'A Night of Shame': A Quantitative Content Analysis of Newspaper Narratives of the Mass Molestation Event in Bangalore, India

Vaibhav Shwetangbhai Diwanji

Awais Saleem

Jaejin Lee

'A Night of Shame': A Quantitative Content Analysis of Newspaper Narratives of the Mass Molestation Event in Bangalore, India

By Vaibhav Shwetangbhai Diwanji[1], Awais Saleem[2], Jaejin Lee[3]

Abstract

On December 31, 2016 amidst New Year's Eve revelry in Bangalore, India, about 700 young women faced a mass molestation. This research analyzed and compared 299 news articles (*N*=299) between January 1, 2017 and February 1, 2017 from three leading English language newspapers in India through a quantitative content analysis. Results indicated that there were differences in how the regional and national newspapers framed their stories. While national newspapers deployed the episodic frame in their news stories, the local newspaper used both thematic and episodic frames. The episodic frame focuses on individual events, whereas the thematic frame focuses on trends over time. Local newspapers discussed causes and attributions of responsibility more than national newspapers. National newspapers mostly used celebrity and official sources in their coverage, whereas local newspapers covered the testimonies of the victims and eyewitnesses more. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Sexual crimes against women, Gender-based violence, Gender and communication, Representation, Framing, Quantitative content analysis, Newspapers narratives, Responsible journalism

The 'Night of Shame' in Bangalore

Drawing on a quantitative content analysis of 299 newspaper articles, this research systematically examines the frames in print news coverage of the mass molestation event in Bangalore, India. On December 31, 2016, the revelers gathered at MG Road and Brigade Road in Bangalore, the two major streets located in the heart of the city, to celebrate New Year's Eve of

---

[1] Vaibhav Diwanji is an Assistant Professor in the William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Kansas. He received his Ph.D. from Florida State University. He has an MS in Integrated Marketing Communications from Florida State University and an MBA in International Business and Marketing from Auckland University of Technology. His research interests include new media technologies, persuasion, media analysis, gender and communication, health communication, cross-cultural communication, and media framing and effects.

[2] Awais Saleem is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Media at Lamar University. He worked as a print and broadcast journalist for more than a decade. During this time, he remained associated with mainstream media organizations in Pakistan, India, and the United States. His research interests are political communication, social media and emerging technologies, political economy of media, and agenda-setting. He teaches broadcasting writing and production courses.

[3] Jaejin Lee is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication in the College of Communication and Information at Florida State University. She received her PhD from the University of Florida. She has an MAdv in Advertising from the University of Florida and a BA from Kyungpook National University. Her research interests include consumer behavior, strategic marketing communications, cause-related marketing, new media, and health communication. Her teaching interests include media consumer behavior, creative strategy, and foundations of integrated marketing communication.

2017. Roughly 60,000 people were present at these locations and 1,500 policemen were deployed to take care of their security (Swamy, 2017). Despite all the security arrangements, 700 young women faced a mass molestation on that night, which was the first incident of its kind anywhere in India.

Bangalore Mirror, a regional newspaper in the state of Karnataka where Bangalore is situated, was the first to cover this incident, as one of their journalists was present at the crime scene (Swamy, 2017). The newspaper called this incidence "*Bangalore's night of shame* (Swamy, 2017)." Other newspapers, especially the leading national English-language dailies, were very quick to react and cover the incident as well. The news about this event spread throughout the country, resulting in protests against the current treatment of women and laws against sexual crimes against women in India. A state minister in Karnataka issued a comment wherein he blamed the women victims for dressing and acting like westerners (Safi, 2017). His comments received wide coverage across several regional and national English language newspapers and on social media websites.

News stories covered not only the narrations of the event, but also commentaries from different celebrities in the Indian Hindi movie industry, Bollywood, sports celebrities, politicians, and the public at large. People held protests in Bangalore and across India to pay respects to the victims and bring attention to the issue of mistreatment of women in Bangalore and other parts of the country. The news spread globally, and many major global newspapers covered the story of the Bangalore mass molestation (Dewan, 2018; Jolly, 2017; Safi, 2017). This research includes a systematic quantitative content analysis of the Bangalore mass molestation related articles in the Indian regional newspaper, *Bangalore Mirror*, and compares it with the news stories covered in two leading national English newspapers of India: *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*.

This research presents a feminist critical analysis of newspaper narratives of the Bangalore mass molestation event. The feminist critical analysis helps to shed light on and acknowledge that violence perpetrated against women is gendered and steeped within a patriarchal culture that views women as subordinate and as less worthy of rights and freedoms than men (Russell, 2001). Newspapers are a major source of information, facts, statistics, ideas, and opinions for people (Johnson & Milani, 2011). Newspapers are a tool of mass information dissemination when an event like this takes place (Ambirajan, 2000). Newspapers' presentation of such events of sexual violence against women can influence people at a very large scale (Phillips et al., 2015). A critical analysis and understanding of newspapers' role in spreading the information about such crimes against women can prove to be valuable in aiding present and future social, political, and legal movements and policies against such crimes. This research contributes to the literature of news framing on sexual violence against women and discusses implications of ethical journalism or otherwise in covering such an issue.

Newspaper Reporting of Sexual Violence against Women in India

This research is not about the significance of investigative journalism and the capabilities of journalists in India, but instead focuses on the newspaper coverage patterns of the Bangalore mass molestation and incident-driven journalism tendencies practiced by the newspapers. Sexual violence against women, according to Brownmiller (1975) and Hooks (1990), is not just about a 'crime of passion', but more crucially, it showcases a social dimension to maintain structures of male dominance and hegemony over females.

