

Urban Versus Rural Newspaper Reading Habits of Undergraduate Students in Uttarakhand, India

Dr. Vikram Singh Rautela, (Associate Professor, Dev Bhoomi Uttarakhand University, Dehradun, rautelavikram@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

Newspapers are a very good source of information and carry variety of sections and topics, including international events and political affairs, expert opinions, features, columns and editorials. They strengthen vocabulary and grammar of readers, especially the young ones. Newspapers have several tiers of gate-keeping to ensure that only correct and authentic information is printed the next day. Apart from getting current information, students can improve their thinking and observational skills by reading newspapers daily and also keep themselves abreast with latest career opportunities and information. The aim of the present study was to understand the newspaper reading habits of the urban versus rural undergraduate college and university students in Uttarakhand. These two group have participants aged majorly between 17 and 22 years. The study aimed to have a insightful peek into and analyse the newspaper reading habits of these two groups. Primary data for the study was collected by floating well-structured questionnaires among undergraduate students in various colleges and universities in the urban and rural areas of Uttarakhand. Random sampling method was used. In order to a get better qualitative insight into the topic, focus group interviews were also conducted with two groups of 10 students each from both urban and rural students. Open-ended questions were asked in the FGDs in moderated settings and their responses analysed. Secondary data was collected from published works on related topics.

Key words: Newspapers, Reading habits, Undergraduates, Urban, Rural, Uttarakhand

1. INTRODUCTION

Habits notoriously stick to us for a life time. It is famously said that 'habit' is 'abit'... 'bit'...of 'it'.. When you remove the letter 'H' from the word habit, 'A bit' of it remains and when you further remove the letter 'A' it become comes 'Bit' and finally when you remove the letter 'B', 'It' is still seen. In simple terms it means that when one keeps on performing a task repeatedly, it becomes a habit and this hold true for both good and bad habits that people have. Reading is one such good habit that can be developed by practice and reading daily. There are various studies which link the habit of reading to better writing and creative skills.

One of the elementary forms of reading is that of reading newspapers. Newspapers, both in their printed as well as online forms continue to be one of the most popular forms of mass-media that give us not only the day-to-day information, but also present comments and expert opinions on national and international developments on daily basis. Newspapers have various beats (specialised news territories) and dedicated teams of reporters to fish-out routine as well as special stories arising from these beats. In the forms of news beats like politics, health, crime, courts, municipal corporations & councils, education, business, sports, fashion & lifestyle etc, feature stories, columns, opinions, interviews and the most prestigious page of a newspaper, --the editorial page--, the newspapers literally are like a 'bouquet' of news and readers are free to pick up and read the news of their choice and interest. More importantly, newspaper reporters and sub-editors are trained journalists and present the news in the most objective, unprejudiced, fair and ethical manner. Newspapers have traditionally been recommended to students to improve their language, grammar and diction as every 'printed word' on a newspaper has to pass through a meticulous scrutiny of several 'trained' and 'experienced' eyes and fingers before finding a place in the newspapers next day. This holds true to both the offline and online editions of the newspapers.

Even though the Internet has been able to radically revolutionise the way people communicate and consumes their daily dope of news and other important information across the globe and in India, the hill state of Uttarakhand continues to remain an exception. According to a news report published by The New Indian Express on October 26, 2022 (Sethi, 2022), a total of 700 villages in Uttarakhand had no Internet access. The report claims with a very senior

BSNL official's quote and the March 2022 annual Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) report that of the 83.80 lakh Internet users in Uttarakhand only 52 % people in the rural areas are using Internet. The report further states that "in 3,500 out of the 16,793 villages in the hill state, residents have not been able to move beyond 2G service."

1.1 Newspapers as a source of information in Uttarakhand

Considering the above mentioned issue of Internet connectivity in the hilly, remote and rural areas of Uttarakhand and high literacy rate, which according to the 2011 census was 78.82 % and estimated to shoot up to 87.60 % in 2021, as per the Census Population Estimate report, newspapers, the oldest form of traditional media, --the printed newspapers-- , continue to remain the main source of news for a large number of people residing in the rural and mountainous terrains in Uttarakhand.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Amid growing influence of Internet, when several online sources are fast emerging as new and alternative sources of news, bringing to the readers /viewers news and information in fraction of seconds, there are numerous studies which establish newspapers, --both in their offline and online forms-- as the most credible source of news as had been rated by the readers. Reading is considered to be healthy habit, which is proved to improve students' memory and cognitive abilities. Newspapers are one of the most elementary forms of reading and satiate readers quest for not only news and information, but also present before them analysis and interpretations along with columns, editorials and feature articles etc. With rich variety of news stories and articles every day, newspapers technically carry something of special interest for everyone who chooses to read them.

Newspaper reading continues to remain one of the main ways to keep oneself abreast with political, social, economical and developmental factors in the country and abroad. Local editions of national newspapers and regional newspapers also address local issues related to their readers. Therefore it becomes relevant to study and analyse the newspaper reading habits of students in Uttarakhand. The study will motivate students to squeeze out some time for reading newspaper daily. It will further encourage undergraduate students from urban as well as rural belts of Uttarakhand to voice their opinion in connection to various issues related to reading newspapers in the state. The findings of this study may also be useful to national and regional newspaper publishers to understand the taste and preferences of their young audience and fulfil their needs by tweaking their contents or generating new content as per the needs of their audience. Information about the factors that affect newspaper reading habit of young readers may be helpful for newspapers. They can take steps and develop strategies to remain relevant in the digital age. The findings of this study may be helpful for the state government for drafting policies related to education and other issues related to the urban and rural youth in the state.

3. OBJECTIVES

The study aims to analyse the newspaper reading habits of colleges/university going students in Uttarakhand with main focus on the:

1. To conduct a comparative study of urban versus rural newspaper reading habits of undergraduate students in Uttarakhand.
2. To find the popularity of English and Hindi newspaper dailies among college going students in urban and rural Uttarakhand.
3. To assess the attractiveness of printed versus online newspapers in urban and rural Uttarakhand.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Reading is the central component in the learning process. And therefore, reading habits and the general attitude of people towards reading is one of the chief concerns in education. Reading can be describe as "a process of decoding and comprehending printed and written texts" (Hoover, 1990). A 2017 study titled, *A Survey on the Reading Habits*

among Colleges of Education Students in the Information Age, Examined a total of two hundred (200) students from the two Colleges of Education in Oyo town. Gender and age stood as the moderating variables in the study. The findings of the study showed that almost all the respondents understood the importance of reading. While 65.5% of them loved to read from various fields of their specialisation on a daily basis, 25.0% loved to read from their fields of specialisation every week. (Fatiloro Oluwayemisi Florence, 2017)

Newspaper reading is one of the most elementary forms of reading, but has several advantages. The biggest advantage being that it adds value to the reader and his/her personality. It improves English or any other language in which one reads it in; it enhances one's confidence and actually make lives easier as one is updated with the current issues, achievements, facts, discoveries, research, laws, events, ideologies, politics, movements, historical facts etc. It also improves one's memory to a certain extent, increases reading skills and indirectly writing skills, as well¹.

There are several studies on the newspaper reading habits and patterns of youth in India and have dwelled into different aspects related to it. *An analysis of newspaper reading patterns among the youth*, has studied the newspaper reading patterns of youth in the metropolitan city of Indian state Maharashtra, Mumbai. The study reveals that youth in Mumbai do not read newspapers much and that The Times of India is the newspaper they frequently read. The study brings to light that news articles on global affairs is what the Mumbai youth read the most in the newspapers. (Bharucha, 2017)

A study titled, *Newspaper reading habits among the students of Farook college, Kozhikode* (Kadeeja Banu C V, 2018) revealed that college students regularly read both regional (Malayalam in this case) as well as English newspapers. Students mainly preferred to read education related sections in the newspapers. "The study also indicated that lack of time was the major negative factor preventing them from newspaper reading."

A 2022 research, by Bharat Dhiman, studying newspaper reading habits among Under Graduate and Post Graduate students of Kurukshetra University gives some positive news amid reports of less number of youth reading newspapers to update themselves. Titled, *A case study of newspaper reading habits among students*, the study reveals that 28.57% of students surveyed spent less than one hour on reading newspapers. A total of 21.42% of them spent 1 hour on reading newspapers, While 31.42% of the respondents gave 2 hours to newspapers, 14.28 % spent more than 3 hours on newspapers. Those who spent more than 4 hours on reading newspapers daily constituted 04.28 % of the sample.

There are many researches on the newspaper reading patterns of urban youth in India, but comparatively less work has been done in this regard focusing on the rural youth. One such research was been published in the peer-reviewed journal of The Delhi Library Association, 'Library Herald' in 2007. Titled, *Reading habits of rural undergraduate students*, the study aimed to investigate the reading habits of rural undergraduate students through a structured questionnaire. It was revealed in the study that, "57.69% of rural undergraduate students read newspaper daily while 33.33% read newspapers occasionally. A majority of respondents (58.33%) read general magazines, 14.73% respondents read magazines on films, 16.67% respondents read magazines relating to various Competitions. More female under-graduates have been found reading Novels/Poetry/Stories books, whereas more male have been found reading religious and competitive books." (Kaushik Sanjay K, 2007)

4.1 Uttarakhand the 27th state of India

The 27th state of Indian union, which came to existence on November 9, 2000 had population of 1.01 Crores, according to the 2011 Census. To be precise, "the total population of the hill state in 2011 was 10,086,292 of which male and female were 5,137,773 and 4,948,519 respectively. Further, literacy rate of the state in 2011 was 78.82 % . Of this, male literacy rate was 87.40 % while female literacy rate was 70.01 percent. In actual numbers, total number of literates in Uttarakhand stood at 6,880,953 of which males were 3,863,708 and females were 3,017,245. Out of the total population in 2011, 30.23% people lived in urban regions, while around 69.77 % lived in the villages of rural areas of the state. Clearly, the population of rural areas was 39.54 % higher. Average literacy rate in the state's urban regions was 84.45 % in which males were 89.05% literate while female literacy rate was 68.96%. In rural regions of the states, the literacy rate for males and female stood at 86.62 % and 66.16 %, while the average literacy rate in rural areas of the state 76.31 percent." **Source: Census, 2011**

4.2 Journalism in Uttarakhand

A well researched article, titled, *1842 से छप रहे हैं उत्तराखण्ड में अखबार* posted by an online, named "Kafal Tree" on January 10, 2019 gives a detailed narrative of the history of newspapers in Uttarakhand. The article traces the history of newspapers in Uttarakhand to 1842. This was the year when John McKinnon reportedly brought out 'The Hills' newspaper from Mussoorie. The newspaper is said to have been continued till 1850, to be closed for some reasons. It started again in 1860 with a new colour and new size, but it was in 1865.

'The Hills' newspaper, claims the article "gave birth to other newspapers and on the same lines 'The Mussoorie Exchange Advertiser' was started in 1870 and 'The Mussoorie Season' was started by Coleman in 1872. When Coleman left India, with his departure the newspaper 'The Mussoorie Season' was also closed," according to the article.

"In 1875, John Northam started a new newspaper 'The Himalayan Chronicle' from Mussoorie. After this newspaper, in 1884, from the same press that published 'The Himalayan Chronicle', another newspaper 'The Camelian' also started coming out, which was a kind of classified advertisements newspaper. On July 1, 1875, a new type of newspaper was started from Dehradun named 'The Indian Forester'. This paper was based on forestry research. A few years after this, in 1878, the 'Imperial Forest School' was started in Dehradun. Its name was later changed to 'Forest Research Institute'. It was established in Dehradun in 1906. Since then till date this institute is world famous for both its name and work." (Yashashvi, 2019)

5. Theoretical Framework

The study examines newspaper reading patterns among the urban and rural undergraduate students in Uttarakhand and is grounded in the established Mass Communication theories that explain media use, dependency, access, and information outcomes. The framework of the study primarily draws upon Uses and Gratifications Theory, Media Dependency Theory, and Knowledge Gap Theory, supported by insights from Digital Divide Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens to understand not only the frequency of newspaper consumption but also the motivations, reliance, and differential outcomes of newspaper readership across urban and rural contexts.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch) assumes that media audiences are active participants who consciously choose media to satisfy their specific needs such as that of information, education, personal identity, social interaction, and entertainment. In the context of this study, undergraduate students have been viewed as goal-oriented media users who engage in reading newspapers to fulfil their diverse academic and informational requirements.

