

Media Coverage of Schedule Caste of Eastern Uttar Pradesh- Content Analysis of Hindi Newspapers of Eastern Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract: The communication theory of agenda setting explain the media's potential impact on public understanding of topics covered and beliefs about their importance. As such, studying media portrayals of schedule caste in media can offer insight into public knowledge and attitudes on the problems and situation of schedule caste of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. This study presents the results of a content analysis of Schedule Caste coverage in two Hindi newspaper of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Major findings include: a) neglect of overall coverage of this section of society b) portrayal of SC as victim of crime and situations c) confinement of stories related to them on regional pages.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste, Media, Agenda Setting, Content analysis.

Introduction

Uttar Pradesh is most populous State of India. The Scheduled Caste (SC) population of Uttar Pradesh is 35,148,377 at 2001 census, constituting 21.1 per cent of the total population (166,197,921) of the State. Uttar Pradesh holds 1st rank and 4th rank in terms of absolute number of SC population and its proportion to total population respectively among all the States and UTs. The State of UP has a total of sixty six (66) SCs; all of them have been computed at 2001 Census. The Scheduled Castes are mainly rural as 87.7 per cent of them live in villages. District - wise distribution of Scheduled Caste population shows that they have the highest concentration in terms of percentage is in Sonbhadra district (41.9 per cent), followed by Kaushambi district (36.1 per cent) and Sitapur (31.9 per cent) districts. Baghpat district has the lowest proportion of SC population (11per cent).

Population - Size & Distribution

Out of sixty six (66) Scheduled Castes, Chamar has the highest number (19, 803,106) constituting 56.3 per cent of the total SC population. Pasi is the second largest Scheduled Castes having a population of 5,597,002, forming 15.9 per cent of the Scheduled Castes population. Three other Scheduled Castes in the descending order are Dhobi, Kori and Balmiki. Alongwith Chamar and Pasi, these five SCs constitute 87.5 per cent of the total SC population. Gond, Dhanuk and Khatik have population in the range of 443,457 to 764,765 and together form another 5 per cent. Nine other SCs, viz. Rawat, Baheliya, Kharwar....

up to Kol with the population ranging from 109,557 to 331,374, constitute 4.5 per cent. The remaining forty nine (49) Scheduled Castes along with the generic castes constitute the balance 3 per cent of the State's Scheduled Castes population. As many as seventeen (17) SCs have population below 5000. Of them, four SCs, namely, Gharami, Lalbegi, Bajgi and Khorot are very small, each having population less than 1000. At the level of the individual caste, Chamar are primarily concentrated in Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Agra, Bijnor, Saharanpur, Gorakhpur and Ghazipur districts. Pasi have the highest number in Sitapur, followed by Rae Bareli, Hardoi and Allahabad districts. Other three major groups of SCs, namely, Dhobi, Kori and Balmiki have highest population in Bareilly, Sultalpur and Ghaziabad district respectively. (Source: Office of the Registrar General, India)

Literacy & Educational Level

The overall literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes has increased from 26.2 per cent at 1991 census to 46.3 per cent at 2001 census. Despite improvement, the literacy rate has been considerably lower than the national average (54.7 per cent) aggregated for all Scheduled Castes. Male and female literacy rates (60.3 per cent and 30.5 per cent respectively) between the SCs are also lower than those recorded for all Scheduled Castes (SCs) at the national level (66.6 per cent & 41.9 per cent respectively). Among the major SCs, Chamar and Dhobi have the highest literacy rate (49 per cent), while Pasi have noted the lowest literacy rate. Similar tendency has been

registered for these castes in respect of female literacy also. Among the Scheduled Castes literates, 38 per cent are either without any educational level or have attained education below primary level. The amounts of literates who have attained education up to primary and middle levels are 27.1 per cent and 18.5 per cent respectively. Scheduled Castes Literates who are educated up to matric/higher secondary constitute 13.3 per cent. Graduates & above are 3 per cent. The technical & nontechnical diploma holders constitute a meager 0.1 per cent only. There is a sharp decline in the percentage of literates from the secondary level onwards. The percentage Scheduled Castes matriculate is almost half of the middle level literates. The proportion of Scheduled Castes matriculates (8.5 per cent) decline to one third in graduation level and above. Out of the total 133 lakh Scheduled Castes children in the age group 5 -14 years, 58.3 lakh have been attending school constituting 56.4 per cent. As many as 45.1 lakh children in the corresponding age group have not been going to school. Among the major Scheduled Castes, Chamar and Dhobi have 60 per cent school going children. This proportion is 51 – 57 per cent among Pasi, Balmiki and Kori.

