CHILD RAPE IN INDIA

The Role of Indian Print Media in Influencing Public Policy and Shaping Public Opinion in the Country

A Case Study on Kathua Rape Case

By

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned Wahida Rohman hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

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Abstract

On January 10th, 2018, an eight-year old girl was gang raped and murdered in the India's northwestern district of Kathua. The gruesome nature of the crime brought national and global attention toward the pervasiveness of the child rape in the country and the failure of the subsequent national governments to provide adequate physical protection to its children. After the incident, the media, specifically print media, emerged as a crucial actor in mobilizing the masses and sensitizing them about the occurrence of such events while at the same time pressurizing the government to address the issue. Moreover, the media's power to translate the events involving child rape into social movement for child sexual protection was tested. This thesis explores how the incidents of child rape are covered in the Indian print media by analyzing the Kathua rape case as a case study. By extensively analyzing the content of two leading Delhi-based English-language newspapers, the *Times of India* and the *Hindu*, it investigates whether the media fulfills its utmost journalistic responsibility of keeping an eye on the policies and progress related to child rape. Specifically, it looks into how media interacts with government to influence public policy regarding child rape and its role in portraying the issue to shape public opinion around it. The thesis aims to show that while the print media was instrumental in arousing public opinion on the issue of child rape and channeling public demands to the government, it failed to push the government to address loopholes in the criminal justice system of India. The thesis concludes that information media in India should further increase the visibility of sexual violence against children and challenge the prevalent social and cultural norms that promote sexual violence against children.

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My thesis is a heartful tribute to all the minor rape victims in India and to the eight-year old Kathua rape victim, who fell prey to the biggest cruelty of mankind.

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List of Abbreviations

BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party

CSA- Child Sexual Abuse

J&K- Jammu and Kashmir

PDP – Peoples Democratic Party

POCSO – Protection of Children from Sexual Offences

TOI – Times of India

Introduction

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) is a pressing human rights issue across the globe. It poses a serious threat to the physical and psychological wellbeing of children and their families. The World Health Organization (1999) has declared CSA "a silent health emergency" of international importance which it defines as "the involvement of a child in a sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society". Child sexual abuse is an umbrella term that encompasses all forms of sexual violence against children, including rape, sexual molestation and sexual exploitation (Putnam, 2003). Though all three forms of CSA are equally outrageous and appalling criminal offences that scar the victims for years, child rape is the most heinous of them all.

Child rape has always remained a pervasive societal issue in India. However, it is only until recently that the issue grabbed national attention and became a part of the public and political discourse. While India has made significant economic strides in the last two decades, the human development of the country has not kept pace with its economic development. This is reflected in the failure of the subsequent governments to provide adequate physical protection to its children which constitute more than a third of the country's population (Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India, 2011). The extent of child rape in India is evident from the staggering figures of child rape in the country. According to the National Crimes Record Bureau, rape cases involving children have witnessed a four-fold increase between 1994 and 2016 (Subharwal et al., 2019). Figure 1 shows the gradual increase in the number of reported child rape cases between 2014 and 2016.

Figure 1: Child rape cases in India between 2014 and 2016
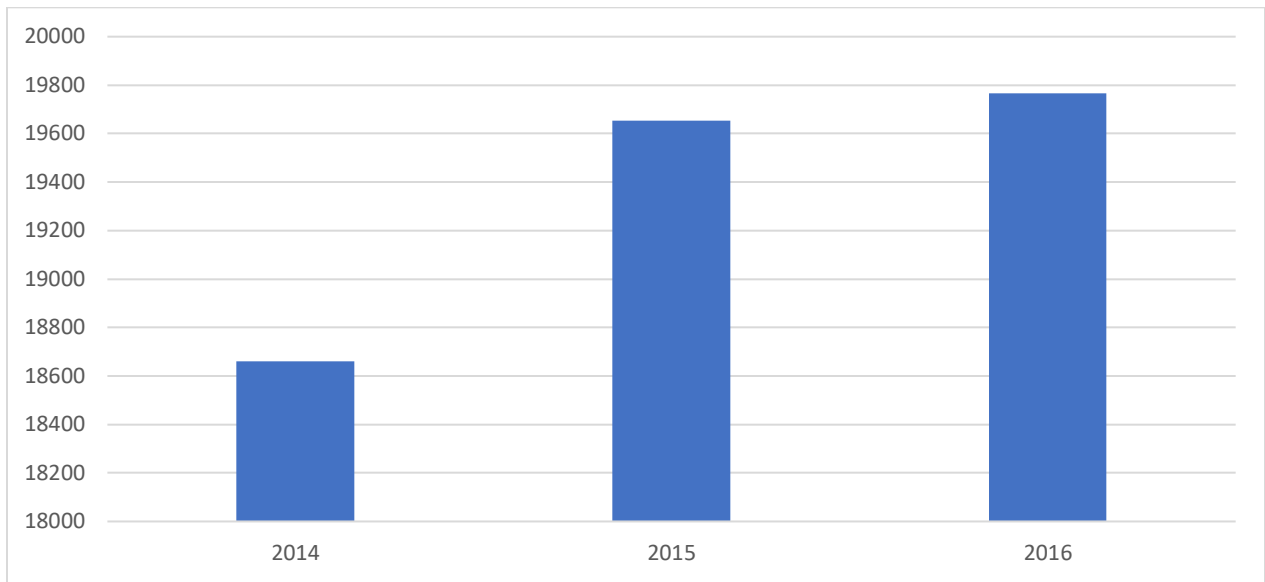
In 2007, Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), India undertook a massive survey to determine the magnitude of child rape in the country. The report revealed horrendous statistics that indicated the prevalence and gravity of the problem in India. Of the 12447 children interviewed in thirteen states, over one-fifth of those interviewed were subjected to severe forms of sexual abuse, including rape (MoWCD, 2007). The statistic has to be used with caution as the study has been criticized for its lack of representativeness; nevertheless, the numbers denote the significance of the problem in India (Choudhry et al, 2018).

The above figures could be misleading to a large extent as the cases of child rape are grossly under-reported in India (Subharwal et al., 2019). Family pressure, cultural stereotypes, dilapidated criminal justice system and social stigma attached to sexual violence prevent the victims from coming forward and reporting the incidents. Louis-Georges Arsenault, the former UNICEF representative to India, in a strongly-worded statement in the aftermath of the 2012 rape and

murder of Nirbhaya, a female medical student in New Delhi, is indicative of the seriousness of child sexual abuse in India. He remarked,

> "It is alarming that that too many of these [rape] cases are children. One in three rape victims is a child. More than 7,200 children, including infants are raped every year. Given the stigma attached to rapes, especially when it comes to children, this most likely is only the tip of the iceberg" (Singh, 2013).

Increased activism around sexual crimes against children led to enactment of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offense (POCSO) Act in 2012. The Act made a range of sexual abuse involving children a criminal offense and brought children under the legal protection of Indian law. However, after the recent high-profile rape cases in Kathua , the Act was criticized for not being harsh enough to deter the sexual crimes against children.

The media can play a vital role in mobilizing the masses and sensitizing them about the epidemic while at the same time pressurizing government to address the issue. However, the child rape has received little media attention in India despite the severity of the problem in the country. The Indian media's response in stirring the masses into action and subjecting the government for its failure to protect the children is reprehensible. It is not to say that the media has remained completely oblivious to the cause of child protection; it indeed has provided exhaustive coverage to the incidents of child sexual abuse and called attention towards the deep state of moral depravity in the Indian society. However, the transient nature of its reporting that wanes with the passage of time sheds doubt on its commitment to monitor the policies of government.

This thesis explores how the incidents of child rapes are covered in the Indian print media by taking the Kathua rape case as a case study. It investigates whether the media fulfills its utmost journalistic responsibility of keeping an eye on the policies and progress related to child rape by

extensively analyzing the content of two leading Delhi-based English-language newspapers: the *Times of India* and the *Hindu*. This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter provides the sociopolitical context of the Kathua rape case and the events that unfolded after the incident. Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature, examines India's print media landscape, and discusses the evolution of child rape legislation in the country. Chapter 3 covers the foundation on which this thesis is built and provides theoretical framework to it. Chapter 4 explains the methodology of the thesis and introduces the research questions that it will address. Chapter 5 corresponds to the first research question of this thesis and summarizes the general findings of the content analysis. Chapter 6 addresses the second research question that whether the print media coverage of the gang rape and murder of eight-year old girl in the Kathua district of India have had any significant impact on altering public opinion and influencing public policy regarding child rape in the country. Chapter 7 proposes recommendations to improve the Indian print media's role in preventing child sexual abuse in the country.

Although a plethora of literature is available on the issue of child sexual abuse in India and some studies have been conducted on the child rape epidemic in the country, the intersection of female child rape in India and the country's print media's role in mainstreaming the issue and monitoring the progress of the government has received little attention in the literature. This thesis presents the role of the Indian print media in highlighting the rape cases of female children in the country, particularly its role as a watchdog of the government policies and (in)action towards the physical safety and security of the minor girls.

Chapter 1

Background: How the Events of the Kathua Rape Case Unfolded

On the chilly morning of 10 January 2018, an eight-year-old girl[1] went missing from the Kathua district of the Indian-administered Kashmir while grazing her family's horses in a nearby forest. A police complaint was filed the next day and search parties were constituted to look for the girl. Five days later, her disfigured and brutally tortured body was found a few hundred meters away from her home (Virmani, 2019). The victim belonged to a community of Muslim nomadic tribe called Bakerwal who crisscross across the Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The heinous nature of the crime grabbed the attention of the state government who was irked by the slow pace of the investigation and therefore, ordered the Crime Branch, a special unit of the state police, to assume the responsibility of the case. The police later arrested eight men, including a retired government official, four police officers and a juvenile, in connection with the rape and murder of the victim (Virmani, 2019). Surprisingly, the police officers were among those who initially registered the complaint and accompanied the search parties.

