# Framing of Environmental Issues in Indian News Channels

**SN Srivarnesh¹, I Arul Aram²\***

¹*PG Research Student, Department of Media Sciences, Anna University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India*

²*Professor, Department of Media Sciences, Anna University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.*

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**\*Corresponding author:** I Arul Aram, Professor, Department of Media Sciences, Anna University, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. Email: arulram@yahoo.com

## Abstract

This study analyses how environmental issues are reported by leading news channels in India with a focus on NDTV 24x7, WION, and India Today. This research identifies the themes and frames used in their environmental news coverage; it also identifies the challenges encountered by journalists while reporting on such issues. The study shows clear patterns that have emerged on these channels. NDTV 24x7 leads in terms of the extent of coverage of environmental problems, many times exploring human interest angles and attributing responsibility to various stakeholders. India Today leads in other frames like attribution of responsibility and conflict, providing in-depth analyses as opposed to WION, which tilts towards a more balanced coverage of environmental news. The research made clear important aspects of the role of environmental journalism in fostering awareness and positive change. The role employed by the journalists is to serve as key facilitators by simplifying complex topics, spotlighting local impacts, and advocating for solutions. Despite encountering challenges and threats, their passion for their profession is evident, because they keep instigating some forces for change towards the environmental challenge. The study emphasizes diverse framing in environmental news and presents challenges that journalists adeptly navigate to fulfill their essential role in advancing environmental discourse and action.

**Keywords:** Media framing, environmental issues, news coverage, public perception, journalist.

## Introduction

India has faced a myriad of environmental challenges in recent years causing widespread problems and health issues among the public. Environmental issues like air pollution, inadequate waste management, escalating water scarcity, water pollution, preservation and quality of forests, biodiversity loss, land and soil degradation, public health concerns, loss of ecosystem resilience, and climatic change are among the critical issues that have captured the attention of the media. The news channels are framing these issues with a keen focus on the location of the occurrence, the impact on people, and the government's responses to these challenges. News channels only report on the problem but also shed light on potential solutions and actions taken by the government. The coverage of environmental news is not homogeneous; rather, it is categorized into major and minor news stories. This categorization allows for a nuanced understanding of the various aspects of each issue, ensuring that the audience is well-informed about the complexities surrounding environmental challenges. Prominent news channels such as NDTV 24x7, WION and India Today, and other prominent news outlets are at the forefront of delivering concise yet comprehensive coverage of environmental issues. Journalists occupy a crucial role in society as interpreters and communicators of complex environmental issues, playing a pivotal role in dissecting and presenting these concerns to the public in a manner that is both informative and comprehensible. Their work goes beyond the surface, involving investigative efforts that delve into the root causes, consequences, and potential solutions to environmental challenges. Through meticulous research and reporting, journalists act as conduits of information, bridging the gap between intricate environmental problems and public understanding. The move towards detailed, textured reporting helps in a collective understanding and urgency towards ecological challenges. The media, in the demonstration of these issues that appeal to and fit into the mindset of every citizen, continues to be a critical driver for millions to be informed and let public discourse come into play and act in this regard toward a sustainable living.

This study has covered three environmental issues of the first three months of 2024: Bengaluru water crisis; the Nilgiris forest fires; and the cold condition in north India. The water crisis that gripped Bengaluru in 2024 had become extremely severe, driven by various factors that had created a dire situation. Firstly, the city faced its worst drought in several decades, worsened by unusually high temperatures during February and March and a significant lack of rainfall. Further, rapid urbanization has exacerbated the problem, leading to a 70% reduction in the city's water spread and a 1055% increase in built-up areas. The Nilgiris mountain range grappled with a distressing surge in forest fires, marking a significant 37 recorded incidents in the region. This trend stems from a combination of factors, notably insufficient rainfall, the unchecked spread of invasive plant species, and the prevalence of monoculture farming practices. The rapid proliferation of invasive plants like common lantana and yellow cassia also poses a threat. Parts of northern India faced an intense and prolonged cold spell, causing major disruptions to daily life. Thick fog has rolled in, causing chaos for transportation, with over a hundred flights delayed and many trains affected, leading to confusion at airports and train stations. In Delhi, the capital city, the cold hit especially hard, prompting schools to extend winter breaks and cancel classes due to the bitter cold. Some areas of Delhi have seen temperatures drop to 1.9°C, while in Kashmir, it is colder, with temperatures dipping to -6°C.

## Scope of the study

India is the most vibrant spot ecology-wise, venturing and engaging all natural resources. Environmentalism surge has been gradually into the lives of people. This paper would like to highlight the role of news channels in covering and framing the news they telecast, according to their perceptions. The present study was undertaken to identify the dominant environmental frames used in the news channels and the challenges faced by journalists while covering environmental issues.

## Aim

The aim of the study is to analyze the framing of environmental issues in Indian news channels,

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

• To identify diverse themes under environmental news coverage

• To analyze prominent frames used in environmental news in the channels

• To examine how news channels NDTV24x7, WION and India Today have framed environmental issues

• To find what the challenges faced by journalists in covering the environment as projected by the Indian news channels.

## Literature Review

According to Boydstun et al [1], media storm, known for its extensive and intense coverage, is a distinct phenomenon in communication studies. The mechanisms behind media storms are attention and their impact on public awareness. This significance is on shaping public perceptions and attitudes, specifically highlighting their role as influential drivers of social discourse. This perspective offers insights into thematic dynamics and content differences for a better understanding of media attention patterns.

According to Graf-Vlachy et al [2], the study of media coverage of firms has grown in recent years, but the literature is scattered across disciplines, making it challenging to grasp its contributions and identify research gaps. The literature highlights the functions, antecedents, and consequences of media coverage, leading to the development of a comprehensive framework. However, gaps persist, particularly in empirical measurement methods.

The investigation into the prevalence of five prominent news frames—attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic consequences, and morality—revealed distinct patterns in media coverage surrounding the Amsterdam meetings of European heads of state in 1997. Analyzing 2,601 newspaper stories and 1,522 television news stories, Semetko and Valkenburg [3] found that the attribution of responsibility frame was the most frequently employed, followed by conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality frames. Notably, the use of these frames varied more significantly between sensationalist and serious types of news outlets rather than between television and print media. Serious newspapers and television news programs predominantly used responsibility and conflict frames, emphasizing accountability and disagreements. In contrast, sensationalist outlets favored the human-interest frame, focusing on personal stories and emotional appeals.

