

Media Framing on Coverage of Motorway Rape Incident: A Study of Cable Channels in Pakistan

Muhammad Riaz Raza*

Babria University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Muhammad Usman Saeed

Bayan college, Oman

Zafar Ali

University of Punjab Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

Sensitive issues, such as rape, need to be handled with special care in the media, as the media's framing impacts how the audience perceives an event. Using framing theory, this study investigated the coverage of the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway Incident on four leading news channels: *Geo News*, *ARY News*, *Dunya News*, and *Express News*. Content analysis was performed to analyze the data collected from 26 programs of 4 primetime talk shows on the selected channels. The study's findings reveal that *Geo News* provided the most extensive coverage of the incident. Altogether, seven significant themes were identified, the most dominant thematic frame being blaming the police. It concludes that the media's coverage of the incident was responsible and objective in relation to the victim and avoided the use of sensational language.

Key words

Rape, Lahore-Sialkot Motorway Incident, framing, news channels, talk shows, content analysis, thematic frames, victim

Introduction

In the context of discriminatory treatment in general and the dangers that women face as a result of cultural, religious, and traditional practices such as honor killings (Veena & Mirza, 2007), According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), experts agree that the reported number of rape cases represents

* Corresponding author

only a small percentage of the total number of rapes that take place (HRCP, 2018). According to the same HRCP study, a woman is raped in Pakistan every couple of hours and incidents of gang rape occur once or twice a week. Ricchiardi (2012) believes that Pakistani society is culturally biased against women, a state of affairs that could be changed by the media. She also believes that a woman can be raped in Pakistan if her rapist wants to take revenge on a male family member. A report in the *Express Tribune* (2017) stated that 73% of women in Pakistan experienced sexual or physical violence at the hands of their close partners during their lives, while 93% suffered some sort of sexual violence in public spaces. The portrayal of rape victims is a difficult task for the media, and because the visual facet is also involved (Majid, 2016).

During the 1970s, feminist activists coined the term “Rape Culture.” Although rape culture obviously includes sexual attacks and rape, feminists are of the view that it is also exhibited in several other harmful ways. Jokes related to rape, cat-calling, sexual pestering and mockery, body policing of women, keeping a check on what they wear and how they appear, and shifting responsibility from the attacker to the victim—all these factors in one way or another constitute part of rape culture. Pakistan’s rape culture is the reincarnation of a traditional power struggle and has roots in mainstream media (Kamal, 2019).

Unfortunately, rape culture is prevalent in Pakistan. Whenever people hear about an incidence of rape, most of them start questioning the victim’s character by suggesting that she might have “asked for it.” In this patriarchal society, the honor of men is attached to the character of women. Male family members are usually reluctant to file an accusation of rape against an assailant, as it will shame both the victim and their family, and their honor will be tarnished (Butt, Zaman, & Malik, 2022).

In the incident focused on here, the rape victim was an adult married woman with two children. Throughout this study, the word “victim” is used instead of “survivor,” as the latter term is only used in cases where the victim endured a life-threatening assault, which is not the case here (Layman, 2020).

Background of the Study

On September 9, 2020, after midnight, a Pakistani-French lady (whose name was not publicly revealed by the media) was traveling along the Lahore-Sialkot motorway with her two children. On her way, she ran out of petrol and phoned her relatives for help. They suggested she contact the motorway police. She did

so, but nobody came to her rescue, supposedly because the area was outside the local police's jurisdiction. She was waiting for help in her car when two men in their thirties came and attacked her. They broke the car's windows, mugged her, and then pulled the woman and her children into a nearby field alongside the road where they raped her. Though woman was severely traumatized but was able to provide the police with basic details.

The Capital City Police Officer (CCPO), Lahore, is responsible for the overall functioning of the city police. The town of the accused and victim were under his administration. While speaking to the media, he made a remark that it was partially the woman's fault because she was travelling alone after midnight and did not even check for fuel before leaving for her destination. He also suggested that she could have used busier roads at night. After this statement, whenever he appeared in front of the media, he reiterated his victim-blaming stance in some way. His insensitive and uncalled-for opinions were not accepted by society, and were met with a massive social uproar.

According to Mori et al. (1995), Asians are more likely than Caucasians to have negative attitudes toward rape victims and to believe in rape myths. Wilson and Miller (2016) believe that women feel reluctant to report sexual assault because, in most cases, they have no evidence except their testimony, and the judicial system is not very supportive in the absence of additional evidence.

