

## INCREASING SUICIDAL RATES IN KASHMIR VALLEY AND ITS PORTRAYAL BY THE PRINT MEDIA

**Naseema Akhter , Prof. (Dr.) Girja Shankar Sharma , Dr. Shobha Kulshrestha:**

*Research Scholar Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh (Rajasthan):*

*Research Supervisor, Professor Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh, (Rajasthan).*

*Co- Supervisor, Vice President, ShriVenkateshvar University.*

### **ABSTRACT:**

The Kashmir valley is one of the most communally unstable and politically disturbed regions all over the world. It is a conflict torn region. There is also absence of uninterrupted electricity due to the shortage of power generation, weather conditions and conflicting situations. Thus, the electronic and the internet media are interrupted every now and then. In such a situation, the only uninterrupted source of information in the Kashmir valley is the print media which is possibly omnipresent. Hence, reporting in newspapers should be done responsibly because as far as the Kashmir valley situation is concerned, the newspapers could be thought of as an influencing medium. The purpose of the present study is to find out the role of newspapers in highlighting the increased suicide rates in the Kashmir valley.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **Aims**

The study is undertaken to understand the role of print media in reducing the suicidal rates in Kashmir Valley.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The study is undertaken with the following research objective:

To analyze the role of newspapers as a tool to curb increasing suicidal rates in Kashmir and hence their impact in stopping suicides in the valley.

### **METHODOLOGY**

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## Questionnaire:

A questionnaire comprising 15 questions was formulated and distributed among some college and university going students. A sample of 200 students was selected across five districts of Kashmir which include Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, Pulwama and Baramulla. Students from main colleges of these districts and three university campuses including Kashmir University, Central University of Kashmir, and Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora were asked to fill up the questionnaires. An equal number of male and female students were approached counting 100 each. Some of the questionnaires were personally given to the respondents by the researcher and some were sent across via emails.

The aggregate responses of very single question were analyzed on Likert 5 point scale, the results of which are shown below:

Q1. Increasing suicidal rates in Kashmir have becomes a serious issue and needs to be highlighted through newspapers?

## Assessment

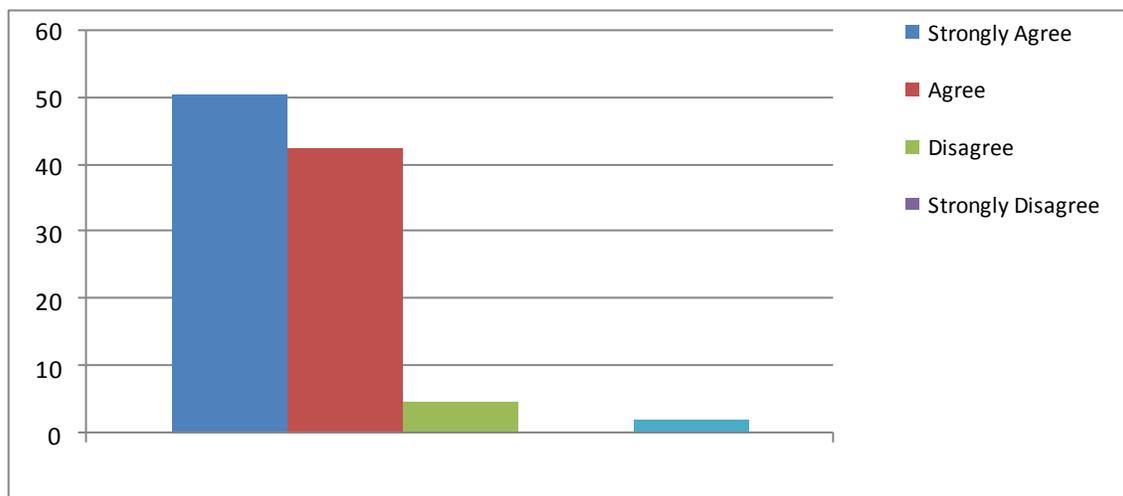
Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
50.66%	42.66%	4.66%	0%	2%

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### ***Inference:***

More than 50% of the respondents strongly agree that increasing suicides are a serious issue and should be highlighted through newspapers while as more than 46% are in agreement of the said statement. Whereas 4.66% people disagree to the statement, 2% seem to be unable to make a judgment about it.

Q2. Print media plays its required role in highlighting suicides in Kashmir?

### **Assessment**

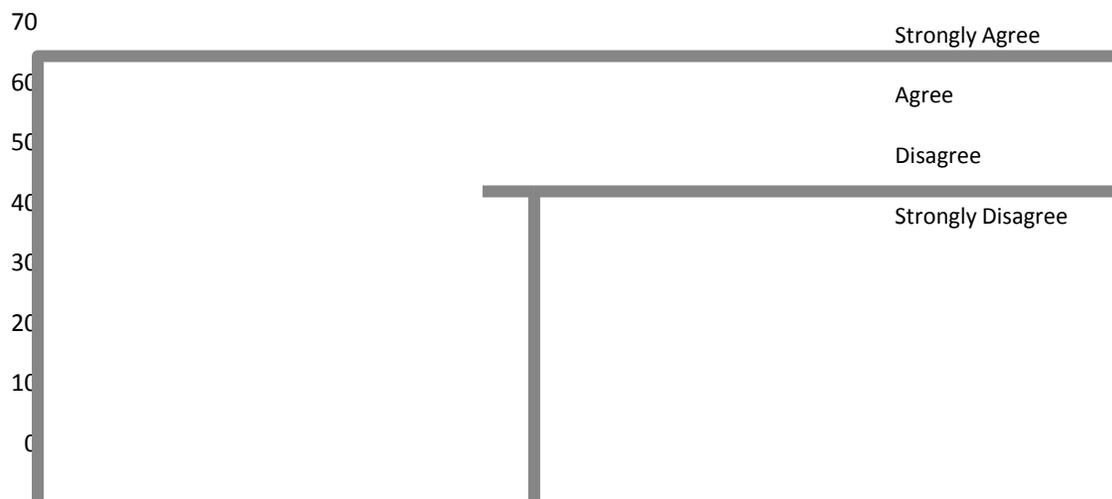
Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
1 . 3 3 %	8 %	6 1 . 3 3 %	2 6 %	3 . 3 3 %

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### ***Inference:***

As far as the print media playing its required role in highlighting suicides in Kashmir is concerned, a meager 1.33% strongly people agree to it while as 8% state in agreement. But a majority of 61.33% respondents disagree to the statement and 26% strongly disagree. 3.33% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree.

