

Reporting Of Different Types Of Crimes And Violence Committed Against Women Published In Indian Newspapers

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ABSTRACT

The evil of violence against women is mirrored by the media and the public comprehends it too, but unfortunately the reporting is erratic and unsystematic. The Indian media usually fails in hitting this nail on its head. The painstaking and deep analysis of over 1500 articles has flowered into this research paper from four mainstream Indian newspapers, both English and Hindi. The articles are tested and measured against paradigms and guidelines set for reporting on violence against the fair sex. We discovered that reporting rarely follows a pattern of systematic evaluation of the situation and rather presents them as isolated events instead of a social problem. It is exotic to discover the type of reporting which debunks the myth about crimes against females.

Focusing on the challenges faced by the surviving victims in pursuing the course of justice and being informative about the support/help and resources for rehabilitation for survivors. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. It is problematic that language of reports is attention seeking (especially in vernacular languages), the focus is extensively on details which leads to “missing the woods of trees”. In the “melee” of sensational news stairs the issues like domestic violence are red lined. This report comes to the conclusion that PIIS “norms of journalistic conduct” must include guidelines for reporting on gendered violence and that media organizations must be made to endorse them and follow them mandatorily.

Keywords: violence, gender, media, newspapers.

INTRODUCTION

As per the researchers Carlyle et al Zlu, palazzo and Roberto 2011, Anastaro and Costa 2004 there is conclusive proof that media shapes public understanding of violence against women and girls: Different nations-based findings reflect that media-coverage of violence has chinks and weakness which include unnecessary focus on details, sensationalisation, individualizing incidents of VAWG without caring for social context, perpetuating rape myths and victims blaming and shaming. Although this has resulted into several sets of guidelines for the journalists on the ways to report correctly on VAWG, they are not always being followed earnestly.

Despite VAWG being a high-point for the Indian Republic's concern it reportage has led to the opening of a flood-gate of criticism for the way it is handled usually especially by commentators in articles like feminism in India 2016. The amount of media research on this issue is nearly negligible. We find that international media has proved to be the better reporter of the two and has successfully orientalised narratives on the reporting of the Delhi gang rape of December 2012 more than Indian media. This paper deals with the first systematic representative reporting of the on VAWG in India and raises questions on the extend this coverage complies with the guidelines for reporting on such sensitive issues.

The four chosen news papers – two English – “Time of India” and “Hindustan Times” and two widely read Hindi ones – “DainikJagran” and “Hindustan” deal with articles published on violence against women in mid 2017. In all a total of 725 English articles and 804 Hindi articles were collected and analyzed ‘This led to the discovery of many controversies and issues which are prevalent in our society and problematic for the victims such as - victim shaming, blaming the victims, suggesting/accruing the victims of lying and siding with exonerating the perpetrator etc. The most prevalent problem was treating such crimes as individual incidents and not as a social malpractice and lack of systematic reporting and also usually ignoring domestic violence at most levels. Even when reporting, domestic violence is treated as a personal manner and usually the victim is blamed saying that “she asked for it “and” she deserves it “stereotypes. Domestic abuse is thus abused and justified erasing/lowering the reader’s sensitivity sympathy level. There is a vast gap between the reporting of English and Hindi language. English newspapers tend to be more professional, while Hindi newspapers tend to use more emotional and sensational language. In the next part of the paper, we concentrate on explaining our methodology before coming to the results and conclusions our findings on this matter.

METHODOLOGY

In order to discover and analyze the location of the articles, the researchers personally read the newspapers everyday instead on depending on the online researching. The criterion for selection was the perpetrators of the violence were male (s) and the victims were other genders in the rare instances the criminals were of different gender too. The victims were single or multiple, but the deciding/deceive factor was that at least one of them should be female and the case must be of gender based violence. It was also planned that our study must contain the violence against third gender and other gender transgender people, but we only found only one such story during our collection period. This in itself is the reflection of the callous/indifferent attitude of media towards the plight of the transgender/LGBT community.