After a delay of more than three months, on 16th April 2018, the trial of the accused began. The gruesome details of the incident that emerged during the investigation of the accused perpetrators shocked the very conscious of Indian citizens. The culprits, all Hindu and aged between 16 And 54, revealed that they had kept the victim in an abandoned temple for several days where she was gang raped multiple times. The girl was heavily sedated during the captivity which rendered her unconscious the whole time. According to the charge sheet against the perpetrators, the victim was "strangled to death and then hit on the head twice with a stone" (Iqbal, 2018).

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[1] *The name of the victim has been concealed to comply with the Supreme Court of India's decision

The investigators believed that the abduction, gang rape and then killing of the victim was meant to terrorize the Muslim Bakerwal community whom the perpetrators thought was altering the demographics of Jammu, a Hindu majority state (TNN, 2018). The incident took a new twist when the local Hindu lawyers from the Jammu High Court Bar Association started protesting in favour of the accused as they thought the accused were being framed by the Crime Branch and demanded the Crime Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the federal investigating agency of India, to probe the case; thus, causing a communal divide between Muslims and Hindus in Jammu.

Moreover, the incident assumed political overtone when the protesting lawyers were later joined by the two sitting ministers of the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly who also happened to be the members of the *Bahartiya Janata Party* (BJP), the ruling government of India. Although the ministers were later sacked from their positions, their actions brought the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led BJP into spotlight for supporting the alleged perpetrators of the crime.

The Kathua rape case drew widespread national and international condemnation. Demonstrations were held across India in support of the victim and brought attention towards the safety of women in the country. A cry for the introduction of death penalty for the rapists and amendment in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was sought by the protesters, including the opposition parties, the celebrities and the citizenry. Consequently, the bill to prescribe death penalty for people convicted of raping minors was brought into effect after it was passed by both the central legislatives of India in July 2019 ("POCSO Amendment Bill", 2019).

The trial of the accused went on for more than a year. In June 2019, six of the seven accused were found guilty of the crime by the Supreme Court of India (Gupta, 2019). The Kathua rape case was a watershed moment in the history of India which exposed the political and communal fault lines

in the country but, also, ignited a movement that sought protection for women and children in India.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews and analyses the literature that has been conducted on the intersection of child rape in India and the country's print media role in mainstreaming the issue and monitoring the progress of the government. However, before moving on to the analysis of the academic literature, it is important to understand the landscape of India's print media and the legislative measures that have been taken by the subsequent governments of India with respect to the physical protection of female child in order to grasp a complete picture in regard to the subject of this thesis.

The chapter, first, looks at the robustness (or lack of it) of the print media in India. Then it proceeds to discussing the laws devised for ensuring the sexual security of female children in India, especially the well-celebrated POCSO Act of 2012. Lastly, it reviews the previous literature conducted to study the role of the media, in India as well as in context to other nations , in highlighting the rape cases of female children in the country, particularly its role as a watchdog of the government policies and shaping public opinion towards the physical safety of the minor girls. This chapter also attempts to find a gap in the existing literature.

2.1. India's print media landscape

While print media across the globe is confronted with an existential threat in the face of the rising penetration of digital media in our lives, the industry is thriving in India. According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation report, print circulation in India has witnessed a growth of 60% in the previous decade ("Audit Bureau of Circulations", 2019). Figure 2 shows the comparison between the percentage change in demand for newspapers in India and a few selected western developed countries in 2015. The newspaper circulation went down in all those countries while it experienced a boom in India (Tharoor, 2017). Moreover, the robustness of the print media in India can be

ascertained from the fact that in 2016 seven out of twenty newspapers with the highest circulation in the world were in India (Milosevic, 2016). "The primacy of the written word and the home delivery of the newspaper" combined with the growing literacy rate are the two primary reasons contributing towards the growth of print media in India (Zehra, 2017).

Thus, the print media remains to be one of the dominant mediums for information and communication in the country. Its role in revealing social realities, setting social and political agendas, and influencing and shaping the opinions of the masses and the decision-makers cannot be underestimated.

Figure 2: Percentage change in demand for newspapers in India and a few selected western countries

Source: Tharoor, 2017

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/05/despite-the-decline-of-printed-papers-theres-one-place-that-is-bucking-the-trend
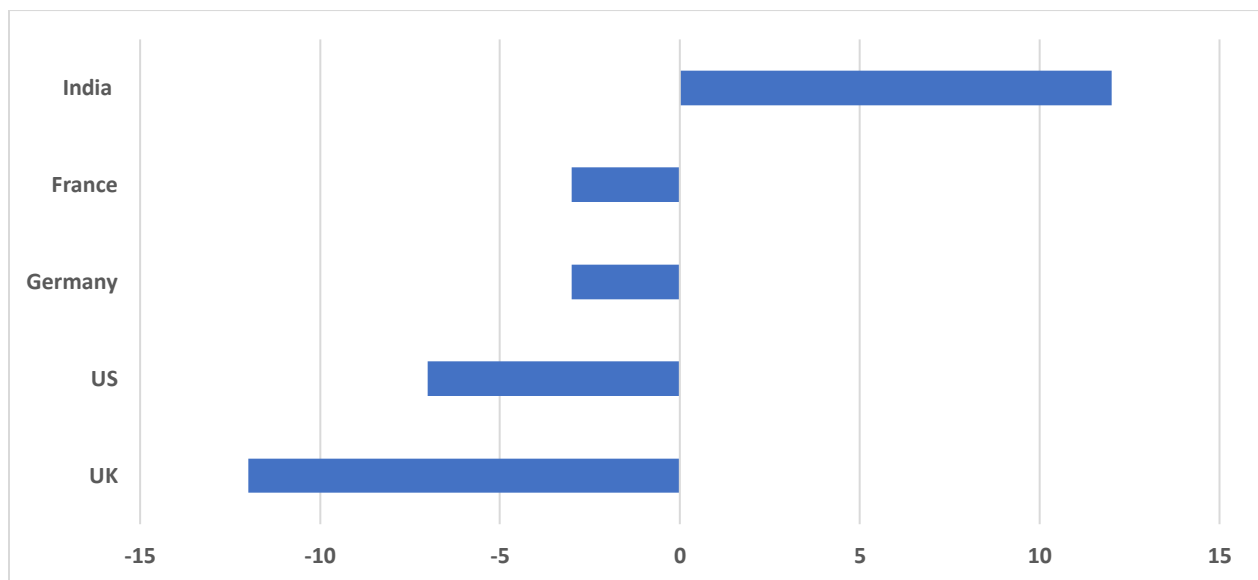
2.2. The evolution of child rape legislation in India

Although the Constitution of India guarantees protection of children and the country is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is quite astonishing that there did not exist any comprehensive child protection policies in India before 2012 let alone a law for child

rape. Sexual crime against children, including rape, was prosecuted under various sections of the British-era Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Belur and Singh, 2015). However, loopholes in the Code rendered it ineffective in protecting the children. For example, the definition of rape was only limited to the non-consensual sexual intercourse between men and women and it was only applicable to the female victims (Law Commission of India, 1971, p 277). Furthermore, sexual crimes other than rape were grouped together into a single crime of "outraging the modesty of a woman" (Law Commission of India, 1971, p 264). Besides lacking a statutory definition of 'modesty', the code failed to specify the different sexual crimes that children might fall victim to.

The cry for a children-specific sexual abuse legislation gained momentum when it was realized that the Indian Penal Code failed to curb the rising numbers of sexual crimes against children. Thus, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act was enacted in 2012 to make child sexual abuse a separate offense and bring the children under legal protection of Indian law (Malhotra, 2013). The Act was hailed for its gender neutrality, categorization of different sexual offences, thoroughness in the definition of sexual crimes, provisions for the speedy investigation and trial of offenders, and child-friendly reporting. For instance, the definition of rape was changed from the traditional non-consensual intercourse to the insertion of any foreign object in any of the private parts of the children. Similarly, any unwanted touching of the children was declared a sexual assault under the Act (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2012).

In 2018, after a number of high-profile rape cases in India, a debate about introducing tougher legislation for the child rapists was reignited. The POCSO Act was criticized for not being harsh enough to deter the sexual crimes against children. Thus, the across-the-board call for stern action against sexual criminals led to the amendment in the Act in July 2019 which introduced capital punishment for the rapists of minors under 12-years old (Himatsingka, 2019). While the human

rights organizations expressed their displeasure with the inclusion of death penalty in the Act ("POCSO Amendment Bill", 2019), the amendment simmered down the anger of the citizenry against the growing situation of child rapes in India.

2.3. Previous studies on child Rape and media

2.3.1. Child rape in other countries context

Examination of the literature reveals that child rape has been studied within the context of child sexual abuse. There is a growing consensus among the academics and practitioners that media coverage of child sexual abuse has contributed to social recognition of the issue, enactment of child protection legislations, and establishment of institutions that cater to the victims of CSA (Jalongo, 2006; Jahan, 2016; Johnson, 1995; Watkins, 1990). Pfohl (1977, p. 320) states that "the proliferation of the idea of [child sexual] abuse by the media cannot be underestimated". Signifying the importance of media in making public aware of child sexual abuse as a social problem, Cohen (1967, p. 13) expressed that the media tells the public "not what to think, but what to think about".