Interaction between media and schedule caste

The literacy rate in schedule caste of Uttar Pradesh is quite low so it can be inferred very easily that newspaper reading is not common among them. They are marginalized people and it is duty of media to provide them forum and representation. One way to support them is by covering their conditions, their requirements and the events related to them. Proper coverage by media about them would make other section of society, politician and bureaucrats aware about their needs and problems and sensitizes them for their bad living conditions. There is practically no section of society whose important socioeconomic, political and cultural life that is not dealt with in media reports, features, editorials, letters to the editor, magazine materials, video clips and programmes including films, telefilms, interviews and talks, though media may not find it practical to present everything that individual media users find interesting, useful or necessary. The messages reaching the audience through various channels are likely to influence different sections of society differently but, in general, those who watch or listen to particular programmes or read certain kinds of material in print media are likely to develop a soft corner for the ideas expressed in those media. If we see the different definitions of news value we find that prominence and popularity play important role in coverage of news. Schedule caste people are neither popular nor prominent and they are not much important for advertisers because schedule caste people are generally poor so their purchasing power is not good. In that case all responsibilities lies on media houses to give proper coverage to their conditions and need. Traditionally schedule caste people are dependent on

traditional form of media like Ramlila, Nautankietc for entertainment and education but modern media have over taken it function particularly of information and entertainment according to study done by Singh M and Singh A [1].

Objective

The focus of this paper is to assess the coverage given by Hindi print media to the people belonging to schedule caste community. It also assesses the media content in terms of type of coverage given to schedule caste community. Thus the study only assesses the amount of coverage given by Hindi print media of eastern Uttar Pradesh but how they present these people.

Literature review

A literature review of books, journals, dissertations, conference proceeding were conducted on the related topic to analyze and identify the gap of knowledge.

Everett K Rogers [2] wrote in “The diffusion of Innovation” the function of mass media is highest at the awareness stage of adaptation process and function of personal information is highest at evaluation stage.

Rao’s [3] pioneering research in two villages in South India found that the pattern of interaction and conflict and role of elites were central determinants of change and that of media had a comparatively marginal role in effecting change.

Defining development Keval J Kumar [13] writes “Development springs from the heart of each society, relying on its own strength and resources as far as possible”

Communication studies made by Trichanea *et al* [4] in “Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge” in Public Opinion Quarterly reveals that development campaigns benefit the comparatively advantage section of community.

According to Andrew A. Moemeka [5] said that by focusing attention and goals of development the media are about to create an information climate in which development is stimulated,

K. Singh [6] observed that “Rural development communication is a far reaching transformation of social and economic structure institution, relationship and processes in rural areas.

Salzman [7] as “the cathecting of consumption as an appropriate orientation” is rapidly becoming an accepted part of culture of rural Maharashtra.

A study by Kirk Johnson [8] in Dinawali village TV has made it clear to the people that caste prejudice is unacceptable and few villagers acknowledge their view openly. He also studied that one of the effect of TV on social change included the use of latrine instead of defecating out in field. He also conferred that Positions of elites who monopolize political, economic and social information and manipulate them according to their profit had changed over the year, as everyone had access to information after the arrival of Television. So exploitation of weaker section is not easy for elite section.

Ekta [9] in her study of rural India found that social media is a potential tool for development. As she concluded, "Social media networks have without a doubt changed the lives of rural people. As far as agriculture is thought of, these have given many opportunities to the farmers and made the process of selling the crop easy through online programs which have resulted in the removal of middlemen. There are many success stories in field of health care as well." She also inferred that use of social media in political up-liftment required improvement.

Singh M and Singh Amit [10] in their study about farmers concluded that the main function of media and development communication is to promote the economic and political consciousness of the farmer. The primary objective of media is to make farmers and workers aware to be self-reliant through mobilization of their internal resources.

A study done on schedule caste people of Rohtak district by Sudir Anand for his doctoral work indicates the mass media like radio and newspapers were of lesser significance to lower caste in rural society. However, comparatively speaking the persons belonging to the upper castes and having education first received the news more often through the radio than the lower castes and the Harijans and illiterate respondents came to know about it mainly through party propaganda, kinsmen and friends.