Prior to the '*Delhi gang-rape*' in 2012, sexual crimes against women in India barely received any extensive national coverage in print newspapers (Bradley, Sahariah, & Siddiqui, 2017). Literature suggests that cases of sexual violence against women in India were not reported sufficiently in print newspapers (Bradley & Pallikadavath, 2013; Chacko, 2003; Gilbertson & Pandit, 2019; Nieder, Muck & Kartner, 2019; Radha, 2019; Srinivasan, 2005). Women, in a patriarchal society like India, have been neglected in terms of coverage by print media of the sexual crimes against them (Spivak, 1988). Bradley et al. (2017) discussed how women and young girls in India have been systematically oppressed and silenced by the media, especially print newspapers. This was because print news outlets barely covered their experiences and chose to focus on a select few ''*hyped*'' cases of sexual violence in the country. Such a selective coverage tends to marginalize the plight of women in the print newspapers. The narratives of rape and sexual crimes against women in India have often included inaccurate portrayals of the victims as well as the incidents (Gilbertson & Pandit, 2019; Ray, 1998). To this end, this research aimed at understanding how the three newspapers covered stories related to the Bangalore mass molestation and analyzed whether and how the print news provided a corridor to discuss crimes against women in the country.

Theoretical Perspectives and Development of Hypotheses
Newspapers in India

Newspapers are an important tool of mass communication and information dissemination to the local as well as national audiences when sexual violence against women occurs at such a large scale as the mass molestation in Bangalore (Ambirajan, 2000). Therefore, newspaper journalists must understand their responsibility for appropriate coverage of such an incidence (Phillips et al., 2015). The previous literature that studied sexual crimes against women in India and their coverage in the English newspapers in the country did not focus on any 'mass molestation' case as such (Bradley & Pallikadavath, 2013; Chacko, 2003; Srinivasan, 2005). Newspapers' presentation of such controversial events can provide tools through which their readers are drawn towards a certain social movement, which makes the newspapers an essential tool in the development of social movements against such crimes against women in India. Therefore, it is important to understand how the information provided by newspapers influences social movements in terms of formation of protests at local and national levels. It is important to analyze and understand how newspapers portray such events, with the potential of influencing social awareness (Von Aelst & Walgrave, 2002). There is also a counter argument that print newspapers, both local and national, are interested in publishing voyeuristic details of such incidents to attract more readers and sell more papers (Bradley et al., 2017). This research discusses the need and implications of responsible coverage of sexual violence against women in the Indian newspapers.

The primary purpose of this systematic content analysis of the three leading English language newspapers in India was to analyze the print news media's role in the dissemination of information from a local to national scale, using the Bangalore mass molestation event as a case example. The next section presents the theoretical framework guiding this research and development of hypotheses. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the method deployed in this study. Results and analysis are presented after that, followed by discussion of theoretical and practical implications.

Female Victims in Newspapers

Incidents like the mass molestation in Bangalore are gender-based crimes whereby women and young girls are sexually attacked, with the intention of humiliating and controlling them (Gill, 2007). Kelly et al. (2006) argued that many myths prevailed among the people based on '*appropriate versus inappropriate*' behavior standards of women who were victims of such sexual crimes. Many portrayed women as 'undeserving' ones, influencing the public's understanding of such crimes through information they receive from newspapers. The newspapers feed their readers with sexualized, soft-pornographic versions of such sexual crimes against women daily (Kelly et al., 2006). Bradley and colleagues (2017) argued that newspapers should avoid the stereotypical ways of representing women as sexual objects who exist for the gratification of men.

Previous studies on representation of sexual violence against women in newspapers were found to be deeply biased and problematic (Benedict, 1992; Carter, 1998; Clark, 1992; Korn & Efrat, 2004; Soothill & Walby, 1991). It was evident from these studies that the print newspapers offered a distorted portrayal of the sexual crimes against women. Benedict (1992) observed that the victims of such sexual crimes were required to meet certain conditions, such as specific skin color, social class, virgin/not married with children, from a respectable background, non-alcoholic, raped/harassed by economically and socially backward man/men, in order to attain a status among the print news media as a *'deserving'* victim. This was also evident in Kelly and Radform's (2005) study that stated, *"...that victims are to blame for 'risk-taking"* (p. 80). The press would deliberately exaggerate gratuitous details of such sexual violence against women to titillate the readers (Soothil & Walby, 1991). Both local and national newspapers normalized such crimes against women by framing them as inevitable and even acceptable facts of everyday life (Carter, 1998). This research used an integrated theoretical framework to analyze the coverage of the mass molestation event in the three newspapers.

Cultivation Theory

Gerbner's (1998) cultivation theory provides an overarching theoretical framework for this research. It serves as a lens to understand the findings of this study, rather than as a predictive tool. Cultivation theory suggests that mass media tools like television and newspapers are primary contributors to the general public's conceptions of social reality (Gerbner, 1998). According to the theory, it is assumed that the more people read newspaper stories, the more their reality estimates would correspond to the most recurrent, stable, and overarching patterns of the newspaper's content (Arendt, 2010). Accordingly, those who spend more time reading newspaper articles related to sexual crimes against women are more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most common patterns of the newspaper stories related to such events (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009).

Feminist Poststructuralism

Weedon's (1997) feminist poststructuralism provides a theoretical framework to examine news representations of lethal gendered violence against women by addressing the relationship between language, social institution, and individual consciousness. The theory focuses on how power is exercised in such situations (Weedon, 1997). It theorizes the relationship between subjectivity, meaning, and social value (Weedon, 1997). This research applied feminist poststructuralism with various framing theories to examine the coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in the three leading English daily newspapers in India (Goffman, 1986). According to Goffman (1986), framing analysis helps in the investigation of experiences. Narratives and events

346

are interpreted according to different frames. Different frames facilitate the selection, portrayal, and examination of news information, thus allowing narratives into specific categories (Dowler, 2006). Han (2007) suggested that news frames offer templates that journalists use for collecting information and converting them into narratives.

