

Silencing of Rape: Treatment of Rape Events and Rape Victims by Media and Fiction

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ABSTRACT

Sexual abuse affects over 120 million children globally (UNICEF, 2018). There has been a total of 48,338 cases of rape of minors in India, with an increase of 336% from 2,113 in 2001 to 7,112 in 2011 (Gohain, 2013). In the US, almost half of female victims (46.7%) had been raped by an acquaintance (Breiding, 2014), with assaults (55%) occurring at or near the victim's house (Planty & Langton, 2013). Each time a rape victim dies, there is public outcry with both press and writers' calling for action but this has not helped the cause. Largely because "rape is not just forcible intercourse; rape means to inhabit and destroy everything" (Sebold, Lucky, 2002). This research analyses headlines and quotations on sexual crimes from mainstream online news from 2018 to 2019 from India and Malaysia. Using Austin's Speech act theory, the study compares the voices of rape victims and witnesses and argues for a reason and social responsibility. The findings revealed significant differences in discourse patterns, language use, and witness response. In providing a worm's eye view, Indian press in appearing to speak louder for victims, create greater sensationalism compared to Malaysian press which often focuses on the culprit and process of law and quickly silences the matter. Given media sensationalism and agenda setting of both nations, there is the need for greater scrutiny on how media provides a voice to victims and helps raise awareness and social responsibility when reporting sexual crimes.

Keywords: *Women, rape survivors, trial by media, voicing, stylistic analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

It is said that "...for every survivor there is also a rapist" (Bode, 1990, p.40). Nothing could be further from the truth here. Rape is a horrific crime due to loss of power for both victim and perpetrator. The American writer and healer, Deena Metzger calls rape 'depersonalization' (1976); the action of divesting someone or a state in which one's thoughts and feelings seem unreal or not belong to oneself. Weis and Borges (1973) point out that "rape is a total attack against the whole person, affecting the victim's physical, psychological and social identity" (p. 72). Rape, therefore, serves as an indispensable constituent of the victim's personality and life. Sociologist-cum-feminist, Kathleen Barry explains in *Female Sexual Slavery* that where there is an attempt to separate the sexual experience from the total person, the first act of objectification tends to be perversion (2011). What is sad is that many of the myths on sexual violence and women asking to be raped are partly fuelled by media reporting. No woman deserves to be raped or abused and the media has a role in raising this awareness.

As stated by Verghese (2018), "media ethics and social responsibility have always been important but never so much as today". This is because knowledge is power and in the wrong hands, it can create havoc for the wronged. The communication revolution has ushered in within a lifetime, the computer and the internet which in turn has paved the way for the Web that is able to create an instant world that has shrunk in space and time. The rise of

smartphones and iPads allows users to hold the world within one's palm. The presence of social media, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter make it possible for the information to be conveyed efficiently. Newspapers have also migrated from snippets of breaking news releases to opinion sheets that provide the public with every news that is fit to print. Constraints of space and the need to reach out to a wider audience, has made it necessary to include ideology, ownership interest, political preferences and much other information that allows for bias, misinformation to be included together with good, responsible reporting. Taken together, newspapers as public trustees of a nation have a responsibility to provide effective and efficient news coverage and this applies to rape reports as well.

Currently, when a woman is sexually assaulted and murdered, there is a public outcry with the press and publicly calling for action. When the incident is of public interest, there is a tendency to sensationalize the event with some reporters taking sides in defence of the perpetrator (e.g. "such a waste of a promising future") almost as if the victim is to be blamed for having been there. Given that the victim is dead, little is mentioned about her dreams and hope. In the words of Dalton (2018), the "level of rape culture in the media predicts both the frequency of rape and how it's handled by local criminal justice systems. Call it trial by media sensationalism or conspiracy, but media sensationalism by protecting the perpetrator and describing the circumstances leading to the events and the victim's background cannot be justified because "rape is not just forcible intercourse; rape means to inhabit and destroy everything" (Sebold & Lucky, 2002).