So the all above studies reflect the various roles played by media in development of marginalized people many belonging to rural areas. The next important concerns of this study are how and why coverage done by media can affect the life of schedule caste. Agenda setting theory can offer the field of insights into how and why audiences pay more attention to certain issues while ignore others. Through agenda building, a function of the media that precedes agenda setting, news organizations have the ability to control the public's agenda by choosing which topics to cover and with what frequency.

Agenda setting involves the media's ability to control the topics the public perceives as important [11, 12]. According to agenda setting theory, the frequency with which the media cover certain topics causes the audience to care more about those topics or believe they are more salient in their lives. One key contributor to the agenda setting effect is the audience's limited capacity to attend to multiple topics; since the public cannot pay attention to every topic at all times, the media's choices influence which topics are on the "public agenda" [11].

Methodology

Very little research exists on the way schedule caste people are portrayed in the media—this study aims to fill that gap. The goals of this research are to describe the way schedule cast people are covered in newspapers and what circumstances surrounding them and abuse are addressed. This paper will present the results of a content analysis of stories about schedule caste people in two national Hindi newspapers for three months. The results of this study will equip media and welfare professionals with information on how to provide them more coverage and platform for their voices. Ultimately, the public will benefit from a greater understanding of the issues surrounding their neglect and seeks support for the larger role society can play in their up-liftment.

Content analysis method is used to study this problem for which Hindi newspaper published from eastern Uttarpradesh is taken as universe. Three month paper between February to April of Dainik Jagran and Hindustan is taken as sample for study. Content analysis is done to interpret the number of stories published by Varanasi editions of Hindi newspaper Dianik Jagaran for three months published from Eastern part of Uttarpradesh.

Schedule caste people names and their activities are chosen as unit of content analysis for this study. The story mentioning name belonging to this community and if any government program related to them are also included. Besides this stories in which they are victims of any accidents or crime that also is counted.

Data Analysis and Discussion

To study how much coverage was done about Schedule caste people in Dainik Jagaran and Hindustan number of stories appeared in selected samples were counted. It was found that Dianik Jagaran published 40 stories while Hindustan published 32 stories within the month of study.

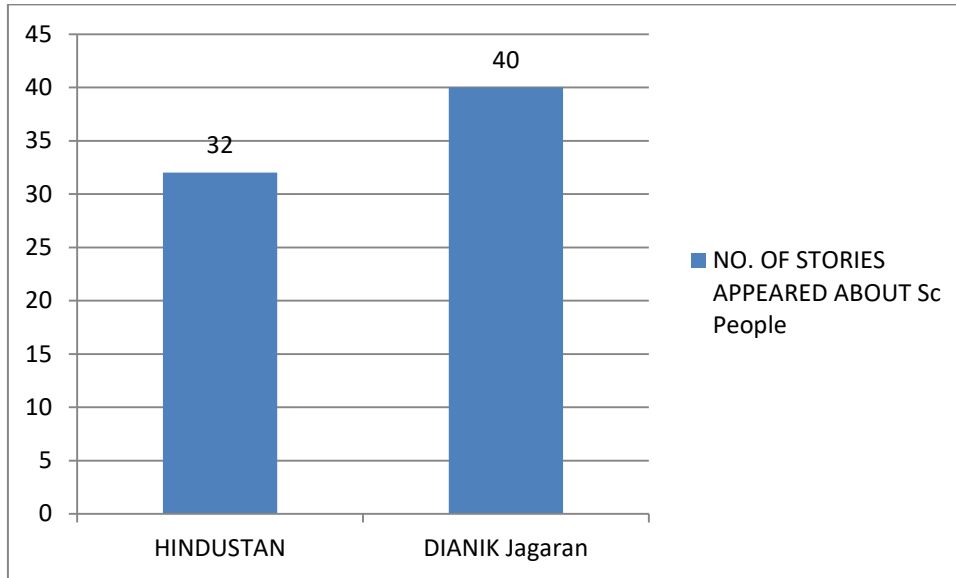


Fig-1: No. Of Stories Appeared About Sc People

Way of presentation of stories about Schedule caste people was categories in five groups and it was found that Schedule caste people are mostly pictured as victims of crime or some situation as 15 stories out of 32 published in Hindustan during the period depicted

them as victims of crime or some situation. Eight out of thirty two stories depicted them as beneficiaries of government schemes implemented by administration, bank or NGOs.