Urban and rural students in Uttarakhand may differ significantly in their motivations for reading newspapers. Urban students are likely to use newspapers for career-oriented information, competitive examination preparation, analytical content, and national or international news. In contrast, rural students may rely on newspapers for local news, government schemes, employment-related information, and community affairs. This theory enables the study to analyse how varying socio-economic backgrounds and educational environments shape the gratifications sought from newspapers.

Media Dependency Theory

Media Dependency Theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur) asserts that the more an individual depends on a particular medium to fulfil his/her needs, the greater the influence that medium has on the individual's perceptions, knowledge, and behaviour. Dependency is influenced by the availability of alternative information sources and the stability of the social system.

In the Indian context, disparities in digital infrastructure and media access suggest that rural students may exhibit a higher dependency on newspapers compared to their urban counterparts, who often have access to multiple digital

news platforms. This theory helps explain variations in newspaper readership based on access to digital media, internet connectivity, and trust in print journalism. It also assists in examining the continued relevance of newspapers in rural areas despite the growth of digital media.

Knowledge Gap Theory

Knowledge Gap Theory (Tichenor, Donohue & Olien) argues that as the flow of information increases, individuals with higher socio-economic status tend to acquire information at a faster rate than those with lower socio-economic status, thereby widening the knowledge gap. This theory is particularly relevant to the Indian higher education landscape, where urban–rural divides persist in terms of educational resources, language proficiency, and media exposure.

The study applies this theory to examine whether newspaper consumption helps bridge or widen knowledge gaps between urban and rural undergraduate students. Differences in comprehension of national issues, political awareness, and public affairs are analysed in relation to newspaper exposure, language of newspapers (English versus vernacular), and reading frequency.

Digital Divide Theory

Digital Divide Theory complements the above perspectives by highlighting inequalities in access to digital technologies, internet connectivity, and digital literacy. While urban students increasingly rely on online news platforms, rural students may continue to depend on print newspapers due to limited digital access or affordability constraints.

Incorporating this theory allows the study to contextualise newspaper reading patterns within broader structural inequalities. It helps explain why newspapers remain a significant source of information for rural students and how digital access influences media choice among urban students.

Integrative Framework

By integrating Uses and Gratifications Theory, Media Dependency Theory, Knowledge Gap Theory, and Digital Divide Theory, the study develops a multidimensional framework to analyse newspaper reading patterns among undergraduate rural and urban undergraduate students in Uttarakhand. The framework connects media access, motivations, dependency, and information outcomes, enabling a nuanced comparison between urban and rural readership practices. This theoretical approach ensures a holistic understanding of how socio-cultural, technological, and educational factors influence newspaper consumption in contemporary India.

6. METHODOLOGY

Sampling

1. The researcher collected information related to the study from undergraduate college and university students in urban and rural areas of Uttarakhand. Random sampling method was used by circulating structured questionnaire among various college and university students in the state through faculty members working in these institutes.
2. Focus Group Discussions (FCDs) were conducted with two groups on 10 undergraduate students each from urban and rural areas of Uttarakhand. Open-ended questions were designed to get insightful responses. Number of male and female participants was kept equal.

Data collection

Primary data

Quantitative data was collected from the above mentioned universe by floating questionnaires. Two set of questionnaires were made for urban and rural undergraduate students. The questionnaire circulated among rural students was bilingual (both in English as well as Hindi). A total of 151 responses were received from undergraduate students in urban areas of Uttarakhand. The number of respondents from rural students was 45. Poor Internet connectivity in the rural and hilly areas of the state may be the reason in the disparity in two sections' responses. Qualitative data collected by analysing focus group discussions.

Secondary data

Secondary data was collected from published studies and researches on the newspaper reading patterns of youth in India and published newspaper and online reports on related issues. Uttarakhand related statistics, relevant for the study was collected from the 2011 census report.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The data collected for the study had more responses from female students. While in urban areas they made 67.3 % of the total respondents, in rural areas 52.4 % of the total respondents were females.

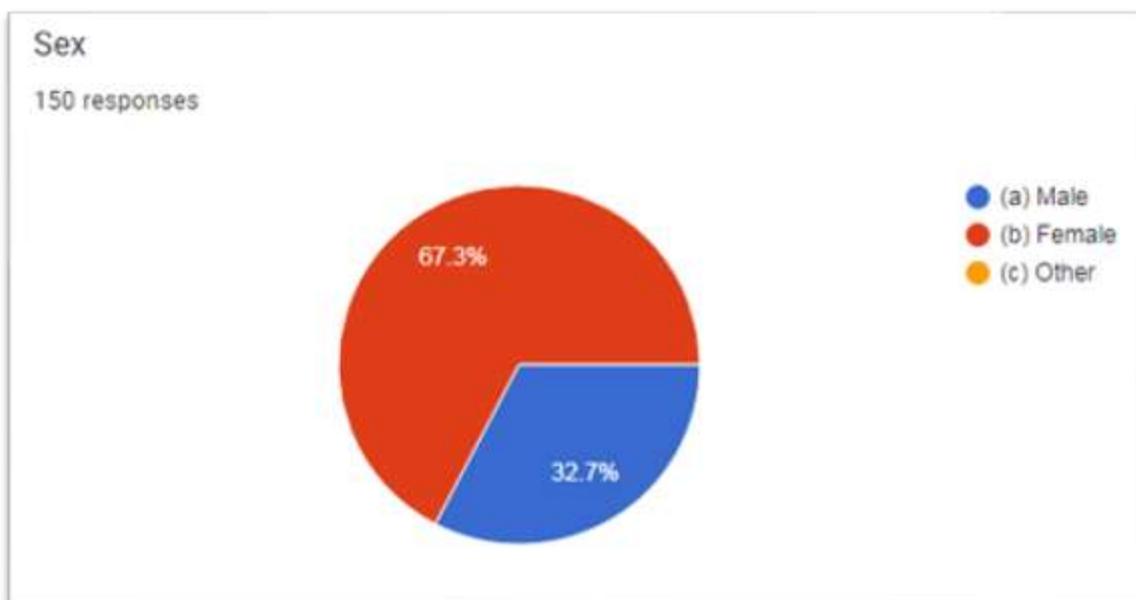


Fig 1 (Urban)

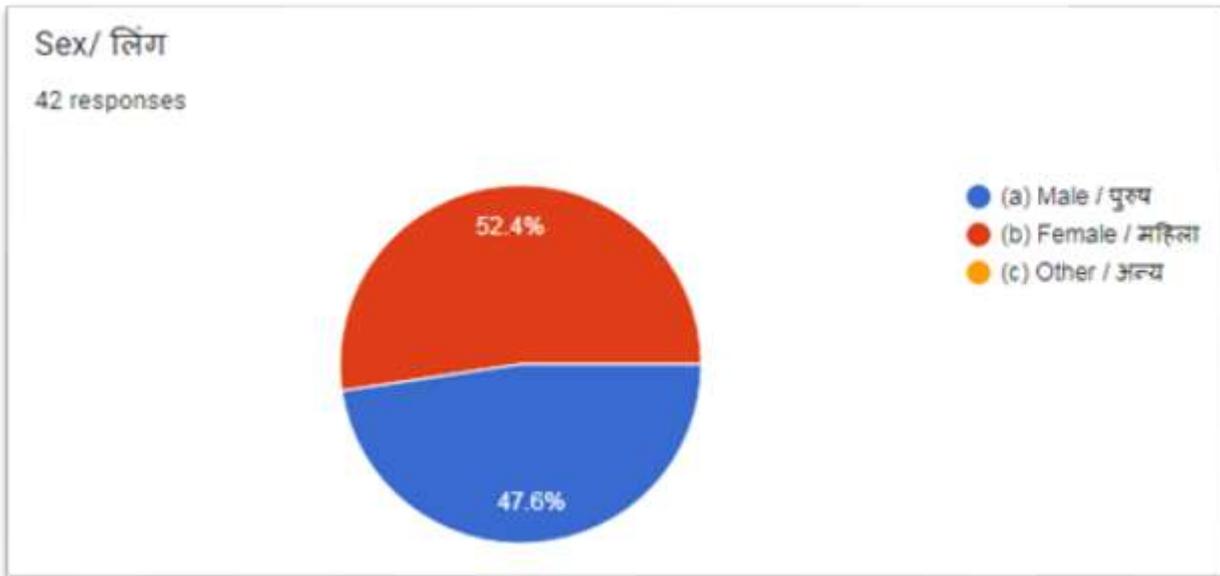


Fig 1.1 (Rural)

When asked if they liked reading newspapers, 97.6 % of rural undergraduate students replied in affirmative. In contrast to this only 74.8 % of urban college and university students in Uttarakhand liked to read newspapers. Remaining 25.2 % said that they don't like to read newspapers.

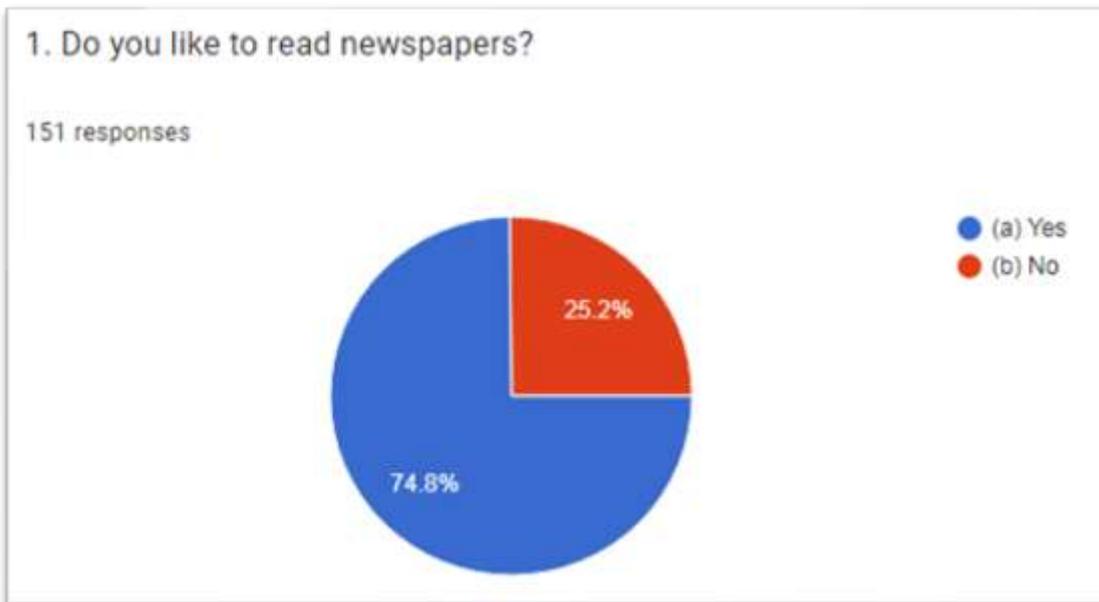


Fig 2 (Urban)

