NEWSPAPER COVERAGE AND TREATMENT OF SOCIAL CRIMES: A STUDY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR

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Introduction

The December 16th 2012 gang rape of a 23 year old student of physiotherapy in a moving private bus on busy roads of Delhi has witnessed world-wide humiliation, not only bringing disgrace to the country's reputation or to its countrymen. But was also a huge backlash on the legislative provision which lacked in providing safety and justice to women, toothless rape laws enactment and threw a light on negligence of law makers and government in implementing strict laws for sexual harassment, providing speedy justice to the victim and also for being inattentive towards the needs of the vulnerable section of society i.e., women and children.

Based on these recommendations of Justice Verma Committee, Criminal Law Amendment Bill, 2013 was passed by the parliament of India in March 2013 and President Pranab Mukherjee gave his consent on 2nd April 2013. This way Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 deemed to be in force from 3rd February, 2013 and is now considered as one of the stringent anti-rape law in the country until now. Various sections of Indian Penal Code (IPC) were revised and amendments were made in the Code of Criminal Procedure (1973), the Indian Evidence Act (1872) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (2012).

The anti- rape law of the country first time witnessed the recognition of some of the sexual deviance. The newly incorporated terms is voyeurism, stalking, disrobing and acid attack added as an offence of violence and is punishable under law. In its ambit definition and punishment given to first time offenders and regular offenders related to rape, sexual harassment, stalking, voyeurism, disrobing, acid attack and gang rape has been expanded. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 newly inserted section are 354A for Sexual Harassment, 354B for Disrobing, 354C for Voyeurism and 354D for Stalking in the range of Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Despite the establishment of law and the due changes made during the amendment in criminal law act 2013, there is a spurt of growing number of gang rape cases. With this the spurt or trend in coverage of such crime by the Indian national dailies has tremendously improved. In this light, the necessity to ascertain the coverage and treatment given to such social (sexual) crimes by leading newspapers becomes imperative. Nearly 68,000 rape cases were registered across the country during 2009-11 but only 16,000 rapists were sentenced to prison, presenting a dismal picture of conviction of sexual offenders (NCRB). The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data shows there were 1,22,292 cases of molestation during 2009-11 but only 27,408 people could be convicted for the offence.

The spurt of sexual crimes is witnessed in Indian society, countrywide. Disturbing social code of society by deviant behaviour is termed as social crime. It is "an anti-social act" (Mowrer, 1959). According to Nisbet (1970), "crimes are the activities which threaten social order, offend morality and endanger person or property". Nisbet in his definition of crime, points out the phenomenon of social crime disturbing the societal order, including violation of morals which could be a threat to individuals at one level and society at another. He explains this concept with an example that pornographic material (books, films or internet porn) damages the morals of individuals as well as of society.

As media is acknowledge as the major source of information of people or society to build views about various social issues like social crime. Therefore, quantitative and qualitative content analysis of media content may provide with the essential data on 'what the media is constructing' and 'how audiences is perceiving' such content. The present research analyzes the content, treatment and coverage of these social crimes under the ambit of amended anti-rape law (2013) in two English national dailies i.e. Times of India (TOI) and The Hindu.

Objective

Research objectives give a sense of direction or are pre-defined goals formulated for a particular study. The objective of the study is to examine the type of coverage and treatment given to social crime stories to understand various characteristics of social crime. The study also proposes to examine the various characteristics of both the offender and the victim especially in

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terms of age and sex, their relationship and the aspect of brutality. This shall help in analysing the way the newspaper coverage of such issue to make inferences from the point of view of the media and also of the audience.

Methodology

For this research paper, researcher has adopted Content Analysis as a scientific tool for analyzing the data. In content analysis, researcher has examined the artefacts of social crimes against women and its communication through national dailies. Content analysis is an efficient way to investigate the content of the media. Berelson (1952), defined it as "Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication".

This research study will use a quantitative and qualitative content analysis technique for ascertaining the crimes stories its treatment, nature and coverage.For the purpose of this study two English national newspapers namely, The Times of India by the Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. established in 1838 and The Hindu by The Hindu Group started in 1878 were analysed for the period of one year. These two newspapers were selected on the basis of their circulation figures all over India and also the selection is based on the readership figures of these newspapers in the country. This acknowledge the fact that most read English newspapers TOI and The Hindu are suitable for such kind of Media Content research on such a sensitive and alarming issue of sexual crimes against society especially towards women.

These newspapers are analysed for the period one year from April 2013 to March 2014, since the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 came in to force. The hard news published during six days from Monday to Saturday edition/issues of these newspapers for one year on social crime stories are taken as a unit of analysis (excluding advertisement and supplement or other paper with the edition).

