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Abstract
Background: Although much is known scientifically about maternally and paternally mediated fetal harms, there has been little research examining how these harms are portrayed in the media. The objective of this study was to examine how maternal and paternal age-related harm is portrayed in contemporary U.S. newspapers. Methods: A content analysis was undertaken of 64 newspaper articles after systematic searching and selection of articles based on inclusion criteria. A coding framework was developed and used to analyze articles for tone. The text of the articles was analyzed for one or more of eight tones, which were correlated with the main article focus and gender of author. Results: Most articles were maternally focused, and only 6% of articles were equally focused on both women and men. Most U.S. newspaper articles focused on maternal age-related harms, and negative tones were often used to describe older parents, especially for women. In contrast, paternal age-related harms were less likely to be discussed and tended to include more reassuring tones. Conclusions: Authors of newspaper articles should employ more balanced perspectives and gender-neutral tones when discussing age-related preconception harm.