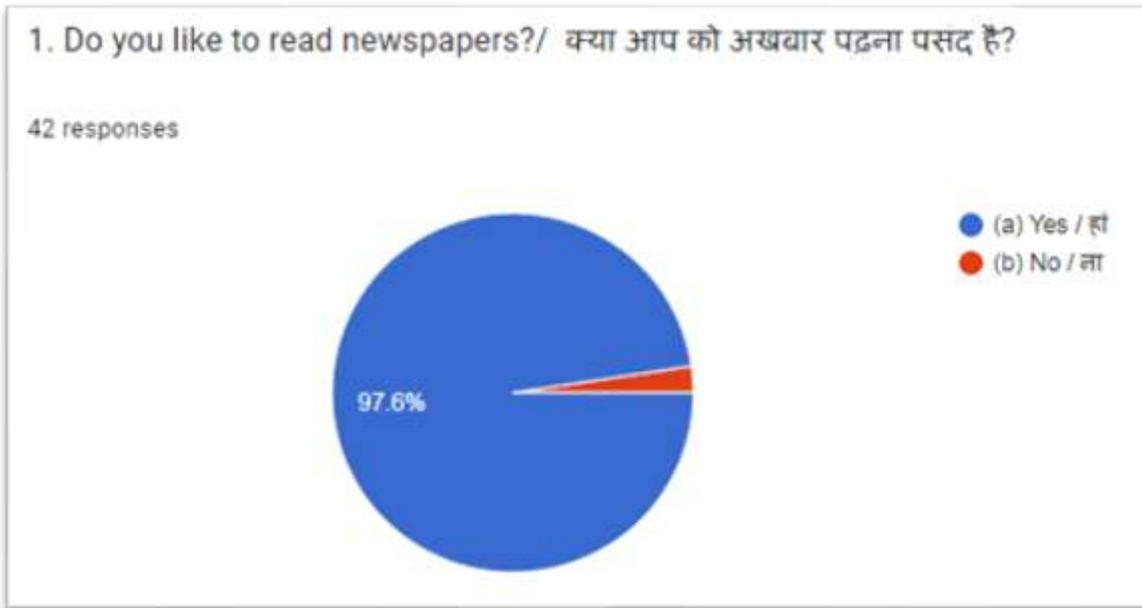


Fig 2.1 (Rural)

Printed newspapers seem to be still preferred by rural readers. Of the rural students surveyed in this study, a total of 61.9 % said that they consumed their daily news from the printed editions of newspapers. Remaining 38.1 % said that they read online editions of newspapers of their choice. In urban areas, which have good Internet access, 56.7 % students that they preferred online mode of newspaper reading. 43.3 % of urban undergraduates said that they read news from offline printed editions of newspapers.

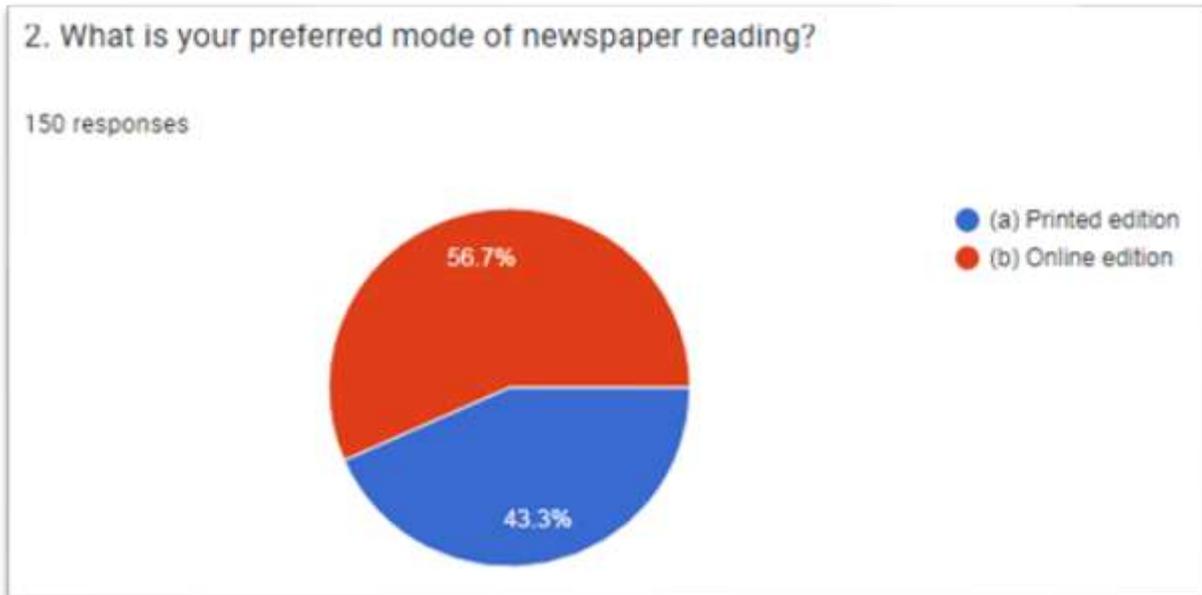


Fig 3 (Urban)

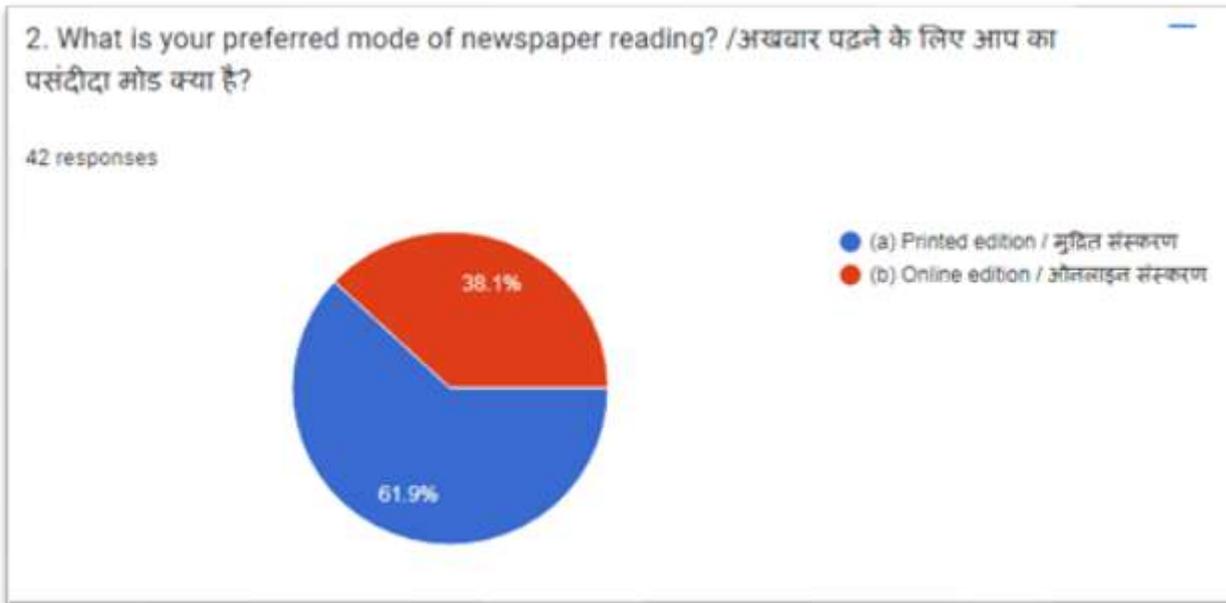


Fig 3.1 (Rural)

On frequency of their reading newspapers, 40.7 % of urban students said alternate days. 40 % of the respondents said that they read newspapers once a week. Of the total urban respondents, 12 % seem to be in a habit of reading newspapers daily and 7.3 % said that they don't read newspapers at all. In sharp contrast to their urban counterparts, the rural undergraduate students in Uttarakhand seem to be more frequent newspaper readers. 59.5 % of them said that they read newspapers on daily basis. 26.2 % of them reported to reading newspapers on alternate days and 14.3 % said that newspaper reading was their once a week business. There were no respondent who never read newspapers. The finding establishes that newspaper reading among youth is more extensive in the rural belts of Uttarakhand.

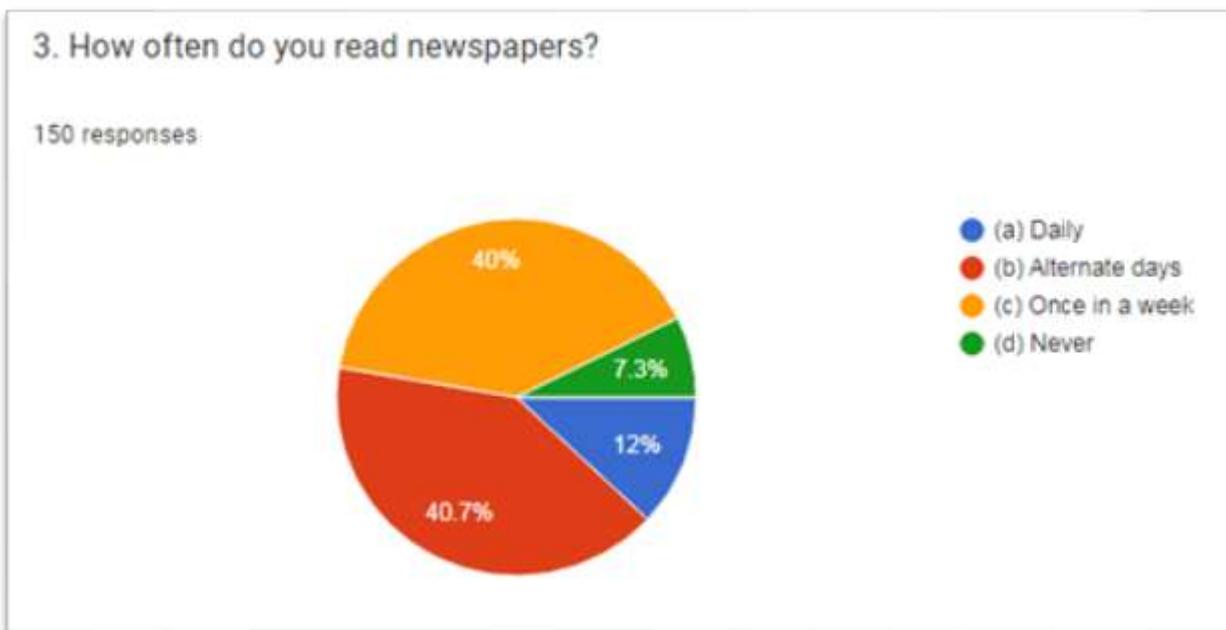


Fig 4 (Urban)

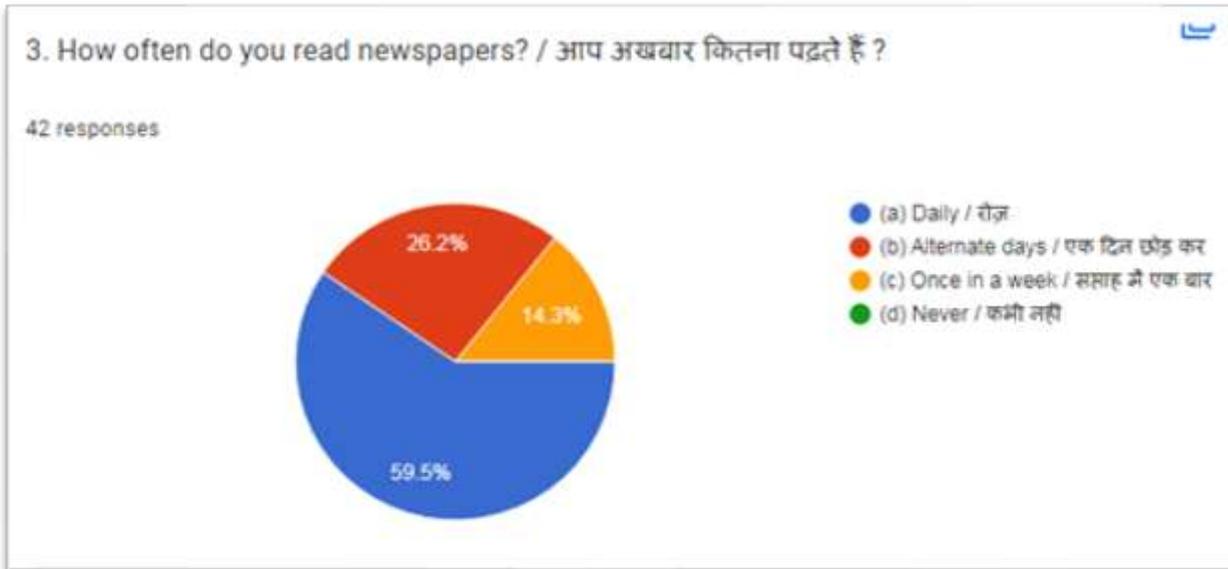


Fig 4.1

The total time spend in reading newspapers too came out to be more in case of college or university going youths in the remote or hilly regions than their equals in the developed urban areas in the state. A total of 16.7 % of the rural respondents gave 30 minutes to 1 hour to newspaper reading daily. None of the respondent in urban Uttarakhand dedicated this much time to reading newspapers. Of the rural undergraduates studied, 42.9 % dedicated their 15 to 30 minutes to newspaper reading daily, while the number of responses to this option in the urban sample was 49.3 %. Those who read newspapers for less than 15 minutes daily were 41.9 % in urban and 35.7 % in rural Uttarakhand.

