

REPORTING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND INTERSECTIONALITY

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MEDIA AND WOMEN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

- Two case studies – one in Australia and another in India
- Both case studies focus on women from diverse backgrounds in each country
- Both consider the media's inability to report on intersectional factors
- Both studies highlight the need for diverse voices in the newsrooms and on social media



TWO CASE STUDIES

- Australian media, intersectionality and reporting on violence against women from diverse background – Usha M. Rodrigues
- Exploring the digital divide as a component of intersectionality through the #DalitLivesMatter movement – Ali Saha, Usha M. Rodrigues and Paromita Pain



REPORTING ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW)

Reporting on VAW has been criticized

- Negligible reporting of the VAW and related issues
- Reporting, when another news value present – celebrity or person in power – politics or corporate
- Unusual nature of the event itself – use of brutal force or means
- Victims either presented as innocent or sexualized vamps
- Most of the coverage is episodic (and not covered as a societal issue)
- The media usually depicts sexual violence victims as middle-class, educated, well-behaved, young and attractive, unless they are from diverse background
- Domestic violence seen as private matter and culturally sensitive issue



INTERSECTIONALITY

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (2021) defines intersectionality as

“[a] theoretical approach that understands the interconnected nature of social categorizations – such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religion, class, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ability or age – which create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage for either an individual or group.”

Crenshaw (1989) used the term “intersectionality” to focus on two dimensions of male violence against women – battering and rape – to note how black women’s experiences were ignored due to an intersecting patterns of racism and sexism



SUPPORT NEEDED FOR WOMEN FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

- Australia is a multicultural society with a majority Australians either born overseas or having a parent born overseas
- Call for inclusive policies and investment in domestic violence support for women from culturally diverse backgrounds (Stayner 2020)
- Migrant and refugee women experienced increase rates of domestic & family violence during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns (Segrave et al 2021)
- Women from Indigenous backgrounds continue to be hospitalized many times over than non-Indigenous adults due to family violence (AIH 2019)



ASSESS THE QUALITY OF NEWS REPORTING ON VAW FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

- A content analysis of news published by three main online news sites – The Age, the Herald Sun and the ABC
- Four months during the long COVID-19 lockdown in Victoria
- Search terms included domestic or family violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Isolated stories that had a reference to a culturally diverse person or aspect – stories were codified for content analysis
- Reporters' name recorded along with their gender, and their cultural background identified



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- 89% news articles, 6% features, 1% editorial & commentary pieces
- News articles on specific episode of DV, SA, SH & SV
- Over 37% of the stories focused on DV
- 34% on sexual violence, while over 20% discussed the issue of sexual harassment
- About 2/3rd of the stories identified women as victims
- A variety of sources quoted in these stories – courts, police, experts, advocates, government reps, victims, perpetrators, relatives and eye-witnesses
- This is a positive compared to 2010 when dominant source was the police (Simon & Morgan, 2018)