All types of media are important in farming and shaping public understanding of VAWG including television, film, video, social media. However greater role is played by print media in carving public’s perception towards these issues. The faith of newspaper readers is on newspaper reporting as more

credible and trustworthy than other mediums. This country is one of the few with a enhancement in news paper readership as found in a research that 39% of Indians (12+ years) read newspapers. Due to the limitations imposed by the short time frame and tiny budget of this project we took a selective approach while choosing the newspapers and contented ourselves with each of the two languages spoken by the researchers. Since the newspapers published in the capital of India are supported to influence the thought process of our leaders governing bodies more than anything else, the Delhi editions were choosen for the said purpose. Expanded studies which compare our data to reporting on VAWG in other languages, other cities and other forms of media would arguably contribute greatly to the comprehension of variations across contexts and also expose the common factors presented as individual incidents and cut off from their social background. It has been recommended as a key principle in media guidelines for coverage of VAWG around the world is to present the story in its proper context. For this statistics must be provided on prevalence and information on factors influencing VAWG, legal and institutional contexts and aid services which help the victims. In our study, such elements are rarely found. Very few articles (18 english and 12 hindi) included statistics on VAWG and it was rarer (only 10 English and 4 Hindi articles) to find information’s on the causes of violence.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Due to this norm of incident – based reporting, very few articles presented data about help services (only 5% in both languages) or directly challenged and exposed the myths surrounding this issue. Very few articles challenged victim blaming i.e. five of longer articles in Hindi and is in Hindi did this. The English newspapers reflected the attention they paid to the stalking of VarnikaKundu, DJ and daughter of a senior bureaucrat, by VikasBarula, the son of Haryana BJP president thus showing the discrepancy in the general attitude. The reporting was very positive for e.g. A Times of India (TOI) article by AartiKapur was titled “why ask me about what I was doing late at night? The two stalkers should be asked what they were upto to” (8 August 2017). “Stamp out stalking” was the headlines twin evils of VIP culture and lack of women’s safety” they were reports about the rising cases of stalking and yet, there are rarely convicted. A politician who blamed the victim in his statement was promptly criticized in the headlines like “kids mustn’t be out at night: BJP neta” (TOI, 8

August 2017), “Misogynist Minister” (TOI, 11 August 2017) and “Union Minister under Fire for Misogynist Tweets” (TOI, 10 August 2017). We must be optimistic now that the same attention and attitude will be extended to the victims who are less high profile/poor and marginalized ones too. An excellent instance of debunking the myth of “stranger danger” with the headline “Rapist Known to victim in most cases, study” on the issue of VAWG, seven Hindi articles called for action against violence, one commented on the difficulty of reporting crimes on the trauma faced by victims during the court procedure while two articles talked about the legal reforms out of 316 articles. Even rarer was the discussion of these issues in English newspapers 19 called for action against VAWG, 22 mentioned the difficulty of reporting crimes or the trauma of court procedures for victims, and the need for law reforms was brought up by 21 (n=419). 46 Hindi articles (14.6%) and 89 English (21.2%) discussed the problems related to the way VAWG is handled by institutions like police, the criminal justice system, politicians, social services and healthcare practitioners. Multiple examples of positive reporting were found here like the article by Indira Jaisingh titled “Victims of Sexual Harassment need more than funds” which was published in “Hinduism Times” (30 July 2017) highlights the required reforms in judicial world/justice system. The headline in TOI (24 June 2017, p. 6) “5 yrs on, it’s the same Ordeal for Nirbhaya” reports the results of a study conducted by partners for Law in Development. The hazards/problems with the medical and legal system carving obstacles in the path of sexual assault survivors in seeking justice. The article on new online portal for government employees to report sexual harassment at work mentions the passing of the sexual Harassment of women at work Act in 2013 and abysmal/dismissal status (total failure) in implementing the Act (Hindustan Times, 25 July 2017). But it was found that the stress was less on systematic structural reform and more on technical or one – off solutions such as street lamps, safety apps and CCTV etc. Mundane solutions were offered such as opening the backdoor of the college to shorten the student’s walk to the metro station as a solution to the sexual harassment cases instead of system’s reforms (TOI, 6 August 2017).