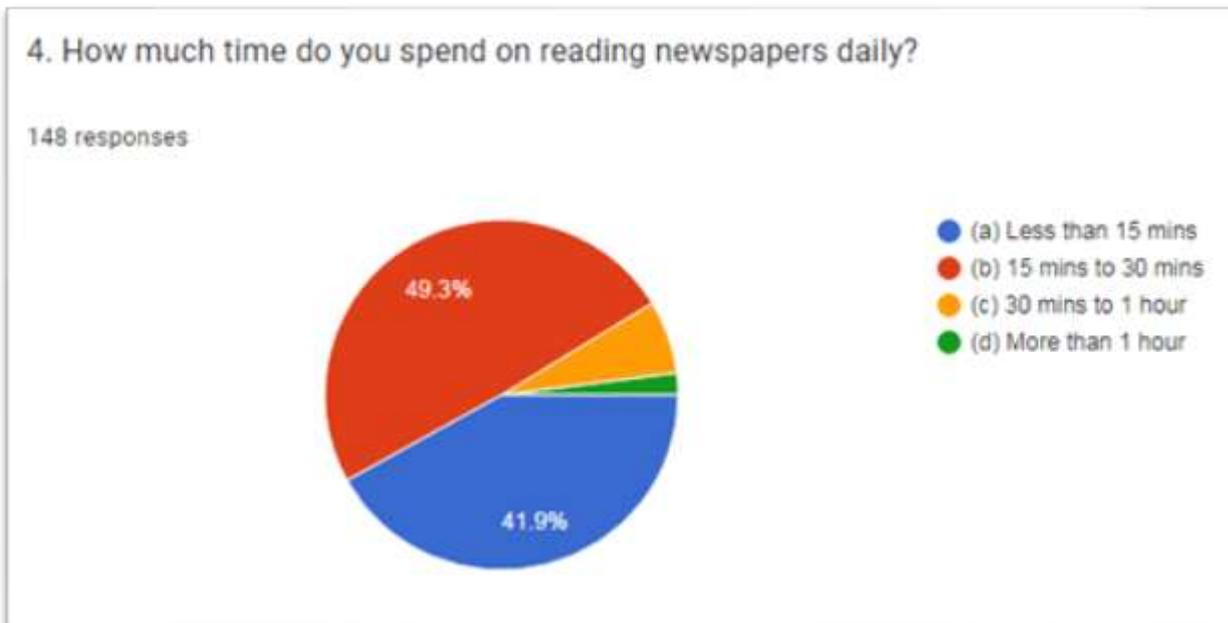


Fig 5 (Urban)

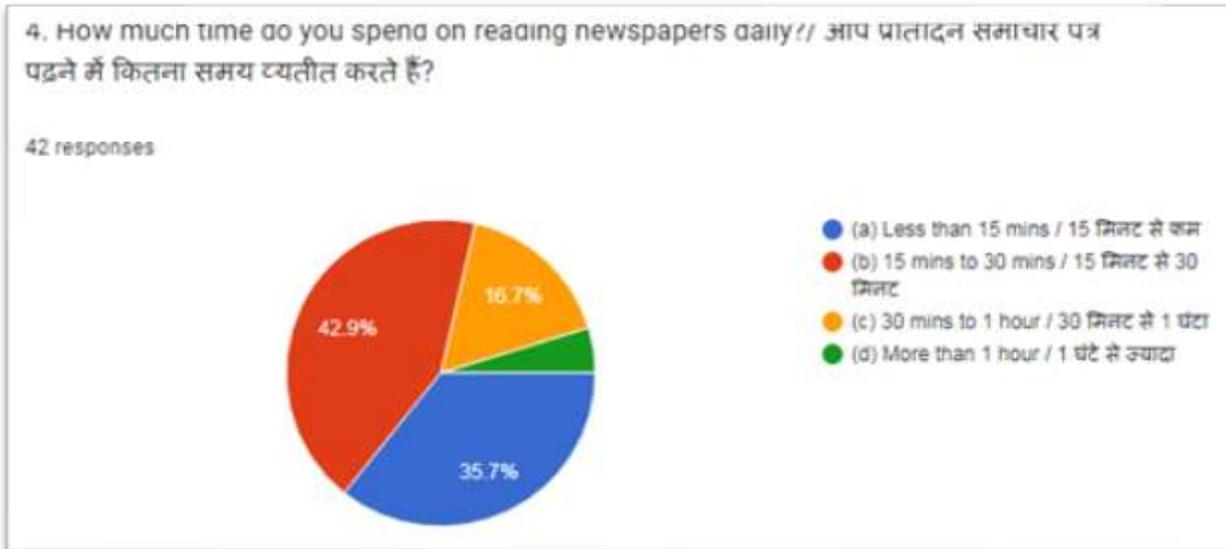


Fig 5.1 (Rural)

When asked to name the place where they read newspapers, 61.9 % of the rural students said in their homes. Only 48.3 % of urban undergraduates read their newspapers in their home. While 47 % of urban sample said that they read newspapers 'anywhere', only 21.4 % of the rural students chose this response. Rural students seem to be in the practice of reading newspapers in their college or university, with 9.5 % of them mentioning it in their response, almost negligible urban undergraduates said that they read newspapers in their educational institutes.

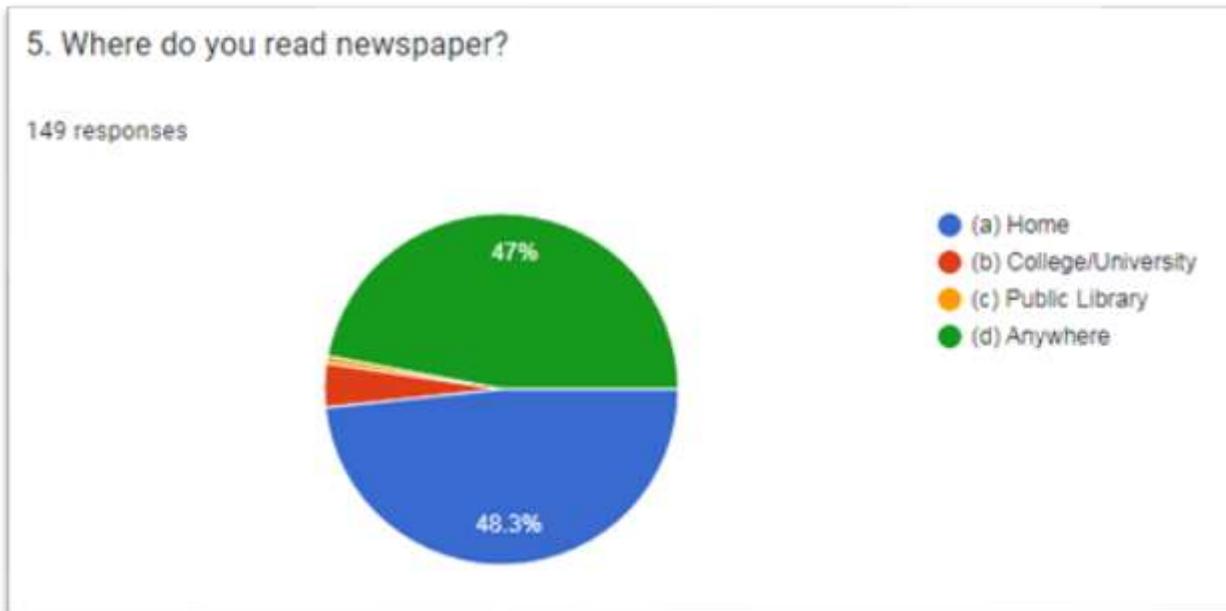


Fig 6 (Urban)

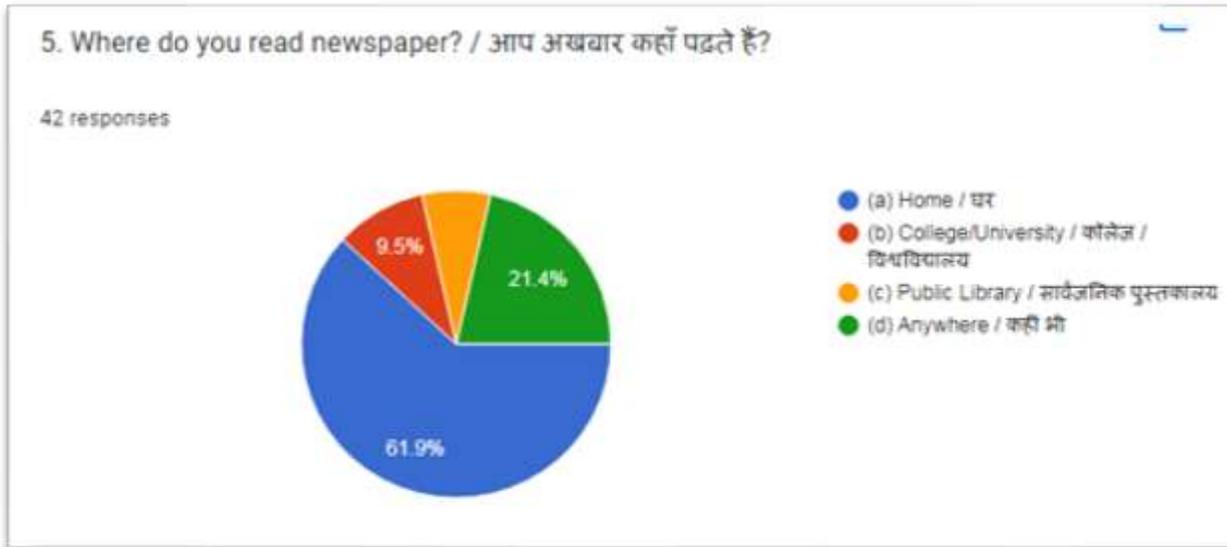


Fig 6.1 (Rural)

The rural sample surveyed seems to be in the habit of reading more newspapers daily. 14.3 % of them said that they read as many newspapers as possible daily. While 19 % said two, 66.7 % said that they read one newspaper daily. Amongst urban students studied, 10.5 % said as many as possible, 9.8 % said two and 78.3 % said that they read one newspaper in a day.