In a study by Mikami et al [4], it was found that television news and newspapers on public awareness of environmental issues in Japan highlighted the importance of shaping public opinion and promoting environmental awareness and action. That emphasized the need for the media to play a more active role in disseminating environmental information and shaping public opinion on environmental issues.

Climate change presentation on Indian TV news channels CNN-IBN and NDTV24X7 by Nivas et al [5] showed that the policymakers, NGOs, news agencies, and scientists are strongly associated with different policymakers and NGOs with a judgmental frame, and news agencies and scientists with an issue frame. The media shapes the public agenda and raises climate change awareness. TV channels adopt the NDTV24X7 model by partnering with a climate change organization for quality coverage. This highlights the importance of defining social problems. The claimants have a

role in shaping news stories. News writers shape and alter stories, while their views influence the news perspective.

A study by Thirumalaiah and Aram [6] did environmental framing in Indian newspapers, analyzing coverage in English and Tamil languages. It suggested that the Tamil newspapers should cover more environmental issues, connecting them to climate change. This has significance in framing and in identifying social problems, particularly in climate change. Policymakers and NGOs favor the judgment frame, whereas news organizations and scientists prefer the issue frame. The media is crucial in conveying social issues, while social agencies strive for public recognition and advocacy of their needs.

## Theoretical framework and methodology

Frame analysis is a theoretical framework developed by Erving Goffman, a sociologist, in his 1974 Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience. The theory explores how individuals interpret and make sense of situations by mentally organizing information into cognitive frameworks or "frames". Frames provide a structured interpretation of events, influencing perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Widely used in sociology, communication studies, and other disciplines to examine how societal norms, cultural values, and individual experiences shape the way people understand and interpret the world around them. The study has used Semetko and Valkenburg [3] environmental frames, distinguishing five distinct perspectives shaping how environmental issues are presented in the media. These frameworks include the human interests frame, The conflict frame, the morality frame, the attribution of responsibility frame, and the economic consequences frame. Each frame provides a unique perspective through which environmental topics are presented, influencing public perceptions and attitudes. These frameworks contribute to the multifaceted nature of environmental discourse in the media, influencing how audiences interact with and interpret environmental information. The study has used these frames for the analysis, and they are defined below:

- **Human Interest Frame:** This frame emphasizes personal stories, anecdotes, and emotional connections related to environmental issues.

- **Conflict Frame:** The conflict frame centers around disputes, controversies, or disagreements regarding environmental topics.

- **Morality Frame:** Morality frames in environmental communication focus on ethical considerations and values associated with environmental actions.

- **Attribution of Responsibility Frame:** This frame identifies specific individuals, groups, or institutions responsible for environmental problems.

- **Economic Consequences Frame:** The economic consequences frame explores environmental challenges' financial impacts and considerations.

These frames collectively offer different perspectives on environmental issues, reflecting the complexity of the subject matter and providing diverse entry points for audiences to engage with and understand environmental topics in the media. In this study, News stories collected from NDTV 24X7, India Today and WION are coded and analyzed. Converting news program durations into seconds is better to analyze the dominant frames. The unit of measurement of each news story is seconds which have been converted into minutes, and the balance fraction of seconds too have been rounded up in minutes. Each story had been coded only for its dominant frame, and the timings in seconds of different stories with the same frame added up. This is even though almost every story has more than one frame embedded in it.

Besides frame analysis of the media text, the five among the audience were subjected to in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique employed to amass comprehensive and in-depth information on a particular subject or matter. In this type of interview, a skilled interviewer engages in a one-on-one dialogue with a participant, typically following a structured or semi-structured format. The objective is to explore thoroughly the participants' viewpoints, experiences, beliefs, and opinions. In-depth interviews are distinguished by their unstructured nature, allowing participants to express themselves freely without being confined by predetermined response options. This approach allows researchers to delve deeply into the participant's thoughts and emotions, uncovering refined insights that may not emerge through other research methods. These interviews are frequently used in various fields, such as psychology, sociology, market research, and journalism, better to understand individuals' motivations, behaviors, and attitudes.

## Results of frame analysis of WION

WION, as a channel, adopts a holistic approach to environmental reporting, addressing three fundamental frames: the human-interest frame, the attribution of responsibility frame, and the economic consequences frame. Through its coverage of environmental issues such as the Bengaluru water crisis, the Nilgiri forest fires, and cold conditions in northern India, WION aims to provide viewers with comprehensive insights into the complexities of these challenges. (Figure 1)

### Human interest frame

The human-interest frame takes center stage in WION's environmental coverage, receiving approximately 9 minutes of focus. This frame spotlights individual stories of resilience and adaptation in the face of environmental challenges. Through personal anecdotes and real-life examples, viewers gain insight into the everyday struggles and triumphs of those directly affected by environmental issues. These narratives often highlight individual sacrifices, such as water-saving measures and efforts to address issues like water scarcity.
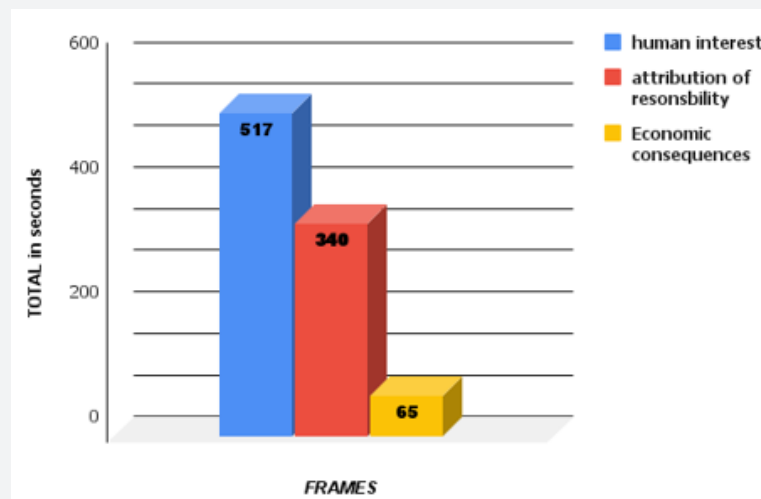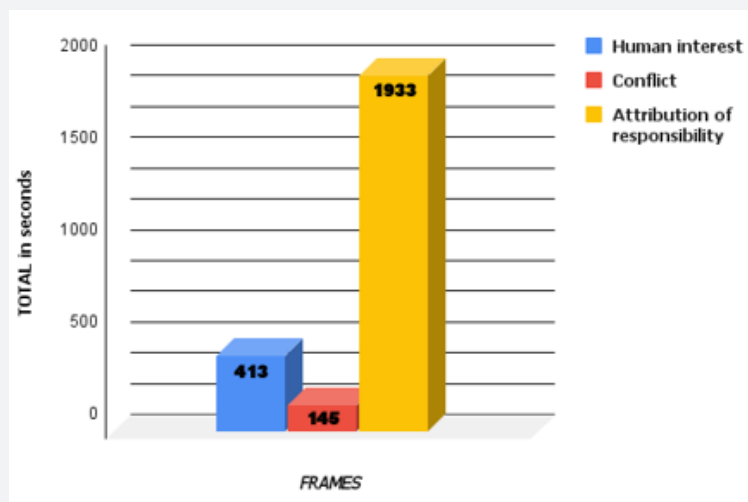
**Figure 1:** Dominant frames in WION



