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### The Climate Narrative and its Custodians: A Review of Environmental Journalism, Public Awareness, and Press Vulnerabilities

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#### Abstract

Through a variety of media platforms, including print, web, and broadcast, this review article examines the vital role that journalism plays in increasing environmental awareness and shaping public attitudes of climate change and environmental sustainability. The study investigates how media coverage impacts public opinion, especially in light of key geopolitical situations like India's G20 leadership, by evaluating case studies from Tanzania, Nepal, Nigeria, India, and the ASEAN region. Additionally, the study identifies important structural issues that environmental journalists encounter, from a dependence on limited sources

of information to serious institutional and personal barriers. Importantly, UNESCO's latest worldwide research highlights a concerning increase in violence and intimidation directed towards reporters covering environment related issues. The effectiveness of environmental journalism is seriously endangered by both practical challenges and growing safety concerns for reporters worldwide, even while media platforms are essential for promoting public engagement with climate issues.

**Keywords:** Environmental Journalism, Climate Change, Media Studies, Journalist Safety, Sustainability Narrative

#### 1. Introduction

This paper compiles recent research and shows how media outlets might impact public opinion and policy conversations on climate change in order to explore the multiple realities of contemporary environmental journalism. It also looks into the institutional hurdles and safety difficulties that threaten the journalists who are responsible for presenting this crucial information. This study seeks to present a detailed analysis of the media's capacity to promote environmental literacy by reviewing case studies from across the world, in contrast to the rising threats to press freedom in the ecological domain.

#### 2. Challenges faced by Environmental Journalists

The study titled, 'The Role of Journalism in Promoting Environmental Awareness: A Content and Comparative Analysis of Media Platforms' studies the effectiveness of reporting in print, online, and broadcast media, which explores journalism's role in raising environmental awareness <sup>[1]</sup>. The study finds important themes and storytelling techniques through content analysis. For journalists, media outlets, and legislators looking to use journalism to promote sustainability, these findings offer insightful information. Each communication channel's effectiveness in raising environmental awareness is influenced by its unique features. The findings support the body of research that has shown digital media to be the best medium for engaging and reaching a broad spectrum of consumers through timely updates and interactive content as compared to print and broadcast media. Print media, despite being traditional and narrowly focused, provides in-depth analysis that supports informed decision-making and thorough comprehension while broadcast media effectively tells important stories through visual storytelling despite the constraints imposed by format, confirming earlier research on the medium's capacity to simplify complex themes. When covering environmental concerns, journalists face a number of difficulties, including limited resources, editorial constraints, and the complexity of environmental topics. The body of existing work has demonstrated that these difficulties may lead to the use of sensationalism or simplified reporting. The need for journalists to strike a balance between accuracy and comprehensibility when working under tight deadlines and with limited access to scientific information is a topic of continuous discussion in environmental journalism studies. Furthermore, as recent study has highlighted, journalists must constantly

update themselves about the dynamic and changing nature of environmental issues. This study emphasizes the vital function of journalism in raising environmental awareness through a range of storytelling techniques and methods across media channels and offers new insights on how different media forms may be used to enhance environmental reporting by analysing the distinct benefits and limitations of print, web, and broadcast media. In order to improve the quality and impact of environmental journalism and develop more informed and engaged citizens, it is imperative that the challenges faced by journalists be overcome. The study concludes that future studies should investigate these challenges, take regional and cultural variations into account, and look at the function of new media platforms. To improve environmental reporting and promote an informed and proactive society, effective cooperation between journalists, media organizations, legislators, and the general public is crucial.

An investigation on the perceived difficulties faced by environmental journalists in Nepal, looked into organizational and individual obstacles in successfully covering environmental issues [2] It emphasizes the effects of global trends, such as dependence on foreign news, restricted editorial autonomy, and particular difficulties encountered within Nepal, based on in-depth interviews with ten journalists. The study shows how changes in the media landscape and financial limitations make it difficult for journalists to carry out in-depth research, which has a direct effect on the calibre and scope of environmental news coverage. The article reviews the impact of NGOs and INGOs on news topics and content, which might limit journalistic independence, using the hierarchy of influence paradigm. The results point to a decrease in environmental news coverage that can be linked to time restrictions and the shift to online media, which is made worse by shrinking role of environmental journalists due to the downsizing of the media industry. This study highlights how environmental journalism is changing in Nepal and urges more investigation into these issues.