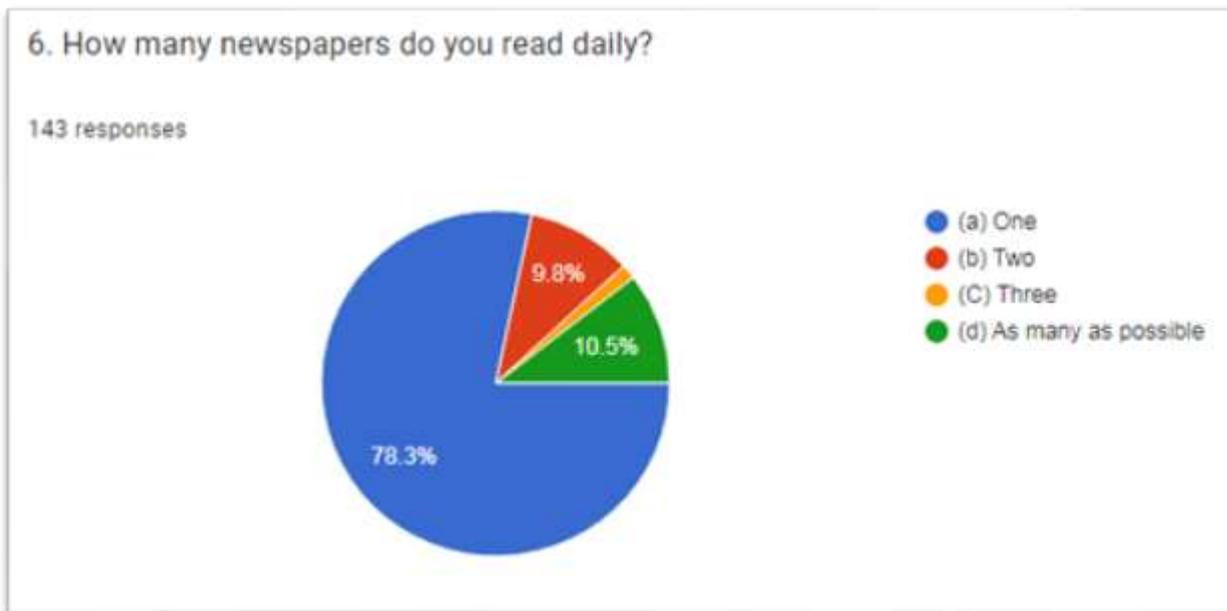


Fig 7 (Urban)

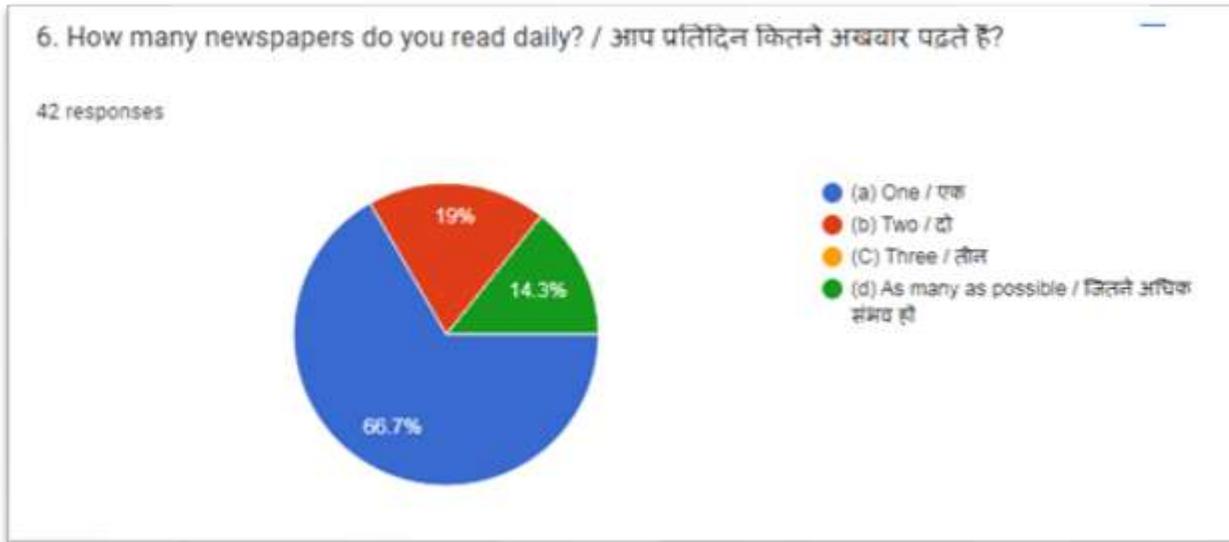


Fig 7.1 (Rural)

English came out as the referred language of urban college students in Uttarakhand, with 65.1 % of them mentioning it as their preferred language. In rural areas, however, Hindi was the preferred language of newspaper reading for students, with 54.8 % students mentioning it. 32.9 % of urban youth said that they preferred Hindi over English, while 45.2 % of the rural students preferred English as their preferred language of reading newspapers.

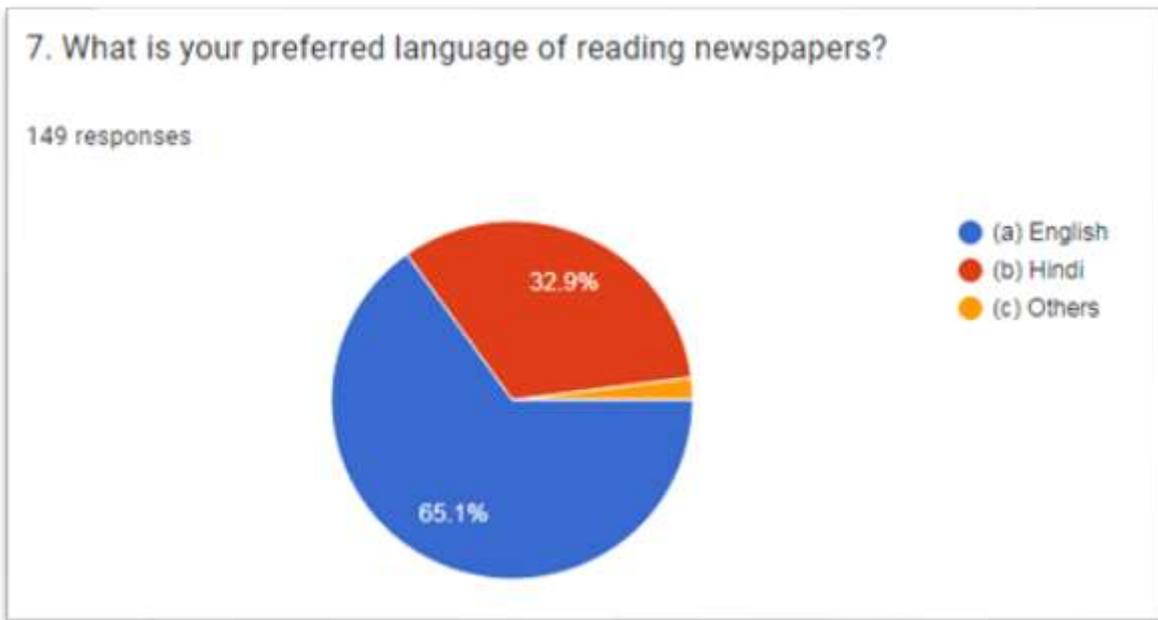


Fig 8 (Urban)

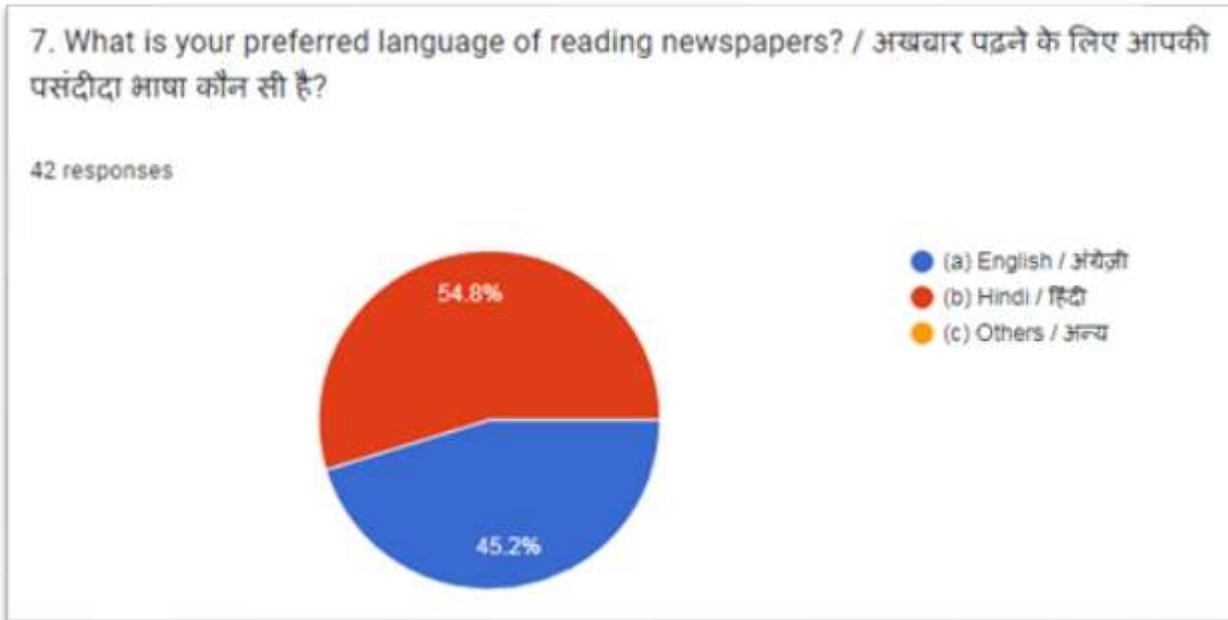


Fig 8.1

(Rural)

The Times of India came out as the favourite English daily among both urban (64.6 %) and rural (50 %) undergraduates in Uttarakhand. Interestingly, The Hindu was second choice of rural students, with 26.2 % of opting for it. Hindustan Times was in the third position (19%) in the list of favourite newspapers of rural students. Among urban students, Hindustan Times (20.8 %) was the second and The Hindu (9.7 %) was the third preferred choice of students.

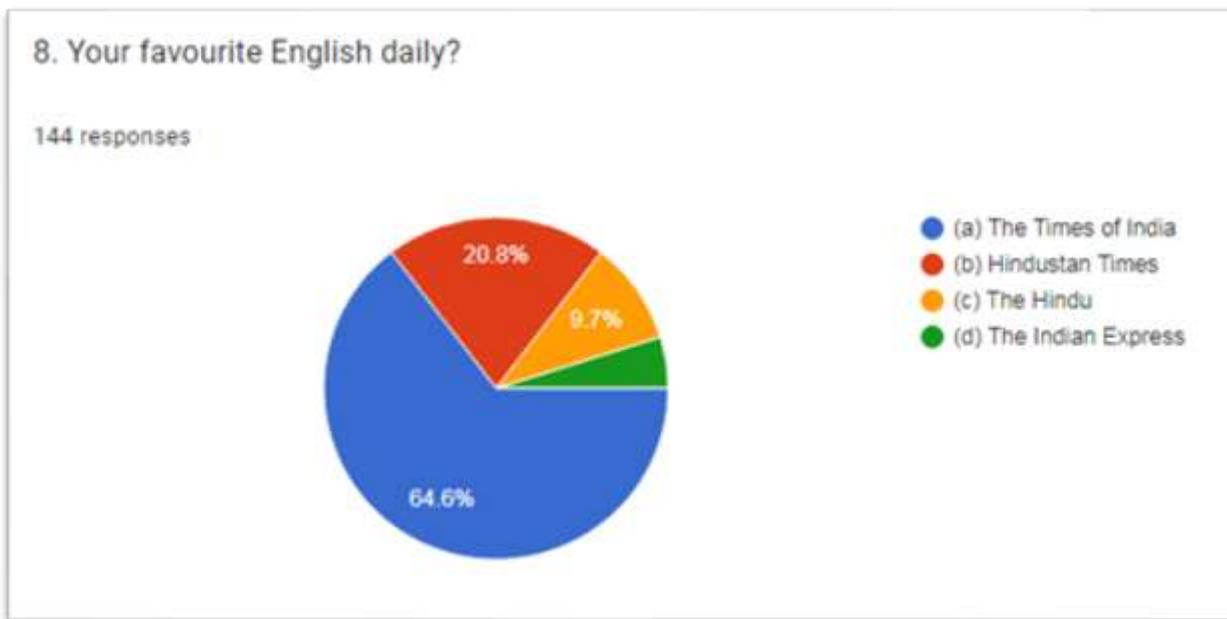


Fig 9 (Urban)