The total number of news items identified as hard news is 781 in 437 issues or editions of both the newspaper, out of which 203 issues of 'The Hindu' published 353 hard news on social crime stories and 234 issues of 'The Times of India' published 428 hard news on social crime stories during this time frame of one year (April 2013- March 2014) after the criminal law amendment act (2013) came in to force. The unit of analysis in this study is the complete.

Result and discussion

Table 1. Depicts the cross-tabulation of Sex of the victim * Sex of the perpetrator							
			Sex of the perpetrator			Total	
			Male	Female	Not comprehensible		
Sex of the victim	Male	Count	16	0	0	16	
		% of Total	2.0%	.0%	.0%	2.0%	
	Female	Count	752	7	5	764	
		% of Total	96.3%	.9%	.6%	97.8%	
	Not mentioned/stated	Count	1	0	0	1	
		% of Total	.1%	.0%	.0%	.1%	
Total		Count	769	7	5	781	
		% of Total	98.5%	.9%	.6%	100.0%	

Result: In table 1. Sex of the victim and sex of the perpetrator is measured. In the columns of the table the sex of the perpetrators is classifies as male, female and not comprehensible. The row of the table classifies the sex of the victim as male, female and not mentioned. The result reveals that the frequency of victims in news stories reported on social crime is extremely high among female victims. There are 764 reported social crime stories where females were victimized out of 781 total social crime stories reported, compromising 97.8 percent. It is also significant to note that male victimization is found in reported 16 cases i.e. 2 percent. And in the remaining one case the sex of the victim was not mentioned.

Conclusion: This indicates that situation of crime of 'Male to Female' social crime is high in society, which may be the result of various factors of cultural environment like configuration of gender power, status, women representation in society's workforce which further may lead to hostility towards women equality.

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Age of the perpetrator					
Age of the victim	Juvenile	Adult	Both	Not comprehensible	Total
Child	27	164	4	11	206
Teenage	6	212	9	7	234
Adult	3	306	20	5	334
Elderly	0	3	0	0	3
Not Comprehensible	0	4	0	0	0
Total	36	689	33	23	781

In table 5 Age of the victim and age of the perpetrator are measured. The columns of the table classifies the age of the perpetrator as juvenile, adult, both and not comprehensible and the rows of the table, sorts the age of the victim as child, teenage, adult, elderly and not mentioned. The result discloses the high frequency of occurrence of adult victimization i.e. 334 (42.8%). This trend of victimization is followed by the teenage victims (30%) and child victims (26.4%). This shows adults and teenagers are at the greatest risk of social crime victimization may be due to the chastity that the adult and teenage victims sustain or due to their physical stimulation capacity which can be attained by the perpetrators. However, elderly victims and the victims who are not comprehensible are insignificant in quantity.

The crosstab results reveal that Juvenile perpetration is highest among child victims compromising 75 percent and teenage victims 16.7 percent. This shows that juvenile perpetrators are preying on child victims more may be because they are easy to manipulate and pursue in order to experience physical stimulation to calm their half-recognized curiosity, imagination and knowledge by exploring their body, body of the opposite sex and other bodily needs.

While adult perpetration is high among adult victims i.e. 44.4 percent followed by 30.8 percent teenager victims and child victim 23.8 percent. This shows that the chastity of the teenager and adults for stimulation could be one of the reasons. Nevertheless, both perpetrators juvenile and adults are high in adult victims 60.6 percent, teenager victims 27.3 percent, and child victims 12.1 percent. This further explains that in a gang where both adult and juvenile offenders participate in a social crime act they are targeting on adult or teenager victims more frequently for the planned objective of the group which can be termed as a "gang-stimulation fun cum experienced activity".

However the negligible representation of elderly victims indicates that in all the reported cases of elderly victims (3 cases) were women and all of them were targeted by adult perpetrators only. This explains the phenomenon of oppression of women who are not even physically weak but who are also not sexually desired or chased and the possible reason could be suppression, revenge or showcasing of gender power.

