



RESEARCH PAPER

The Manipulation of Pakistani News Media Using Deletion in News Reports of Rape Cases

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the manipulation strategy of Pakistani news media coverage by using 'deletion' from macrostructure for promoting victim blaming in rape cases. The study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model of Van Dijk to examine the data collected from the most prominent Pakistani newspapers such as Dunya News, ARY News, Geo News, Dawn News, and The Express Tribune. The data was collected from their official websites. The study examined the impact of news media in reporting rape cases by using Van Dijk's macrostructure model of CDA. The findings of the study revealed that the news media consciously uses 'deletion' as one of the four elements of macrostructure to conceal the truth in reporting the rape cases. On the basis of findings, the study recommends certain measures to minimize the issue of biased media coverage and victim blaming in Pakistan.

KEYWORDS Manipulation, Media, Pakistan, Propagation, Rape Cases

Introduction

Mass media holds the power in a society. They belong to the dominant group that is involved in running the system (Dijk, 1993). Their influence in shaping a society cannot be neglected. Two tools, text, and talk are enough for media to manipulate the peoples' mindset and reform them as per need and demand (Dijk, 1995b).

Specifically, Pakistan's media acts in a way as if it is their right to decide what is right or wrong for society. They have the power to reform political and social objectives which are fair enough as the media is the fourth pillar of the society after the judiciary, the legislative, executive who are performing their roles in their respective circles. They are sensitive to any oppression in their way and are not willing to take criticism. Pakistani media is known for covering the incidents that are not necessary. Their focus is to give coverage to the acts of violence by individuals rather than revealing the root causes behind it like poverty, lack of opportunities for the middle class, and exploitation of facilities by the government and powerful authorities. They do not reveal the external interventionists, especially powerful (Bilal et al., 2012).

There are some facts, one cannot ignore that media is a billion-dollar company, and its main purpose is to earn money rather than portray the facts and figures of the society and social classes (Burke et al. 2014). No doubt, media is the mirror of society, and they both influence or complement each other. In addition, it is directly in connection with politics and various social factors. Freedom of speech has been given by the government

of Pakistan to the media which comes along with certain restrictions and responsibilities. Realizing their influence on society and social classes, Pakistani media took advantage of their power rather than playing their role to shape the moral structure of the society (Huda and Kamal, 2017).

Aside from a general assessment of media, their role and attitude in sensitive crimes, particularly towards rape cases is a matter of concern. The way media presents the sexual assault reports is a matter of concern and is demurred by majority of people. It solely blames the victim as compared to the one who is criminal. In fact, the reality behind the rise in rape cases is the negligence of news media. Their manipulative behavior towards rape cases, victim blaming and rise in rape incidents are the cords that are connected with each other in the society. This situation contributes to make women more vulnerable. That is why, it is important to analyze how media shapes the perspective of a society and its justice system towards rape victims. Along with that, justice system has to be careful and concerned about the media coverage as it can impact the trials in a negative way. On a bigger picture, it can set permanent boundaries when it comes to treat the victims of rape cases that can be revolutionary in future.

Literature Review

Sexual violence, a problem that has been reported globally and has adverse mental, physical, reproductive, and sexual effects. It is an issue that is seeking attention of not only media but of scholars, influencers, social media activist and various organizations. People in the society are more concerned that how these heinous acts which are already violent actions, being presented and negotiated by News Media. Is media representing these just as an act of violence? The incidents that were being reported by the victims, how media handled those sensitive reports?

Media and Society

In sexual assault reports, rape has become a serious matter of concern. Nagira (Nagira, 1995) defined rape as “a terrifying act that is performed by a mentally sick person to keep a woman in a state of fear and intimidation”. The fear follows the women her whole life The worst part of these incidents is the reaction of the society and the role of media and justice towards the victim. According to a study, 40% of the victims were self-blamed in rape incidents and 14% were blamed in sexual assault. The most common rhetorical devices used to portray the victim as responsible is to accuse her for delayed reporting or not providing enough information to proceed the case. The next is to bring in the deinking behavior of the victim. The most convenient way for victim blaming is to question her credibility and asking questions regarding her late-night hangout with her male friends (Vaara, 2002).