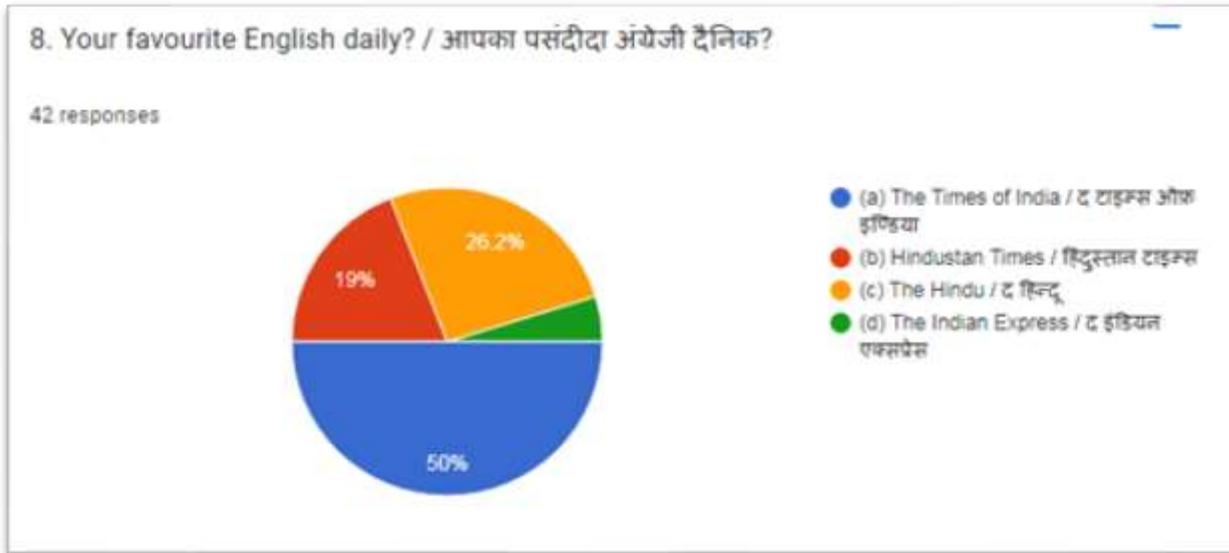


Fig 9.1 (Rural)

Among Hindi dailies, Amar Ujala was the first choice of both rural (52.4 %) and urban (43.2 %) undergraduates students in the state. Among rural students, 40.5 % chose Dainik Jagran as their favourite newspapers and 7.1 % picked up Hindustan. The takers of Dainik Jagran and Hindustan among the urban students were 36.3 % and 20.5 % respectively.

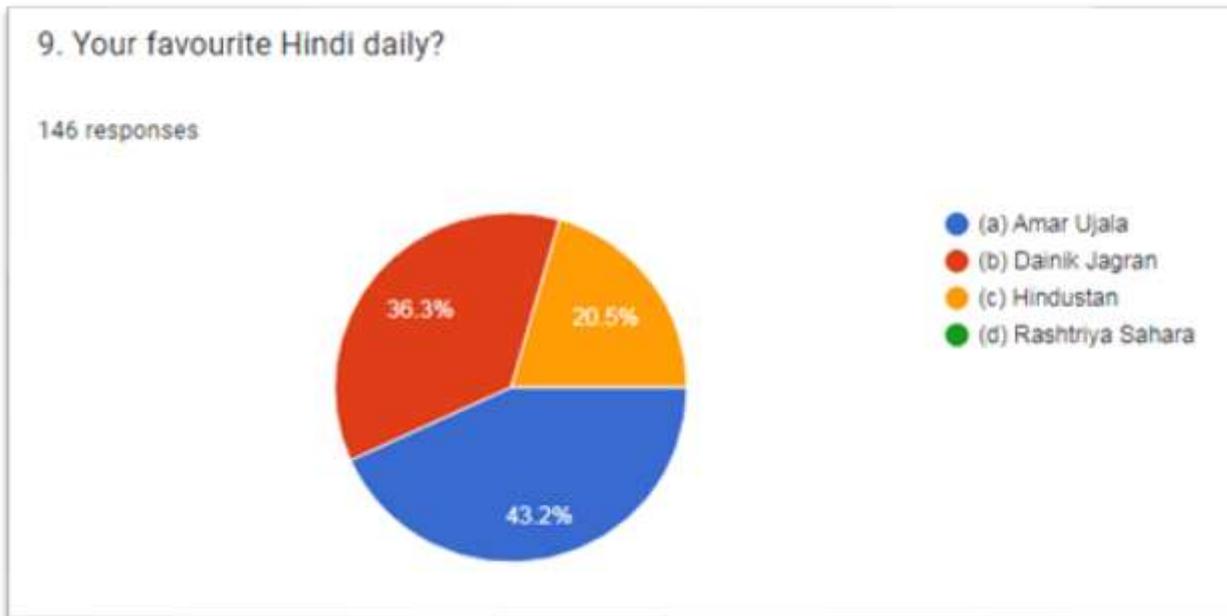


Fig 10 (Urban)

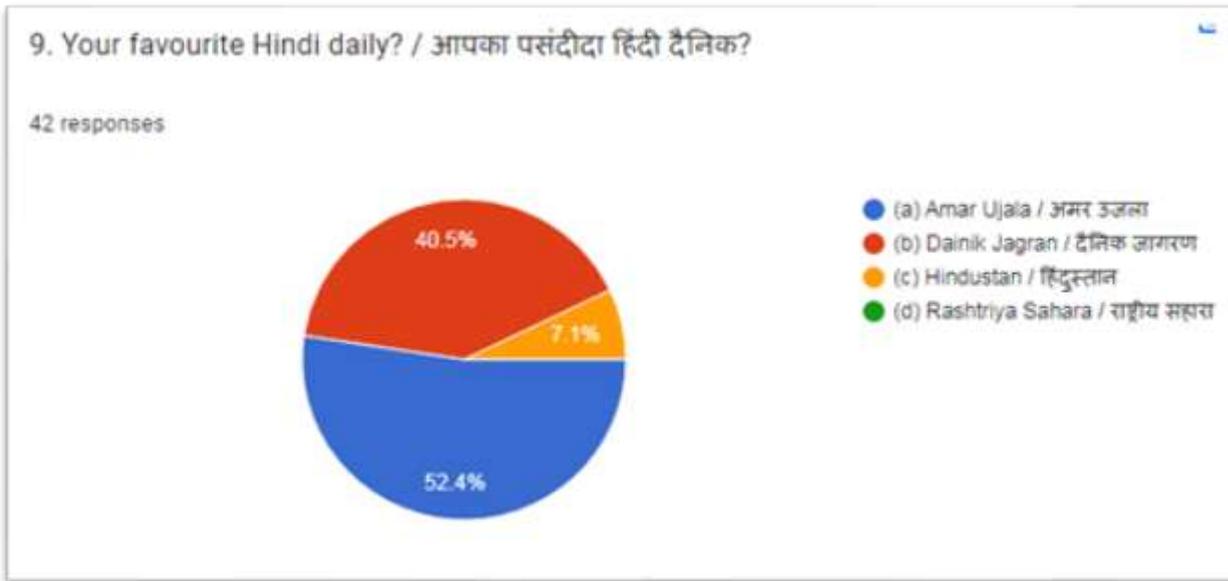


Fig 10.1 (Rural)

Most of the urban (57 %) as well as rural (52.4 %) college students studied, said that they read newspapers for news and information. A total of 42.9 % of the rural sample and 20.5 % of the urban sample said that they read newspapers to gain knowledge. 'Entertainment' came out to be the reason for a total of 7.4 % of the urban students.

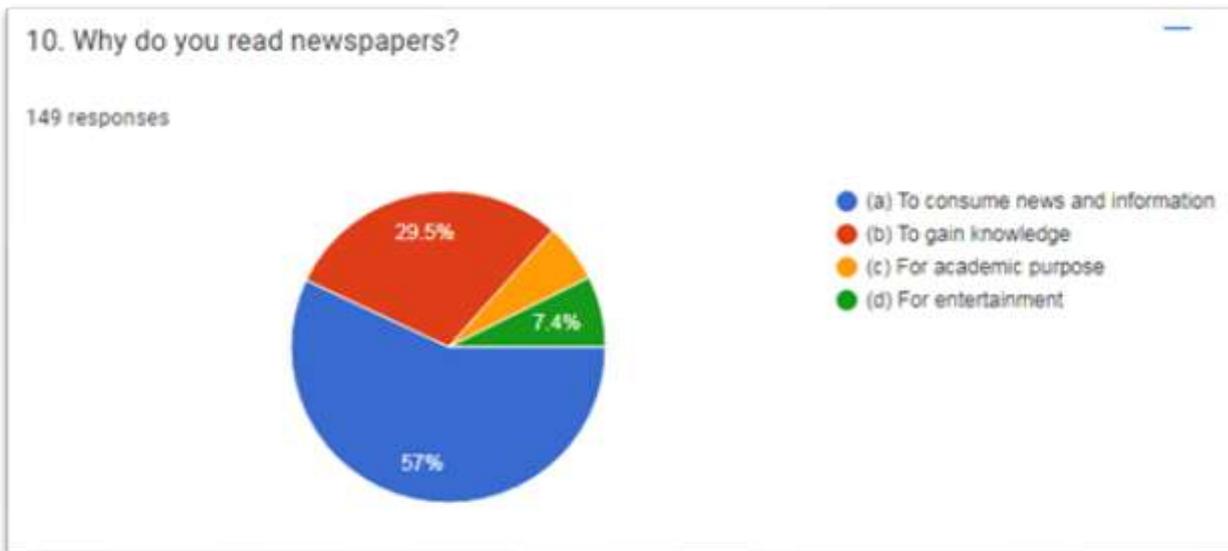


Fig 11 (Urban)

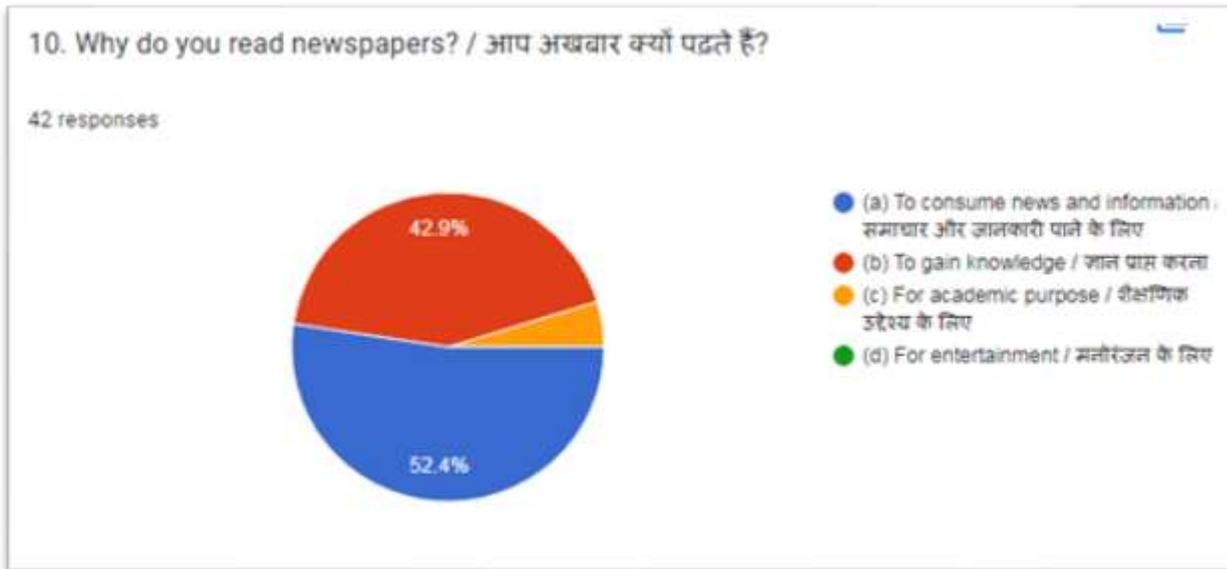


Fig 11.1 (Rural)

While maximum number of urban undergraduate students in Uttarakhand (34.7 %) preferred to read crime-related stories as their first choice in the newspapers, 24.7 % preferred to read political news and 20 % said that they preferred to read education related news. In rural sample, however, the preferences were different, with maximum (69 %) number of students saying that they preferred to read news related to education. 16.7 % of rural respondents said that political news was their first choice. Interestingly, contrary to their urban counterparts, there was no takers of crime related news in the rural sample studied.