**Figure 2:** Dominant frames in India Today

Attribution of responsibility frame: The attribution of responsibility frame, receiving approximately 6 minutes of coverage, delves deeper into the underlying causes of environmental problems. This frame seeks to identify the root sources of issues such as groundwater depletion and environmental mismanagement. WION examines factors like excessive extraction and resource mismanagement, aiming to hold accountable the various stakeholders involved, including government agencies and private corporations. For example, in its coverage of the Nilgiri forest fire, WION analyses the state government's role and response strategies, shedding light on both successes and shortcomings in environmental governance.

**Economic consequences frame**

The economic consequences frame, covering approximately

1 minute, explores the broader socio-economic impacts of environmental phenomena. By examining how environmental issues affect transportation systems, commodity prices, and livelihoods, WION contextualizes these challenges within the framework of economic repercussions. For instance, reporting on cold weather conditions in Delhi goes beyond meteorological observations to highlight their implications for various sectors. By providing a comprehensive understanding of the economic dimensions of environmental issues, WION enables viewers to grasp the full extent of stakeholders' challenges.

**Results of frame analysis of India Today**

India Today is well-regarded for its thorough and analytical approach to news coverage, particularly evident in its reporting on environmental issues. The channel employs three main frames

in its environmental reporting: the human-interest frame, the conflict frame, and the attribution of responsibility frame. By using these frames, India Today offers a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective on environmental crises, ensuring that its stories are not only informative but also impactful and engaging for its audience. (Figure 2)

### Human interest frame

Within the human-interest frame, which garners approximately 7 minutes of coverage, India Today delves into personal narratives that highlight the struggles and challenges faced by individuals affected by environmental issues. These stories aim to evoke empathy and a sense of urgency among viewers by focusing on the human element. For instance, in coverage of the water crisis, the channel features stories of families grappling with the daily struggle to obtain clean drinking water. Interviewing with residents, India Today sheds light on the harsh realities of living without a reliable water supply, emphasizing the health risks and daily inconveniences.

### Attribution of responsibility frame

The attribution of responsibility frame receives the most extensive coverage, totaling approximately 32 minutes. This frame centers on identifying and holding accountable the various actors responsible for exacerbating environmental problems. India Today scrutinizes illegal borewell operators, government officials, and other entities whose actions contribute to environmental degradation. In its coverage of the water crisis, the channel delves into how illegal borewell operations have led to the depletion of groundwater levels, investigating regulatory failures and enforcement gaps. By highlighting these systemic issues, India Today not only informs its audience but also exerts pressure on authorities to address these shortcomings. Additionally, the channel provides detailed analyses of government policies and their implementation, underscoring the importance of effective governance and transparency in managing environmental resources. Further, in coverage of the Nilgiris forest fire, India Today places significant emphasis on the attribution of responsibility frame. The channel highlights the involvement of various authorities, including the administration and the Indian Air Force, in managing the crisis. Through detailed reporting, India Today underscores the severity of the environmental disaster and the need for coordinated and effective response efforts.

### Conflict frame

The conflict frame, which receives approximately 3 minutes of coverage, explores the political and social tensions surrounding environmental issues. India Today presents debates and disputes between different political entities, such as the BJP's accusations of government negligence and the government's responses and promises to address concerns. In its reporting on the water crisis, the channel covers confrontations between state leaders and opposition parties, offering a platform for different viewpoints. This frame helps viewers understand the complex political dynamics influencing environmental policy and decision-making, highlighting the need for collaborative and bipartisan approaches to solving environmental problems. Additionally, it educates the public about the political stakes involved in environmental issues.

### Results of frame analysis of NDTV 24x7

NDTV 24x7 adopts a multifaceted approach to environmental news coverage, emphasizing three primary frames: the human-interest frame, the conflict frame, and the attribution of responsibility frame. This approach ensures that the coverage is comprehensive, addressing the issue from multiple perspectives and providing a well-rounded understanding of the environmental challenges and responses. (Figure 3)

### Human interest frame

In its extensive coverage of the Bengaluru water crisis, NDTV 24x7 dedicates significant airtime to the human-interest frame, with approximately 39 minutes focused on this frame. These stories bring to the forefront the daily struggles and hardships faced by residents, vividly depicting the reliance on water tankers, the soaring demand for drinking water, and the difficulties in securing an adequate supply. The human-interest frame is crucial as it personalizes the crisis, making it relatable to the audience by showing real-life implications for individuals and communities. Human-interest narratives often include interviews with residents, highlighting their personal stories and struggles. By focusing on the human aspect, NDTV 24x7 effectively underscores the urgency of the situation and advocates for immediate, proactive solutions. The channel's emphasis on the human-interest frame aims to mobilize public opinion and prompt action from authorities by illustrating the tangible impacts of the water crisis on daily life.