The reporting on VAWG is more incident- based than thematic, which compounds the basic problem of underreporting and underciting of organizations

which treat this malice as a social issue. On the other hand, police and lawyers are much more likely to focus on the individual, specifications of the crime and criminals. As highlighted by a research, the journalists reporting on VAWG are heavily dependent on the police and legal agencies. The result is that there is mere focus on incident – based reporting as well as reproduction of the recurrent injustices of our legal system, such as suppression of victims as well as public – shaming/ holding the victim’s behaviour/character up for public scrutiny and reiterates that legal reform is the best possible way to solve the problem of VAGW. There is lots of advisory by media guidelines which advise journalists to choose their sources wisely as it affects the story’s shaping and presentation. We found that consistent with previous literature, police were must frequently quoted or paraphrased sources of news. On compounding the legal and criminal justice professionals together, we are surprised to discover that they are quoted or paraphrased in an astoundingly high (74% of Hindi articles and 88.0% of English articles) number in papers as sources of information. Compared to this the position of representative working in organizations working on VAWG is abysmal i.e. on 4.0% of Hindi and 5.5% of English articles quoted them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I. VICTIM BLAMING

Generally, the press coverage is biased against women and tends to blame the victim and exculpate the perpetrator (Alat 2006, Bnedict 1993; Berns 2017, Bullock and Cubert 2002, conralov 1998; Taylor 2009; Meyers 2004). While in some cases, the victim is blamed directly and explicitly, the others more subtly hint that the victim is blamed directly and explicitly, the others more subtly hint that the victim was responsible for provoking on enabling the violence and brought it upon herself. Most media guidelines advise against both direct and indirect victim – blaming. The first line of media guide produced by the UK organization against violence and abuse (2013) warns against implying that a victims in anyway responsible for the violence she experienced or that any of her behaviour might have triggered/avoided the abuse (see also National union of Journalist 2013).

In consistency with this guideline, the other recent studies of VAWG in the media (Sutherland et al

2016) explicit victim blaming was rare in our study. The victims were usually dealt with in a neutral way and positive languages (9 articles in each language) outnumbered the negative ones (5 articles in English and 3 in Hindi). The victim blaming was found to be (as per our judgement) in the overall time of 4.3% English articles (17 of 391) and 3.3% of Hindi articles (10 of 304) only.

The recent times have seen a decline in explicit victim blaming, but the subtle hints that the victim can be guilty of enabling the violence remains, common in place and continues to haunt the reporting's even now. When the stress is on the victim alone, it reinforces that stereotype that women are responsible for preventing their own victimization and stopping the violent abuses by their own efforts. We were pleased that even implicit victim blaming was quiet uncommon in our study. In some articles (26 English (6.6%) and 46 Hindi articles (15.1%)] the victims' actions were described. The details of her affair implying that she herself provoked the violence. During our research we found that ten English (2.6%) and 16 Hindi articles (5.3%) reported on the woman's conduct/behaviours thus making it possible for some readers to interpret this as evidence that the victim enabled the violence/abuse by acts like consuming alcohol, going to the perpetrator's with him i.e. the perpetrator and brought it upon herself (the catastrophes).

