

An Analytical Report on Media Content from Gender Perspective



Freedom Forum



2016

Background

Monitoring media under the themes of freedom of expression and press freedom violations is a regular activity of Freedom Forum for long. Despite doing regular monitoring of press freedom violations, there were various issues left, which actually had to be brought to fore. FF had not encompassed issues of gender equality in Nepali media, though cherished for long. At a time when the country has witnessed growing advocacy for equal participation of men and women in any sector for functional democracy, FF got financial support from the Free Press Unlimited (FPU), a foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, working on freedom of expression issues across the world, to boost this long cherished activity- monitoring of media content based on gender perspective. With the constant guidance of FPU team and application of FPU's tool, FF carried out this monitoring from October to December 2016, which has obviously added new dimension to our regular media monitoring. However, with the monitoring, it is astonishing to find the fact that gender discrimination is prevalent in Nepali media. It is an integral part of the project- **Support to Enable Environment for Freedom of Expression in Nepal** funded by FPU, 2016.

This report presents an outcome of the assessment on women's participation in the Nepali print media as news source, news actors and news reporters. It also encloses topic wise distribution of main news, categories of news highlighting inequality and challenging stereotypes of women. The study revealed that only 13.4% female are news writers among total 247 journalists.

Key Points

- ❖ Among total 700 news scanned during the study period, 345 news didn't specify name (sex) of journalist.
- ❖ 13.4% female reporters and 10.7% female sources were quoted in the newspapers.
- ❖ 18.52% females report on social and legal issues whereas only 48.15% report on political issues.
- ❖ Overall, news on the political and governmental issues was found dominant.
- ❖ Only 45 news stories among total highlighted inequality and warranted further analysis on gender perspective.

- ❖ Comparatively, Annapurna Post revealed maximum female in byline and as news sources.
- ❖ The data revealed poor representation of women's opinion in the politics, government and other development activities regardless of their growing participation in politics and bureaucracy in present context.

Methodology

Freedom Forum conducted weekly monitoring of five National dailies namely: three Nepali medium (Kantipur, Commander Post, and Annapurna Post), and two English medium (The Himalayan Times and Republica). First, the contents from five national dailies were scanned and analyzed through gender lenses as how balanced the news are in terms of news source, news reporter, reported news/content etc. These dailies were selected on the basis of their wider circulation, strong public reach and effective journalism.

The monitoring was conducted once in a week with different days in different weeks. Firstly, eight main news from page no- first, second and fourth- were sampled from each newspaper and all those news were scanned to derive variables chosen for the study. Initially, gender of the journalist writing the news was noted, then the whole story was scanned for appropriate sources; either primary (persons) or secondary (reports, data). If the news contained primary source, both the male and female sources were noted, after that, the story was critically observed whether it deals with women issues. On the second phase, all those data were entered into the coding sheet according to the procedures provided by FPU for Gender Content Monitor. Data were again entered into Microsoft Excel for further presentation and comparative analysis. This report is prepared on the basis of the analyses of the data derived from tabulation.