Unlike other rape cases, which appear in the news for only one day and are casually discussed in talk shows, this case was given comprehensive coverage. Mainstream media, consisting of all three major platforms—print, electronic, and social media—followed up this case on a regular basis.

Problem Statement

After reviewing the literature, the researchers recognized the gaps in the research as little work has been done in Pakistan in the context of framing theory concerning rape cases in electronic media in general, and primetime talk shows in particular. This study focuses on how this specific rape incident was portrayed in the talk shows, how talk show panelists discussed the topic and, as a result of the discussion, how the motorway rape incident was portrayed.

Significance of the Study

Studying such cases is important for understanding how these so-called

“unspeakable” topics are portrayed in the news media. Studies on cases of rape may help media practitioners to have a clearer understanding of such events and thereby improve their ways of reporting them. The framing of rape cases is of utmost importance as careless decision-making by a journalist or anchor, and irresponsible use of language can turn the victim into a “bad character woman.”

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the amount of time dedicated to the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway Incident by selected news channels.
2. To investigate the major thematic frames applied in the selected talk shows.
3. To investigate which group of participants received the most coverage in the selected talk shows.
4. To investigate how participants responded to thematic frames.

Literature Review

Rape: Its Causes and Impact on the Victim

The distinction between a rapist and a nonrapist is that a rapist has an overly aggressive masculine self-image and desires to demonstrate his hegemonic masculinity compared to a non-rapist (Koss, Dinero, Seibel, & Cox, 1988). The adverse effects of rape may differ for different victims depending on key factors such as the type of rape (stranger or acquaintance rape), the extent and severity of the assault, the victim’s personal history, the response of the victim’s friends and family, and the victim’s experience with various institutions (health/police) after the assault (Foster, Boyd, & O’Leary, 2012).

Types of Rape

Rape has been divided into three categories by researchers: acquaintance rape, stranger rape, and marital rape. Stranger rape occurs when the rape victim and attacker have no prior relationship and are unacquainted. In acquaintance rape, the alleged attacker and victim may have previously dated, or may be mates, coworkers, classmates, or neighbors (Calhoun, Selby & Warring, 1976; Check & Malamuth, 1983). Rape or assault committed by a friend is a type of crime that is rarely covered by the media (Carter, 1998). Society tends to sympathize more with

victims raped by strangers, whereas the claims of victims whose rapists are acquaintances are treated with doubt (victim-blaming).

Attitudes Toward Rape Around the World

Nwabueze and Oduah (2015) mentioned how, in African countries such as Nigeria where shame culture is common, society tolerates rape covertly. Rao (2014) talked in her study about how, in India, a country obsessed with caste and class, the reporting of rape is primarily focused on the elite and middle class in society, marginalizing the lower castes and classes.

Media's Conventional Representation of Rape Incidents

Similarly, how the media depicts poverty and sexual violence can have a negative impact on people's perceptions as they perceive the rape and its victim accordingly. The media emphasizes gang rapes and stranger rapes (Gravelin, 2016). The use of misogynistic language must be considered because improper words may benefit the rapist while inappropriate language may reinforce societal perceptions of rape myths (Ali, Yousef, & Qamar, 2020). They further cited (Alhumaid, 2014; Sutherland et al., 2019) that news media represent violence against women in specific frames frequently under crucial discussion. For instance, using the word "alleged," the culprits' invisibility, or stating any speculative claim can mislead the audience. The victim's identity, the word "victim," calling the offender a "beast, monster," and disclosing the victim's image or video can also be damaging to the victim and offender (Ali et al., 2020). Another study by the Global Media Monitoring Project (2020) found that sexist and misogynistic representations of women in news media were common worldwide. The way these cases are presented in the media and the language used to describe them often give the impression that rape is socially acceptable and occasionally consented to by the victims.

Myths About Rape in the Media

Burt (1980) coined the term "rape myth," which was later defined as "prejudiced, stereotyped, or delusional beliefs about rape, sexual assaults, and rapists." Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1974) provided an example of a commonly held rape myth in which the victim was "asking" to be raped, while Cuklanz's (1998) re-

search revealed that over fifteen years, primetime television's portrayal of rape has strengthened rape myths.

Media Framing of Rape Victims

The media often does not depict victims who do not meet the requirements of being “good” women as genuine victims (Larcombe, 2002). Revictimizing the victim through the media means that the media uses frames or words to communicate that the victim is being directly blamed for the rape, either by dressing improperly or being in the wrong location (Nwabueze & Oduah, 2015). According to McManus and Dorfman (2005), the media are more likely to use episodic framing when covering violence against women and the tendency for event-based reporting means the social context in which aggression against women exists is ignored. Gravelin (2016) discusses how victim-blaming information, even when discreetly presented in the media, influences readers' perceptions of assault cases.