The first known case of the (print) media's role in making public aware of the CSA took place in 1874 in New York when the *New York Times* covered the horrific story of a ten-year old girl physically and sexually abused by her foster parents and subsequent court trial of the accused (Jalongo, 2006; Watkins, 1990). The coverage of the whole story led to the creation of the first ever child protective agency in the United States, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (Jalongo, 2006). This affair prompted the researchers to study the significant role of media in not only shaping the public's opinion around child sexual abuse but also influencing the government to take steps to address the issue.

Analysing how news media coverage of child sexual abuse affects individual behaviour, Jones et al. (2006) and Whitehead et al (2004) find that reporting on CSA inculcates among public a sense of responsibility to protect children from sexual crimes. Similarly, a study conducted by Besharov and Laumann (1994) concludes that personalized stories about CSA make individuals empathize with the victims who then feel emotionally compelled to lookout for a potential child abuse. However, according to Aldridge (1994) and Galilee (2005), not all cases of child sexual abuse make it to receive media attention as media is selective in reporting only those cases that are rare, unusual or unpleasant, such as cases involving child rape. The public's receptiveness for sensational stories greatly explain the media's selective reporting on child sexual abuse (Chan, Chun, and Chung, 2008). Where sensationalism helps create public awareness about the issue (Goddard and Saunders, 2000), it has downside to it as well. For example, Aldridge (1994) as well as Jahan (2016) opine that greater media coverage to infrequent child sexual crimes develop a sense of fear and panic among the public which can have immense psychological effects on them.

Besides effecting public's opinion regarding CSA, media's role in influencing the behaviour and attitudes of policy makers and public departments is well-researched in literature. In the United States, media news stories are one of the primary sources of "sensing" public opinion for policy makers (Cohen, 1983). Similarly, Rogers and Dearing (1988, p. 579) expressed the same opinion about the political leaders in the US as they "consider the media agenda to be the public agenda".

The difference in holding the relevant authorities accountable for failure to protect children in the aftermath of child sexual abuse is visible between the US and Canada media. Jahan (2016) shows that law enforcement agencies and child protective services in the US are incessantly blamed when a sexual crime involving children occur. On the other hand, drawing on the content analysis of five major French-speaking newspapers in Canada, Saint-Jacques et al. (2010) reveal that the media

generally remains neutral in assessing the performance of relevant authorities in an event of sexual crime against children. While the scrutiny of government agencies and departments allows the media to play the role of watchdog, it may also diminish the public's trust and confidence in the government's ability to tackle the issue (Turcotte et al., 2012).

2.3.2. Child rape in the context of India

An increasing body of literature is emerging in India to better understand the issue of child abuse in the country. Generally, these studies have examined the determinants and consequences of sexual crimes against children in India. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, the literature on the Indian media's role in influencing public's and/or policy makers' attitudes and opinions regarding child rape is largely missing. Thus, this thesis would be the first of its kind to study the media's, or more specifically the print media's, role in highlighting child rape as a social problem, creating public awareness, and influencing public's and policy makers 'opinion about the issue.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a theoretical framework to address the two-pronged question of this thesis, that is how media, specifically the print media, influence policy making and shape public opinion. First, it explores the theories to understand how media interact with government to influence public policy. Then, the chapter provides the framework through which the media shapes and portrays child abuse and rape and helps in shaping public's opinion around it.

3.1. How media influences policy process

The media's role in the political process has long been debated among the media and public policy scholars. This subsection will examine the relevant theories that establish a relationship between the role of media and political process of policy making.

3.1.1. Political agenda-setting theory model

Agenda-setting theory looks at the impact of the media on the political process and suggests that the coverage the media provides to a certain issue finds its place on the political agenda of a government (Pavelka, 2014). Walgrave and Aelst (2016) systematically reviewed all the studies that have been conducted between 2005 and 2015 on the media's influence on the political agenda setting. They found that of the 32 studies that were carried out in different political contexts, eight concluded that media had a strong impact on the political agenda, eleven had a moderate impact while in only two studies the influence of media on political agenda setting was weak. Thus, according to the agenda-setting theory, as suggested by literature reviewed by Walgrave and Aelst, media pushes the political actors to give priority to the issues that the media deems important for the society in large.

3.1.2. The theory of framing

The theory of framing finds its roots in the studies of cognitive psychology. Entman (1993) defines it as the act of "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation". Like the political agenda-setting theory, framing stresses on a particular aspect of an issue; however, the aspect is presented from a particular angle so as to limit the readers' attention to that specific aspect of the issue. Thus, according to the theory, media can affect how the policy makers view certain issues by making certain features of the issue more salient.

3.2. How media influences public opinion

The impact of media coverage on sexual crimes, including child rape, on public's worldview, knowledge base, belief system, behavior and attitudes regarding these phenomena is well documented in the literature (for example, see Bryant and Zillman, 1994; Everland, 2002; Thakur and Durrant, 2006). Moreover, social and cultural norms influence society's perception of an issue and its response to it. For example, social and cultural norms that encourage child sexual abuse create social conditions that are conducive to the sexual crimes against children (Krug et al, 2002). Thus, media can play a major role in influencing public opinion regarding sexual crimes against children by altering the beliefs and attitudes of the public, and thus the prevailing social and cultural norms in the society (Doll et al, 2007; Linkenbach, 2002). By reporting extensively on the rape incidents, developing understanding on their underlying causes, presenting consequences to the potential perpetrators, and publicizing available resources for the victims, media can foster public attitudes of non-tolerance towards the issue. Figure 3 shows the framework that explains

how media shapes social norms regarding child sexual abuse which in turn influences public opinion.

Figure 3: Impact of media on the shaping of social norms regarding child sexual abuse
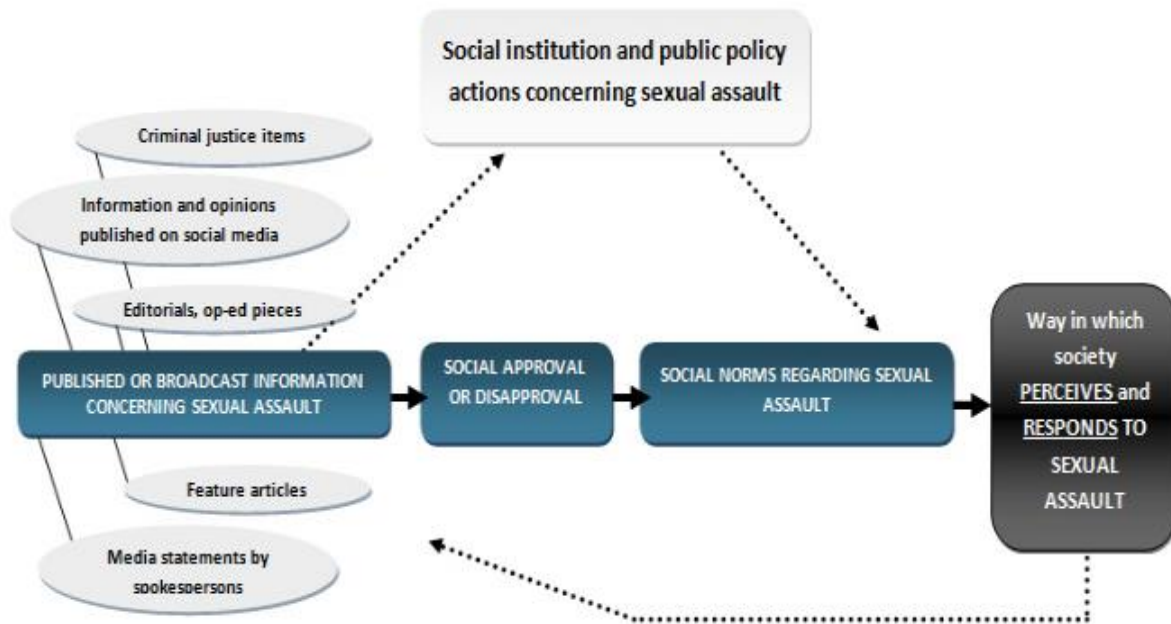
Source: Renault et al., 2007

Chapter 4

Research Design: Methodology, Sample Size and Research Questions

This chapter explains the methodological approach undertaken in this study. Specifically, it examines the methodologies and the research questions. Content analysis provides the underlying methodology for this study. To systematically investigate the published news contents of the *Times of India,* and the *Hindu,* I used both qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the newspaper articles. Since this study is built on the theories and works drawn from multiple disciplines, including media and communication studies, political science, and sociology, content analysis has been chosen as a preferred technique or tool for its expansive and inclusive approach.

4.1. The newspapers to investigate

Two newspapers*,* the *Time of India* and the *Hindu,* were selected for this study. Multiple reasons contributed to the author's decision of choosing these two English-language Delhi-based newspapers. The newspaper articles for analysis were collected from the online archives of these two newspapers' websites. Although the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* have different regional editions, this thesis uses only the Delhi edition, which is circulated in the capital territory of India. Moreover, this study limits its analysis to only the print versions of the chosen newspapers.

