use and behaviour is not equivalent to media causing that behaviour.
- 4) Demonstrating individual, cultural and contextual differences in the experiences of different media technologies.
- 5) Assessment and evaluation of technology, interfaces, usability and content.
- 6) Integrating technology into education, media literacy education.

In 1998, Dr. Lilli Friedland and Bernard J. Luskin, co-chaired the APA's Division 46 (Media Psychology) and after researching media and technology and surveying wide range of experts gave the following areas where media psychology's role is crucial (Lusk in, 2012).

- 1) Disseminating expertise on media through writings and appearance in media shows.
- 2) Consulting and coaching media workforce
- 3) Research on identifying ways to improve all forms of media

- 4) Making new media technologies increasingly effective and user friendly
- 5) Applying new media technology to the practice of clinical psychology, to education and training (distance learning, virtual classrooms)
- 6) Developing media standards for ethical conduct
- 7) Media and commercial fields like advertising, entertainment
- 8) Studying the sociological, behavioural and psychological effects of media
- 9) Developing innovative media materials for physically and developmentally challenged groups and other marginalized population.
- 10) Working with deviant or criminal populations

Media psychologists, thus, have to not just make people more aware, but help make ensure that governments, bigger organisations are aware of the scope of their influence in the public. They work as consultants and experts in helping advertisers, influencers, and anyone who has a strong media presence be more effective. It is true to a certain limit that media's influence on individuals is high, but research has usually been more focussed on all the negative impacts of the same. The media, in itself, is not the problem that the world needs to cure. Rather, it is the field that needs to be understood better. Media psychologists do exactly this, and then share their knowledge and expertise to share with people how they can interact with media.

For instance, in today's time, there is awareness about the fake news and propagandas that are continuously being run of several media channels. However, since the awareness on this phenomenon is growing, people are more cautious and thorough in their research before believing in some news. That is, woke and educated individuals would focus their attention on reading more deeply about an issue before deeming it to be the truth. However, this is not the case with the large majority. There are still various cases where a situation has gotten out of hand due to such false claims that spread over the internet/ and or media channels, and this is precisely why media psychologists' need is going to grow with time.

Check Your Progress 1

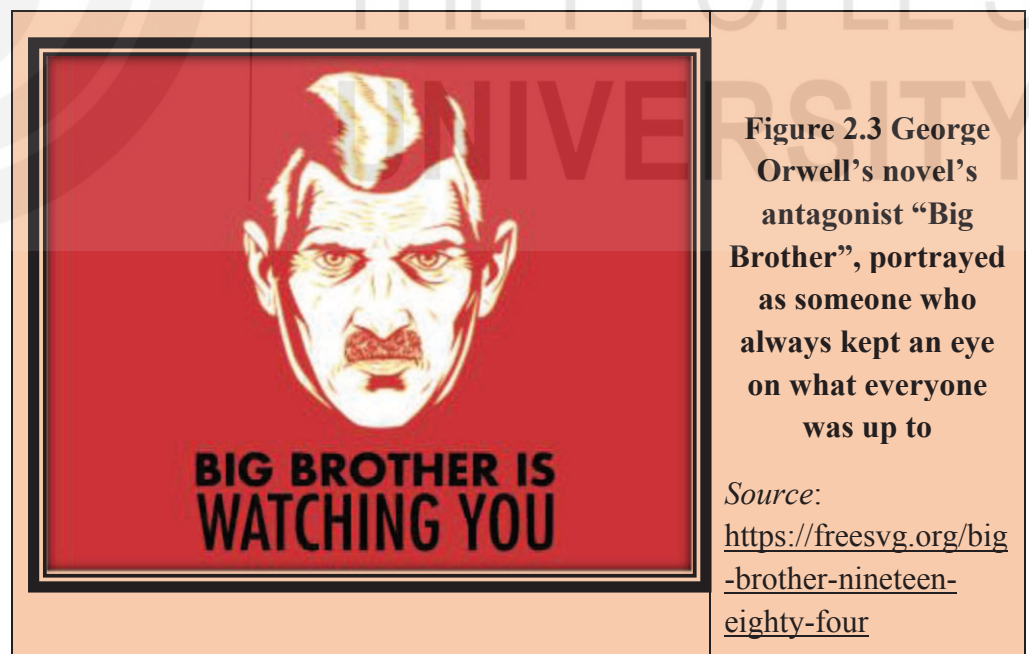
Answer true or false:

1. Media psychology is interested in understanding the dynamics of inter-personal and face-to-face communication.
2. Media and mass media are one and the same thing.
3. Media psychology research helps us understand the social-psychological effect of media use.
4. Social media cannot help in creating mass movements.