Q3. Print media seems to have failed, in creating awareness about suicide and its prevention in Kashmir?

Assessment

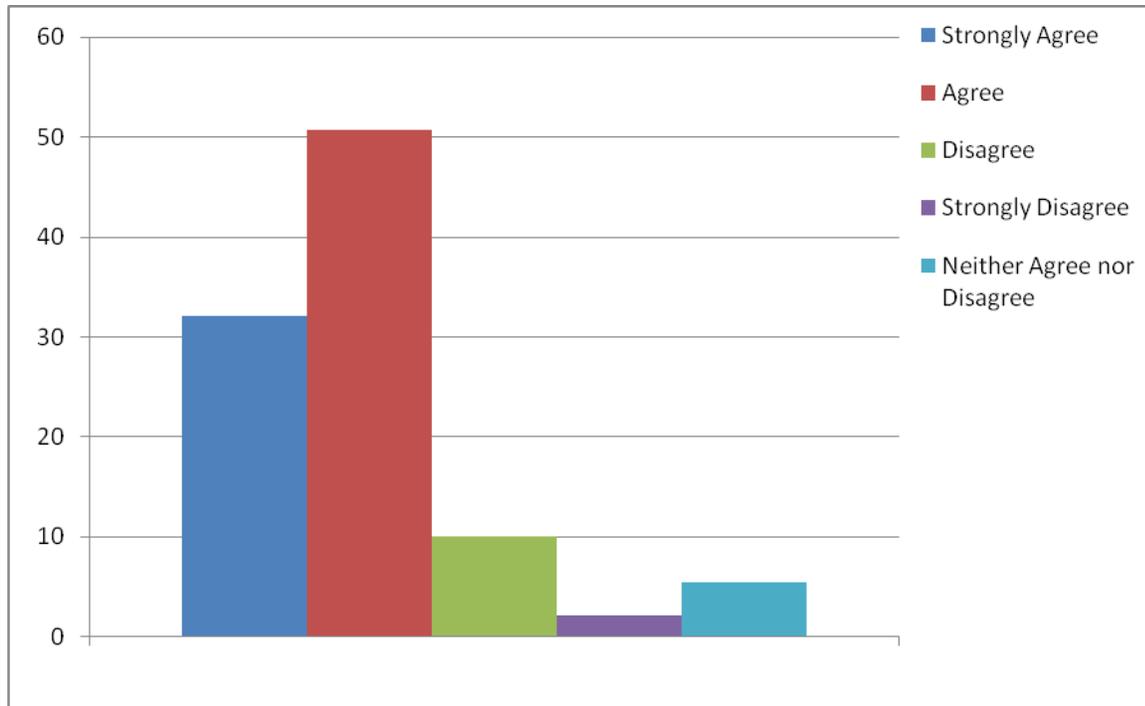
Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
3 2 %	5 0 . 6 6 %	1 0 %	2 %	5 . 3 3 %

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### ***Inference:***

32% people strongly agree to the statement that print media has failed to create awareness about suicides and its prevention in Kashmir while as more than 50% agree to the statement. 10% people disagree and 2% strongly disagree with statement while as around 5% respondents are uncertain about the statement.

Q4. While reporting on suicides in Kashmir, newspapers give follow-up of the news they report on suicides?

Assessment

Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
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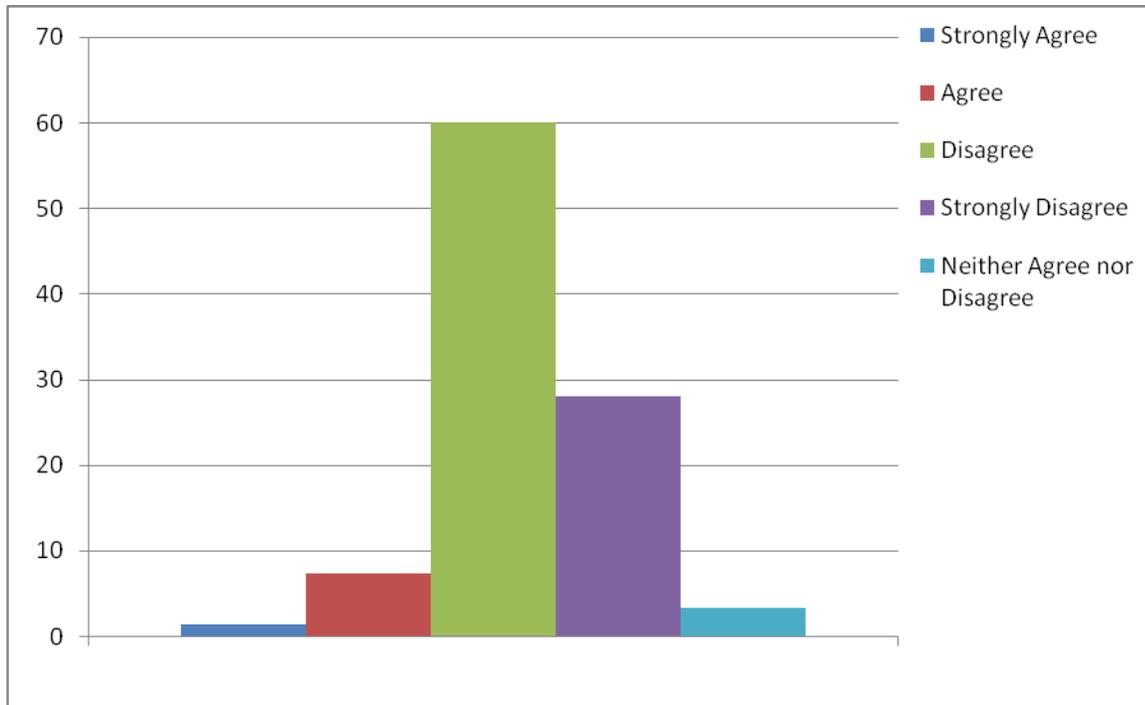
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1 . 3 3 %	7 . 3 3 %	6 0 %	2 8 %	3 . 3 3 %
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### ***Inference:***

A majority of 60% people disagree to the statement that newspapers give follow-ups to the news stories about suicides while as 28% strongly defy this statement. A meagre 7.33% respondents agree to the statement and just 1.33% strongly agree to it while as around 3% people seem to be in ambiguity regarding the statement.

