

Online Survey

# Journalism in Corona Pandemic in Bangladesh

May 2020

Conducted by



promoting information and gender literacy in media in Bangladesh

South Asia Center for Media in Development  
(SACMID)

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Together for reliable information

## **Journalism in Corona Pandemic in Bangladesh: On-Line Survey**

**Background:** During the time of COVID -19, people widely depending on media to be informed about latest update of death, cure, vaccines, medicine, healthcare facilities and information provided by government. For anything & everything citizens rely on media as this pandemic is new and media is the only source which can help with information on how to deal with the situation.

Despite all the expectation towards media from consumer, it's also true that Newsrooms are facing challenges every moment. There are several issues making the journalists dealing the pandemic with hardship. The most challenging one is health issue, journalists are covering news from public places and crowd, secondly, there is no prior knowledge or research on COVID-19, so if they are suggested for a new behavior, safety precautions or medicine they have to depend on one source, there are limited resource to cross check the information and the mental trauma is always there.

In Bangladesh, journalists are facing more challenges than other developed country. One journalist Humayun Kabir Khokon (47) died on 28<sup>th</sup> of April, 2020 and another two journalists died before him with COVID-19 symptoms. Until today, 88 journalists have been identified Corona-infected. One national newspaper closed their printed version of newspaper and continued only on online, all crew of all unit in a television channel had to go quarantine for 14 days; but they continued their program by taking footage and other technical help from other media houses. Generally, houses are prioritizing to 'Work from Home' but it's very difficult for profession like journalism where frequent visit and observational findings are crucial for reliable journalism.

**Objective of Survey:** To find out how professional journalists are experiencing with COVID-19 situation in terms of safety (health & financial) and accessing information.

**Survey Method:** Quantitative (online survey)

**Survey tool:** Close ended questionnaire with 20 questions including demographic inquiry.

**Sampling:** Journalists working in different media outlets in Bangladesh.

**Sample Size:** 200 (of mixed group)

**Research Team:** Survey initiated and conducted by South Asia Center for Media In Development (SACMID) team members under 'Promoting Media Literacy in Bangladesh' project supported by Free Press Unlimited. Team SBCC cooperated to collect data from the responding journalists.

**Respondents' Demographic Segregation:** Age, gender and job specification was not pre- determined in this survey. Journalists from different age group, gender and different work area were appreciated to take part in this online survey.

82% respondents were from 25-35 age group where 36-40 and 41-50 age group made 12.5% and 5.5% of total the total respondents, hence no above 50 aged journalist participated in the survey. 91.5% male journalists and only 8.5% female journalists responded in the survey. Most of the journalists are urban

based (90%) and only 10% are from rural area. Most of the journalists are from Newspaper (37%) where 31% journalist are from Television channels and 28% are from Online news portal. 61% percent journalists who responded were reporters and 23.5% worked in desk. Professionals from the area of Photography/Cinematography, news production and the journalist working in 'Others' are made 2.5%, 7.5% and 5.5% respectively.

