



PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF REPORTERS

(A Comparative Study of Rural & Urban Areas in Telangana State)

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ABSTRACT

Journalism is a vital profession that significantly influences public opinion on a wide variety of topics. Journalists working in the media space offer their services to society by reporting on events and issues that impact people's lives. This study focuses on the challenges journalists face in rural and urban areas of Telangana. A survey-based study was conducted using a questionnaire designed to explore the demographics, challenges, and problems experienced by reporters in these areas. The data, analyzed using SPSS, revealed that 53.8% of respondents face pressure from politicians and local administrators (17.5%), while 56.7% reported physical attacks during their work. Two-thirds (65.6%) indicated experiencing verbal abuse, and 54.9% of the physical violence was attributed to politicians. Based on these findings, the study recommends stringent action against political interference to ensure journalists have the freedom to report accurate and impactful news for better public understanding of national, regional, and local issues.

Keywords: Problems, Challenges, Reporters, Physical Attacks, Verbal Attacks

1. INTRODUCTION

Journalists and reporters often face numerous obstacles that make it difficult to report freely and securely, especially in hostile areas. Recognizing these challenges and developing strategies to address them enables media professionals to navigate their roles while maintaining journalistic integrity. Addressing physical threats, combating intimidation, understanding legal constraints, prioritizing digital security, managing trauma, and finding alternative information sources are essential to ensuring quality journalism in challenging environments.

Media is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy worldwide. In any democratic government, three branches—the Executive, the Parliament, and the Judiciary—are essential for effective governance. Media, considered an equally important body, monitors these three branches and fosters a healthy democracy.

Namra (2005), editor of *Charkha*, emphasized that in a country like India, where numerous developmental issues need attention, the media can highlight the challenges faced by grassroots workers. Similarly, Ninan (2004) noted that newspapers often prioritize market growth over the quality of public discourse. In electronic media, the representation of rural issues remains inadequate, as observed by Murthy and Das (2011). A 2013 report from the Rural Media Network Pakistan identified the lack of security for rural journalists as a major challenge, with neither authorities nor media organizations offering adequate protection.

Given the importance of journalists' safety, this research investigates the perceptions and realities of rural and urban journalists in Telangana, focusing on their challenges and problems.

Objectives:

- (a) To identify the problems faced by rural and urban reporters.
- (b) To examine physical and verbal attacks, as well as violence involving rural politicians/officials.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Costa Antonio (2023) highlighted the various challenges journalists face, including physical threats, intimidation, legal restrictions, and digital security concerns. Addressing these challenges is essential to maintaining journalistic integrity. Thuvarakan and Raguram (2017) discussed issues like working hours, promotions, and gender discrimination, noting that political situations significantly influence media personnel's safety. Rajaram and Iyswarya (2015) emphasized organizational commitment and work-life balance as key factors affecting journalists' job satisfaction.

Thuvarakan and Raguram (2017) discussed security challenges while discussing other challenges like working hours, promotions, service extension, gender discrimination, work freedom. The editors focussed on the fact that and based on the then political situation, personal security of the media personnel was more of a challenge during the war situation. It could be seen that most of the news editors have stated that because of exposing the atrocities it is more dangerous than the other fields. They add that politics influence the security of the media personnel more.

Rajaram and Iyswarya (2015) aimed to bring the problems encountered by the journalists in their walks of life pressure a challenging profession and satisfaction to their job. The findings of the study revealed that organizational commitments, gender inclusive, culture, work life balance and external pressures are highly influenced on job satisfaction of journalists.

Md. Nurus Safa and Tahera Akter (2015) explored challenges faced by women journalists in Bangladesh, revealing issues such as harassment, stereotypical attitudes, and job insecurity as major factors causing dissatisfaction and attrition.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study population comprises reporters and stringers working in various newspapers and TV media in Telangana. Data was collected from rural reporters in Karimnagar district and urban reporters in Ranga Reddy district. A total of 90 samples (27 rural, 63 urban) were analyzed using SPSS to calculate percentages and averages.

4. DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

In the following table the researcher presented the distribution of the respondents on the basis of their gender, age, caste, academic qualification, professional qualifications, experience and income.

