



Portrayal of Sexual Assault: Comparing the Narratives of Private and Public Television Media (With Reference to Doordarshan and Aaj Tak)

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v5i7.319>

Abstract

The study undertaken focuses on the portrayal of sexual assault by the television news media. This topic has been selected because sexual assault is an umbrella term inclusive of rape, molestation, groping, stalking, among others and this study will allow the researchers to briefly touch some of these aspects if not all. This topic was also selected because there are very few existing studies that even come close enough to the exploration and comparison of two different sources of reportage of sexual assault. Many studies exist in terms of sexual assault and news media separately and not much work has been done on the collective. Through this study the researchers analysed and compared the portrayal patterns of the public and private media using content analysis and semi-structured interviews. The researchers found great contrast in the portrayal style and narratives of both the news sources which have their own pros and cons.

Keywords: Reportage; Sexual Assault; Public Media; Private Media; India; Doordarshan; Aaj Tak

Introduction/ Backdrop of The Study

1.1 History and Evolution in India

Mass Communication dates back to prehistoric era and forms. Before major inventions like the printing press or the introduction of technology, communication was mainly verbal, signed and in the form of art. The invention of Gutenberg's printing press in 1455 led to the documentation of major historic events in a physical form. The first weekly newspaper was printed in Antwerp in 1605 and paved the way for mass communication to evolve and allowed news to travel far and wide. The invention of

radio by Marconi in 1895 and television by John Logie Baird in 1925, although three decades apart made communication easier. Finally, invention of the internet (the World Wide Web) by Tim Berners Lee in 1990 led to a complete revolution in how information is processed, spread and perceived. (Sehgal, 2019)

In India, the chronology of the evolution of mass media begins in 1780 with Bengal Gazette, the first newspaper founded in India. While the print media faced a hindered path for several decades, the next major development in the timeline took place in 1927 with the introduction of radio broadcasting. This milestone was followed with the Press Trust of India being founded twenty years later in 1947 and by 1950, 214 daily newspapers were being published in India. The television took charge of the broadcast scenario with the launch of Doordarshan in 1959. Come 1975, the media freedom finds itself in shackles much like the gagging in the times of British rule. Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of the country, declares an emergency along with the suspension of free press.

Private television channels came to market in 1992 with the launch of Zee TV and were an instant hit. This helped widen the horizon of news, entertainment and information. The first private channel to dive into the realm of television news broadcast was New Delhi Television (NDTV), which in 1988, produced 'The World This Week' airing every Friday night. Since then, the television media has evolved and has seen a lot of development in terms of technology, content and style. By 2000, social media has taken the world of communication by a storm, with the news being instant. This has paved way for the spread of false information but that doesn't seem to dampen the popularity of the medium. (History of Mass Media in India, n.d.). The audience is now limitless on the virtual front with an estimate of four billion people having access to the World Wide Web in 2018. (Sehgal, 2019)

1.2 Media Ethics

With regard to the principles of self- regulation as indicated by News Broadcasters Association's (NBA) Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards, the fundamental standards of Reportage are:

- All news reporting must be done keeping public interest in mind.
- All and any reporting must refrain from sensationalizing any information or creating panic, distress or fear among the viewers.
- Content matter of broadcast should not be shown out of context.
- Subjects which promote horror, supernatural, superstition, occultism, exorcism, divination, and the paranormal should be avoided.
- Broadcasters must take utmost care while featuring content related to any racial or religious group so as to prevent any kind of negative impact.
- "Reconstruction" of any event, when shown, should be clearly marked and should adhere to the guidelines
- Broadcasters must avoid unhealthy competition that may lead to the deterioration of the broadcasting standards. (News Broadcasting Standards Authority)

1.3 Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is inclusive of a range of sexual offences including showing indecent pictures and videos to touching or kissing and penetration of the person's body with a body part or object without explicit consent. Consent is when someone freely agrees to do something. (What is Sexual Assault? n.d.) According to the United Nations, thirty- five percent of women have experienced physical or sexual assault by a partner or non- partner. This percentage is not inclusive of sexual harassment, including which the rate can be as high as seventy percent. (UN Women, n.d.) According to the report released by National Crime Records Bureau, 3, 78,236 cases of crime against women were reported in India in the year 2018. The country recorded an average of 87 rape cases per day in 2019, with the overall 4, 05,861

cases of crime against women in the year. The data shows seven percent rise in the cases of sexual assault. As a matter of fact, rape is the fourth most common crime committed in the country. (The Wire, 2020)

1.3.1 Types of Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is a term inclusive of multiple atrocities against women. It includes various unwanted sexual activities where the perpetrator, using force and making threats, takes advantage of the victim without explicit content. (American Psychological Association, n.d.) It includes the following:

- Sexual abuse
- Rape
- Indecent behavior
- Indecent assault
- Sexual molestation
- Incest
- Child sexual abuse
- Child sexual assault
- Touching [‘feeling up’]
- Sexual harassment

The immediate reaction to sexual assault include shock, fear and disbelief among others, depending on the victim. On the other hand, the long term effects include depression, post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety among others. (American Psychological Association, n.d.)