5. Media psychology is an old field and came into existence many centuries ago.
6. Media psychology is a part Division 56 of American Psychological Association.
7. Media psychologists are only interested in developing theories.
8. Developing innovative media material is not the role of media psychologists.
9. Correlation between media use and behaviour is equivalent to media causing that behaviour
10. Distance learning and virtual classrooms are not the subject matter of media psychology.

2.3 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODS IN MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY

In the last unit, we discussed how research began, as there was widespread media technologies such as the radio and television. However, most of the researchers focussed on the negative effects that media was bringing along with it. The reason behind this could be due the fact that it was happening during a period that led up to the Second World War. There was a ubiquitous belief that media could be used as a medium for political unrest and can influence the public negatively.



Even certain authors were cautious of how media could interfere with an individual's life. In 1949, a novel published by George Orwell "1984" showed "telescreens", which were television like tools, that the government or the people in power used to control and oppress the public. The "Big Brother" is symbolic of mass surveillance and information censorship that

takes place in modern culture, where media use by public is scrutinized and media content censored by those in power.

There is no denying that media does in its way have an impact on the human behaviour and cognition. There is enough research to prove this, however, one thing all will agree to is the fact that media is not the *only* factor that plays a role in influencing the human mind. Studies and research, not just from media psychology, but also other theoretical subjects share factors of nature and nurture that play a pivotal role. Thus, the amount of media influence on the human psychology has always been under scrutiny. This is precisely what makes the research under media psychology so complex as well. Let us understand the reasons behind its complications in more detail.

2.3.1 Why is research in Media Psychology complex?

Box 2.4 Reflect!

Can you choose the reason or reasons behind the complexities of Media Psychology Research?

- *Human behaviour and cognition is not influenced by only a single factor*
- *Proving one hypothesis correct may not mean other underlying reasons play no role in influencing the human psychology*
- *Human psychology is continuously evolving, hence, the results might be changing as well*
- *Media technology is changing at a fast pace, which makes research on media harder to keep up*
- *All of the above*

The answer to the question above is certainly ‘all of the above’. When we look at the research in Media Psychology, we notice the type of questions scholars initially asked, and how these progressed and became more specific with time. For instance, if we look at the studies focussing on aggression in media and its effect on people, it began with questions such as “*Does observing aggression in films and other videos increase aggressive behaviour of the observer?*” (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963) and eventually the intricacies were being focussed upon more with questions such as “*What are the cognitive and affective mechanisms through which violent media exert their influence on aggression?*” (Anderson et al., 2003), “*How strong is the effect of media violence and how long term is it?*” (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Anderson et al., 2010).

The reason could be to understand more deeply, about when media’s role has more to do with the human behaviour change than any other factors. The focus, as we discussed earlier, of media psychology research is to gain better knowledge of how these two interact together. It strives to look for reasons on firstly, how much of an effect can it have on people, and secondly, how

can people work towards communicating with media better so as to not get blindly affected by it. As mentioned earlier, researching about human psychology does not yield results in either black or white, it operates within a grey area. Let us understand the complexities that are specific to media research, as has been explored by Prot and Anderson, 2013.