Table 1: Demography of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Variable	Rural		Urban		Total		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
1.	Gender	Male	25	(92.6%)	53	(84.1%)	78	(86.7%)
		Female	2	(7.4%)	10	(15.9%)	12	(13.3%)
		Total	27	(30.0%)	63	(70.0%)	90	(100%)
2.	Age (in years)	18-24	2	(7.4%)	7	(11.1%)	9	(10.0%)
		25-31	9	(33.3%)	21	(33.3%)	30	(33.3%)
		32-38	14	(51.9%)	20	(31.7%)	34	(37.8%)
		39-45	0	(0.0%)	8	(12.7%)	8	(8.9%)
		46-51	2	(7.4%)	7	(11.1%)	9	(10.0%)
		>51	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)	0	(0.0%)
		Total	27	(30.0%)	63	(70.0%)	90	(100%)
3.	Caste	OC	4	(14.8%)	15	(23.8%)	19	(21.1%)
		BC	18	(66.7%)	31	(49.2%)	49	(54.4%)
		SC	0	(0.0%)	4	(6.3%)	4	(4.4%)
		ST	5	(18.5%)	13	(20.6%)	18	(20.0%)
		Total	27	(30.0%)	63	(70.0%)	90	(100%)
4.	Academic qualifications	Inter	2	(7.4%)	3	(4.8%)	5	(5.6%)
		UG	15	(55.6%)	28	(44.4%)	43	(47.8%)
		PG	10	(37.0%)	24	(38.1%)	34	(37.8%)
		Ph.D.	0	(0.0%)	8	(12.7%)	8	(8.9%)
		Total	27	(30.0%)	63	(70.0%)	90	(100%)
5.	Professional qualifications	Cer/Dip	14	(51.9%)	21	(33.3%)	35	(38.9%)
		BCJ/BA	9	(33.3%)	24	(38.1%)	33	(36.7%)
		MCJ/MA	4	(14.8%)	18	(28.6%)	22	(24.4%)
		Total	27	(30.0%)	63	(70.0%)	90	(100%)

The study consists of 27 rural and 63 urban reporters and stringers. In this study, majority male respondents participated (rural 92.6%) and (urban 84.1%). Majority rural respondents' age group is 32-38 (51.9%) and urban is 25-31 (33.3%). The BC respondents are more in both the areas, 66.7% from rural and 49.2% from urban. The

highest qualification of respondent is UG, 55.6% are from rural and 44.4% are from urban communities. The rural respondents' professional qualification is Certificate or Diploma (51.9%) and the urban respondents have BCJ/BA qualifications (38.1%).

Problems and Challenges

The district and rural correspondents of the newspapers are supposed to report various issues and events of rural community as a part of their day to day job. The following questions were addressed to the respondents about the most important issues pertaining to of their news collection which they consider to cover and report to their respective newspaper organizations. The reporters of two areas are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Reporters problems

Sl. No.	Name of the Rural district	Problems		
		Yes	No	Total
1.	Karimnagar (Rural)	22	5	27
		81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
2.	Ranga Reddy (Urban)	58	5	63
		92.1%	7.9%	100.0%
	Total	80	10	90
		88.9%	11.1%	100.0%

Source: Field survey.

Majority of the rural reports from both the areas replied as 'yes' and the percentage is nearly 90.0%. A great majority (81.5%) of the rural respondents from Karimnagar district replied that they are facing problems while collecting the news from rural areas. Further, more than ninety per cent i.e., 92.1% of the Ranga Reddy district reporters also expressed the same opinion on the problems while collecting news. The table clearly shows that most of the rural reporters agreed that they are facing variety of problems compared the urban reporters.

Problems and Pressures with Various Types of Peoples in the Society

In continuation to the above, the researcher asked further question from whom they are facing the problems. Based on this, the replies of the respondents are presented in the following table.