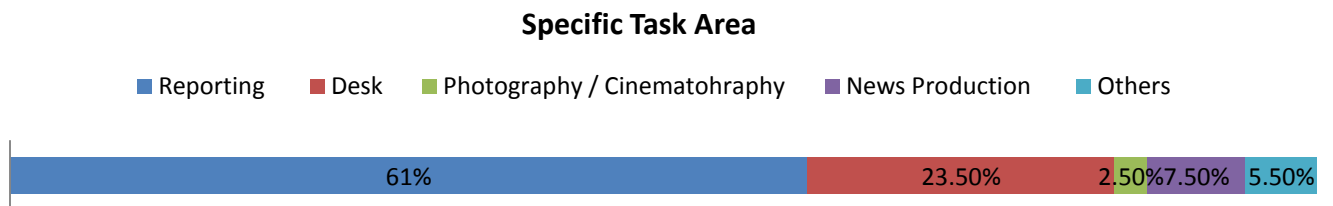
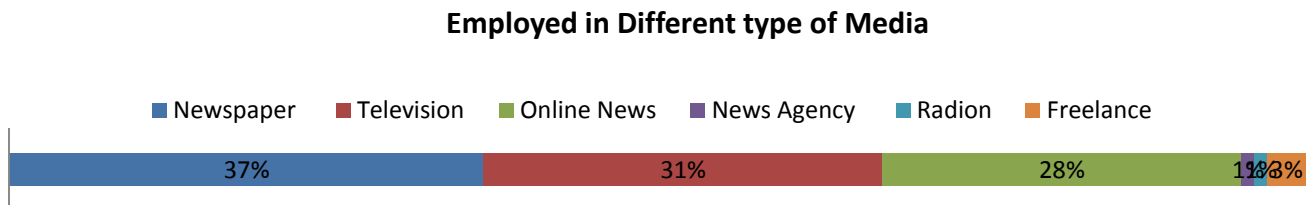
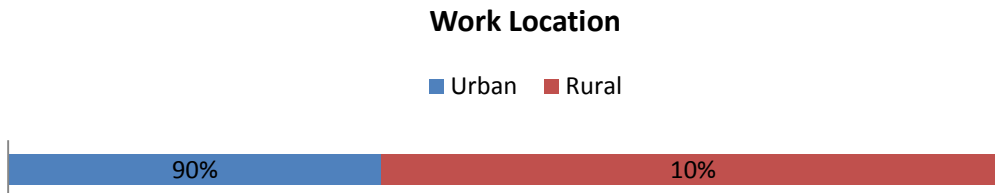
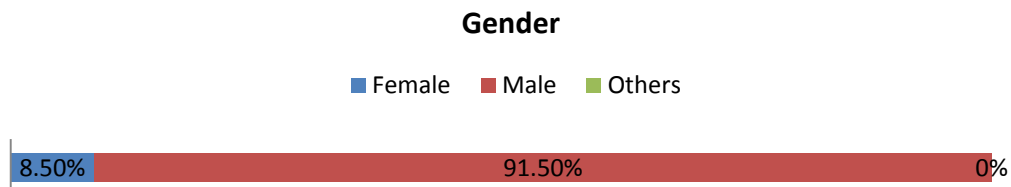
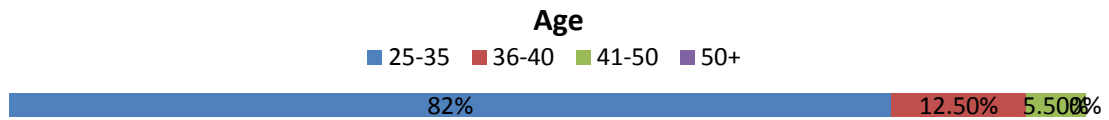


Figure 1: Age

Figure 2: Gender

Figure 3: Work Location

Figure 4: Type of Media where journalists are employed

Figure 5: Specific Task Area.

**Physically Working in Field to cover News in COVID-19 period:** According to 'Figure no 6' and 'Figure No 7', 57% journalists among 200 have directly covered COVID-19 related news and 67.5% journalists worked in field to cover either in COVID-19 related news or other news during Corona pandemic time. In the question "time" was specifically mentioned as 'from 8 March, 2020 as first patient of Corona has identified on this day.

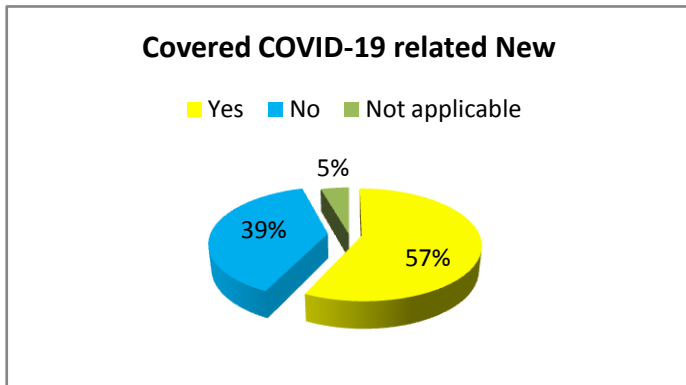


Figure 6: Covered COVID-19 directly

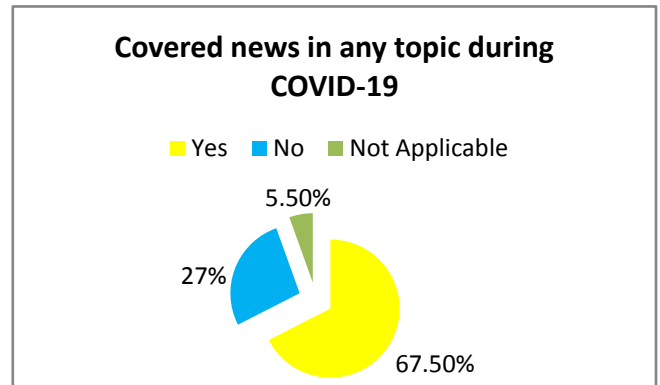


Figure 7: Covered any news during COVID-19

**Getting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during COVID-19 working Period:** Journalist were asked if they have any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during COVID-19 days. 62% journalists have PPE, collected from different sources where 32% don't have PPE yet. In the questionnaire, specification of PPE was explained as a package of Hand gloves, mask, hand sanitizer and goggles.

