

Chapter – 3

Research Methodology and Data Collection

The previous chapter provided a theoretical base for the study by discussing and analysing various studies, blogs and books by eminent media scholars regarding the media representation of gender issues. Based on the literature reviewed, central themes have been identified and news articles on gender issues are analysed and interpreted based on these themes. This chapter explains in detail the methodology used for this research. It also provides an overview of the research design, the data collection methods used, research instruments used and data analysis techniques undertaken.

From the conceptual framework and the literature reviewed it can be concluded that an interpretive research strategy, employing quantitative and qualitative methods of data gathering and predominantly qualitative analysis is required.

Qualitative analysis draws primarily on thematic content analysis as a research mechanism and Strauss and Corbin (in Van Zoonen, 1994:134)¹ define qualitative as any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Rudestam and Newton (1992)² state that qualitative research can be defined as involving descriptive data that is made up of words rather than numbers. Qualitative research is centrally concerned with understanding things rather than with measuring them. The qualitative approach is also known as the interpretative, constructivist or post positivist approach. These authors explain that qualitative research studies share one or more of the following purposes:

- **Verification:** The qualitative approach allows a researcher to test the validity of certain assumptions, claims, theories or generalizations within real-world contexts.
- **Description:** Qualitative research can reveal the nature of certain situations, settings, processes, relationships, systems or people.

- **Interpretation:** It enables a researcher to (a) gain insights about the nature of particular phenomena, (b) develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives about the phenomenon, and/or (c) discover the problems that exist within the phenomenon.

In this chapter, the researcher has also outlined the time frame of this study. It must be noted that the analysis is not only analytical but also interpretive. This analysis seeks to get beneath the surface meanings and examines more implicit social meanings.

The basic methodological approach in this research is inspired by the simplest questions that one needs to ask --more as a layman rather than as media scholar in relation with the media and gender. At the root of all methods and computer programmes used in the subsequent chapters, is an attempt to analyse the patterns of representation of gender issues in print as well as broadcast media. Questions which involve studying some of the social and political processes of larger society include what the media covers and what they leave out. It would be prudent to recall at this juncture, the Research Questions this study seeks to answer, which have been mentioned in the Introduction Chapter. They are:

- 1) *How and to what extent do the print and the broadcast media report gender issues?*
- 2) *How is broadcast media fared in terms of giving importance to gender issues as compared to the print media?*
- 3) *How news stories on gender issues are framed and to what extent the coverage by media is episodic or thematic.*
- 4) *What is the editorial orientation of the newspapers and news channels towards gender issues?*

This study attempts to answer the above questions using quantitative and qualitative content analysis approach. The research draws on various types of studies conducted in different fields of social sciences. The conceptual framework chapter has quoted and discussed some important contributions made to the study of mass media and gender studies by social scientists, psychologists, linguists, jurists, historians and culturologists among others. The present study is basically a piece of media research but its multi-disciplinary framework often stretches its basic inquiry beyond mass communications. That is why once in a while the study appears more problem-centric than media centric. The spirit of this research is rooted in

what Halloran (1983) calls critical eclecticism³. The theoretical approaches used in the analysis for developing a conceptual framework are discussed in the last chapter. Content analysis is seen as a quantitative technique which is both an objective and systematic method of analysis of the media's manifest content.⁴

Stempel III has underlined the need for a formal content analysis by arguing that issues like gender issues, violence and television are far too crucial to be left for "people's impressions"⁵. The biggest advantage of drawing conclusions on the basis of a scientific content analysis is that it makes it possible to make "replicable and valid inferences from data to their context."⁶

It has been argued that data per se serves no purpose and that it is essential to back the whole exercise of data analysis with a perspective of theoretical understanding. One of the disadvantages of a purely quantitative content analysis is that it runs the risk of losing the meaning of data in the same sense as one may confuse trees with the woods. That is why the exponents of a more qualitative approach find the quantitative approaches shallow and simplistic. But the old debate of quantitative versus qualitative content analysis has become less important today because the two perspectives of analysis are seen more as complementary rather than exclusive to each other.