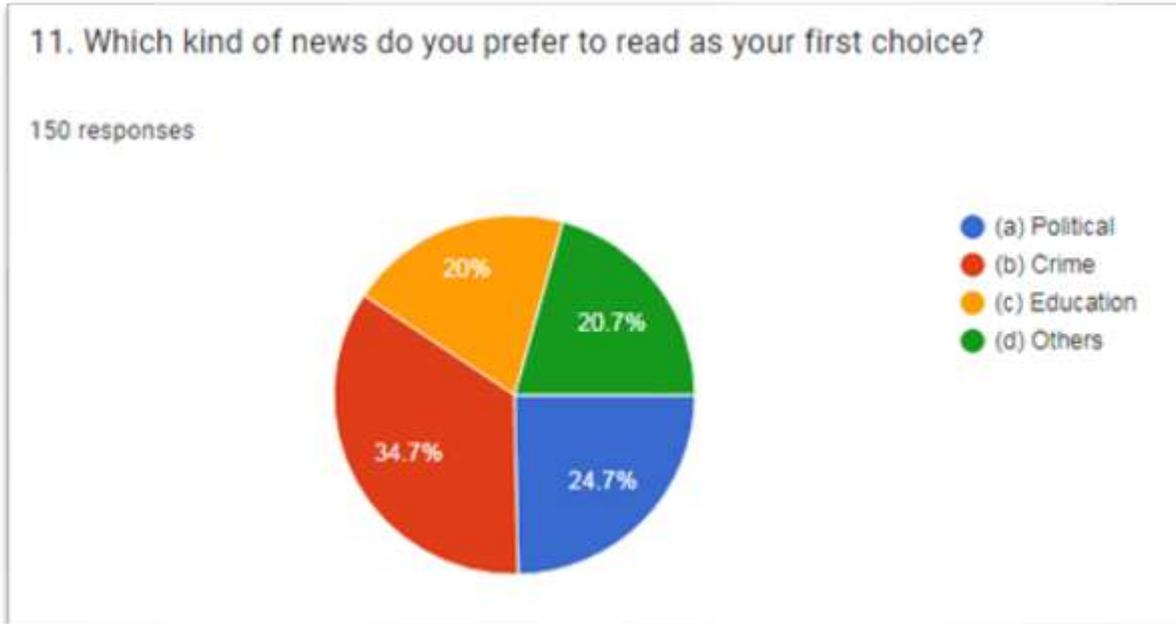


Fig 12 (Urban)



Fig 12.1 (Rural)

Editorial page is defined by some as the 'soul of a newspaper' and considered the most prestigious page, which remain same across all the editions of a newspaper, had more takers among the rural students, with 64.3 % of them saying that yes, they read the editorial page. Among the urban students, only 30.9 % said that they read the editorial page. While 51.7% of the urban students and 31 % of the rural students said that they read the editorial page sometimes, 17.4 % of the urban students admitted that they don't read the page at all.

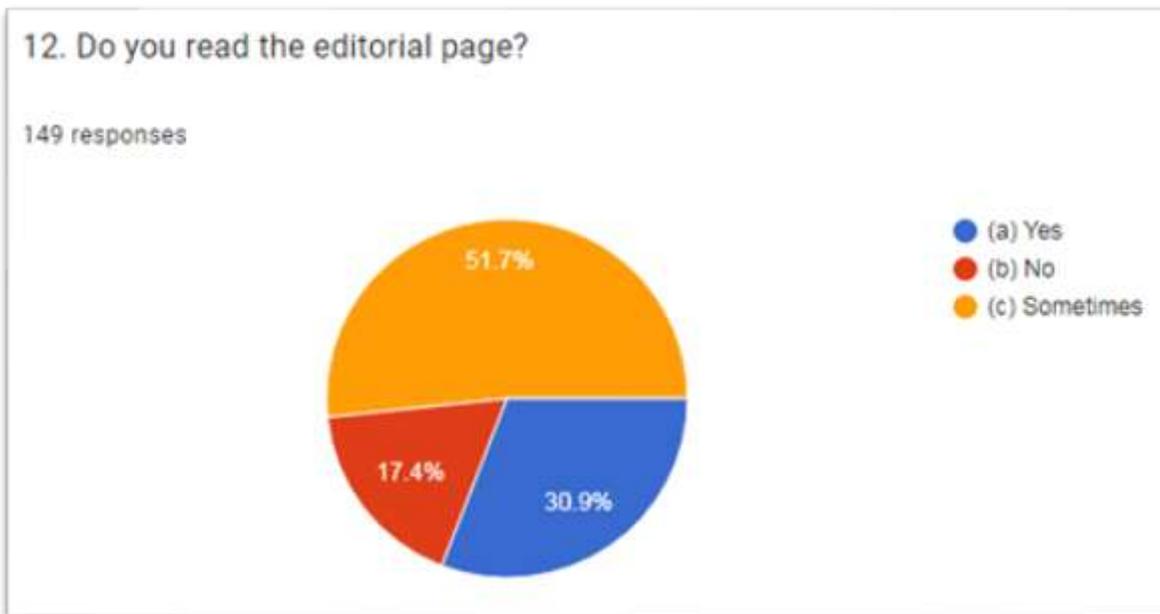


Fig 13 (Urban)

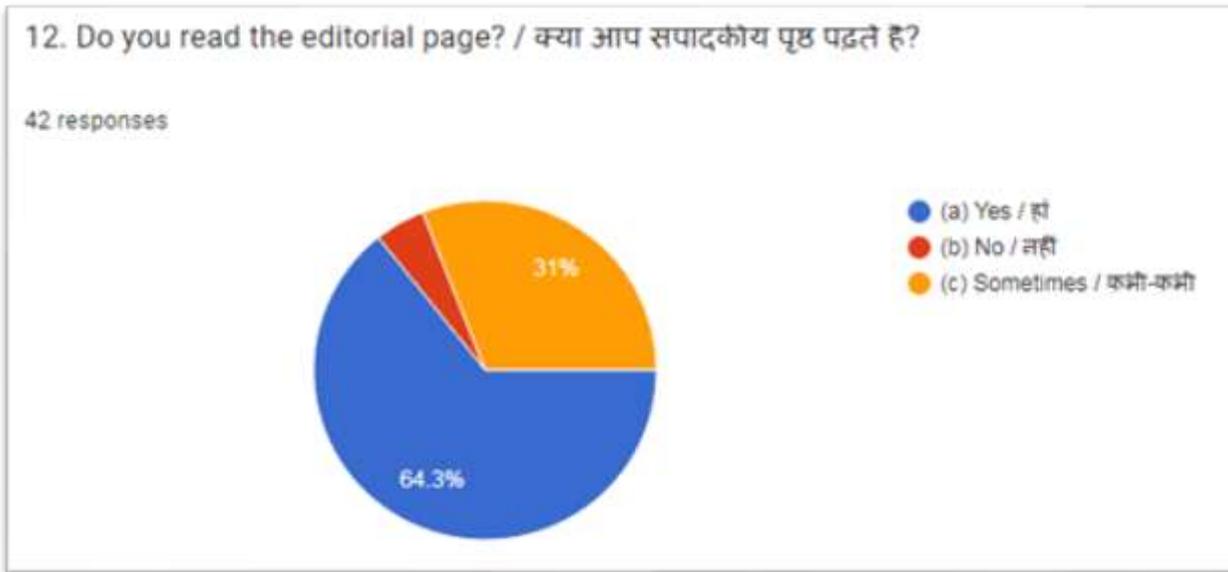


Fig 13.1 (Rural)

Several studies have already established the credibility quotient of newspapers over other forms of media and this was further restated in the present study. With 90.5 % of rural students surveyed and 77 % of the urban students saying that they find newspapers as a credible source of information.

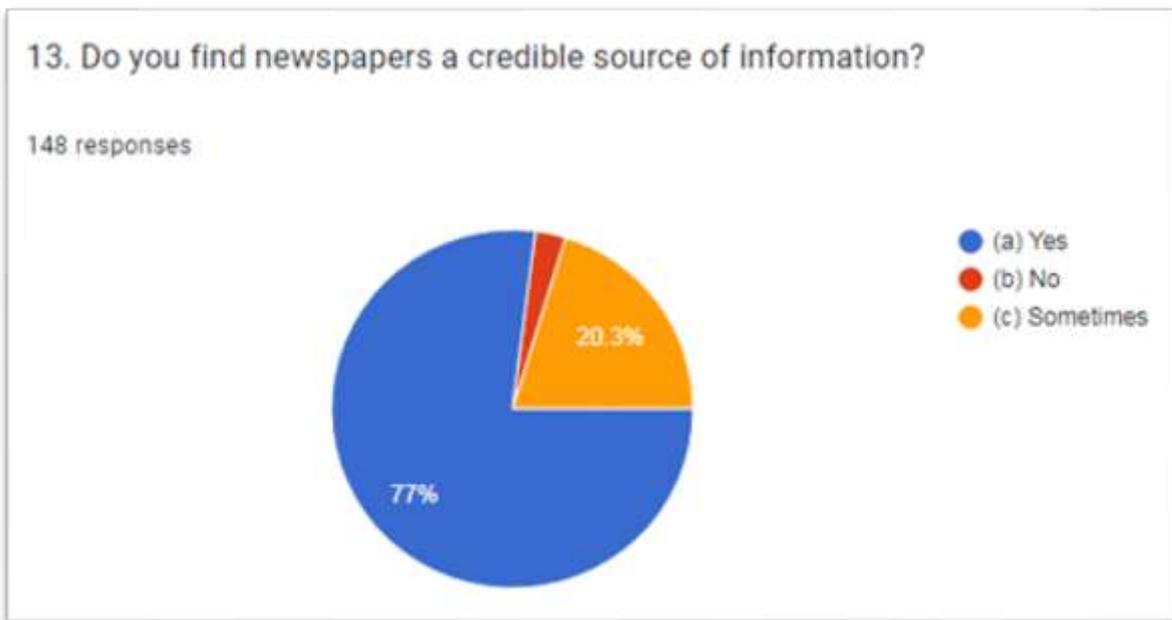


Fig 14 (Urban)

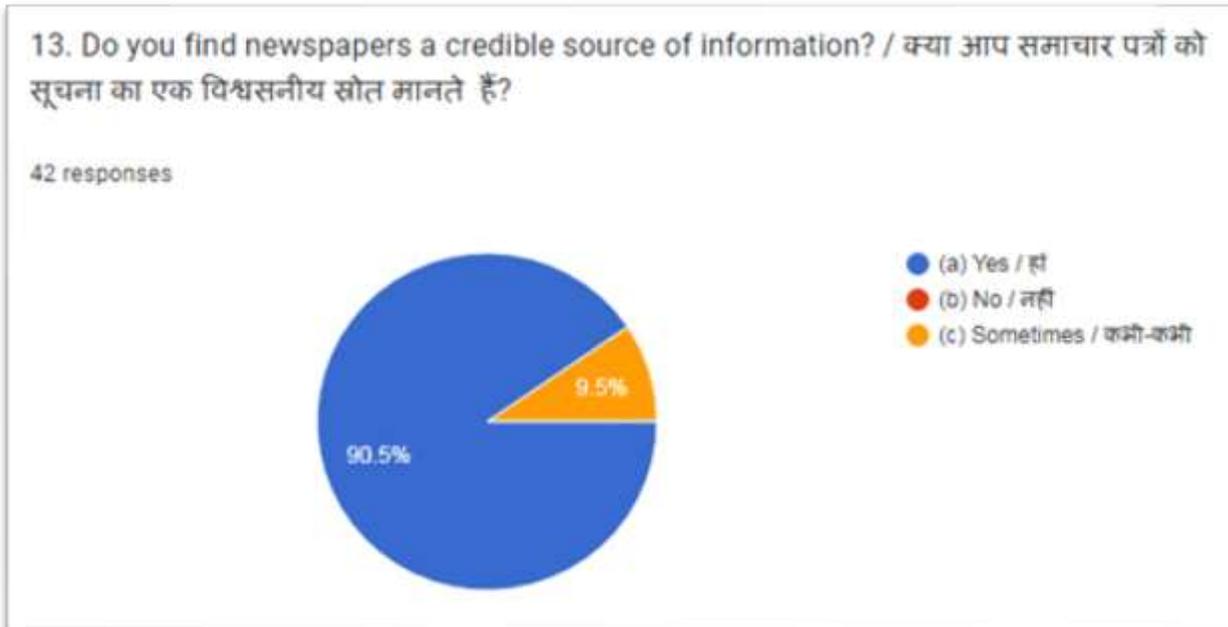


Fig 14.1 (Rural)

The biggest problem with newspapers according to both rural (42.9 %) and urban (34.9 %) undergraduate students studies was that they give news the next day. Another 34.9 % urban and 33.3 % rural students it was the political bias of newspapers. 16.7 % of rural and 16.1 % of urban students said that newspapers have limited space. 14.1 % of urban and 7.1 % of the rural students believed that newspapers are 'old-fashioned' sources of news.