In Pakistan, the graph of crime reports has gone up. The most reported cases were of rape victims that has become a major social issue. Sadly, media presented these incidents as the fault of women and portray men as naturally violent. The most rape cases in Punjab were being reported in Lahore. The most depressing aspect right now is that the children are the main target in these incidents. The reason behind worsening of the situation is the inability of the police forces as they never take necessary actions on time otherwise the victims could have been saved (Hussain, 2011). The other reason behind the rise in these cases is the victim blaming that not only encourages the culprit but gives him courage to carry on the brutal process. There is need to bring awareness regarding rape crimes to control the situation (Ali, 2015).

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse can be encapsulated or defined as a certain perspective on and comprehension of a particular aspect of the world we live in. Thus, conducting a discourse analysis is a technique to look at the way we talk about a particular phenomenon, either its social or criminal aspects. It can also be used to investigate which discourse is most prevalent in particular contexts (Cukier, 2009).

To analyze the role of media in shaping the options of a society Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is being used for self-reflection and anticipation of certain happenings (Ramanathan & Hoon, 2015). CDA is a modern methodology that enables a person to critically evaluate and assess the language to describe things in a better way. According to Van Dijk, CDA is an approach used by researchers to understand the social issues (Dijk, 2006b). The aim of CDA is to study about the power and ideologies and talk about the ways justice, education, politics, and culture roles evolve and reforms the society and social issues.

Critical Discourse Analysis highlighting media manipulation

By using the technique of CDA it can be highlighted that media manipulation can be achieved through a variety of methods using the techniques of selective reporting, spin, sensationalism, and distortion of facts. There are media organizations who, instead of performing their duty diligently, are involved in certain political agendas and are accused to have a political bias. Media has stepped into the circle of power and influence (Kress, 1990).

The aim of CDA in highlighting the media manipulation is to examine how media is using the power of language and discourse to shape the public opinions and beliefs. By analyzing the news structure, content, and news reports context, CDA will reveal the ways in which media organizations are not only biased but how they are presenting only certain perspectives. It will reveal the ways through which media is using the language in a manipulative manner (Bouvier, 2018).

CDA is the source to raise awareness about media manipulation as well as promote media literacy. This way individuals can get a better understanding and fully evaluate the information they receive from media. By doing so, CDA will promote a more informed and democratic society where individuals can make informed decisions based on a diverse range of perspectives and accurate information (Phelan, 2017).

Control opinions and sentiments

There is no doubt that news reports, advertisements, religion sermons, political propagandas and scholarly written research influence the mind and perspective of the society they are targeting to. They convey opinions and knowledge to change their attitudes (Buijs, 2005). There is possibility that few of the recipients might reject or oppose the intentions of the powerful speakers or conveyers. They might have freedom to interpret and use discourse to understand the hidden agendas. Despite this freedom, there are various other constrains, such as credibility and status of the speaker. In addition, people might lack enough sources and they may not be able to fully understand the logic and grammar behind the critical discourse. They may not be able to detect lies and manipulation or are unable to develop counter opinions (Mar et al. 2010).

In sum, powerful speakers and influential sources have ways to manipulate and control the sentiments of the people and CDA studies the ways which media and such influencers use to control the social and moral ethics of a society (Merrill, 2003).

It specifies how media and powerful sources control language whether in written and oral form and monitor the mind of recipients as per their need. It can be seen in rape cases for instance when headlines instead of focusing on the rapist portray the victim and hide the identity of the criminal (Lee, 2010).

Previous Research

Merrill (Merrill, 2003) reported a case in which a 16-year-old teenager was raped by two of his classmates after being drugged. She was not able to remind what happened to her and came to know everything through the pictures and videos that boys posted on social media. After reporting the case in police station, she has been declared as a liar as the defense lawyer questioned her credibility and claimed that as she was intoxicated, and they cannot believe her statement.