With the advent of new and diverse textual analysis techniques such as social semiotics and critical linguistics among others, and with the emergence of more eclectic and multi-disciplinary media analysis approaches, the abstractness of news discourse could be underpinned by sociological paradigms and its meaning could be understood in a more holistic sense. The importance of theory in Content analysis is evident in the following lines: *"We can recognise that data without adequate theory are intellectually sterile, but we must also acknowledge that theory, unless subjected to rigorous and wide-ranging empirical test, is merely polemic."*⁷

3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis is one of the primary methodological tools for analysing media communications. According to Holsti, content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of

messages”⁸. Holsti goes further to outline the questions content analysis is most helpful in answering.⁹ He suggests content analysis has three fundamental goals. First, content analysis can be very effective in helping to describe the characteristics of messages, without delving into the encoding or decoding processes that many studies of media include¹⁰. Second, content analysis allows researchers to make “inferences about the causes or antecedent of the message”¹¹. This form of analysis is not as focused on questions of “what” but rather on questions of “who” or “why”, and as such is open to criticism since much of the relationship between statements and motivations of individuals are open to wide and varied interpretation. The third goal of content analysis is to make inferences about the effects of the messages¹². This form of analysis cannot be centred on media alone, but must also find ways to evaluate the recipients of the communication and connect audience members to media texts.

Content analysis focuses on the two major forms of information presented in media: structural content and substantive content. Substantive content can be further categorized into manifest or latent content. Additionally, analysis of media content can occur in a qualitative or quantitative form, although commonly a mixed-methods approach is used and the researcher has adopted the same approach for the present study.

Structural content analysis focuses on the physical characteristics of media communications. In the case of print media, the form of media examined in this thesis, questions are asked regarding the length of a story or column, its placement in the newspaper and so on. These categories are easily quantifiable and are readily apparent for measurement. Typically, these types of examinations have high inter-coder correlation, because it is easier for different coders to reach agreement on objective structural characteristics of news stories compared to the substantive content or message of a story, which are open to greater interpretation.

Substantive content analysis is an examination of the deeper meanings in a text. This type of exploration can be achieved through asking questions that go beyond the more surface-level structural content. Analysis of substantive content is meant to get at the underlying message of an article, and analysis tends to focus on the topics being explored, the kinds of quotes being used or the implicit meaning conveyed through the choice of metaphors or frames, to provide a few examples. These questions may be posed in such a way as to get at more subjective content in the text – for example, coding the tone of an article, a task that requires

more interpretation from the coder(s) than tallying the word count for a story. While structural content analysis tends to be quantitative in nature, both quantitative and qualitative forms of data collection can occur when dealing with substantive content.

Although examinations of manifest content are often more reliable, methodologically speaking, latent content is usually more significant or interesting (Riffe et al., 1998: 107)¹³. For this reason, many studies combine analysis of both manifest and latent content, typically using analyses of manifest content in order to make inferences about latent content. The two do not exist in separate spheres. Usually manifest and latent content have a degree of overlap; hence, the majority of content analyses are compelled to address both.

Although content analysis is often a process of turning qualitative texts into quantifiable data, there are ways to approach content analysis in which data are not transformed into numerical representations, but rather approached in a more 'raw' or contextual state – where information is not reinterpreted as part of a coded index, but is instead examined in its original presentation. This could involve examining the way sentences are constructed, or how particular descriptive word choices are employed. In these instances, a qualitative approach is adopted wherein the researcher searches for themes in media instead of recording the amount a particular subject is discussed or the number of times a term is used, for example.

This form of analysis is often supported by the use of quotes, which can help illustrate the themes in a way quite separate from the number of times a particular trait or label may be mentioned. Arguably, however, the most powerful and comprehensive form of communications analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

The content analysis is designed to study basic determinants of a news story which is treated as a single unit of analysis. These determinants are: prominence, sources, themes, descriptions and story judgements. This part of the analysis brings out (a) the manner in which a particular newspaper and news channel defines the gender-related issues and (b) contrasts and similarities in the perceptions of these papers and news channels. However, both these sections pertain to the area of the newspapers' manifest content. For instance, the content analysis brings out the most important themes and sources of gender-related news, as perceived by the individual newspapers and news channels.