One of the appeals of newspaper reports is their ability to provide a worm eye view of the crime as it took place and this is seen as providing a just and impartial report. However, some news tends to be downplayed or sensationalized. This is especially so, when the victim is young (e.g. 12-34 years) and among the highest risk group for rape and sexual assault (Greenfeld, 1997). Media news can be used in the local justice system to bring the criminal to justice but when the news is superficial, one sided, it can contribute to victim abuse, shaming and silencing. The question that arises at this juncture being, in a world of shrinking space and time, where media is focused on increasing audience appeal, how fair and unbiased can media be when it comes to reporting sexual violence and crimes? Even more so, when the audience is not interested in scroll through the lengthy write-ups or has no intention of being morally shocked or take responsibility for certain events. When the public is not interested in a good responsible write up and prefers sensational news that provides explicit and dark secrets about the victim's past, how effective can media be in raising awareness, mobilising public sentiments or helping bring criminals to justice? This paper explores how online media portrays rape and murder, who acts as the spokesperson for the dead victim and who has the final say in online news reports nowadays.

BACKGROUND

According to Chomsky (Chomsky, *What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream*, 1997), media are not very different from scholarly institutions and they can be studied objectively based on three major sources of information. For starters, it is possible to study them like a scientist would by taking a look at the structure (e.g. headlines, outlines) and make some hypotheses based on the structure as to what the media is trying to project. Then, it is possible to investigate the narrative and see how well they conform to the hypotheses. The last part would be to study carefully just what the media is trying to project and whether it conforms to obvious assumptions about the nature and ideals of the institution. To take a rape report, no one likes to see themselves as connected to someone else's misery, no matter how remote

the link may be (Johnson, 2006) and perhaps the easiest way to get off the hook would be to deny it exists in the first place (p. 108) and by distance. The following excerpt is an example from two newspapers.

“Class 4 student raped by vice-principal, class teacher in Jharkhand”
(theHindu.com, 2019).
“Standard Five boy nabbed for raping cousin, 12, in Sabah” (Malaymail.com,
2019).

Closely related to the denial is the minimization of the trouble by acknowledging that it exists but then claiming that it happened somewhere else like “Jharkhand” and “Sabah” and not directly involving the mainstream population. Similarly, when feminist movements demand justice, they are essentially told that the crime is internal e.g., alleged involvement with “stepdaughter”, “cousin”, and therefore little can be done since the family members will sort this out and society should “move on”. When media i.e., newspaper media begins to deny the reality of oppression daily, they deny the reality of the privilege that underlies the perpetrators, which is just what it takes to get criminals off the hook.

Basically, objective and good news reporting matters and reporters and editors are well aware of this but the concern is that fewer and fewer newspapers are engaging in it. Part of the problem is due to newspapers having shrunk their reporting staff and space devoted to hard news due to dwindling readership. News organizations that once served to keep tabs on misuse of power, seem to be less concerned with public service but with filling up newspaper space as cheaply as possible. This means instead of hiring investigative reporters or reporting on what actually happened or how it happened, local newspapers offer “action news” which tend to be really pre-packaged narratives. As pointed out by (Chomsky, 2005) newspapers crammed with celebrity interviews, disaster and crime reports, are not so much as arsenal against ignorance but a weapon of mass distraction. When readers are sold into the idea, that this rarely occurs to them, they are in a poor position to understand the pain, sufferings of victims. A woman might get raped and murdered “Bhagalpur woman raped and burnt by kin, dies,” and an “Unemployed man is charged with rape and, murder of 85-year-old woman” but nothing further is added to describe the nightmare of the victims because the victims are dead, old, less significant, and the nightmare is considered over. Alternately, when newspaper headlines interpret other people’s experiences for them, they deny the validity of their own reports and impose their views of reality.

In a democracy, giving the media the role of the watchdog may be one of the best ways to hold the government and privileged accountable for their actions because of news matters. However, some media or news anchors reports often takes on the form of blaming the victim. It is unfortunate when the crime is blamed on the people who suffer most from it. Indirectly, they make it the “victim’s” problem, if not their fault. Telling the readers that the “dead raped” the victim was out at night, out with her partner, or not married assumes that the victim was indirectly responsible for her situation - “The couple was not married, and the woman was one and a half month pregnant.”

The result of such reporting being, oppression gets transferred to the people who suffer from it, while the perpetrators who use these women remain invisible and untouched.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are varying definitions of sexual violence (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013) and the World Health Organisation [WHO] (2013) has defined sexual violence as follows:

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments, or advances, acts to traffic or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim in any setting, including but not limited to home and work (p. 149).