It is significant to note that in almost half (47.8%) of cases perpetrators is not comprehensible in child victimization may be due to inability of the child to recognize or recall the traumatic incidence and the offender or is hospitalized because of multiple injuries or is being killed.
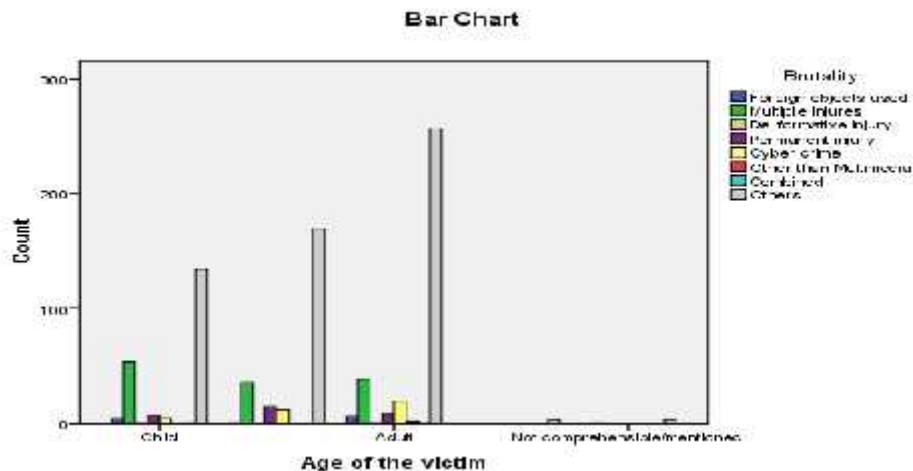
Result: In table 16 the age of the victim and the degree of brutality is measured. The rows of the table sorts the age of the victim classified as child, teenage, adult, elderly and not mentioned and the columns of the table classifies the degree of brutality as foreign object (11), multiple injuries (130), de-formative injuries (2), permanent injury (30), cyber crime (36), other than multimedia (2), combined (2) and other brutality (568). The table discloses that maximum number of foreign objects is used against the adult (54.5%) victims of the social crime, 36.4 percent against child victims and minimum is used against the teenagers (9.1%) victims of social crime reported in newspapers. Whereas multiple injuries are mostly identified in child victim cases i.e. 41.5 percent, followed by 30 percent adult victims and least in teenage 27.7 percent. De-formative injuries occurred equally among child and adult victims of social crime. Although, half (50%) of the permanent injuries took place in teenage group of victims and least among child victims with 23.3 percent representation. However, a little more than half (55.6%) adult were victimized with cyber crime and only 11.1 percent child victims witnessed cyber offences. Also, the degree of brutality other than multimedia is only witnessed by adult (100%) victims of social crime. On the other hand, equal representation of combined cases of degree of brutality is experienced among child and adult victims i.e. 50 percent each. The category of others degree of brutality includes those social crime cases where either a different degree of brutality is mentioned other than listed or the degree of brutality is not mentioned at all. It is high among adult (45.2%) victims and least is recorded in elderly (0.5%) group.

Conclusion: The result reveals that most of the adult victims also face foreign objects brutality, de-formative injury, cyber crimes and other than multimedia crimes with sexual assault or social crime making them the most victimized and brutalized group. Child victims are mostly victimized with multiple or de-formative injuries may be because they are vulnerable and defenceless towards the social crime. In case of teenagers, they are victimized mainly with permanent injuries damaging their sexual or other body parts which cannot function in its natural form again.
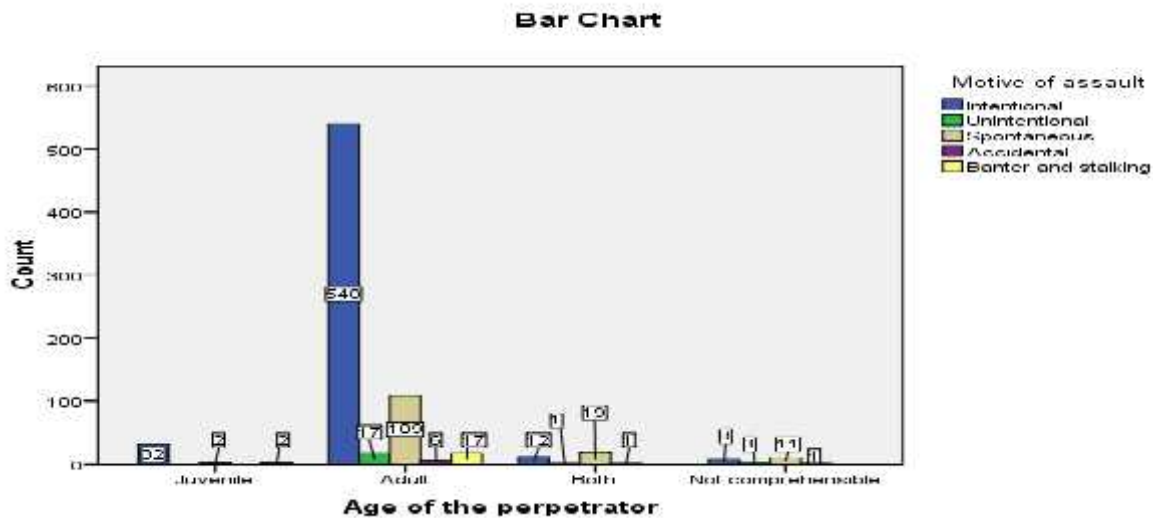
Result: In table 20 the age of the perpetrator and the motive of assault are measured. The rows of the table sorts the age of the perpetrator as juvenile, adult, both and not comprehensible and the columns identifies the motive of assault as intentional motive, unintentional motive, spontaneous motive, accidental motives and banter motives. The table discloses that intentional motive of crime is extremely high in 91.2 percent adult perpetration cases and is least in 1.4 percent not comprehensible perpetrator cases. Adult perpetration is also identified maximally in unintentional motive of social crime and lowest when both adult and juvenile perpetrators (4.8%) were involved. Similarly, adult perpetration (77.3%) is also high in spontaneous motives of social crime and is least identified in juvenile offenders (1.4%). Further, two-third (75%) accidental motives and 89.5 percent bantering motives is also high in adult offenders and is minimal among juveniles i.e. 10.5 percent in bantering cases.