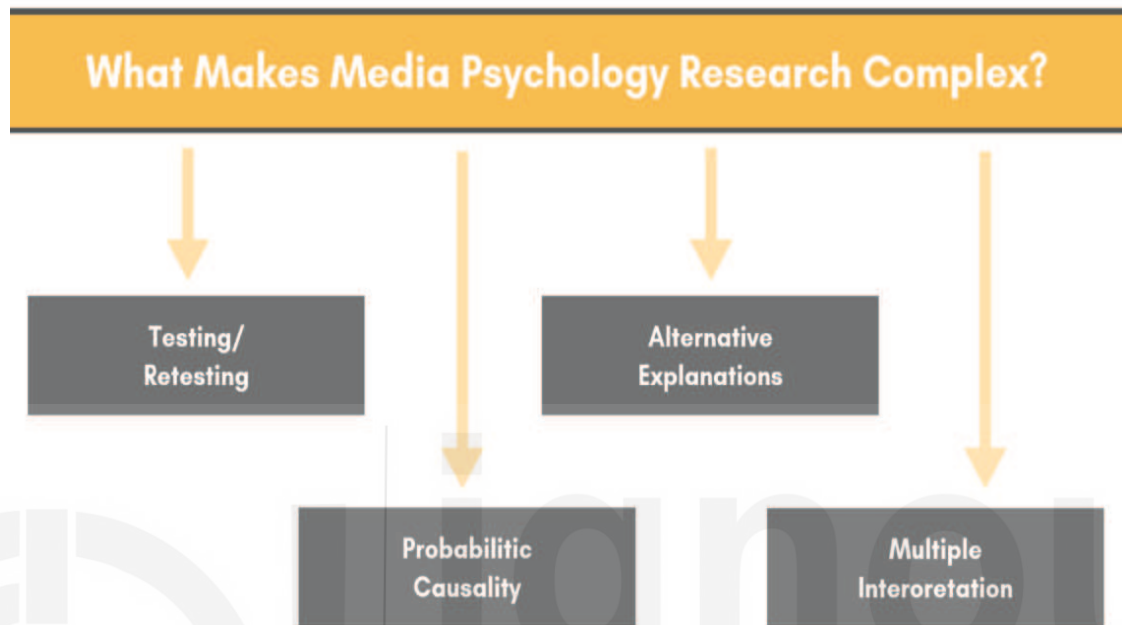


Figure 2.4 Showing the challenges of media research (Prot and Anderson, 2013)

- 1) **Testing/Retesting/Revising:** To prove that learning can take place through conditioning, Ivan Pavlov did a series of experiments on animals to prove its effectiveness. Within the quantitative paradigm, it is the series of continuous investigations and tests of hypotheses that researches engage in, which eventually become theories. These theories might raise a few other questions that researchers then study and the cycle thereby continues. Science is established through the process of replication of empirical studies, which are verified and modified with time. Media research has also been characterized by such a cycle (see Figure 2.5) Media exposure and violence can be a good example of this continuous process of testing-revising-retesting cycle. These are based on more than a century's psychological research on learning, emotion, cognition, and behaviour.

Translating the psychological concepts into measurable terms is also a challenge faced by media researchers. For instance, classifying video games into violent and non-violent, would require specifications in observable/measurable terms.