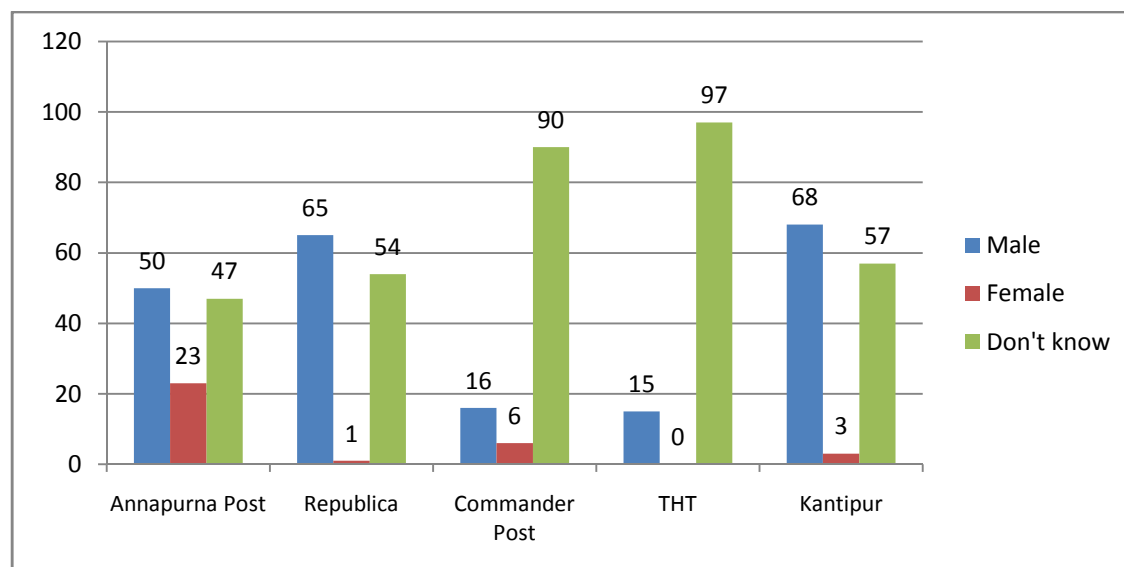
Limitation

The study report does not give a comprehensive picture of women's presence in the selected media. It however observes the news stories (once every week from selected five newspapers, eight news items from each newspaper, totaling 120 from each newspaper during the period of three months- Oct to Dec 2016) in terms of news writer (male, female, undefined in byline), and the news sources. Presence of women in the media house is not incorporated in the report, *but*,

the presence of women in news byline and news source. Similarly, how the women are presented in any news story- stereotypically (submissive, dominated, weaker, traditional role) or not is another point we observed in the particular news stories. The news stories are picked from Page Nos. 1, 2 and 3 or 4.