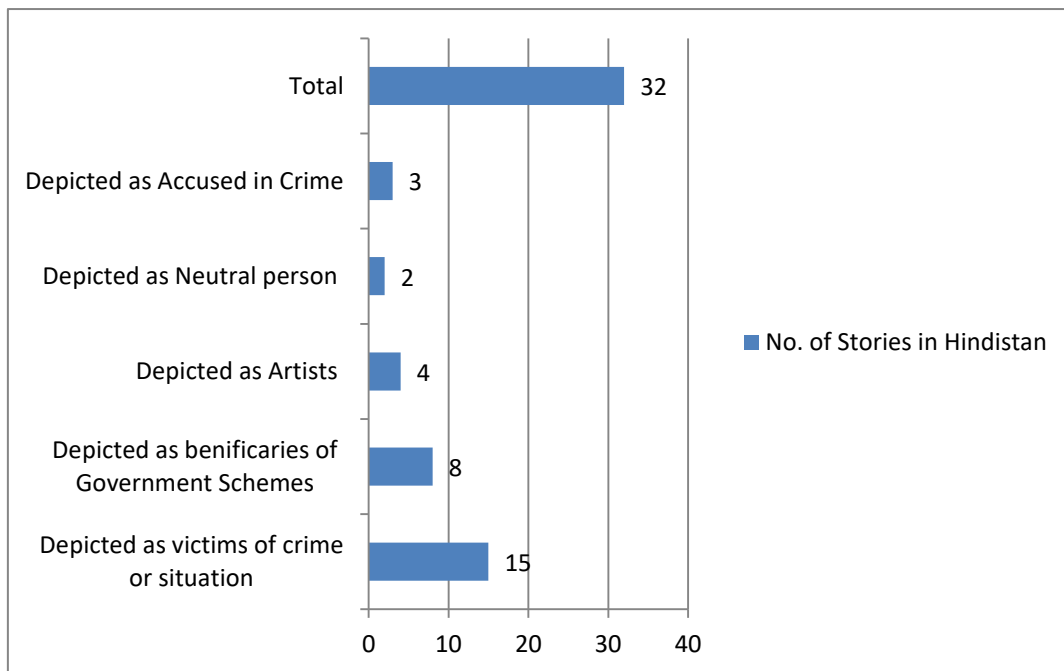


Fig-2: Nature of Stories in Hindustan

Similar picture appears in Dianik Jagaran also as 18 out of 40 stories published depicted them as victim of crime and situation. Ten out of 40 represent

them as beneficiaries of government schemes. In five stories they are accused in a crime.