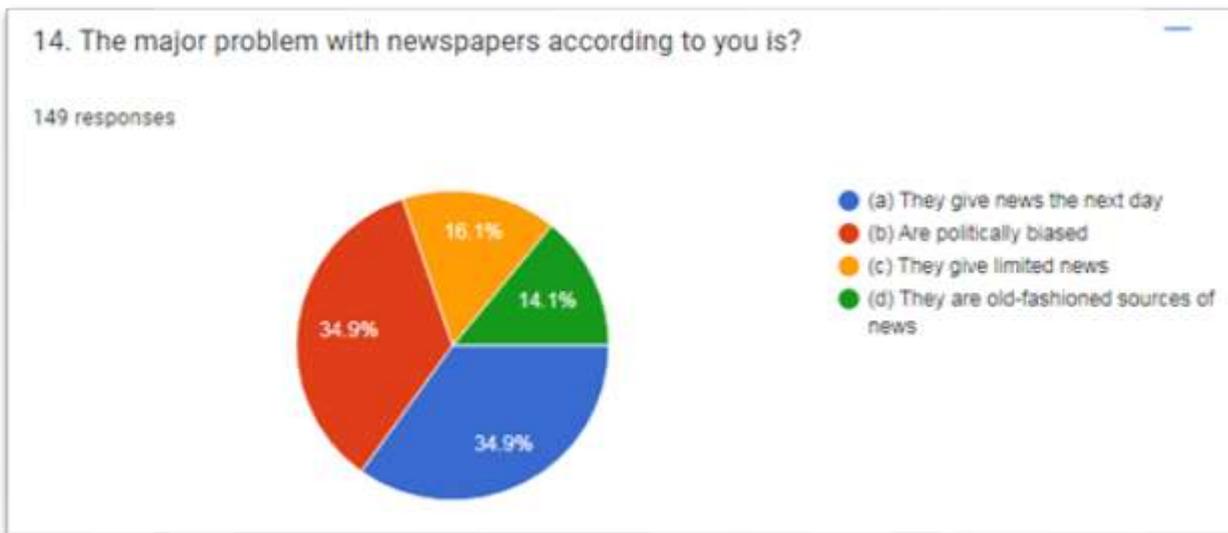


Fig 15 (Urban)

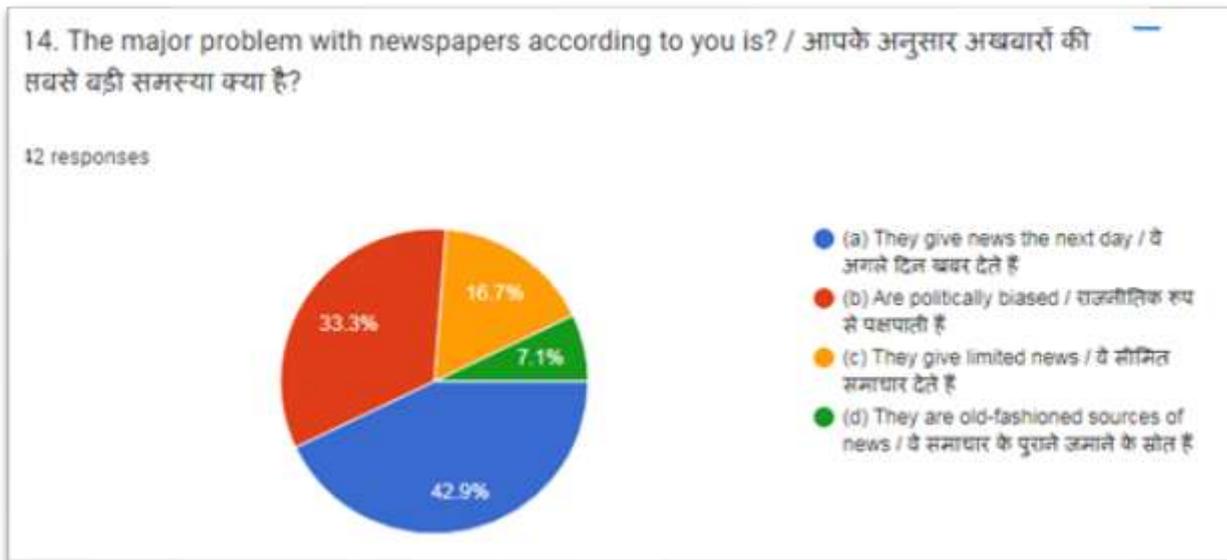


Fig 15.1 (Rural)

8. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

FGDs were conducted with two groups of 10 undergraduate students each from urban and rural areas of Uttarakhand. Of the total number of 40 students, half, i.e, 20 were female respondents. The respondents were aged between 19 and 22 years. 53.1 % of the respondents in urban areas were aged 19 and 18.5% were 20 year old. In the rural groups, 31 % were 21 year old and 11.9 % were aged 20. A total of 55.2 % of the urban students and 72% of the rural students came from service class families. Those who received newspapers in their homes daily, constituted 61 % of the urban groups and 89 % of the rural lot.

Open-ended questions were asked in moderated settings to elucidate original and variety of responses. The FGDs were conducted for 20 minutes with each group and common responses noted and examined to study the trends. On being asked about what according to them is the right age for students to start reading newspapers, more than 50 % of students both from urban and rural areas said that it was 14 years. There were few who said that newspapers reading on daily basis should start from even younger age and the responses included 8, 9 10 and 12 years. On ease of reading newspapers offline versus online, 70 % of the students said that reading the newspaper offline, was much more convenient and easy. The advertisements cropping up on their smartphone screens while reading online newspapers was the biggest 'problem' and 'distraction' for most of them who newspapers digitally.

On being asked about their motivation for reading newspapers, most of the students from both groups, majorly named their parents or teachers. While close to 30 % of the students from both groups said that they are 'forced' to read newspapers, remaining 70 % said that they read newspapers as they are interested in doing that.

Like in the qualitative survey, most of the students in the focus group said that they don't read editorial page of a newspaper, because of relatively 'tough' language and 'unfamiliar' issue discussed there. Rural students came out to be more frequent readers of editorial pages of the newspapers. One of the regular columns of The Times of India, "The Speaking Tree" was the main reason for 50 % of The Times of India readers for going to its editorial page. The Hindu was rated as the most 'balanced' newspapers by English newspaper readers in both urban and rural areas. As was already established in the qualitative study, Amar Ujala was the most favourite Hindi newspapers among undergraduate students in Uttarakhand. This was in contrast to the national surveys, which establish Dainik Jagran to be the present most read Hindi daily in India. The Hindu seemed to be the preferred choice of students who are preparing for competitive exams.

The common trend of newspaper reading in both the groups was to first glance through all the headline on the page and then pick up the news that interests them. Almost 91 % of students believed that reading newspapers helps them to improve their language, vocabulary and grammar. While most of the Hindi newspaper readers found Amar Ujala to be

the most comprehensible newspaper, in terms of its language and info-graphics, graphs and bullet points used to explain the story, The Times of India was the top choice in this regard among English newspaper readers in both the groups. Though most of the students in both the groups said that they read newspapers in their homes, college/university, public libraries or on their mobilephone screens, merely 5 % of urban and 8 % of rural students said that they buy newspapers from their pocket money. Most of the students said that they also glance through the printed advertisements in the newspaper, but very less said that they have bought something after seeing its add on a newspaper.

9. RESULTS & CONCLUSION

It was found in the research that more undergraduate students in the rural areas of Uttarakhand like to read newspapers as a daily habit. While printed newspaper editions were preferred by the rural students, the urban student consumed more news through online editions of their favourite newspapers. The disparity in the newspaper reading habits of the two lots may be because of lack of proper Internet connectivity in rural Uttarakhand. Further, it was revealed in the study that college students in rural areas in the state spend more time on reading newspapers and read them more frequently than their urban counterparts. More number of rural students read newspapers in their homes and college/university than urban ones. It was found that rural students still visit public libraries and read more number of newspapers than their urban mates. Presumably because of better Internet access in the urban areas, more number of students here read newspapers 'anywhere'. While English came out as the preferred choice of language for urban students for reading newspapers, rural students preferred Hindi. While The Times of India and Amar Ujala came out as the favourite English and Hindi dailies among both urban and rural students, The Hindu had more takers among the rural students, while Hindi daily, Hindustan had more readers among urban students than their rural counterparts. It was further revealed that more number of rural students read newspapers for the purpose of gaining knowledge than the urban folks. Sharp contrast was seen in the type of news that the students wanted to read as their first choice in the two segments. While for rural students it was education related news and information, the urban students seemed to enjoy the 'thrill' of reading crime news more. Editorial page, which is considered to be the most prestigious page of a newspaper had far more takers among rural students than the urban ones. An already established fact through numerous studies that newspapers are still considered to be the most credible source of information, was restated in the study, by both urban and rural students endorsing that. Both urban and rural students considered that what goes against newspapers was the fact that they are 'time-consuming' in terms of giving them today's news the next day and are politically biased. The urban students seem to have also started looking as newspapers an 'old-fashioned' news source.

10. LIMITATIONS

1. The study is limited to Uttarakhand.
2. As online questionnaires were circulated, there are less number of responses from rural students.

¹ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/readersparadise/the-importance-of-reading-a-newspaper-1552/>

References

- Bharucha, J. (2017). AN ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER READING PATTERNS AMONG THE YOUTH. *International Journal of English and Education* , 138.
- Fatiloru Oluwayemisi Florence, O. A. (2017). A Survey on the Reading Habits among Colleges of Education. *Journal of Education and Practice* , Vol.8, No.8, 2017 .
- Hoover, W. A. (1990). The Simple View of Reading. *Reading and Writing. Scientific Research* , 127-160.
- Kadeeja Banu C V, Y. A. (2018). Newspaper reading habits among the students of Farook college, Kozhikode. *IP Indian Journal of Library Science and Information Technology* , 49-55.

Kaushik Sanjay K, K. J. (2007). Reading Habits of Rural Under-Graduate Students. *Library Herald* , 61-69.

Sethi, N. (2022, October 26). *newindianexpress.com*. Retrieved December 28/12/2022, 2022, from The New Indian Express: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/oct/26/700-villages-out-of-internet-bounds-inuttarakhand-2511806.html>

Yashashvi, V. (2019, January 10). *kafaltree.com*. Retrieved December 30, 2022, from www.kafaltree.com : <https://www.kafaltree.com/history-of-newspapers-in-uttarakhand/>