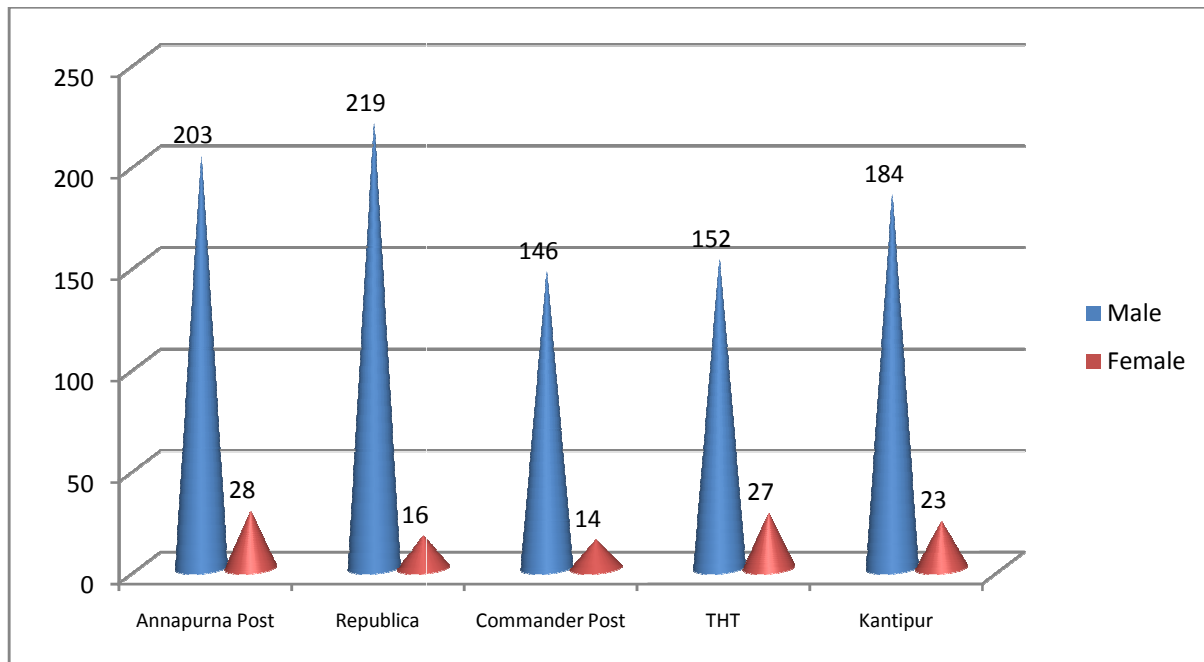
Analysis

1. Journalists (Who are talking in the media)



Data on the sex of journalists on the news monitored depicted dominance of males in all 5 print media. Among the total number of journalists mentioned in the byline excluding those with undefined sex (eg Himalayan News Service, RSS, AP, AFP, Reuter, Kantipur reporter, correspondent, Republica, Commander Post), female in byline was not found in The Himalayan Times (THT) with 100% males in byline, which is followed by Republica (98.5%), Kantipur (95.8%), Commander Post (72.7%). The Annapurna Post contained least- 63.5%. On the other hand, news on Annapurna Post contained 31.5% female journalists followed by Commander Post (27.2%), Kantipur (4.2%), and Republica (1.5%). In most of the news stories of those national dailies journalists' names remained unspecified as shown in the figure. Those with undefined gender were named as: RSS, Himalayan News Service (THT), Reuters, Commander Post, Annapurna, Republica, Kantipur reporter, etc. The data says THT contained maximum number of undefined (no male or female in byline) journalists (86.6%) followed by Commander Post (80.4%), Republica with (45%), Kantipur (44.5%) and lastly Annapurna Post (31.96%).

2. Sources (Who are talking in the stories):



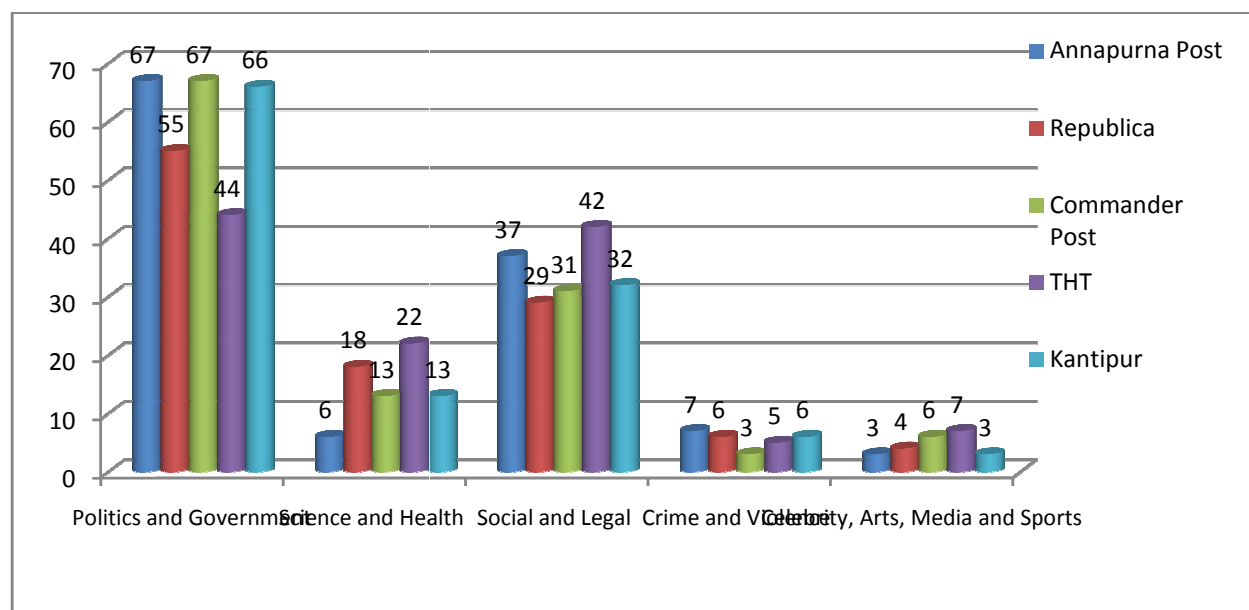
Majority of the male sources were quoted in all newspapers where Republica has the highest value with 93.2% males followed by Commander Post (91.3%), Kantipur (88.9%), Annapurna Post (87.9%), and lastly THT (84.9%). Talking about female actors in the news stories, the highest coverage is found in THT with 15.1% followed by Annapurna Post (12.1%), Kantipur (11.1%), Commander Post (8.8%) and lastly Republica has the least (6.8%).

Data resulted from monitoring shows clear gender discrimination as news actors, experts, media educator, etc. The data revealed poor representation of women's opinion in the politics, government and other development activities regardless of their growing participation in politics and bureaucracy in present context.