A false public perception prevails globally that charges of violence against women are usually false on the contrary, it was found that false allegations are rare, as found in the studies carried out in the UK, Europe and in the US – only between 2 to 6% of the total allegations are false. (Loverlt and Kelly 2009). In Indian context, the situation is a bit more complex. The parents who disprove of a communal sexual relationship often criminalize, as in the redefinition of consensual sex as non-criminal in instances where a man goes back (retracts) on a promise or marriage, thus incurring a charge or rape by false promise of marriage fear of law officials (Miera and Bronnit 2014, Brereton 2017)

The lack of belief in their accusations lead to hesitation/reluctance of amongst the women in going to the police with their complaints (Bhattacharya and Kundu 2018) resulting into a large number of cases being unreported. Many male groups feel that low conviction rates are an evidence of false accusations by females where as women's rights group counter it by saying that low conviction rates are a reflection of

our failing justice system that mistrusts women's testimony and behaves in a misogynistic way (Jaiswal 2017). The need of the hour is to make the legal and judicial system more women – friendly, the prevalent idea that women insure the law has resulted in measures that making reports, reporting, persecution and connection even rarest. The justification of the fact that “marital rape” is not a crime in India has been a result of this “misuse” argument and as an aftermath the protection against “marital rape” is denied to the “live in” partners too (Brereton 2017). No less than the apex Indian court ruled in 2017 that domestic violence laws needed to be watered down, this deeming that most of the domestic violence cases were based on trivial / unimportant matters or blatantly false allegations (The invisible lawyers team 2017).

The wrong perception of women leveling false allegations is reflected and shaped by media as per the research in U.S. (Barnett 2012) and new Zealand (Gavey and Gow 2001).

Same is the case with Indian reporting, where the mainstream media has overemphasized the misuse factor time and again, thus presenting an enhanced percentage of its extent and impact while disproportionate representation of this issue with the scope / measure of rising VAWG results into underreporting and adversely affects the peoples outlooks/overview on VAWG (for eg. Anand 2015). We were pleasantly surprised that contrary to the expected trend, very few articles directly or indirectly suggested that the victim may have given false testimony (although these were not above contradicting the victims story) – 50 articles in Hindi (7.2%) and 30 in English (7.7%). When it comes to sexual crimes, the myth of false allegations is usually used as powerful weapon of information. During our research we found that 5 of 149 Hindi articles (3.4%) and 11 of 200 english articles (3.5) suggested that the victims lie about indecent assault, rape etc. In some cases, the articles went on to suggest that although the sex act was consensual at that time, the victims usually change their minds later on as reflected in 3 of 149 Hindi articles (20%) and 7 of 200 english articles (3.5%). We found that the myth of rape victims being liars was but marginally perpetuated in the articles we examined during our research.

2. SENSATIONALISM

In order to attract and lure the audience, the reporting stoops to sensationlisation of news on VAWG to

make it unusual /exotic and appealing to the readers/audiences (Carter 1998; Benedict 1993; Greer 2003). These articles expose the victims by holding them up for public viewing/public's scrutiny by adding entertainment angle to these stories. This results into public-shaming and humiliation of the victims and distract the attention from the serious realities of gendered violence thus undermining the real issues (Kothari 2008: 50 Morgana and Politoff 2012). Thus the case becomes more provocative than representative (Sutherland et al 2015). These are of many types – selective violence forms, language and headlines of the articles and the type and level of detailing used in presenting the factors / details of VAWG)

Some types of VAWG were more reported and found greater space in the media. For eg. rape was covered in 45.7% of English and 43.0% of Hindi articles where as murder in 23.8% of English and 23.9% of Hindi articles. Rarely were the issues like threats of violence and emotional abuse discussed in our study – material. Sensationalist cases ruled the roost – involving multiple forms of violence, stories of young victims and brutality in particular was given more space. For eg. 17.4% of Hindi (49 of 282) and 19.2% of English (50 of 200) articles discussed gang rape. NCRB (National crime records Bureau) data for 2016 point out that only a small percentage of reported rapes (5.6% only) are gang rapes; but the articles focused more on them (National Crime Records Bureau 2017).