1.4 Portrayal of Sexual Assault by the Media

Over years and decades, media has played a very important role in creating impact and voicing strong opinions, be it reporting a crime, elections or stories of public interest. Be it known to us or unknown, media plays an important role in shaping the minds of a society. (Pandya & Mohapara, Dec. 2015).

When it comes to sexual assault, the role of media is very crucial. Be it the coverage of the issue or acting as a tool to empower the government and activists in raising awareness in this issue. If we go back to cases like those of Jessica Lal, Priyadarshini Matto, Shivani Bhatnagar, Nirbhaya and Geetika Sharma among others, one can witness the strong stance and outrage in the reportage of these crimes. The media, with the help of sting operations, investigation and heavy coverage, made sure that the perpetrators of these crimes were brought to justice. This trial by media was also seen during the Nirbhaya gang rape case. However, portrayal of this sensitive issue has been deteriorating with time. Media normalizes sexual assault in one way or another while placing the blame on the victim. The phrasing in news also downplays the graveness of the crime. The media is highly politicized and picks up women’s issues accordingly. Issues like rape, trafficking and prostitution are reported for the sake of sensationalization and hence we see a clear lack in the representation of cases of domestic violence, marital rape, etc. (Pandya & Mohapara, Dec. 2015) Moreover, the coverage of rape is narrowly focused on sexual violence against middle-class and upper-caste women and avoids discussing violence against poor, rural, lower-class, lower-caste, and otherwise marginalized women. (Rao, 2014)

The portrayal of any issue by media is totally dependent on TRPs. It is clear that the importance of any issue is ranked according to the media attention it receives and the lack of clarity and representation of sexual crimes has led the society to house a narrow opinion on such a grave issue. (Pandya & Mohapara, Dec. 2015)

1.4.1 Guidelines on Reportage of Cases of Sexual Assault

With regard to News Broadcasters Association (NBA), the guidelines on the reportage of cases of sexual assault are:

- News channels must bear in mind that news coverage of crime influences the mind-set of the viewer and has a significant impact on the public perception of such crime.
- In reporting on matters involving sexual assault, news channels are advised to carefully balance the survivor's right to privacy and that of the survivor's family with public interest.
- News channels must ensure that no victim of sexual assault, violence, aggression, trauma or a witness to any such acts, is featured in any news report or program, relating to such victim, without concealing the identity of such person. In conformity with this principle any visuals shown of the victim must be completely morphed.
- In reporting on cases of sexual assault on women, victims of child abuse and juvenile delinquents, to respect their privacy, the name, photograph and other details that may lead to disclosure of their identity or that of the family shall not be broadcast or divulged.
- News channels must exercise sensitivity, discretion and sound judgment particularly in the following cases:
 - when disclosure of details of the sexual assault would only serve to add to the trauma of the survivor;
 - when details of the sexual assault are needed to be disclosed to secure a safe environment
- News channels must take special note of the provisions of Section 228A of the Indian Penal Code 1860 and of Section 21 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 which provide for protection of the identity of victims of sexual offences and of juveniles in conflict with the law.

Review of Literature

1. Coverage of Sexual Assault Cases on Prime Time News

Published by: Shreya Mohan

Published in: International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research

Volume: 04, Issue: 03

Published on: March, 2019

The introduction outlines some basic definitions and further dwells into the aspects of prime time news and sexual assault cases on prime time news. The research focuses on the shift from credibility and passion to commercialism and TRPs. There is also focus on the outdated portrayal of sexual assault and factors affecting it. The methodology used in this research is content analysis and expert interviews.

For content analysis, the author has based her observation on 23 episodes of The News Hour Debate and The Clash collectively for the time period from August 1st 2018 to October 31st 2018. On the other hand, interviews of five journalism professionals were undertaken for analysis. The interview questions were based on the ethics and role of media, source of information, #metoo movement and audience expectations. The researcher does the quantitative data analysis on factors such as use of blurred visuals, revealing the identity of the accused, follow up, sting operations, profession of the panellists, Hashtags followed, feminist and misogynistic opinion, IPC sections highlighted and inclination of the moderator. The interview answers concluded to a code of ethics where maximum output should be

achieved while disclosing minimum information. It also revealed that the main source of information in such cases are usually the police and the victim's family. The interview also highlights the audience's need of being in the know of the back story and developments of a case and the #metoo movement is marked as an empowering movement towards women safety as well as being a tool to malign an individual.

The researcher comes to the conclusion that the media unit has agendas, to fulfil which it can resort to biases and trends even if it's not ethical. Despite various laws and ethics being put down, there is a lack of passion and discipline in the reportage of the media. Apart from pressing on the need of strong framework and regulations for media, the researcher brings to light the lack of knowledge in the masses and the need for media to be the informing body, the need for both the coverage of #metoo and the representation of movement itself to be fluid in terms of gender.