4.1.1. Why English-language newspapers were chosen?

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, deemed the English language important for the country to excel in the fields of science and technology and declared it the official language of the country (Agarwala, 1977). He thought that without the English language "there is the danger

of cutting off from the world of thought in all its aspects and becoming complacent in our own little world of India" (Nehru, 1958). Consequently, the language was tied to the apparatus of power and its mastery became crucial for the upward social mobility of the masses. The middle-class or in the words of Nehru, the "English-knowing caste", has since then occupied important positions in the social, economic and political pyramid of the country who are able to influence, directly or indirectly, the decision-making processes in the country.

Thus, the rising literacy rate coupled with the steadily growing middle class in India has given a boost to the English-language journalism in the country. According to the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), India had 1406 English newspapers in 2011 with a total circulation of more than 5 million copies (Subramanian, 2014). These factors contributed to the author's choice of considering English newspapers as the unit of analysis in this thesis.

4.1.2. Why the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* were chosen?

The *Times of India* and the *Hindu* are the two most widely circulated national English dailies in India (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2019); the *Times of India* has 2.8 million while the *Hindu* has 1.4 million subscribers (ibid). Moreover, both the selected newspapers have similar political leanings; they are considered to have either centrist or centre-left political views (Mishra, 2015) and, therefore, they have been the critics of the current Modi-led right-wing government.

4.2.3. Why the Delhi edition was chosen?

The thesis chose the Delhi-based dailies to provide an objective analysis of the newspapers and avoid the potential biases in the reporting and coverage of the Kathua rape case that might appear in the newspapers published in other states, especially Kashmir. As the subsequent chapters would show, the rape incident was communalized and politicized at the cost of transparent and

expeditious justice for the victim. The selection of the Delhi edition of the newspapers ensured that the analysis of the newspapers remained fair, impartial, and non-partisan.

Secondly, newspapers operating in a capital city are highly influential in lobbying the government for a certain cause by virtue of their proximity to the political power corridors of the country. Thus, the author anticipated that the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* would have the capacity to draw attention of the policy makers towards the Kathua incident and influence the national government for taking administrative and legislative steps to curb the growing instances of rape involving female children.

4.2. Methodology and the content analysis strategies

As mentioned above, content analysis was adopted as a primary methodology in this study. First, this section reviews both the qualitative and quantitative content analysis methodology. Second, the strategies employed to analyse the content of the newspapers are explained. Finally, it documents the coding strategies used in this research for the content analysis.

4.2.1. Content analysis

Content analysis is a research methodology that utilizes a set of systematic procedures to study the content of texts, make valid inferences from it, and let us examine messages, both implicit and explicit, occurring in the media (Weber, 1990). The two arms of the content analysis, qualitative and quantitative, were employed for this research.

Quantitative content analysis is clearly a potent analytical tool for understanding and bringing out the traits of news content. Equipped with the strength of numeric, it reliably and objectively records frequencies of particular key terms and reveals trends in written texts. However, quantitative content analysis fails to capture the tone and intensity of the texts and visual graphics, such as

images and cartoons, as they cannot be counted. Thus, the role of qualitative content analysis becomes pertinent here.

Qualitative content analysis allows a researcher to comprehensively explore the nuances of a particular (news) article. It unfolds the underlying theme or defines the purpose of the text that the author wants to convey to their audience (Grabber, 2008) and, therefore, inspects the implicit intentions of the writer's texts. Thus, qualitative and quantitative analyses mutually complement each other.

Moreover, qualitative content analysis helps in identifying the "media frames". Media frames are the dominant narrative structures the media provides (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). Often a news article may appear neutral or objective, however, this is rarely the case. By uncovering the stories covered and the sources and the language or adjectives used in news articles to describe the events and actors, media frames can be deconstructed to understand the motives of the news outlets.

4.2.2 Content analysis and coding strategies

A code system was developed by the author to systematically study and analyse the articles in the two newspapers. The following are the coding strategies used in this research:

4.2.2.1. Key concepts

Several key concepts were qualitatively extracted from a news article and then were tested quantitatively for frequencies. Depending on the length and genre of each article, number of key concepts were chosen. However, on average an article had between two to four concepts. The concepts were documented as a phrase which reflected the main idea of the articles, such as 1) the political parties are politicizing the rape case, 2) the incident has resulted in a communal tension

between Muslims and Hindus. Furthermore, the key concepts were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. (See Appendix I)

4.2.2.2. Sources and quotations

Journalists rely on their sources to produce news articles. Sources play a crucial role in determining the narrative of the news story. They determine the overarching theme of the news stories that journalists cover. Moreover, media houses tend to prefer some sources over others. Each news outlets try to propagate a certain political view, and thus selecting a specific source may favour certain interests. The author categorized and coded the sources and quotations in each news article by role, for example, Indian government officials, police officials, citizens, civil society, international organizations etc (see Appendix II).

4.2.2.3. Anti-rape and pro-accused protests

While the gang rape and murder of the eight-year-old sparked widespread protests and condemnation across the country, there were counter protests by the Hindu right-wing groups who called for the release of the accused ("India outrage" 2018). The author coded each news article for the anti-rape and pro-accused protests in the aftermath of the incident, that is whether they appeared in the news articles, and how they were described.

Moreover, providing coverage to protests is an effective way of putting pressure on the governments to either take action for or stop it from taking action against an issue. Thus, the author reviewed the news articles to determine whether the government's delay in providing justice to the victim or overhauling the criminal justice system of the country has been criticized.

4.2.2.4. Display of the news article

The page number where a new article is displayed in a newspaper is of utmost importance as it signifies the priority that the newspaper editors attach to a certain story. The author coded the page number in which a news article about the rape incident was published in the selected newspapers.

4.2.2.5. Portrayal of Actors and their Actions

The author probed how certain actors and their actions related to the Kathua rape case were portrayed in the two selected newspapers by investigating whether an article was negative, positive or neutral towards the actors and their actions (see Appendix II). The actors considered were:

1)   The government, including the central government and the state

government of Jammu and Kashmir

2)   The state; and

3)   The judiciary

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis was undertaken in order to catch a tone of the article as well as gauge the frequency of a tone. For instance, if an article's general tone about the Indian government's action in the aftermath of the rape case was critical, supportive or neutral, the article was recorded as negative (N), supportive (S) or middle-ground (Z), respectively.

4.2.2.6. Media frame

After drawing out the key concepts, actors and sources, and other elements in the two newspapers, the media frame about the female child rape in India, in general, and Kathua rape case, in particular, were ascertained. As mentioned above, since every news media has a particular socio-political leaning, news reports and articles tend to have media frame. Though difficult to observe,

media frames are one of the most crucial elements of the newspaper article as they reflect a news media organization's political views.

4.3. Sample size

The content analysis covers the period between 10 January 2018, the day the rape incident occurred, till the 31st of December 2018. During this one-year period, the two newspapers produced numerous stories about the Kathua rape incident. There were a total of 117 the *Times of India* and 133 the *Hindu* articles that contained the phrase "Kathua rape" in this period. The author selected all these news articles that appeared in the two newspapers. Figure 4 shows the process the author took to systematically search and select the sample size. From this we can see that *The Hindu* was much more extensive in its coverage of the incident than *The Times of India*.

Figure 4: The process taken by the author to systematically search and select the sample size

23
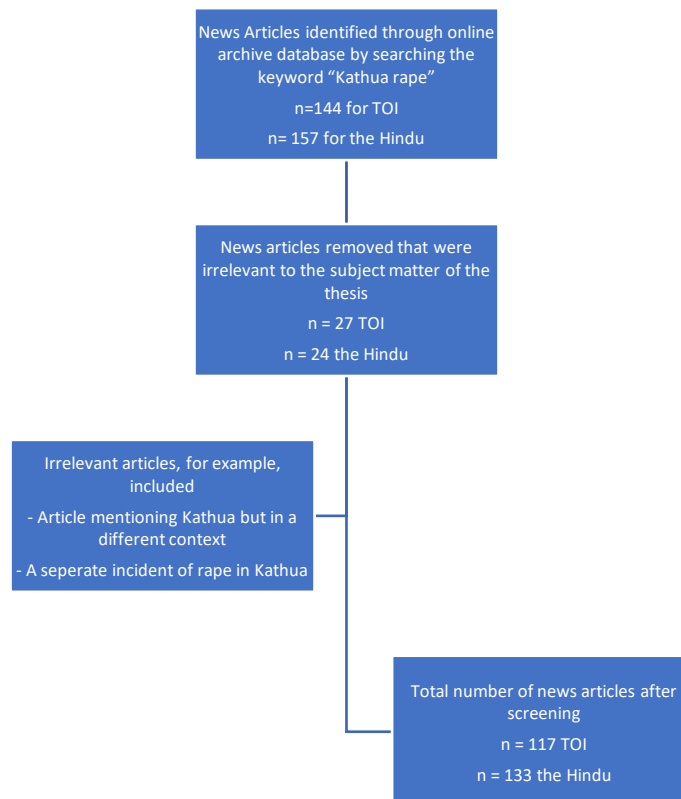
4.4. Research questions

The questions that this thesis attempts to investigate is to determine the role the Indian print media plays in monitoring of government's policies and performance in eliminating the female child rape in the country. More specifically, there are two main research questions addressed in this thesis.

1. How the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* presented the Kathua rape incident?

2. What was the role of print media in influencing the political process and shaping the public opinion regarding child rape in India?

4.5. Research limitations

This research may not be perfectly free from bias. The author's own political perspectives and inclinations may have come in the way when conducting the research. The author is cognizant of this limitation and attempted to carry out the research in an impartial, unbiased and non-partisan manner as much as possible. Moreover, as the main focus of this study is understanding the role of print media in shaping public opinion and influencing public policy regarding child rape and not a political critique, thus, this bias, even if they existed, are insignificant.