Framing the Rape Progressively

Mendes, Ringrose and Keller (2018) believe that feminist activism is visible in the media, and whoever dares to challenge misogyny is at risk of becoming a target of sexist abuse. If the framing of rape does not follow a sexist outline, it is assumed to indicate progressive coverage (McManus & Dorfman, 2005).

Viano (1995) believes that the media's portrayal of rape victims is superficial, as it tends to sensationalize the rape story by focusing on the offender rather than giving importance to the victim. Regarding victim blaming, according to VanRyne (2015), news broadcasts on TV may be the most heinous of the three media. “television news is likely to be framed in a way that elicits an emotional response from its viewers by often depicting the most gruesome and heinous crimes with little or no contextual-level analysis” (p.8).

Theoretical Framework

Goffman (1974) was the first to propose the theory of framing or “frame analysis theory,” wherein he talked about how the general public uses clues and hints to comprehend their daily life situations and the people in those scenarios. Entman (1993) described framing as “a scattered conceptualization” (p.51). Framing is a method through which individuals gain a specific understanding of an issue or

change their perspective on it (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Because of these similarities, some media scholars believe that framing theory is simply an extension of agenda-setting theory (Shaw, McCombs, Weaver, & Hamm, 1999). Emotional responses are conditioning pressures that form the power of episodic frames. Aaroe, (2011) pointed out, thematic frames are stronger when the audience's emotional reaction is weak, but episodic frames are stronger when the audience shows a powerful emotional reaction.

He was of the view that the relative strength of episodic and thematic frames to argue that our understanding of the dynamics of frame strength can be advanced through a better incorporation of citizens' emotional reactions. Statistical studies can identify popular debates by analyzing the frequency of certain topics or keywords mentioned in media coverage. Episodic and thematic frames can be identified as two essential types of structures that appear across time and space in political information communication (Aaroe, 2011).

Gross (2008) was of the view that the thematic frame was, in fact, more convincing as soon as this indirect impact of a frame on emotional feedback was considered.

According to Iyengar (1996), the influence of culture or ideological background on the attribution of responsibility cannot be denied when analyzing framing.

Aaroe (2011) also remarks that, in the literature, the question of the relative strength of episodic and thematic structures remains surprisingly open. He further quotes Gross (2008): "Whether making use of an episodic frame would boost or reduce the effect of a convincing appeal relative to a thematic frame is somewhat much less clear from prior literary works" (p. 173). Aaroe opined that although an impressive body of research has investigated framing effects, we still have very limited knowledge of the factors that shape frame strength.

Framing Techniques for Rape Incidents

Iyengar (1994) distinguishes between thematic and episodic framing. The media emphasis in episodic framing is on a single topic; for example, reminding the audience of the primary example (Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976). During thematic framing, the media discusses issues conceptually. Episodic framing holds a single person accountable for a problem or its resolution, while thematic framing keeps the community accountable (Scheufele, 2004). This refers to media reports about sexual assaults or rape incidents; the use of the word "victim" may appeal to people's sympathy rather than using the word "accuser"

(Katz, 2015).

According to Valkenburg, Semetko, and De Vreese (1999), a media frame is a way of creating news stories to improve audience accessibility. When compiling news stories, journalists are constrained by time and space. In addition, while news can be framed in a variety of ways, journalists typically use one of four frames: (1) the conflict frame, (2) the human interest frame, (3) the responsibility frame (credit or blame is assigned to individuals or political groups), and (4) the economic consequences frame (Valkenburg et al., 1999). Scheufele (2004) identifies four potential effects of framing: 1) activation, 2) transformation, 3) formation, and 4) attitudinal. The people typically have different biases and perspectives that shape their interpretations of information presented to them, which in turn influence their cognitive frames or schemas. These may include political leanings, cultural backgrounds, personal experiences education levels and interests. Understanding audience framing schemas can help communicators tailor their messages to resonate with their intended audience. In the formation effect, media framing establishes frames that are not already present, and, ultimately, a behavioral change in the audience can occur through an attitudinal effect (Scheufele, 2004). Valkenburg et al. (1999) examined the effect of news frames on audience thoughts and their tendency to arouse information in a news story.