3. Topic wise distribution

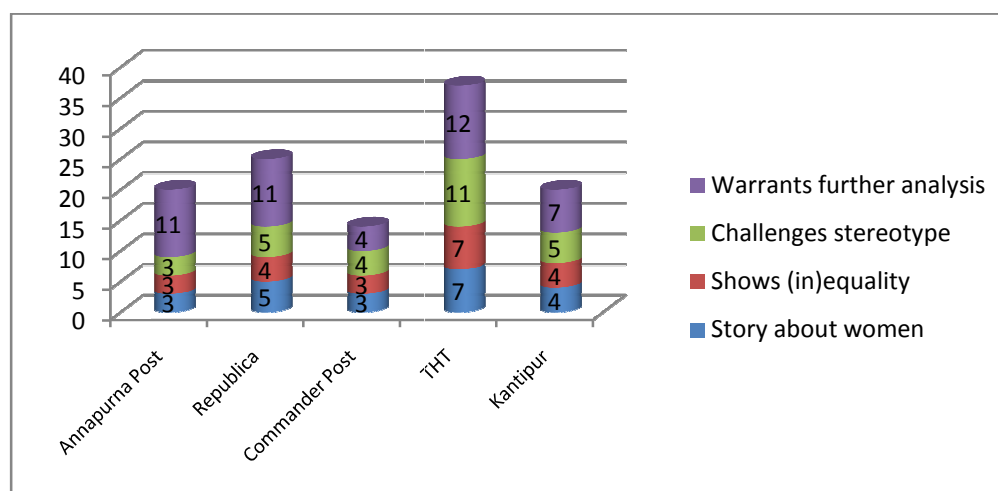
News on the political and governmental issues was found dominant. As per the coding list of topics provided by FPU most of the stories on main new pages came under the Politics and Government followed by Social and Legal, science and health, crime and violence and lastly the celebrities, arts, media and sports. On the basis of news coverage, the Kantipur daily published political news 55% of the total which is still less than that published by Annapurna Post and

Commander Post, i.e. 55.8%. This may be due to placement of advertisements even on main news pages in the Kantipur daily.



Similarly, the Annapurna Post and the Commander Post covered maximum (55.8%) news about politics and government and remaining on other themes followed by Kantipur (55%), Republica (45.8%) and the Himalayan Times 36.7%. The least contents were found under the topic Celebrities, Arts, Media and Sports in Kantipur, Annapurna Post and Republica; whereas, those in Commander Post and The Himalayan Times were found under Crime and violence. Some of the news which did not exactly fit in to the coded topics were included under others and described in the comment box of the coding sheet as per instruction.

4. Analysis of the gender based story



Despite being quoted in some major stories on political negotiations, dialogues, social behaviors, etc. lack women's suggestions, feedbacks and opinions. Hence, besides the stories about women, those which lack women's involvement and emphasize more on men's quotes were also coded under **warrants further analysis** column.

On those bases, 55% news stories from Annapurna Post, 28.6% from Commander Post, 32.4% THT, 44% from Republica and 35% from Kantipur warrant further analysis. Among the total, only 3, 5, 3, 7, 4 news from Annapurna Post, Republica, Commander Post, THT, and Kantipur respectively were about women in the lead role. In some cases, even though stories challenged stereotype, they did not warrant analysis, as for example: news on women president in Nepal, speaker of Parliamentary House, issues of women politicians.

5. Stories those highlight (in) equality and warrant further analysis:

On the basis of the stories observed through gender lens, some of the major stories underlined as those which warrant further analysis have been highlighted below:

Headlines:-

Three human trafficking suspects held (The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu, December 18)

The story is based on trafficking of financially disadvantaged women as a market commodity by luring them into going to Kuwait and Oman where they would suffer physical and mental torture and sexual violence. It shows how men misguide poor illiterate women and make their earnings by selling them. Hence, the news clearly perpetuates stereotype and highlights inequality as well.

Girls more susceptible to domestic violence (Republica, Jhapa, December 18)

This is a story about domestic violence against women and girls existing in the several rural areas of Nepal. Reporter says: theme of this year's Human Rights Day was centered on ensuring safe environment for women and girls at home and also concludes from different discussions on the program that domestic violence is the most rampant form of violence that females and children have to suffer from. Inclusive of various examples of murder, rape and sexual abuses, the news also reveals data from INSEC report stating children were more vulnerable to violence even at their home. For instance, during political unrest, natural disasters- numbers of such

abuses tend to raise as a result of affected social security- mentions the news story. Thus, the news clearly highlights inequality and stereotype.