Media plays an important and constructive role in any community and society as a source of information, education and entertainment. It accommodates the world into a single village which is saturated with media information. The media is a powerful tool and through its representation shapes the understanding, perception and views of society. In the present study, media stories are content analysed to determine patterns of coverage and professional practices. All news items, features, editorials and letters etc. which were on or about gender issues were picked up for coding. Items which were not primarily about gender were excluded from analysis. All these items were subsequently analysed using the statistical computer package, SPSS. In an attempt to provide space for a feminist approach in the analysis, the researcher has employed both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Feminist methodology is also more supportive of qualitative approaches (e.g., Bryman, 2004: 336)¹⁴, largely because of the feminist critiques of quantitative methods (e.g. Harding, 1987)¹⁵.

In addition to a coding grid that was used to elicit numerical data about the sample of news stories, questions were asked that could not be quantified or coded. These questions allowed the researcher to contemplate what the main message of the article was, where the focus lay and to note specific quotations that highlighted a particular bias or perspective in the presentation of opinion. This form of examination allowed the researcher to look beyond the more simple numerical data for themes that could then be supported by quotes, as suggested by Bryman (2004)¹⁶.

3.2 Selection of the Study Period

The brutal assault on a young woman in Delhi on December 16, 2012 and the protests that followed in its wake spotlighted global attention on the issue of gender-based violence, a malady that manifests itself in myriad forms across the world – sexual violence, war crimes against women, domestic abuse, domestic violence, just to name a few. This heinous gang rape led to a powerful campaign for women's liberty and subsequently Justice J.S.Verma committee made recommendations about different aspects of violence against women, including verbal sexual assault, sexual harassment at the workplace etc.

In the month of February 2013, the President of India gave his assent to the anti-rape ordinance making voyeurism, stalking, disrobing of women and acid attacks specific offences under IPC. Parliament passed the bill in March 2013, making it the strongest legal protection available to women against sexual violence. It seemed that campaign for women safety has become a movement for “freedom”.

An important part in raising this debate was played by the media, both national and foreign. As the news of the rape broke, the media went into frenzy, not just in tracking the case but in leading people to introspect. A responsible section of the media asked people to be part of radical reforms the country required while it continued to give expression to the public grief, the mourning and reconciliation as people watched in horror the victim’s final moments. The media covered the demonstrations day and night, following the protesters to every street and corner, giving a voice to their demands for justice and bringing them to the centre of political debate. Moreover, it exposed the growing crime statistics, especially in the national capital, against women. Basically, the media led bare the growing frustrations of an entire emerging aspirational urban class and generation.

As it catalyzed anger among the civil society groups, prominent dailies such as The Hindu, The Times of India, The Indian Express, Hindustan Times, and others, continuously published protesters’ movement and promoted the movement among masses not only through print but also through their electronic version.

On December 19, 2012, TOI dedicated its front page to ‘Times View’ with the headline ‘Enough Talk. Let’s make women safe’. The ‘Times View’ also included ‘6-Point Action Plan’ with respect to such cases – 1) Harder Punishment 2) Sensitize Police 3) Fast Track Courts 4) Better Patrolling 5) Use Technology 6) Database of Public Transport Personnel. The Hindu organized a public forum on December 28, 2012, bolstering the fight against sexual violence from various perspectives: Legislation, law enforcement, social activism, media and from the perspective of students.

The foreign media also stood behind the demonstrators. Reporting on the death of the victim, The New York Times stated, “Revulsion and anger over the rape has galvanized India, where women regularly face sexual harassment and assault, and where neither the police nor the judicial system is seen as adequately protecting them”; the Washington Post reported, “The

brutal rape shook Indians out of their usual apathy”. *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Mark Magnier, who was covering the campaign for his newspaper, said the case kept the rest of the world so interested since it was a “turning point” for India as it grappled with women’s issues. “Turning points always drive news,” he said, “especially since the other side to it was the ‘shining’ India posters, the ‘Incredible India campaigns’ and the meditation retreats.”

The Indian media print and broadcasting both extensively covered the issues pertaining to women’s safety and brought it to the public discourse. This leads us to the point that media activism of a powerful kind, of a type that jolts people out of their comforts and brings them on a same pedestal calling for both, meaningful dialogue and action for a better future, is not to be shunned, but actively promoted . Media advocacy is not about outrage, shrieks or passing judgments. It is about bringing people out of their closet and empowering them with skills and data to tell stories on their own. It ought to be an interesting study to see if the media can transact the women’s safety issues into some serious deliberations on broader gender issues.