Research Questions

- RQ1. How much time was dedicated to the Motorway Incident in the selected media?
- RQ2. Which channels dealing with the incident applied major thematic frames?
- RQ3. Which groups of participants received the most coverage on the selected TV channels?
- RQ4. How did the participants respond to the thematic frames?

Methodology

Scholars dispute whether content analysis, which is mostly concerned with counting the number of occurrences of an entity, may or may not succeed in deciphering the meaning attached to symbols in a given text (Prasad, 2008).

The Rationale for Selecting Television Talk Shows

Television is the most popular news source, especially in Pakistan's urban areas (Ricchiardi, 2012). The private TV owners broadcast contentious topics related to gender, like rape, women's right to divorce, domestic violence, and similar issues which are not discussed on *Pakistan Television* - a state-run TV channel (Cheema, 2018).

Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study. Primetime talk shows from four leading news channels—*Geo News*, *ARY News*, *Dunya News*, and *Express News*—were selected. The race for the highest TRP (Television Rating Program) score in September was won by *Geo News* with 0.566 points, followed by *ARY News* (0.407), *Dunya News* (0.220) and finally *Express News* (0.123) (*Daily Pakistan*, 2022). From a total population of 60 talk shows ($60 \times 45 = 2700$ minutes), a sample size of 26 ($26 \times 45 = 1170$ minutes) from the four selected news channels was analyzed manually by the researchers using content analysis. The data were extracted during the peak period when the issue was being covered by these channels, September 10–17, 2020.

The *Geo News* talk shows selected were “*Capital Talk*” hosted by Hamid Mir (airs Mondays to Thursdays). From *ARY News*, “*Off the Record*” hosted by Kashif Abbasi (Monday to Thursday). “*Kal Tak*” hosted by Javed Chaudhry (Monday to Thursday) were selected from *Express News*. From *Dunya News*, “*On the Front with Kamran Shabid*” (Friday to Sunday). The unit of analysis was the question (asked by the host) and the answers of the talkshow participants.

The Rationale for Selecting the Talk Shows

Considering the ranking of the channels, the prime time talk show *Capital Talk* is the most watched talk show among the top ten, according to *Daily Pakistan* (2022). *Off the Record* of *Ary News* with Kashif Abbasi is at 3rd. *Kal Tak with Javed Chaudhry* remains in top 10 most-watched talk shows. The other criteria for selection is the TRP-Television Rating Points of the concerned channel.

Data Collection

Four categories were designed for the subjects, based on the representations of all the stakeholders like Government, ministers and spokes persons, representatives of the civil society, representatives of the opposition party, and Host of the talk show to get through this quantitative investigation. The talkshow host is the first category, followed by independent experts, lawyers, police, and representatives of

civil society or human rights as the second category. Government representatives like ministers and spokespersons are Category 3, opposition representatives represents Category 4. The representatives of the sitting government posed questions about law and order and governance issues and the future measures to be taken to counter such incidents. Experts such as lawyers discussed legal issues and frameworks, while human rights representatives highlighted the violations of gender and human rights.

A sample size of 26 talk shows (1170 minutes) was extracted from the four selected news channels. Talk shows from September 10 to 17 were downloaded from YouTube and analyzed by carefully examination of each show. The coding was carried out by defining some rules according to which recurrent Thematic Frames would be identified, topics discussed by the panelists were categorized by two researchers, and an intercoder reliability check was carried out.

Table 1
Coding Sheet for Thematic Frames

Themes	Rules
Victim Support	A segment of the talk show is coded as “victim support,” in which participants condemned “victim shaming” and showed “empathy and support” for the victim and her children.
Law & Justice	A segment of the talk show is coded as “law & justice,” in which participants stressed the “need for timely justice for rape victims” and highlighted “lack of law & order” as one of the major reasons for increasing cases of rape.
Security Concerns	A segment of the talk shows is coded as “security concern,” in which panelists were concerned about “Lahore-Sialkot Motorway Security Conditions” in the context of the Motorway Incident, and overall “security conditions in Pakistan” discussed in the shows are also coded under this theme.
Societal Insensitivity	A segment of the talk shows is coded as “insensitivity,” in which carelessness of the state, immorality of society, abusive language and derogatory remarks toward women, and the insensitivity of police and judiciary toward the victim are mentioned.
Capital Punishment	A segment of the talk shows is coded as “capital punishment” in which public hanging, castration, and strict and immediate punishment for the culprit were discussed by the panelists.
Blaming the Police	A part of the talk show is coded as “blaming the police,” in which the “CCPO police was blamed” for his negative statements about the victim and “negligence of Motorway Police” and overall “laidback attitude of police” in general were discussed.
Institutional Reforms	A segment of the talkshow is coded as “institutional reforms,” in which the “need for reforms” in different state institutions such as “police,” “judiciary,” and “law enforcement agencies” were discussed.