2. Media Awareness Towards Sex Crime and Women in India

Published by: Rakesh V Talikoti
Published in: Journal of the Gujarat Research Society,
Volume 21 Issue 2

The author starts by stating that India is the fourth most dangerous nation in the world for women and brings in different statistics to prove this point. Moving forward, features such as portrayal of sexual issues by different media, its nature and the impact of consuming such content is discussed with the help of facts and instances. The methodology used in this research is quantitative analysis using a questionnaire.

The author collects 100 samples to form the data. Out of the 100, 36 were males and 64 were females. The questionnaire followed a five point scale, 5 indicating strongly agree and 1 indicating strongly disagree. The questions asked were: Are women safe in India? To this, 37% of the responded that women are safe in India. Has sex crime increased in India? Has the government taken strict actions against these offenses and are the criminals with record of sexual abuse rightly convicted by the government? 53% of responses for both the questions indicated the rise of sex crime in the country and that the government fulfils legal procedures and rightly convicts the criminals with record of sexual abuse. Does the media pay rightful attention to the issue and are the codes of morals, pursued by the media, suitable for the representation of such sensitive issues? 82% respondents voted that media pays enough attention to the issue while 80% disagree that the media follows suitable ethics.

The author comes to the conclusion that though the media, on their part, have come a long way when it comes to the representation of issues related to sexual offense. However, there is a need for change in the ethics in order to have greater impact. It is also mentioned that the impact is not limited to the awareness created but also in being more inclusive and impacting the rate of these crimes.

3. Role of Media in Combating Violence Against Women in India

Published by: Rameshwari Pandya, Atanu Mohapara
Published in: Social Work Review, Vol. 51 No. 1
Published on: Jan - Dec 2015

The author leads the introduction with some strong words, focusing on what is included under the definition of sexual assault. They go on to quote the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and presents a number of statistics. They further define media and its importance and state, with examples, how it portrays the issue of sexual assault and why it is criticized for the same. The

authors have chosen to conduct a secondary data analysis and have quoted various books, research works and newspapers and portals like NDTV.

They put their point across with the help of examples of murder cases like Jessica Lal, Priyadarshini Matto, Shivani Bhatnagar, Nirbhaya and Geetika Sharma among others. The researchers also take into consideration the image of the whole case formed by a news channel. Every keyword is weighed and tested on the terms of language, sensitivity, terms used for addressing, statistics and background information. The researchers, based on the above cases discuss the role played by the media in bringing about a change and making sure that justice is served. They discuss the rise of activism in journalism and how it was the sting operations and investigations of the media that helped solve these cases. They also argue that the media still has the power to rise even though it's burdened by consumerism and privatisation.

The researchers conclude that the media, true to being the fourth pillar of the society, has played an instrumental role in raising awareness about the incidents of violence. However, media must stay away from stereotypes and act as a bridge between the public and the government, making communication easier. It should maintain sensitivity when it comes to cases like sexual assault and not follow cheap gimmicks to gain TRP and readership. Media houses should allocate a beat on women like that of business, sports, etc. and lastly media should make sure it does in-depth coverage of issues and follows up on the story.

4. Media Coverage of Violence Against Women in India: A Systematic Study of a High Profile Rape Case

Published by: Mark Phillips, Fargol Mostofian, Rajeev Jetly,
Nazar Puthukudy, Kim Madden and Mohit Bhandari
Published in: BMC Women's Health, 15:3
Published on: 2015

The researchers provide an account of the Delhi rape case of 2012 as they commence with the introduction. They further describe the situation of national protests and outcry for justice for Nirbhaya. The researchers further define media and its role of spreading awareness from a local level to the global scale. The researchers carried out qualitative analysis of secondary data.

They took into consideration, two news databases, LexisNexis Academic and Factivia and individual newspapers and media reports covering gang-rape. Reports and database pieces were included if it fulfilled at least one of the criteria out of description of the events, rape victim's condition, rape victim's death, protests as a consequence of the event and testimonies of events from victim, witnesses or the accused. The reports that were prevalent to this study were 534 in number while 352 were fit for inclusion. The reports were mostly centred on India, 32.8 % coming from Delhi while 27.9% coming from the rest of India. Content analysis brought out the discrepancies in the media reports where 56% applauded her bravery, 40% discussed outrage over the events and 11% discussed cases of victim-blaming. Also, the number of reports increased significantly throughout the month of December and plateaued to a steady rate by January. The researchers point out that the Nirbhaya case gained global momentum through the professional media and the media played a pivotal role in the development of this case.

The researchers come to conclusion that the media reports of the Delhi gang rape incident were inconsistent in the depiction of events. They also conclude that although the spread of information through media is fast, it has its own limitations such as inaccurate initial reporting. They finally conclude that even though the information is variable, the media is still a strong tool to spread awareness about women issues.