Q5. Newspapers in Kashmir comparatively give a lesser space while reporting on suicide related issues?

Assessment

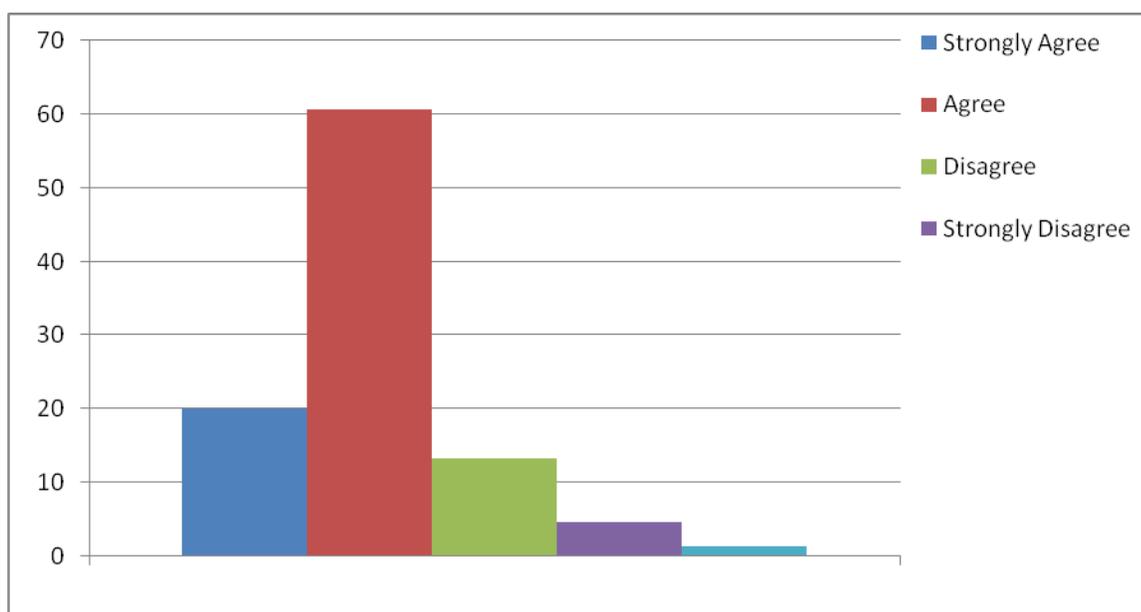
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 0 %	6 0 . 6 6 %	1 3 . 3 3 %	4 . 6 6 %	1 . 3 3 %



### ***Inference:***

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the newspapers in Kashmir give lesser space to suicide related stories as compared to other issues. 20% respondents strongly agree to this statement while as more than 60% agree to it. Only around 13% disagree with the statement that newspapers give suicide related issues lesser coverage and just less than 5% strongly disagree. Around 1% of the respondents fail to form any opinion about this statement.

Q6. Besides news reports, newspapers have a role in creating awareness about suicides and its prevention through editorials and articles as well?

Assessment

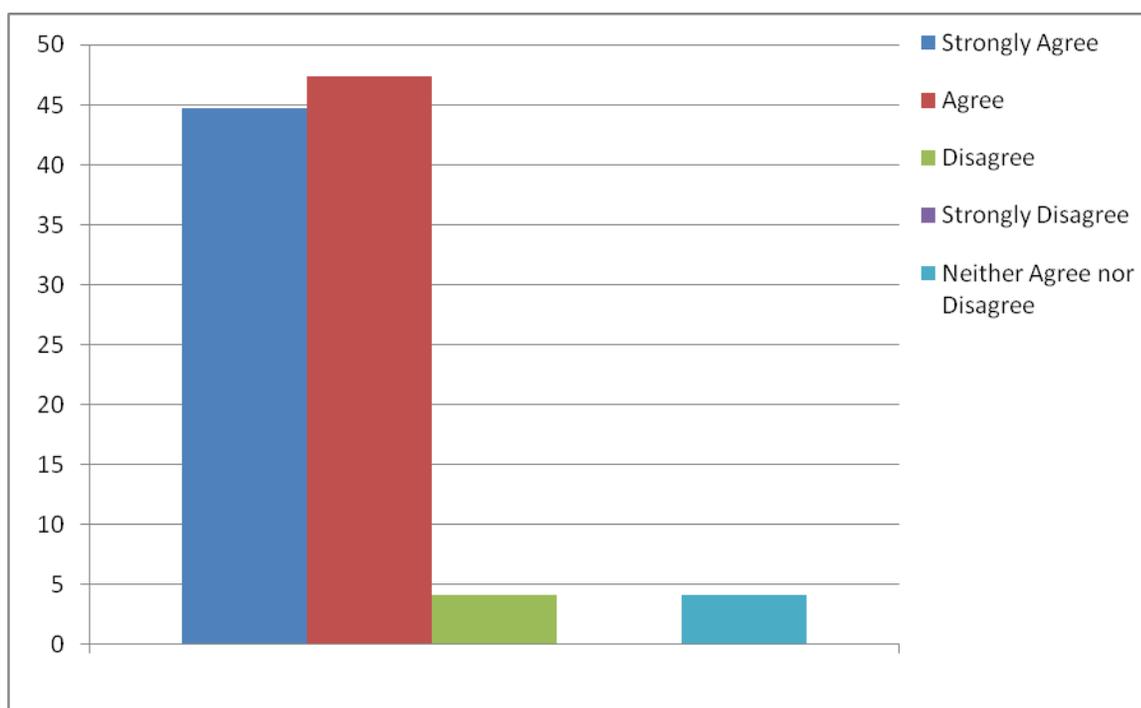
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
44.66%	47.33%	4%	0%	4%



### ***Inference:***

More than 44% of the respondents strongly believe that the newspapers have a role to create awareness among people about suicides and prevent the same not only through news reports but editorials and articles as well while as more than 47% agree to the statement. A mere 4% people disagree while as 4% of them neither agree nor disagree to the statement.

Q7. Newspapers in Kashmir accomplish the required role of highlighting the increasing suicidal rates in Kashmir through their Articles and Editorials?