Table 2
Inter-coder Reliability

	Symmetric Measures			
	Value	Asymptotic Standard Error ^a	Approximate T ^b	Approximate Significance
Measure of Agreement (Kappa)	.304	.155	2.572	.010
N of Valid Cases	16			

Note. a. Not assuming the null hypothesis. b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Findings

The results in the table 3 show that the total time dedicated by the selected media to the Motorway Incident was 294 minutes. Out of this total time, the *Geo News* talk shows gave the most coverage by dedicating 92 minutes of airtime, 31.29% of the total time. *Dunya News* dedicated 78 minutes 26.53% of the total time and *Express News* 73 minutes 24.82% of the total time. Out of all the selected news channels, *ARY News* provided the least coverage of the incident 51 minutes 7.35% of the total time.

Table 3
Time Dedicated to Incident by Selected News Channels

	Minutes	Percentage
ARY News	51	17.35%
Geo News	92	31.29%
Dunya News	78	26.53%
Express News	73	24.82%
Total	294	100%

The most dominant frame applied by the selected media in their talk shows is blaming the police, accounting for 20% of the total percentage of frames, as shown in the table 4. Capital punishment is the second most dominant frame 18.36%, with societal insensitivity 17.68% constituting another major frame. The thematic frame of security concerns makes up 15.98% of the total percentage, law and justice 12.58%, and the victim support frame 7.82%. Institutional reforms are the least dominant frame with 7.48% of the total.

Table 4
Major Thematic Frames' Cross-tabulation

Thematic Frames					Total Time (Minutes)
	Geo News	ARY News	Express News	Dunya News	
Blaming the Police	18	13	13	15	59 (20.06%)
Capital Punishment	17	7	15	15	54 (18.36%)
Societal Insensitivity	16	11	12	13	52 (17.68%)
Security Concerns	18	9	11	9	47 (15.98%)
Law & Justice	9	5	13	10	37 (12.58%)
	7	6	5	5	23 (7.82%)
Institutional Reforms	7	0	4	11	22 (7.48%)
	Total				294 (100%)

Table 5 shows that of the four categories, the opposition group (PPP & PMLN) participants received the most coverage 31% over the selected news channels, with the Government group (PTI) receiving 27% of the total time. In contrast, the talk show hosts and the analysts/experts got 22% and 20% of the total time respectively.

Table 5
Cross-tabulation of Participants and Selected Media

News Channels					Total Time (Minutes)
	Host	Government	Opposition	Analyst/Expert	
ARY News	13	14	9	15	51
Geo News	20	32	23	17	92
Duniya News	15	16	31	16	78
Express News	16	16	29	12	73
Total	64 (22%)	78 (27%)	92 (31%)	60 (20%)	294 (100%)

The table 6 depicts the time allotted to all topics in the primetime talk shows selected. Overall, the rape case was allotted 12%, while other topics—including, politics, the economy, terrorism, the judiciary, regional global issues, and social development—received 88% during the study period.

Table 6**Time Allotted to Topics in Prime Time Talk Shows (in Minutes)**

Channel	Time Allotted to Other Topics	Time Allotted to Rape Case
ARY News	650 (92%)	51 (8%)
Geo News	643 (86%)	92 (14%)
Duniya News	610 (87%)	78 (13%)
Express News	590 (88%)	73 (12%)
Total	2493 (88%)	294 (12%)

Table 7 shows that, overall, participants in all categories showed favorable responses toward the thematic frames by adopting supportive attitudes, representing 62.24% of the total attitudes. Hostile responses from participants toward certain themes were also recorded, giving a total of 30.61% for such responses. A few participants remained neutral on some themes like capital punishment, making up a small percentage 7.14% of the total.