Secondly, this thesis limits its analysis to the print media and excludes other forms of media from the study. Especially electronic and social media which have penetrated deeply in the Indian society in the last few years. Although these forms of media are important to discuss, due to the limitation of time, it was necessary to set boundaries on the scope of the research. However, this study would encourage other scholars to explore the role of other forms of media in shaping public opinion and influencing public policy regarding child rape in India.

Chapter 5

Results of the Content Analysis

This chapter presents the general findings of the content analysis of the Kathua rape incident as covered by the *Times of India* and *the Hindu*. Specifically, it reviews the results of four different categories by juxtaposing the news articles from the two newspapers in order to bring out the main features in their reporting. The five categories are: the main topic or storyline of the newspapers, key concepts, actors and their portrayals and coverage of protests. However, before putting down the findings of these categories, the section will examine the importance individual rape case received in each newspaper by looking at the total number of articles published about the incident, assessing the editorials, the usage of images, and the page number the articles were published. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized in this chapter to extract the findings, that is, the author first thoroughly scrutinized and categorized the news articles qualitatively which then were tested quantitatively for frequencies.

5.1. Total number of news articles

In total, as mentioned above, the *Times of India* (TOI) and the *Hindu* published 117 and 133 news articles, respectively, on the Kathua rape case during the next one-year period. Although the incident had occurred on 10 January 2018, both the newspapers remained apathetic towards the case. While it took two weeks for the *Hindu* to pick up the story, the *TOI's* response was even more sluggish as it took the newspaper more than a month to publish a short news article on the incident. Figure 5 shows the quarterly breakdown of the number of news articles published in the two newspapers that were related to the Kathua rape case. During the first three months of the incident, (from January 10, 2018 to April 09, 2018), the *TOI* published only three articles on the

case while *the Hindu* provided relatively higher coverage to the incident and published thirteen news articles. However, the case came into the media limelight after the Jammu and Kashmir Crime Branch registered a case against the accused on 9th of April 2018. Thus, during the next quarter, there were 94 news articles in the *TOI* that reported on different aspects of the incident while for the *Hindu* the figure was 109. In the third and fourth quarters, the newspapers started to lose interest in the news story as evident by the huge drop in the number of published articles that were related to the rape case (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of news articles related to Kathua rape case published in TOI and the Hindu
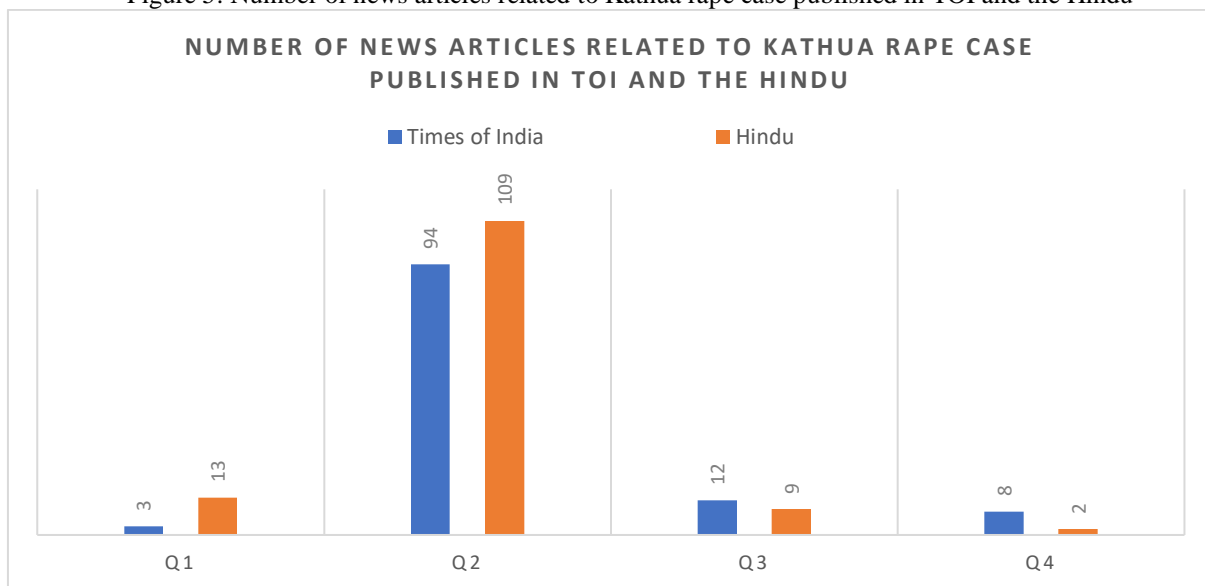
5.2. Editorials

Editorials are seen as an ideal place to find out the similarities and differences in any two newspapers because newspapers use the editorial space to express their opinion about a certain issue rather than merely reporting it. Both the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* published almost the same number of editorials about the Kathua rape case (see Figure 6), most of which were in the month of April 2018 when the case received its highest attention. According to the content analysis of the editorials, the *TOI* in its strong-worded pieces of writing named and shamed the lawyers of

the Jammu High Court Bar Association for defending the accused and creating impediments in the speedy justice for the rape victim. Moreover, the editorials vehemently accused the Modi-led BJP for politicizing an otherwise straight-forward case of rape and murder and called it out for patronizing the perpetrators which had led to the communalization of the Indian society, especially the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The progressively increasing anti-Muslim sentiments in the country, the *TOI's* editorials opine, are the result of the rising Hindu nationalism in the country which got emboldened after the election of Narendra Modi, a staunch supporter of the ideology, in 2014. Lastly, the editorials point out towards the ever-deteriorating status of women in India and accused the Indian state, in general, and the incumbent government, the BJP, for failing to ensure safety for women in the country.

Almost all the issues raised in the editorials of the *TOI* were reflected in that of the *Hindu* as well. That is the condemnation of BJP for protecting the accused and reprimanding Prime Minister Narendra Modi for keeping mum on the case in the beginning; the dangers of rising Hindu nationalism in the country which is sowing a division in India over the communal and religious lines; and the rising sexual violence against women and children in the country. Moreover, while both the newspapers backed for amendment in the POCSO Act to introduce harsher laws for rapists, the civil society's demand for death penalty was rejected.

Figure 6: Number of editorials about the Kathua rape case published in TOI and the Hindu
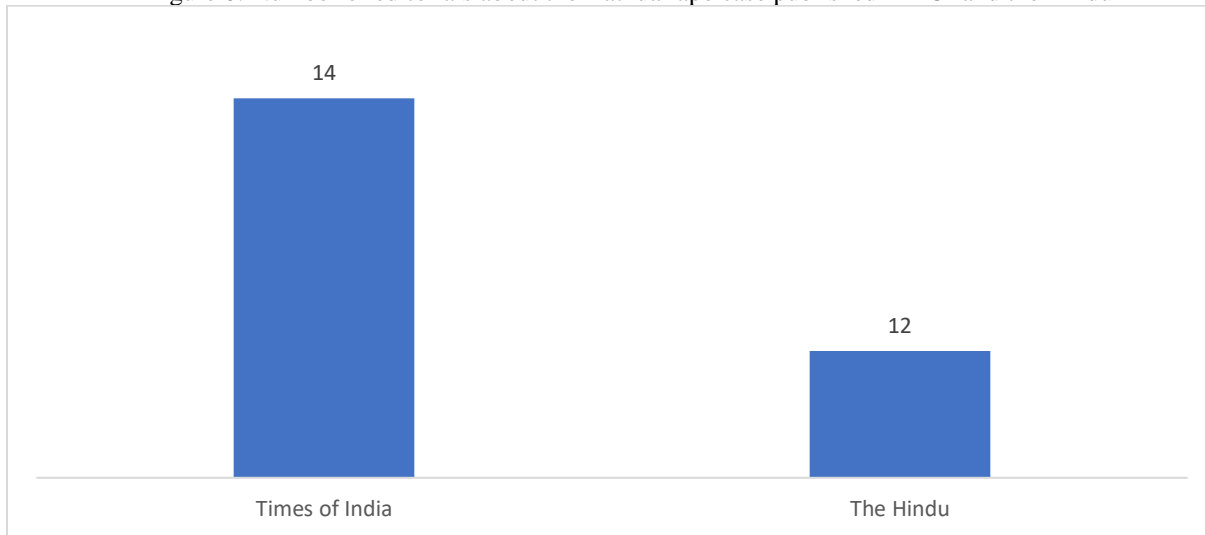
5.3. Images

Images are a powerful tool to inspire and grab attention, and sometimes are worth "a thousand words". A news article accompanied by an image is much more likely to generate an emotional response from the readers. The *Times of India* used images in about 36 percent of all their news articles that were related to the Kathua rape case. Of these, one-third of the images showed the anti-government or pro-victim protests and demonstrations and about one-fifth displayed images of a political leader (see Figure 7). Similarly, 41% of all the news articles published in the *Hindu* employed images to get their message across their readers. Like *TOI*, the *Hindu* also produced images of the protests and political leaders (see Figure 7). Moreover, the *TOI* initially published the images of the victim in a bid to arouse strong feelings among their readers. However, after the verdict of the Supreme Court against revealing the identity of the rape victims, the newspapers stopped publishing the images.