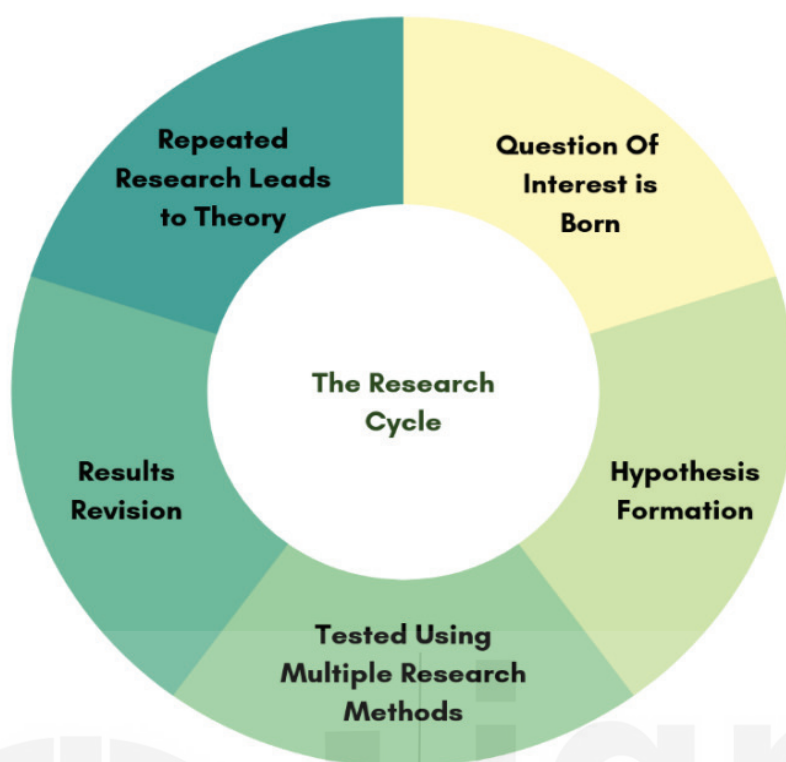


Figure 2.5 Cycle of research in Media Psychology, from the predominant quantitative approach that is followed mostly by media researchers

- 2) **Probabilistic Causality:** Studies in Media Psychology have usually studied causal relationships between certain things. Theories such as Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura 1973) suggest causal relationships among variables. However, as scholars have later argued, it creates confusion among the general public. Causality between two things does not mean things are only going to happen due the fact that they are related. It is more to do with the positive/negative correlation that is spoken for between two variables. Anderson strongly suggests that scientific causality is probabilistic, and not “necessary and sufficient.” When we state that variable X causes outcome Y, it only means that variable X causes an increase in the likelihood of outcome Y.

Thus, when it comes to research that shows a certain negative or positive influence that media has on human cognition behaviour, it cannot be inferred that no other factors play a role. What it implies more is that media can play a pivotal role in increasing the likelihood of certain behaviours. There is a fine difference, but this difference is important to take into consideration.

- 3) **Alternative Explanations:** Human psychology can clearly not be segmented into a few different categorisations. There is much more to it than that. Humans are complex, and when it comes to studying how they interact with media, a lot more focus has to be on the intricacies. Moreover, when we are looking theoretically to explain, or put a claim

out there that is going to be generic in nature, a lot has to go on behind the scenes before any such results can be proven acceptable. In other words, there are distinct number of explanations for certain behaviours and researching and studying the plausible effects becomes important.

Research provides reasons behind certain hypothesis that are more accurate than the others. For instance, cigarette smoking increases the chances of suffering from lung cancer. However, there are cases of people who do not smoke, yet end up suffering from lung cancer. This analogy is similar in the case of media psychology research as well. The reason to study alternative claims and theories is to see and remove the possibility of the involvement of less accurate assertions from a study. Doing so strengthens the remaining explanations, which leads to better clarity of the relationship between two variables, in this case, between human beings and media.

- 4) **Multiple Interpretation:** The complexities are increased because of people's ability to interpret or perceive certain theories in their own specific ways. When theories are interpreted in a customised fashion, the empirical research that is followed might not be ideal for that particular theory. Findings in such cases may prove to be as ineffective. In other words, the hypothesis that a researcher derived from a theory may prove to be ineffective in the results. Sometimes, when the results do not offer weight to the theory, there is a chance of that theory having a weak foundation. However, it is equally as possible for the methodology to be used incorrectly in the empirical research. Such an action can have a severe effect eventually.

For instance, one of the media violence studies published by Williams and Skoric (2005) had results which showed that media had little to no influence on people behaving violently. This study has often been used by various video game brands and gamers to promote the idea that media does not have a huge impact on human psychology, particularly aggression. However, what they fail to mention is that the study conducted is considered to have one of the poorest methodology in media violence studies. Thus, when a hypothesis or a theory is tested and researched using different methodologies and each method yields similar results, is when a theory should be trusted and promoted. Believing just on one study or research is not enough when it comes to media psychology.