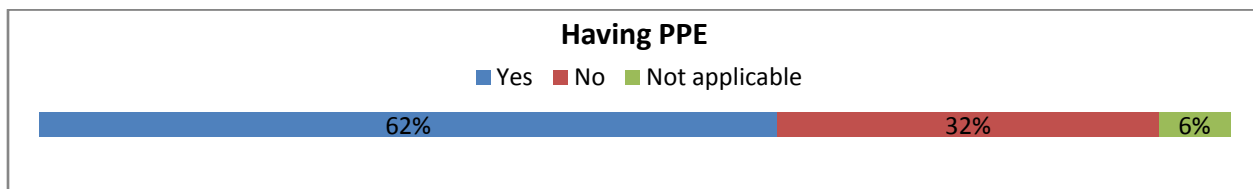


Figure 8: Having PPE

Respondents were also asked about the process of procuring their PPE. 29.5% said that, their employer has provided them PPE. 27% journalists have bought their own PPE with own cost. 2% journalist said that they have collected the PPE by their own but employer has reimbursed the money later. Only one journalist, (which made .5% of total respondents) received PPE from government, Other Non - government organization and 'Other' sources provided each 1% of PPE. 38% respondents said 'Not Applicable' for them, it can be assumed that they don't have any PPE yet.

Only 3.5% of journalists had PPE before March 2020, 19.5% had PPE on first half of March and 21.5% had it by second half of March, 2020 according to the finding shown in 'Figure 10'. 34% journalists said that they don't have any PPE yet.

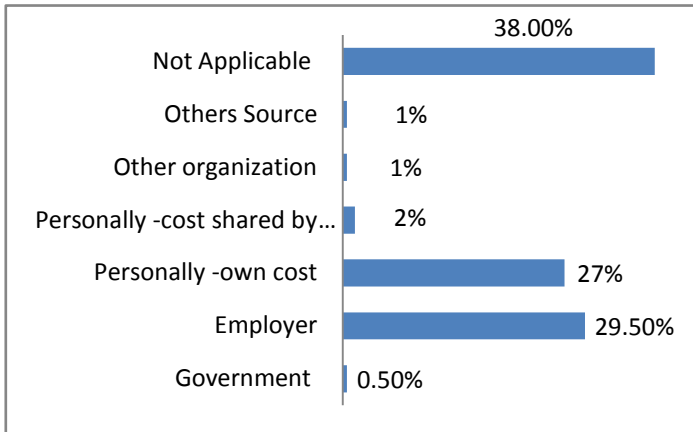


Figure 9: Sources of procuring PPE

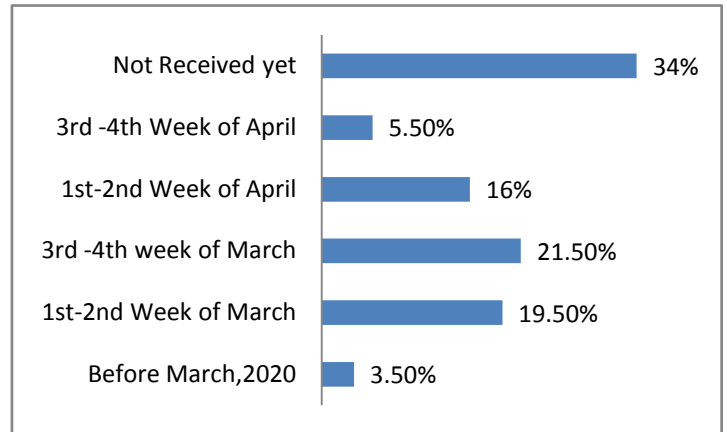


Figure 10: Time of Procuring PPE

#### Health care Facilities (health insurance):

76% journalists don't have any health insurance coverage or medical allowance from their employer when they recruited them. Only 7% journalists gave positive response towards this, that they have either health insurance or medical allowance or have both of these from their employer. 7% said, this is not applicable for them, though according to their job specification only 3% are freelancer.

