



## **A STUDY ON CITIZENS WHO WRITE LETTERS TO EDITOR FOR KANNADA NEWSPAPERS**

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### **Abstract:**

This research is about letters to editor column for Kannada newspaper. According to communication specialists feedback is the most important tool in communication. In print media readers give feedback through the column letters to the editor. The readers use this column to share their opinion with the society. Readers write letters to get solutions to many of the social problems. Through this research I'm trying to gather information about the purpose, topics which are covered in the letters to the editor column and to which the readers respond more. This research is done by using Quantitative Survey method. The information for the study is gathered through questionnaire for about 60 people in Belagavi and Dharwad districts of Karnataka.

**Key Words:** Letters to the editor, Citizen, Writers, Readers and Feedback.

### **Introduction:**

Newspapers are not just owned by owners and editors, but they are owned by readers too. Readers are lifeblood for Newspapers. So there is a meaning for keeping space in newspapers for readers to write a column. The column reserved for readers to write letters is letter to the editor column. This space will be filled only by readers and common people.

Letters to the editor: is an important column. It's an opinion of the citizen. A flat form to share freely whatever they feel about issues that are going on in the society. A small voice of the citizen by this flat form can reach lacks of people and also the politicians/ the government servants who are responsible for the issue. Letters to the editor has the power to create campaigns as well.

Writers write for newspapers generally on citizen's problems. In spite of grammar and presentation style the letters to the editor covers life's problems in all possible angles. Letters to the editor is just like feedback for the content. We can say citizens' letters are like lungs to any newspaper by which it can breathe. A debate will be on in everyday newspaper on one or the other topic. So this column is a mirror to the society kept by all the newspapers.

### **Literature Review:**

- According to Wahl-Jorgensen K. (2010) the letters page can be considered a public thermometer as cited because letter writers are not representative of general population.
- According to Dr. Baseer Menan (2016), Small newspapers accept up to 80 per cent of the letters they receive, whereas large newspapers scrap a much larger proportion. Like New York Times, publishes less than 6 percent of the letters received. Most newspapers enforce a limit of 300 words on letters to the editors, as they may allow for the greatest number of individuals to voice their opinion. The demand for increasing the number of letters and decreasing the bulk of individual ones has grown stronger. As igniting debate is the editors' main objective.
- According to Hogan J. (2006), Owing to space constraints, editors hardly publish all of the letters they get. Hence, large circulation broadsheets publish only a small portion of the letters dispatch in by readers. Moreover, letters to editor pages cannot be deemed simple reflections of public opinion. Rather they are carefully constructed texts that frame public debates in particular ways.
- According to Nielsen K. (2010) editors insist that letters pages belong to individual readers, not to spokespeople of this or that organization engaged in signaling to each other, or pursuing free publicity.
- Journalist D. V. Gundappa in his book *Vrutha Patrike* (1928) discussed about letters to the editor column, he said in London people write letters about their day to day problems. And also discussed about some interesting facts in the column with some examples
- Journalist Vishweshvar Bhat in his book *Patrikodyama Pallavi* (2004) discussed in detail about journalism, dailies, editorial department, reporter, sub-editor etc. he also discussed the importance of letters to the editor column with examples.
- H. S. K (2004), he has given detailed information about letters to the editor column in his article *Baraha Patrikodyamada Pusthaka Maale-17*. In this article he discussed about the importance, impact, characteristic, writing style, content for the letter, information in the letter for letters to the editorial column.

- J. B. Kambalimath's book Janamukhi (2009) contains all the letters (99) he wrote for prestigious dailies. When we analyze these 99 letters most of the writers write on citizen's problems. Along with that the letters contain topics about corrupt political system, environment, language, development etc.

**Methodology:**

For this research Quantitative Survey method is used and Simple random sampling method is used to collect data. Appropriate statistical tools are used to analyze the data. SPSS software is also used. 60 citizens from Belagavi and Dharwad, Karnataka are contacted who writes letters to editor for different Kannada newspapers.

**Objectives:**

- To know the reason behind writing letters to editors.
- To know on which topic the citizens write more letters.
- To know the impact on society by the letters to editor column.