When dealing with media, it is important to ask questions about what constitutes news and what media choose to focus on when reporting events or movements. Agenda-setting and framing are media theories that seek to answer questions about media content. These theories are concerned with how media select stories, the importance they place on certain aspects of stories or the way they may privilege certain viewpoints over others. The goal of these theories is to posit questions about the realities of media and the messages media impart to wider publics. Additionally, these media theories attempt to articulate more clearly the relationship between media production and content, sometimes extending their analysis to consider ownership, by beginning with the understanding that mass communication does not follow a linear process, and there is no clear distinction between where media begins and society ends (Carroll and Hackett, 2006: 86)¹⁷.

Kim, Scheufeele, and Shanhan (2002)¹⁸ through their research found out that a newspaper’s prominent coverage of a particular issue increased the importance of that issue among its readers. The study is on similar lines of Agenda Setting theory. McCombs and Shaw (1972)¹⁹ through their study of the 1968 Presidential campaign in the United States found out that there was indeed a correlation between the issues given prominence by the media and the perception of readers, who considered those issues as important. Further, a study by Dayan

and Katz (1992)²⁰ discovered that in certain cases (especially sad cases) media event could also help in giving expression to public grief, mourning and reconciliation.

Looking at the newspapers coverage of the rape case, one could see a combination of all these factors at work. On the one hand, the incident itself was indeed a grave one and hence called for wider coverage. On the other hand, the public outcry over the event also was unprecedented and media rightly took notice of this. However, questions have been raised if the coverage would be as wide if a similar incident were to happen in a smaller town and to a person from a subaltern community.

The coverage was not only confined to reporting the incident but newspapers were awash with articles, editorials and letter to the editor. For example, the reportage of the Delhi gang-rape case in Deccan Herald was wide and intensive. From December 18 to January 11 (25 days), there were in all 134 reports, besides five editorials and 15 analytical articles.

The five editorials that the paper carried displayed the position of the paper as regards crimes against women, the police system, the role of the government and what needs to be done urgently. The editorials in general emphasised the need for reform of the legal as well as police system in the country and the need for more women-friendly laws. Above all, the paper reiterated the need for a change in the mind-set of men who need to consider women as equal rather than subordinate.

As many as 15 articles put the blame on the failure of the police as well as the justice system, demanding immediate reforms. Overall, the articles emphasised long-term solutions to crimes against women. Among other things, several articles spoke of encouraging young men to participate in women's advocacy and equality issues.

There were in all 23 letters to the editor related to the incident. Considering the limited space that Deccan Herald gives to letters, this was quite adequate. On average, there was at least one letter every day for almost a month.

Almost the same pattern of coverage was seen in "Hindu", another reputed newspaper which published 130 reports, 7 editorials, and 26 articles during the same period. The Hindu gave ample space for letters to the editor, publishing, in all, 145 letters. They expressed shock and condemnation and suggested ways to tackle the issue. Some debated the viability of

castration as a solution, with quite a number of the letters supporting it, as against only a few opposing it. There were also voices on death penalty for the rapists, with opinions both for and against. A number of letters were reactions to various articles and editorials.

The coverage by newspapers also served as a forum for grief and mourning on behalf of the readers. This was clear from the wide coverage and mournful reports and articles that both papers carried on the day following the death of the girl. This is in line with what Dayan and Katz (1992)²¹ hold in their study. The tapering off of the coverage was in tandem with the fading of protests on the streets of Delhi. By then, most issues regarding violence against women and possible remedies had been discussed threadbare.

Ignoring Information & Broadcasting Minister Manish Tiwari's advice to TV channels to exercise restraint, the maximum hysteria over the incident was whipped up not just by a clutch of private channels, namely NDTV 24x7 (1,998 minutes), Aaj Tak (1,104 minutes) and Zee News (1,275 minutes) but also the national broadcaster, DD News that devoted 1,208 minutes (way beyond the 92 hours of prime time) to the Delhi gang rape incident.

Almost nothing, in the past or present compares with this kind of media attention, roughly 7,551 minutes or 252 hours of news coverage, special bulletins and talk shows against the 46 minutes devoted to all rape cases in March 2012 and 17 minutes to cases of molestation, according to a study carried out by the Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies (CMS).