Table 7**Cross-tabulation of Thematic Frames and Slants**

Frames	Neutral	Pro	Anti	
Victim support	0	16	5	21
Blaming the Police	3	53	9	65
Law & Justice	0	25	10	35
Security Concerns	6	40	0	46
Societal Insensitivity	0	4	49	53
Capital Punishment	10	23	17	50
Institutional Reforms	2	22	0	24
Total	21	183	90	294

Discussion

The purpose of our research study was to evaluate the framing practices surrounding the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway rape incident in talk shows on selected Pakistani news channels, as the literature review revealed that limited research has been done in Pakistan in the realm of how the portrayal of rape is framed in the electronic media. This paves the way for our research, which further narrows the focus, specifically to talk shows. Therefore, this study focused on exploring the thematic frames, how much time the electronic media devoted to the coverage of the rape incident, and which group of participants received more coverage in se-

lected talk shows. Several studies have shown that how an audience responds to a rape victim depends on how the media frames that victim. However, the strength of the frames is relative and dependent on the audience; as Aaroe (2011) pointed out, thematic frames are stronger when the audience's emotional reaction is weak, but episodic frames are stronger when the audience shows a powerful emotional reaction.

The results showed that the selected media dedicated a reasonable amount of airtime (294 minutes) to the coverage of the Motorway Incident in its current affairs talk shows, with *Geo News* giving the most coverage 92 minutes to the issue. *Geo News* also discussed this issue for eight consecutive days. *ARY* provided the least coverage, dedicating 51 minutes to discussing this incident on its talk shows. It is important to note that institutional reforms, one of the major thematic frames, were not discussed in *ARY*'s talk shows, which speaks volumes about the channel's policy. Grossman (2022) believes that the political affiliations and economic preferences of media houses determine the channel's policy.

The selected media outlets focused on the thematic framing of the incident. Iyengar discussed in their study "Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues" how television news episodically or thematically frames political issues for an event. In episodic framing, the media tends to focus on the event alone, whereas in thematic framing the context of the event is also discussed (Iyengar, 1994, p. 14). The major thematic frames applied by the media were: blaming the police, capital punishment, societal insensitivity, security concerns, law and justice, victim support, and institutional reform. The talkshow participants empathized with the victim, as the most dominant frame was blaming the police, in which the CCPO Lahore was held responsible for his insensate remarks because of his implied victim blaming.

Capital punishment emerged as the second most dominant frame, exhibiting the fury of participants toward the culprits. The participants demanded capital punishment for the culprits and suggested public hanging. They emphasized that perpetrators of sexual crimes should be treated with such sternness that nobody would even think of committing such a heinous crime. Societal insensitivity also emerged as a major thematic framework. Society's overall insensitive attitude toward rape victims and women was discussed in this frame. Other significant thematic frames were safety problems and the absence of security for the country's population. Regulation and Justice were also significant themes. It was emphasized that rigorous regulations against rape and sexual crimes must be implemented. If timely justice is meted out, the number of rape cases in general can be reduced.

Institutional reforms also appeared among the significant thematic frames, but were the least dominant. Institutional reforms consisted of improvements in all the appropriate institutes of the state, such as the police, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies. Out of the four selected media networks, three dealt with the requirement for institutional reforms, with the exception of *ARY News*, where this thematic frame was not used. Many participants from all groups supported the victim support frame; only a few made comments that implied prejudice toward the victim. Some participants made casual remarks that could be seen as not condemning societal ignorance. All participants, with one voice, demanded institutional reforms.

The existing research has verified and supported Gravelin's (2016) framing technique for rape incidents. Since rape culture is a sensitive subject anywhere, this study examined the patterns and social reactions to such criminal offences in this society. The results will certainly aid in illuminating the activities that can be conducted to address this concern as a social process instead of an occurrence. Sexual assaults and rape can take place anywhere, yet how society reacts to the victim varies from culture to culture. In developing nations, such as Pakistan, it is normally seen as a black mark on the victim's reputation with major sociocultural repercussions. Societal insensitivity, police and judicial insensitivity, norms, myths, and illiteracy are all considered—to a greater extent—hurdles in making the society ethical and responsible. Since, Pakistani private media is not too old, such sensitive issues have not been highlighted as a social problem in mainstream private media and state-run-TV. As a result, illiteracy, intolerance and the absence of regulation and legislation have severely weaken the social fabric, however, traditional stereotypes and ways of thinking are gradually evolving in a more positive direction as a result of expanding understanding, education, and learning.

Conclusion

The selected media dedicated significant airtime to covering the incident. This is one of the reasons the Motorway Incident became a high-profile case that ultimately led to the prosecution of the gangrape culprits. The media chose to conduct thematic framing of the incident, not just focusing on the event in hand but, by discussing the context of such issues, holding society and the state accountable for sexual crimes. Blaming the police, as the dominant frame, shows how the media can play a watchdog role and safeguard citizens by holding the concerned parties accountable. The media's framing of the rape victim was carried out respon-

sibly, and no sensational language was used, as is frequently the practice of the media in such cases. The victim's identity remained anonymous, and victim blaming was shunned by all participants in the selected talk shows. This gives hope for responsible media coverage of sensitive issues, such as rape, in the future.