5. Reception of News Reports On Violence Against Women by The Youth in Tamil Nadu

Published by: B. Radha, Dr. P. Govindaraju

Published in: International Journal of Advanced Scientific Research and
Management, Vol. 1 Issue 11

Published on: Nov, 2015

The authors discuss the role of the media in shaping the image of any incident. They further throw light on the statistics related to crime against women. They further discuss how news framing, language and choice of words influence the audience perception in a major way. The authors point out the major flaw in the portrayal of such sensitive issues to be gender stereotyping, lack of attention to structural causes of gender violence and story selection. They point out that any instance of sexual violence is either sensationalized by the media or not given enough attention.

This study is a part of a larger study aimed at researching the representation of violence against women by the press in India. The authors have relied on audience reception to gather the needed data. They conduct focus group discussions and compare the pre- post differences. The differences between the general opinion and that shaped after being exposed to the news articles is recorded. Two groups, one with 12 female students and the other with 9 male students, was formed. Tamil Dinathanthi and Dainik Jagran were the newspapers chosen on the basis of readership. The authors discuss the different reactions that were brought out depending on various media reports. The reactions were sympathy or finding the victim to be the cause and finding the reports untrustworthy. They discuss how gender played no significant role in shaping the participant's point of view. They further observe that the acts of sexual violence are glorified, the articles highlighting the perpetrators point of view and ignoring that of the victim. The participants were of the opinion that the media reports lacked depth. The post analysis brought out aspects of patriarchy, gender sensitivity, cultural degradation and degradation of value of relationships. The researchers come to a conclusion that the audience's perception of any news article is more dependent on society than gender. They point out the gender stereotypes instilled in each participant how it triggered their response to the reports. They press on the fact that while the youth needs to widen their scope of understanding such issues, the media should also put together their pieces with much more social responsibility and sensitivity.

6. Mainstream Media's Framing of #Metoo Campaign in India

Published by: Manjushree G Naik, Padma Rani

Published in: Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies

Vol. 9 No. 1

Published on: Feb, 2020

The introduction dwells into the statistics of how the number of cases about sexual assault have seen a quick rise and how the media has covered very few of these cases in comparison. The researchers claim that the media does not pay heed to the issue unless and until it benefits them. Backing their claim up, they put forward the hours devoted by major news channels like Aaj Tak and NDTV before the 2012 gang rape case and after. The scenario for the same is brought to light in terms of national newspapers like The Hindu and Times of India. Further into the introduction, the #metoo movement and its spread in India is discussed at length. The research sources its information from various other studies and researches. It talks about feminism, liberal feminism and post-feminism and how these concepts have affected the representation of cases of sexual violence. Studies by Mack and McCann and Ringrose and Keller analyse the sexual crimes against women as represented by the media under five themes: interest of the media in such stories to create commercial profit, representation of women in the press as sexualised objects, explanation of the violence, blaming and the demographic profile of the victim. The study also

focuses on the impact of the digital era on the representation of these sensitive issues. With regards to #metoo, the researchers make the observations that the media put the accused into the casualty frame and there is more focus on the story rather than the solution. It is also found that the nature of the portrayal of crimes against women has to be more responsible and sensitive and while the media is progressing towards a more responsible stance towards reporting on sexual crimes, the audience's interpretation makes a lot of difference as well. The researchers conclude that people in all scope of the society are responsible for the way sexual crimes are represented, be it portrayal, response or action. The study throws light at the different ways in which newspapers and television media differ in covering content and how the same is applied for the national and the vernacular media. It is also conveyed that #metoo was a huge movement that led women of the country to come forward. However, its success can only be measured by the perspective of its impact on the rest of the world.

7. Trends in Primetime News: Study of Selected News Channels in India

Published by: Jintendra Singh

Published in: Journal of Content, Community & Communication

Volume 1, Issue 1

Published on: 2015

The introduction of the study essentially covers the development and importance of electronic media. It is specified that the medium is very crucial for socio-economic development and how it helps the country grow. The golden period and the growth of the media industry are discussed along with the new age challenge of TRPs and competition is discussed. Later, the concept of prime time and how it varies on the basis of audience, region and competition are discussed.

The author chose to involve content analysis as the mode of data collection and carried the process out through surveys and observational notes on the prime time shows. The sample data included two hours of content for everyday of the week for four consecutive weeks and the four channels chosen were on the basis of the following criteria: promptness in news coverage, completeness in news presentation, breaking news and social responsibility in news presentations. The author has also considered the evolution of prime time by including detailed surveys from journalists, presenters and audience. The author observes that the content of prime time and finds that it is highly driven by TRPs and covers the realms of supernatural and gossip more than focusing on the important aspects that need more attention. News culture has been swallowed by corporate culture and the quality and authenticity of news has been compromised.