Bradley and colleagues (2016) argued that almost any issue related to violence against women in India is framed in terms of gender violence. Drache and Velagic (2014) also deployed framing analysis to identify the importance of language used by four different English newspapers in India in developing people's understanding of the Delhi gang rape case. They found that the press failed in maintaining a balance between a holistic coverage and incident-based reporting of the violence against women.

Justice Frame

The notion of justice can be applied in communication research and holds 'significant promise' in this field of research (Besley & McComas, 2005). Justice research demonstrates that media coverage of justice cases such as the mass molestation in Bangalore may have a significant impact on public sentiments and attitudes toward the event, victims, and the authorities (Besley & McComas, 2005; Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995). This research also used Moriearty's (2010) study which used the justice frame to understand the print news media's representation of justice with regard to sexual violence against women. In addition, this research was also influenced by Thacker and Day's (2017) study that used the media's framing of justice as problematic in terms of the practice of 'victim blaming,' which refers to news coverage in which the women who were victims of sexual violence are accused of playing a role in their own victimization. Therefore, the first hypothesis is proposed as below.

> *H1*: The coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India,* and *Hindustan Times*) will highlight a justice frame.

Adversarial Frame

The present research also provides a comparative analysis of adversarial framing in the context of its presence or absence in the newspaper narratives about the Bangalore mass molestation. Adversarial framing has been employed extensively in both print and television journalism (Karlberg, 1997). The main feature of an adversarial frame is its representation of issues in terms of two distinct, mutually exclusive aspects such as good versus evil (Karlberg, 1999). Adversarial framing comes from adversarial perspectivism to imply not simply different perspectives, but rather deliberately constructed apex perspectives, based on the theoretical concept of 'perspective realism' (Karlberg, 1997; McGilvary, 1933). This research used an adversarial frame to examine whether these news stories from three newspapers delineated boundaries between good and evil by identifying people responsible for the incident or accused victims of being themselves responsible for the incident. This research was influenced by Knight and Greenberg's (2011) study in which they used the adversarial framing in the context of social movement and counter-movement discursive relationships. Therefore:

> *H2*: The coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India,* and *Hindustan Times*) will highlight an adversarial frame.

Rights-based Frame

The current study also looked at the prevailing conflict of interests through rights-based framing, in terms of the positions held by the primary people involved in the narratives about the Bangalore mass molestation in the three newspapers such as the victims, the accused, the law-enforcement agencies, the politicians, the celebrities, the eyewitnesses, or others. The rights-based framing helps in understanding the underlying power-based hegemony, which in turn can influence how print media framed sexual violence against women (Miller, 2010). Rights-based frames refer to moral principles and universal rights that can be claimed by anyone regardless of their interests or identity (Helbling, Hoeglinger, & Wuest, 2010). In view of evidence that journalists employ issue dualism, in which two sides of an issue are treated as equally valid (Terkildson, Schnell, & Ling, 1998), this research examines the rights-based framing in the newspaper articles. Therefore:

> *H3*: The coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India*, and *Hindustan Times*) will highlight a rights-based frame.

Another goal of this study was to identify whether the tone of the newspaper articles covering the mass molestation was primarily positive or negative. The present research was influenced by Nitz and West (2004) and Iyengar (1991), who had found that the tone of a newspaper story could have a significant effect on the public's opinion of an incident. Therefore:

> *H4*: When *Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India,* and *Hindustan Times* covered the Bangalore mass molestation, the tone of that coverage will be primarily negative.

Thematic Frame

The present study also investigated whether the coverage of the mass molestation in these newspapers was thematic or episodic. According to Iyengar (1991), thematic framing refers to placing a specific event in a wider context and discussing the possible implications of its outcome. Whereas episodic framing refers to presenting public discourse in terms of a specific event or occurrence in isolation. Therefore:

> *H5*: When *Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India,* and *Hindustan Times* covered the Bangalore mass molestation, their coverage will be primarily thematic.

Causal Frame

This study also used the causal frame analysis to identify whether the newspapers emphasized specific aspects of the incident and made them more salient so as to promote a particular causal interpretation (Entman, 1993). Causal frames in news articles influence people's assessment of an issue, which in turn could become salient considerations in their evaluations of the event (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). Journalists often select frames in their depictions of issues to make certain aspects of an issue more salient, often aspects related to causal attribution (Entman, 1993). Therefore:

348

H6: The coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India*, and *Hindustan Times*) will highlight a causal frame.

Responsibility Frame

In line with the previous literature, this research used the attribution of responsibility frame to understand how the newspapers attributed responsibility for the mass molestation, pointing towards either the accused or the politicians or the local law enforcement agency (Hannah & Cafferty, 2006; Kim, 2015; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Attribution of responsibility frame is defined as a way of attributing responsibility for a cause to either the government or to an individual or group (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) found that the attribution of responsibility frame was most used in serious newspapers. Based on Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) argument, the mainstream newspapers such as *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* can be considered serious newspapers as they are equivalent to newspapers in other countries such as *The New York Times*. Therefore:

H7: The coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India*, and *Hindustan Times*) will highlight an attribution of responsibility frame.

Solution Frame

Borrowing from Nitz and West's (2004) study, a solution frame was deployed in this research to identify whether a newspaper article offered a solution to the problem that was being covered at length. Solution frame deals with treatment recommendation and makes prognoses about possible outcomes of the process (Nitz and West, 2004). Therefore:

H8: The coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation in three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India*, and *Hindustan Times*) will highlight a solution frame.