Another bold study was being done by (O'Hara, 2012). The article named as "Monsters, playboys, virgins and whores: Rape myths in the news media's coverage of sexual violence". The purpose of this study was to analyze how news media covers sensitive incidents like "rape" as there is no doubt that news media shapes the public opinion and normalizes things that must be a matter of concern. The researcher did lexical analysis of three rape cases to get an access of rape myths. One case was of a stranger rape, the other was a gang rape, and the last case was of a dating rape case. The analysis of news reports regarding these cases clearly depicted the manipulated behavior of media where the reports overlooked the impacts of the attack on the victim. It shows how the British and American media is under the influence of the rape myths and is not ready to bring awareness in the society.

To highlight media discourse in sensitive cases of "rape", another research was conducted by Pekkarinen (Pekkarinen, 2016). She presented in her article "Critical discourse analysis of the representation of victims and perpetrators of sexual violence in select US news articles" how predators and victims of rape incidents were being portrayed in news articles. The analysis was qualitative in nature where the cases were gathered from US newspapers "The New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Washington Post". These newspapers were revolving throughout the region. The articles were of 2014 to 2015. The analysis was being done by Critical Discourse Analysis, including various other previous tools that have been used for such studies. The study shows that news reports regarding sex crimes are not appropriate, and they do not show the reality behind of the sexual abuse.

In Pakistan, newspapers play an important role in reforming the ideologies of people. One side of media is holding the views and perspectives of common people while on the other side the same mass media is incorporating the desired ideology by using political language, full of ambiguity. Ashraf (Ashraf, 2019) in his paper tries to find out how political ideologies are being presented discursively by Pakistani English Newspaper. The reason behind choosing English papers was its common use and accessibility by each citizen. The headlines based solely on the theme of politics were taken from 2 famous English newspapers for analysis purpose. Four political headlines from each paper were being selected for analysis. The analysis was done using the Van Dijk model. The research highlighted the fact that in media there is a discourse that lies within it and there is discourse that lies behind it. No doubt, media uses discursive techniques and tactics, and

portrays same news differently playing with the ideologies of people. They can present the same event as per their desire and can mold people (Sajid et al. 2019).

Similarly, another study was done by Layman (layman, 2020) in her paper named "The Representation of Rape and Sexual Assault within News Media". In this paper, the researcher did content analysis by collecting data of rape case from a famous news publishing company "The New York Times". She gathered data over 3 different time durations to analyze the public and media discourse imposed by the news media on the public. The results clearly showed that victim blaming has been increased in US over a period despite the people being more aware of these sensitive issues. There were several cases that were being ignored. Media framing is a major source that brainwashed people and mold them as media wants. Media must be familiar with the fact that words have their influence and what they are presenting will ultimately shape people's beliefs and concerns.

Similarly, feminist critical discourse analysis was conducted by Tylstedt (Tylstedt, 2021) of Swedish mass media in response to violent acts. The aim of the study was to analyze whether newspapers are playing their part in defamation of rape cases in the wake of MeToo, and if yes, then how they are doing it. The purpose was to analyze their biased perspectives and twisting of facts in news media discourse on defamation in the Wake of Metoo. Four national newspapers were selected, and 98 articles were shortlisted. The reason behind collecting data from different newspapers was to gather information from different political and social perspectives as these were from different regions. The data was being collected in 4 years from 2017 to 2020. The analysis was at textual level including social level by using Fairclough model under a theoretical framework. The analysis of these reports was clearly showing that the information given by them was misleading, showing women accountable for defamation and to prove this, patriarchal structures were being produced by media. Women who testify about rape are portrayed as perpetrators of defamation rather than as victims of rape, while men are constructed as victims of defamation rather than as perpetrators of rape. In conclusion, privileges were being granted to men, and women were demoralized, and systematically got damaged by authorities.

