Decoding Mass Media Bias: An In-depth Examination of Content Actor Representation and Partisanship in Indian Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

The research paper examines in detail the complex terrain of media bias in Indian journalism. The study focuses on comprehending the degree of bias in the portrayal of content actors—individuals, organizations, or groups—and the role of partisanship in this representation in an era where mass media, especially newspapers considerably affect public opinion. Taking into account India's multifaceted and intricate geopolitical landscape, the study utilises a methodical approach to examine a wide range of Indian newspapers.

This research paper investigates the topic of mass media bias in the context of Indian newspapers using the Content Analysis approach in a thorough manner. The research findings contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of mass media bias in the Indian context where Commoners have been largely covered throughout the research findings, biases for multiple content actors' portrayal, the degree of political impact, moral implications of media coverage, the ethics of journalism, and the influence of skewed information regarding content actors on public opinion have been discussed with respect to India.

Keywords: Media Content, News Actors, Representation, Newspapers, Bias, Coverage

INTRODUCTION

The mass media's position as the main information source in the modern period has grown in importance, influencing public opinion and making a substantial contribution to the political process. Given their authority, media organizations—especially newspapers—have an obligation to provide fair and impartial news coverage. On the other hand, challenges concerning the impartial portrayal of content actors and the possible impact of partisanship have long been raised in relation to media bias. (Soontjens & Van Erkel, 2022)

The mass media is one of the vital constituents of the public sphere. The history of mass media goes back to the days when dramas were performed in various ancient cultures. This was the first time that a form of media was broadcast to a wider audience. At the time when the normative concept of the public sphere was being discussed; radio, magazines and newspapers were the ones that galvanized public opinions and henceforth set up an informed populace. Influenced by critical theory, Habermas sees media as creating a society of private and fragmented individuals for whom it is difficult to form public rational-critical opinions that could oppose established power (Lubenow, 2012). The Marxist theory has often criticized mass media in general for creating a pseudo-public sphere (Salter, 2006). The critical theorists hold a firm opinion that it is much into public relations and passive spectatorship rather than genuine public debate. Different people in the country may understand and report news events differently due to the diversity of viewpoints and interests. Due to the media's critical role in influencing public opinion, it is important to carefully examine how fairly and objectively material is portrayed in newspapers, particularly with regard to various content players. Concerns regarding media bias have gained prominence in the changing Indian journalism scene, potentially having an impact on the country's democratic foundation (Rodrigo-Ginés et al., 2021).

With a varied sample of Indian newspapers, the research attempts to apply a thorough and methodical approach to examine the coverage of different content players. Our aim in doing this analysis is to add significant knowledge to the current discussion on media ethics, journalistic ethics, and the effects of biased reporting on public debate and democratic processes (Schiavo, 2016). The goal of this research is to identify the content actors—individuals, groups, or organizations—that receive biased coverage and the degree to which partisanship affects how news is portrayed.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate the extent of biased coverage of Content Actors
- To examine the role of newspapers in disseminating prejudiced information
- To investigate the influence of Content Actors on the public sphere

METHODOLOGY

Content Analysis
It refers to a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of clear content of communication (Berelson, 1952). Content analysis is the method that is used with either qualitative or quantitative information and in an inductive or deductive way. Content analysis is a broadly used qualitative research technique. The quantitative content analysis is an empirical method used in the social sciences majorly for examining recorded human communication in a systematic and intersubjective way.

Universe: All newspapers that were published from the national capital Delhi and circulated across India.

Sample Frame (Newspaper): Largest circulated newspapers published from Delhi and according to the latest Indian Readership Survey data year 2019 (Q1+Q2+Q3+Q4)
● Two English daily - Times of India and the Hindustan Time.
● Two Hindi daily - Dainik Jagran and Dainik Bhaskar

Sampling Technique: Composite sampling techniques would be used. The samples would be selected out of 184 days spreading over six months from 1st July to 31st December 2022. Samples would be selected from each 4th day of the total 184 days in six months.
● 184/4 = 46 samples
● 46 days composite sample of each Hindi newspaper (46x2=92).
● 46 days composite sample of each English newspaper (46x2=92).