Alice Sebold, a novelist, in *The Lovely Bones* (2002) depicted the same long-lasting traumatic experiences of rape and sexual violence inflicted on females and stated 'life is a perpetual yesterday' which is full of pain, horror and sufferings for them (p. 8). Sebold, would know as she is a survivor of a similar event. The writer is not alone. Literary writers have often chosen to speak up for victims and perpetrators from several perspectives for some time and have helped raise awareness of the violence and pain. Presently, the term 'gender-based violence' provides a new context in which the phenomenon of violence against women is being examined and understood. However, this should not be taken exclusively a woman's concern because it shifts the focus from women as victims to gender and the unequal power relationships between men and women created and maintained by gender stereotypes as the basic underlying cause of violence against women. The following perspectives have helped raise awareness about sexual crimes.

a. Shame, Stigma, and Secondary Victimization

Rape is generally an underreported crime, with its victims feeling silenced by shame, stigma, fear of the rapist, and often, fear of not being believed. It is stated that three out of four sexual assaults go unreported (National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2016, 2017). Rape is unique in that it stigmatizes the victim, rather than the perpetrator.

Rape is stigmatizing in cultures with strong customs and taboos regarding sex and sexuality. A rape victim may be viewed by society as being damaged. Victims in these cultures tend to suffer isolation, fear being disowned by friends and family, are prohibited from marrying, or are divorced if already married. In an incident in India, BBC (2019) reported that a group of men sexually assaulted two women, and upon their resistance, the men shaved the women's heads and paraded them through the village. In Malaysia, many young girls get raped by family members but these incidences go unreported as the rapists is either a grandparent or a stepfather. In some situations, the rapist marries the girl to avoid arrest despite being the girl being under aged. Responses of community members and public institutions to such crimes of rape and sexual assault of under aged girls and women have been, historically, disappointing. Victims are often forced into silence, ashamed to speak out about their experiences because victims of sexual assault who report their assaults to community members, police investigators, and health care workers are at risk of secondary victimization. A two-finger test which is officially banned in India in 2016 is still practised to subject and re-traumatize the rape victims. In India, journalist Meehika Barua reported that despite identifying a 23 years old rape victim's attacker, police have been relying solely on witness testimonies and, crucially, the discredit two-finger test (2019).

b. Rape Myth Acceptance and Victim Blaming

'Rape is rare,' 'women secretly want to be raped,' 'some women are asking to be raped,' 'rape is harmless,' 'rape is a result of uncontrollable passion,' 'all rapists are mentally ill or cognitively impaired,' 'only certain kinds of women are raped,' and 'a heterosexual man cannot be raped' are some common rape myths existing around the world (Rich & Seffrin, 2012). Other myths imply that the perpetrator could not control his urges or that the victim deserved to be assaulted based on appearance, behaviour, or style of dress (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds, & Gidycz, 2011). Bingham (2015), a news reporter of BBC, quotes a celebrity Chrissie Hynde in a report who was abducted and sexually assaulted saying that it was "all my doing" because of the way she was dressed. However, Sarah Green, a feminist adds that it is very common for victims to blame themselves because there is a deep victim blaming attitude in society (ibid).

Myths generally deny the magnitude of a sexual assault, and put an immense burden on survivors and contribute to post-rape trauma. They also impede survivors' ability to recognize and recover from these traumatic events, thus posing a threat to women's health. Wilson and Miller (2016) found that 60% of rape survivors failed to recognize their assaults as rape. This has serious implications because this means survivors are less likely to seek medical and police intervention after the rape. Aneri Pattani, a journalist in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* writes a report of a girl remained silent and suffered for a long span of life after her rape in college; the victim says, "I suffered in silence for 12 years. I don't want nobody to experience that long stretch of suffering" (2019). By giving a voice to the victim, society will recognize that rape, the suffering of women are real.