RESULTS & DISCUSSION

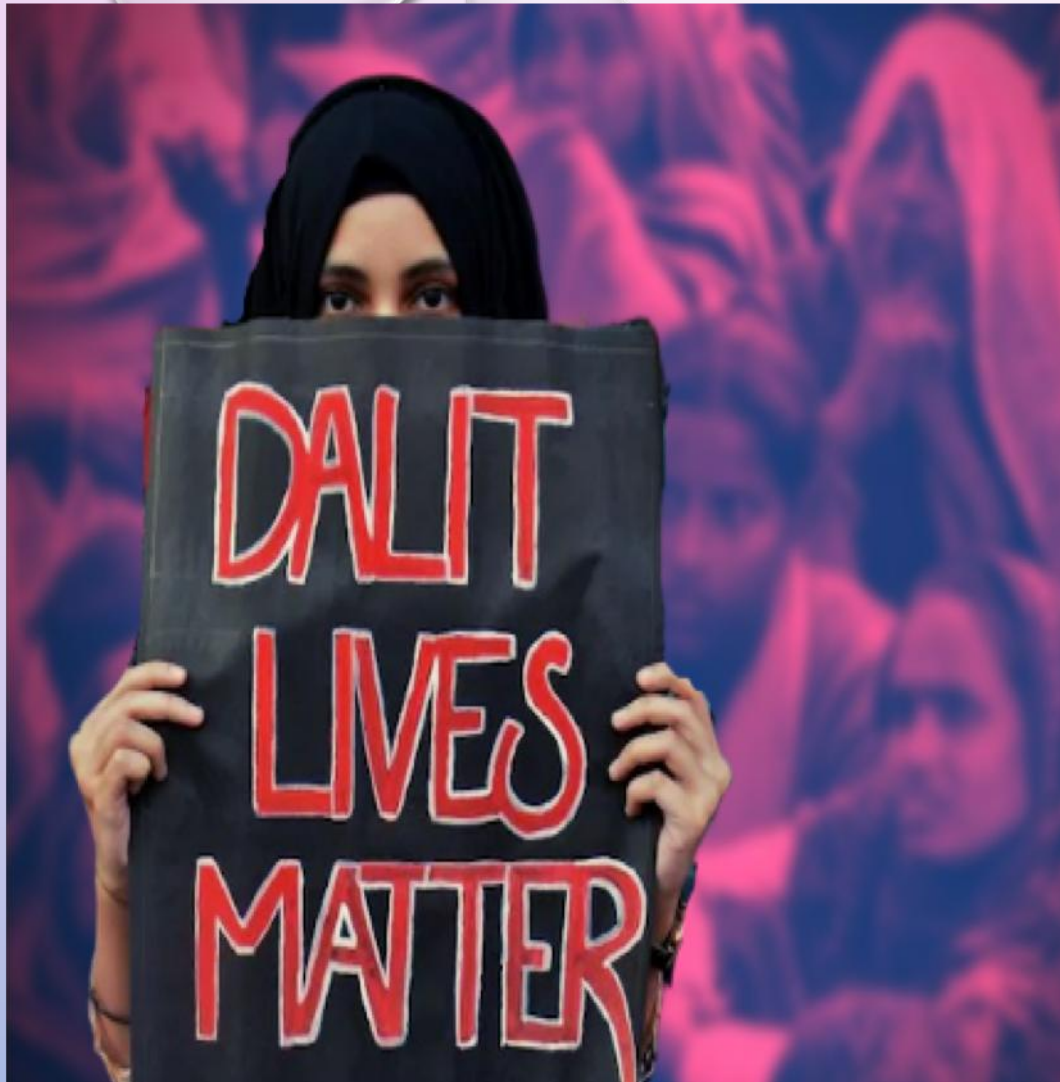
TONE

- About 76% of stories are presented in neutral tone, about 23% use a constructive language in terms of the issues covered
- Australian reporters are increasingly commenting on the legal constraints within which they write these stories on DV and SA

Who tells the stories? If intersectional factors included in the media coverage?

- Over 69% of stories are written by a journalist from an Anglo-Celtic
- Over 41% of the stories are reported by a male journalist
- Only a handful of stories discuss the issue of intersectional factors impacting on victims of DV and SA





EXPLORING DIGITAL
DIVIDE AS A
COMPONENT OF
INTERSECTIONALITY
THROUGH
#DALITLIVESMATTER
MOVEMENT

DR ALI SAHA

PROF USHA M. RODRIGUES

DR PAROMITA PAIN





Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement.

(Cixous, 1975, p. 347)