### Attribution of responsibility frame

The attribution of responsibility frame, receiving approximately 14 minutes of coverage, delves into innovative initiatives and strategies aimed at addressing water scarcity. The channel explores efforts to use treated recycled water and investigates scientific methods for accessing alternative water sources such as lake beds. By showcasing these proactive measures and potential solutions, NDTV 24x7 raises awareness and fosters dialogue on sustainable water management practices, encouraging viewers to consider the broader implications and possibilities for mitigating the crisis. This frame is essential in identifying who or what is responsible for the crisis and what steps are being taken to resolve it. It examines the roles of various stakeholders, including government agencies, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations, in managing the crisis. NDTV 24x7 aims to inform the public about ongoing efforts and inspire accountability and transparency among those responsible. Moreover, the attribution of responsibility frame often features

expert opinions and analyses, providing viewers with a deeper understanding of the technical and policy aspects of water management. This approach not only informs but also educates the audience about the complexities involved in addressing such a crisis, helps the public in active participation in finding sustainable solutions.
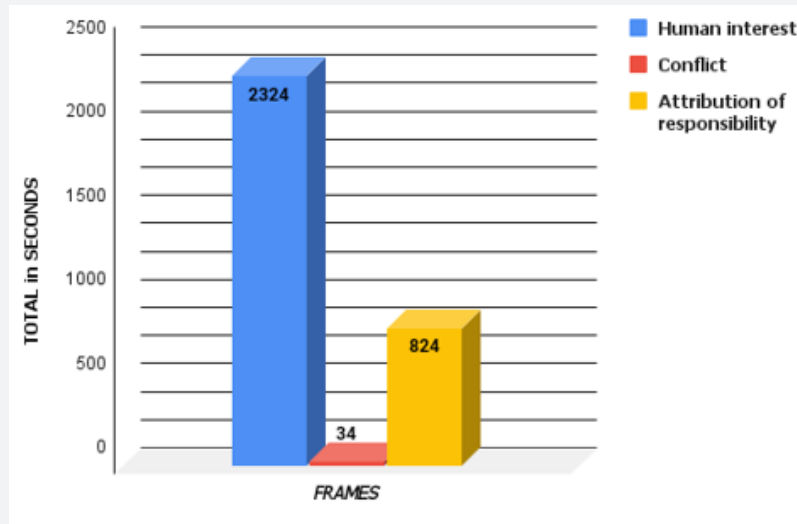


**Figure 3:** Dominant frames in NDTV 24x7

## Conflict frame

The conflict frame, covered for approximately half a minute, highlights the confrontational dynamics between state BJP leaders and the Congress government regarding the management of Bengaluru's water crisis. Through comprehensive analysis and coverage of these conflicting perspectives, NDTV 24x7 provides viewers with insight into the political dimensions of environmental issues. This approach not only informs but also encourages critical discourse on governance and policy responses. Helping to illustrate how political agendas and power struggles can influence the management and resolve such issues. By presenting different sides of the argument, NDTV 24x7 ensures that viewers receive a balanced perspective, allowing them to form their own informed opinions on the matter. In covering the conflict frame, NDTV 24x7 often includes statements and interviews with political leaders, analysts, and other stakeholders. This approach provides a platform for diverse voices and opinions, and discussion about the water crisis.

## Results from in-depth interviews

### Role of journalists

➢ Environmental issues have historically received little attention, but this is changing. The growing impact of global warming over the last 5-6 years has heightened public awareness of the need to protect natural resources like waterbodies and forests. Previously, media coverage of environmental issues was rare, and journalists often did not create stories on these topics.

However, the increasing visibility of climate change effects and persistent protests such as those against the Koodankulam nuclear plant, hydrocarbon projects in Thanjavur, impacts on the Western Ghats in Theni, and fly ash pollution in Ennore have forced these issues into the news. Journalists now play a crucial role in highlighting environmental and climate change effects, a significant improvement from the past. Their reporting is essential in raising awareness and informing the public on these critical issues (Sathish).

➢ Journalists fulfill a crucial function by bringing attention to pertinent issues, including environmental concerns that have an impact on the public. Journalists need to bear this in mind and consider the potential consequences for the common person. Numerous examples illustrate this point, including the most recent instance of the oil spill at Ennore, which had a significant impact on the environment and those who rely on it (Pramod).

➢ Journalists serve as a crucial link between the environment they are reporting on and the wider audience they aim to inform. Their role as a bridge ensures that the status of the environment within the confines of their designated space is communicated effectively to those outside of it, while also providing context and relevant information to the audience. By fulfilling this function, journalists help to keep the public informed about important environmental issues and encourage responsible action to address them (Ronald).

➢ Journalists hold a pivotal position in fostering public awareness, imparting education, and ensuring that governing

bodies are held accountable. They delve into and disseminate information about environmental issues, regulations, and remedies, thereby connecting the dots between scientific advancements and the comprehension of the public (Divya Hari).

➢ Journalists are vital in raising awareness about environmental issues, delivering accurate and timely information that is essential for informed decision-making. They play a key role in holding authorities accountable, ensuring that environmental policies and actions are scrutinized and transparent. By fostering public understanding and engagement, journalists empower citizens to take an active part in environmental advocacy and stewardship. In addition, journalists serve as crucial intermediaries among scientific communities, policymakers, and the public (Rajalakshmi).

### Inspiration for environmental reporting

➢ I studied in Tirunelveli, where I witnessed significant protests the Koodankulam nuclear power plant. I attended the protests, and at the same time, there was also a protest Pepsi in Thamirabarani, both of which were linked to environmental issues. This experience sparked my interest in environmental activism. After finishing school, I pursued a degree in computer science, initially having no interest in journalism. However, the misreporting I saw during the Koodankulam protest, whether in newspapers or on television, frustrated me. The media's refusal to report the truth made me realize the critical role journalism plays in informing the public. This realization inspired me to become a journalist committed to truthful and impactful reporting. That's how I was inspired to study journalism and focus on environmental issues (Sathish).

➢ My response would differ significantly in this regard, as we operate for bureaus, which necessitates that we possess specialized expertise in a diverse array of topics, including sports, civic issues, environmental concerns, and political matters (Pramod).

➢ I draw inspiration from witnessing the profound impact on audiences who become informed about the environment they live in. Seeing how knowledge can empower people to act and make informed decisions about their surroundings is deeply motivating. Additionally, my seniors have been a significant source of inspiration. They consistently emphasized the importance of creating stories that can bring about meaningful change in people's lives. They taught me that journalism is not just about reporting facts, but about making a difference. Their guidance instilled in me a sense of responsibility and purpose, encouraging me to pursue journalism with a focus on creating beneficial outcomes for society (Ronald).