Moreover, when technologies in today's age are evolving so quickly, the need for continuous research for better understanding of media psychology has never been higher. The above pointers were shared to further invoke the importance of credible research that is needed in media psychology. While the complexities cannot be removed, they can be better understood. When these are better understood, fewer mistakes will take place since precautions to curb the complexities can be taken before hand. However, we still are left

to understand the different types of research that Media Psychologists use to study the subject. Let us move on to unravel the different types of research methods in media psychology.

2.3.2 Research Methods Used

We have read about many researchers and quite a lot of researches that explain the level of impact media has on human psychology. However, we are yet to unravel the different types of research methods used in media psychology. Media psychology research can be divided into two broad domains – **quantitative and qualitative research**.

- *Quantitative research*: Simply put, quantitative research deals with numbers, uses statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It is mostly concerned with testing hypotheses derived from theories, and makes use of tests and scales for assessing variables.
- *Qualitative research*: In its broadest sense, qualitative research is the one that relies on and produces descriptive data in the form of people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. It is concerned with understanding the process and experiences of a phenomenon in depth and helps in building theories.

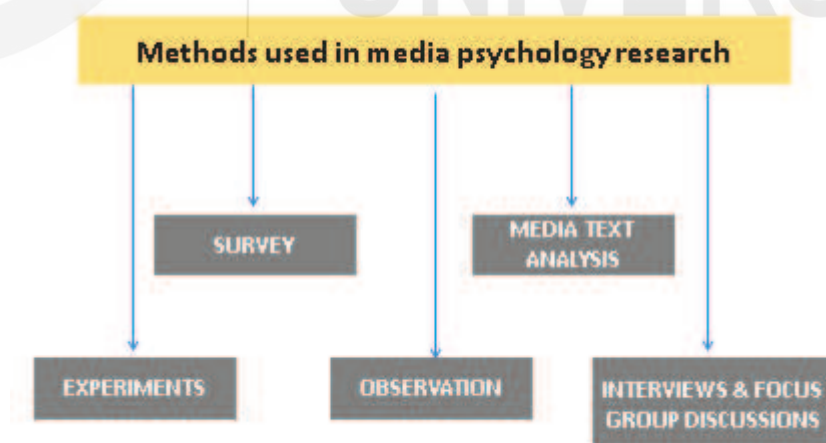
Historically speaking, quantitative measures under media psychology research have been more prevalent than qualitative research. One of the reasons, as mentioned previously, could be because quantitative methods gave more factual findings. At a time when psychology was trying to prove itself as a serious science, people had to be made realised of its importance. Considering science was more interested in numbers, quantitative empirical research thus, became an integral part.

Though, studies under media psychology are inclined more towards quantitative methods rather than qualitative, it does not indicate that qualitative studies are not as effective. As time passed by, and the relevance of psychology became more prominent, qualitative research gained increased attention. Methods such as in-depth interviews and ethnographic approaches are the principal techniques that fall under qualitative research methods. Let us study the different types of media psychology research methods used over time.

- 1) **Experimentation**: Experimentation is a way of research where credibility of a hypothesis is tested in a controlled environment. In media psychology research, experiments are being conducted for more than half a century. These were primarily influenced by behavioural perspective in psychology. Such experiments were usually conducted in an artificial setting for a reason. To prove the credibility of the hypothesis, it was also ideal to prove that other factors did not come into play.

As we know that there could be alternative theories and explanations for certain behavioural responses, and to remove the possibility of this, the experiments were conducted in an artificial setting. In experimentation, defining cause and effect relationship between two variables becomes the main subject of interest. For instance, in media psychology, the relationship between the two is explored. It studies how one affects and/or influences the other. Following are the different types of experimental designs:

- **Classical Experimental Design:** This is when a pre-test and post-test is given to an experimental and a controlled group so as to understand the effect of a stimulus.
- **Pre-Experimental Design:** This method is similar to the above one, only control groups are not present, which can be due to different reasons. Circumstances might not always give way for a control group to be a part of the experiment, and thus, a researcher may have to settle for this design.
- **Quasi-Experimental and Special Design:** These are similar to a normal experiment except that they lack one element – random assignment.
- **Factorial Design:** Such design method helps the experimenter to study more than one independent variable and its effect on the experimental group.
- **Repeated Measures Design:** This is the type of design in which various independent variables are studied on the same group on a repeated basis.



