

WOMEN ISSUES IN NEWSPAPERS OF UTTARAKHAND

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***Abstract:** The print media which include newspapers, periodicals, newsletters and other channels are relied upon by the people as credible source of information, education and entertainment. The print media are known for fearless criticism and service. In the past few years there has been an improved and increased reportage of issues related to women in the media particularly in the print. News related to women though still marginal have started to occasionally occupy important slots like the editorial, feature news, front-page news etc.*

The present study is focused on the coverage made by newspapers regarding women's issues. Two Hindi daily newspapers, 'Amar Ujala' and 'Danik Jagran' were taken for study. Both of papers are published from Dehradun (capital of Uttarakhand state) and having largest circulation in the Uttarakhand. To analyze the women's issues in newspapers, equality, health, education, sexual harassment, violence, police atrocities and crime against women related issues were selected. All kind of printed material related to these issues as articles, news stories, analysis, editorials, letter to editor, column etc were taken for analyses separately.

***Keywords:** Print Media, sexual harassment, education, health, equality, balance, Article, Discussion*

Introduction

Media is the buzz word of the era of globalization. In fact, the rapid expansion of term and the concept of present form of globalization has been made possible only through the information revolution throughout the world. It has been widely recognized that media can play a substantial role in promoting and

disseminating information and are key players in the social and economic development of women. Therefore, media largely reflects the life styles, socialization patterns, participation levels, cultural boundaries, political maneuverings, religious manifestations, educational standards, social hierarchy, and of course, society images of any given society.

The print media which include newspapers, periodicals, newsletters and other channels are relied upon by the people as credible source of information, education and entertainment. The print media are known for fearless criticism and service

In the past few years there has been an improved and increased reportage of issues related to women in the media particularly in the print. News related to women though still marginal have started to occasionally occupy important slots like the editorial, feature news, front-page news etc. However, women's visibility in the news is still dominated by sensational stories of glamour, sex, domestic violence and other forms of violence. Stories like women coping with adversity or building their lives are largely missing. Issues affecting women, their vast experiences and their lives, barely find their way into the mainstream media. Many other studies have also established that when women appear in the news, they are mostly projected as passive victims or passive reactors to public events in news media. They hardly appear as speakers or participants in public event.

There have been several studies of print media with regard to women which have found the print media guilty of sexism, distortion of image of women and propagation of sex stereotypes: mothers, housewives, dependant, passive, etc. The other side of such misinterpretation is that in most popular print media women are seldom shown as working women- capable professionals, labourers, farmers. Rather the predominant image is that of the self-sacrificing housewife.

The Print Media has also seen a growth spurt in the recent years particularly with regard to women and development magazines. The journals are mostly qualified for modern society and could be said to be positively harmful to the development of women as conscious individuals aware of themselves and aware of the society around them. If a woman wins a beauty contest, magazines or newspapers in particular give much importance to the news and even take her photographs on cover page but, at the same time if a woman gets the Nobel Prize she gets limited coverage. Here the difference of judgment in women's issues is quite marked in our media. Similarly the daily newspapers rarely put women's news and their development. Rather they prefer reporting on rape, atrocities, crime, sexual harassment and abuse of women prominently in their columns. Besides Sunday and Saturday special glossy editions on women's leisure, fashion, beauty and other luxurious news items with erotic photographs are issued from time to time by daily newspapers .

However the scenario is not so depressing and some researchers hold a more encouraging view. According to Joseph, Sharma, 1991, the advent of women reporters and the presence of some senior women journalists in positions of responsibility have made a significant difference to the coverage of women's issues in the press. They have observed that in the past ten years, women's issues have increasingly, though sporadically begun to make news and to be considered worthy of comment. This is due to the growth of the contemporary, women's movement in India, with women's groups becoming steadily more active and vocal. While these changes could be perceived through the print media they were particularly evident in the English language press, which occupies a position of special privilege and eminence in India, although its audience is substantially smaller than that of the regional language press.

Status of women in India

About half of India's population consists of women. We often find very pitiable condition of women in India especially in the social backward rural areas, their lives are miserable. India, with a population of 989 million, is the world's second most populous country, of that number; 120 million are women who live in poverty. India has 16 percent of the world's population, but only 2.4 percent of its land, resulting in great pressures on its natural resources. Over 70 percent of India's population currently derives their livelihood from land resources, which includes 84 percent of the economically-active women.