Figure 7: Number of news articles in *TOI* and the *Hindu* that appeared with images

Times of India	The Hindu
5%	6%
42% 20%	24% 42%
33%	28%
■ Victim ■ Political Leader ■ Protest ■ Others	■ Accused ■ Political Leader ■ Protest ■ Others
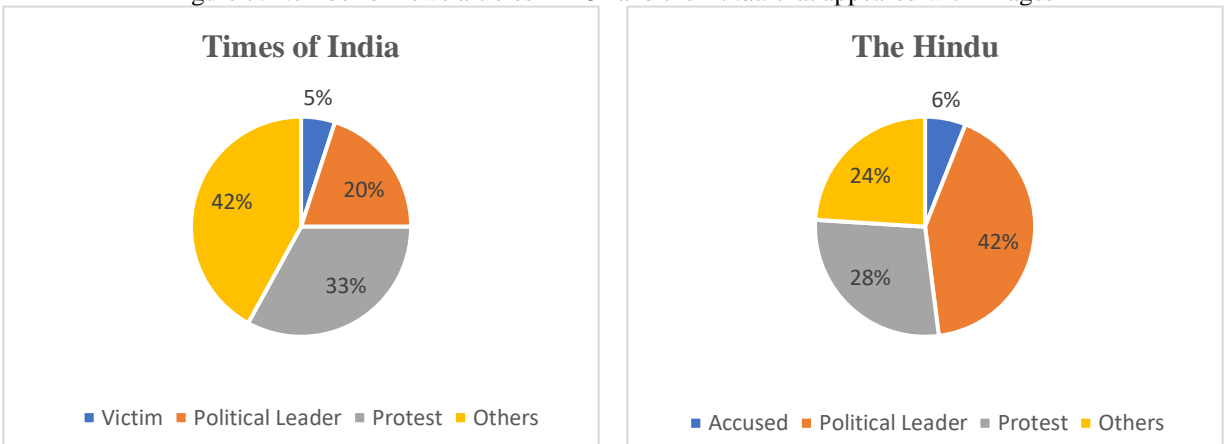
5.4. Page numbers

Stories published on the front page of the newspapers are a window into the minds of the editors. They signify the importance the editor of the newspaper attaches to those stories. The Kathua rape case made it to the front pages of the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* sixteen and twenty-eight times, respectively. Almost all of them were in the month of April 2018.

5.5. Key concepts

The limited coverage by the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* provided to the Kathua rape case during the first three months of the incident might limit the scope for extracting meaningful key concepts in this time period; nevertheless, some trends could be obtained. While the only three news articles published in the *TOI* merely reported the occurrence of the incident and the subsequent investigation carried out by the J&K Police, the key concepts in the *Hindu* were diverse (see Figure 8 and 9). The newspaper's main focus was on the communal tension between the Muslims and Hindus in the state of J&K that had been created after the incident. Other key concepts included the investigation by the J&K Crime Branch into the case and the emergence of a rift between the two ruling parties in the state, the BJP and *Peoples Democratic Party* (PDP), that were threatening the already-fragile political alliance between the two.

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The differences of the two newspapers in the key concepts is more clearly evidenced in the second quarter. The *Times of India* had shifted its focus towards calling out the prevailing sexism in the Indian society and showed concern for the deteriorating security of women and girls in India (see Figure 8). Moreover, the trial of the accused perpetrators had also begun in the second quarter and the *TOI* extensively covered the court proceedings. The other repeated key concepts of the *Times of India* included accusing the Hindu lawyers of the Kathua's High Court Bar Association for protesting in favor of the accused and blaming the *Bhartya Janata Party*, the ruling government, for politicizing the incident.

The *Hindu* exhibited diversity in key concepts even during the second quarter. One of the dominant key concepts overlapped with that of the *Times of India*, that is blaming the BJP for politicizing the rape case. The focus on communal tension was carried over from the previous period and continued to be a frequent key concept. The other two key concepts included appreciating the government for taking measures to provide justice to the victim and the Supreme Court for ensuring the fair and speedy trial of the accused.

Six months after the Kathua rape incident, both the *Times of India* and the Hindu featured a great number of different key concepts. The top two key concepts during the third quarter in the *TOI* were presenting a case to amend the POCSO Act and reporting on the court proceedings of the case. However, no such trend was visible in key concepts during the fourth quarter. On the other hand, the two repeating key concepts in the *Hindu* during the third quarter were reporting on the trial of the accused and expressing that the rape of the minor girl was intended to oust the Muslim Bakerwal community from the Kathua district. As the *Hindu* published only two news articles related to the rape incident in the fourth quarter, the trend is not visible.

Figure 8: Percentage of Key Concepts that appeared in the *TOI*

Quarter 2 (11 Apr - 10 July)

- Seeking physical safety for Indian women
- Covering trial of the accused
- Blaming BJP for politicizing the case
- Accusing lawyers for defending the accused
- Others

16%
10%
10%
8%
56%

Quarter 3 (11 July - 10 Oct)

- Covering trial of the accused
- Suggesting amendment to the POCSO Act
- Others

23%
31%
46%
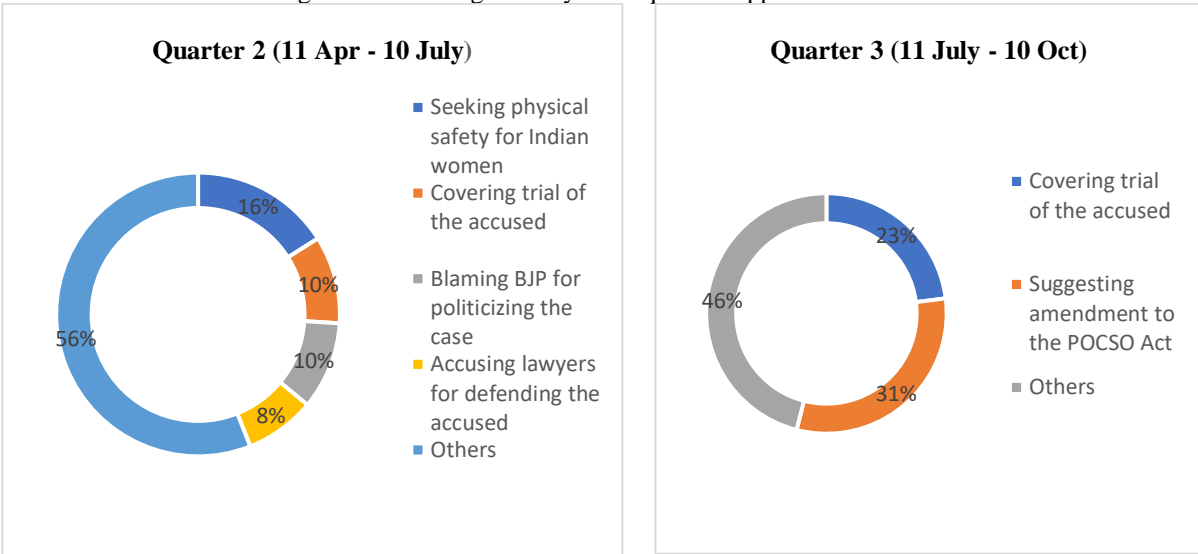
Figure 9: Percentage of Key Concepts that appeared in the *Hindu*

Quarter 1 (11 Jan - 10 Apr)

- The case has resulted in communal tension
- Reporting on the J&K Police investigation
- Emergence of rift between BJP & PDP
- Others

31%
15%
15%
39%

Quarter 2 (11 Apr - 10 July)

- Blaming BJP for politicizing the case
- The case has resulted in communal tension
- Acknowleding the government's efforts
- Appreciating the SC for ensuring fair trial

10%
8%
6%
6%
70%

Quarter 3 (11 July - 10 Oct)

- 33% Covering trial of the accused
- 33% Accused conspired against the Bakerwals
- 34% Others

5.6. Coverage of protests

Another pivotal difference between the *Times of India* and the *Hindu* was how much the anti-government and pro-victim protests were covered in their papers. The *TOI* was more frequent than the Hindu in referring to protests that sought justice for the victim and called on the government for its inaction and patronizing the accused perpetrators. The coverage of the protests peaked in the month of April for both the newspapers, however, the remaining months saw either none or negligible reporting of the protests (see Figure 10). It would be hard to determine whether the drop in the numbers was the result of the protests dying down or the newspapers losing interest in the topic. Moreover, it should be noted here that neither of the newspapers endorsed the pro-accused protests held by the Hindu lawyers of the Jammu Bar Association but, as described in the previous section, mentioned the lawyers in a bad light while calling the demonstrations an obstacle in providing swift justice to the victim.