➢ My inspiration stemmed from witnessing firsthand the severe impact of environmental degradation in my hometown. This experience opened my eyes to the urgent need for awareness and action to protect our environment. I realized the transformative power of journalism in driving change and raising public consciousness about critical issues. This revelation compelled me to harness my skills and passion for storytelling to highlight the pressing environmental challenges that affect our planet and communities. Through my work, I aim to inform, engage, and inspire others to act towards creating a sustainable and healthier world (Divya Hari).

➢ My decision to specialize in environmental reporting is driven by a profound passion for nature and an unwavering commitment to its preservation. Having witnessed the devastating impacts of environmental degradation firsthand, I felt an urgent call to action. This experience ignited a deep-seated determination to inform and educate the public about the critical issues facing our planet. Through my work, I aspire to raise awareness and inspire others to join the effort in protecting and restoring our natural world (Rajalakshmi).

### Challenges faced while covering environmental issues

➢ In television journalism, time constraints are critical, with only 2-3 minutes typically allotted for a story. Whether it's about climate or environmental issues in Tamil Nadu, explaining the scientific intricacies within this timeframe is essential for clarity. For instance, when discussing air pollution, it's imperative to elucidate how gases affect humans and other species to convey their impact accurately. Validation from environmental experts and professors is crucial but challenging to obtain within such short deadlines, especially when translating complex scientific concepts for lay audiences. Unlike print media in English, where terms like 'Greenhouse gases' can be succinctly written, explaining them in Tamil requires linking them to global warming, adding another layer of difficulty. Initially, conveying technical terms like 'Greenhouse gases' was problematic, given their potential to confuse the public. However, I addressed this challenge by developing a dictionary of simplified explanations and repeatedly using these terms to enhance comprehension. When I began working in television media, the environment beat received little attention compared to crime, politics, and health news during prime time. However, over time, there has been a shift in focus, with environmental issues gaining prominence, especially amidst recent events like heat waves. Now, television news bulletins allocate significantly more time to environmental coverage, reflecting the growing importance of this beat (Sathish).

➢ The most important challenge is obtaining accurate information, especially since the government holds records on environmental issues. We need to gather these records to uncover the real issues. For example, the Pallikaranai marshland is supposed to remain a protected wetland, yet government institutions have divided it into two parts – dump yard and real estate development, shrinking the marsh areas. Right before our eyes, the Pallikaranai marshland is being converted into a dump yard, with no action being taken to address this (Pramod).

➢ One significant challenge journalists face is the lack of access to timely information on government policy decisions. Often, these decisions are not communicated effectively to the media, leaving journalists uninformed or outdated. Additionally, political agendas and pressures can hinder journalists from reporting freely and accurately. These obstacles make it difficult to provide the public with a clear and truthful account of environmental issues and other critical matters (Ronald).

➢ A primary hurdle arises from the intricate nature of environmental subjects, necessitating a comprehensive grasp of scientific data for effective communication. Moreover, journalists face the challenge of sustaining public interest in prolonged issues, alongside contending with misinformation and conflicting interests propagated by influential entities. This multifaceted challenge underscores the need for journalists to navigate complex terrain, balancing scientific accuracy, long-term public engagement, and the pressures exerted by powerful stakeholders (Divya Hari).

➢ One significant challenge in environmental reporting is the technical complexity of many environmental issues, which can make it difficult to convey in a way that is easily understood by a general audience. Moreover, there is frequently limited access to reliable and comprehensive data, which hampers the ability to present accurate and thorough information. Journalists also often encounter resistance from powerful entities that have a vested interest in downplaying or obscuring environmental damage (Rajalakshmi).

## Strategies employed

➢ Addressing climate change requires adapting our approach to suit different audiences. While typical images of melting snow or polar bears may not resonate with Tamil Nadu audiences, connecting climate change to local issues like floods, droughts, or increasing air pollution can make it more relatable. By linking these local phenomena to global warming and climate change, we can help communities understand the broader implications. International studies from organizations like IPCC and WMO provide valuable insights into temperature rise, rainfall patterns, and precipitation trends, which can be used to contextualize climate change discussions at the local level. When discussing environmental issues in places like Thoothukudi, connecting them to global warming and climate change helps people to recognize the underlying causes and fosters a deeper understanding. Ultimately, shifting our focus from global to local perspectives enables us to engage communities effectively and inspire action on climate change (Sathish).

➢ Environmental issues become particularly compelling when they involve events like forest fires, such as the recent incidents in Pallikannai marshland. However, it's crucial to consistently communicate to the public that these occurrences represent significant hazards unfolding before our eyes. We cannot afford to become desensitized to these threats. By continually drawing attention to them through media coverage and advocacy, we can raise awareness and prompt action. The more we highlight these issues, the more people will recognize their magnitude and understand the urgent need for collective efforts to address them (Pramod).

➢ Enhancing engagement with environmental issues can be achieved through the implementation of rapid feedback mechanisms, such as leveraging social media platforms for real-time interaction. Encouraging active participation and soliciting feedback from the public fosters a sense of ownership and involvement in addressing environmental concerns. By providing avenues for people to share their thoughts and experiences, we can create a dynamic dialogue that amplifies awareness and drives collective action. This reciprocal exchange of information not only strengthens community engagement but also enables more effective responses to environmental challenges (Ronald).

➢ Employing storytelling techniques is integral to my approach to portraying environmental issues in a more humanizing light, thereby rendering them relatable to people's daily experiences. By weaving narratives that resonate with audiences, we can effectively convey the relevance and impact of these issues. Additionally, the integration of multimedia elements, such as videos, infographics, and interactive content, further enriches the storytelling process, captivating and sustaining audience interest (Divya Hari).

➢ To engage a broader audience, I employ storytelling techniques that emphasize the human dimension of environmental issues. By weaving narratives that highlight how these issues affect individuals and communities, I make the topics more relatable and compelling. My approach also includes a strong focus on solutions-oriented journalism, which aims to inspire positive action by showcasing practical and effective ways to address environmental challenges. This combination of human-centric stories and dynamic multimedia content helps to foster a deeper understanding and engagement with environmental topics (Rajalakshmi).