We raised several serious questions to establish sensationalism such as 1) does the story offer large amounts of details about the crime? (2) Are the details offered unnecessarily titillations? (3) is the headline sensationalistic? In order to balance (not conflate) issues related to the types of violence reported and the nature of that reporting a relatively high bar of assertion of facts was used by us to determine sensationalism in headlines – coding as sensationalist only those headlines which used adjectives or emotive verbs, or focused on unnecessary details to entice and entrap/lure the reading community. As a result, a total of 17.9% of English (75 of 419) and 36.4% of Hindi (115 of 316) headlines were sensationalist as per our standards. Hindi (115 of 316) headlines were sensationalist as per our standards. Hindi articles promoted more emotive language. The examples are headlines like “SPkethappadkikeemat 50 hazaar” (sp's slap costs Rs. 50,000), “sadakparibekaaubudaudrahaaiaparadh (crime running amok). Excessive details in as Hindi

headlines is written as “SauteliMaa ne pakde the masoomkahatth, pita ne dabayatha gala” (step-mother held child's hand, dad strangled her). Examples of English headlines coded as sensationalist include “killer hubby suspected wife, brought knife” (Hindustan Times, 22 June 2017) and “why trigger-happy Delhites are killing over suspicion of adultery (TOI, 17 July 2017).

The articles, which vividly detailed a crime as having excessive details. This highly prevalent problem was found in 45.3% of English articles (190 of 419) and 57.0% of Hindi articles (180 of 316). Occasionally images were used for the same. For example a Hindustan times article with the headline “Man stabs wife 30 times over affair” includes step-by-step detailed pictures) images of the crime (10 August 2017, p. 13). However, titillating details were rare – prevalent in on 3.6% English articles (15) and 2.8% Hindi articles (09) only.

3. FRAMING THE PERPETRATOR

It has been found in many studies that over-reporting is the norm in articles when the perpetrator (s) of any crime are stranger (s) (Marhea 2008; Mason and Monckton – smith 2008; Morgan and Polit off 2012). The aftermath of such type of reporting is a greater emphasis on ‘stranger danger’ and the fake perception that women should stay away from public spaces to stay safe and secure. The sad reality is that in most cases of VAWG, the perpetrators are known to the victim. We found only a few instances in which the criminals/perpetrators were strangers to the victim – only 64 Hindi articles (10.3%) and 76 English articles (14.2%). The definition of ‘acquaintance’ is very broad ranging here. The perpetrators living the same neighbourhood or attending the same neighbourhood or attending the same school as the victim were included in this. In many articles, i.e. 25.3% of Hindi and 21.4% of English ones, the relationship between the victim and the perpetration was either unmentioned or unknown. This could lead to the rise in the readers' assumption that perpetrator was a stranger to 35% in both Hindi and English articles as found in our study.

When it comes to sexual crimes, it is strongly yet falsely believed that women are at most risk from strangers. As per database of India only 47% experience domestic violence and as per Palermo, black and Reterman 2013; 605 and between 0.97% and 5.8% (Gupta 2014; 3) of rape survivors formally

lodge a police report. As most cases go unreported the police statistics cannot be used as authentic guide for determining the true extent of VAWG. However, it can be expected that there would be some co-ordination between the two types of reported VAWG – that reported in the media. India's National Crime Records Bureau shows in its database that 94.6% of reported rapes in 2016 were perpetrated by a person known to the victim (NCRB 2017) and only 5.4% were done by unknown people. By focusing on our study – utilized articles only 7.4% of Hindi articles and 10.2% of English articles explicitly reported rape by strangers. In many articles, i.e. 24.8% of Hindi and 19.2% of English the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator was either unmentioned or unknown. This requests in raising the number of articles in which the reader could assume that the perpetrator was a stranger to 32.2% of Hindi and 29.4% of English articles. Our definition of “acquaintance” is rather broad. It seems that the newspapers in our study may be contributing to the myth of stranger danger. especially when seen in context of the low reporting on domestic violence, discussed in the next section.

The presentation of perpetrator as a nice or kind person, by considering him unfortunate, by referring to his sad/poor background or a victim of violence himself is risky as this, type of coverage lessens the blame of the male perpetrator (Taylor 2009, Benedict 1993). However it was not very noticeable in our research. The overall exonerating tone was a feature of only 21 English articles and 3 Hindi articles. Defending the perpetrator as a victim himself, mentioning his unfortunate background or describing him as a nice/kind person was rarely found.