A study conducted on Tanzanian newspaper reporters looks at the sources they use to learn about environmental conservation and the difficulties they have when covering environmental issues [3] The study used a qualitative research design and included journalists from four major newspapers: Daily News, The Guardian, Mwananchi, and Habari Leo. Twenty journalists were chosen for in-depth interviews and content analysis of published articles using a purposive sampling technique. According to the findings, journalists cover stories they publish in newspapers using a variety of sources, including government agencies, environmental conservation organizations, academic experts, community voices, social media, corporate sources, international reports, and their own observations. Their professional hazards include lack of prioritization for environmental news, resource limitations, lack of skills and knowledge, time constraints, low public literacy on environmental issues, limited access to reliable information, and political and commercial pressures. In order to improve environmental reporting, this study emphasizes the need for better journalism education and policy support for journalists. To improve conservation coverage in Tanzania, the study suggests thorough training for journalists, greater understanding of the significance of environmental news,

improved access to a variety of sources, and a supportive media environment.

A study titled, 'A literature review on waste management treatment and control techniques' has employed a structured review approach following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to find, assess, and integrate current publications on refuse handling methods and waste processing techniques [4]. The evaluation procedure included four phases: detection, filtering, qualification, and selection. Pertinent studies were obtained from the Scopus academic database using the keywords ('waste management' or 'waste planning' or 'waste control') and ('treatment' or 'technologies' or 'methods') in the headings, summaries, and key terms. The query was performed from 7 January 2024 to 17 January 2025, resulting in a preliminary count of 811 articles. Only studies that specifically focused on refuse handling processing techniques, methods, and regulation strategies, and were consistent with the aims of the review, were kept. Articles that failed to satisfy selection standards after entire document assessment were omitted. This filtering procedure resulted in an ultimate set of 392 studies, published from 2000 to 2025, which served as the foundation for the in-depth examination and integration presented in the review. The analysis highlights several problems that are strongly connected to the difficulties encountered by environmental reporters in covering waste disposal. The intricate nature of waste processing techniques, including physical, organic, chemical, and heat-based methods, makes it challenging for journalists to precisely understand and reliably convey technical data to the public. Swift developments in innovations such as artificial intelligence, the internet of things, distributed ledger technology, and waste conversion technologies further increase the demand for expert understanding and ongoing education. The analysis also emphasizes difficulties stemming from intricate policy and regulatory structures, including waste disposal rules, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), circular economy initiatives, and global agreements. Reporters frequently encounter obstacles in obtaining trustworthy information, assessing policy execution, and overseeing regulatory adherence. Moreover, insufficient infrastructure, budget limitations, poor governance, and restricted transparency, especially in developing areas, pose challenges to efficient environmental journalism.

Dr. D.S. Poornananda's book 'Environmental Journalism: Reporting on Environmental Concerns and Climate Change in India' is reviewed in 'The Green Beat: Exploring India's Environmental Journalism and Climate Change Issues' [5]. The book has significantly advanced media studies, particularly in the field of environmental journalism. Investigative journalists showcase sustainable solutions, expose environmental threats, and elevate the voices of impacted citizens. As watchdogs, journalists advocate for open environmental regulations and encourage involvement from citizens. By bridging the gap between the public and scientific advisors, they serve as change agents, raising people's awareness of environmental issues and promoting a better tomorrow. The extent to which journalists carry out the aforementioned tasks is the topic of Dr. D.S. Poornananda's book. Journalists can use the book as a tool to explain complicated environmental concerns to a variety of

audiences. It can be used by academics who teach environmental communication to instruct students on how media, the environment, and society are interconnected. The book emphasizes how the media shapes environmental narratives, stimulating critical thought and dialogue. By focusing on India, the book also aids in dispelling Western prejudices regarding environmental communication. The book discusses climate change, deforestation, floods, air and water contamination, and an Indian press that is unable to cover these problems because government officials frequently overlook them. The issue is exacerbated by the fact that environmental stories are assigned to general reporters who lack the technical expertise and specialized training necessary to cover environmental concerns. The book concludes that good environmental journalism can increase public understanding of the connection between health and the environment.

The study, 'Framing of Environmental Issues in Indian News Channels', examines how top Indian news outlets cover environmental concerns, with NDTV 24x7, WION, and India Today being the focus of the study [6]. The study aims to draw attention to how news outlets report and present the news they broadcast, based on their own perspectives. The study's primary goals were to examine how the selected media outlets frame environmental issues and the difficulties faced by journalists covering the environment.