Health Status

In most Indian families, a daughter is viewed as a liability, and she is conditioned to believe that she is inferior and subordinate to men. Sons are idolized and celebrated. May you be the mother of a hundred sons is a common Hindu wedding blessing.

A study of women in the Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), based in 20 villages in four districts in Maharashtra state was introduced in this way:

The primary issue all women in the SSP were struggling with was that of everyday survival. Insufficient incomes and the lack of employment were reported to be their most pressing concerns. Survival is a constant preoccupation and at its most basic, survival means food (Chambers 1983). The most common problems were the lack of basic amenities such as food, water, fuel, fodder and health facilities. In addition, the deterioration of the natural environment and the fact that many of their traditional occupations were no longer viable were conditions that were making it increasingly hard for women to continue sustaining their families, as they had done in the past.

The average female life expectancy today in India is low compared to many countries, but it has shown gradual improvement over the years. In many families, esp. rural ones, the girls and women face nutritional discrimination within the family, and are anemic and malnourished. The maternal mortality in India is the second highest in the world:

- Only 42% of births in the country are supervised by health professionals. Most women deliver with help from women in the family who often lack the skills and resources to save the mother's life if it is in danger
- According to UNDP Human Development Report (1997), the proportion of pregnant women (age 15-49 aged) with anemia was found to be as high as 88%
- The average nutritional intake of women is 1400 calories daily. The necessary requirement is approximately 2200 calories.
- 38% of all HIV positive people in India are women yet only 25% of beds in AIDS care centers in India are occupied by them.
- 92% of women in India suffer from gynecological problems
- 300 women die every day due to childbirth and pregnancy related causes.
- The maternal mortality ratio per 100,000 live births in the year 1995 was 440

Access to Education

Though it is gradually rising, the female literacy rate in India is lower compared to the male literacy rate. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools; many of them drop out⁵⁴. According to the

National Sample Survey Data of 1997, only the states of [Kerala](#) and [Mizoram](#) have approached universal female literacy rates. According to majority of the scholars, the major factor behind the improved social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy.

According to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless) Girls are often taken out of school to help with family responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings. Girls are also likely to be taken out of school when they reach puberty as a way of protecting their honor. The data on school attendance by age show the proportion of girls attending school decreases with age while for boys it remains stable. In 1992-93, only 55 percent of girls aged 11 to 14 were attending school compared with 61 percent of the younger age group.

- Close to 245 million Indian women lack the basic capability to read and write.
- Adult literacy rates for ages 15 and above for the year 2000 were female 46.4% male rate of 69% .
- Of the literate women in India, 59 percent have only a primary education or less. This level of education may not be sufficient to meaningfully improve the status of these women.
- Only 41 percent of the literate population, or 13 percent of all Indian women, have more than a primary education.
- Women had 62% illiteracy, whereas men had 34%.
- Among the rural female population in the age group of 7 years and over, the literacy rate is 30.4%, whereas it is 63.9% among the urban female population. Moreover, the difference between male and female literacy rates is much higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.
- Although substantial progress has been achieved since India won its independence in 1947, when less than 8 percent of females were literate, the gains have not been rapid enough to keep pace with population growth: there were 16 million more illiterate females in 1991 than in 1981 .
- There is little response to counter these obstacles: school hours remain inflexible to the labor demands of girls; many villages do not have a school; and less than 1/3 of India's primary and middle-school teachers are women.

Violence against women in India: Some Facts

- Female feticide in India increased by 49.2% between 1999 and 2000 .
- 16,373 women were raped during the year, 45 women were raped every day, 1 woman was raped every 32 minutes; an increase of 6.7% in the incidents of rape was seen among 1997-2002. 2.25% of the total rape cases were cases of incest.
- 11,332 women and girls were trafficked 31 women and girls were trafficked every day 1 woman or girl was trafficked every 46 minutes.
- 7,895 women were murdered due to dowry 21 women were murdered every day. One woman was murdered due to dowry every 66 minutes.
- 49,237 women faced domestic violence in their marital homes.135 women were tortured by their husbands and in-laws every day 1 woman faced torture in her marital relationship every 11 minutes.