## Perspectives of journalists

➢ When discussing the Bengaluru water crisis, it's imperative to look beyond the immediate problem and examine the root causes that have been developing over the past two decades. Despite extensive media coverage, the focus often shifts to immediate solutions like the construction of the Mekedatu dam, neglecting to address the underlying issues such as the loss of green cover, changes in water usage, and the degradation of the Cauvery River. This narrow perspective fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of the crisis and hampers efforts to implement sustainable solutions. Similarly, in the Nilgiri region, issues of land degradation, illegal resorts, and loss of green cover have long been overlooked until they reach a crisis point, such as the recent forest fires. Despite advances in technology, such as satellite monitoring, comprehensive coverage and analysis of events like forest fires

are lacking in mainstream media. This failure to connect the dots and provide in-depth reporting undermines public understanding and hinders effective action. This oversight is compounded by the failure to connect events like forest fires to broader phenomena such as El Niño-induced heat waves. Contrastingly, in cities like Delhi, where access to research institutes and experts is abundant, media coverage of environmental issues is more robust and addresses the root causes of crises like cold weather patterns. By prioritizing expert voices and scientific analysis, Delhi-based journalists provide more insightful coverage that helps audiences understand the complexities of environmental challenges. The media needs to prioritize coverage of environmental issues such as water crises, droughts, and forest fires, rather than relegating them to secondary importance. Heat waves, for instance, often receive less attention despite their significant impacts. By providing comprehensive coverage and addressing the root causes of environmental crises, the media can play a vital role in raising awareness and driving meaningful action towards sustainability (Sathish).

➤ Regarding the environmental challenges in Bengaluru and Nilgiri, it's important for me, as an environmental journalist, to base my analysis solely on factual data rather than personal opinions. The situation in Bengaluru indicates issues stemming from overpopulation and excessive urbanization, which the city's infrastructure struggles to support adequately. Further, the proposed construction of dams like Mekedatu and the subsequent water diversion have turned into political debates. While alternative solutions may exist, conversations with experts emphasize that the crisis is primarily human-made and should, theoretically, be manageable. Moving to the Nilgiri forest fires, occurrences are unfortunately not rare and happen annually. Unlike in other countries where forest fires prompt thorough investigations into their root causes, such practices are lacking here. This gap in investigative techniques hampers our ability to determine whether these fires are natural, or human made. Now, shifting focus to Delhi's cold weather conditions, the issue is closely tied to stubble burning. The smoke resulting from this practice not only poses health hazards but also contributes to the cooling effect in the region (Pramod).

➤ The three environmental issues discussed – Bengaluru's water crisis, the Nilgiri forest fire problem, and Delhi's cold weather conditions – are all deeply intertwined with government policy decisions. However, addressing these challenges requires more than just policy changes; it necessitates a holistic approach that incorporates social perspectives. In the case of Bengaluru's water crisis, the issue goes beyond mere infrastructure inadequacies; it reflects broader societal issues such as overpopulation and urban sprawl. Therefore, any solution must consider the social dynamics of the city, including equitable access to resources and sustainable development practices.

➤ Similarly, the recurring forest fires in Nilgiri highlight the need for a multifaceted response that addresses not only forest management policies but also social factors like land use patterns and community involvement in conservation efforts. Empowering local communities to take forest management decisions can enhance the effectiveness of preventive measures and promote sustainable land practices. Regarding Delhi's cold weather conditions exacerbated by stubble burning, addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort between policymakers, farmers, and the broader community. In essence, while government policies play a crucial role in addressing environmental challenges, integrating social perspectives into decision-making processes is essential for fostering benefit for both people and the planet (Ronald).

➤ In addressing the water scarcity issue gripping Bengaluru, my emphasis is squarely on advocating for immediate action toward implementing sustainable water management strategies and enacting essential policy reforms. It's paramount that we recognize the interconnectedness of water usage, urban development, and environmental sustainability to mitigate this crisis effectively. Through proactive measures like rainwater harvesting, efficient irrigation systems, and responsible water consumption practices, we can work towards securing a more resilient water future for the city.

➤ When delving into the devastating Nilgiri forest fires, my focus extends beyond the immediate blaze to underscore the profound ecological ramifications and stress the indispensable need for robust forest conservation efforts. Preserving biodiversity, safeguarding ecosystems, and preventing further habitat destruction demand urgent attention and concerted action. By promoting reforestation initiatives, enforcing strict fire prevention measures, and fostering community engagement in conservation endeavors, we can strive towards restoring and preserving the invaluable natural heritage of the Nilgiri region. Shifting gears to Delhi's chilling cold spells, I delve into the complex interplay between extreme weather patterns and broader climate change trends, highlighting the imperative for adaptive measures to mitigate their impact (Divya Hari).

➤ The Bengaluru water crisis exemplifies the urgent need for sustainable urban planning and effective water management practices. The primary causes of this crisis include last year's insufficient rainfall and inadequate retention capacity of the city's lakes, which are crucial for replenishing the groundwater table. This situation was exacerbated by a lack of proactive planning to anticipate and mitigate water scarcity, particularly using climate predictions. As a result, many residents found themselves leaving the city and returning to their hometowns on weekends due to the water shortage. Similarly, the Nilgiri forest fires underscore the critical importance of addressing climate change and safeguarding biodiversity. The devastating fire is a stark reminder

of the increasingly frequent and severe natural disasters linked to global warming. Further, the severe cold weather in Delhi serves as a poignant reminder of the broader impacts of climate change, manifesting in extreme and unpredictable weather patterns. Each of these issues – whether it is water scarcity, forest fires, or extreme cold – highlights distinct challenges that require focused and nuanced reporting to raise public awareness effectively and promote informed action (Rajalakshmi).

## Avoiding sensationalism

➢ In Kerala, there's an elephant named Garbini, which tragically consumed an explosive-laden fruit, resulting in severe injuries. This incident garnered widespread attention from notable figures across India, including Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli, and prominent industrialists, reflecting the collective concern over wildlife welfare. However, amidst this outcry, there's a stark contrast in the discourse surrounding broader environmental issues, particularly concerning recent policy decisions. Over the past two years, the BJP government has enacted several amendments diluting crucial forest and environmental laws. These changes have significant implications, creating potential threats to wildlife habitats and exacerbating human-wildlife conflicts. Notably, the alteration of forest classification norms has raised concerns about encroachments into protected areas, posing grave risks to biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. Additionally, incidents like the Nilgiri forest fires highlight the critical need for a balanced approach to wildlife conservation and habitat management. While immediate attention is drawn to high-profile wildlife emergencies, such as injured elephants or rogue tigers, there's often a lack of focus on addressing underlying systemic issues. For instance, aging tigers unable to hunt resort to preying on livestock, leading to conflicts with human populations. The resulting interventions to protect both wildlife and humans often lack long-term sustainability and fail to address root causes effectively. Further, media sensationalism surrounding environmental events can distort public perception and divert attention from nuanced ecological narratives. Headlines exaggerating incidents like forest fires may create unnecessary panic and overlook the intricate ecological dynamics at play. By reframing environmental narratives to emphasize ecological integrity and species conservation, we can cultivate a more informed and engaged society committed to preserving our natural heritage for future generations (Sathish).