Unit of Analysis
● **Newspapers:** One complete article or editorial on the editorial page of the newspaper

LITERATURE REVIEW

● In the book titled "Talk on Television: Audience Participation and public debate", 1994, (9-35) the authors Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt in one of the chapters named "The Mass Media, democracy and the Public Sphere" attempt to demonstrate the role played by the mass media in political participation, in particular in the relationship between the laymen and federal power. To elaborate on the facets of the relationship between mass media and the democratic public sphere, the authors examine the way television works and responds in the contemporary capitalist setting (Livingstone & Lunt, 2002).
● The case study titled "Beyond Public Spaces and Private Spheres: Gender, Family, and Working-Class Politics in India", 1997, 23(3), 525, conducted by Fernandes, L. examined the ways in which workers in the Calcutta jute mills engaged in the production of a gendered public sphere, one that simultaneously contests management authority and manufactures gendered hierarchies amongst workers. The study puts forth an analysis of the exclusionary nature of the subaltern public sphere by shedding light upon the everyday practices and political processes (Fernandes, 1997).
● In the research paper titled, "Evolution of Public Sphere in India", 2001, (pp. 2419-2425), author Amir Ali sources the order in which the public sphere has evolved in India under colonial rule and during the national movement and hence the very nature that it has acquired for it to be susceptible to the recent advance of Hindutva (Ali, 2001).
● In the review titled, "Four models of the public sphere in modern democracies", authors Myra Marx Ferree, William A. Gamson, Jurgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht, 2002, (vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 289–324) ---- evaluate the four traditions of democratic theory, mining them for the answers they suggest for the public sphere and, more particularly, for mass media discourse in ''actually-existing democracies.'' The review regards this categorization as a convenient organizing tool for attempting to identify normative criteria that play a significant role within and across perspectives (Ferree et al., 2002).
● The book titled, "Culture and democracy: media, space and representation", authored by Barnett Clive evaluates the linkages between varied aspects of democracy and communication. As the author points out, the media and popular culture are frequently blamed for the decrease in engaged citizenry and the deterioration of democratic institutions. Clive Barnett examines the conceptual underpinnings of such widespread judgments in Culture and Democracy (Kennell, 2005).
● The research paper titled "People and the public sphere in India ", 2009, (270-280), presented by Shashi Ratnakar Singh, attempts to explore the complexity of the Indian Public which makes the reach and access of the public sphere exclusive to certain members. He establishes the argument of the heterogeneity of Indian societies by considering the notion of the "common good" as reiterated by the private and exclusive members of the sphere (Singh, 2009).
● The research paper titled, "Indian Media and its Transformed Public", 2010, authored by Maitrayee Chaudhuri, argues that the media plays a crucial ideological role in recasting public discourse in India, a role which is rendered more effective because of a strong synergy between its substance and style. (Chaudhuri, 2010).

- The research essay titled, "Media and Social Change: Current Trends in India", (2016), authored by Milind Awatade attempts to highlight the role of media as an engine of social change in the Indian setting. He mentions that mass media is an important social institution that caters to the social and economic needs of wider social groups and it has been playing a vital role in developing countries like India (Awatade, 2016).
- The research paper titled, "Researching the Local Context of Good Governance", (2018), presented by Samiksha Annaso Farakat, analyzes the concept of good governance by studying its usage and manifestations in the public discourse and politics of India. The paper reviews the international academic literature on good governance as well as the appearance of the term in media, political manifestos, and policy documents in India with the goal of bringing out the ideological and political undercurrents of the seemingly non-political term of good governance (Farakate, 2018).
- An online article titled, "Public Sphere and the Power of Mass Media" published by The Circular, a production of students in Griffith College, Dublin, (2015), -- echoes the principles of an ideal public sphere laid by Habermas and exemplifies the influence of mass media on a public sphere (Rashem, 2018).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

VARIABLES USED:

- Name of the Newspapers: According to the latest Indian Readership Survey data year 2019 (Q1+Q2+Q3+Q4), four newspapers with the largest readership have been considered, Two English daily (Times of India and the Hindustan Times) and Two Hindi daily (Dainik Jagran and Dainik Bhaskar).
- Content Actor 1: The dominant performer of a particular content piece that the editorial page focuses.
- Content Actor 2: The subservient performer of a particular content piece that the editorial page focuses on.
- Level of Bias: It is the degree of partiality in the way the information is presented on the editorial page. This is categorised as not biased, partially biased, totally biased or even not applicable.

Table 1.1

Table 1.1 highlights the frequency and percentage of each of the Content Actors, covered in newspapers for a time period of six months

Content Actors		Frequency	Percent
Valid	None	14	1.6
	President	22	2.5
	Vice President	1	.1
	Prime Minister	74	8.5
	Union Cabinet	77	8.9
	Chief minister	44	5.1
	Governor	6	.7
	State Cabinet	33	3.8
	Other Ministers	22	2.5
	Opposition Leader	40	4.6
	Justices/Judges	38	4.4
	Media personality/Byron/owner	10	1.2
	Environmentalist	3	.3
	Social Activists	1	.1
	Bureaucrats	20	2.3
	Academicians	13	1.5
	Police	6	.7
	CBI	2	.2
	Armed Forces	15	1.7
	Doctors	8	.9
	Accused	24	2.8
	Commission/Committees	85	9.8
	Commoners	132	15.2
	Film Personality	2	.2
	Sports Personality	23	2.6
	Scientists	3	.3
	International Personalities	77	8.9