- 2) **Surveys:** Based on the objectives and methodology chosen, survey is a form of research when information is collected from a pre-determined group on a particular topic of study. It is an effective way to collect data from large number of people, and requires planning and skill in

administration. There are various types of surveys, and following are the ways that helps researchers decide which to go for:

- What is the purpose behind this survey?
- What mode of administration (among telephone, interview, etc) will be most suitable?
- What will be the time span of the research?

Based on the answers to the above questions, researcher can decide the type of survey that is most suitable. The different types of survey method based on design are: cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies, correlational studies. However, survey methods are not just limited to these. With technological advancement, surveys can also be conducted over telephones, SMS (text messaging), e-mail, and now even through google documents. Depending on the type of study, researcher may pick up the most effective way of collecting the desired information.

- 3) **Observation:** As the name highlights, observational methods are those when the researcher takes part in the research to collect the relevant information. The observational research can be divided into three categories: (a) if the researcher actively participates or not; (b) if observations are structured or unstructured; (c) If observed behaviour takes place in a natural or artificial setting.

For instance, a researcher may choose to involve themselves to live in a household to observe the media effects. However, the real purpose of research is never revealed to the participants, so as to keep the behaviours as authentic as possible. In a non-participant observation method, the researcher observes but is hidden. In other words, those being observed are unaware of their actions being watched.

The structure constructed for research is another factor to be taken note of during observational research. The following diagram will help you understand structured and unstructured research better.

Degree of Structure Imposed by Observer	Natural Setting		Artificial setting
	Unstructured	Completely unstructured field study	Unstructured laboratory study
	Structured	Structured field study	Completely structured laboratory study

Figure 2.6 Degree of Structure of Observational Setting

Source: Bailey, 1994:247

Observational methods are quite effective for they can capture how individuals actually react or behave in a natural setting. The subtle intentions behind their behaviours can be recorded, and a better understanding can be generated out of such researches.

- 4) **Media Text Analysis:** One type of media text analysis is **content analysis**. It is the most recent form of research, i.e., when compared with other research methods. In media psychology, a good example under this is the study of gender portrayals in television advertisements or in the daily soap operas. The content can be audio-visual or textual/written material. Considering researchers analyse a lot of content, the criteria of analysis can be set prior to their gathering the information or it can be emerge while the analysis is in progress. It means the dimensions on which the content would be analysed could be pre-determined or it could be emergent. In quantitative content analysis, the criteria are predetermined and frequency of its occurrence is mostly calculated. While in qualitative content analysis, researchers go with a certain and clear idea of study, but what they will find can only be definite once they go through the relevant content.

Other type of media text analysis is **discourse analysis**. Discourse in media refers to interactions occurring through a broadcast platform (spoken or written) between a source of the discourse and mostly a non-present reader, listener or viewer. It is a constructed/manufactured interaction which is public. Primarily a qualitative method, it is gaining popularity both in psychology and media psychology in recent times. There are two categories that fall under this. The first is primarily concerned with the type of language used, it intricately works out the linguistic features of the text. The second pays more attention to the way social power abuse, and inequality are portrayed in texts to understand the political and social context better. The approach takes a critical stance towards appraising the media messages, and is called **critical discourse analysis** (CDA). It has, however, been criticized for its subjectivity and informal procedure.

- 5) **Interviews and Focus group discussions:** Interviews can be structured or semi-structured/unstructured. When interviews are highly structured and follow strictly a questionnaire (known as interview schedule) that asks all respondents the same questions in the same order to allow for statistical analysis, it is a quantitative interview.

However, most interviews are qualitative, as in they attempt to understand the phenomenon under study from the participant's (interviewee's) *point of view*, to understand their meanings and experiences. These are conversations that are unstructured or have low degree of structure (to give some direction to the interview) and the participant's responses are open-ended. Questions are not pre-determined and unfold as the interview progresses, based on the responses of the interviewee. However, the researcher might have some pointers/themes (known as interview guide) to help them stay focused on the topic of research.