A wide range of social sciences have been impacted by the study of framing and its significance in social life. The way media outlets display and organize information to influence the public's perception of events, problems, or people is known as 'media framing' [7]. This approach holds that the media creates reality by highlighting some aspects of a problem while downplaying or leaving out others, influencing how viewers view and assess the world. Framing of climate change on the Indian TV news channels CNNIBN and NDTV24X7 revealed a strong correlation between various policymakers, NGOs, news agencies, and scientists with a judgmental frame and news agencies and scientists with an issue frame [8].

Frame Analysis was first used by sociologist Erving Goffman in his 1974 book 'Frame Analysis' [9]. He understood the concept of the frame to refer to the culturally established conceptions of reality that enable people to make sense of things and events. Goffman envisioned frame analysis as a component of ethnographic research that would enable analysts to read discernible portions of social behaviour, or 'strips', in order to comprehend the frames that individuals employ to make sense of the behaviour. For example, in a car advertisement, car driving is framed as a pleasurable activity when it is shown being driven down a beach with appropriate background music. Similarly, individuals perceive reality through a secular or religious frame.

The study used human interest frame, the conflict frame, morality frame, attribution of responsibility frame and economic consequences frame to analyse the framing of environmental issues in Indian news channels. In WION's environmental coverage, the human-interest framing is given about nine minutes of attention. Individual tales of adaptability and perseverance in the face of environmental difficulties are highlighted in this frame. Viewers learn about the daily challenges and victories of people who are directly impacted by environmental issues through personal

tales and real-world examples. Individual sacrifices, such as water-saving practices and initiatives to address concerns like water scarcity, are often emphasized in these narratives. With a duration of roughly thirty-two minutes, the attribution of responsibility frame is covered the most in India Today. The main focus of this framework is to identify and hold accountable the different players who are aggravating environmental issues. The channel closely examines government officials, illicit borewell operators, and other organizations whose activities worsen the environment. By drawing attention to these structural problems, India Today not only educates its readers but also puts pressure on decision-makers to fix these flaws. Furthermore, the channel offers thorough evaluations of governmental regulations and their execution, highlighting the significance of efficient governance and openness in the management of environmental resources. In the conflict frame, lasting for 30 seconds, NDTV 24/7 highlights the antagonistic dynamics between the rival political parties regarding the handling of Bengaluru's water problem. The channel gives viewers insight into the political aspects of environmental issues by thoroughly analysing and covering these opposing viewpoints. This strategy promotes critical discussion about governance and policy solutions in addition to providing information, demonstrating how power struggles and political agendas can affect management and provide solutions to such problems. NDTV 24x7 guarantees that viewers receive a fair viewpoint by presenting opposing viewpoints, enabling them to develop their own sound judgments on the subject. The results of the study showed that NDTV 24x7 has the most coverage of environmental issues, frequently examining human interest perspectives and assigning blame to different players. In contrast to WION, which leans toward more impartial coverage of environmental issues, India Today leads in other frames, such as attribution of responsibility and conflict, offering in-depth assessments.

On the issue of challenges faced by journalists while covering environmental issues, some journalists responded that they took to environmental reporting when they saw the devastating effects of environmental degradation in their area and decided to raise awareness and take action to save the environment. Some were compelled by a strong desire to educate people and motivate others to preserve and restore the planet. Issues like heat waves attributed to global warming, drinking water shortage in urban areas have compelled news channels to allocate more time to environmental coverage. Important facets of environmental journalism's significance in promoting awareness and constructive change were made evident by the study. By highlighting local effects, pushing for solutions, and simplifying difficult subjects, journalists play a crucial role as facilitators. Despite facing obstacles and dangers, their enthusiasm for their work is apparent since they continue to advocate for change in response to environmental issues. The study concluded that in order to raise public awareness, environmental news should be given more importance on news channels, and each channel should have a dedicated time slot for it. With a focus on community vulnerability, news organizations should hire environmental journalists to research and evaluate environmental challenges, demystifying complex scientific data and making it understandable and pertinent to the local audience. The study suggested that despite corporate and governmental

pressure, journalists should provide responsible, fact-based reporting, steer clear of sensationalism, and uphold their independence and integrity. They should encourage sustainable practices and environmental adaptation through the use of multimedia, storytelling, and a solutions-focused approach. Journalists should uphold ethical standards, increase public understanding, link the scientific and political communities to improve policy, hold authorities accountable, and promote environmental awareness and action despite obstacles such as restricted information access and vested interests.