The author comes to a conclusion that news media takes part in irresponsible journalism without comprehending its impact on audience understanding of certain issues and leading to the wrongful formation of opinion. Sting operations have become the easy way of gaining TRP and the focus of the media has shifted from the impact it should have on society. Sensitive issues are sensationalized and the accused glorified. All in all, the media has gone from being an impactful source of information to covering tantric and gossip.

8. #MeToo Goes Global: Media Framing of Silence Breakers in Four National Settings

Published by: Jesse C. Starkey, Amy Koerber, Miglena Sternadori, Bethany Pitchford

Published in: Journal of Communication Inquiry, Volume 43, Issue 4

Published on: 2019

The introduction summarizes the initial phase and the rebirth of the #metoo movement. The authors mention the 2006 initiation of the movement by Tarana Burke and how Alyssa Milano's tweet in

2017 helped it gain momentum. The authors explore how news framing and culture affect the #metoo movement and hashtag activism focusing on the silence breaking stories and how these stories were framed and portrayed. First and foremost, media framing for four different silence breakers across the world is analysed. These women are: Susan Fowler in the United States, Shiori Ito in Japan, Tanushree Dutta in India, and Tessa Sullivan in Australia. The study relies on secondary data analysis for data collection. News websites were selected on the basis of Google rankings for each country and it was determined whether the websites had news related to #metoo. After collecting various researches and articles, a thorough analysis was done. The researchers analyse four frames in the media reporting of the #metoo movement. They are: the brave silence breaker frame where the woman's courage and bravery were lauded, the stoic victim frame highlighting the risks taken by the victims to speak up in an unjust system, the reluctant or recovered hero frame. In the former, the victim takes the frontline unintentionally while in the latter, the victim initially faces criticism but emerges a hero. The last is the hysterical slut frame where the credibility of the victim is questioned. The authors classify headlines and statements into these frames for all four cases to support their analysis.

The authors conclude that the #metoo movement brought forward a revolution, enabling women to speak up about the unjust treatment they received. The media framing of the movement brought to light the different discussions and opinions around the topic. Culture of a country or community also played an important role in how the movement was perceived by the people. The movement is an optimistic step but a cautious one considering the negative effects faced by the victims.

9. The Crime Heard Around the World: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Media Coverage of the New Delhi Gang Rape

Published by: Tonya B. Lewis
Published in: Baylor University
Published on: 2015

The introduction details the happenings of the Delhi gang rape case of 16 December, 2012, including details like the basic story, the injuries and suffering of the victim leading to her death, the details on the accused and how they have been punished, the response that the incident triggered from the country and statements of the victim's parents. The author also presents the case of gender gap in India and presents statistics to support her statements. She also quotes the statements from the accused and their lawyer blaming the victim for the incident.

The author conducts both a pilot and a final study. In order to familiarize herself with the case and aid the development of the research study. She relied on content analysis based on articles from The Times of India and The New York Times and online content from The Guardian. She carried out the selection the basis of readership and accessed the articles through LexisNexis academic database. The author analysed the articles on the basis of keywords and frames. The frequency of certain words, descriptions and phrases are also recorded. The analysis lead the author to classify the data in certain frames. There are different frames for the perpetrators and the victims. Those for perpetrators are alien others, brutes, hyper- masculinity, misplaced blame, mob mentality and poor mental compass. The frames set for the victim, on the other hand are jezebel, noble woman and student, poor moral compass, true victim and victim blaming. The author also finds the sensationalization of news, patriarchy and judicial system to hold responsibility for the condition of women in the country. It was observed that most of the articles took the neutral perspective when reporting the incident and framing the victim was prominent over perpetrators. The author concludes that none of the sources under scrutiny participated in impactful journalism and failed in taking a stand. While The New York Times wrote longer articles, The Times of India focused more on the judicial front. While the reporting was strong, the narratives omitted frames.

10. No Nation for Women: Reportage on Rape from India, the World's Largest Democracy

Published by: Priyanka Dubey
Published on: 2018

No Nation for Women: Reportage on Rape from India, the World's Largest Democracy is a book by Priyanka Dubey and captures, in excruciating detail, the waking nightmares of every Indian woman. She is a Multimedia Investigative Reporter working with BBC. In her book, Ms. Dubey talks about why our country proves to be unsafe for its women and narrates different horrific incidents of sexual crimes against women that have been clearly neglected by the mainstream media.

The researcher finds this book to be extremely useful for the study as it explores the media coverage of sexual assault at its root, i.e., the non- coverage of it. The author of the book not only narrates the incidents to the world but also mentions the need for media to be more sensitive and empathetic when covering sexual assault cases. Her book cover incidents of 'corrective' rape, sexual crimes against smaller tribes, rapes in small towns and rural areas, custody rapes, trafficking, etc. while also exploring the political and sexist themes involved in rape and other sexual assault cases. The book is a narrative of devastating cases of sexual assault with varying degrees of media attention. Some made national headlines, some made it to the local newspapers and some of these cases remain mostly unheard of. The author questions not only the media reporting of such incidents but also our response to them as a society. She raises some important questions like: Where is the line between our empathy and our apathy? Does a story taking place outside the known economic stratum reduce the importance of the matter or the gravity of the crime that happened? Is the importance and coverage based on the crime's geological distance?