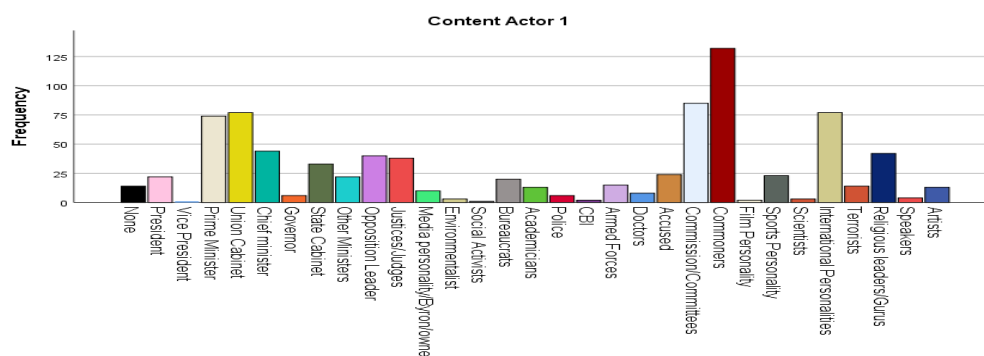|		
Terrorists	14	1.6
Religious leaders/Gurus	42	4.8
Speakers	4	.5
Artists	13	1.5
Total	868	100.0

Fig 1.2

Figure 1.2 highlights the frequency of each of the Content Actors through the use of a Bar Graph, covered in newspapers for a time period of six months

Table 1.3

Table 1.3 highlights the frequency and percentage of each of the Content Actor 2 (subservient in nature), covered in newspapers for a time period of six months

Content Actor 2		Frequency	Percent
Valid	None	56	6.5
	President	18	2.1
	Vice President	3	.3
	Prime Minister	39	4.5
	Union Cabinet	82	9.4
	Chief Minister	19	2.2
	Governor	2	.2
	State Cabinet	32	3.7
	Other Ministers	41	4.7
	Opposition Leaders	56	6.5
	Justices/Judges	18	2.1
	Media Personality/Byron/Owner	11	1.3
	Environmentalist	9	1.0
	Social Activists	10	1.2
	Bureaucrats	31	3.6
	Academicians	7	.8
	Police	16	1.8
	CBI	1	.1
	Armed Forces	16	1.8
	Doctors	8	.9
	Accused	26	3.0
	Commission/Committees	78	9.0
	Commoners	143	16.5
	Film Personality	3	.3
	Sports Personality	3	.3
	Scientists	10	1.2
	International personalities	34	3.9
	Terrorists	13	1.5
	Religious leaders/gurus	68	7.8

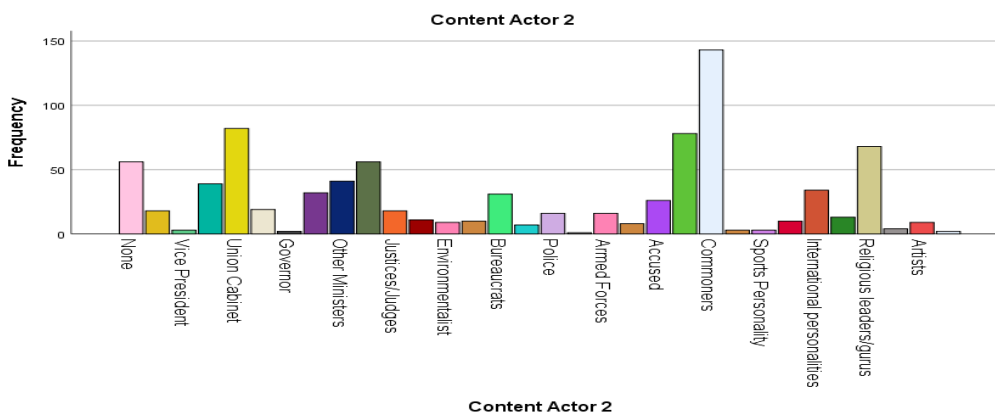| Attorney/Advocate general	4	.5
Artists	9	1.0
Not clear	2	.2
Total	868	100.0

Fig 1.4

Figure 1.4 highlights the frequency of each of the Content Actor 2 (subservient in nature) through the use of Bar Graph, covered in newspapers for a time period of six months

Table 1.5

Table 1.5 collectively highlights the occurrence of Content Actor 1 and Content Actor 2 in percentage, covered in newspapers for a time period of six months