**Data Analysis:**

Table 1: Number and Percent distribution of Background characteristics of the respondents

Background Characteristics	Percent	Frequency
<b>Name of the District</b>		
Dharwad	50	30
Belgaum	50	30
<b>Age of the Respondents</b>		
15-20		
21-25	1.66	1
26-30	5	3
31-45	26.66	16
46-60	35	21
61 or more	23.33	14
	8.33	5
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	90	54
Female	10	6
<b>Qualification</b>		
Primary		
SSLC	1.66	1
PUC	1.66	1
Diploma	6.66	4
Graduation	18.33	11
Post Graduation	43.33	26
	28.33	17
<b>Total</b>	100	60

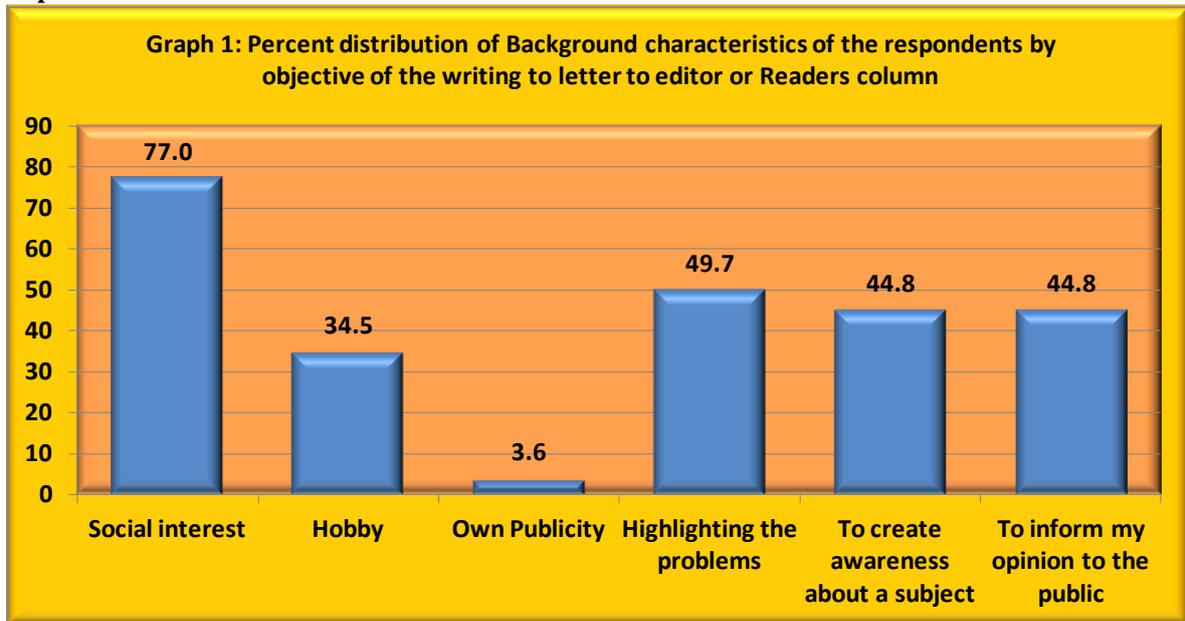
Table 1 shows demographic data of the respondents. When respondents are categorized on the basis of district, 50% respondents are from Belagavi and 50% respondents are from Dharwad.

When respondents are categorized on the basis of age, 0.5% of respondents belongs to the age group of 15-20, 2% respondents belongs to the age group of 21-25, 10.5% respondents belongs to the age group of 26-30, 35.5% respondents belongs to the age group of 31-45, 24% respondents belongs to the age group of 46-60 and 2.5% respondents belongs above 61 age group respondents.

When respondents are categorized on the basis of sex 88% of the respondents are male, 12% of the respondents are female.

When respondents are categorized on the basis of education 2% of the respondents completed Primary, 2% of the respondents completed SSLC, 4% of the respondents completed PUC, 16% of the respondents completed Diploma, 46% of the respondents completed degree, 30% of the respondents completed master degree.