15-year old girl dies in *Chhaupadi* Shed (Kantipur, Achham, December 18)

The story does perpetuate stereotype and shows high inequality as well where women are forced to reside in the shed during their menstruation (called *chhaupadi* in local dialect especially in the mid- and far western region of Nepal). News is about a ninth grader undergoing third day of her menstruation who died of suffocation in the shed at night. It depicts brutal image of society which forces menstruating women and girls out of the home excluding family members to stay in a shed with poor ventilation. The news also brings forth the traditional mindset of families about women's periodical cycle due to which they are still suffering.

Major parties supporting 'Threshold' (Annapurna Post, Kathmandu, October 6)

In this story, no women's opinions have been included. It's not even identified whether they have agreed to this context or not. Hence, despite representation of women in major political parties absence of their opinions in the news draws inequality in the news story.

Program oriented for 'Safety measures taken by Pregnant Women' (Commander Post, Kathmandu, November 13)

This story focuses on the present situation of conceiving and delivering a baby compared to the past. It also explains about health care facilities and practices related to pregnant mothers during ante-natal and post-natal period. Hence, the news is completely focused upon the women's perspective as a whole.

Quake victims in Laharepauwa Camps brace for another winter tents (Republica, Rasuwa, November 13)

The story is about miserable lives of earthquake victims under makeshift tents. In this story, it consists of picture with women faces and also highlights a women voice in regard to difficulties being faced while living under the tent during shivering cold. To this context, story signifies equality to produce equal participation as news actors.

Proposed amendment lets naturalized head constitutional bodies (Republica, Kathmandu, November 6)

This story contains maximum numbers of male source but lacks female sources. In the story about amendment of Nepal's Constitution, despite having significant numbers of women MPs absence of women's' opinions and statements is a remarkable issue thus highlighting inequality. Hence, the story has been selected under warranting further analysis.

NC was not informed at all (The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu, October 20)

This story is a politics based news where both male and female politicians participated in a meeting held to discuss on impeachment motion registered against Chief of anti-graft body. But the news lacks any women's statements regardless of 4 male quotes. This signifies story highlighting inequality.

Man arrested for attempting to murder ex-wife (The Himalayan Times, Bhaktapur, October 6)

This story is about a husband's multiple attempts to kill his ex-wife. The woman quoted as his ex-wife says she divorced him because of continuous severe torture after marriage. However, end note of the news which informs that the woman has been running a workshop on her own and parenting her 4 years old daughter challenging a stereotype of a divorced woman.

More women face domestic violence (The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu, November 2)

This news describes a study report on violence against women during the month of September and October. It says: among 54 cases recorded, 57% of the survivors were victims of domestic violence, 23% belonged to age group between 31-45. The report also describes stereotypic nature of women. On the statement-survivors often choose to keep quiet and in 68% cases husbands were the perpetrators of violence. The record also suggested 13% women were subjected to physical torture, 5% suffered mental torture, 5% were raped and 4% were sexually abused and accused of witchcraft. This clearly highlights the inequality existing in the society.

Pushpa Basnet: From CNN Hero to Superhero (Republica, Kathamandu, December 12)

This story is about a Nepali social worker Pushpa Basnet being honoured with the Super Hero award. The story clearly imposes on challenging stereotype of a woman; and her deeds. She is a single woman working for the welfare of children obliged to stay with their parents inside prison. She had been honored with CNN Heroes in 2012. The news absolutely challenges stereotype and is worthy of further analysis. She bagged the award amongst her competitors.

Citizenship issue should be resolved soon, says former minister Basnet (The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu, December 12)

This story shows the inequality existing among male and female in Nepal. As, male can easily get citizenship even though he gets married to a foreigner. But in case of the female, they are deprived of getting citizenship easily. News includes lamentation of a woman saying: she could not get citizenship after getting married to an Indian and thus, could not provide birth certificate to her two daughters. Similarly, in another case a boy could not get citizenship in mother's name because she was married to an Australian but has been living in Nepal since long. Hence, the story not only perpetuates the stereotype but also highlights inequality. Overall, it shows the challenges these women have been faced.

Alopalo School (Kantipur, Bajhang, December 13)

The story is based on early/child marriage where both husband and wife attend their school one by one. This depicts female children's restraints to manage both education and household works together. Besides those, early pregnancy is also the major disturbing issue. News also describes problems of young mother after delivering child that they are sometimes compelled to leave school. This shows the challenges of women as stereotype and the inequality, they have to bear.

Speaker in bid to end house obstruction (The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu, December 7)

The story focuses on the issues of obstruction in the proceeding at the Parliamentary house. Where, almost all the leaders from different political parties were gathered. At the same time, it doesn't contain any women's perspective or opinion. Thus, it shows inequality as well.