Content Actors		Per cent 1	Per cent 2
Valid	None	1.6	6.5
	President	2.5	2.1
	Vice President	.1	.3
	Prime Minister	8.5	4.5
	Union Cabinet	8.9	9.4
	Chief minister	5.1	2.2
	Governor	.7	.2
	State Cabinet	3.8	3.7
	Other Ministers	2.5	4.7
	Opposition Leader	4.6	6.5
	Justices/Judges	4.4	2.1
	Media personality/Byron/owner	1.2	1.3
	Environmentalist	.3	1.0
	Social Activists	.1	1.2
	Bureaucrats	2.3	3.6
	Academicians	1.5	.8
	Police	.7	1.8
	CBI	.2	.1
	Armed Forces	1.7	1.8
	Doctors	.9	.9
	Accused	2.8	3.0
	Commission/Committees	9.8	9.0
	Commoners	15.2	16.5
	Film Personality	.2	.3
	Sports Personality	2.6	.3
	Scientists	.3	1.2
	International Personalities	8.9	3.9

Terrorists	1.6	1.5
Religious leaders/Gurus	4.8	7.8
Speakers	.5	.5
Artists	1.5	1.0
Not clear	0	2
Total	100.0	.100.0

Table 1.1 establishes the significance given to each of the content actor 1 by the four newspapers of India. Content actor 1 refers to the dominant actor of a particular editorial page content. From the table, this can be stated that the editorial page content regarding Commoners has been covered relatively more than any other content actor. Content related to Commoners accounts for 15.2%. This statistical finding ensures that the public sphere will be highly aware of the common public, their thoughts, issues, challenges and opinions in comparison with any other content actor. A higher coverage of editorial page content regarding commoners will assist people with diverse backgrounds in voicing their opinions as they know they are being heard. This heightened representation would create a sense of shared identity leading to enhanced community interaction and engagement. People across different religions, cultures, territories and income groups may cultivate tolerance for each other and an understanding of the everyday challenges of those groups. Higher coverage of commoners-related content also boosts the confidence among marginalized communities by giving them a platform to discuss their stories and issues. On the other hand, excess coverage can oversimplify or even exploit the struggles of individuals. There can be a higher probability of sensationalising everyday events that may also lead to distorted or polarized perceptions of certain specific issues. This often creates a scenario where the combined ability of the public sphere to formulate an in-depth analysis commences to decline. Similarly, Table 1.3 individually presents an image of Content Actor 2 that is subservient in nature. The dataset also concludes that commoners have been given relatively higher importance as Content Actor 2 as well accounting for 16.5%. Therefore, this would be correct to state that the editorial page has largely published commoners-related content pieces.

Commissions/Committees have been given extended significance as Content Actors 1 and 2 accounting for 9.8% and 9% respectively as per Table 1.5. The coverage of Commissions / Committees as content actors has been a highlighted spot in the contemporary print media. In India, the role of commissions is to oversee, investigate and examine various issues to further provide recommendations to the respective institutions. Therefore, their excessive coverage encourages transparency in the decision-making processes and ensures that the authorities are accountable for their respective actions. Practising accountability and transparency also come from a place where critical analysis is given due importance so that the good is appreciated and the bad is improved. Collective scrutiny from the public also acts as an encouragement for the authorities to work efficiently. The representation and the interest of the people in understanding the functioning of various institutions increases as the public sphere is largely aware of the committee's recommendations, discussions and further consequences that anyhow will influence individual lives. With the increased coverage, the nature of the public sphere transforms into an informed public sphere where opinions about various aspects of a national or local commission exist. At the same time, overemphasis on commissions may change the public perception through the use of sensationalism that lacks objectivity. People formulate opinions that may empower their existing notions and divert attention from the important issues that are significant for attracting attention and finding solutions. In many cases, when commissions/committees are given unending importance, the confidentiality of a number of stakeholders in that particular issue is often compromised. The risk of initiating discussions around commissions/committees may reflect on the poor handling and hence inappropriate consequences of sensitive matters even when they are both dominant and subservient under different editorial page contents.

In a democratic country like India, the Union Cabinet holds enough powers for the smooth functioning and governance of the nation. From Table 1.5, it is evident that the Union Cabinet also occupies enough space as Content Actor 1 and 2 in the editorial page content accounting for 8.9% and 9.4% respectively. When the Union Cabinet is given multidimensional coverage, it increases the awareness of the public regarding various policy formulations, decisions and limitations. The engagement of the public sphere with the government for the betterment of the country also sees a shift where there is more transparency between both parties with respect to the functioning of the Union Cabinet. The increased coverage of Union Cabinet regarding editorial page content promotes accountability among various politicians and officials as now they are under public scrutiny for whatever steps they may take. The interest of the public sphere also sees an increment with the excessive coverage of the Union Cabinet as the democratic participation in a number of decision making processes is encouraged by the citizens who are well informed through media agencies. But this coverage has a downside with respect to the political polarization and misinformation that prevails simultaneously. This large and specific coverage of the Union Cabinet can enhance the already prevailing beliefs of the people that are not substantiated with adequate shreds of evidence and may provide a propagative perception leading to a biased and homogenous opinion formation. The increased coverage has a higher probability of spreading misinformation regarding multiple aspects of the Union Cabinet and the trust of the public in the government starts to fade away. There always remains the potential

for the excessive coverage of content to invade the privacy of cabinet members rather than focusing on their respective official duties.