Borrowing from the previous literature (Phillips, et al., 2015), it was also important to analyze how the newspapers presented the consequences of the mass molestation event. Therefore:

H9: When three English newspapers (*Bangalore Mirror*, *The Times of India*, and *Hindustan Times*) covered the Bangalore mass molestation, they will highlight the consequences of the incident.

The examination of these hypotheses in the framing used by the newspapers in covering the mass molestation event would help in answering the following overarching research question:

RQ: How does the coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation differ in the local English newspaper from the two national English newspapers?

Method

The present research used a quantitative content analysis to examine the newspapers' coverage of the mass molestation event. Using this method, this research aimed to investigate the underlying themes in the news stories related to the Bangalore mass molestation in the three English newspapers: *Bangalore Mirror, The Times of India, and Hindustan Times*.

Sample

The researchers used two comprehensive online databases (LexisNexis Academic and Factivia) to collect the news articles from the three newspapers. The search strategy was adopted from the previously established methods (Cheung et al., 2011; Phillips et al., 2015). *Bangalore Mirror* is one of the most read English daily newspapers in Bangalore in terms of circulation (Kumar, 2009). Also, *Bangalore Mirror* was the first newspaper to break the Bangalore mass molestation story (Wang, 2017). *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times* rank as the top two English language newspapers in India both in terms of circulation of physical copies and online readership (Audit Bureau of Circulations-India, 2019; Government of India: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2019). The coverage period for the present research was January 1, 2017 to February 1, 2017.

Only English language newspapers were selected because of the researchers' inability to interpret or translate sources in other language newspapers. However, English is a very commonly used language in India and is the co-official language of the Government of India, along with Hindi, as designated by the Constitution of India (Annamalai, 2006). Aula (2014) suggested that the English language in India is a "new caste system," wherein a person's socioeconomic status is based in line with his or her fluency in the language. Therefore, the insertion of only English language newspapers for the purposes of the present research was sufficient. The primary keywords used to find the articles from the database included: Bangalore mass molestation, Bengaluru molestation, New Year's Eve, night of shame, Karnataka home minister, New Year assault, and New Year horror. These keyword searches generated a total of 299 newspaper articles (N=299) from the three newspapers-*Bangalore Mirror* (n=109), *The Times of India* (n=98), and *Hindustan Times* (n=92).

Unit of Analysis and Coding Procedure

The unit of analysis of this research were articles covering the Bangalore mass molestation event in the three English daily newspapers. For each newspaper story, the basic identifying details were listed, in terms of date of publication, newspaper name, length of the story, author, type of story, and its relationship with the Bangalore mass molestation event. The newspaper article inclusion criteria were: i) description of the Bangalore mass molestation event, ii) victim's conditions, iii) protests as consequences of the event, and iv) testimonies from victims, eyewitnesses, celebrities, politicians, and police officials. On the contrary, the exclusion criteria were: i) articles not from the three mentioned English language newspapers in India, ii) articles not focused specifically on the Bangalore mass molestation event, iii) social media sources reported by non-professional journalists, and iv) official police statements. The police records were not included in this research because they relate to the dimension of criminal justice which was beyond the scope of this research. The justice frame was examined in terms of presence or absence of a call for justice/solidarity in the story. This variable examined the presence or absence of calls to action in the news story for justice or solidarity. The adversarial frame looked at the 'good

versus evil' in the story. Each story was studied to check whether it included human rights or civil rights related information. The rights-based frame was examined in terms of positions held by primary people involved in newspaper narratives. The tone of the story was examined in terms of negative, positive, and neutral. The researchers investigated the primary theme of each story in the context of thematic or episodic frames. Whether or not the story included possible cause/-s behind the incident was also analyzed. The attribution of responsibility frame helped in understanding who was being held responsible for the incident in each story. Whether the story provided a solution to the present scenario or not as well as consequences was also examined. And finally, the primary source/-es of information were identified for each newspaper story related to Bangalore mass molestation.

After retrieving the content, it was processed through filtration and coding. The present study deployed the framing categories and sub-categories from the literature for coding purposes (Iyengar, 1991; Nitz & West, 2000; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The categories for framing were identified inductively. A coding manual defined and operationalized all categories and sub-categories. The framing categories consisted of justice, adversarial, rights-based, tone, thematic-episodic, causal, attribution of responsibility, and solution (*See Table 1*).

Table 1: Framing Categories and Subcategories for Coding

Primary categories	Subcategories/Framing elements
Identification frames	ID Number:
	Date of story publication:
	Name of the English newspaper: Bangalore Mirror, The Times of India, Hindustan Times
	Length of the story:
	Author of the story: (Staff, News agency, Freelance/guest authors, Others, Not mentioned)
	Story type: 1) Personal commentary, 2) Mainstream news article/column/editorial, 3) Information from NGO or other nonprofit website, 4) Celebrity opinion, 5) Announcement (press conference, event, protest/march), 6) Other
	Number of photos included:
	Is the story directly or specifically related or relevant to the Bangalore mass molestation? __ No, __ Yes
Justice frame	Is the story calling for justice or solidarity? __ No, __ Yes
Adversarial frame	(delineates boundaries between 'good' and 'evil') __ No, __ Yes
Rights-based frame	(human rights, civil rights) __ No, __ Yes
Tone of story	__ Negative
	__ Neutral
	__ Positive
Dominant framing approach	__ Thematic
	__ Episodic
Causal frame	(Hinting at possible causes behind the incident) __ No, __ Yes
Consequences of the incident	(Economic/Political) __ No, __ Yes
Attribution of responsibility frame	The accused
	The politicians
	The law enforcement agency
	The victim
If responsibility attributed, then	Government blamed
	Political personality blamed
	Solution offered
Solution frame	(Indicated how the existing situation could be improved) __ No, __ Yes.