Table 3: Problems & Pressures faced in the Society

Sl. No.	Name of the Rural district	Type of Person					Total
		Politician	Local Administrators	Extremists	Local mafia	Police	
1.	Karimnagar (Rural)	12	4	1	3	2	22
		54.5%	18.2%	4.5%	13.6%	9.1%	100.0%
2.	Ranga Reddy (Urban)	31	10	2	9	6	58
		53.4%	17.2%	3.4%	15.5%	10.3%	100.0%
	Total	43	14	3	12	8	80
		53.8%	17.5%	3.8%	15.0%	10.0%	100.0%

Source: Field survey.

The respondents were asked a question from whom you are getting problems and pressure in collecting the rural news. Out of 90 respondents 80 of them were responded to this. A greater number of the respondents from both the rural districts are expressed that the politicians 43 (53.8%), 14 (17.5%) local administrators, 3 (3.8%) of extremists, 12 (15.0%) local mafia and 8 (10.0%) of police personnel getting problems and pressures. Similarly, among 27 respondents from Karimnagar district only 22 were answered. Among them, 12 (54.5%) respondents stated that they are getting pressures from politicians, 4 (18.2%) of them stated from local administrators, 1 (4.5%) respondent from extremists, 3 (13.6%) respondents from local mafia and 2 (9.1%) respondents from police officials. Likewise, out 58 respondents of Ranga Reddy district who said as 'yes', high number of respondents stated that they are getting problems and pressures from politicians (31, 53.4%) and it is followed by local administrators (10, 17.2%), local mafia 9 (15.5%), police staff 6 (10.3%) and 2 (3.4%) extremists. The findings of the study shows that more than fifty per cent i.e., 53.8% of the respondents are facing problems and pressures from politicians and local administrators (17.5%). The same results can be seen in Karimnagar and Ranga Reddy district with 54.5% and 53.4%, respectively.

Physical Attacks

Harassments, attacks, imprisons and killing many journalists are departing their lives for their commitment to the freedom of expression in rural news collection and they have right in collecting the information that are useful to the rural society. Not only in India but many other global countries facing crimes against reporters/journalists which are not limited. In this regard, the opinions of the reporters are presented in the following table.

Table 4: Physical Attacks

Sl. No.	Name of the Rural district	Physical Attacks		
		Yes	No	Total
1.	Karimnagar (Rural)	14	13	27
		51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
2.	Ranga Reddy (Urban)	37	26	63
		58.7%	41.3%	100.0%
	Total	51	39	90
		56.7%	43.3%	100.0%

Source: Field survey.

A majority (56.7%) of the news reporters of rural community are encountered physical attacks some times that are serious in nature and the remaining are said 'no'. In both the districts, the respondents stated positively for this physical attacks with 51.9% of respondents of Karimnagar district and 58.7% of respondents of Ranga Reddy district. Although crime rate is much lesser in the rural areas comparatively urban areas in Telangana state, but sometimes big incidents like political meetings during elections, murders/robberies take place which need media reporting. It is found that more than fifty per cent of the respondents on the whole (56.7%) and both districts individually (Karimnagar: 51.9% and Ranga Reddy district-58.7%) getting attacked physically while reporting rural news.

Verbal Attacks

Similarly, sometimes the social activists or other persons in the rural community also attack verbally to the reporters using their political or administrative powers. The opinions of the reporters in this regard presented in the following table.

Table 5: Verbal Attacks

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Verbal Attacks		
		Yes	No	Total
1.	Karimnagar (Rural)	39	24	27
		61.9%	38.1%	100.0%
2.	Ranga Reddy (Urban)	20	7	63
		74.1%	25.9%	100.0%
	Total	59	31	90
		65.6%	34.4%	100.0%

Source: Field survey.

Out of 90 respondents, 59 (65.6%) of them answered positively about the verbal attacks and remaining were not. Coming to districts, the Karimnagar district respondents also positively opined with 61.9% and Ranga Reddy district respondents scored with 74.1%. The results of the study found that about 2/3rd of the respondents (i.e., 65.6%) on the whole and 61.9% of Karimnagar district and 74.1% of Ranga Reddy district stated positively.

Physical Violence

In the above tables, whether the rural reporters are facing either physical attacks or verbal attacks from rural society. In continuation to this, it is important to know who behaved physical violence in rural areas and the replies of the reporters are enumerated below.