- Domestic violence constitutes 33.3% of the total crimes against women. A steep rise of 34.5% in domestic violence cases was witnessed between 1997 and 2002.
- 12,134 women were driven to commit suicide due to dowry, 1, 10,424 housewives committed suicide among 1997-2001 and accounted for 52% of the total female suicide victims.
- Out of 600 women respondents 76% had been sexually abused in childhood or adolescence .Of the abusers 42% were ‘uncle’ or ‘cousin’ 4% were ‘father’ or ‘brother’.
- Over 40% of married Indian women face physical abuse by their husband, one in 2 women faces domestic violence in any of its forms physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic.

Coverage of Women’s Issues in Newspapers

The present study is focused on the coverage made by newspapers regarding women’s issues. Two newspapers, ‘Amar Ujala’ and ‘Danik Jagran’ were taken for study. Both of papers are published from Dehradun (capital of Uttarakhand state) and having largest circulation in the Uttarakhand.

To analyze the women’s issues in newspapers, equality, health, education, sexual harassment, violence, police atrocities and crime against women related issues were selected. All kind of printed material related to these issues as articles, news stories, analysis, editorials, letter to editor, column etc were taken for analyses separately.

Year 2006 was selected to study the contents of the newspapers. In view of the voluminous data, the scope of the study was narrowed down further through systematic sampling. Thus, starting from 1 January 2006 every fifth issue of the daily was selected and analyzed throughout the whole year i.e. till December 2006. The selection of every fifth issue ensures equal representation of each day of week in the data. The total number of newspapers analyzed are 146 (73 issues each newspaper). Supplement magazines were not considered in study because of their specialty i.e. youth, film, career etc.

Print Area of the Newspaper

Table: A

<i>Newspapers</i>	<i>Average no. of pages</i>	<i>Area of per page (length X width) Sq.cm</i>	<i>Average Print Area of single issue (Sq.cm)</i>
Amar Ujala	16	50x33=1650	26,400
Dainik Jagran	16	50x33=1650	26,400

It is shown from above table that average no. of pages in Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagran are same as 16. It means Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagran published average 16 pages in a single issue. Print area of single issue of Amar Ujala and Danik Jagran is, also same as 26,400 sq.cm and 26,400 sq.cm separately.

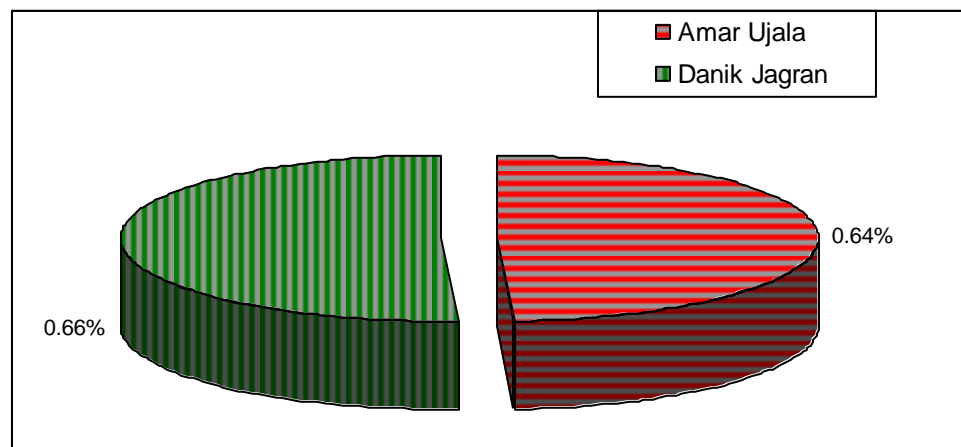
Coverage of Women’s Issues in newspapers during 2006

Table -B

Name of Newspapers	Area (in Sq.cm)			
	Single issue	Total Print Area (singlex73)	Women's issues	Percentage
Amar Ujala	26,400	19,27,200	12,334.00	0.64
Danik Jagran	26,400	19,27,200	12,719.50	0.66

With regard to above table it is clear that the total number of each newspaper taken for analysis were 73. The above table shows that total percentage of covered area for women's issues in Amar Ujala and Danik Jagran is 0.64 percent and 0.66 percent respectively. It shows that the space given to women's issues is too less.

