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(PSSIR 2018)

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'Stop Violence Against Women', A Critical Estimate on Sensationalism in the Indian Press

Ronie Thomas
Department of Political Science & Public Administration
St. Johns College
Achal, India

Abstract — It is widely established that media can play a major role in protecting and promoting human rights in the world. It can make people aware of the need to promote certain values in the form of human rights to mankind. The predominant role of media in addressing violence against women is particularly important in this current era of globalization and information revolution wherein the media reflects and contributes in shaping the core values and attitudes of society. Given the scenario, the present paper explores the role of Newspapers in addressing violence against women. Today, when Newspapers are on the decline and market driven motives are eroding the more solid values of journalism, there is a tendency among the journalists to focus on sensationalism rather than on ethical and normative dimensions of news or its objectivity. This is particularly true when we consider the Newspapers in India where in patriarchal values and perspectives still decide the content and value of news. Unless there is a huge political or civil society outrage, issues of violence against women are often neglected by our mainstream Newspapers. There are many examples to substantiate this argument. Hence, the focus of this paper is the role of the press on violence against women in India.

Keywords—*Sensationalism, Gender bias, Gender Violence.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The multidimensional consequences of violence on women and girls require relevant policy interventions at the international, national and local levels. Apart from the governments, international agencies and civil society organizations, the media- including print, visual and social media- can contribute a great extent to this global strategy to

reduce violence against women. Media reflects and contributes in shaping the core values and attitudes of society besides disseminating information. Therefore, mass media such as daily newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, video clips, posters, songs etc. and the internet play an important role in introducing the topic to the public and breaking the silence surrounding it and challenging existing norms, gender stereotypes and attitudes that tolerate it. Nevertheless, media often fail to highlight this critical role and instead often support violence against women either through silently ignoring it or projecting the opposite versions.

Violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights, which stretches across nations, cultures, and classes. It is a mass phenomenon taking many different forms with disastrous consequences on women's life itself. The social and economic costs resulting from this abuse place a substantial burden on society as a whole, significantly hampering development. Therefore, preventing violence against women and girls is a key factor to achieve most of the UN Millennium Development Goals and to upkeep the dignity and status of Man as the rational creation.

Given the scenario, the present study explores the role of Newspapers in addressing violence against women. News has classically been known as the first draft of history [1]. Journalism needs to take up issues that shape the lives of citizens as well as questions and instances of degeneration and destruction of life and dignity. Today, when Newspapers are on the decline and market driven motives are eroding the more solid values of journalism, there is a tendency among the journalists to focus on sensationalism rather than on ethical and normative dimensions of news or its objectivity. This is particularly true in the context of India where patriarchal values and perspectives still pervade the society. Unless there is a huge political or civil society outrage, issues of violence against women are seldom attended to or often neglected by our mainstream Newspapers. Hence, this paper focuses on the