Assessment

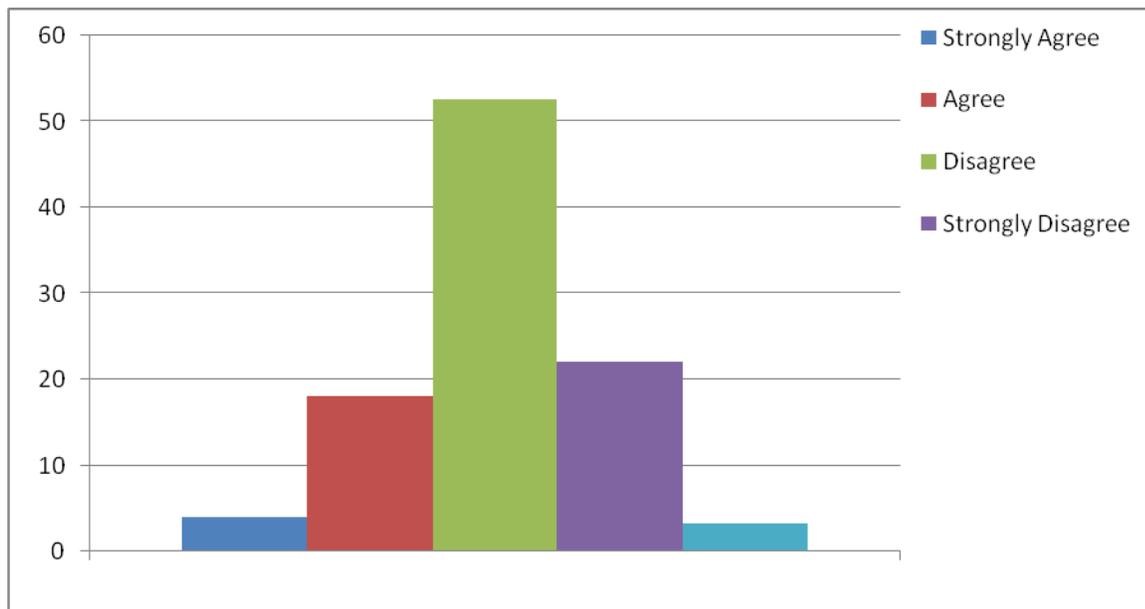
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
4 %	1 8 %	52.66%	2 2 %	3 . 3 3 %



## ***Inference:***

Only 4% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that newspapers actually accomplish the required role of creating awareness about suicides through editorials and articles and 18% agree to it. Majority of more than 52% disagree while as 22% strongly disagree to the statement. Around 3% respondents have ambiguity in their minds regarding the statement.

Q8. The impact of suicide reporting may not be restricted to harmful effects; rather coverage of positive coping in adverse circumstances, as covered in media items about suicidal ideation, may have protective effects?

Assessment

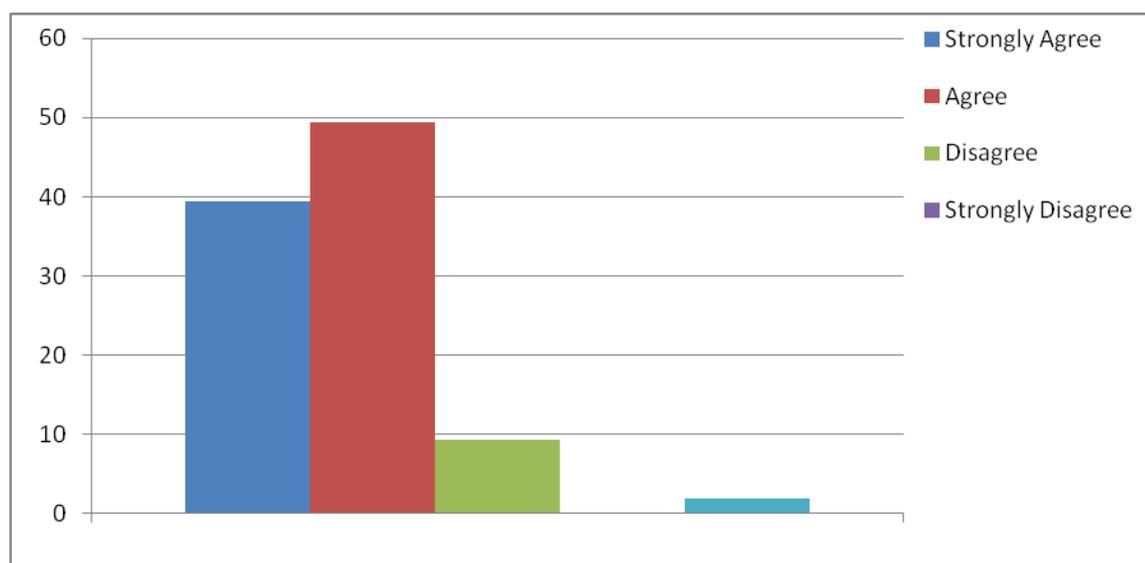
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
39.33%	49.33%	9.33%	0%	2%



### ***Inference:***

More than 39% respondents strongly agree to the statement that suicide reporting is not just restricted to harmful effects but a positive coping about suicidal ideation in newspapers can have protective effects. More than 49% agree to the statement while as less than 10% respondents disagree to it. 2% of the respondents fail to make any analysis regarding the statement.

Q9. Newspapers in Kashmir from time to time have launched campaigns through their write ups against the growing menace of suicides to bring down the rising suicide rates?