Material and Methods

To investigate the manipulation in news media for victim blaming and hiding the facts, this study chooses the qualitative search method. Qualitative research is a way to gain insight as well as develop an understanding of the deep meaning and experiences that are relevant to a person's social life (Fossey et al., 2002). The design of qualitative research helps to reveal the psychology and behavioral expectation of the particular audience upon which the research is conducted (Vishnevsky and Beanlands, 2004). In qualitative research paradigm, various research designs are included and one of them is Critical Discourse Analysis which is the most effective approach to conduct this research. Using discourse, it is easier to understand how media manipulates things by using the text and language.

Data Collection

The data was collected from online sources. There is one case reported as "Zainab's Murder and rape case" taken from 5 different famous newspapers. Five news reports were taken on this case, one from each newspaper. The newspapers are Dunya News, ARY News, Geo News, Dawn News, and The Express Tribune. The reason behind selecting these newspapers is due to their popularity and people's belief on these for providing right and instant information to their audience.

Zainab's murder case is the right choice to highlight the elements of victim blaming as well as manipulating the actual information by news media. In Zainab murder and rape case, the discourse analysis of various statements shows the brutality of this society along with the inhuman response of police towards a heinous act. This case also reveals that the rise in these incidents is because of the poor law and security system, which media tries to cover using discourse markers in their reports (Adil, 2020).

Table 1
Newspapers selected for analysis

Selected Newspapers	No of News Reports
Dawn News	1
Ary News	1
Geo News	1
Dunya News	1
Express Tribune	1
Total number of selected Newspapers	Total number of cases
5	5

Results and Discussion

The collected data will be analyzed manually by applying the rule of Deletion from the macrostructure of Van Dijk's Model. The textual analysis will move towards the interpretation of the given data. Macrostructure is based on the thematic investigation of text. It revolves around the meaning of themes and topics. For example, what is produced and said in a text (Komaruddin, 2014). In discourse, macrostructure is visible on the surface structure of any statement or sentence (Dijk, 1988).

Before doing this analysis, one needs to understand that media is a huge industry and is full of manipulation. They are not restricted to bring out the facts as their main motto is to earn money, manipulate the society, and be in the competition.

Table 2
Analysis of the data

1	Dawn News	Macrostructure (Deletion)
	Police said the girl seemed to have been killed four or five days earlier	The way news writer reported the statement of the police shows clearly the element of <i>deletion</i> done by the reporter as there is nothing written by him regarding her kidnapping and her brutal rape. They were only focused on her murder. Also, they could have mentioned about the kidnapping which they did not.
	The heinous nature of the crime had seen immediate riots break out in Kasur – in which two people were killed – while #JusticeforZainab became a rallying cry for an end to violence against children	Rather than using the exact word "rape" for the incident the writer is using words like "heinous crime". Instead of mentioning the "raper" or their name, the writer is using the substitute word like "two people" which is hiding their identity. There is nothing mentioned regarding what quick actions have been taken by the police which is clearly the <i>deletion</i> of the various circumstances that must have or should have taken place. The victim's name is on the display but what is the purpose behind hiding the name of the raper.

2	ARY	
	We gave them two videos from CCTV cameras, the one in which he (The Criminal) is taking Zainab to some unknown place and the other in which he is coming back from the place. They took the clips and did nothing about it	The reporter did mention the person who attempted the murder and rape of the Zainab as "the criminal" which is <i>deletion</i> as it is not showing what crime he did.
3.	Express Tribune	
4.	Dunya News	
	Seven-year-old Zainab's rape, murder in Kasur shocks Pakistan.	In topic sentence, there is <i>deletion</i> as it's not providing its reader enough information. There is nothing which portrays information regarding the rapist.
	KASUR (Dunya News) - The enraged locals on Wednesday took to the streets against the brutal murder of a seven-year-old girl after rape and demanded to hang the culprit in public.	There is <i>deletion</i> in the paragraph as the reporter didn't mention the name and age of the rapist but mentioned Zainab. Further, the word he used for the rapist is "culprit" which is creating the base of misunderstanding of the crime he did. A way to distract people from the actual incident.
	Zainab was kidnapped six days ago from Road Kot when her parents left for Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah. The girl was strangled to death after being raped.	There is missing information regarding what that incident caused to her. Rather, the writer is reporting it as the murder whereas she died because of rape.
	Police officers recovered her body from a garbage heap near Zaki Ada.	The <i>deletion</i> is being done in the report as the reporter didn't mention the cruel and unconcerned behavior towards the case and how they were treating it like nothing.
	A shutter down strike was observed in the metropolis against the killing while enraged lawyers	How much time police took to find out the child? How did they do it? Why it took days to recover the child? Why didn't they out an effort to save the child's life? The reporter deleted every bit of information targeting the police.