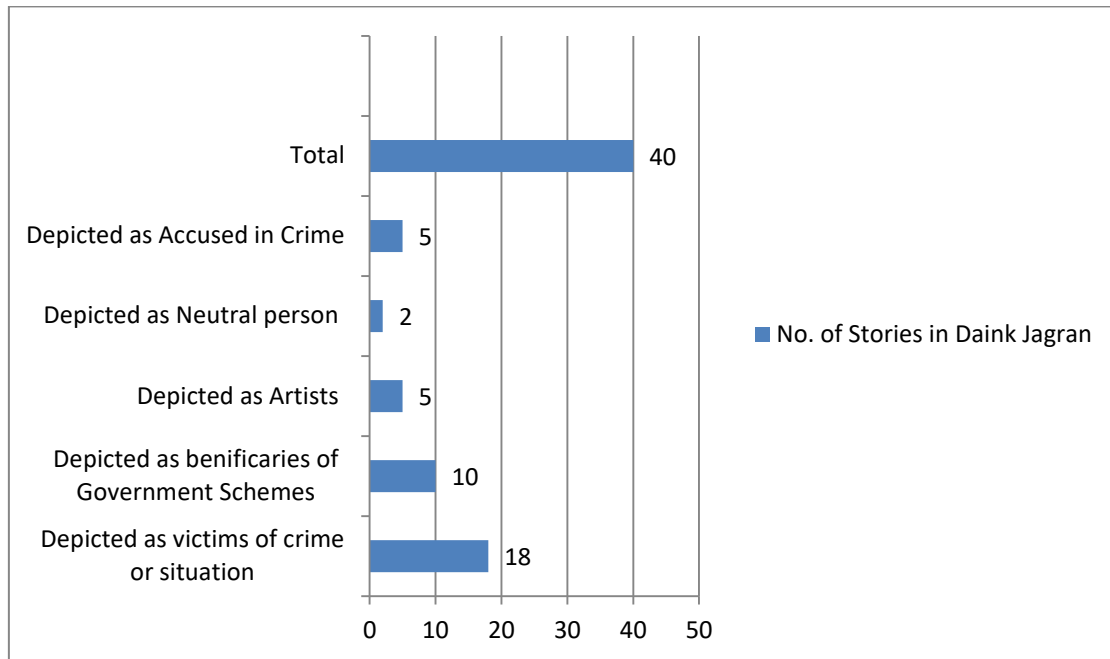


Fig-3: Nature. of Stories in Dainik Jagran

To know the importance given to stories based on the placement of stories on pages of the newspaper. It was found that most of the stories published on regional pages in both newspapers. Dainik Jagaran published only 2 stories and Hindustan also published two stories about Schedule caste people on front page

during the study period. Editorial regarding the causes of schedule caste people is also neglected in both the papers. Dainik Jagran published only two times while Hindustan published it once in whole three months period.

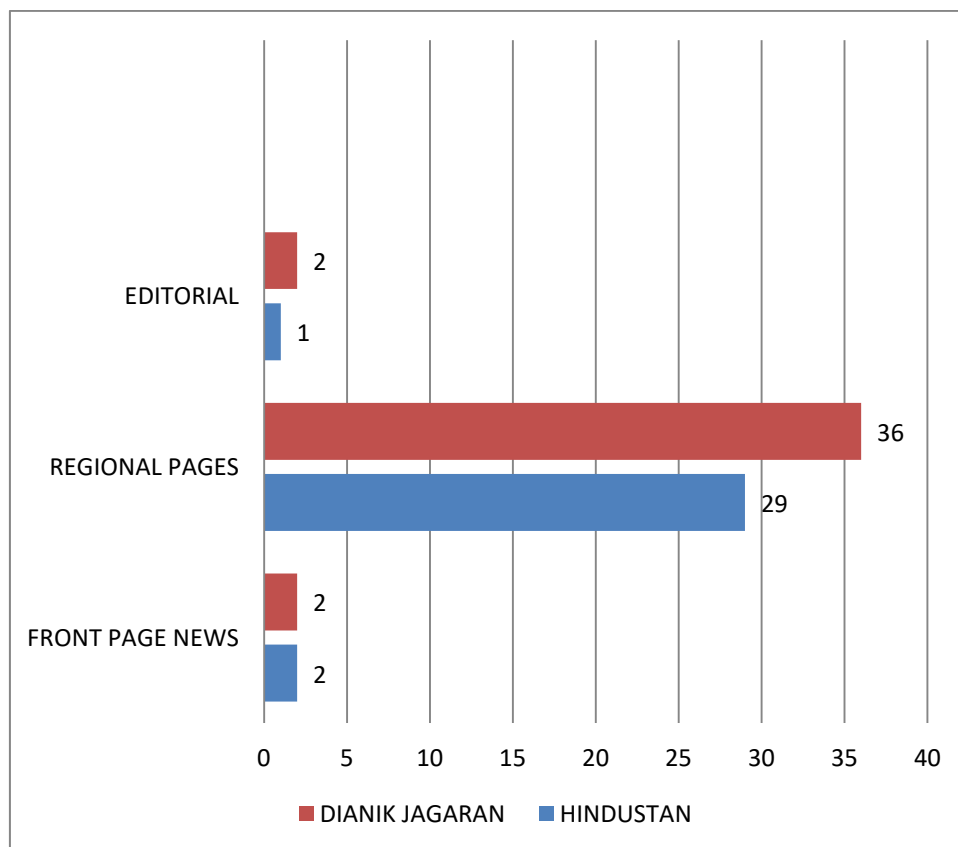


Fig-4: Importance Given To News Related To Sc People

Conclusion

The above study shows that presentation of news related to schedule caste people is much less in comparison to their percentage in population. Less than 3% space is provided to the stories of schedule caste. This shows that media is not concerned about the problems of majority people and still follows the concepts of elite media. Besides this the type of story coverage indicates them as victims of crime, situations, bureaucracy and accidents. The stories related to them seldom see the face of front pages and they are limited to the regional pages only. Similarly the editors are not concerned to publish their views or opinion about the causes of this section of society.

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