Source of information	__ None
	__ Police
	__ Politician
	__ Victims
	__ Accused
	__ Eyewitness/-es
	__ Common people
	__ Administrative official
	__ Celebrities
	__ More than one source ___ Other

Coder Training

Three coders were used in this research. The coders were undergraduate students proficient in quantitative content analysis. In the first phase of content analysis, a pre-test was conducted with 89 news articles (*n*=89) from the three newspapers, not included in the sample, to test for inter-coder reliability. The coders were given a comprehensive coding training and coding was carried out to examine the coders' understanding of the codes as well as ascertain the inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability was evaluated using Krippendorf's alpha (Krippendorff, 1980, 2004). The researchers determined the alpha by the scale order (nominal, ordinal, interval) of the coding scheme. All the variables included in this research achieved an inter-coder reliability alpha of .70 or above. All three coders achieved an agreement in their coding of the sample articles from the three English newspapers based on the pre-defined categories and sub-categories.

Upon the successful completion of the pre-test, the full investigation was carried out in the second phase involving the remaining stories from the three English newspapers ($N = 299$). After all articles were coded by the coders, quantitative analyses were conducted to examine the data. To assess the association between the variables and the significance of the association, Chi-square tests of independence were conducted.

Results

The first hypothesis predicted that a justice frame would be present in the articles analyzed from the three English newspapers about the Bangalore mass molestation. This hypothesis was supported as all three English newspapers used the justice frame in the stories, $\chi^2(2, N=299) = 10.26$, p < .05. The local newspaper, i.e., *Bangalore Mirror* (48%) was found to use the justice frame more than the other two national newspapers, i.e., *The Times of India* (38%) and *Hindustan Times* (32%).

The second hypothesis was about the inclusion of an adversarial frame in the stories by the three newspapers. This hypothesis was statistically supported indicating the distinction made between the 'good' and the 'evil' sides of the incident, $\chi^2(2, N=299) = 16.62\%$, $p < .05$. Overall, about 59% of news articles that were analyzed showed the use of an adversarial frame.

The third hypothesis posited that all three newspapers would highlight a rights-based frame. This hypothesis was also supported as all three newspapers were seen to use the rights-based frame, $\chi^2(2, N=299) = 12.78\%$, $p < .05$. Roughly 45% of the news stories used the rights-based frame in presenting the Bangalore mass molestation event related information.

The fourth hypothesis predicting an association between the newspaper source and a negative tone of the story was not supported as it was not statistically significant, $p = .87$. For the most part, the tone of the story was found to be neutral (70%), more than negative or positive.

Some articles in the local newspapers (12%) used a negative tone, whereas the tone of the articles in the two national English dailies was mostly neutral.

H5 predicted that three newspapers would use thematic frame in covering the Bangalore mass molestation. This hypothesis did not find support, $p = .15$. The local newspaper used both thematic and episodic frames, whereas the other two national dailies primarily used the episodic frame more than the thematic frame.

The sixth hypothesis was regarding the presence of a causal frame in the stories from the three newspapers and it was significantly supported, $\chi^2(2, N=299) = 14.61\%$, $p < .05$. The local newspaper used the causal frame more (42%) than the other two national English dailies.

The seventh hypothesis was concerning the presence of the attribution of responsibility frame in the articles by all three newspapers. This hypothesis was supported, $\chi^2(2, N=299) = 15.16\%$, $p < .05$. It was found that *Bangalore Mirror* (45%) used the attribution of responsibility frame more than *The Times of India* (39%) and *Hindustan Times* (32%).

The eighth hypothesis regarding the presence of a solution frame in the stories about the Bangalore mass molestation by three newspapers was not supported, meaning there was not a statistically significant relationship between the news source and the use of a solution frame, $p = .10$.

The final hypothesis was supported, meaning that all three newspapers discussed the consequences of the mass molestation incident in Bangalore at varying degrees, $\chi^2(2, N=299) = 13.97\%$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The findings of this research helped in answering proposed hypotheses and a research question, which compared the coverage of the Bangalore mass molestation event in the local newspaper with that of the other two national newspapers. Cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) and feminist poststructuralism (Weedon, 1997) serve as a lens to understand the findings. The results were mostly in line with the existing literature, with some variations.

Moriearty (2010) and Thacker and Day (2017) in their respective studies established that newspapers would use the justice frame. This frame did not mean that stories directly referred to the crime or the criminals, in this case the frame rather described that the authors of the news stories either sought or described justification for the victims. It was also found that the local newspaper *Bangalore Mirror* used the justice frame more in the coverage of the mass molestation. It could be because they were covering more on-the-ground material, meaning they were in direct touch with the people involved in the incident, which might not necessarily be the case for the other two national English dailies. Feminist poststructuralism supports such transformative rather than emancipatory agenda in media representation of marginalized gender (Baxter, 2008; Weedon, 1997).

The current study provides further evidence in line with Miller's (2010) research that had established that newspapers would use a rights-based frame when reporting crimes against women. It was evident in the news stories related to the comments of the state's Home Minister who blamed the victims of the mass molestation for wearing the 'western' clothes and thus self-inviting the violence. Victim-blaming was quite present in such stories. Victim-blaming further evidences deep-rooted stereotypes against women. When such incidences happen, the newspaper narratives are used by those in power to warn the women that irresponsible behavior such as wearing western clothes or drinking could render them vulnerable to such incidents. Marhia (2008) reported that

the newspaper narratives have been used in the past in favor of men wherein they are shown to be under the influence of alcohol which could then lead to their misconduct, but they are seldom warned not to get drunk or misbehave with women. Feminist poststructuralism (Helliwell, 2000; Wooden, 1997) also argues that such newspaper coverage creates cultural constructions of gender differences, particularly in pre-assigned victimhood to gendered categories.