The study titled, 'Claims, Frames, and Blame: Coverage of Climate Change in ASEAN's English-Language Newspapers', looks into how the region's English-language media has reported on environmental issues [10]. The study examines the difference between nations offering print news coverage and whether the coverage exhibits any discernible biases or patterns, the sources and frames used for the coverage. Over a ten-year period (2002–2012), this study found overall environmental coverage tendencies in a number of the English-language publications in the area. As suggested by earlier research, news articles were examined to determine the type of coverage, coding for a number of factors. The findings show that the media switched to using the term 'climate change' instead of 'global warming' since 2006, when the media coverage related to climate change significantly increased. The sources that were most frequently cited with stories were government officials (Claims). There were more 'judgments' about the problem than 'solutions' in the articles (Frames). Lastly, humans were mentioned in certain stories more frequently than just 'nature', even though the majority of publications avoided naming any individual as the cause of climate change (Blame). The study concluded that in order to raise awareness about the 'problems' and 'causes' of climate change and its effects, more input from the scientific community must be incorporated into news reports. However, when reporters are preparing their articles for their local media market, they frequently follow the rituals of their professions and reach out to the usual suspects. As a result, government officials tend to dominate when reporters are drafting stories. When it comes to conversations about climate change, the media's business practices might not always be "in sync" with the demands of the larger global society. It is hoped that as the subject develops, the frequently cited officials will try to provide more precise and comprehensive cures and answers to the climate change problem rather than passing judgment and assigning blame. However, in keeping with the "thematic" vs "episodic" debate of news coverage that has been brought up in earlier studies, reporters must constantly consider the bigger picture, so to speak, of how conditions and events are connected, which in turn will benefit the global community. The study, 'Environmental Journalism: Investigating the coverage of water disruption in mainstream English online news' [11], highlights the issues of widespread deforestation, pollution, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and many other problems, which are not acknowledged by the Indian media. The study discusses some of the potential causes of environmental issues as well as the consequences of how environmental concerns are viewed and for upcoming political action on these issues. Analyses of news coverage trends show that ecological issues are not sufficiently addressed by stakeholder reporting. Longer-term

investigative environmental coverage is hampered by corporate interests, political pressures, and media ownership structures. The study examines how public opinion and policymaking are impacted by the scant coverage of environmental issues, and it concludes with a contemplation of how social media or independent platforms might be able to turn this around. The outcomes of the study highlight the significance of ethical journalism practices and the need for legislative measures that both encourage a greater focus on ecological issues and balance media content in relation to ecological interests. Increasing public awareness of India's environmental issues would need strengthening environmental journalism and strengthening media independence.

The objective of the study 'Mapping the Practice of Environmental News Reporting in News Channels: A Perception Survey of News Channel Media Professionals' [12], is to examine the opinions, attitudes, and factors that influence environmental news coverage in Indian news outlets. The study explores how these factors contribute to environmental journalism in news channels, with a focus on the dynamic link that exists between journalists' personal convictions, their educational backgrounds, and the editorial landscape. The study explores the significance of editorial viewpoints, commercial concerns, and content relevance in order to shed light on the complex dynamics of environmental reporting in India. The researcher used the Gate Keeping theory to support the goals of the study. Gatekeeping refers to the method by which material can be added or removed by a mediator before it reaches an audience [13]. It has been regarded as a theory as well as a normative journalistic role. David Manning White first created the idea in a 1950 paper titled 'The Gate Keeper: A Case Study in the Selection of News in Journalism Quarterly'. White was influenced by the work of social scientist Kurt Lewin, who used the phrase to characterize the groups that might have an impact on food distribution. In media studies, the theory had previously been modified and reshaped in response to changes in media long before digital technology called into question the preconceived notions of multiple theories. The study looked into factors including individual experiences, attitudes, beliefs, educational background, news value, and institutional limits. In order to include members of the media community who were intimately related to environmental journalism, the study used the purposive sampling technique. 100 media professionals between 20 to 55 years, working in news channels were used as participants for the study. The findings showed that environmental journalism is significantly shaped by individual attitudes, educational background, and personal convictions. Journalists' personal values and educational background have a significant impact on how they approach environmental news stories, emphasizing the moral and ethical considerations that they integrate into their work. The study highlighted the importance of content relevance as well as the editor's knowledge and passion for environmental issues while creating news stories related to the environment. The content's relevance and editorial viewpoints have a greater impact on the content than do monetary factors like advertising sales. Journalists' viewpoints on environmental issues are significantly shaped by their academic backgrounds and attitudes, highlighting the ethical aspects of their reporting. The importance of content relevance and

editors' knowledge and enthusiasm for environmental issues were highlighted in this study as crucial components in creating powerful environmental narratives. Additionally, it implied that although financial factors were important, editorial viewpoints and content relevance were more crucial in influencing the calibre and breadth of environmental journalism. By fusing factual data with media knowledge, the study threw light on the complex nature of environmental journalism in India. The outcomes of the study emphasized the need for environmental journalism to take a comprehensive approach that considered the different factors that influence how environmental news is perceived and covered.