The researcher found the book to a strongly put narratives of sexual assault and related crimes. With each incident, the author subtly but strongly pursues an important question and highlights how women are safe nowhere. Every story an interview with the victim and their family, the book contains some much needed follow ups on the decade old cases. The author has a keen eye for details and has maintained a clear balance between facts and emotions, making it an ideal book for researchers to reference when working on the theme of sexual assault.

Research Objectives

- To analyse the portrayal patterns for two major cases of sexual assault in the past decade, comparing the portrayal by Aaj Tak and Doordarshan.
- To study the selection and different narratives explored by the broadcasters.

Research Questions

- 1.How does the portrayal of a sensitive issue such as sexual assault differ for state- owned (DD NEWS) and private (AAJ TAK) television news channels?
- 2.How accurate and ethical are the narratives explored by both the channels?

Research Methodology and Design

Research design is the strategic framework that act as the bridge between what the research intends to cover and the process of how the coverage is made possible. It is a guide that helps with the arrangement of the steps in planning and collecting data and executing an analysis to derive a conclusion.

It also details nature, form and other details of the involved methods. (Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, South Africa)

The current research is exploratory in nature and aims to bring to light the different narratives of private and public television news channels and to compare the narratives used by the two mediums. The researcher has focused this study around the portrayal of sexual assault. In order to address the objectives, the researcher has opted for qualitative method of data collection. Qualitative method is chosen as it will help the researcher in determining traits and characteristics needed to reach a defining conclusion. The study in question considers the functioning of an organization as a whole and detailed, conceptual analysis serves as a better source of data as compared to numerical data. The nature of the collected data is a combination of both primary and secondary data.

Tools of The Study

- 1.To achieve first objective, the researchers have analysed the content drawn from interviews and bytes given by politicians, lawyers, victim's family, offender and other involved parties to the channels Aaj Tak and DD News separately for two different cases of sexual assault, #metoo movement and Unnao rape case, and compared the results. Two cases out of the different types of sexual assault are chosen. The researchers have chosen these two cases due to the prominent coverage of these cases by the media. Other deciding factors were the involvement of political factors and severity of the case.
- 2.For the second objective, the researchers have conducted semi-structured interviews of five journalists. The journalists showed the representation of: one from private news channel, one from public news channel, one from non- conventional news media, one from digital news media and one from print media. While the representatives from the television news media give an insider perspective from different viewpoints, the representatives from print and digital news media give a knowledgeable outer perspective from different viewpoints. An analysis of the interview data was done to find a pattern and different perspectives and come to a conclusion regarding the different notions and narratives of the media.

Process of Data Collection

In order to understand the portrayal patterns, data is collected through secondary sources and analysed to determine the presence of any pattern. News clippings like interviews, panel discussions and media bytes from the Unna case and #metoo movement are collected for both Aaj Tak and Doordarshan. If a defining pattern for public and private television media was found, the two data were compared to find the similarities and differences in the portrayal patterns of the two. On the other hand, the researchers interviewed five different media professionals with different approach towards the television news media in order to understand the different narratives of news presentation and how selection in television news works. All the interviewees are presented with 10 questions about ethics and policies of media and different cases of sexual assault.

Limitations of The Study

- The study focuses on only two cases of sexual assault, so there is a chance that relevant patterns or narratives related to other forms of sexual assault are missed out.
- The research focuses on one channel each from public and private television news media which is a narrowed area of representation.

Findings and Analysis

Interpretation [A]

The researcher conducted five personal interviews:

1. Frank Rausan Pereira, Editor-in-chief of Bharata First, a digital media company
2. Pankaj Pachauri, an Indian TV anchor and journalist, founder and Editor-in-chief of Go News, India's first app based TV News channel. He was associated with NDTV for 15 years.
3. Priyanka Dubey, a multimedia Investigative Reporter and Author of 'No Nation for Women-Reportage on Rape from India, the World's Largest Democracy' published by Simon & Schuster
4. Skand Vivek, a journalist with over 13 years of experience in print and digital media. He is currently working as Executive Editor at Dainik Bhaskar group and heads the business vertical of the newspaper
5. Fahmida Naz, a creative producer with over 7 years of experience and is currently the Senior Multimedia Producer at BloombergQuint.