Speaking broadly, rape or sexual violence/assault is not just physical assault but a violation of physical, psychological, social and spiritual boundaries. It permeates all socioeconomic classes and affects millions worldwide. Feminist thoughts and activism have challenged the myth that rape is rare and an exception and that it is a common experience for many young girls and women. In 2012, a female medical student was brutally beaten and savagely raped while returning home from school. This violent event on a moving bus in India shocked the world. The victim was badly wounded and the media highlighted the incident as it should. By highlighting the victim's mother cry, "She did not know that her intestines had been ripped out," and by emphasizing on the voice of the mother's cry, "When she asked me why the doctors had done such a big operation on her abdomen, I just told her that I didn't know. I kept telling her she would recover and come home" (Dhillon, 2013), the media was able to garner mass appeal and make a difference in seeking justice for the victim. Thus, while victims of rape generally hesitate to come forward, media by subtly restating the painful memories /experiences of the rape victims through the voice of others, succeed in providing "voice" to victims of sexual violence. By highlighting e.g., "He ripped out my earrings, tore my eyelashes off, while spitting in my face and telling me how unlovable I am...I was on the ground in the fetal position, and when I tried to move, he squeezed both knees tighter into my sides to restrain me and slapped me" stated Marrisya Mayor (Ho, 2012), the media can drive home the message that the victim's suffering is long, permanent and more needs to do for these victims in terms of healing.

Both media and literature give voice to victims and survivors and they do so by drawing attention to the events, circumstances from a number of angles (Refer Appendix 2) to awareness about the dangers and loopholes in the system. The present paper aims to look at the language used in news reports dealing with rape and murder over the last two years in

two Asian countries: India and Malaysia. The discourse patterns of the victims and the witnesses will be compared to see whether newspapers in their quest for increasing audience appeal are moving towards bias reporting or still holding to their ideals of responsible journalism.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the speech act theory of J. L. Austin (1962) in *How to Do Things With Words*. It will use James Paul Gee's (2011) "why this way and not that way" toolkit for analysing speech acts. It will analyse the utterances in relation to grammaticality, meaning, topic and themes and stanzas. Forty newspaper narratives about sexual crimes from the two countries will be analysed. Only news reports of rape and murder published in mainstream newspapers from 2018 to 2019 in India and Malaysia will be used. Three steps will be involved.

Step 1: The coding process

The headlines will be extracted, compared and analysed by looking at the words and phrases used to depict the rape experience. Ref. **Table 1**.

Table 1: Coding Process

Literature (Baseline)	Indian Press (IP)	Malaysian Press (MP)
As he kissed his wet lips down my face and neck and then began to shove his hands up under my shirt, I wept (Sebold, <i>The Lovely Bones</i> , 2002).	Soothsayer rapes woman, crushes her and her daughter to death in Chennai (The Times of India, 2019).	Enraged by rape of four-year-old girl (The Star, 2019).

Clause → **Noun / Noun Phrase + Verb Phrase**

[e.g., **Soothsayer rapes woman**]

Verb Phrase → **Verb (Prep. Phrase) & (Prep. Phrase)**

[e.g., to death, by rape of four year old girl]

Clauses expanded by adding optional arguments:

Soothsayer rapes woman,

Soothsayer crushes woman,

Soothsayer crushes woman to death,

Soothsayer crushes daughter,

Soothsayer crushes daughter to death,

Soothsayer crushes both woman and daughter to death

The subject is the one who rapes, crushes and kills, and the object is the woman. The expanded optional arguments modify both the verb and noun allows the writer to organize and present and represent information from a particular perspective. In the Indian press (IP), by mentioning the perpetrator first and mentioning his profession, the crime is shifted to a minority group. The victim is partly responsible for being out to see the culprit. In the Malaysian press (MP), the clause is turned into a phrase, with information being left out. We do not have the name of the person abusing. The missing information gives rise to further speculation.

Step 2: The integration tool

This section looks at how clauses are integrated or packaged into utterances or sentences. What is left out and included in terms of optional arguments. In this section, only the quotations in the newspaper reports will be analysed. Whose voice is depicted? Who is given the opportunity to explain and how are adjectives encapsulated? For example,

“He always kept Rs 10 note in trousers. Whenever he got an opportunity, he would offer it to the girl on the pretext of buying them chocolate and lured them. When the victims followed him, the accused would take them to an isolated place, spend some time talking to them to ensure the victim was comfortable and that no one suspected anything,” said Raj Kumar, sub-inspector, “He would then commit the crime” (Hindustan Times, 2019).

Here the voice of the sub-inspector is used to interpret the event. Perhaps this provides the illusion that justice will prevail. Here the emphasis is on the criminal. “*He always kept*”, “*He got an opportunity*”, and “*He lured them*”. It depicts the modus operandi of the criminal. Such information adds value to criminal proceedings over time but it ignores the ordeal of the victim and details about the prosecution.