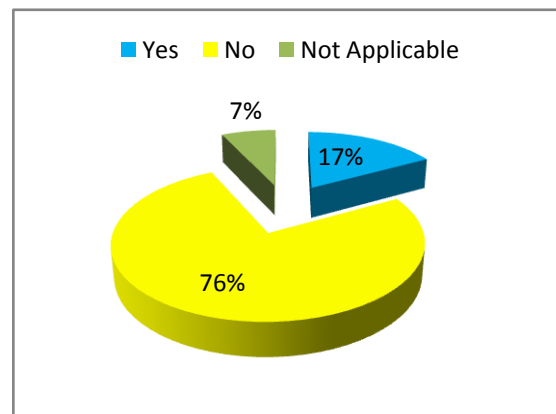


Figure 11: Health Care facilities from Employer

**Facilities from the employer/work Place:** Journalists were asked what are the facilities they have been provided by their employers during facing Corona virus situation. 73% of the Journalists said that they were allowed to "work from home" for a certain amount of time. As the respondent could tick more than one options, so 29% journalist said that they were provided PPE which we have seen in 'Figure no 9' also. 39% stated that, office had provided safe transportation for their field work and 39.5% said they

were allowed to take medical leave if required and only 4% said employer supported their treatment costs.

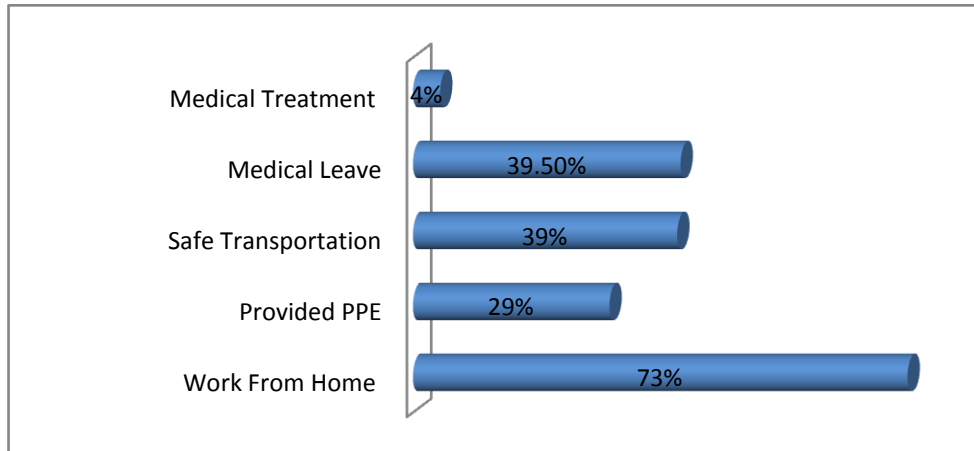


Figure12: Facilities from Employer during COVID-19

#### Challenges During COVID-19 pandemic:

Respondent were given eight different probable challenges to mention they faced while working. They could choose more than one option. only .5% (means 1 person) from the respondents got infected of Corona virus. Facing difficulty to do investigative reporting as most of the government and non-governmental offices are closed for long time, journalists found this challenge the most with 45% responses. 38% journalists had to be detached with their family because of safety concern. 35% journalists explored that they are going through mental trauma as they have to suffer always from the fear of getting infected. Same number of journalists also found difficulties to identify the news sources because of numerous number of Fake news and rumors spreading related to COVID-19. 30.5% journalists said that they didn't get salary in time. 27.5% are in fear of losing job in near future and 20% journalist have been harassed/ threatened from either government, non-government/corporate organizations or persons for publishing certain news.