Therefore, it becomes imperative study whether the issues of gender sensitivity, equality and women safety remains on the same radar for media, both print and electronic, in the coming months. Since the first quarter of the year i.e. January to March 2013, have reflected ample media space for deliberations on these issues, researcher thought it prudent to study the media coverage and space given to gender issues in the second and fourth quarter i.e. from April to June and from October to December 2013.

3.3 Selection of Newspapers and News Channels

For the purpose of this study, newspapers have been collected for a period of 6 month and its content has been analysed exhaustively. Content analysis of TV news channels has also been carried on and for this purpose the researcher has selected the leading TV news channels Aajtak and Times now. The selection has been made on the basis of TRP. Prime time (9:00

pm- 10:00 pm) news programme has been recorded and then analysed quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

The scope of the study is confined to two newspapers and two News Channels, one each of English and Hindi of National Capital Region (NCR) Delhi. They were selected on the basis of the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) for the last quarter of 2012 and the TAM ratings for the same period. Although TAM ratings have been challenged by news broadcasters for their inaccuracies but in the absence of any other credible criteria, the same ratings were taken as a basis of the study for the selected News Channels. According to the Readership Survey, The Times of India was the most read English newspaper in Delhi NCR and hence was selected for the study. As for the Hindi newspaper, Navbharat Times has the tag of most read newspaper in Delhi NCR, but in some quarters, Hindustan has also emerged as the Number one newspaper of Delhi. Since both The Times of India and Navbharat Times are published by the same media house i.e. Bennett, Coleman & Company, their editorial orientation towards Gender might be similar and may not provide a variation for comparison. Therefore, to get an alternative perspective, the Hindi newspaper Hindustan was chosen for the study. The news channels Times Now and Aaj Tak were selected for the study as they dominated the TAM ratings.

3.4 Study Time Frame and Data Collection:

The media's focus on episodic framing reinforces the dominant ideology of individual responsibility for their problems. Making the dominant ideology seem like 'common sense' is critical to the concept of hegemony. Through the frames they use and the discourse they contain, media reports can either reinforce or challenge the dominant ideology. Often, journalists may not be aware of their role in reinforcing the status quo. By giving only episodic information about some social problems, the media give cues that there is nothing citizens can do, thus ignoring research to the contrary, increasing the public's fear, and reinforcing the dominant ideology of blaming the individual with only vague references to greater social causes.

As mentioned earlier, for the purpose of the research, entire study has been divided into two frames; that is second and fourth quarter of 2013. This division will help the research to

collect error free data and to discard personal biases while data collection. As the study is exploratory and empirical in nature thus flexible structure of research design is required. This may allow the research to induct new aspects and variables related to the study at any point of time during the study period. Present study is pure empirical thus for the data collection empirical study based techniques are adopted.

Every attempt is made to make the samples representative and to study the coverage on gender issues uniformly. A decade's longitudinal study could have been representative as well as consistent but the long time period puts other restrictions on the study. For instance, it runs the risk of spreading the sample too thinly. Another difficulty with a longer time period was that it restricted the possibility of applying various different but complimentary methods of analysis on account of the sheer bulk of text. In the backdrop of media activism after the Delhi Gang rape case, it was found more useful to take two slices of time in a calendar year.

The following two periods of study are selected for analysis:

- 1) April to June 2013
- 2) October to December 2013.

Once the time frame of the study was decided, every possible care was taken while sampling the data. The sampling procedure was so randomised as not to spread the study too thinly and at the same time to cover all days. The days were selected to cover every month of the quarter and every day of the week evenly and thoroughly during the time period. Prime time newscast and newspapers were selected every month in such a way that at least two/ three week days and one each of either Saturday or Sunday got covered over a total of 24 days. For the month of April 2013, 7th (Sunday), 8th(Monday), 16th(Tuesday) and 24th(Wednesday) were taken into consideration for the study. For the month of May 2013, 2nd (Thursday), 10th (Friday), 18th (Saturday) and 26th (Sunday) were selected. For the month of June 2013, 3rd (Monday), 11th (Tuesday), 19th (Wednesday), 27th (Thursday) and 30th (Sunday) were chosen. The same process was adopted for the fourth quarter i.e. October- December 2013. For the month of October, 6th (Sunday), 14th (Monday), 22nd (Tuesday) and 30th (Wednesday) were selected for the purpose of the study. For the month of November, 7th (Thursday), 15th (Friday), and 23rd (Saturday) were chosen and for December, 1st (Sunday), 9th (Monday),

17th (Tuesday) and 25th (Wednesday) were taken into consideration. On the above selected dates the contents of both newspapers and prime-time newscast have been analysed.