Step 3: How narratives are disguised

This will look at how speech is organized into groups of ideas or stanzas. The sub-inspectors voice has a higher order structure made up of a SETTING, in terms of time, space, character; a CATALYST, which sets the problem; a CRISIS, which builds the problem, an EVALUATION, which makes it clear why the story is interesting and a RESOLUTION which solves the problem set by the story; and a CODA, which closes the story.

ANALYSIS

a. Utterances of Rape Headlines (IP vs MP)

Each of the utterances in the headlines was (1) saying so directly, and (2) and (3) saying so indirectly. Utterances (2) and (3) were expressing bonding with the audience, while (1) was more socially and emotionally neutral as in 2.1a-c:

2.1a	Saying directly Clause → Noun / Noun Phrase + Verb Phrase	IP	MP
		<i>Fear stalks locals...</i>	<i>Tourist bus driver held...</i>
		<i>Woman gang raped...</i>	<i>Year five people in custody...</i>
		<i>16 year old raped by neighbour...</i>	<i>Senior citizen remanded...</i>
2.1b	Saying indirectly Noun Phrase → (Adj.) & (Prep. Phrase) & (Noun Phrase)	<i>Unnao victim's father won't have died...</i>	<i>Enraged by rape of four year old girl</i>
		<i>Haryana rape and murder: 15 year old Dalit girl wanted to be doctor</i>	
2.1c	Saying indirectly	<i>Rape more serious offence than murder: Maharashtra gov. tells High court</i>	<i>What seduction? Babies, fellow mean become rape victims too</i>

*System has failed us: Reported child abuse
 mother of 2012 Delhi gang cases that still shock
 rape victim Malaysians*

The arguments of the verbs were on the experience of the object (e.g. “child raped, killed, dumped”) as outlined below. The simplest clauses were made up of a verb and some background on the actual rape event (refer 2.2 a-b):

2.2a	IP	MP
	<i>Fear stalks locals even six years after child was raped, killed and dumped in drain</i>	<i>Intellectually disabled woman allegedly raped by father and his friend</i>
	Subject + Verb + Object	Subject + Verb Predicate + Noun
2.2b	<i>Victim was drugged before sexual assault</i>	<i>Batu Gajah police nab driver for alleged molest, rape of disabled stepdaughter</i>
	Subject + be Predicate + Noun	Subject + verb Predicate + Adjective

The clauses were expanded by optional elements that either modified the verb or the whole clause as in 2.3a-d:

2.3a	<i>held over alleged rape of stepdaughter</i>	[“alleged” modifies the clause -bus driver- raped stepdaughter]
2.3b	<i>remanded, suspected for molesting and raping adopted daughter</i>	[“suspected” modifies the clause Senior citizen –molested-raped adopted daughter]
2.3c	<i>raped by vice-principal, class teacher in Jharkhand</i>	[“in Jharkhand” modifies the clause Vice Principal raped -Year 4 student]
2.3d	<i>raped, murdered by cousin in MP</i>	[“by cousin in MP” modifies the clause Five year old raped – murdered]

Integrating or packaging clauses allow newspaper writers to organize how they present and represent information about rape and violence as indicated in 2.4a-b:

2.4a	<i>Surat girl, 3, raped and killed by neighbour, body found in bag</i>	[=aged 3 and body found in bag is embedded inside “girl-raped and killed by neighbour”...]
2.4b	<i>Surat girl, 3, raped and killed allegedly by neighbour, body found in bag</i>	[=aged 3 and body found in bag is embedded inside “girl - raped and killed allegedly by neighbour”...]

Similarly, when material placed in subordinate clause is assumed and not asserted; material placed in the main clause gets foregrounded and asserted as indicated below:

Subordinate Clause	Main Clause
	(1) Batu Gajah police nab driver for alleged molest,
	Embedded Clause
	(2) The police think some form molesting could have taken place
rape of disabled stepdaughter	Embedded Clause
	(3) The police think some form of rape could have taken place
	Embedded Clause
	(4) The disabled stepdaughter shows signs of being molested and raped
↓	↓
The disabled stepdaughter	Molest and rape is different due to insufficient proof

b. Discussion

From the headlines for IP in Table 1, priority is given to the ‘subject’ of the sentence which is often the victim of the sexual violence (e.g. Clause/NP - women gang raped, Unnao victim’s father, Victim, Class 4 student). Different names are intentionally placed to protect the victim and also to give priority and importance. This is in contrast to how the MP press position the victim (e.g. VP – Verb + rape of stepdaughter + raping adopted daughter). In MP the victim is projected as the object. In IP, in addition to giving priority to the victims by placing the subjects, integrating information (e.g. class 4 students, 8 years old Dalit girl), the act is also highlighted to raise awareness about the way perpetrators act (gang raped and burnt alive; raped, killed and dumped) to depict that sexual violence is not limited to a lone wolf act but done in packs and it affects the victim, the victim’s family and the community, thus making it a genuine concern for all. While the names of the victims are concealed, the places where rape occurs is often highlighted either at the beginning of the clause or sentence. This, however, is different in MP, where the focus is given to the perpetrator and place names are only given in situations where the law catches up with the culprit. The victims in Malaysian reports are placed as objects that come after their attackers.

In terms of integrating information, the predicates in the headlines of IP generally refer to the bone-chilling experiences of the victims and previews the savage acts. E.g., ‘stalks’ is used to signify the long-lasting effects of crime in a community. A child became victim; the child was abused, killed and dumped. Other predicates in IP refer to the seriousness of the crime where rape is not within family members but expands to society i.e., gang rape, being burnt alive, being drugged, poisoned, killed and dumped etc. The reporting is direct, explicit, and details the crime minutely, and, thereby highlights the horror and heinousness of the crime, and the painful humiliation victims go through. Interestingly, the MP prefers to colour their predicates with verbs that speak about judicial procedures and punishment which the criminal likely to receive while ignoring what has happened to the victim. The verbs mostly used are: held, charged, sent, remanded, sentences, nab/nabbed, and detain etc. It is almost as if justice is swift and the case is closed.

A headline in one of the reports in IP contains the word ‘Dalit girl’. ‘Dalit’ is used to refer to the lowest class in Indian society, and the ‘Dalits’ are still considered untouchables in many parts of India. The fifteen year old ‘Dalit girl’ mentioned was brutally raped and savagely

killed. Her private parts mutilated, some vital organs ruptured, and her half-naked body was discovered near the banks of a canal. Her mother's voice is projected in the news:

“Even beasts will not be this cruel. Those who gave so much pain to my daughter and killed her in this manner, are much worse than that.”

Word choice such as *beasts*, *cruel*, *pain*, *killed*, and *worse* in the quotation depicts the perpetrator as a powerful man who possesses sufficient strength to silence and maims a woman. The word ‘Dalit’ in the heading speaks loudly for the incorrect status of women in select societies. IP have sufficient reasons to speak loudly against rape since press freedom has helped them solve many societal problems. Another incidence being the situation when a girl was fatally gang raped on a moving bus in 2012 in Delhi. The victim's mother cry resonates in many parts of India,

“It has been six years since the incident took place. Similar incidents are still taking place every day, our system has failed us. Even after so many years, we see cases of brutal rape and murder of young women. This should stop at the earliest.”

Such cries would not have been heard if not for the attention given the event by the Indian press and international media. Following an increasing spate of news reports highlighting victims and the sufferings of their families, the Indian government decided to introduce death penalty to the perpetrators of minors. However, the child rights activists united against this decision, to argue for the introduction of the death penalty as it would simply lead to a decrease in the already poor conviction rates in rape cases. Vinod Tikoo, a former member of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, says,

“I fear that with the death penalty, most people will not report child rapes, as in most cases the accused are family members. The conviction rate will come down further.”

It was the newspaper's coverage of rape crimes and their narratives against rape and violence that helped bring about greater awareness about sexual violence in society. The press in India and Malaysia have helped by repeatedly reporting rape and violence and draw attention to this social injustice to help society rethink rape discourse.

In a rape report in Malaysia, a bus driver is held over the alleged rape of his own stepdaughter inside the house. This crime raises many questions over blood and social relationships between men and women, and it strongly alarms that women are not safe even amidst fathers and brothers. However, given the sensitivity of certain relationships and the impact it would have on the sole ‘breadwinner’ and family, the Malaysian press appears to be not giving sufficient space to the voices of the victims.