Assessment

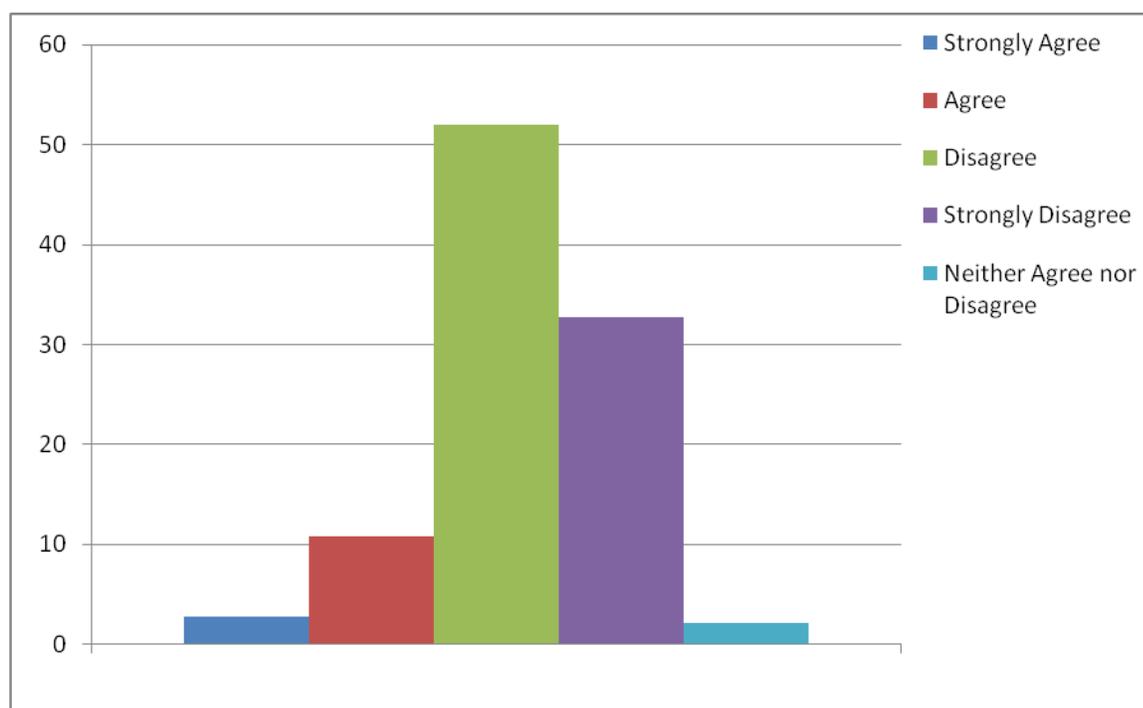
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 . 6 6 %	1 0 . 6 6 %	5 2 %	3 2 . 6 6 %	2 %



## ***Inference:***

Only around 2% respondents strongly believe that the newspapers in Kashmir from time to time have launched campaign through their write-ups against the growing menace of suicides while as around 10% agree to it. A major 52% disagree to the statement and more than 32% strongly disagree to it. 2% of the respondents are uncertain about the statement.

Q10. Newspapers in Kashmir have always reported the incidents of suicide in the form of single column stories without giving any follow ups?

Assessment

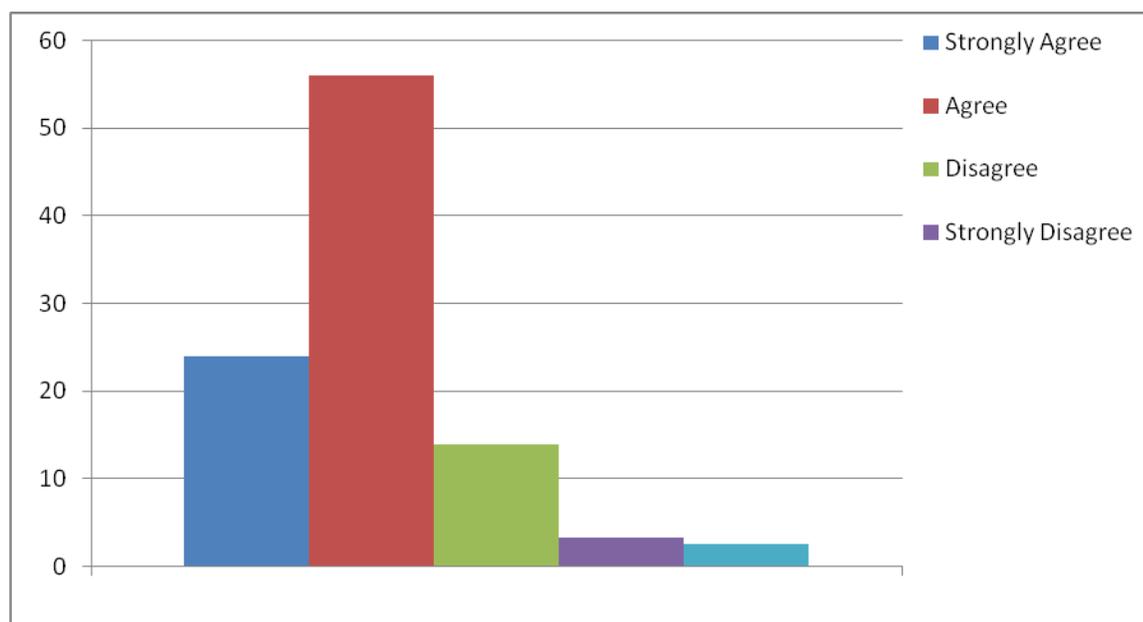
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
24 %	56 %	14 %	3.33 %	2.66 %



## ***Inference:***

Majority of the respondents believe that the newspapers in Kashmir have reported suicides incidents in the form of single column stories without giving any follow up stories. 24% respondents strongly agree while as 56% agree to the statement. Only 14% of the respondents disagree while as less than 4% strongly disagree to the statement. Less than 3% respondents are ambiguous about the statement.

Q11. All the newspaper organizations in the state should include suicide reporting in their curriculum and program requirements?

Assessment

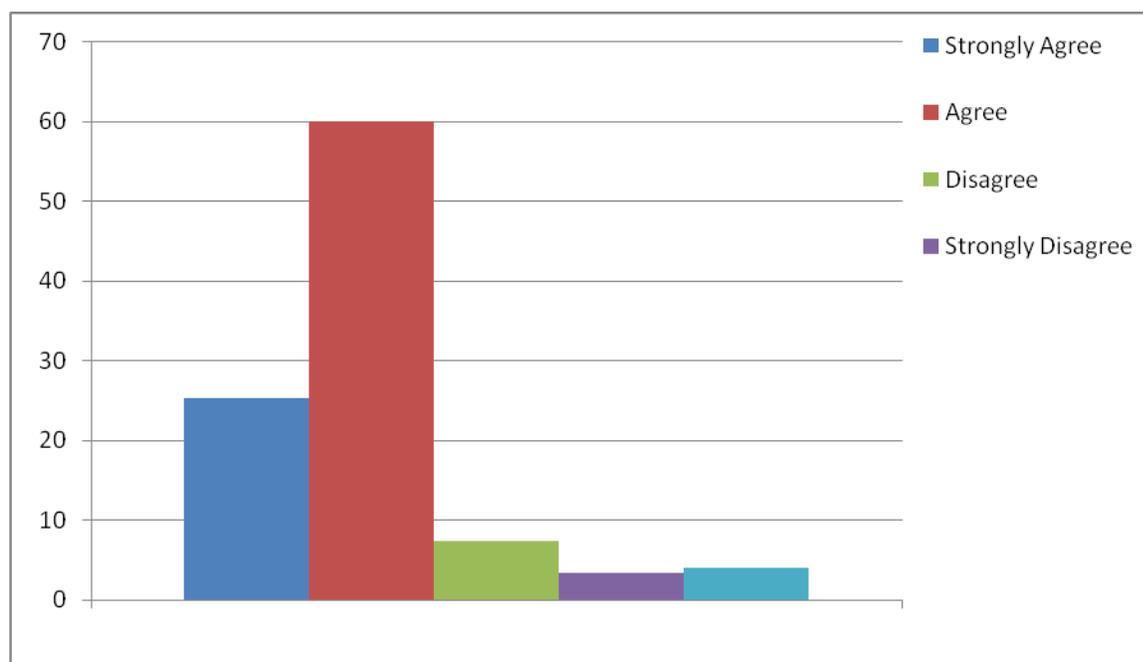
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
25.33%	60%	7.33%	3.33%	4%