➢ We prioritize factual reporting over sensationalism in our journalistic endeavors. However, there are occasions where it becomes imperative to uncover discrepancies between official statements and on-ground realities, as exemplified by our coverage of the Ennore oil spill incident. Initially, the information provided by CMRL officials downplayed the severity of the spill, suggesting minimal impact. However, subsequent reports from the Coast Guard painted a contrasting picture, revealing substantial damage to the shoreline that required immediate intervention. Considering these conflicting narratives, our journalistic duty compelled us to delve deeper into the matter. Through meticulous investigation, including document analysis and on-site reporting, we sought to uncover the truth behind the divergent accounts. Our findings revealed a stark contrast between official claims and the actual situation on the ground. One glaring observation was the discrepancy in safety protocols. While CMRL officials purportedly assured adherence to safety measures, our ground report depicted a different reality. It was evident that fisherfolk, who were at the forefront of the cleanup efforts, were inadequately equipped with only basic protective gear, such as boots and regular surgeon gloves. Our commitment to factual reporting compelled us to present these findings to the public, highlighting the discrepancies and potential lapses in the authority's response to the crisis (Pramod).

➢ Instead of resorting to blame and presenting one-sided narratives, our approach is to foster awareness by highlighting both challenges and potential solutions. We believe in showcasing positive examples from around the world, demonstrating effective measures taken by other countries to address similar issues. For instance, instead of solely focusing on shortcomings in local environmental management, we aim to draw attention to success stories and case studies from countries that have implemented successful strategies. By highlighting these examples, we not only inspire hope but also provide actionable insights that can be adapted and implemented locally. Our commitment lies in presenting a balanced perspective that acknowledges challenges while also showcasing opportunities for positive change (Ronald).

➢ I adhere strictly to verified facts and ensure balanced coverage in my reports, steering clear of sensationalism or exaggerated claims. My approach centers on evidence-based reporting, relying on credible sources to convey the seriousness of issues without unnecessarily alarming the audience. By prioritizing accuracy and objectivity, I aim to provide comprehensive insights into complex topics while maintaining transparency and integrity in my reporting (Divya Hari).

➢ To maintain credibility and avoid sensationalism, I adhere strictly to verified facts, provide comprehensive context, and steer clear of alarmist language. Balancing the urgency of environmental issues with a measured and rational tone is essential in my reporting. I emphasize evidence-based journalism, ensuring that my work is grounded in thorough research and analysis. By consulting multiple credible sources and presenting a well-rounded perspective, I strive to inform and educate the public without inducing unnecessary panic (Rajalakshmi).

## Accuracy and integrity

➢ From the outset, I prioritize obtaining first-hand information, which is fundamental in journalism. It's crucial to listen directly, read directly, and only then write. For the past five years, I have delved deeply into my stories, gathering raw data to

ensure accuracy and depth. Two invaluable tools in my reporting are reliable sources and the Right to Information (RTI) Act. When a source provides first-hand raw material and data, it significantly enhances the story's credibility. Additionally, the more I use RTI, the more robust my stories become. I wait until I have this raw data before proceeding with any story. Moreover, a basic yet essential practice in journalism is to engage all stakeholders connected to the story. It's imperative to speak directly with them and obtain their perspectives to ensure comprehensive and balanced coverage (Sathish).

➤ We rely heavily on documents for accuracy, but field reporting often reveals a different reality, especially with environmental stories. On paper, everything might appear perfect for documentation and legal purposes. However, the situation on the ground can be vastly different. Solely relying on documents is not enough. It's essential to visit the field and observe firsthand. Only through cross-referencing documents with on-the-ground observations can we obtain the actual information (Pramod).

➤ Instead of assigning blame and presenting a one-sided story, it is more productive to create awareness by highlighting positive examples and effective solutions. Journalists must collaborate with legal experts, policymakers, and environmental activists to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues and possible solutions (Ronald).

➤ I verify information through reputable sources, consult with specialists, and stay current on the latest advancements in research. Additionally, I adhere to strict editorial principles and ethical standards to uphold the trust of my audience (Divya Hari).

➤ To ensure the highest standards of accuracy and integrity in my reporting, I depend on reputable sources and rigorously cross-check all information. I regularly consult with experts in the field to validate the data and provide deeper insights into the issues. Transparency is a key principle in my work; I always disclose the origins of my information to maintain trust with my audience. Additionally, I am committed to correcting any errors promptly if they are identified, ensuring that my reporting remains reliable and trustworthy (Rajalakshmi).

## Influence of government and corporates

➤ You will influence both sides. Let me give you an example. There is a very important marshland in Pallikaranai, which serves as a crucial flood absorber for Chennai. During floods, it absorbs excess water and gradually releases it to the sea. The Chennai Corporation has proposed a project to convert this marshland into an eco-park, attracting interest from various companies. However, a marshland is not just a water body; it is a unique ecosystem supporting numerous birds, insects, and other species, many of which are endangered. Marshlands play a vital role in absorbing greenhouse gases, carbon, and methane. Despite this, the government takes so long to prioritize the preservation of Pallikaranai. While some view the eco-park project as beneficial for beautification and public use, it overlooks the ecological significance of the marshland. When writing about such projects, it is important to consider the pressure and influence exerted on the government and corporations. Both the beautification efforts and the commercial interests can overshadow the intrinsic value of the marshland. To create an authentic story, one must critique the project objectively. Similarly, in Perungudi, the presence of a garbage dump and the use of an incinerator to burn waste threaten the marshland. Highlighting these issues involves navigating various influences while emphasizing the importance of preserving the natural ecosystem for its inherent ecological benefits (Sathish).