Both encouraging empathy and demonizing portrayals can be problematic while dealing with VAWG. The first one minimizes blame of the perpetrators, while the second tendency, although rarely found is also damaging. The sense of “stranger danger” can be exaggerated when perpetrators are described as evil or monstrous, rather than someone familiar with ‘normal’ psychology. This was found in 24 Hindi articles (8%) and features only in 03 English articles (0.8%). The reflection of the wage of more emotive language in Hindi reporting can be understood through this discrepancy. Stories and headlines in Hindi newspapers often used words like *vahasheeyat* (bestiality), *haivaniyat* (animality), *darindgi* (predator like) and *Jaghanya* (heinous) which sensationalise the issues.

4. DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

It is rare to find an article mentioning violence by intimate partners and close family members. By recording the relationship between victim and perpetrators, we found that 18.4% of Hindi and 19.2% of English articles reported on violence perpetrated by a husband or other kith or kin. The longer articles were subjected to the full coding sheet, including greater number of questions about incidents of familial or domestic violence. The news worthiness of these articles is doubtful due to the extreme brevity which rendered it impossible to subject them to the full coding sheet/questionnaire.

2016 saw 32.6% (110,378 of 338,954 incidents) or recorded/reported crime against women being labeled under headings like ‘cruelty by Husband or his relatives and several other categories of crimes in which the perpetrators were related to the victims, this grim picture is presented by NCRB statistics. There is discrepancy between the 18-19 percentage of VAWG perpetrated by relatives (including relatives) husbands in our study is much less/lower than the reported cases in which the crimes were committed by relatives. When we go into the specifications, we find that the proportion of rape perpetrated by a family member (other than a husband) in our study (10.5% of Hindi articles and 9.0% of English articles about rape) is equal to NCRB data for 2016 (10.6%). However, murder perpetrated by family member was found to be under-reported in our study-period. The non-availability of statistic in India with regards to the victim – perpetrator (relationship status) makes it rather vague, but globally 38% of murders of females are done by a male intimate partner. When we closely look at articles about adult female murder victims (aged 18+ and assuming them to be adults in case no age is mentioned) we find that 30 hindi articles out of 167 (18.0%) and 21.7% of English articles (28 of 129) blame the husband/allege the male spouse to be the perpetrator of the crime.

Not only the language, but also the reporting of the incidents of domestic violence was also lacking in our study materials although a plethora of media guidelines include recommendations regarding the proper and correct usage of language (Sutherland et al 2015, 28). For example, the following advice is provided to the journalists under the heading “name it” is provided by the Australian organisation “our watch (2014:2) “Always use the term “domestic violence wherever applicable.

Don't use terms which minimize and trivialize a violent situation such as 'domestic dispute' 'volatile relationship' 'or' 'bashing' etc. the usage of the correct term frequently will help the audience to understand this problem's extent to a greater extent/help broaden their understanding of such matters.

Very few Hindi articles used the phrases *GhareluHinsa* (Domestic Violence) or '*ghareluJhagda* (domestic fight or dispute) numbering only. Three during our study-time. Some used the term '*dajeh* (*dahej* *utpeedan* (dowry harassment). Rest of them used trivializing words like *Jhagda* (fight), *maarpeet* (battery) and *pitai* (beating). The focus is more than detailed when describing the violence between partners (lurid) but the articles shy away from using (generally) the term *ghareluhinsa*. When coding, our study found 13 English articles using the term domestic violence usually when dealing with general stories about domestic violence, court stories, interviews with lawyers and or when discussing the legal issues/legislation about the anti violence issues. The focus is on the details of crime, but the term domestic violence is not used usually especially in incident – based articles. The terms domestic violence and *ghareluhinsa* are included in relevant act protection of women from domestic violence Act 2005 or *GhareluHinsa se MahilaonKaSanrakehanadhiniyam* 2005. Indian history has witnessed civil society campaigning for laws and public awareness around domestic violence for a long time/since long. Therefore, it is but natural that newspaper readers will be familiar with it our contention is that the frequent usage of the correct terminology by journalists would aid the readers to recognize the fact that individual incidents are part of larger scenario and actually as part of a systematic problem, and to realize that scale of the problem is higher than the comparatively minor problem of leveling false charges which remains the common area of media's attention.