The purpose of focus group discussions is to obtain collective views on a certain topic from people who have certain experiences in that topic. For example, a media psychologist can invite all video gamers to come together and share the impact of gaming on their day-to-day behavior. Focus groups enable a researcher to elicit opinions, attitudes and beliefs held by the members of a group.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is critical discourse analysis?

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- 2) Mention two qualitative and quantitative methods each that are used in media psychology research.

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- 3) What are the different types of observational researches?

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- 4) Why is media psychology research important?

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2.4 ETHICAL ISSUES IN MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH

Box 2. 5 Reflect!

A, B, C and D are 4 friends who are having a conversation together. B asks the rest of them if they like Harry Potter, A and C replied in the positive. Now, B got curious and asked if A and C liked superhero movies as well. They both said yes. By just this conversation, B declares that whoever likes Harry Potter will also like superhero movies.

Do you think there is a mistake in B's saying so? Why?

Every research that has grown to be a huge success has been so because their thorough following of the ethical rules of researching. It is important to have a structure and to follow the same while conducting research. If not adhered to the ethical standard of conduct, the credibility of researches decreases and the results cannot be completely trusted. This is especially so in disciplines like Media Psychology that deals with human beings. Some of the central ethical concerns in media research are as follows:

Informed consent: Participation in any research is voluntary. Media psychology researchers cannot force anyone to participate in their study. Prior consent from the participants regarding their willingness to provide data and information should be taken. Before participating in research, the participants are informed about the nature of research, if there are any risks associated, that their participation is voluntary and they are free to withdraw at any point in time.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: It is a challenge for media researchers to keep participant anonymous and de-identify their participation in the highly networked and searchable “data” universe, particularly when data has been collected online. Utmost care has to be taken to minimize harm to the participants while doing research on sensitive topics by maintaining their confidentiality, so that in future no stigmatization or bullying of the participants happens.

Privacy: Everyone has the right to lead a private life and control the access of information about them. However, in this highly networked society, maintaining privacy is also a challenge. Media psychology researchers can assure their participants of privacy through anonymity and confidentiality, as well as being extra careful while asking sensitive personal questions. Privacy issue becomes paramount when researchers make use of video recordings of their participants, which is quite common in media psychology research.

Reporting of research findings and publication ethics: Ethical decisions also govern how research findings are to be interpreted and communicated to scientific community and the society at large. After proper data analysis, results should be reported accurately and objectively in an unbiased manner. Acknowledgement of all those who contributed in the research is required. The report should be free from plagiarism or any kind of fudging in the data collected.

Research is not just meant to be published in journals, which have scientific value. Findings from media psychology research also need to be communicated to the public as it would be beneficial for them. For instance, parents need to know how gaming impacts the development of their child. Likewise, studies on impact of media can help people become more responsible media consumers.

Considering there are enough complexities in studying human behaviour and cognition as is, it becomes even more important that proper ethical concerns

are being taken care of. However, that is not always the case. Let us understand few of the methodological pitfalls in the field of media psychology.

- 1) **Conducting studies in a “Theoretical Vacuum” and disregarding established theories:** There are researchers ignoring credible and valid researches such as observational learning, imitation, priming etc. when they proclaim that media violence does not influence human aggression which is a clear exaggeration. Media Psychology Research is a separate field of psychology, but it is still connected to psychology in general. Thus, theories that have been proven time and again cannot be left aside while research on a media effect is being conducted. This can lead to confusion and various false claims that general public may believe to be true without reading much about it.
- 2) **Using inadequate sample size and excluding minorities:** A good sample size is of crucial importance in media psychology else, the results will come out as unstable and inconsistent. Usually, the effects found in media psychology tend to be small, it is imperative that there is a large sample size in order to see if the media effect is present or not. The reason behind the effect size being small is because human behaviour is complex and is not entirely dependent on just one factor such as media. However, this can be tackled by combining studies, yet adequate **sample size** is still necessary.