Table 6: Physical Violence the rural politicians/officials

Sl. No.	Name of the district	Physical Violence				Total
		Politician	Local mafia	Police	Extremists	
1.	Karimnagar (Rural)	7	2	3	2	14
		50.0%	14.3%	21.4%	14.3%	100.0%
2.	Ranga Reddy (Urban)	21	7	6	3	37
		56.8%	18.9%	16.2%	8.1%	100.0%
	Total	28	9	9	5	51
		54.9%	17.6%	17.6%	9.8%	100.0%

Source: Field survey.

The present study consists of 90 respondents, out of which 51 of them answered to this question. Among the majority 28 (54.9%) of respondents from both the districts reporters stated that the physical violence mainly from politicians. Nine respondents (17.6%) stated that they are facing physical violence from each of local mafia and police personnel. Below ten per cent of the respondents stated that they are facing physical violence from extremists also. In Karimnagar district, out of 14 respondents 7 (50.0%) of them facing physical violence from

politicians, 2 (14.3%) of them from local mafia, 3 (21.4%) of them from police and 2 (14.3%) of them from extremists. The respondents of Ranga Reddy district also facing physical violence from politicians with 56.8%, 18.9% of them from local mafia, 6 (16.2%) of them from police and 3 (8.1%) extremists. The study concludes that majority (54.9%) of the politicians attacking physical violence on rural reporters and it is also found that individual districts also facing the same physical violence from politicians.

5. FINDINGS

- The results of the study regarding challenges and problems, nearly 90% of them facing variety of problems compared the city reporters.
- The results states that more than fifty per cent (53.8%) of the respondents are facing problems and pressures from politicians and local administrators (17.5%). In this regard, the problems of Karimnagar and Ranga Reddy district are 54.5% and 53.4%, respectively.
- Findings of the study indicates that about fifty per cent of the respondents (56.7%) and both districts individually (Karimnagar: 51.9% and Ranga Reddy district-58.7%) getting attacked physically during rural reporting.
- The study found that about 2/3rd of the respondents (i.e., 65.6%) on the whole and 61.9% of Karimnagar district and 74.1% of Ranga Reddy district stated positively with regard to verbal attacks.
- Majority (54.9%) of the politicians attacking physical violence on rural reporters and the views of both the districts respondents are alike regarding violence.

6. DISCUSSION

The present study focused on challenges and problems of reporters and stringers. Nearly ninety per cent of the rural reporters facing variety of problems compared the city reporters. More than fifty per cent of the respondents are facing problems and pressures from politicians and local administrators. Above fifty five per cent of the respondents, both districts of the study area individually, getting attacked physically during rural reporting. The study found that about 2/3rd of the respondents stated positively with regard to verbal attacks. Majority of the politicians attacking physical violence on rural reporters and the views of both the districts respondents are alike regarding violence. These results of the present study supported by the previous studies. We all of know that the killing of three journalists shivered the country and brought the journalistic fraternity in India to demand safety of journalists. Jagendra Singh in 2015, Rajdev Ranjan in 2016 and Gauri Lankesh in 2017, these three journalists reported on politics, crime and corruption and the investigations in each case indicated the involvement of an upset political dispensation. The journalist accused Ram Murti Singh Verma, a member of the then ruling Samajwadi Party (SP), for targeting and threatening him for revealing his alleged involvement in cases of land encroachment and corruption. On Facebook, Singh had also posted about the minister being accused of rape, a case reported in Hindi-language media as well (Jagran, 2015, May 28). Victor Asal et al. (2016) found that a “robust support for the idea that a better quality of governance lowers the risk for journalists”.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Most of the rural reporters are facing number of problems compared to urban reporters, mainly from politicians and local administrators and both the districts are competing each other. In addition, while they are delivering their responsibilities, the rural reporters getting attacked by the said lawbreakers with physical and verbal attacks. The opinions of the respondents of both the districts are same. It is suggested that the government should take stringent action against political mafia to report more qualitative and quantitative news for better presentation to the nation.

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