The study titled, 'Assessing environmental knowledge among journalists: A study in Bangalore city' <sup>[14]</sup>, examines the degree of environmental awareness among Bangalore-based journalists, emphasizing their comprehension of ecological information, local environmental concerns, and worldwide environmental issues. The media's role in influencing public knowledge and discourse on sustainability is crucial given Bangalore's fast urbanization and environmental problems. 32 journalists from print and electronic media, equally represented by gender, language (Kannada and English), and media type, were surveyed using structured questionnaires in this study. The study looked at how journalists' environmental knowledge is affected by professional and demographic factors like gender, media type, and language. Bangalore's environmental problems have received a lot of media attention throughout the years. Public indignation and legislative actions have been prompted by reports of Bellandur Lake's foaming and burning, the concerning decline in the city's groundwater levels, and deteriorating air quality. In order to demonstrate the effectiveness of group action, media campaigns have frequently emphasized citizen-led projects like waste segregation campaigns and lake revitalization projects. These instances highlight the media's ability to both report on and impact environmental conservation initiatives. The study highlighted that journalists serve as watchdogs, holding government officials responsible for poor environmental stewardship. Their efforts can motivate people to adopt new habits and promote laws that put environment first. The study demonstrated notable disparities in environmental awareness among Bangalore's journalists, with female journalists typically exhibiting higher levels of knowledge than their male counterparts, especially in print media. Male journalists appear to have lower levels of global and ecological awareness due to a significant negative association between gender and knowledge, indicating the necessity for focused interventions. English media journalists demonstrated superior knowledge, particularly in ecology, and exhibited comparatively better understanding of both local and international environmental issues. Another important factor was the language used in the media; English-language media were better at raising environmental awareness. The results of the study pointed to the necessity of enhancing Kannada journalists' environmental literacy in order to close knowledge gaps and guarantee more thorough and impartial environmental reporting on all media platforms. The study concluded that given the complexity and urgency of environmental issues, journalists need a robust understanding of environmental science, policies, and local context. They must be equipped to ask the right questions,

identify credible sources, and report responsibly. In Bangalore, where environmental challenges are intertwined with urban development, journalists must be adept at highlighting the interconnectedness of these issues. By doing so, they can foster a more informed and engaged citizenry, ultimately contributing to the city's sustainable future.

Climate journalism gathers, analyses, selects and presents the information about climate change, its features, factors leading to its development, consequences, and ways of mitigating it <sup>[15]</sup>. This type of journalism distributes this information through professional media channels. Climate journalism is a key source of information, which helps the public to understand climate-related issues and make appropriate decisions based on them. Recent years have brought new changes to the media environment in connection with climate journalism due to economic factors. These changes affected the way how climate information was produced, spread, and used by both the Global North and the Global South audiences. The study presents a comprehensive analysis of the literature concerning both the current situation and changes happening in environmental journalism in the Global North and the Global South. This literature review analyses the impact of emerging digital media, social media, economic constrains, and public relations on the processes of journalism and climate communications. The synthesis of literature focuses on the impact of emerging digital media, social media, economic constrains, and public relations on the processes of journalism and climate communications. Among others, the review reveals some interesting developments in the sphere of climate journalism nowadays. First of all, it proves that the embedding of climate journalism within organizations is undergoing change; namely, experts in journalism become quite scarce and work in difficult conditions, while the emergence of web-born news media and the special platform in climate journalism takes place. The other point revealed is that there are no specialist climate journalists in the developing countries. Secondly, the review proves that the variety of the roles assigned to climate journalists is becoming larger; namely, the "gatekeeping" role changes into "curating" one. Thirdly, it is evident that the relations between climate journalists and their sources undergo change; namely, elites continue to be very important sources, although their composition changes from scientists to different parties. There is also quite a big impact of stakeholder PR on climate journalism.