Another content actor that has been placed under the direct spotlight is the Prime Minister which is evident from Table 1.1. Coverage of the Prime Minister is dominant in many of the editorial pages. 8.5% of the total coverage is being given to the Prime Minister under Content Actor 1. This makes the public sphere more politically aware as well as inclined. The accountability of the Prime Minister towards the public also increases. Their actions come under scrutiny and greater transparency is further encouraged from the Prime Minister. As the Prime Minister is the elected representative of the country, therefore, his/her responsibility to work for the people remains intact if they are being provided with extensive coverage. As their every action has been considered dominant in the four mentioned newspapers this gives a deeper look into the functioning of the government which then makes it easy for the public to decide which party they want to vote for in the upcoming elections. Simultaneously, overemphasis on the Prime Minister leads to sensationalism and agenda-based reporting. The coverage can be in favour or against the actor but the constant emphasis on a particular perspective may show bias towards a particular way of thinking. This creates a majoritarian homogenous viewpoint where the other opinion is often sidelined or seen as a counter that cannot co-exist and political polarization is fostered. A climate of extremism and lack of constructive criticism commences to prevail which leads to the downfall of a quality public sphere. Lastly, excessive coverage of the Prime Minister may overshadow other important issues present on the local, national and international platforms that necessarily demand public attention and action. Table 6.5 depicts the relationship between the coverage of dominant and subservient actors where limited importance has been given to the Prime Minister as a Content Actor 2. As every content actor has their own significance in society, thus, equitable coverage of each of these actors should be encouraged. The current state of publishing editorial page content displays a biased narrative where only a handful of content actors are observed as worthy of coverage leading to a limited understanding of the people regarding other actors and their specific concerns. Lack of public scrutiny may also arise from the limited coverage of the mentioned content actors where they are not held accountable for their actions. The larger concern should be the uninformed public sphere that has not been provided with crucial knowledge about various developments regarding the specific content actors. Therefore, as democracy abides by the representation of all and India being the largest democracy (According to Pew Research Centre) needs to divide their attention on multiple aspects of the public sphere in a justifiable and equitable manner.

Table 2.1
Content Actor 1 * Name of the Newspapers Crosstabulation
% of Total

| | | Name of the Newspapers | | | | |
		DAINIK BHASKAR	DAINIK JAGRAN	TIMES OF INDIA	HINDUSTAN TIMES	Total
Content Actor 1	None	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%	1.6%
	President	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%	0.9%	2.5%
	Vice President	0.1%				0.1%
	Prime Minister	2.2%	1.2%	2.1%	3.1%	8.5%
	Union Cabinet	1.4%	2.3%	3.2%	2.0%	8.9%
	Chief minister	0.7%	1.7%	1.4%	1.3%	5.1%
	Governor		0.1%	0.1%	0.5%	0.7%
	State Cabinet	0.6%	2.2%	0.5%	0.6%	3.8%
	Other Ministers	1.0%	0.8%	0.3%	0.3%	2.5%
	Opposition Leader	1.3%	1.7%	0.7%	0.9%	4.6%
	Justices/Judges	0.8%	0.6%	1.5%	1.5%	4.4%
	Media personality/Byron/owner	0.2%		0.7%	0.2%	1.2%
	Environmentalist	0.1%	0.1%		0.1%	0.3%
	Social Activists	0.1%				0.1%
	Bureaucrats	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%	0.7%	2.3%
	Academicians	0.6%	0.6%	0.1%	0.2%	1.5%
	Police		0.5%	0.1%	0.1%	0.7%
	CBI	0.1%	0.1%			0.2%
	Armed Forces	0.1%	0.6%	0.7%	0.3%	1.7%
	Doctors	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%		0.9%
	Accused	0.3%	1.3%	0.7%	0.5%	2.8%
	Commission/Committees	1.4%	1.2%	3.0%	4.3%	9.8%

Commoners	6.2%	5.4%	2.6%	0.9%	15.2%
Film Personality	0.1%		0.1%		0.2%
Sports Personality	0.3%	0.1%	1.6%	0.6%	2.6%
Scientists	0.1%			0.2%	0.3%
International Personalities	1.5%	1.3%	3.7%	2.4%	8.9%
Terrorists	0.3%	0.5%	0.2%	0.6%	1.6%
Religious leaders/Gurus	1.5%	1.8%	1.0%	0.5%	4.8%
Speakers		0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%
Artists	0.7%	0.6%	0.2%		1.5%
Total	23.6%	26.5%	26.8%	23.0%	100.0%

Table 2.1 highlights the number of times a Content Actor has been talked about in a particular newspaper.