References

- Aaroe, L. (2011). Investigating frame strength: The case of episodic and thematic frames. *Political Communication*, 28(2), 207–226. doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2011.568041
- Ali, S., Yousef, E., & Qamar, A. (2020). Analyzing the news media practices concerning sexual exploitation of women. *Multicultural Education*, 6(4). doi: 10.5281/zenodo.4251870
- Burt, M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(2), 217–230. doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.38.2.217
- Butt, M. W., Zaman, S. & Malik, R. (2022). Discursive constructions of child rape in Pakistani newspapers: A Study of Hussain Khan Wala Case. *Sustainable Business and Society in Emerging Economies*, 4(2), 415–424. doi.org/10.26710/sbsee.v4i2.2343
- Calhoun, L. G., Selby, J. W., & Warring, L. J. (1976). Social perception of the victim's causal role in rape: An exploratory examination of four factors. *Human Relations*, 29(6), 517–526. doi.org/10.1177/001872677602900602
- Carter, C. S. (1998). Neuroendocrine perspectives on social attachment and love. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 23(8), 779–818. doi.org/10.1016/S0306-4530(98)00055-9
- Check, J. V., & Malamuth, N. M. (1983). Sex role stereotyping and reactions to depictions of stranger versus acquaintance rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45(2), 344–356. doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.45.2.344
- Cheema, M. (2018). Talk shows in Pakistan TV culture: Engaging women as cultural citizens. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 2(1), 1–12. doi: 10.20897/femenc.201808
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). A theory of framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 99–118. doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00331_3.x
- Cuklanz, L. M. (1998). The masculine ideal: Rape on prime-time television, 1976–1978. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 15(4), 423–448. doi.org/10.1080/15295039809367058
- Daily Pakistan (2022). Top news channels. Retrieved November 7, 2022, from <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/24-Oct-2022/ratings-battle-geo-ary-retain-top-slots-here-s-the-complete-list-of-pakistan-s-most-watched-tv-channels-and-programs-september-2022>
- Entman, R. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43(4), 51–58. doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x
- Express Tribune (2017). 93% of Pakistani women experience sexual violence. Retrieved September 27, 2020, from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/>

- 1348833/93-pakistani-women-experience-sexual-violence
- Foster, G., Boyd, C., & O'Leary, P. (2012). Improving policy and practice responses for men sexually abused in childhood. Melbourne: *Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault*.
- Global Media Monitoring Project (2020). *Who makes the news*. 6th Global Media Monitoring Project. Retrieved December 17, 2022, from https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GMMP2020.ENG_FINAL_.pdf
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gravelin, C. R. (2016). *Assessing the impact of media on blaming the victim of acquaintance rape* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Kansas. Retrieved October 21, 2020, from https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/bitstream/handle/1808/22396/Gravelin_ku_0099D_14763_DATA_1.pdf?sequence=1
- Gross, K. (2008). Framing persuasive appeals: Episodic and thematic framing, emotional response, and policy opinion. *Political Psychology*, 29(2), 169–192. doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2008.00622.x.
- Grossman, E. (2022). Media and policy making in the digital age. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25, 443–461. doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-103422
- HRCP (2018). *State of human rights in 2018*. Lahore: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. Retrieved November 10, 2020, from <https://hrcp-web.org/publication/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/State-of-Human-Rights-in-2018-English.pdf>
- Iyengar, S. (1994). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar, S. (1996). Framing responsibility for political issues. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 546(1), 59–70. doi.org/10.1177/0002716296546001006
- Kamal, D. (2019) A culture of rape. *Soch Writing*. Retrieved October 14, 2020, from <https://www.sochwriting.com/a-culture-of-rape/>
- Katz, J. (2015). A theory of qualitative methodology: The social system of analytic fieldwork. *Méthod(e)s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology*, 1(1-2), 131–146. doi.org/10.1080/23754745.2015.1017282
- Koss, M. P., Dinero, T. E., Seibel, C. A., & Cox, S. L. (1988). Stranger and acquaintance rape: Are there differences in the victim's experience? *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 12(1), 1–24. doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1988.tb00924.x
- Larcombe, W. (2002). Cautionary tales and telling anxieties: The story of the false complainant. *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 16(1), 95–108. doi/abs/10.1080/13200968.2002.11106906