Conclusion: The table reveals that the adult and juvenile group of offenders is high in intentional motives of social crime where as both offenders crime and not comprehensible is high in spontaneous motive of social crime. This indicates that where both adult and juvenile offenders are involved the social crime is majorly a spur-of-the-moment and impulsive act. However, adults and juveniles offenders primarily pre-plan or organise with the deliberate and consciously act towards completing the sexual assault to achieve their desired intention.

Bar Chart
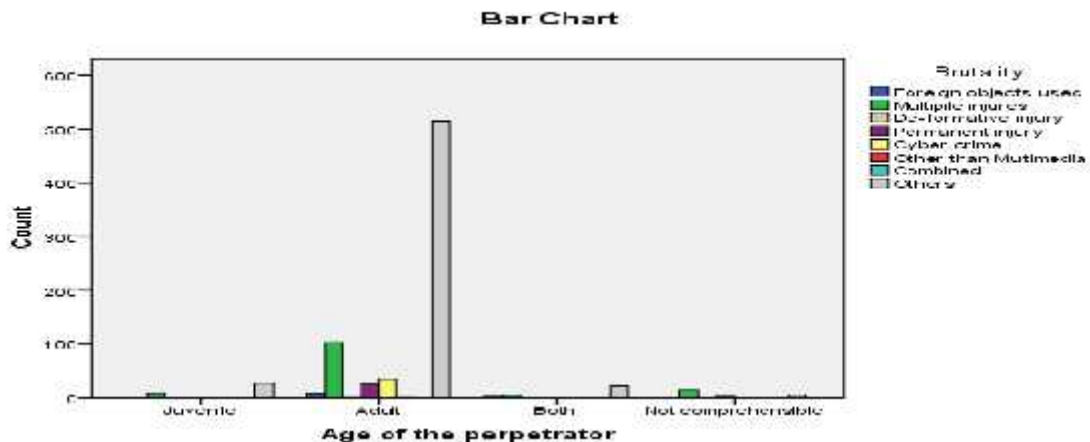
Result: In the table 21 the age of the perpetrator and the degree of brutality is measured. The row of the table classifies the age of the perpetrator as juvenile (36), adult (689), both juvenile and adult offenders (33) and not comprehensible (23). The column of the table classifies the degree of the brutality as foreign objects (11), multiple injuries (130), de-formative injuries (2), permanent injuries (30), cyber crime (36), other than multimedia (2), combined (2) and others (568). The table exposes that foreign objects is highest among 63.6 percent adult offenders and is lowest among juvenile delinquent (9.1%). Multiple injuries are maximally caused by adult perpetrators (79.2%) and least when both juvenile delinquent and adult criminals (3.8%) are involved. However, de-formative injuries and other than multimedia injuries are caused by adult offenders only. In the same way, permanent injuries (86.7%), cyber crime (94.4%) and other brutality (90.5%) are highly identified in adult perpetration. On the other hand, combined brutalities are equally represented by adult offender and both juvenile delinquents and adult criminals i.e. 50 percent in each category.

Conclusion
The result explains that the adult perpetrators are extremely brutal in all types of classification of degrees of brutality. This indicates that society is more prone to adult perpetration with heinous and serious violence or degrees of brutality against social crime or sexual assault victims.

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