➤ So far, I have neither been influenced nor has anyone attempted to influence me on this matter because my network operates independently. For instance, during the recent Ennore oil spill incident, the information provided by CMRL was vastly different from the situation on the ground. We went to the site and reported the actual conditions, which turned into a national issue and gained significant attention (Pramod).

➤ Individuals or entities that profit from various ventures often seek to exert influence in diverse ways. However, the onus lies on media management firms to prioritize their responsibility towards environmental issues when making decisions, despite potential external pressures or vested interests (Ronald).

➤ Government and corporate bodies possess the capacity to sway reporting by providing funding, controlling advertising, and regulating access to information. Nevertheless, it falls upon journalists to adhere to the principles of impartiality and to withstand any pressures that may threaten the integrity of our reporting. This commitment to journalistic integrity ensures that our coverage remains unbiased and serves the public interest above all else (Divya Hari).

➤ Government and corporate entities can exert considerable influence over environmental reporting through various means, including public relations campaigns, lobbying efforts, and sometimes direct pressure on media outlets. These tactics can shape the narrative in ways that may downplay or obscure the negative aspects of environmental issues. By controlling the flow of information and framing it to their advantage, these powerful stakeholders can affect public perception and policy discussions, potentially hindering efforts to address environmental challenges effectively (Rajalakshmi).

## Obstacles from government and corporates

➤ Certainly. I've faced such situations before. For example, after a shooting incident at the Sterlite plant, there was uncertainty regarding its reopening pending a court judgment. I received an unofficial copy of the judgment, which I approached cautiously given its unofficial status. Despite concerns, we reported it as a

leaked document. This led to disagreements with Sterlite, who denied involvement and pressured us to retract our statements. Similar challenges arise when covering environmental issues like the Ennore fly ash leakage. Authorities often restrict access to affected areas, hindering documentation. While governmental pressure is manageable, threats from large corporations pose greater challenges. In some cases, threats occur locally, as seen in Tamil Nadu's Manalkollai village in Vellore district, where individuals have faced violence for exposing environmental abuses. Despite these risks, I prioritize ethical reporting, weighing the importance of the story against potential consequences (Sathish).

➢ Absolutely not. We always publish all the information we receive and present both sides of the story, including diverse versions. If there's a discrepancy, it's often picked up by activists or others. Our role is simply to report what occurred on the ground, cross-referencing documents. This approach has sometimes caused trouble for certain individuals, but we stand by our commitment to journalistic integrity (Pramod).

➢ Certainly. Over my 19 years in journalism, I've encountered numerous challenges, including receiving life threats. However, I'd prefer not to delve further into that incident (Ronald).

➢ Certainly. I've encountered various forms of pressure and obstacles throughout my career, including limited access to information, threats of legal repercussions, and efforts to undermine my credibility. Despite these challenges, I remain dedicated to upholding principles of truth and transparency. To navigate such hurdles, I frequently collaborate with journalistic institutions and seek guidance from legal experts (Divya Hari).

➢ Indeed, I have experienced pressure from both government and corporate entities in my environmental reporting endeavors. This pressure often takes various forms, ranging from attempts to withhold crucial information and threats of legal action to endeavors aimed at discrediting the integrity of the reporting itself. Maneuvering through these challenges demands a steadfast dedication to upholding journalistic ethics and principles. Moreover, having robust support from editorial leadership is essential in maintaining integrity and fortitude in the face of such pressures. By remaining resolute in our commitment to truth and transparency, we can navigate these obstacles and continue to fulfill our duty to inform the public about vital environmental issues (Rajalakshmi).

## Findings

With regards to the analysis of the frames of the three news channels WION, India Today, and NDTV 24x7, it was observed that the dominant environmental frames used in the three news channels were the human-interest frame, the attribution of responsibility frame, the economic consequences frame, and the conflict frame. Further, this research also brings out the challenges faced by journalists.

• The channel WION covers the human-interest frame for approximately 9 minutes, the attribution responsibility frame for approximately 6 minutes, and the economic consequences frame for approximately 1 minute.

• The channel India Today reveals the attribution of responsibility frame for 32 minutes, the human-interest frame for roughly 6 minutes, and the conflict frame for approximately 3 minutes.

• NDTV 24x7 meticulously captured the human-interest frame for approximately 39 minutes, delved into the attribution of responsibility frame for approximately 14 minutes, and addressed the conflict frame for approximately half a minute.

• In environmental reporting, journalists play a crucial role driven by the growing public awareness of issues like global warming and pollution. Mainstream media is recognized as pivotal in this effort, prioritizing accuracy and integrity. Despite challenges such as complex data and pressure from political or corporate entities, journalists employ strategies like storytelling and emphasizing community impacts to navigate obstacles while ensuring factual accuracy and avoiding sensationalism.

• Environmental journalists are committed to balanced reporting, presenting solutions, and maintaining independence and integrity, even in the face of threats. Collaboration with experts and leveraging social media for engagement are keys to impactful reporting. Overall, journalists perceive their role as essential in raising awareness, educating the public, and holding authorities accountable on environmental issues, driven by a steadfast commitment to truth and positive change.

## Suggestions

News channels must give more prominence to environmental news and every news channel should have an independent slot for environmental news to create awareness among the public. News channels should employ environmental journalists to investigate and analyze environmental issues, simplifying complex scientific information and making it accessible and relevant to local audiences, with an emphasis on community vulnerability. The journalists should ensure responsible, fact-based reporting, avoid sensationalism, and maintain integrity and independence despite political and corporate pressures. Using storytelling, multimedia, and a solutions-focused approach, they should promote sustainable practices and environmental adaptation. Despite challenges like limited information access and vested interests, journalists should follow ethical standards, raise public awareness, connect scientific and political communities for policy improvement, and hold authorities accountable, driving environmental awareness and action.

## Appendix 1: Guideline Questions for In-Depth Interviews

1. What role do journalists play in covering environmental issues?

2. What inspired you to specialize in environmental reporting?

3. What challenges journalists face while covering environmental issues?

4. What strategies do you employ to make environmental news more engaging to a broader audience?

5. What are your journalistic perspectives on the Bengaluru water crisis, the Nilgiri forest fires, and the Delhi cold weather?

6. How do you avoid sensationalism while reporting on environmental issues?

7. What measures do you take to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the information you present?

8. What influence do government and corporate entities exert while reporting environmental issues?

9. Have you encountered pressure or obstacles from government or corporate entities while reporting on environmental issues?

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