Troublesome life abroad for migrant workers (Kantipur, Jahel (Syria Border), Nov 6)

This story is based on a women, who has died in Illam and her family were not able to get her dead body for whole three months. This story is about women and the problems her family has to face in order to get her dead body.

International Day of Women Human Right Defenders observed (THT, Kathmandu, November 29)

The story is based on the International Day of World Human Right Defenders. The story shows the victimization of women because of the state and its mechanism which were not correctly issued. In addition to this, this story also denotes that highlighting women's achievement never comes out in focus. It shows challenges faced by women due to discriminatory social structure and state mechanism.

A teenage girl captured to force marry (Annapurna Post, Mahottari, December 3)

This story is about a girl who is just in her teens and was forcefully sent to stay at a boy's home for the boy had allegedly have affair with her. In addition to compensation to both families, village committee forced the girl to stay at his home even before marriage. Nonetheless, the girl was rescued later but such act of violence and forceful early marriage pictures horrible status of the female in Nepali society even in this 21st century. This presents the stereotypical notion of that family and our society as well.

‘I want to become a model’, Tarkaliwali

This story is about a teenage girl whose picture went viral on social media. The news explains: Kusum, who hailed from hilly village of Wangilang of Bhumlichok-8, Gorkha district, was herself amazed to learn that her pictures had gone viral on the internet. She came in the limelight and expressed her desire to become a model in future. This is a typical story of a woman who has her own dreams, which are far from her reality. Hence, the story challenges stereotype as well as highlights equality in context to the opportunity media has provided to the farmer's daughter.

Enraged parents manhandle teacher (The Himalayan Times, Lalitpur, November 14)

The issue is focused on a teacher (Diwakar Shrestha) who abused his female student at the school. Around 150 parents came to school to demand the school's officials to punish Shrestha. The story focuses on the sexual harassment of girls in school by their teacher in the name of arranging dresses and identity cards. The news presents how females are prone to violence even in the school. However, victim's family and other parents have raised voice against such hostility which signifies awareness against gender violence.

Women suppress their uterine problems (Kantipur, Kathmandu, December 23)

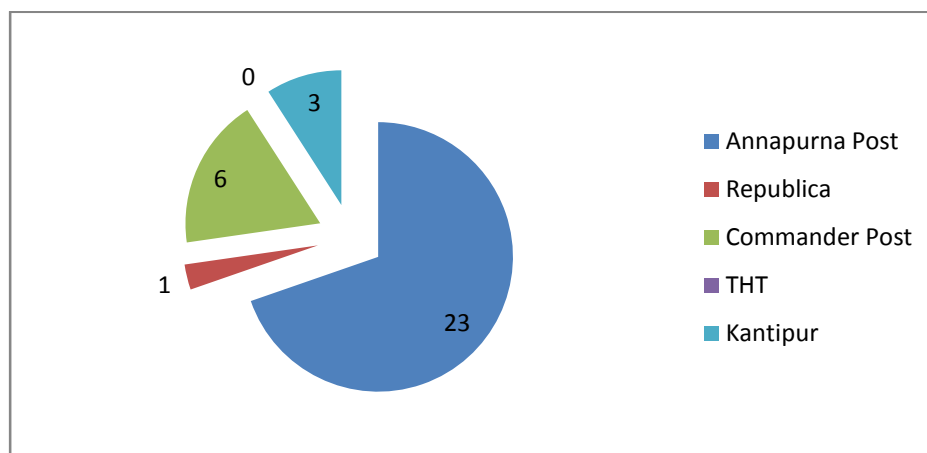
The story is about hesitation and to some extent restrictions of women to discuss about their uterine problems with medical officers. Giving examples of three women suffering from various uterine diseases who visited hospital only after extreme pain, the reporter presents how women are dedicated to their family and household works ignoring own pain. Even after declaration of free treatment, due to the lack of awareness on reproductive health, uterine diseases have become common problem among rural women. Hence, the story perpetuates stereotype and eventually, does highlight inequality.

6. Comparative study of 5 print media

The study found the least participation of women as news actor and writer in comparison to men hence, thorough comparison among selected 5 dailies was felt important.