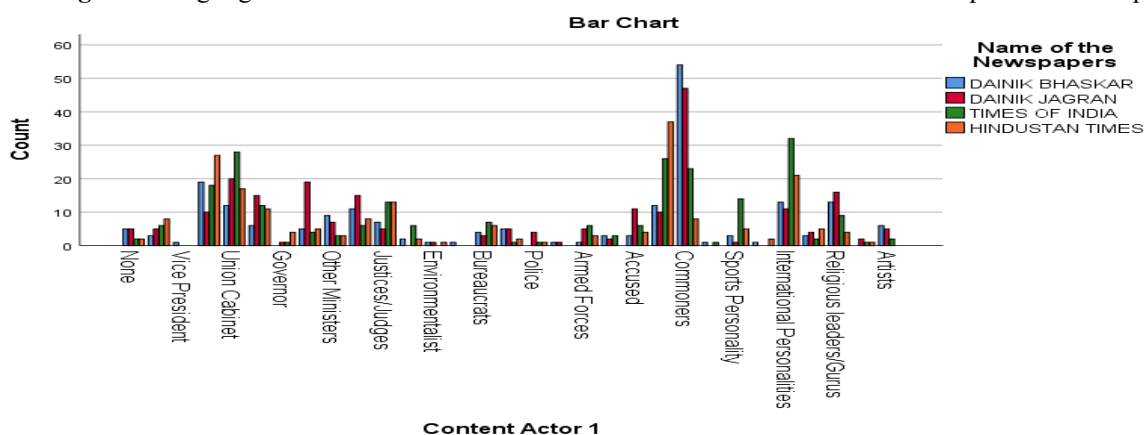**Figure 2.2** highlights the number of times Content Actor 1 has been talked about in a particular newspaper

Table 2.3
Content Actor 1 * Level of Bias Crosstabulation
% of Total

| | | Level of Bias | | | | |
		not applicable	not biased	partly biased	totally biased	Total
Content Actor 1	None	0.5%	0.9%	0.2%		1.6%
	President		1.7%	0.8%		2.5%
	Vice President		0.1%			0.1%
	Prime Minister		6.1%	2.4%		8.5%
	Union Cabinet		6.6%	2.3%		8.9%
	Chief minister	0.1%	2.5%	2.4%		5.1%
	Governor		0.6%	0.1%		0.7%
	State Cabinet		2.8%	0.9%	0.1%	3.8%
	Other Ministers	0.1%	1.6%	0.8%		2.5%
	Opposition Leader	0.1%	2.3%	2.2%		4.6%
	Justices/Judges		3.6%	0.8%		4.4%
	Media personality/Byron/owner		0.3%	0.8%		1.2%
	Environmentalist		0.3%			0.3%
	Social Activists		0.1%			0.1%
	Bureaucrats		2.1%	0.2%		2.3%
	Academicians	0.1%	1.3%	0.1%		1.5%
	Police		0.6%	0.1%		0.7%
	CBI		0.2%			0.2%
	Armed Forces	0.1%	1.4%	0.2%		1.7%
	Doctors	0.1%	0.8%			0.9%
	Accused		2.4%	0.3%		2.8%
	Commission/Committees	0.2%	8.8%	0.8%		9.8%
	Commoners	8.8%	4.3%	2.1%	0.1%	15.2%
	Film Personality	0.1%		0.1%		0.2%
	Sports Personality		2.3%	0.3%		2.6%
	Scientists		0.3%			0.3%
	International Personalities	0.1%	5.2%	3.6%		8.9%
	Terrorists		1.5%	0.1%		1.6%
	Religious leaders/Gurus	1.8%	2.4%	0.6%		4.8%
	Speakers		0.3%	0.1%		0.5%
	Artists	0.1%	1.3%	0.1%		1.5%
Total		12.3%	64.7%	22.7%	0.2%	100.0%