Apart from small sample size, another very alarming issue is that of **excluding minorities** in the targeted sample. Media research at large under represents certain groups like North-east Indians or transgender persons in their targeted sample. This could be owing to stereotypical perceptions and prejudice against these groups. Sensitivity to diversity and adequate representation of all such groups in the sample is necessary for a media researcher. Their research findings shape public perception in a significant way.

- 3) **Using experimental manipulation:** Manipulating certain independent variable in order to achieve a certain result is clearly not acting in the interest of the field. For example, if a researcher is studying the effect of violent video games on children, they might choose to study it on two groups. One group being exposed to the violent video game, while the others will engage in video games that do not include violence. In some studies, however, what the researcher did was the intensity of violence in both video games differed but there were signs of violence in both the video games. What this does is that it might show that both set of children acted violently and thereby, denoting there was little media effect. However, that is not the complete truth.
- Researchers are trusted upon doing a study in order to understand a concept better. When experimental manipulations come into play,

the essence of the research takes a backseat which hampers the credibility of the research. Such research can take a rather bad turn. If you will recall, we studied how certain video companies used the research that showed video games do not encourage violent behaviours as an example, even though the research was deemed an untrusted source for its poor methodology.

- 4) **Using poor and inappropriate measures:** Use of distinct methods in media research can yield different results. Thus, it becomes important that researchers use the correct and more valid measures in their study. A way to reduce this issue from occurring is to use multiple methods, diverse sources of information and different research paradigms.

2.5 SUMMARY

Let us review what we have learnt in this unit.

- Media psychology deals with the interaction between human beings with media and media technology. It is concerned with the content of the media, the technology-human interface, and its impact.
- The role of media psychologists is manifold, which includes research, development of ethical standards, consultancy to media producers, educating people regarding the impact of media, integrating media in other fields like counselling, education etc.
- Researches in media psychology deal with complex issues of measurement, operational definitions of variables, plausible explanations and interpretations of occurrences, replication of studies etc. This owes to the complexity and density of factors that impact media and human behaviour interaction.
- Research in media psychology can be quantitative and qualitative. The research methods used are experimentation, survey, observation, media text analysis, interview and focus group discussion.
- Ethical considerations of diversity and inclusion in sample, confidentiality and privacy, reporting of findings is paramount while conducting research.

2.6 KEYWORDS

Discourse Analysis A qualitative approach to the study and analysis of the uses of language (spoken or written)

Focus Group Discussion A qualitative data collection method to obtain collective views on a certain topic from people who have certain experiences in that topic

Informed Consent Prior consent from the participants regarding their willingness to provide data and information

Media Psychology A sub-discipline in psychology, media psychology uses the theories, conceptual frameworks and research methods of psychology to examine the impact of mass media on individuals, groups, societies and cultures

Media Text Analysis Analysis of media content either audio/visual; textual/ written material that can be analysed in a predetermined way or in an emergent manner

Survey A form of research when information is collected from a pre-determined group on a particular topic of research

2.7 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How do you define media psychology?
- 2) Social media has led to mass movements. Justify your answer.
- 3) List any 5 roles of media psychologists in contemporary times.
- 4) What makes research in media psychology a challenging enterprise?
- 5) What are the ethical considerations while doing research in media psychology?
- 6) How can content analysis be used as a research method in media psychology?
- 7) Why are experiments an integral method of media psychology?

2.8 REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READING

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2.9 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- American Psychological Association: Society for Media Psychology and technology (Division 46) Society for Media Psychology and Technology (Division 46) (apadivisions.org)
- Media Psychology <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLGgZ9YKp4M>
- MediaPsychologist Rutledge lecture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVEK2mIk9EM>

Answers to Check Your Progress 1

True and False

- 1) False
- 2) False, anything that is a medium of communication (like telephone) is media, however mass media deals with communications that reach large number of people at the same time.
- 3) True
- 4) False (Arab spring)
- 5) False, Media psychology is a relatively new field

- 6) False, Media psychology is a part Division 46 of American Psychological Association.
- 7) False, Media psychologists are equally interested in application-based research
- 8) False
- 9) False, Correlation does not imply causation.
- 10) False