The general trend of VAWG is to explain or excuse men's use of violence through reasoning including impulse control, anger management and emotional stress (Exner and Thurston 2009). A norm followed by journalists has been observed by researchers. They tend to focus on arguments preceding the violence resulting into the stereotype of 'she asked for it and gives the message that responsibility for violence is shared by the victim (Evans 2001). Even when not directly or openly blaming the victim, they include information which leads to excuse or

misrepresent the causes of violence. During our study, we found reasons and explanations for violence in 26.6% of Hindi and 18.6% of English articles. When it came to incidents of domestic violence, the reasons were given in a greater number than in our sample as a whole – 2/3 rd of English and 76.2% of Hindi news papers included a reason for violence in their respective articles. The argument before violence was given as the logic/explanation in explicit detail thus governing a total 24.4% of English and 32.5% of Hindi articles in our chosen newspapers. Some examples cited here are "man says killed wife after threats" (TOI, 03 June 2017), "suspecting extramarital affair, man murders wife" (Hindustan Times, 16 July 2017), "Man kills wife as her chappatis are not round" (TOI, 24 July 2017) which are a sad commentary on the status of VAWG in our society and its lop-sided reporting.

HO gets Media Attention? Or The focus of Media's attention?

This study primarily focused on articles about VAWG in a metro city, one of the largest such as Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata – 5.0% of English and 67.2% of Hindi articles. The articles on this topic featuring the incidents which took place in rural / village areas were rare, that is only 6.6% of English and 4.9% of Hindi. Since our analysis was based on Delhi issue of the newspapers, it's but natural that most of the violence that was reported had occurred in Delhi. The under-reporting was however, notable. The trend of under-reporting reflects a media-bias towards more news worthy issues in so-called important places/locations.

The publication of rural-focusing papers like *KhabarLohariya* and people's Archive of rural India is a direct result of the metro-centric nature of Delhi media, which has remained mostly unchanged despite years of harsh criticism.

The reporting of violence is selective. It depends not only on the more and less newsworthy geographics, but also on the demographics of victims and perpetrators. It has been suggested by many commentators that a high scale of media public and political attention given to the fact the victim's status was middle-class and was returning from a movie in a middle-class area of New Delhi at night reflects poorly on media's presentation of December 2012. Gangrape and murder case (Dutta and Sircar 2013). While in our study, a large proportion of the more thematic reporting challenging victim blaming was based on the case of *VarnikaKundu* case. This shows

that it is the high profile cases involving famous perpetrators that are perceived as warranting a thorough analysis of the systematic gendered nature of VAWG and this privilege is rarely extended to lower-class victims/poor victims of VAWG.

We find a marked contrast between the high-profile and low-profile cases' reporting. For example the murder of a Dalit family in khairalnji in 2006 (PUCI 2007) was barely reported. This also happened in the case of a Hindu man raping and murdering a girl from a nomadic Muslim community in Kathua where this incident barely made headlines outside the metiarised state of Jammu and Kashmir which is already prone to violence. This case may have occurred in January 2018, which skips out study's periods, it is noteworthy that the Hindi newspaper, DainikJagran published an article denying the rape of the girl child (BOOM FACT check team 2018). We found that the articles rarely included the caste and religion of victim and perpetrator (so seldom) that it was near impossible to conclude whether the portrayal/representation was under or over the required mark. NIL Hindi and only two English articles explicitly described violence in relation to caste and only three articles in each language explicitly described the religious angle of the violence.