The researchers tried to bring in the perspective of state-owned media through Frank Rausan Pereira and that of private media through Pankaj Pachauri. While Priyanka Dubey brought in representation of an unconventional source, Skand Vivek and Fahmida Naz represented print and digital media respectively. On analysing the responses of the interviewees, the researchers have interpreted the following:

- Need for sensitivity and empathy while covering sexual assault cases.
- Keeping the victim's identity under wraps.
- Presenting the incident in an objective, unbiased way.
- Doordarshan is a media body highly influenced by the government and its reportage is affected by the same.
- Private channels are in constant lookout for TRP and its reportage is affected by the same.
- While private and public media cannot be unbiased and are highly affected by external factors, there is no buying the media as a whole. Owing to this, there always will be different representations of the same case.
- There is lack in the representation of men in sexual assault cases and that gap needs to be filled by the media with appropriate representation.
- #metoo movement saw different traction on social media and mainstream media. News media was more careful and limited in their representation due to the involvement of high profile personalities.
- Similar to #metoo, the involvement of a high profile leader in the Unnao rape case gave traction to the case. Media saw a divided representation of the case, ultimately leading to the arrest of the leader.

Having pointed out the common factors among the interview data, the researchers found a few points where there was a difference of opinion. These points are:

- While all other interviewees find private media to have more freedom given the government's regulation of the public media, expert Frank Rausan Pereira finds public media to have more freedom to express as it does not have to worry about TRP.
- While all other experts are of the opinion that the Nirbhaya gang rape case is used in headlines and reportage till date to emphasise the graveness of any case, Priyanka Dubey is of the opinion that such reportage lacks imagination and is a gimmick for TRP.
- While most experts agree to the idea of a political actor on a panel discussing and debating sexual assault, Frank Rausan Pereira is of the opinion that political involvement alters the logical conclusion of any discussion while Priyanka Dubey does not find them to be important in every panel.

Interpretation [B]

The interview clippings collected from Aaj Tak and Doordarshan are on the cases of #metoo movement and Unnao rape case. The study of the patterns noticed in the reportage is as given below:

Aaj Tak

The two videos under consideration report the murder case against Kuldeep Singh Sengar after the accident of the Unnao rape victim and that of M.J. Akbar addressing the #metoo allegation against him.

• The Unnao Rape Case

Headline: सेंगर के 'कोतवाल' तो डर कहे का?

Visuals: Accident site, accident vehicle, image of the Supreme Court, footage of Sengar being arrested.

In the news clipping, the host shares the news of the arrest of Kuldeep Singh Sengar following the accident of the Unnao rape victim that claimed the life of two of her aunts and left the victim and her lawyer in the hospital fighting for their lives. The host questions the absence of the gunner and the security allotted to the victim. He further states that while the opposition raises questions on the government, the latter goes on to announce that the case could be transferred to CBI if the victim wanted. He also raised the question that if the women leaders in the assembly could wage a war against Azam Khan for insulting Rama Devi, why could the same leaders not come forward and address the Unnao case where a leader from their own party was the main accused? The tones of the reporter as well as the host were accusatory towards questioning with a high pitched voice.

• The #Metoo Movement

Headline: एमजे अकबर पर 'रहम'... तो क्या #metoo वहम?

Visuals: A video of MJ Akbar swarmed by the media at the airport, a photo of him outside his resident, a run through of his official statement, photographs of the accusing journalists and a video of Akbar addressing the media at the airport.

The clipping informs of the return of MJ Akbar to the country after a week which saw a wave of allegations against him. The host subtly suggests that the leader returned only after he received support from the government. While the speculation of his arrest was around, Akbar finally broke his silence

while addressing the media at the airport and later issued a formal statement. The clip of the same is also shown where reporters can be seen asking if the allegations against Akbar were true and if he would resign. The host later goes on to elaborate that Akbar had a total of 14 accusations labelled against him. He mentions the #metoo stories of Priya Ramani, Gazala Wahab, Shutapa Paul and Shuma Raha among others. Statements by leaders like Smriti Irani and Narendra Tomar are also included. The tone used by the host and reporters was conversational while that of the political actors was authoritative. The pitch of voice was also normal.

Doordarshan

The two videos selected for analysis are the news of Sengar being sentenced to life in prison and that of M.J Akbar's official statement about the #metoo charges against him.

• The Unnao Rape Case

Headline: उन्नाव रेप केस में कुलदीप सिंह सेंगर को उमरकैद

Visuals: A clip Sengar addressing the media, media interaction of the victim's lawyer

The Tees- hazari court of Delhi has come to a verdict in the Unnao rape case and MLA Kuldeep Sing Sengar has been sentenced to a lifetime in prison. Sengar has also been charged with a fine of 25 lac that has to be paid within a month. The court has also ordered that the victim be compensated with an extra 10 lacs and provided with the needed security. The court also acknowledged that the crime committed by the people's representative was grave and there was no intention of going easy on him. The lawyer addressed the media to inform the same.