### ***Inference:***

More than 25% respondents strongly agree to the statement that the newspaper organisations should include suicide reporting as part of their regular curriculum while as 60% agree to it. Around 7% people disagree to the statement while as around 3% disagree to it. 4% respondents neither agree nor disagree.

Q12. There is an immediate need to educate journalists about suicide coverage which should go beyond the publication of deaths caused by suicide?

Assessment

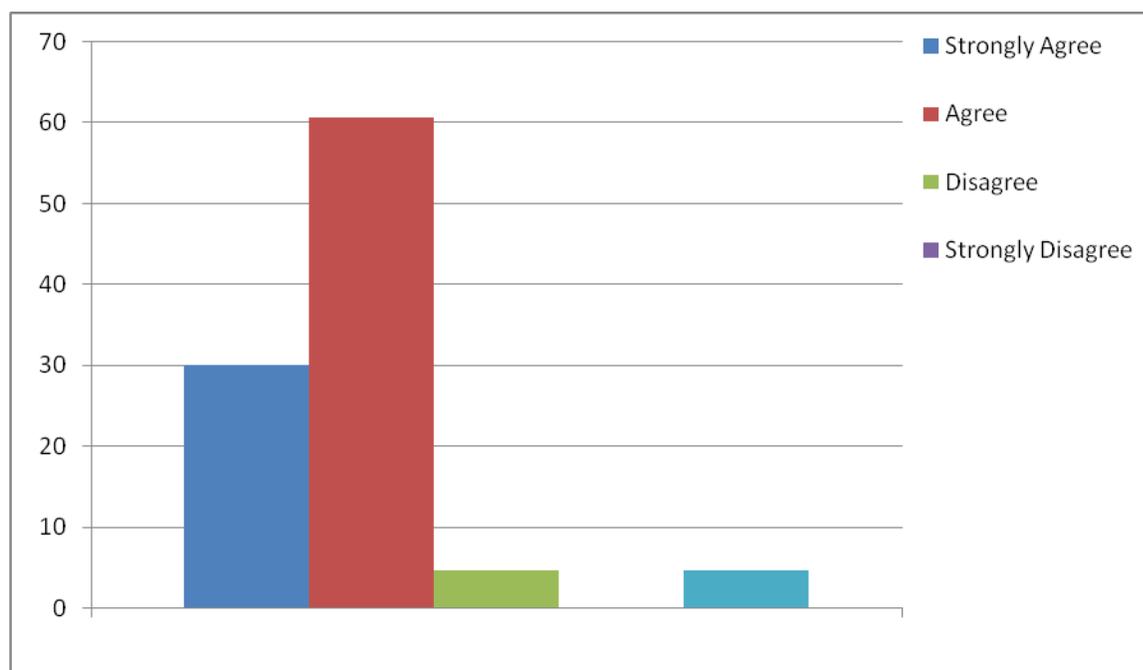
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
3 0 %	6 0 . 6 6 %	4 . 6 6 %	0 %	4 . 6 6 %



## ***Inference:***

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that there is a need to educate journalists about suicide coverage which should go beyond publication of the stories related to deaths caused by suicides. 30% strongly agree while as more than 60% agree to the statement. A mere 4.66% disagree while as an equal percentage is uncertain about the statement.

Q13. Newspapers should come up with the articles which highlight the suicide as a heinous crime and also suggest the measures for suicide prevention, for those who remain at the risk of committing suicide?

Assessment

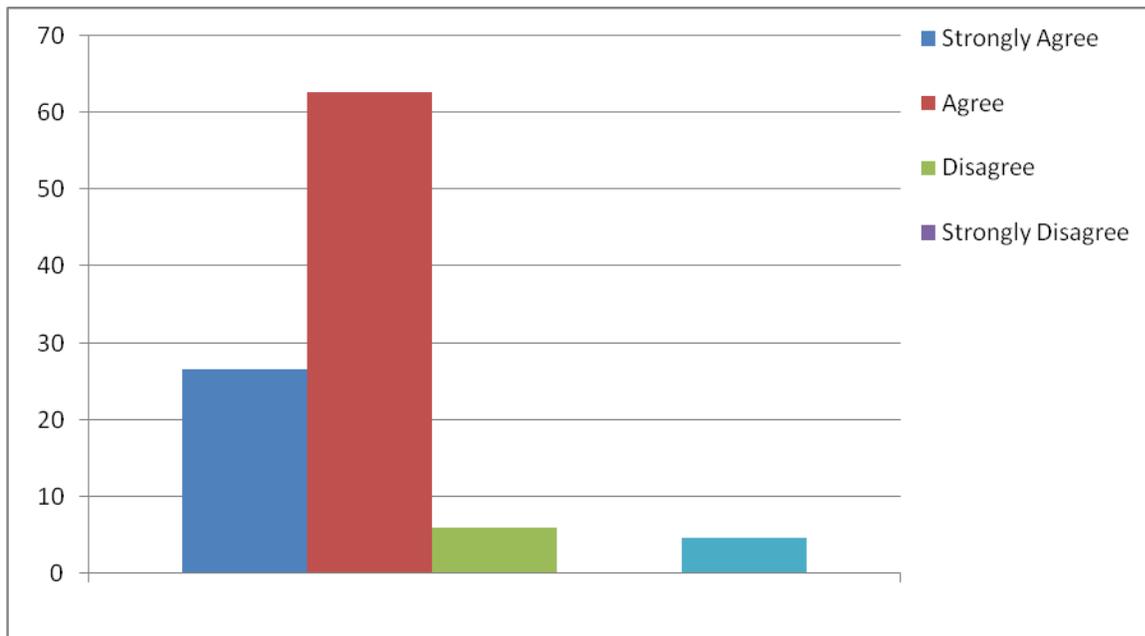
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
26.66%	62.66%	6%	0%	4.66%



### ***Inference:***

More than 26% respondents strongly believe that newspapers through stories and articles should highlight suicides as a heinous crime and suggest ways of preventing it. More than 62% agree while as 6% disagree to the statement. Less than 5% respondents are unclear about the statement.