In terms of giving a voice, the role of police in detaining the culprit is given precedence and the victim's family is often overlooked. In another incident, an intellectually disabled woman is said to have been raped by her own father and his friend. The woman is twenty-eight and her father is sixty-one and his friend is fifty-three-year-old. The police report says,

“According to the victim's statement, she was raped by her father at home in May. In the same month, her father took her to a friend's farm and raped her there.”

The intellectually disabled woman is used as an object while her father as the subject. The woman is left to fend for herself and there is no statement from the medical officer or social worker showing that very often, Malaysian women do not have the support that they need. Newspaper reporters can go further to help such women.

CONCLUSION

Media ethics and social responsibility have always been important but never so much as today when so much information is available at the palm of one's hand. Major newspapers may be governed by their own rules and agenda setting but they are in a position of immense information power and this comes with social responsibility from the reporter, photographer, copy-editor, news editor, and up the line to the analysts and the editor. How and what they sift and shift, make them gatekeepers.

A newspaper audience might not like to be made responsible for many of problem faced by others. This may be more so in multiracial and multilingual nations like India and Malaysia. Race, class based politics may prevail with reports quick to divorce their audience from the event by naming the place. Many may be interested in the political system, market economy and prefer being involved in organizing the way people think and look at things. To these people issues about sexual violence, rape and murder happen to women who are at the wrong place at the wrong time. Their hypothesis would be rape and murder always happens to others. Sadly rape and violence will continue as long as society permits the culture.

When news media play up images (e.g. project a single criminal), write about single mother, a low caste woman, girl out at night as victims, it is possible to say, yeah, sure, she asked for it but why should this percentage of society hide away where others can walk. Again, it is not about women asking to be raped. So long as men think they have the power to hurt and dictate others, then the media has the responsibility to make society realize that to force one's opinion, prejudice and violate another person's right is wrong. Unless news media decide to write against rape, explain the heinousness of the crime, young women will never feel safe and free on the streets.

Finally, media being ubiquitous can play vital roles in empowering society. Citizen journalism through social media may be narrow, subjective and unmediated. Fictional rape may be interesting by requires in depth reading and interest and may not be read by many. Similarly, the worm's eye view may be limited. Disinformation can contribute to a skewed perspective of the reality of rape as a crime. In other words, newspapers need to get better, not worse, to retain the loyalty of readers and the ringgits and rupees of advertisers. If they fail to get better, newspapers will continue to shrink in size, in quality and importance or close as in some cases. This would be tragic because no other news medium can fill the role that good newspaper plays in informing and educating the country.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 2: Headlines / Titles of Rape and Murder in Indian Press and Malaysian Press

SN	Indian Press	Malaysian Press
1	Fear stalks locals even six years after child was raped, killed and dumped in drain	Tourist bus driver held over alleged rape of stepdaughter
2	Woman gang raped, burnt alive inside temple premises in UP's Sambhal	Fisherman charged with 22 counts of sexually assaulting 12-year-old stepdaughter
3	System has failed us: Mother of 2012 Delhi gang rape victim	Man sent to the gallows for murder
4	Rape more serious offence than murder: Maharashtra govt tells High Court	Year Five pupil in custody on suspicion of rape
5	Child rights activists oppose death penalty for rape of minors	Senior citizen remanded, suspected for molesting and raped adopted daughter
6	Unnao victim's father won't have died if complaint to CM was acted upon: Allahabad HC	Security guard sentenced to death for rape and murder of student
7	Victim was drugged before sexual assault	Batu Gajah police nab driver for alleged molest, rape of disabled stepdaughter
8	Class 4 student raped by vice-principal, class teacher in Jharkhand	Lorry driver charged with murder and rape of assistant registrar
9	16-year-old raped by neighbor, burnt to death in Ghazipur	Standard Five boy nabbed for raping cousin, 12, in Sabah
10	Bhagalpur woman raped and burnt by kin, dies	Cops detain suspect over tweet linking Orang Asli to death of Nora Anne
11	Punjab: Minor girl gang-raped, poisoned to death	Unemployed man charged with rape, murder of 85-year-old woman
12	Eight-year-old Dalit girl 'raped', murdered in Rajasthan's Jhalawar	Report: Over 50,000 Sex Crimes & Domestic Violence Cases Recorded in M'sia Since 2013
13	Lure, rape, kill: Gurugram serial rapist followed pattern, always wore 'lucky' shirt	Reported child abuse cases that still shock Malaysians
14	Surat girl, 3, raped and killed allegedly by neighbor, body found in bag	Intellectually disabled woman allegedly raped by father and his friend
15	Five-year old raped, murdered by cousin in MP	Enraged by rape of four-year-old girl
16	Haryana rape and murder: 15-year-old Dalit girl wanted to be doctor	Nine-month-old baby dies after alleged rape by caretaker's husband in Bangi
17	12-year-old molestation victim dies under treatment	I want justice, says mother of baby girl killed in shocking rape crime
18	Pune: Kidnapped & sexually abused, 3-year-old girl dies of head injury	Baby dies in Malaysia after alleged rape by caretaker's husband from Channelnewasia
19	Gurgaon: Three-year-old missing from home found raped and murdered	Woman murdered in Seri Kembangan: 4 housemates detained
20	Telangana rape-murders: Day after arrest, accused confesses to another victim	Girl dies after allegedly fighting off rapist