Graphical Presentation



Nature of Covered Women's Issues:

To analyze the nature of published coverage, it was categorized in different fields like health, education, sexual harassment, status/equality, violence/ crime and police atrocity related issues. Area of published material was measured in these categories separately in sq.cm. The analysis in percentage is shown in table below.

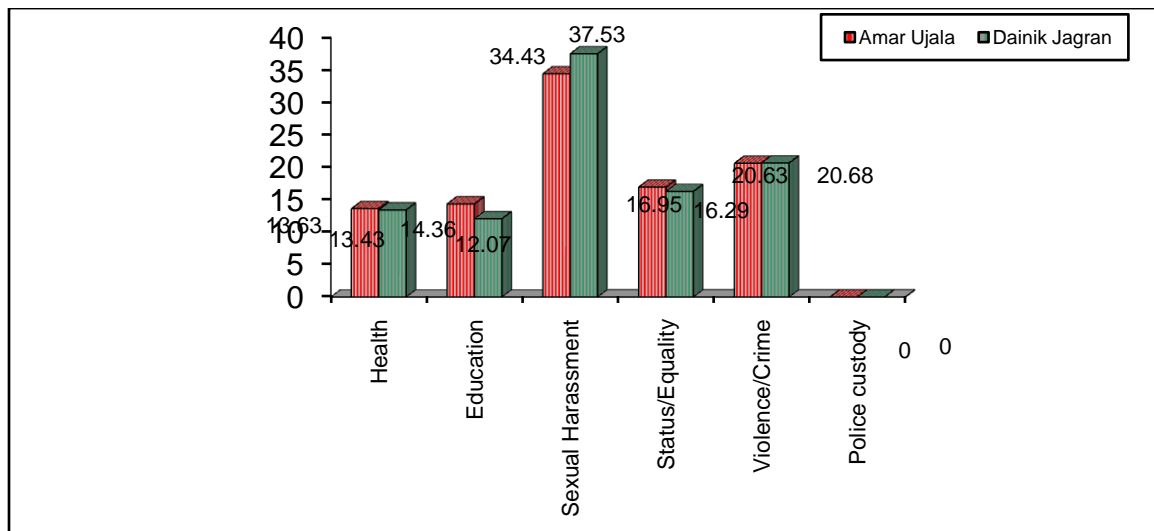
Table: C

Nature of coverage	Amar Ujala		Danik Jagran	
	Area (sq.cm)	Percentage	Area (sq.cm)	Percentage
Health	1681.12	13.63	1708.22	13.43
Education	1771.16	14.36	1535.22	12.07
Sexual Harassment	4246.59	34.43	4773.50	37.53
Status/Equality	2090.63	16.95	2072.20	16.29
Violence/Crime	2544.50	20.63	2630.36	20.68
Police Atrocity	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	12,334.00	100	12,719.50	100

In Hindi dailies, 'Amar Ujala' covered 13.63 percent women's rights related issues concerning health while another Hindi daily 'Danik Jagran' covered 13.43 percent of health related issues, which is near about same. In 'Amar Ujala', education related coverage was 14.36 percent while in other side 'Danik Jagran' covered 12.07 percent of education related issues, which is little bit less from 'Amar Ujala'.

In 'Amar Ujala' 34.43% space was given to sexual harassment related coverage while in 'Danik Jagran' these issues were covered 37.53 percent, which is more than 'Amar Ujala'. Discrimination against women i.e. status/equality related issues got 16.95 percent coverage in 'Amar Ujala' and in 'Danik Jagran' this type of issue got also 16.29 percent space which is near about same. Violence or crime against women is also covered in large amount as 20.63 percent in 'Amar Ujala' while 'Danik Jagran' gave 20.68 percent coverage for these issues. There is no coverage of police atrocities related issues in 'Amar Ujala' and 'Danik Jagran'.

Graphical Presentation:



Importance of women's issues in Newspapers

To analyze the importance given by the newspapers to the women's issues the placement and pattern of stories was classified in editorial, article, news, letter to editor, column and analysis. Total published area of coverage was measured. The lower table shows the importance given by the different newspapers to women's issues.