The presence of the adversarial frame further strengthens the claim about the power-differences and hegemony as was also evident in the previous literature (Knight & Greenberg, 2011). The three newspapers, regardless of whether local or national, strongly condemned the incidence in most of their articles by clearly differentiating between the 'good,' i.e., the victims, and the 'evil,' the accused, sides. The results find support in the feminist poststructuralism framework, which argues that processes used by mainstream journalists to consult communities have tended to be based on adversarial models of human relations, such as good versus evil (Wooden, 1997). The results of the present study extended Entman's (1993) findings that newspapers would use causal frames when reporting sexual violence against females. Again, the reason for the use of the causal frame more by the local newspaper than the two national newspapers could be that the former was more focused on resolving the issue at the local level as against the mainstream newspapers. This was reflected in Zhang, Jin and Tang's (2015) research as well who also used the causal framing in the interpretation of the media's representation of the public health threat. From the feminist poststructuralism perspective, the use of causal frames in newspaper coverage of gender-based violence are often used by the mainstream journalists to make certain aspects of the issue more salient (Nelson et al., 1997, Wooden, 1997).

In terms of the usage of the responsibility-attribution frame in the coverage of the mass molestation by the three newspapers, the findings of this research were in line with Hannah and Cafferty (2006), Kim (2015), and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). The hypothesis regarding the application of the solution frame was not supported upon the analysis of the articles from the three English newspapers. This was a departure from the prior research which had posited that the newspapers would use a solution frame when covering a social issue such as the Bangalore mass molestation at a greater length (Nitz & West, 2004). As per the feminist poststructuralism framework, one explanation of this finding could be that the journalists covering violence against women in patriarchal societies like India are focused more on the incident itself, rather than trying to discuss the implications of such violent occurrences (Wooden, 1997).

Interestingly, the findings of the present study were contrary to the literature which postulated that newspapers would portray the accused involved in such major incidents in a negative light (Esser, 2008; Iyengar, 1991; Nitz & West, 2004). *Bangalore Mirror* was seen to use a more positive tone than *The Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*, however, the general tone found in most of the articles was neutral. This signified that the three newspapers focused on representing the incident as it happened and reported the commentary of the people about the mass molestation.

The present research found support in the literature in terms of the usage of a thematic frame by newspapers in covering sexual crimes against women like the mass molestation in Bangalore (Entman, 1991; Iyenger, 1991). While the local newspaper was seen to use the mass molestation incident to refer to the bigger issues such as safety of women in the Metro cities, the increasing crime rate against women, gender inequality, etc., the national newspapers focused more on the specific incident in their coverage. While all three newspapers were seen to discuss the consequences of the mass molestation, *Bangalore Mirror* covered it in a broader context, including details such as the cancellation of the David Guetta concert in the city due to the incident

354

and the announcement of different rallies and protests against the government for not being very active in this matter. This finds support in the feminist poststructuralism framework, which argues for the principle of meaning construction within localized or context-specific settings or communities (Wooden, 1997). The national dailies, on the other hand, covered how the Bollywood and sports celebrities across the country condemned this incident along with the reactions from different political leaders.

All three newspapers used multiple sources of information in their respective stories. Local newspapers relied more on information from police (42%), government/politicians (25%) and common people (23%), i.e., victims and witnesses. *The Times of India* used celebrity comments (54%) more than the other two newspapers. *Hindustan Times* mostly replicated the information sources from these two other newspapers. It was also found that the local newspaper focused more on personal commentary from police, victims, and witnesses, etc., whereas the national dailies focused on mainstream news articles, announcements from NGOs, and celebrity comments/opinions. Given the detailed coverage of the event and the fact that it was the first newspaper to break the story, *Bangalore Mirror,* despite being a local English daily, appeared to have a direct and stronger contact with the victims, the government, and the police. This direct connection seemed to have helped it, and as a result it had access to greater and more reliable information to report. The framing analysis helped to identify differing priorities by the local and national dailies in terms of the perspectives.

In terms of cultivation theory, the consistent and neutral focus on the fact-based information related to the mass molestation event in Bangalore might lead the newspapers readers to have neutral conceptions toward the victimized women. Rather than being pursued by specific opinions and thoughts of those in systemic power, such as the State Union Minister who blamed the victim girls for the mass-molestation event, the readers might feel the need to investigate further by finding more event related information in the newspapers. The three newspapers also provided their readers with information about protests that were being held in Bangalore and in other cities of India for supporting the victims of the mass molestation in Bangalore. This way, the newspapers would lead the readers toward social movements against sexual crimes against women in Bangalore and across the country.

Feminist poststructuralism aided in attaining a comprehensive understanding of the incident through a merged analysis of newspaper discourses and gender. In line with the theory, the result of this research shows that reality is governed by newspaper discourses that are controlled by people's temporally and spatially specific versions of 'hegemonic masculinity' prevalent in patriarchal societies like India. Gender-based violence thus can be perceived as a process legitimized and normalized within society through its core connection with gender hierarchies. When used in conjunction, cultivation theory and feminist poststructuralism help reveal the gendered nature of our current intelligible reality through newspaper narratives.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study had some limitations. The three English language newspapers were selected based on their circulation figures. While readership could be a good indicator of their popularity, it does not mean that they were the only newspapers that extensively covered the mass molestation in Bangalore. Therefore, the future research should include more newspaper sources for a more comprehensive content analysis of such a serious social issue. Similarly, another limitation of this research is that it only includes the English language newspapers in India.

However, there are more non-English language newspapers in India than the English language newspapers. Therefore, it is important to analyze the contents from the non-English newspapers too when it comes to the coverage of sexual violence against women in India.