To discourage perpetuation of the false belief/myth that certain communities are more violent than others the media guidelines advice against including certain details in the reports. For eg guidelines from against violence and (2013, 16) state, "the country of origin of the perpetrator is irrelevant considering that gender-based abuse is cross-cultural phenomenon, with no geographical or cultural boundaries press council of India 2010 has issued guidelines advising against identifying a person's caste or community to avoid misconceptions. Our study discovered that the articles with explicit reference to details of violence in relation to religion were in danger of perpetuating myths about certain communities being more prone to gendered violence. These articles linked VAGW to Islamic culture, and hinted at a global trend of 'outsourcing patriarchy to Islam and vilifying Islam (Abu – Lughod 2013) by citing gender inequality as its proof. For example, an article with the headline "Minor 'sold', marked to 65 – year – old –arab" and the led "SayeedaUnnisaa, mother of the girl said she received a call from her daughter saying she was being tortured by her Arab husband" (Hindustan Times, 18 August 2017, p. 10).

On the other hand, the complete absence of case and religion's mention in newspaper reporting on VAWG, other than these problematic examples means that readers are in dark/completely oblivious about the centrality of VAWG to the conflict situations in general and inter-caste inter-religious violence in particular. The journalist has to tread a fine line between avoiding vilifying and demonising any particular community and also informing the readers about inter-caste and inter-religious aspects of VAWG so that the readers/audience is educated and develop awareness about these issues which define any social system.

CONCLUSION

There is much need to be done and lots of measures are required to better the quality of reporting on VAWG by the maintenance media. Our media was not found to be problematic or highly active in victim blaming, suggesting victims lie or/and exonerating the perpetrator as found in studies of media representations of VAWG at other places. There were some high-class reports which reported thematically. These few pieces challenged common myths about VAWG and also focused on the difficulties faced by survivors in seeking justice. But these reports were exceptions. The general trend is to subject the poor readers to a steady stream of often excessively detailed and sometimes sensationalized stories which present the stories isolated incidents rather than part of a systematic social issue and social problem. The articles fell short of the expected standards and lacked the information about support and resources available for survivors and VAWG expects were very rarely cited. Domestic violence cases were reported, but on a lower scale than other types of violence and even referred in other ways than using the term, "domestic violence". Few and far were the reports that were unbiased, while the majority of the reports asked questions on the creditability / credibility of the victim and even sought to explain the quarrel, thus implying the victim brought the calamity upon herself provoking the perpetrator.

Public information on VAWG and gendered violence relies on journalism and they can play a very positive role in informing the people about these things. For e.g. digital new media sites such as feminism in India, youth kiawaaz, the wire and the ladies finger usually produce the reports which are in line with the media guidelines. How can the mainstream media newspaper journalists be encouraged to include more context and analysis in their coverage of VAWG?

One solution may be following the PTI's 'Norms of Journalistic conduct' (2010). Upto this time, these norms focus on reporting in connection to gender with regards to HIV cases. May be by including guidelines about reporting on VAWG and encouraging news organizations to enclose and commit these guidelines would result in improved standards of reports. What is required now is greater information on the factors that inform journalists and make editors choose or reject the information to be collected / rejected/ published. However, pressure of being newsworthy may often make the publications ignore the guidelines regarding publication, as well as ethical and moral restraints. Our studies/international research has shown a betterment in reporting on VAWG in countries with sustained government supported campaigns (including guidelines) aimed at achieving it (Sutherland et al 2016, Morgan and polit off 2012, simons and Morgan 2018) our study concluded that need of such a campaign is highly justified and also the need of the hour.

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- Defining domestic violence was challenging in this project. Some of the violence against women was perpetrated by family members other than their intimate partner. Dowry-related violence was the key example of this. We included these examples within our definition. There were many different types of intimate partner. In India it is very uncommon for unmarried couples to live together. Therefore, violence perpetrated by a boyfriend was often not connected to a domestic setting. These examples were not included in our definition.
- We have consolidated all categories of relatives listed by the NCRB - grandfather/father/brother/son (630), close family other than above (1087), and relatives other than both the above (2174).