Importance of women's issues in Newspapers

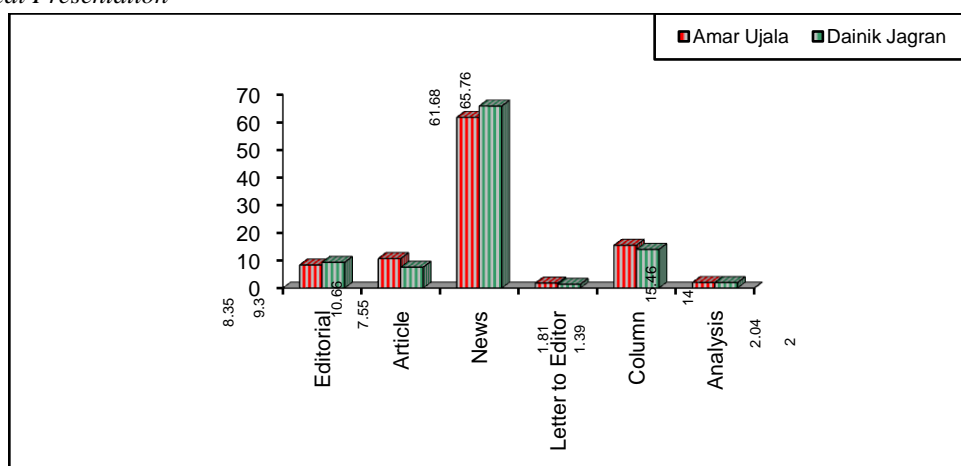
Table: D

Importance	Amar Ujala		Danik Jagran	
	Area (Sq.cm)	Percentage	Area (Sq.cm)	Percentage
Editorial	936.24	8.35	1182.92	9.30
Article	1195.25	10.66	960.32	7.55

News	6915.86	61.68	8364.34	65.76
Letter to Editor	202.94	1.81	176.80	1.39
Column	1733.45	15.46	1780.73	14.00
Analysis	251.61	2.04	254.39	2.00
Total	12,334.00	100	12,719.50	100

In Hindi newspapers 'Amar Ujala' gave its 8.35 percent space for women's rights related issues in editorial while 'Danik Jagran' gave little bit more i.e. 9.30 percent space for these issues in editorial. In 'Amar Ujala' articles on women's issues were written 10.66 percent while in 'Danik Jagran' less space i.e.7.55 percent were given to articles related to women's issues. More than half of stories i.e. 61.68 percent are in news form in 'Amar Ujala' while in 'Danik Jagran' 65.76 percent space of women's related coverage was given in the form of news item. Letter to editor was occupied only 1.81 percent space of 'Amar Ujala' in 2006 while 'Danik Jagran' gave 1.39 percent for letter to editor based on women's issues. These issues got 15.46 percent space in 'Amar Ujala' in the form of columns while 14.00 percent space in 'Danik Jagran' in column form. Analysis on women's issues got least 2.04 percent in one year in Hindi daily 'Amar Ujala' while 2.00 percent in another Hindi daily 'Danik Jagran'.

Graphical Presentation



Conclusion

The study shows that newspapers give a little bit space to women's issues in fact less than one percent. Mostly newspaper gives a good space to glamorous image of women in news stories; feature or advertisements. The coverage of women's issues in terms of sexual harassment is higher than other types of issues like health, education, status/ equality, violence / crime and police atrocities. We can say that the rate of sexual harassment against women is higher than developmental issues and newspapers give this issue

higher coverage than other issues. The analysis also shows that the space given to other issues like equality, health, education of women etc is negligible by the newspapers

In view of above findings, it is shown that news items are prominently covered by both of Hindi newspapers while women's issues got little bit attention in Analysis, Editorials, Columns and Articles. It means only daily incidents related to women are used to cover by newspapers while women's issues could not get space in discussions and analysis. It has also been observed by researcher that women also got least preference in readers mind i.e. letters to editor. Likewise, very few informative pieces or feature columns are published for women informing them about their legal rights, or about their potential for political activity.

The data shows that the newspaper does not provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world. Much remains to be done with regard to the "participation, portrayal and access of women to the media and its impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women".

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