	also boycotted judicial proceedings at district bar and urged to take action into the matter.	The writer didn't highlight the major reason why the strike took place on the first place. There is <i>deletion of accurate information</i> .
5.	Geo News Zainab murder case: Confessional video of accused emerges	This has been the most manipulative statement. They didn't mentioned the word "rape" and portray the case as a murder case solely. There is <i>deletion</i> of facts. It us an attempt to portray a "rape and Murder Case" as a "murder case" solely.
	On Tuesday, Punjab Chief Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a news conference confirmed that Imran had murdered seven-year-old Zainab, referring to him as a "serial killer".	They didn't impose him as a rapist instead reported him a serial killer. A clear indication regarding the manipulative nature of the news report and somehow an attempt to cover the actual crime of the rapist.

The Zainab's murder case being selected to analyze the ways newspapers manipulate the rape cases in their news reports. They clearly divert the attention of their audience from the actual point and control their perspective by using manipulative statements. Five different reports from five different newspapers were selected and macrostructure from van Dijk's model was applied on the selected data.

The analysis of the data showed that process of Deletion is applied on these reports in immense form. Among all the newspapers, the Dawn News was quite repellent to become factual towards truth. There was manipulation in their writing style to hide the truth which they did by using rule of deletion. Most of the matters that were needed to mention were being portrayed as nothing by writing in summarized form. The news is supposed to be the main source of the facts. The descriptions of rape cases and their intensity, plays their role in shaping the sexual behavior and social practices of the humans of that society (Lindqvist, 2018).

Besides ARY, other news reports didn't really bother to mention the name of the predator using the rule of deletion, which is an alarming act. Furthermore, what is the point of mentioning these aggressive sexual acts as something that just happened and people just needed to know about it. Media is more focused about the women which clearly shows their "victim blaming" intentions, rather than highlighting the criminals which keeps people's attention away from him. The truth is not being revealed the way it can be highlighted.

The whole focus was on the rape attempt by the criminals while manipulating the reasons behind this. The words are highly manipulative as in one statement the report mentioned it as a murder case but not as a rape case. Newspapers language is often sexual

and unconcerned when it comes to woman. They didn't leave any chance to dwell into women and compelling to hide the nature of men towards a certain situation (Pekkarinen, 2016).

Conclusion

The way rape victims are portrayed in media is of extreme importance as it shapes the public opinion towards the victim. Media plays an important role in shaping the concepts and mindsets regarding rape incident that can either reform the society or can worsen the condition even more. The society assumes that the empathy must be confined for the victims who were underage, virginal, defenseless, pure or from a specified class. Otherwise, the victim will take the responsibility of victimization on its own.

Although, when it comes to rape cases and providing law to the helpless and weak, media steps back and tries to save their reputation rather than playing their part properly. Media which is responsible for developing the ideologies of the society, portrays women as responsible of this cruelty. Instead of trying to bring justice to the women, media provides the false information or hides it more often which results in delayed or no justice.

Overall, the results reveal that exposure to media was not focused on the criminal or his crime, but it was focused on blaming the victim or cover the rape incident by naming it "murder". It became apparent that manipulation of the truth and covering the dark side of the law and forces were more salient variables (Curtiss, 2009).

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