• The #Metoo Movement

Headlines: MJ AKBAR denies all allegations

Visuals: M.J. Akbar's photograph

The host comes straight to the point, informing that Akbar had denied all allegations of sexual assault against himself and goes on to quote the union minister's official statement on the matter.

Interpretation

The researcher, on analysing the data can interpret the following details:

- The representation style of Aaj Tak is dramatic while that of Doordarshan is simple.
- Two cases covered by the same channel also have a varied style of representation.
- While Doordarshan emphasised on delivering the information, Aaj Tak was more driven towards asking questions.
- The headlines used by Aaj Tak is an evidence of the dramatic nature of the private media and the simple headlines, an example of the simple nature of Doordarshan.
- Additionally, the researcher found the representation of #metoo movement by Doordarshan to be inadequate. Firstly, finding any clipping was difficult and the one found simply quotes MJ Akbar's official statement on the case.

Conclusion

The portrayal of sexual assault by public and private television news media is visibly poles apart. Starting with headlines, while private media chooses to dramatise the headlines, public media simply states the information. Visuals presented throughout the reportage also differ to a great extent as private media chooses to include videos and pictorial representations in their presentation while public media sticks to the usage of image representation. The general presentation of the public media includes a simple lay down of the information with a little background on the matter which gives the audience a chance to absorb the events and allow them to form their opinion on a matter. The private media on the other hand has a complex presentation where the information is given in a reiterated manner and the host tends to repeat the same line atleast thrice. This presentation is also very aggressive with the host shouting out as well as raises questions after question. These questions however, are pertinent and logical and support the audience in piecing together their thoughts and opinions on a matter. On the negative side, this representation holds the power to sway or influence one's opinion as well.

The Broadcasting Authority of India as well as the United Nations have some ethics in place which should be followed by journalists when reporting a sexual assault case or any other sensitive case. Apart from these stated ethics, some ethics to be followed are:

- A case should be reported in facts and solid, verified information and stories should not be built around it in order to gain TRP.
- The media must be sensitive and fair in their reporting and should report both sides of the story without any agenda.
- The name of the victim should not be revealed until and unless there is written consent.
- Media should not act as the law and declare someone to be culprit, campaigning against them as so. While media trials help people voice up their greivinces and demands, keep in mind that it also affects the proceedings in the court.

The narratives of media are highly influenced on the affiliations and the ownership of media houses. The narratives for private media depend on TRP while that of public media is under the scrutiny of the government. It is also noteworthy that the narratives of a case can be different for two different times, channels, etc. While the narrative style of private media is expressive and aggressive, that of public media is limited and simple.

Recommendations for Future Studies

- This study can be explored in a more detailed and comprehensive way by including more private and public news channels and a lot more data for content analysis.
- A three-way comparison of public, private and local television news media will also add to the current study.
- The respondents for the interview can be increased significantly nad public opinion of the narratives can be included.

Suggestions

- The study can be slightly altered by comparing television news media with print media or digital news media instead of comparing within a branch.
- Another alternative is to explore a different branch of news media altogether.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Interview Questions

1. What is the ethical way in which any case of sexual assault should be portrayed by the television media, it being the primary source of information?

2. Looking back at the recent alleged Hathras gangrape case, quite a few cases of rape and sexual assault were reported around the same time but no prominent coverage given to those. What are the checkboxes that any case must check to be given coverage?
3. The presentation and representation styles of DD News and Aaj Tak are evidently poles apart with these channels being under specific authority. How will you describe and bifurcate these differences in the portrayal of sexual assault by Doordarshan and Aaj Tak? Which of these presentation style more effective and has a better chance at objectivity?
4. Does Doordarshan being an entity influenced by the Government, lead to a bias or insufficiency when covering sexual assault cases? How, according to you, would the coverage differ if it were more independent?
5. The Delhi eve-teasing case had the media labelling the accused as "Dilphenk-mizaaz" and "bullet-sawaar manchala", doing a quick assessment and judgment of the matter. What would have been a more responsible take that could have been used in the coverage of this case? How does media trial in such cases affect the judicial process and what impact does it have on the viewers?
6. Since the Nirbhaya gangrape case, most coverages about rapes use headlines like "Ek aur Nirbhaya" or something similar, keeping in touch with the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape case. What is the reason that every case since 2012 has been connected to the Nirbhaya case and how does this connection help the narrative?
7. What is your idea of a diverse panel of experts, who can, not only educate the viewers regarding sexual assault but also play an important role in debasing taboos? What is the need of placing political actors on such panels?
8. With prominent faces like Nana Patekar and MJ Akbar involved, how would you describe media's portrayal of the #metoo movement, with accusations being tossed around from both the alleged accused and the victim? Was the media thorough with its research and representation?
9. Former BJP member Kuldeep Singh Sengar being the accused, did political involvement in any way, sway the coverage of the Unnao rape case by both the state-owned and private media? What were the agendas in play by the private channels on the basis of affinity and did the government authority in any way affect the coverage by Doordarshan negatively?

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