- Layman, K. E. (2020). *The representation of rape and sexual assault within news media*. (Unpublished university honors thesis). Portland, OR: Portland State University. doi: 10.15760/honors.872
- Majid, S. (2016). *Rape stories in Pakistan the flaws in the TV coverage: Reasons and solutions* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Missouri. [https://hdl.handle.net/10355/58486]
- McManus, J., & Dorfman, L. (2005). Functional truth or sexist distortion? Assessing a feminist critique of intimate violence reporting. *Journalism*, 6(1), 43–65. doi.org/10.1177/1464884905048952
- Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). #Me too and the Promise and pitfall of challenging rape culture through feminism activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(2), 236-246. doi.org/10.1177/1350506818765318
- Mori, L., Bernat, J. A., Glenn, P. A., Selle, L. L., & Zarate, M. G. (1995). Attitudes toward rape: Gender and ethnic differences across Asian and Caucasian college students. *Sex Roles*, 32(7), 457–467. Retrieved October 14, 2020, from https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=9cc26b7b6a2c42ee40309bcfb0c6d142a7bffece
- Nwabueze, C., & Oduah, F. (2015). Media re-victimization of rape victims in a shame culture? Exploring the framing and representation of rape cases in Nigerian dailies. *Global Media Journal*, 13(24).
- Prasad, B. D. (2008). Content analysis. *Research methods for social work*, 5, 1-20. Retrieved September 27, 2020, from http://www.css.ac.in/download/deviprasad/content%20analysis.%20a%20method%20of%20social%20science%20research.pdf
- Rao, S. (2014). Covering rape in shame culture: Studying journalism ethics in India's new television news media. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 29(3), 153–167. doi.org/10.1080/08900523.2014.918497
- Ricchiardi, S. (2012). Challenges for independent news media in Pakistan: A report to the Center for International of Media Assistance. *CIMA: The Center for International Media Assistance*, 30. Retrieved September 28, 2020, from https://www.centerfor-internationalmediaassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Challenges-for-Independent-News-Media-in-Pakistan_Ricchiardi-updated.pdf
- Rosch, E., Mervis, C. B., Gray, W. D., Johnson, D. M., & Boyes-Braem, P. (1976). Basic objects in natural categories. *Cognitive Psychology*, 8(3), 382–439. doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(76)90013-X
- Scheufele, B. (2004). Framing-effects approach: A theoretical and methodological critique. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, 29(4), 401–428. doi.org/10.1515/comm.2004.29.4.401

- Schwendinger, J. R., & Schwendinger, H. (1974). Rape myths: In legal, theoretical, and everyday practice. *Crime and Social Justice*, 1, 18–26.
- Shaw, D. L., McCombs, M., Weaver, D. H., & Hamm, B. J. (1999). Individuals, groups, and agenda melding: A theory of social dissonance. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 11(1), 2–24. doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/11.1.2
- Valkenburg, P. M., Semetko, H. A., & De Vreese, C. H. (1999). The effects of news frames on readers' thoughts and recall. *Communication Research*, 26(5), 550–569. doi.org/10.1177/009365099026005002
- VanRyne, A. (2015). Language in news media regarding the victim precipitation and sexual assault of women. *The Review: A Journal of Undergraduate Student Research*, 16(1), 64–74. 12.
- Veena, M., & Mirza, H. S. (2007). "There is nothing 'honourable' about honour killings": Gender, violence and the limits of multiculturalism. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 30(3), 187–200. doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2007.03.001
- Viano, E. (1995). Victims, crime and the media: Competing interests in the electronic society. *Communications & the Law*, 17, 41.
- Wilson, L. C., & Miller, K. E. (2016). Meta-analysis of the prevalence of unacknowledged rape. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 17(2), 149–159. doi.org/10.1177/1524838015576391

Biographical Note: **Muhammad Riaz Raza**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Media Studies, Bahria University, Islamabad. His area of interest is the effects of print, electronic and social media. A few of his research articles have been published in international journals.

Biographical Note: **Muhammad Usman Saeed**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Media Studies, Bayan college, Oman. A number of his research articles have appeared in national and international journals.

Biographical Note: **Zafar Ali**, PhD Candidate in the Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Punjab Lahore. He has published a good number of research papers on global media effects.

Received: October 24, 2021
Revised: November 22, 2022
Accepted: March 3, 2023