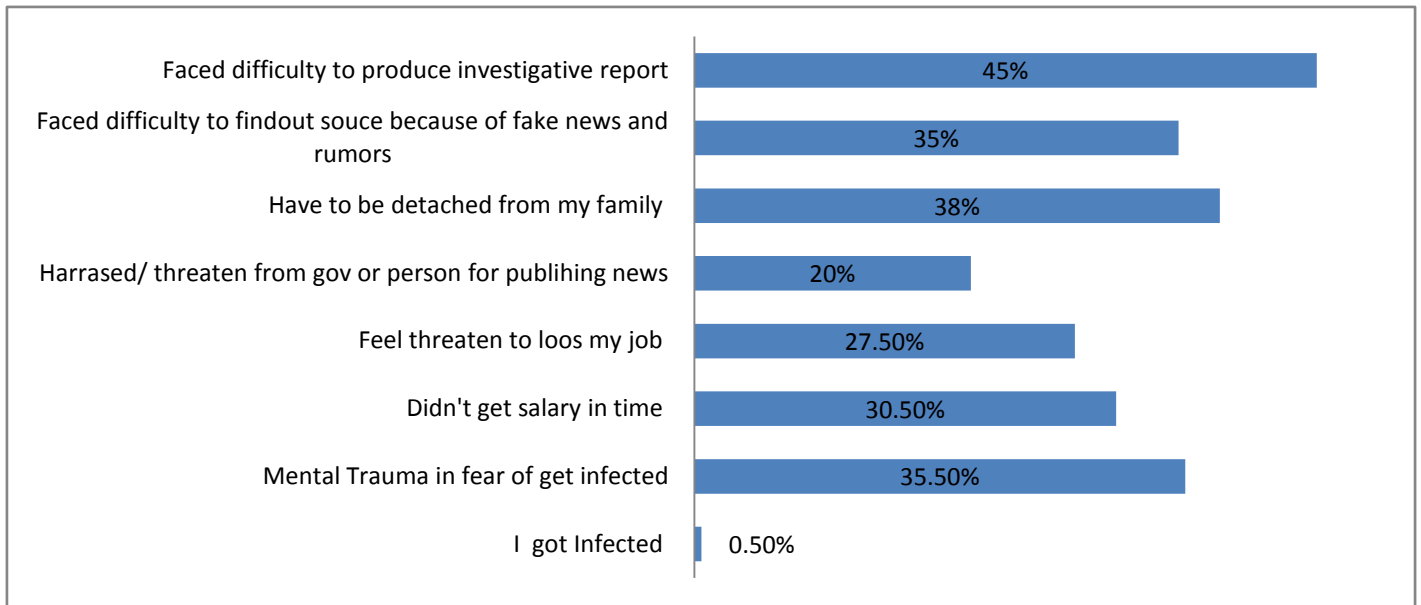


Figure 13: Challenges faced during COVID -19

**Accountability of Media regarding Fake News and Rumors:** Journalist were asked if media is responsible towards spreading fake news and rumors; because media failed to disseminate authentic and reliable information. According to 'Figure 14' 46% journalists didn't agree that media is responsible, 36% agree with the statement and 19% didn't comment.

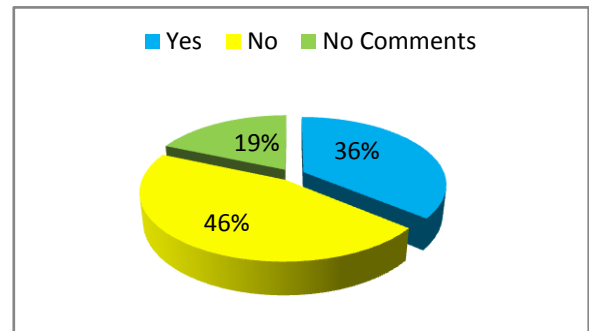


Figure 14: Media is responsible on spreading fake news & rumors

**Adequacy of Information from Government Agency:** 'Figure No 15' is representing the question number 15 where it was asked to journalist that, the information is being provided by the government on COVID -19 are enough at all. 84% journalists said information provided by government agency are not enough, only 9% said those are enough and another 9% didn't comment.

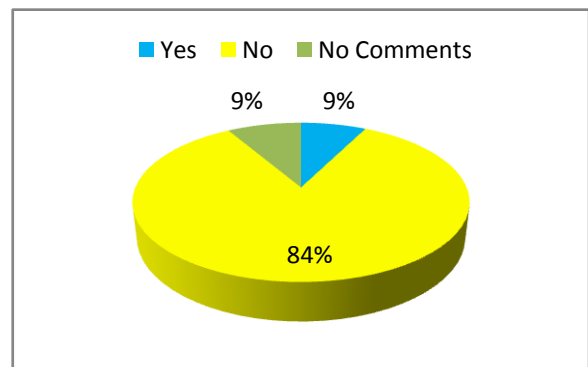


Figure 15: Adequacy of Information from government agency

**Government's sincerity towards ensuring free Flow of information:** Only 19% journalists believe that Government is sincere towards ensuring free flow of information during COVID-19 period where 63% think that government is not sincere enough and 18% didn't comment.