Environmental journalism is instrumental in forming opinions and policies concerning environmental issues due to heightened awareness about environmental issues among the public. The study, 'Cultivating Public Perception and Policy Initiatives: Understanding the Impact of Environmental Journalism through Focus Group Discussions and Secondary Data Analysis' <sup>[16]</sup> investigates the effects of environmental journalism on the development of public perception and policy concerning environmental issues like climate change and others. Besides, the effectiveness of various media platforms in the dissemination of information and the use of storytelling, advocacy, and participation by the public will be investigated. This study involves a multidisciplinary approach involving focus group discussions and secondary data analysis. Perceptions, awareness, attitudes, and emotions regarding environmental journalism in the focus

groups were analysed using NVivo software. Views of participants about various media platforms that disseminate environmental news such as digital, print, broadcasting, and social media were analysed. Furthermore, secondary data analysis of environmental news stories from the various media outlets was carried out to determine the major frames that media organizations employ in disseminating information. The study reveals that environmental journalism helps shape opinions and decisions, especially concerning climate change and environmental issues. Digital media was seen as more successful than print and broadcasting media in achieving immediate awareness, whereas emotional stories helped develop empathy among the public. Although most participants agreed on advocacy-based environmental journalism, there were issues of bias, sensationalism, and spreading false information in social media outlets. The overall message is that effective environmental journalism can help engage the public and shape informed policies through cooperation between journalists, scientists, and policymakers.

Environmental journalism is an important aspect of informing the people about environmental concerns and creating an awareness about sustainable development. The study, 'Environmental Reporting on Nigerian and Indian Newspapers: A Comparative Study of Factors Influencing Coverage' [17] is a study on the challenges faced by environmental journalists in Nigeria and India in relation to their work in the print media. This study used the comparative approach for conducting structured online interviews for ten practicing environmental journalists from each of the two countries. Moreover, a survey was done for 500 people in Nigeria and another 500 people in India in order to measure the public opinion about environmental journalism in newspapers. The data gathered was analysed. It has been found that environmental journalists in both Nigeria and India have to face similar challenges which include pressure from government departments and public officials, organizations, and individuals. The issue of internal censorship through newspaper owners and editors has also been recognized. It is therefore recommended that environmental journalists undergo training and re-training on scientific and technical aspects of environmental journalism.

Climate change is one of the major environmental problems of our time. Print media has a great influence in raising environmental awareness through disseminating information related to the issue of climate change and shaping opinions on it and policy choices. The study 'Climate Change Coverage in Indian Newspaper: Systematic Literature Review and Analysis' [18], provides a literature review on the contribution of print media in India towards spreading knowledge about climate change science and raising environmental awareness. This paper uses exploratory research design, which involves a review of the literature and analysis of information quality framework of print media and ways in which newspapers, magazines and other print media publish information about climate change. From the analysis carried out in this review, it can be seen that print media has a vital role to play in raising climate change awareness and shaping public opinion on environmental issues in India. The study concludes that newspapers, magazines and other print media have great potential as environmental communication media. Further studies are needed in this area.

The report by the UNESCO on World Press Freedom Day points to the increasing dangers to which environmental journalists across the world are being exposed [19]. The report titled Press and Planet in Danger finds out that 70% of the environmental journalists who were surveyed had either been attacked, threatened or subjected to pressure for their work. According to UNESCO, at least 749 attacks have been carried out against journalists and media organizations covering environmental matters from 2009 to 2023, including physical assault, arrest, online abuse, legal threats, and murder. Over 300 such attacks took place from 2019 to 2023, pointing towards an alarming increase in the threats to environmental journalism. In addition, it was observed that many journalists suffer from censorship and self-censorship because of the threat of being attacked by governments, corporations, and other actors. Women environmental journalists in particular suffer from online abuse. It is highlighted by UNESCO that besides harming journalists, these threats also hinder the public access to accurate environmental and climate information.

The report, 'EJN-Supported Story from India Brightens Prospects for Rural Solar Electrification Efforts, Fellows Dive Deep into the UN Ocean Conference & More' [20] reveals the critical role played by environmental journalism in dealing with urgent problems of sustainability. The highlighted story from India proves the impact that in-depth reporting can have on drawing attention to innovative rural solar electrification efforts and how the renewable energy can be used as the way to improve the life of people living in disadvantaged areas. The report is also notable for pointing to the contribution of the EJN fellowship program that makes it possible for journalists to work on environmental issues on a deeper level, covering events such as the UN Ocean Conference. Thus, it becomes clear how important environmental reporting is for linking local problems with global environment agendas.