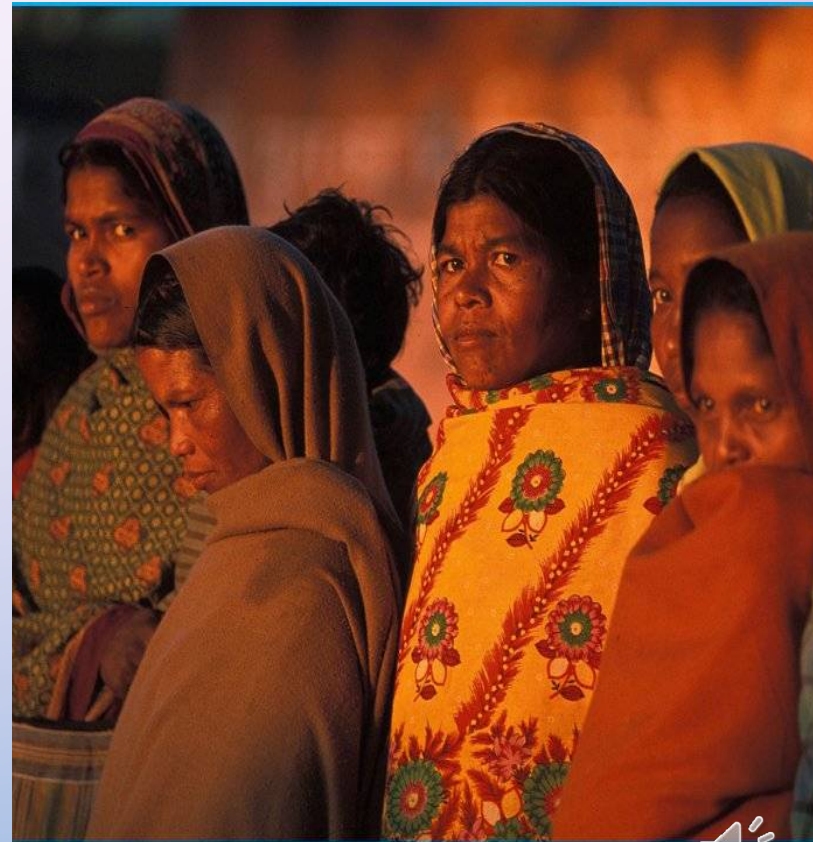
DALITS' STATUS IN INDIA

- Dalits/untouchables (people of god) evolved because of the caste system, sanctioned by Hindu religion
- Dalits are considered to be at the lowest level of the social hierarchy
- Excluded from public places
- Forced to perform degrading tasks such as manual cleaning
- The Indian constitution abolished untouchability and prohibited discrimination based on caste, and guaranteed equal social, political, and economic rights for the Dalits
- About 25% of Indian Dalits continue to remain vulnerable to physical, psychological, and sexual violence by people from other castes (teltumbde, [2020](#); zelliot, [2010](#)). Many live in extreme poverty...



DALIT WOMEN

- Intersection between caste and gender in India, discrimination against Dalit women is more intense and frequent than that of Dalit men.
- Denial of social, cultural, political, and economic rights of Dalit women who constitute approximately 16.6% of all Indian women.
- Violence serves as a crucial social mechanism to maintain Dalit subordination in society.



HATHRAS CASE AND #DALITLIVESMATTER

- On 14 September 2020, a 19-year-old Dalit woman was gang-raped in Hathras district, Uttar Pradesh, India, by four upper caste men
- The Dalit woman died two weeks later. After her death, the victim was forcibly cremated by the police without the consent of her family. The police deny this allegation.
- The case and its subsequent handling received widespread media attention and condemnation from across the country
- It was the subject of protests giving way to the online #dalitlivesmatter movement which gained prominence



HOW WERE DALIT WOMEN'S VOICES REPRESENTED

This study aimed to answer:

- How were Dalit women represented in the mainstream media in the context of the Hathras incident?
- What was women's participation in the online #dalitlivesmatter moment in 2020?



NEWS MEDIA'S COVERAGE

Analysis of news stories in the TOI and HT two weeks following the incident showed

1. Equal number of male and female voices
2. But, dominated by non-Dalit elite voices
3. Dalit voices included after September 28, when an argument about the Dalit girl being forcefully cremated by the police gained attention
4. Representing Dalit men as protesters versus Dalit women as victims
5. Most of the reports provided details of the rape in a sensationalistic way, without acknowledging casteist and other intersectional factors



DALIT WOMEN'S VOICE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

The analysis of the top twitter posts showed:

1. Most posts were made by Dalit men and organizations
2. Posts largely focused on rape but ignored other forms of abuse of Dalit women
3. Posts constantly reflected the emotion of anger regarding atrocities against Dalits in general and pity for Dalit women's suffering
4. Posts focused on casteist practice but ignored intersectional factors such as gender and class affecting Dalit women
5. A lack of amplification of Dalit women's voices on Twitter

IS DIVERSITY OF VOICES IN THE NEWSROOMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA THE ANSWER?

- Why is the media coverage of VAW from diverse backgrounds important?
- Media's coverage of VAW influences government policies and service response to victims from diverse backgrounds
- Both these studies found the news media's inability to report on intersectional factors
- Both studies highlighted the need for diverse voices in the newsrooms
- The second study also noted that on social media Dalit women remained invisible. They are talked about by Dalit men or non-Dalit women, emphasising the need to address digital divide as an intersectional factor