Figure 10: Number of times anti-rape protests were reported in *TOI* and the *Hindu*
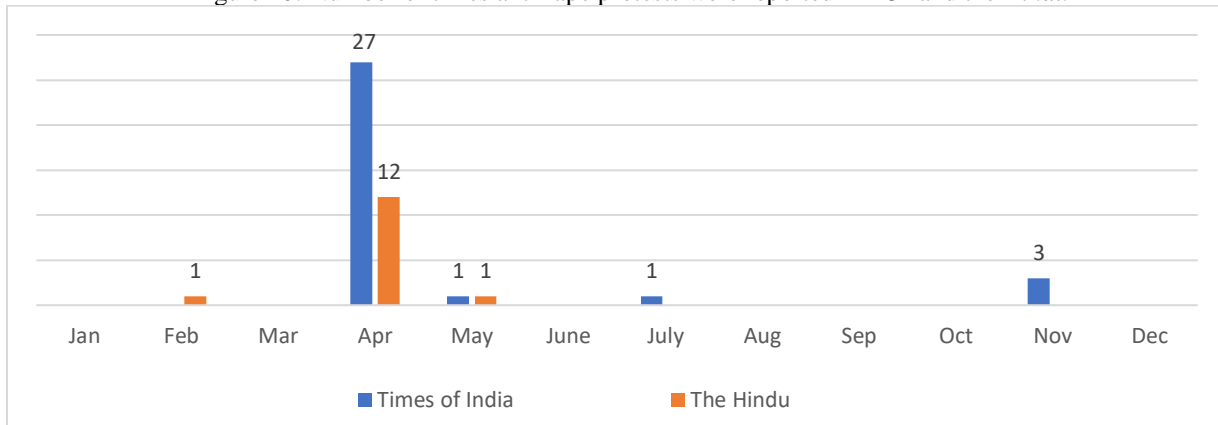
5.7. Portrayal of actors and their actions

This subsection investigates how certain actors were portrayed in the *Times of India* and the *Hindu's* coverage of the Kathua rape case. Although many actors are involved in a criminal justice system, from the time a crime is committed to the conviction of perpetrators, this thesis considered those actors who frequently appeared in the two newspapers and who could have played a crucial role in the whole affair of the Kathua rape incident. The major actors during the period of analysis were a) the government, b) the state, and c) the judiciary. The government included the federal government, that is the BJP, and the state government of Jammu and Kashmir. By virtue of the influence that the office of the Prime Minister has in India over the national affair, Narendra Modi was also included as part of the analysis. Secondly, as the police (both J&K Police and the J&K Crime Branch) was the major state protagonist in the Kathua incident, it was taken up for the analysis. Lastly, the Supreme Court was considered the judiciary.

Figure 11 and 12 shows how the two newspapers portrayed the actors and their actions in the Kathua rape case. Both the *TOI* and the *Hindu* were mostly critic of the BJP and its handling of the case; however, the *TOI* was more negative towards the ruling party than the *Hindu*. A similar trend is observed for the portrayal of Narendra Modi as well; while the *Hindu* remained neutral

half of the times in reporting on the Prime Minister and his actions, the TOI mostly portrayed him negative. The involvement of the BJP state ministers in the pro-accused protests and the late response of the party leaders, including Narendra Modi, in condemning the rape might explain the negative portrayal of the two actors. On the contrary, the state government of Jammu and Kashmir, which was made up of the alliance between BJP and PDP, was depicted more positively in the news articles of the *TOI* than the Hindu, however, the latter, for the most part, remained neutral about it.

Second, both the newspapers highly demonized the Jammu and Kashmir Police and portrayed them negatively. Although the investigation of the rape was transferred rather quickly from the Police to the Crime Branch after it emerged that the police attempted to cover up the case by tampering with the evidence, the Jammu and Kashmir police remained in the negative light throughout the period of analysis. However, the Crime Branch was appreciated for its positive role in conducting a fair and swift investigation.

Third, the *Times of India* portrayed the Supreme Court of India positively as, according to the newspaper's articles, its role was instrumental in upholding the rule of law and ensuring unbiased and non-partisan trial of the accused. Moreover, the lawyer of the victim was shown as a champion of the justice for ignoring the threats from the powerful political elites and taking the case pro bono. On the other hand, the *Hindu* was mostly neutral or positive about the Supreme Court and its actions.

Figure 11: Portrayal of Actors and their Actions in TOI

BJP
- Positive — 14%
- Negative — 76%
- Neutral — 10%

PM Modi
- Positive — 30%
- Negative — 70%
- Neutral

J & K Government
- Positive — 55%
- Negative — 12%
- Neutral — 33%

J & K Crime Branch
- Positive — 12%
- Negative
- Neutral — 88%

Supreme Court of India
- Positive — 67%
- Negative
- Neutral — 33%

Figure 12: Portrayal of Actors and their Actions in the Hindu

BJP

- Positive: 3%
- Negative: 52%
- Neutral: 45%

PM Modi

- Positive
- Negative: 47%
- Neutral: 53%

J & K Government

- Positive: 28%
- Negative: 15%
- Neutral: 57%

J & K Crime Branch

- Positive: 31%
- Negative: 11%
- Neutral: 58%

Supreme Court of India

- Positive: 22%
- Negative: 5%
- Neutral: 73%

Chapter 6

Discussion of the Findings

This chapter will address the second research question of this thesis, that is, whether the print media coverage of the gang rape and murder of eight-year old girl in the Kathua district of India has had any significant impact on altering public opinion and influencing public policy regarding child rape in the country. The review of the relevant literature informed us that the media, in general, plays a major role in sensitizing, conjuring up public opinion on a certain issue, influencing policies and policy makers, and holding government departments and agencies accountable. However, the content analysis of the two leading English newspapers produced mixed results.

6.1. Newspapers were instrumental in stirring social movement

There have been many instances in the history of India when media's response to events involving violence against women, especially rape, translated into social movement for gender equality as well as demand for tougher legislation for rapists. A recent such episode took place after the brutal gang rape and murder of Nirbhaya, a 23-year-old medical student in New Delhi, on 16 December 2012 (Mandhana and Trivedi, 2012), which sent shock waves across India and set about the country on soul searching journey regarding the epidemic of sexual violence against women in India. Massive demonstrations that spilled on streets in virtually every major city of India called on the government to overhaul the criminal justice system in the country for the physical protection of women. The Indian media emerged as a powerful actor for not only jolting people out of their comfort to seek justice for the victim but engraved, through its incessant

reporting, the horrifying details of the incident in the minds of people across the country, thus, sparking a renewed feminist movement in the process.

A similar trend can be found in the aftermath of the Kathua rape case as well. Looking at the findings of the content analysis of the two newspapers, it becomes evident that media played a crucial role in arousing public opinion on the issue of child rape, in general, and the rape incident, in particular. The newspapers' reporting of the rape case coincides with the public's protest. In the beginning when the newspapers remained apathetic towards the rape case and provided inadequate coverage to it (refer to Figure 5), the public at large were kept obscured of the facts of the case and the depth of the issue in the country. The dormant attitude of the masses changed in the April of 2018 once the newspapers started publishing the horrific details of the rape and created public awareness regarding the gravity of the sexual crimes against children. The newspapers coverage of the case and the resultant public protests were mutually reinforcing; the more the case was reported the more it caused protests and vice versa. However, this loop was broken when the newspapers shifted its emphasis on the protests and began to focus on the trials of the accused. The print media failed to keep the social movement's momentum which it could have capitalized on for greater concessions from the government.

The above discussion gives support to the existing literature about the power of media to shape public opinion. It showed that the print media is indeed a significant actor and a force to be reckoned with in India in creating public awareness and sensitizing the public towards the issue of child rape in India. The newspapers coverage of the Kathua rape incident revealed that the media is very much capable of creating social movement for the physical protection of children in the country.

6.2. Media has the power to frame 'the good, the bad and the ugly'

The print media coverage of the Kathua rape case showed that the media has the power to build a narrative of their own around one issue by highlighting certain aspects and then propagate their version of the story. As findings of the content analysis of the *TOI* and *the Hindu* suggests, media framed the rape case in the context of deteriorating security situation for women and girls and the rise of Hindu nationalism in the country. For example, the pro-accused protesters were demonized for their demonstrations against the investigation of the J & K Crime Branch, although the media could have easily portrayed them as raising a legitimate voice for their demands.

6.3. Newspapers were critical in channeling the public demands to the government but failed to push the government to address loopholes in the criminal justice system

While it is true that had the media not provided coverage to the Kathua rape case, the public would have remained unaware of the incident and the overall child rape situation in the country. Protests in the form of mass demonstrations, hunger strikes and statements from influential individuals started to erupt as soon as the media brought into limelight the gruesome details of the Kathua rape case. However, the Indian media failed to capitalize on the public protests to demand greater action from the government regarding the child rape. Although the media played a major role in pressing the government for taking legislative measures to introduce harsher punishments for the rapists of the minors, it could not push the government to take drastic steps for overhauling the criminal justice system. While the introduction of the death penalty for the perpetrators of raping minors below 12 years through amendment in the POCSO Act eased the public outrage, it did not address the loopholes in the country's criminal justice system that allows such crimes to occur.

Chapter 7

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the content analysis of the Kathua rape case related news articles published in the *Times of India* and the *Hindu*, print media in India failed to keep the momentum of the social movement against child rape in the country that it had generated through its intensive coverage of the Kathua rape case. Although it was instrumental in shaping public opinion around the issue and helped to channel the public sentiment to the government that consequently resulted in legislative changes, its lackluster and unresponsive attitude towards the growing incidents of child rape in the country and failure to push government for overhauling the country's criminal justice system requiring policy interventions. This thesis suggests the following recommendations to improve the Indian print media's role as a watchdog for child rape in the country.

7.1. The media should increase the visibility of sexual violence against children

Where media in the western world openly talks about sexual violence against children and educate the public about its causes, consequences and prevention, the Indian media has yet to shatter the taboo in discussing the sexual topics on public forums. The recent rape cases of sexual violence against children provided the media an opportunity to alter the individual and societal behaviors and attitudes towards the child sexual abuse through increased publicity; however, such reports of rape couldn't remain a part of mainstream public discourse for too long in the deeply culturally conservative society of India. Thus, to start with, the India print media should increase the visibility of violence against children in their content to challenge the issue at a cultural level. While it is important for media to acknowledge and provide coverage to the public protests demanding justice

for the victims of sexual crimes, there is also a need to challenge deep-root culture of sexual violence against children in the country by continuously keeping the issue active in the media.