**Graph 1:**

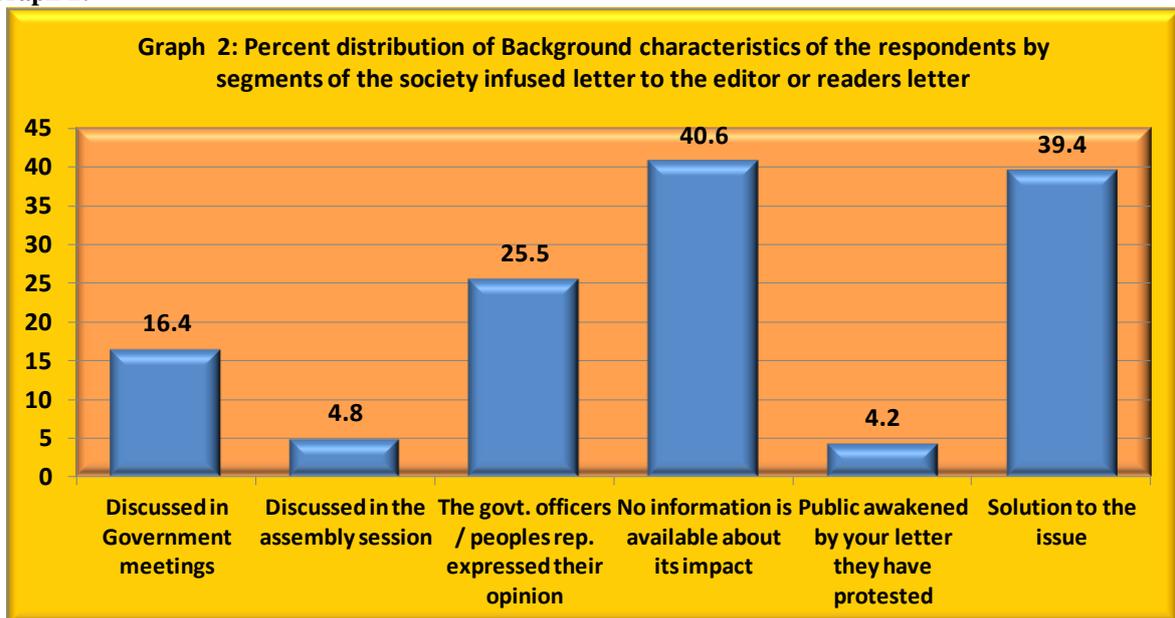


(Note: Multiple responses may not be added to 100%)

Graph 1 shows that the percentage distribution of background characteristics of the respondents by objective of the writing letters to editor or readers column.

When we analyzed Graph 1, 77% of the respondents because of social interest, 34.34% of the respondents for hobby, 3.6% of the respondents for own publicity, 49.7% of the respondents for highlighting the problems, 44.8% of the respondents to create awareness about a subject, 44.8% of the respondents write letters to editor to inform their opinion to the public.

**Graph 2:**

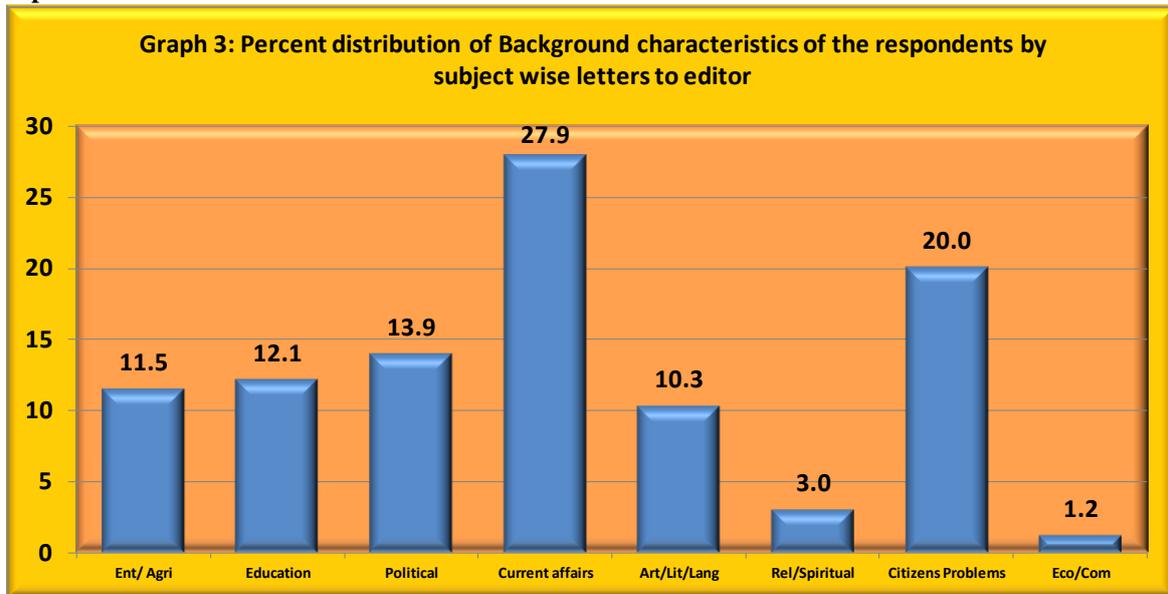


(Note: Multiple responses may not be added to 100%)

Graph 2 shows that the percentage distribution of background characteristics of the respondents by segments of the society infused letters to editor or reader's letter.

When we analyzed Graph 2, 16.26% of the respondents answered the letters are discussed in government meeting, 4.8% of the respondents replied the letters are discussed in assembly session. 25.3% of the respondents replied the govt. officers/people expressed their opinion about the letters, 40.4% of the respondents replied there is no information about the impact of letters, 4.22% of the respondents replied because of letters public awakened and protested, 39.4% of the respondents replied they found answers to some of the problems by writing letters to editor.