### 3. Coverage of Environmental Issues in the Media

The report, 'Trends in the coverage of environment in the news channels', aims to revive environmental awareness and make it a national priority at both the macro and micro levels [21]. Mass media is a trustworthy source for understanding how the media, especially the news media, portrays the environment in their reporting, which is crucial to gaining a precise understanding of the nation's position in analysing environmental concerns. Based on the breadth and depth of news media coverage, this report attempts to represent the issues and priorities at the macro level. TV channels, especially 24-hour news channels, have become the agenda-setters and decision-makers for public policies and priorities due to their recent expansion. The country's growing number of news channels and notable advancements in climate change over the past ten years have raised expectations that the media will approach environmental reporting with renewed zeal. Additionally, a significant increase in environmental coverage in the public media is anticipated due to the numerous initiatives that various government agencies, as well as civic and community organizations, have undertaken to advance the cause. The report highlighted several green programs launched by the channels NDTV, CNN IBN and Zee News. These programs focused on conservation, campaigns, or reducing/ recycling the waste generation. The NDTV-Toyota Green campaign was India's first nationwide

environmental campaign, launched in April 2008. The Greenathon was a 24-hour live fund-raising event that brought people together to donate money to support TERI's Lighting a Billion Lives initiative, which aimed to provide solar power to villages without electricity. This initiative raised over Rs 2.4 crore in pledges, while the 2nd, 3rd and 4th editions helped raise Rs. 3.92 crore, 11 crore and 8.89 crore respectively and funded solar lanterns for over 600 villages benefitting thousands of households. Prior to the telethon, the NDTV network ran a month-long awareness campaign featuring waste-related and other cutting-edge environmental initiatives. A 'Clean the Yamuna' drive on the banks of the Taj Mahal in Agra marked the start of Greenathon 4, NDTV's campaign against plastic trash. The campaign ambassador, Priyanka Chopra, emphasized the need to reduce and recycle because plastic and other garbage were choking the country.

In order to raise awareness and safeguard the environment, Zee Media started the 'My Earth My Duty' campaign in 2010. This multi-city project included awareness camps, rallies, skits, talks, oath ceremonies, painting competitions, and other fun activities throughout India. Over 50 million children responded favourably to the initiative, and they, along with other partners, planted over 1.4 crore trees in more than 1.5 lakh Indian villages and cities. In addition to receiving numerous additional honours, the effort to make such a significant contribution was acknowledged by the Limca Book of Records. It also represented India in the 2012 Rio Earth Summit, a historic accomplishment.

CNN-IBN highlighted 'Saving the Ganga' on World Environment Day, one of the most popular TV programs, which was aired in six regional languages, including History TV 18 India. The 45-day campaign drew attention to how the precious river was dying. The special report from CNN-IBN demonstrated how pollution and dams were destroying the river in each state it flowed through. Journalist Bahar Dutt travelled 2400 kilometres to follow the Ganga River from its source, the Gaumukh Glacier, through five states to the Bay of Bengal, where it emptied into the sea, for this series. In the second series, she travelled the Western Ghats from north to south for six months, meeting the locals who lived in one of the 'hottest hotspots' in the world and documenting the region's distinctive biodiversity for a show called 'Saving India's Western Ghats'. Among other noteworthy honours, this series won the Series (based on Environment and Wildlife) Award in the 7th CMS VATAVARAN 2014 competitive edition. The CMS media centre frequently maintains an eye on major news outlets and believes it is a myth that favourable media coverage influences how various crises turn out. Over the past six years, there has been a significant decline in the coverage of environmental stories during peak hour news broadcasts on major networks. The results and cross-sections of the coverage indicate that the news is mostly focused on the specific or current occurrence of a disaster, if any, in a given year. It was clear that news outlets were not motivated to report on ecological and sustainability issues. The study concluded that the most valuable content on news channels included entertainment, politics, and the majority of commercial ads. The 24-hour news channels either evaluate the soap operas or look for news on localized traffic accidents or celebrity rumours. Maintaining the calibre of news broadcasting requires balancing the news across local, national, and international channels. Viewers are aware of

current events in politics, entertainment, crime, and corruption, but they know relatively little about environmental preservation. Increasing coverage of policy-driven news or environmental issues by news media channels in India is crucial to raising awareness in even the most remote areas of the nation.

In light of India's G20 presidency, the study 'Front-Page Environmental News Coverage and Implications for the Public Sphere: A Study Against the Backdrop of India's G20 Presidency' <sup>[22]</sup>, looks at front-page environmental news coverage in two major national newspapers. In order to comprehend the effects of front-page coverage of environmental issues on the public sphere, the study combined public sphere theory with agenda setting and framing theories. A continuous six-month sample of the two newspapers, spanning 180 days and 360 issues, was subjected to content analysis and frame analysis using a mixed approach. 435 front-page environmental stories in all were found and examined. The results showed that, in contrast to the government's sustainability-focused and eco-centric language during the G20 presidency, front-page environmental reporting in the tested newspapers focused on the serious environmental challenges affecting the nation. The most prominent topic was the weather, which was followed by pollution. Problematizing weather events as a concern for the public was aided by the front page's emphasis on extreme weather and uncommon weather patterns.