The current study includes only some framing categories for the analysis of the newspaper articles. Future research could consider including more framing categories based on the literature. The fact that the present study focuses on the newspaper coverages of the Bangalore mass molestation could also be a potential limitation. With the increasing usage of smartphones and social media websites by people, online information dissemination occurs at a much faster rate than through traditional media (i.e., newspapers). Hashtags like #nightofshame and #Bangalorehorror started trending, which fueled the social media discourse about the incident even more. Therefore, future researchers should look at the non-traditional and emerging media channels as well when carrying out the framing analysis of the coverage of sexual violence against women. The present study uses a quantitative content analysis approach, but future studies could also look to deploy a qualitative descriptive content analysis to gain a better understanding of the media's portrayal of such incidences.

The findings of the present research help identify different priorities of perspectives in the local and national newspapers when covering sexual violence against women. There are certain implications of such coverage that need to be considered as well. Newspapers are the primary vehicles through which people learn about these sorts of crimes. People's opinions are shaped by the dominant discourse as presented in the newspapers. An attitude toward such crimes against women, in turn can affect the outcome of trials against criminals and the treatment of victims. The massive differences in how different newspapers cover the same crime can have extremely significant implications for the country's legal and political systems. It is important, therefore, that the press, at both local and national levels, provides an honest and true representation of such crimes and does not try to commercialize their content through titillating presentation. The newspapers should not just stop at creating a social script of such a traumatic incident, but more importantly need to guide the community effectively in the recovery process and the authorities in coping strategies to avoid yet another 'Night of Shame' in the future.

References

Ambirajan, S. (2000). Globalization, media and culture. *Econ Polit Weekly*, 35(25), 2141–2147.

Annamalai, E. (2006). India: Language Situation. In *Brown, Keith. Encyclopedia of language & linguistics.* (pp. 610–613). Elsevier B.V.

Arendt, F. (2010). Cultivation Effects of a Newspaper on Reality Estimates and Explicit and Implicit Attitudes. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 22, 147–159.

Audit Bureau of Circulations-India. (2019). *Submission of circulation figures for the audit period Jan – Jun 2017: Daily Newspapers (across languages)*. India: Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Aula, S. (2014). The Problem with The English Language in India. Retrieved August 10, 2017, from Forbes website: https://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2014/11/06/the-problem-with-the-english-language-in-india/#3c2ce73d403e.

Baxter, J. (2008), 'FPDA – a new theoretical and methodological approach?' in K. Harrington, L.

Benedict, H. (1992). *Virgin or vamp: how the press covers sex crimes*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Besley, J. & McComas, K. (2005). Framing Justice: using the concept of procedural justice to advance political communication research. *Communication Theory*, 15 (4), pp. 414-36

Bradley, T., & Pallikadavath, S. (2013). Dowry and Women's Lives in Kerala: What has Changed in a Decade? *Contemporary South Asia*, 21(4), 444–461.

Bradley, Tamsin, Sahariah, S., & Siddiqui, O. (2017). A critical reading of western newspaper narratives of rape in India and their implications for feminist activism. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 31(1), 126–137.

Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Carter, C. (1998). When the 'extraordinary' becomes 'ordinary': Everyday news of sexual violence. In *News, gender and power*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Chacko, E. (2003). Marriage, Development, and the Status of Women in Kerala, India. *Gender and Development*, 11(2), 753–773.

Cheung, A., Lavis, J., Hamandi, A., El-Jardali, F., Sachs, J., Sewankambo, N., & Knowledge-Translation Platform Evaluation Team. (2011). Climate for evidence-informed health systems: A print media analysis in 44 low- and middle-income countries that host knowledge-translation platforms. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, 9(7).

Clark, K. (1992). The linguistics of blame: representations of women in The Sun's reporting of crimes of sexual violence. In *Language, Text and Context: Essays in Stylistics*. London, UK: Routledge.

Dewan, A. (2018). India the most dangerous country to be a woman, US ranks 10th in survey. Retrieved June 30, 2018, from CNN website: https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/25/health/india-dangerous-country-women-survey-intl/index.html.

Dowler, K. (2006). Sex, lies, and videotape: the presentation of sex crime in local television new. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34(4), 383–392.

Drache, D., & Velagic, J. (2014). Sexual violence journalism in four leading English language Indian publications before and after the Delhi rape. *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 4(2), 11–38.

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.

Esser, F. (2008). Dimensions of political news cultures: Sound bite and image bite news   in France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13(4), 401–428.

Gamson, W., & Modigliani. A. (1989). Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 95 (1),1-37.

Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation analysis: An overview. *Mass Communication and Society*, 7(3/4), 175–194.

Gilbertson, A., & Pandit, N. (2019). Reporting of Violence against women in Indian newspapers. Economic & Political Weekly, 54(19), 41.

Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the Media*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Goffman, E. (1986). *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. New York, NY: Northeastern University Press.

Government of India: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. (2019). *Claimed Circulation of Registered Newspapers by Language from 2008-09 to 2014-15*. Government of India: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

Han, G. (Kevin). (2007). Mainland China frames Taiwan: How China's news websites covered Taiwan's 2004 presidential election. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 17(1), 40–57.

Hannah, G., & Cafferty, T. P. (2006). Attribute and Responsibility Framing Effects in Television News Coverage of Poverty. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 36(12), 2993–3014.

Helbling, M., Hoeglinger, D., & Wuest, B. (2010). How political parties frame European integration. *European Journal of Political Research*, 49, 496–521.

Helliwell, C. (2000). *It's Only a Penis*, 812, 796-98.

Hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Iyengar, S. (1991). Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues. *University of Chicago Press*, 208.

Johnson, S., & Milani, T. M. (2011). Language Ideologies and Media Discourse: Texts, Practices, Policies. *Language in Society*, 40(4), 533–534.