Q14. The newspaper organizations working in Kashmir should start a collective campaign by dedicating certain space against the alarming suicidal trends in the valley through their write ups?

Assessment

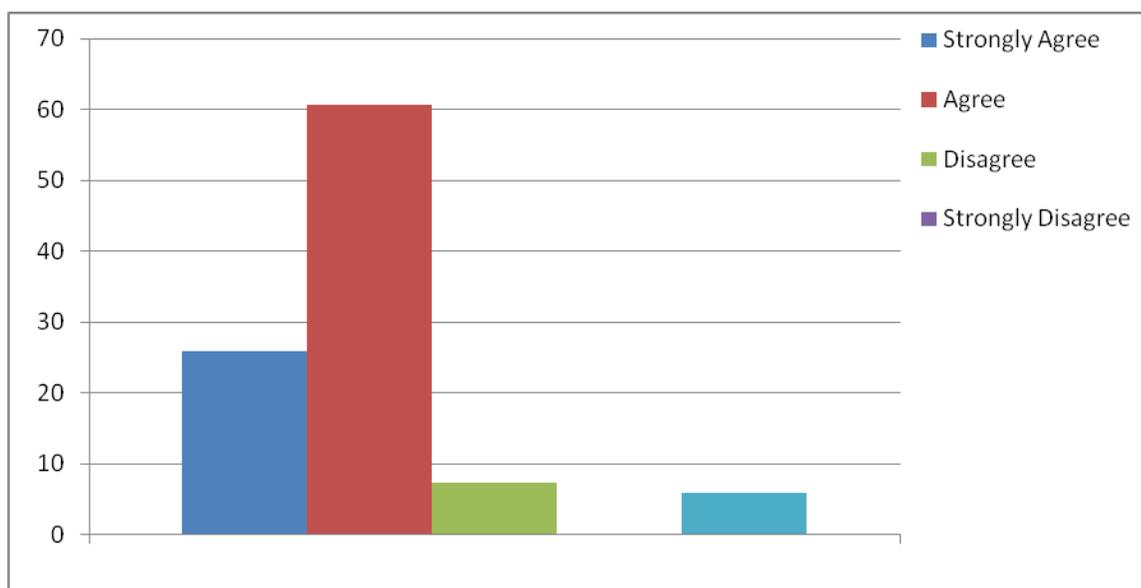
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
26%	60.66%	7.33%	0%	6%



### ***Inference:***

There is a consensus among majority of the respondents that newspapers should dedicate a regular space to the write-ups against the alarming suicidal trends in the valley. 26% respondents strongly agree to the statement and more than 60% agree to it. Only around 7% disagree to the statement while as 6% neither agree nor disagree.

Q15. Responsible reporting guidelines should be drawn up in consultation with media professionals and incorporated while reporting on suicides?

Assessment

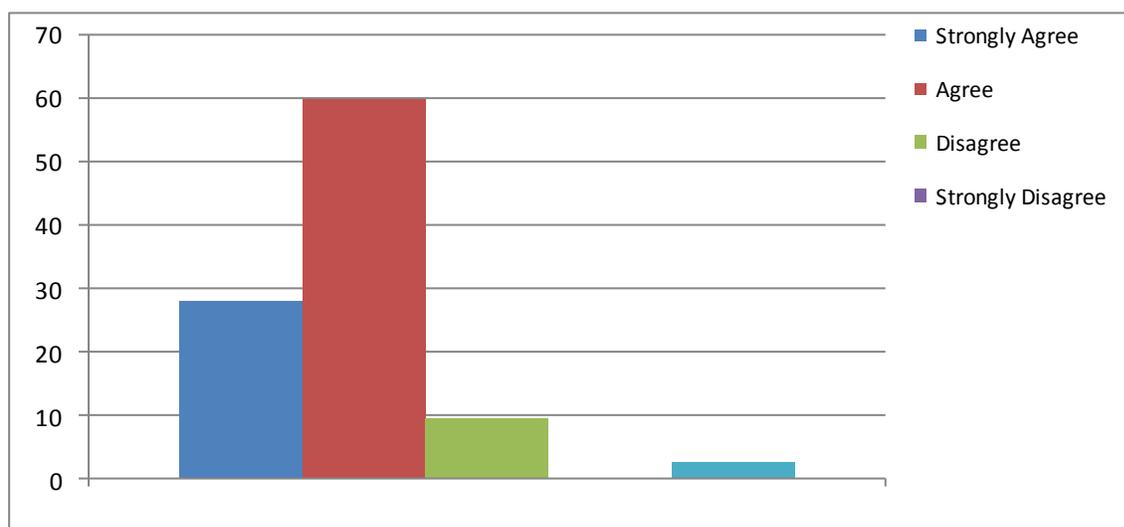
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Strongly Agree	A g r e e	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
2 8 %	6 0 %	9 . 3 3 %	0 %	2 . 6 6 %



### ***Inference:***

28% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that responsible reporting guidelines should be drawn up in consultation with media professionals and incorporated while reporting on suicides while as 60% agree to it. Only around 9% disagree to the statement while as less than 3% respondents are uncertain about it.