7.2. The media should challenge the prevalent social and cultural norms that promote sexual violence against children

As discussed earlier, social and cultural norms play a significant role in perpetuating sexual violence against children. Hence, the print media in India should develop educational programs that challenge these prevalent social and cultural norms in the country as well as to educate the public on identifying and preventing child rape. The media may do it through social marketing campaigns, public service messages etc.

7.3. The government should regulate the content of media

There is research that suggests that the media perpetuates a culture of rape where sexual violence is normalized, overlooked and often blame the victim rather than the perpetrator of sexual crime (Burt, 1980). Moreover, sometimes the media implicitly facilitate a 'continued tolerance of aggression towards children and thus the occurrence of sexual violence against them (Iconis, 2011). Thus, the government should regulate the media content in order to change attitudes and cultural norms with the ultimate goal to prevent and reduce sexual violence against children, including child rape.

7.4. There needs to be a shift from 'episodic' media framing of sexual violence to that of 'thematic'

Episodic framing means that media coverage is primarily concentrated on the details of a specific rape case or episode where the protagonists of the event (victims and/or perpetrators) are the main focus of the coverage without positioning them in the broader context (Benjamin, 2007). On the

other hand, thematic framing focuses on the broader ideas, such as rape culture, statistical trends of rape etc (ibid). While the data on the categorization into episodic and thematic framing of the Indian print media's coverage of child rape is unavailable, generalizing from the findings of this study reveal that most of the news articles on the Kathua rape case discussed the event rather than seeing it in a broader context, such as trial of the accused, investigation by the police etc (see Figure 8 and 9). Previous research suggests that the change in media framing can have an immense impact on the public opinion of a particular issue. For example, the 'innocence movement' in the US shows that the public concern about the fairness of the country's criminal justice system increased and public support for the capital punishment declined after it started lobbying for the news outlets to focus on the trend in exonerations of individuals on death row rather than on a few isolated cases (Baumgartner and McAdon, 2017). Thus, the print media in India needs to transform the way it frames child rape, that is from episodic to thematic in order to bring about a positive change in the public opinion regarding child rape.

Conclusion

The magnitude and extent of child rape reflects the alarming reality of child sexual abuse in India and show the country's deteriorating law and order situation, crumbling criminal justice system and decaying moral values. The foremost step in addressing the growing child rape cases in India is to recognize and assess the nature of the problem. Although reporting of child sexual abuse, in general, and child rape, in particular, has increased over the years, the issue continues to be shrouded in secrecy and often go unreported. This has led to the denial of the existence of the crime and contributed to collective naivety of the society about the pervasiveness of child rape in the country. Thus, it becomes pivotal for all the relevant stakeholders to bring to the fore the issue of child rape in India and ignite a discussion that could educate the public about the problem and push the government to take measures to address it.

This thesis attempted to examine the Indian print media's role in influencing the public policy and shaping the public opinion regarding the child rape in India. It investigated whether the print media, through its coverage of the child rape cases and the topics related to it, plays the role of watchdog to monitor the actions and policies of the government and pushes it to bring about legislative changes for the sexual protection of the children. Moreover, the thesis explored the role of the print media in sensitizing the public towards the issue of child rape in the country and channeling their sentiments to the corridor of powers for sociopolitical and legislative changes.

The thesis took the rape incident of an eight-year old girl in Kathua as a case study and carried out qualitative and quantitative content analysis of two leading Delhi-based English-language newspapers, the *Times of India* and the *Hindu,* to see how the incidents of child rapes are covered in the Indian print media. It found that the print media did ignite a social movement against child rape in India and passed on the sentiments of masses to the government; however, it could not

keep the momentum of the movement that it had generated in the first place and failed to push the government to address the loopholes in the criminal justice system of India that would prevent the occurrences of child rape.

A holistic analysis of the relationship between print media and child rape in the context of India has been missing from the literature. Thus, in addition to practical implications, the study would contribute to the existing literature. It would contribute to the understanding of how the media through mainstreaming the issue of child rape and challenging the prevalent sociocultural norms that promote child sexual abuse can shape public opinion and influence public policy regarding child rape.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Key Concepts
1= Arrest of the men allegedly involved in the crime by the J&K Crime Branch
2= Conspiracy by the culprits to oust the Muslim nomads from the Hiranagar region/ Conspiracy aginst Bakerwal community/ Conspiracy against supporter of Victim
3=Accusing the Hindu lawyers/HCBA for protesting and obstructing the justice and defending the accused
4=Accusing/Shaming BJP/ruling government for supporting the accused
5=Inadequate Police investigation into the crime/Police complicit in the defending the accused
6= The accused are being falsely framed by the Crime Branch/Probe by CBI is a justified demand/ demand of NARCO test
7=The incident has resulted in a communal tension i.e. between Muslims and Hindus
8=Victim's family/Bakerwal community fled as they faced threats/Family or the Bakerwal community is facing threats/ Protection of victim family
9=JBA harassing/threatning victim's lawyer/ Protection of lawyer
10= The Political parties are politicizing the incident/BJP and Congress blaming each other/ Political interference
11= Women/Children security in the country is deteriorating/The growing culture of rape in the country/There's prevailing sexism in the country
12=Suggesting amendement to the POCSO Act/ Monitor POCSO Act trial/Introducing Death Penalty for rapists of minors/Strong anti-rape laws
13=BJP is taking steps only for political reasons
14=The mainstream media has ignored the incident
15=The govt./the institutions has failed to provide justice
16=Calls for reforms (social/political/legislative/bureaucratic etc)
17=Govt is/has taken step toward providing justice to the victim/introduced legislation that would deter people from commiting crimes against women, children
18=Death penalty is not a viable solution to curb sexual crimes/It doesn't act as a deterent agaisnt crime
19=Coverage of the trial of the accused
20=Courts are conducting fair and speedy trial of the accused/ SC action for fair inquiry
21=Kathua rape has played a role in the break-up of the alliance between BJP and PDP/kathua discussed in the context of the break-up
22=J&K crime branch investigation on rape
23= Demand of fair inquiry and Justice/ Speed up the Justice process
24= Communalising crime/rape
25= Charge sheet against Accused/ charge against accused supporting lawyers
26= Juvenile accused/ Law about Juvenile accused
27= Female security in the country
28= Crime description of Acuused / Confirmation of crime by accused
29= Violation of POCSO Act / violation law by Media
30= Supreme court action on J&K bar association protest
31= Indian rape cases discuss in international fourm / Kathua discussion in international fourm
32= Criticism of Bar council of India
33= Discussion about criminal law amendment bill
34= Protest for Security

Appendix II

Actors/Sources
1. Victim's Family
2. Hirriat Conference (The Seperatistists)
3. Jammu Bar Association/High Court Bar Association
4. Jammu Kashmir Panther Party
5. Civil Society*
6. BJP
7. J&K Crime Branch
8. Chaudhary Lal Singh
9. Chander Prakash Ganga
10. SPO Deepak Khajuria
11. Sanji Ram (The Mastermind)
12. J&K Chief Minister, Omer Abdullah
13. Rohingya Refugees
14. Hindu Ekta Manch
15. J&K Police
16=8&9 combined
17=J&K Liberation Front, Yasin Malik
18= J&K Deputy Chief Minister, Nirmal Singh
19=Chief Minister, Mehbooba Mufti
20=Unidentified/ Public
21=Protesting Lawyer/ Protester in favour of acuused
22=Nirbhaya
23=Rahul Gandhi
24=AAP (Aam Aadmi Party)
25=PM, Modi
26=Maneka Gandhi, Minister for women and child development/ Ministry of women and child
27=Bollywood actors
28=Family of Sanji Ram
29=Former Police Officer
30=Congress/ Congress leaders
31=Delhi Commission for Women/DCW Chief, Swati Jaihind/ State Women commission
32=Supreme Court
33=Deepika Singh Rajawat, Victim's lawyer
34=High Court

35=United Nations/ International fourm
36=Experts
37=IMF Chief
38=Rape Survivors
39=Communist Party of India (CPM)
40=VHP Chief
41= J& K government
42=National Congress Provincial President / Devender Singh Rana
43= Right wing group
44= People democratic party (PDP)
45= RSS
46= PDP leader /J&K Education minister /Altaf Bukhari
47= Special investigation team
48= Indian Government/law and order system / Police system /Government document
49= BJP leaders / Ram Madhav
50= Accused of the crime
51= Accused family/ Supporter of Accused
52= Kathua bar association
53= Chiarman Aakanksha college / University employee/ College administration
54= Indain Media (Print / Electronic)/Social Media
55= President of India
56= Human Rights Commission
57= Chief Justice of India
60=Bar Council of India
61= Democratic nationalist party
62= Home Ministry
63= POCSO Act

*Civil society includes students, youth, citizens

Appendix III

Images	Type of Image	Editorial	Page Number	Coverage of the Protests	Portryal	Crime in detail
1=Included	Victim-1	1= Appeared in the Editorial Sect	Where was the article published?	0= No coverage	S=Supportive	0=If not discussed in detail
0=Not Included	Accused-2	0=Appeared in any other section		1=Protest against the government for its inaction/seeking justice for the v	N=Negative	1=If mentioned in detail
	Politician /Political leader/ Minister-3			2=Protest demanding tougher legislation for sexual criminals	Z=Neutral	
	Police-4			3= Protest supporting accused		
	Protest -5			4= political protest		
	Governmnet official/ victim lawyer -6					
	others-7					