Jolly, J. (2017, February 8). Does India have a problem with false rape claims? *BBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-38796457

Karlberg, M. (1997). News and conflict: How adversarial news frames limit public understanding of environmental issues. *Alternatives Journal*, 23(1), 22-28.

Kelly, L., & Radford, J. (2005). *A gap or a chasm? Attrition in reported rape cases*. London, UK: Home Office.

Kelly, L., Temkin, J., & Griffiths, S. (2006). *Section 41: an evaluation of new legislation limiting sexual history evidence in rape trials*. London, UK: Home Office.

Kim, S.-H. (2015). Who Is Responsible for a Social Problem? News Framing and Attribution of Responsibility. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 92(3), 554–558.

Knight, G., & Greenberg, J. (2011). Talk of the Enemy: Adversarial Framing and Climate Change Discourse. *Social Movement Studies*, 10(4), 323–340.

Korsgaard. M., & Roberson, L. (1995). 'Procedural Justice in Performance Evaluation: the role of instrumental and non-instrumental voice in performance appraisal discussions, Journal of Management 21(4), 657-69.

Korn, A., & Efrat, S. (2004). The Coverage of Rape in the Israeli Popular Press. *Violence Against Women*, 10(9), 1056–1074.

358

Krippendorff, K. (1980). *Content analysis.* Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Kumar, D. S. (2009). Bengaluru emerges as the new battleground for English dailies. Retrieved November 12, 2017, from afaqs website: http://www.afaqs.com/news/story/23083_Bengaluru-emerges-as-the-new-battleground-for-English-dailies

Marhia, N. (2008). *Just representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape.* London, UK: Eaves.

McGilvary, E. (1933). Perceptual and Memory Perspectives, *Journal of Philosophy*, 30, 310ff.

Miller, H. (2010). From 'rights-based' to 'rights-framed' approaches: a social constructionist view of human rights practice. *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 14(6), 915–931.

Morgan, M., & Shanahan, J. (2010). A state of cultivation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54(2), 337–355.

Morgan, M., Shanahan, J., & Signorielli, N. (2009). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. In *J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), Media effects: Advances in theory and research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Moriearty, P. L. (2010). Framing Justice: Media, Bias, and Legal Decisionmaking. *Scholarship Repository: University of Minnesota Law School*. Retrieved from http://scholarship.law.umn.edu/faculty_articles/303?utm_source=scholarship.law.umn.edu%2Ffaculty_articles%2F303&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

Nelson, T.E., & Kinder, D. (1996). Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion. *The Journal of Politics*, 58 (4),1055-1078.

Nieder, C., Muck, C., & Kärtner, J. (2019). Sexual violence against women in India: daily life and coping strategies of young women in Delhi. *Violence against women*, 25(14), 1717-1738.

Nitz, M., & West, H. (2004). Chapter Eleven: Framing of Newspaper News Stories During a Presidential Campaign Cycle: The Case of Bush-Gore in Election. *The Environmental Communication Yearbook.*, 1, 205–226.

Phillips, M., Mostofian, F., Jetly, R., Puthukudy, N., Madden, K., & Bhandari, M. (2015). Media coverage of violence against women in India: a systematic study of a high-profile rape case. *BMC Women's Wealth*, 15(3), 1–10.

Radha, R. (2019). Historical perspective of violence against women in India through various ages. *International Journal of Basic and Applied Research*, 9(6), 149-153.

Ray, R. (1998). Women's Movements and Political Fields: A Comparison between two Indian Cities. *Social Problems*, 45(1), 21–36.

Russell, D. & Hermes, R. (2001). *Femicide in Global Perspective*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Safi, M. (2017). 'Mass molestation' in Bangalore blamed on Indians 'copying' west. Retrieved January 27, 2018, from The Guardian website: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/02/mass-molestation-bangalore-blamed-on-indians-copying-west.

Semetko, H., & Valkenburg, P. (2000). Framing European politics: a content analysis of press and television news. *Journal of Communication*, 50(2), 93–109.

Shah, D. V., Watts, M. D., Domke, D., & Fan, D. P. (2002). News framing and cueing of issue regimes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 66, 339–370.

Shaw, D. L., Weaver, D. H., & McCombs, M. E. (1997). *Communication and Democracy: Exploring the Intellectual Frontiers in Agenda-Setting Theory*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Soothill, K., & Walby, S. (1991). *Sex Crimes in the News*. London, UK: Routledge.

Spivak, G. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak. In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 42–54). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Swamy, C. H. M. (2017, January 3). Bengaluru's Night of Shame. *Bangalore Mirror*, p. 1.

Terkildson, N., Schnell, F. I., & Ling, C. (1998). Interest groups, the media and policy debate formation: An analysis of message structure, rhetoric and source cues. *Political Communication*, 15(1), 45–61.

Thacker, L. (2017). Rape Culture, Victim Blaming, and the Role of Media in the Criminal Justice System. *Kentucky Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship*, 1(1), 89–99.

Von Aelst, P., & Walgrave, S. (2002). New media, new movements? The role of the internet in shaping the 'anti-globalization' movement. *Information Communication Society*, 5(4), 465–493.

Wang, A. (2017). Indian politicians cause outrage after blaming alleged groping on women's 'Western' clothes. Retrieved January 17, 2018, from The Washington Post website: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/04/indian-politicians-cause-outrage-after-blaming-alleged-groping-on-womens-western-clothes/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.537c972e76b8.

Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Second Edition. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

Zhang, Y., Jin, Y., & Tang, Y. (2015). Framing Depression Cultural and Organizational Influences on Coverage of a Public Health Threat and Attribution of Responsibilities in Chinese News Media, 2000-2012. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 92(1).