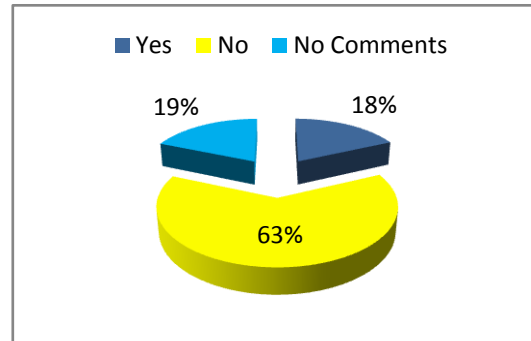


Figure 16: Government's sincerity toward ensuring free flow of Information

**Accessibility of information of COVID -19 by Community people:** In response of question 'Do you think- people from all class and occupation of the society irrespective of rural or urban, rich or poor are getting all information around Corona Virus correctly and accurately?' 84% journalist said 'NO' means people are not getting COVID-19 information accurately and correctly, only 10% respondent as positive.

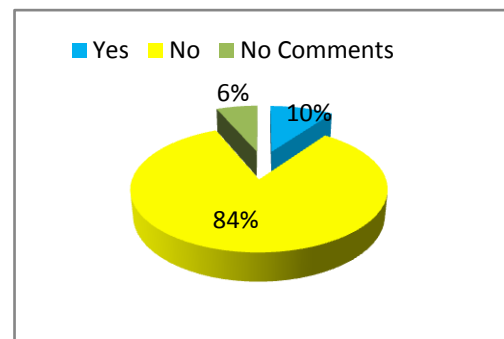


Figure 15: Accessing COVID-19 information correctly and accurately by all people of Bangladesh

Question number 18, tried to explore the cause behind the gap between all news consumers and accurate information with seven options of prospective causes, while the respondents were able to choose more than one options. 68% sated that 'due to people's reliability on social media where fake news spread very quickly', 51% think government is not sincere enough to provide accurate information. According to 48.5% journalists the cause is 'Public media channels are not performing their responsibility'. 41% respondents believe, people's disability (could be economical, technological & educational cause behind this) to accessing all media is the reason behind this, Figure 18 shows all the responses of prospective causes.

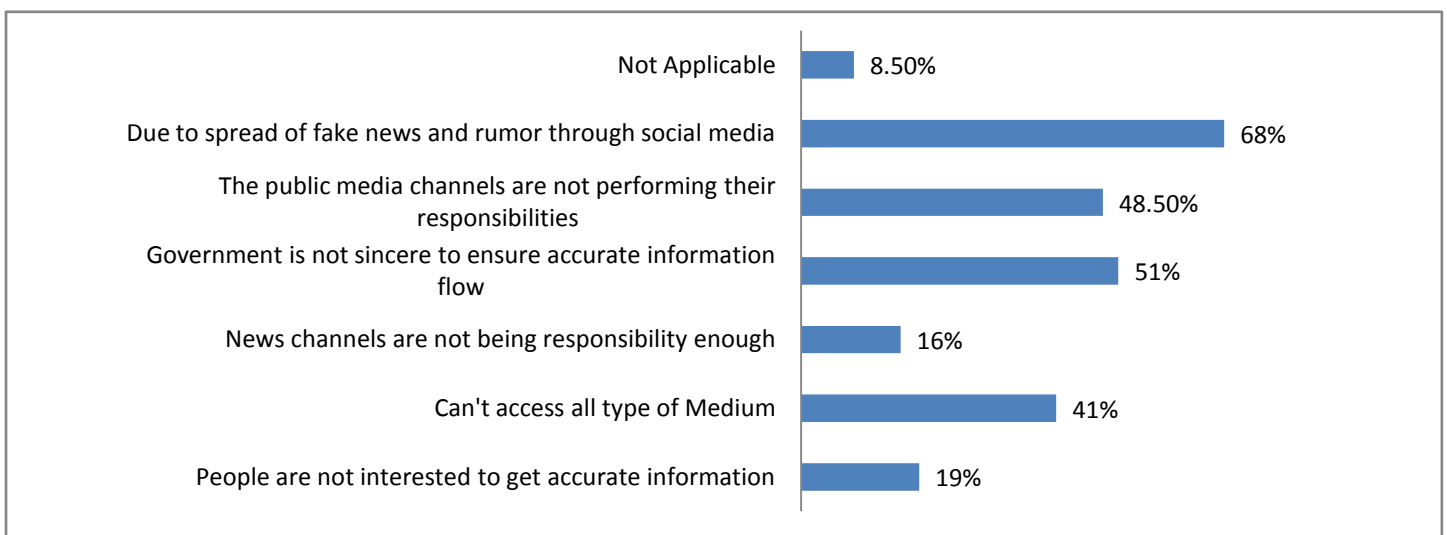
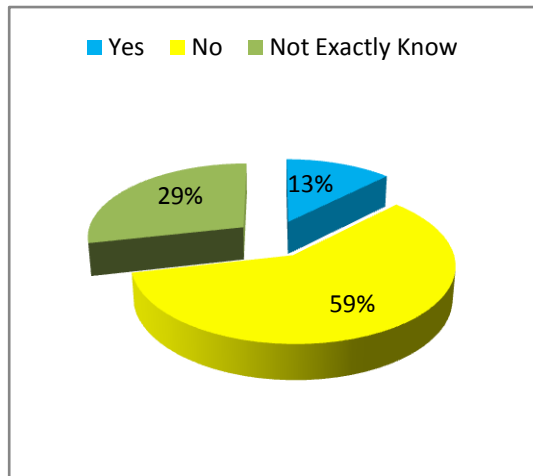