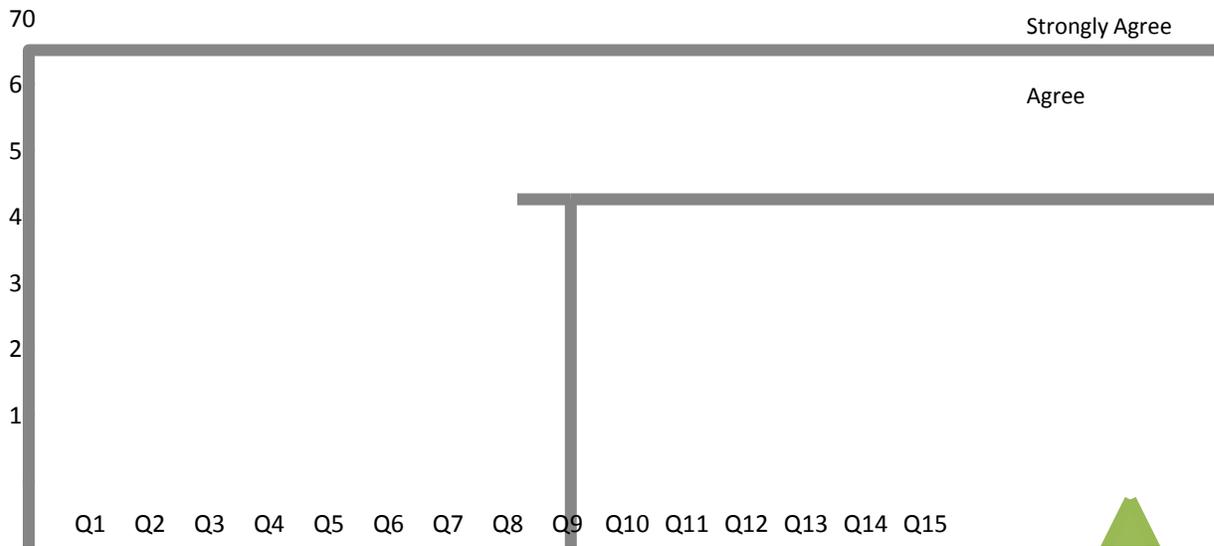
### **Aggregate Analysis**

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An overall analysis suggests that the newspapers in Kashmir fail to give due representation to the suicide related stories. If at all any space is given to such stories, it is in the form of single news stories without any follow-ups. Besides no space is given to the issue of suicides in editorials and articles, thus, ignoring an all important role of educating and counseling people particularly youth who are at the risk of committing suicide. News and views related other issues like politics, sports, environment, conflict etc. are given a prominent place by the newspapers and in comparison the important issue of suicides is trivialized or altogether ignored.

More than 50% of the respondents strongly agree that increasing suicides are a serious issue and should be highlighted through newspapers while as more than 46% are in agreement of the said statement. Whereas 4.66% people disagree to the statement, 2% seem to be unable to make a judgment about it. A meager 1.33% people strongly agree that print media play its required role in highlighting suicides in Kashmir while as 8% state in agreement. But a majority of 61.33% respondents disagree to the statement and 26% strongly disagree. 3.33% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree. 32% people strongly agree to the statement that

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print media has failed to create awareness about suicides and its prevention in Kashmir while as more than 50% agree to the statement. 10% people disagree and 2% strongly disagree with statement while as around 5% respondents are uncertain about the statement.

A majority of 60% people disagree to the statement that newspapers give follow-ups to the news stories about suicides while as 28% strongly deny this statement. A meager 7.33% respondents agree to the statement and just 1.33% strongly agree to it while as around 3% people seem to be in ambiguity regarding the statement. Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the newspapers in Kashmir give lesser space to suicide related stories as compared to other issues. 20% respondents strongly agree to this statement while as more than 60% agree to it. Only around 13% disagree with the statement that newspapers give suicide related issues lesser coverage and just less than 5% strongly disagree. Around 1% of the respondents fail to form any opinion about this statement.

More than 44% of the respondents strongly believe that the newspapers have a role to create awareness among people about suicides and prevent the same not only through news reports but editorials and articles as well while as more than 47% agree to the statement. A mere 4% people disagree while as 4% of them neither agree nor disagree to the statement. Only 4% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that newspapers actually accomplish the required role of creating awareness about suicides through editorials and articles and 18% agree to it. Majority of more than 52% disagree while as 22% strongly disagree to the statement. Around 3% respondents have ambiguity in their minds regarding the statement.

More than 39% respondents strongly agree to the statement that suicide reporting is not just restricted to harmful effects but a positive coping about suicidal ideation in newspapers can have protective effects. More than 49% agree to the statement while as less than 10% respondents disagree to it. 2% of the respondents fail to make any analysis regarding the statement. Only around 2% respondents strongly believe that the newspapers in Kashmir from time to time have launched campaign through their write-ups against the growing menace of

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suicides while as around 10% agree to it. A major 52% disagree to the statement and more than 32% strongly disagree to it. 2% of the respondents are uncertain about the statement.

Majority of the respondents believe that the newspapers in Kashmir have reported suicides incidents in the form of single column stories without giving any follow up stories. 24% respondents strongly agree while as 56% agree to the statement. Only 14% of the respondents disagree while as less than 4% strongly disagree to the statement. Less than 3% respondents are ambiguous about the statement. More than 25% respondents strongly agree to the statement that the newspaper organisations should include suicide reporting as part of their regular curriculum while as 60% agree to it. Around 7% people disagree to the statement while as around 3% disagree to it. 4% respondents neither agree nor disagree.

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that there is a need to educate journalists about suicide coverage which should go beyond publication of the stories related to deaths caused by suicides. 30% strongly agree while as more than 60% agree to the statement. A mere 4.66% disagree while as an equal percentage is uncertain about the statement. More than 26% respondents strongly believe that newspapers through stories and articles should highlight suicides as a heinous crime and suggest ways of preventing it. More than 62% agree while as 6% disagree to the statement. Less than 5% respondents are unclear about the statement.

There is a consensus among majority of the respondents that newspapers should dedicate a regular space to the write-ups against the alarming suicidal trends in the valley. 26% respondents strongly agree to the statement and more than 60% agree to it. Only around 7% disagree to the statement while as 6% neither agree nor disagree. 28% of the respondents strongly agree to the statement that responsible reporting guidelines should be drawn up in consultation with media professionals and incorporated while reporting on suicides while as 60% agree to it. Only around 9% disagree to the statement while as less than 3% respondents are uncertain about it.

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## CONCLUSION

It is very much clear that the newspapers in Kashmir have failed in highlighting the grave issue of suicides as compared to other issues which find a good space in these papers. The reportage of suicide incidents has remained limited to just covering a story about a committed suicide.

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