However, limitations in inclusive and logical discussion of environmental issues were revealed by the disproportionate dominance of weather and pollution, an over-reliance on routine sources, a lack of representation of source categories like scientists and experts, and an underutilization of data journalism. The coverage was dominated by problem-centric framing, which was followed by hostile storylines. Anthropocentric tendencies in environmental coverage were also evident in the framing, which primarily highlighted environmental concerns to people while marginalizing risks to nonhuman entities. The study concluded that instead of focussing on the government's prominent sustainability-focused campaign during the G20 presidency, the Times of India and Hindustan Times played a crucial role in drawing attention to the environmental problems facing the nation. The reporting illustrated how the media sets public agendas by bringing topics like pollution and extreme temperatures to the public's notice. However, these categories' supremacy came at the expense of a number of other environmental issues not receiving enough attention or space on the main page. In addition to a re-examination of the anthropocentric narratives that predominate in the mediated environmental public sphere, the study suggested that the media should make coordinated efforts to include more representative coverage and analytical discussions into the environmental discourse. The study's focus on legacy media, limited to front-page research, and quantity of newspapers analysed are some of its shortcomings. For a more comprehensive understanding of environmental news coverage and its influence on India's diverse public spheres, the study suggested future research to incorporate internet platforms and vernacular media.

Sustainable development and climate change are now global problems that demand more awareness among the people and policymaking. Newspapers are an essential source of information that affects how the general population views

environmental problems. The study 'Green Coverage: How Indian Print Media Is Shaping the Sustainability Narrative on Climate' [23], examines the framing and prominence of climate change and sustainable development coverage in two leading national Indian newspapers, The Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar. The front pages and editorials of The Times of India and Dainik Bhaskar are analysed through qualitative content analysis. Issues of newspapers dated February 27 to March 23, 2025, during significant environmental days such as World Water Day and National Science Day, are studied. This study focused on identifying the nature, frequency, and positioning of content related to sustainability and climate change in the mentioned newspapers. There were no editorials regarding climate change and sustainability in The Times of India, which is indicative of an important gap in the editors' perspectives. Dainik Bhaskar gave very little attention to such topics, featuring only one editorial related to World Water Day. As can be seen from the results, the Indian print media is more focused on political and governmental problems than on environmental issues.

#### 4. Conclusion

According to the comprehensive research on environmental journalism in India, news outlets were not motivated to report on environmental issues [6]. The most valuable content on news stations is the news about politics, entertainment, and the majority of commercial ads. The 24-hour news channels either evaluate the soap operas or look for news on localized traffic accidents or celebrity rumours. Maintaining the quality of news transmission requires balancing the news across local, national, and international channels. Viewers are aware of current events in politics, entertainment, crime, and corruption, but they know relatively little about environmental preservation. Increasing coverage of policy-driven news or environmental issues is crucial to raising awareness in even the most remote areas of the nation. Studies on environmental journalism has revealed that print, internet, and broadcast media continue to be a vital component of the worldwide effort to combat climate change and ecological degradation. Mass media has the special potential to turn complicated climate facts into a crucial public sphere catalyst by constructing narratives around sustainability. This is particularly noticeable during significant geopolitical turning points, like India's G20 presidency, which help bring environmental issues to the forefront of the media.

Studies, however, show a startling and unsettling contradiction: although there has never been a larger public need for thorough environmental reporting, the working circumstances for the journalists who provide it have gradually declined. Reporters are constantly hampered by organizational, structural, and informational limitations, especially in developing nations like Tanzania, Nepal, and Southeast Asia. UNESCO's 2024 study confirms the worrisome global increase in assault, harassment, and intimidation against environmental journalists, which exacerbates these operational challenges. In the end, if the voices shaping the narrative on climate change are hushed or repressed, the sustainability narrative cannot be maintained. Immediate and coordinated action is necessary for environmental journalism to effectively raise public awareness and promote legislative change. International organizations and national governments must put strict

safeguards in place to ensure the safety of the press, and media companies must invest in specialized training and diverse sourcing for their reporters. In order to achieve global climate resilience, protecting the future of environmental reporting is essential and goes beyond press freedom.

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