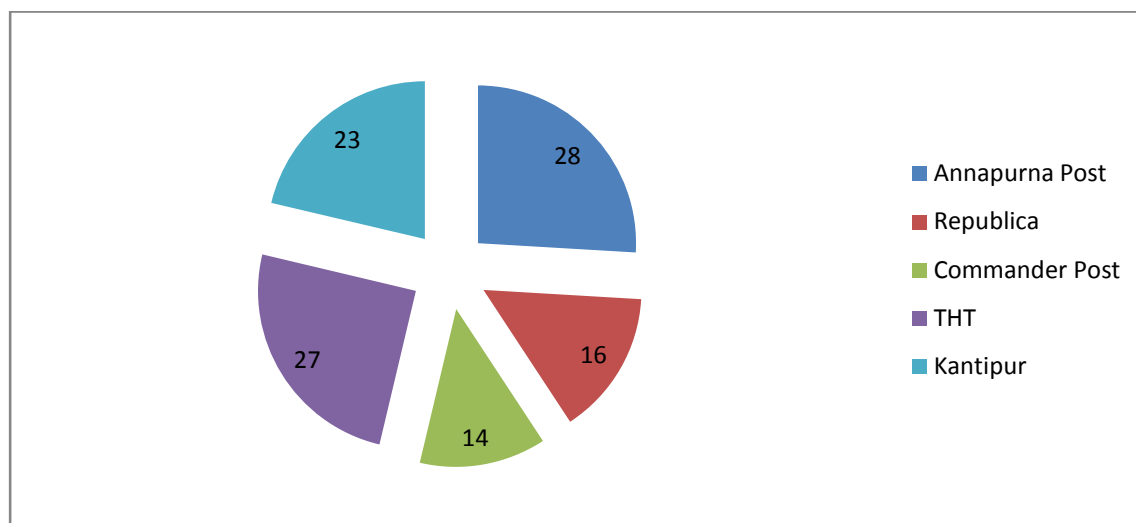
1. Female Journalists in 5 print media

Data showed maximum number of female in byline in the Annapurna Post, while THT failed to show any female in byline.



2. Female news sources

Similarly, in terms of women and girls as news sources, the Annapurna Post exceeded others followed by THT, whereas Commander Post occupies the least position. Out of the total monitored news items, the Annapurna Post wrote news having 28 women sources of the news, while, the THT, which has no female as news writer, stood second by taking news and views from a total of 27 women.



Opportunities and Learning

Media monitoring through gender lenses has not only capacitated Freedom Forum team on the issues but also helped the FF on advocating for increasing females in media. The tool provided by FPU remained very effective to bolster FF's media monitoring adding new dimension to the regular work. FPU team's constant suggestions and guidance made us know the matter clearly and accelerate the monitoring of gender content in five Nepali dailies. Needless to say, this new venture has helped in capacity building of the organization. This sort of monitoring can be replicated in other cross-cutting issues of social inclusion. Wider dissemination of the report would draw concern from the stakeholders. It has been a tool of advocacy for more number of female in media.

Recommendations

- Stories based on social issues should also include opinions from local women and girls,
- Although number of women's participation has been growing in State agencies and political parties, it is quite dissatisfying in media. So, the women in State agencies and political parties can also help create atmosphere for increased participation of women in media,
- As some news depicted horrible gender stereotypes, the concerned State agencies must make concerned efforts to address women issues to bring them (women) to mainstream including in media.
- Whether it is male or female news writer writing on any areas as policy, politics, economics, governance, and social maladies as gender discrimination, he/she should make further efforts to seek women as news sources.
- Female participation should be increased both in reporting, and editing desk
- Reform in the editorial and managerial level in media seems imperative to increase women's participation in media
- The media houses need to formulate gender policy and implement strictly to ensure more number of women in their respective media.

Conclusion

Study revealed meager representation of women in Nepali print media. Among total 700 news scanned, only 45 highlighted (in)equality and warranted further analysis on gender perspective. Women journalists and sources comprised only 13.4% and 10.4% respectively. Overall, news on the political and governmental issues was found dominant. Among total 33 female journalists, only 18.52% reported on social and legal issues whereas 48.15% reported on political, on crime and violence and on science and technology. Similarly, Nepali news media focused more on political issues than social issues; which may also be due to swinging politics in Nepal. Among five vernacular dailies, Annapurna Post revealed maximum inclusion of female in byline and as news sources. The report should serve as a wakeup call for the print media how they should take women issues (for news story, as news writer and as news sources) and ensure more number of their participation in media.