**Graph 3:**

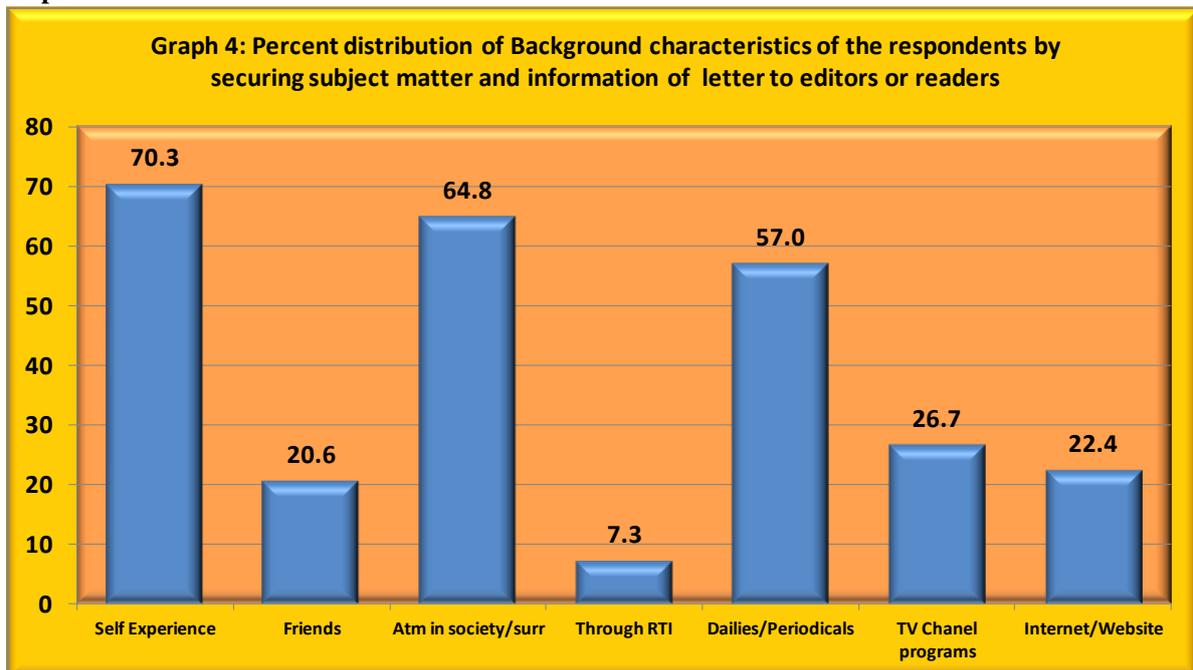


(Note: Multiple responses may not be added to 100%)

Graph 3 shows that the percentage distribution of background characteristics of the respondents by subject wise letters to editor.

When we analyzed Graph 3, 11.5% of the topics will be on environment or agriculture, 12.1% of the topics will be on education, 13.9% of the topics will be on politics, 27.9% of the topics will be on current affairs, 10.3% of the topics will be on art or literature or language, 3.0% of the topics will be on spiritual, 20.0% of the topics will be on citizens problems, 1.2% of the topics will be on commerce.

**Graph 4:**



(Note: Multiple responses may not be added to 100%)

Graph 4 shows that the percentage distribution of background characteristics of the respondents by securing subject matter and information for letters to editor.

When we analyzed Graph-4, 70.3% of the respondents secure subject by self experience, 20.5% of the respondents secure subject by friends, 64.8% of the respondents secure subject by surrounding society, 7.3% of the respondents secure subject through RTI, 57% of the respondents secure subject by dailies/periodicals, 26.7% of the respondents secure subject by TV channel programs, 22.4% of the respondents secure subject by internet/website.

**Result and Conclusion:**

From the above study we can say that the citizens write letters to editor on social interest. By writing letters the citizens try to get the attention of the related department and to get solution from them.

3.6% respondents said they write letters for the publicity and 34.34% respondents said they write letters as a hobby. By this result we can conclude that citizens write letter because of social interest than for their own publicity.

27.9% respondents write their opinion on current issues letters to editor, 20% respondents write on day to day problems of citizens. By this result we can conclude that letter writers give more importance to current issues and social problems. Next the writers give importance to education, agriculture, environment and art-literature-language and least importance is given to spiritual and commerce topics.

39.12% of the respondents said they found solutions for many problems by writing letters to editor. By this result we can say it is the success of the letters to editor's column in kannada newspapers. 16.26% of the topics are discussed in government meetings and 4.8% of the topics are discussed in the assembly session. By this we can see the effect and importance of the column letters to editor. By this result we can observe that the citizens and the government departments give importance to the column.

70.3% respondents choose topics to write letters on their own experience and about surrounding environmental issues. People respond to subjects which affect them directly. Very low percentage of the respondents secure subject through RTI, compared to TV channel programs and internet/website people secure subject by dailies/periodicals more.

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