Table 2.3 deduces whether the coverage of a particular content actor is biased or not. The inadequate substantial support to an argument has been classified as biased
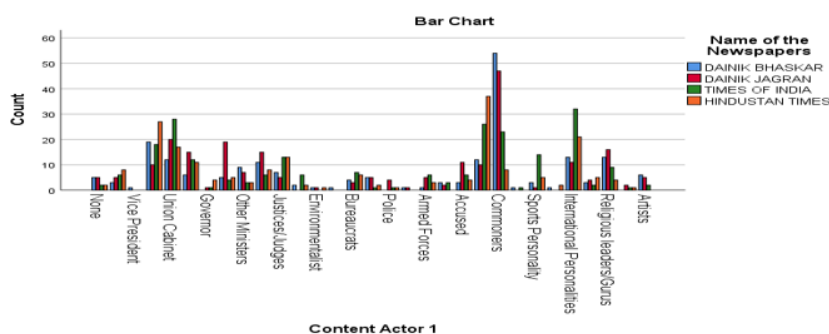

Figure 2.4 deduces whether the coverage of a particular content actor is biased or not with the help of a bar graph. The inadequate substantial support to an argument has been classified as biased.

Table 2.1 deliberates upon the distribution of content actors on the editorial page content of different newspapers separately. From the table, this can be stated that news regarding Commoners has been covered relatively more than any other content actor. News related to Commoners accounts for 15.2% of the total editorial page content. This statistical finding ensures that the public sphere will be highly aware of the common public, their thoughts, issues, challenges and opinions in comparison with any other content actor. Dainik Bhaskar covers 6.2% of commoners-related content, Dainik Jagran 5.4%, the Times of India covers 2.6% and Hindustan Times publishes 0.9% of the total content that has commoners as the dominant content actor. Thus, English newspaper readers will be more engaged in stories that somehow affect the common citizens. Publishing such content not only fosters a sense of community but also balances the media coverage that may focus on influential people and elites of the society. English-speaking citizens may ask for more advocacy efforts and diversified policy reforms that can be social, economic, political or cultural in nature. According to Table 2.3 out of a total of 15.2% of commoners-related editorial page content, 8.8% come under not applicable, 4.3% are not biased, 2.1% are partly biased and 0.1% come out to be totally biased. If news regarding commoners comes out to be biased then the assumption of misrepresentation of their perspectives and various experiences may become true. This leads to the neglect of crucial issues and the government may consider a biased public opinion formulated by the media agencies to have a discussion on and then devise certain policies over the same.

As per the findings of Table 2.1, the coverage of Commissions / Committees as content actors has been a highlighted spot in the contemporary print media. In India, the role of commissions is to oversee, investigate and examine various issues to further provide recommendations to the respective institutions. From a total of 9.8% of commissions / committees-related content on the editorial pages, Dainik Bhaskar publishes 1.4% of it, Dainik Jagran 1.2%, Times of India 3% and Hindustan Times covers 4.3% of that particular type of content. This is apparent that English newspapers are more inclined towards the coverage of commissions as the dominant content actor. Their extensive coverage can either substantiate a discussion and findings to make it more accountable or it can expose the inefficiencies of institutions and individuals. The English newspaper readers will be relatively more informed about different policies, activities and potential amendments to enable citizens to make adequate decisions and participate in essential democratic processes. Thus, for a robust democracy coverage of commissions and their doings becomes an essential tool for the promotion of transparency in the government. Although Table 2.3 clearly states the level of bias for the content actor Commissions / Committees i.e., 0.2% come under being not applicable, 8.8% are not biased, 0.8% are partly biased and none of the content related to the actor is totally biased. Therefore, the commissions' related pieces are relatively less biased and are mainly reported in an objective manner.

Editorial page content regarding international personalities has also been given comparably higher importance by all the newspapers than other content actors. They are often responsible for shaping the public opinion. Table 2.1 indicates that English newspapers namely Times of India (3.7%) and Hindustan Times (2.4%) have covered more stories than the Hindi newspapers, Dainik Bhaskar (1.5%) and Dainik Jagran (1.3%). Times of India being the most widely circulated English newspaper in India has the potential to raise awareness regarding global issues, humanitarian causes and cultural diversity. The relatively extensive coverage given to the international actors may result in more engagement in negotiation in treaties and communication with the global public sphere. On the other hand, Table 2.3 depicts that from a total of 8.9% of the total content that considers international personalities to be the dominant content actor, 5.2% are not biased and 3.6% are partly biased. This concerning factor of the biased content and relatively more coverage of the international actors may lead to the creation of distorted perceptions in the minds of the people. An excessive and biased publishing can establish unrealistic expectations of the individual therefore, the public may begin to discard or worship them as their idols which was rather a result of the biased reporting about their brand.