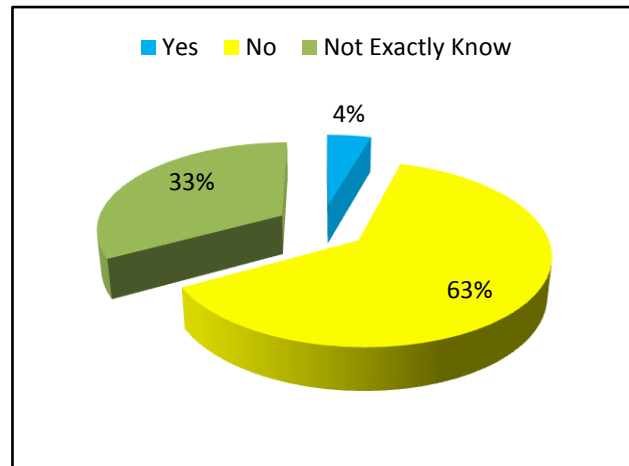
Figure 18: Cause behind of not getting information equally, correctly and accurately



**Initiative Taken for Journalist welfare in COVID-19 Pandemic situation:** Journalists were asked if journalist union or association have taken any initiative for journalist welfare during COVID -19 period. Only 29% journalists responded positively that initiative have been taken, 59% said 'No' and 12% 'Not exactly know' whether initiatives have taken or not. Figure 20 followed nearly the same trend. 63% said there are no initiative from government body for journalist welfare and only 6% said 'Yes' they did, and a significant number of journalist (33%) said they don't exactly know.



**Figure 19 : Initiative taken by Journalist association and Journalist Union**



**Figure 20 : Initiative taken by Information Ministry or any other government agency**

**Discussion and Conclusion:** This survey revealed some significant findings from different perspective. 32% journalist don't have any PPE by the end of April, 2020 where COVID-19 cases have been increasing every day and 88 journalists from 42 national and regional media houses tested positive till date (12<sup>th</sup> May, 2020). This is also unfortunate that people who have (62%) PPE, 27% of them bought by their own cost and there is only .5% contribution from government. 76% journalists don't have any health insurance or medical allowance though they are also exposing themselves in crowd, public area and hospital to cover news. Fake news and rumor is a new challenge journalists are facing these days. 35% journalist already faced challenges because of fake news and rumors and 68% of them think that people are not getting accurate news because news consumers are widely depending on social media which are the sources of fake news and rumor. In terms of government response, it is quite evident that journalists are not satisfied with the information that government is providing. 20% journalist faced threat and they have been harassed for publishing news, 63% journalist believe that government are not sincere enough to ensure free flow of information regarding corona virus and 84% believe that the information government is providing is not adequate. Nether Journalist Union nor Government body is thinking about journalist welfare according to findings.