APPENDIX 2

Indian Press

hindustantimes
 Friday, Oct 25, 2019 New Delhi 27°C - 1 page

In Kathua rape case, court orders FIR against SIT members
 A local court on Tuesday ordered Jammu superintendent of police (SP) Tejinder Singh to register an FIR against six members of the special investigation team (SIT) who probed the 2018 rape and murder of an eight-year-old nomadic girl in Kashmir's Kathua district for allegedly torturing and coercing witnesses to give false statements. (Reuters file photo for representation)

INDIA Updated: Oct 23, 2019 09:47 AM
 HT Correspondent
 Jammu

NO MERCY TO RAPIST

The special investigation team (SIT) probed the 2018 rape and murder of an eight-year-old nomadic girl in Kathua district for allegedly torturing and coercing witnesses to give false statements. (Reuters file photo for representation)

A local court on Tuesday ordered Jammu superintendent of police (SP) Tejinder Singh to register an FIR against six members of the special investigation team (SIT) of the state crime branch that probed the 2018 rape and murder of an eight-year-old nomadic girl in Kathua district for allegedly torturing and coercing witnesses to give false statements.

Judicial magistrate Prem Sagar issued an order that read, "From the gist of the complaint, cognizable offences are made out against the non-applicants (sic crime branch officials) herein. Therefore, application under Section 156(3) CrPc is allowed with direction to SP Jammu to register FIR against non-applicants under relevant provisions of law and report compliance by November 7, the next date of hearing."

The court directed registration of FIR against the then SSP D.K. Jalla (now retired), ASP Preetinder Narveed, deputy superintendents of police Shabbir Shams and Nissar Hussain, sub-inspector Dhan Virshi and Javed Hishore of crime branch of police and asked the SP Jammu to report compliance by next date of hearing.

Advocate Ashraf Shams had filed the application on behalf of Sachin Shams of Kathua, Naveed Shams of Jhelum and Fahid Shams of Rajpura Samba. All three were witnesses in the case.

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"The FIR has been ordered by the city judge against six SIT members, including the then SP Crime Branch XX Jalla, for custodial torture, illegal confinement, criminal intimidation and creation of false evidence against my clients, who were made witnesses in the case," advocate Shams said.

Malaysian Press

NEW STRAITS TIMES
 Friday, 25 October 2019, 9:26 AM

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 British PM Johnson calls for Dec 12

By Norazikin Daimah, Hazzyah Abdul Rahman - October 23, 2019 @ 8:14pm

SANDAKAN: A plantation worker has been sentenced by the Sessions Court here to 40 years in jail and 20 strokes of the cane for raping his employer's daughter.

Judge Indra Ayub meted out the sentence against Mohd Ayub Darman, 25, after he pleaded guilty to the three charges read before him.

Based on the first charge, he was accused of raping a 10-year-old girl at a palm oil plantation at a village in the district on Nov 15, 2017.

For the second charge, he was accused of raping the same girl on June 2 last year at a plantation in the district, while the third, he was accused of raping the girl in a bedroom on Oct 5 last year.

The charges were framed under Section 274(2)(a) of the Penal Code which carries a jail term of not less than 10 years and not more than 30 years, and caning.

The accused was sentenced to 10 years and six strokes of the cane for the first charge, 12 years and eight strokes for the second charge, and 18 years and 10 strokes for the third.

Earlier, the accused, who was not represented, pleaded for a lenient sentence, saying he regretted his action and promised to change.

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