In the Indian democracy where the country ranks 108th in the Electoral Democracy Index (V-dem Democracy Report 2022), allocation of work and power becomes essential for maintaining the smooth functioning of the country. For this very reason, a Union Cabinet is formed which performs under the name of the respective council of ministers. Union cabinet serves as the top-level decision-making body of India. Table 2.1 throws light on another crucial content actor that has been largely covered by the mentioned four newspapers in India. From a total of 8.9% of content that is around Union Cabinet, 1.4% is published by Dainik Bhaskar, 2.3% by Dainik Jagran, 3.2% by the Times of India and 2% by the Hindustan Times. Times of India being the most widely circulated English newspaper of India considers the Union Cabinet as one of the important content actors in comparison with others. Largely the readers of the Times of India will have more transparency into the policies, decisions, functioning and performance of the Union Cabinet. Substantial media coverage of the cabinet (8.9%, Table 2.1) creates a sense of accountability within the ministers when they are aware that their actions are subject to public scrutiny. This assists in maintaining the checks and balances within Indian democracy, critically ensuring that no single branch of government becomes excessively powerful. Table 2.3 adds another perspective to the coverage of Union Cabinet where out of a total of 8.9% of their related content, 6.6% is not biased and 2.3% is partly biased. Thus, biased reporting of content related to the Union Cabinet not only erodes the credibility of the respective media outlet but also reduces accountability and transparency from the government and its institutions. Reporting in favour or against the Union cabinet without adequate pieces of evidence showcases bias which further contributes to political polarization through the reinforcement of already prevailing ideological divisions in the public

sphere. The readers of the biased content (2.3%, Table 2.3) may be discouraged from indulging in an open and constructive debate, unwilling to take into consideration an alternative opinion.

Another such content actor that has been given relatively more significance by the newspapers is the Prime Minister of the country. If we look into the statistical findings of Table 11.1, we may observe that from a total of 8.5% of editorial page content about the Prime Minister, his actions, policies and decisions, 2.2% are published by Dainik Bhaskar, 1.2% by Dainik Jagran, 2.1% by the Times of India and Hindustan Times published 3.1% of the total content. Giving comparably higher coverage to the Prime Minister holds him accountable for ensuring that his opinions and actions are in accordance with the interests of the citizens of the nation. In contemporary times media is used as a tool for the dissemination of urgent and crucial information regarding various governmental initiatives, guidance for public health, enhancing global diplomacy, international cooperation or for the promotion of a specific agenda if the news is biased. The Hindustan Times (3.1%, Table 2.1) tend to have a higher potential for inspiring citizens with a 13.213 million Average Issue Readership (Indian Readership Survey 2019 Q4) and promoting the feeling of nationalism by publishing content regarding the leadership of the Prime Minister. At the same time, Table 2.3 observes that from a total of 8.9% of content revolving around the Prime Minister, 6.1% are not biased and 2.4% are partly biased. This deduces that those who approve of the bias may become more rigid in their opinions and deny to accept any alternate viewpoint whereas those who disagree with the biased reportage may feel more alienated, leading to growth in polarization within the public sphere. Political manipulation through extensive coverage of the Prime Minister may benefit the leader (as assumed by 46% population, The Statista Daily) and its party while the opposition parties may endure the negative bias. Similarly, if the news bias is in favour of the opposition parties then they may try to manipulate the public and the government will have to suffer from the rejection by the people at large.

CONCLUSION

The research article has illuminated crucial aspects affecting the public's perception and the distribution of information in the quest to understand the intricacies of media bias in the Indian journalism scene. Our investigation's conclusion invites contemplation on the complex relationship between partisanship and news story framing, the complexity of content actor portrayal, and the varied dimensions of media bias.Bias in the way people, organizations, and groups are portrayed in Indian media has been demonstrated by our research of a wide sample of these publications. The pervasiveness of prejudices stemming from cultural norms, political allegiances, and editorial policies emphasizes the necessity of having a sophisticated awareness of the variables influencing news reporting. The varied range of contextual circumstances and the dynamic nature of journalistic practices are exemplified by the differing degrees of bias seen in different newspapers. Wide-ranging effects result from the mutually beneficial interaction between media outlets and content creators, including alterations to public opinion, public dialogue, and even democratic procedures.

Public opinion is significantly shaped by content actors, as seen by the extensive effect these actors have on public discourse. It is important to take a deeper look at content players' roles and duties within the media ecosystem since they play a crucial role in shaping social narratives as influencers and disseminators of information. In conclusion, this study offers important new perspectives on the complex mechanisms of media bias in Indian newspapers. The need for ongoing examination of journalistic standards, editorial guidelines, and the moral principles guiding news reporting is emphasized. Fostering a media climate that promotes objectivity, transparency, and the core values that support responsible journalism is crucial as we navigate the changing media landscape in one of the greatest democracies in the world. This research provides a basis for further study on the crucial role mass media play in constructing India's democratic narrative, and it also acts as a springboard for future investigations into media integrity.

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