Hence, 24 copies each of The Times of India and Hindustan were obtained either from the newspaper files/ libraries or were accessed in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library archives. For the Television news content, 24 primetime recordings of Times Now and Aaj Tak were purchased from various Television Tracking Agencies located in New Delhi and Mumbai. It was decided to study each and every news item about gender in the entire newspaper, (excluding supplements) and primetime news broadcast. . Every news item was treated as a separate unit within the newspaper and newscast and its accompanying visuals, boxes or graphic elements were also included in the mapping exercise.

3.5 Coding Procedure:

For content analysis an elaborate coding sheet was prepared on the basis of a pilot conducted on the same newspapers and news channels before embarking on data collection. The idea of the pilot was to have as many categories of elements to be studied as possible. Many new categories were added on the basis of the issues/topics covered in the news items about gender. One coding sheet was used for each item studied.

Going through every news item precludes the risk of leaving out poorly displayed news items. On the basis of the pilot study, it was decided to go through the entire newspaper rather than only the front and edit pages. It was found useful to select only those stories which were focused on gender related issues. This includes all the stories, comments and letters on issues related to women. The process was cumbersome as well as time consuming but it covered the entire range of gender-related news in both the papers and news channels irrespective of their prominence and placements.

To identify a news item related to gender as either falling within the social sphere, the political sphere or the economic sphere, the titles and the slant in the coverage was first assessed. Thereafter the broad subject matter was considered in terms of its emphasis in the news content. It is difficult; however, given the dynamics of news presentation, to find a news item that is a 100% social, political or economic in nature. Indeed almost all the news

stories contained elements of each of these aspects. But the study considered the weighting of each aspect in each news story in order to assign a specific type. And as already mentioned, it also considered the broad subject matter the news addressed. In cases where the content of news shared all these aspects in a mixed or unclear manner, the study used 'other' category as a unit of analysis.

Following are the categories each of which is divided into multiple subcategories: (1) name of the newspaper, (2) content and quantum, which includes prominence and placement (3) story followed by feature/ editorial (4) visuals (accompanying the story), (5) by-lines of male and female journalists or no by-line (6) coverage on crime/violence/oppression against women (7) coverage on legal issues (8) coverage on economics and gender (9) empowerment coverage (10) coverage on social and welfare issues related to women (11) coverage on art, craft and literature related to women (12) coverage on women's position in family and marriage (13) coverage on women and sports, (14) coverage on feminism/politics and women activism (15) coverage on women and education, (16) lighter vein coverage (Fashion/ features).

Apart from these categories (a) total number of news item in the newspaper (b) total number of gender related stories in the newspaper (c) total number of by-lines, and by-lines of male and female journalists in the newspaper (d) letter to the Editor (written by males/females, written on gender issues, was also examined. A slightly changed version of the coding sheet was prepared for the analysis of television news content as the broadcasting medium is different from the print medium. The coding sheet for television had the following categories: (1) name of the news channel, (2) prominence of the story (in blocks), (3) story placement-numerical order of stories within the newscast, (4) visual/audio value addition, (5) story type. In the story content segment, categories no. 6 to 15 of the newspaper coding sheet were replicated so that parity can be achieved and a comparative analysis is made possible. In addition, balanced presence of men and women in television newscast in the form of reporters, experts or opinion givers and coverage of gender equality and equity issues has also been studied in depth.

These (16) heads of the coding sheet contained quantitative as well as qualitative information about the news items studied. The quantitative heads comprised the size, placement and display of the story while the qualitative heads looked at themes, sources or the setting in which the story has been written. Each question or head contained multiple choices of elements prepared on the basis of a pilot. Some of these choices were later clubbed under their corresponding categories.

However, many individual themes were later clubbed under subcategories on the basis of similarities. The subcategories chosen were “crime” and “legal issues” themes or “empowerment” and “economics and gender” themes in order to create a big picture of the media’s selection of themes. A separate category was created for social and welfare issues related to women to check if the media give importance to the new paradigm of human and equity-based development in India.

In all, 583 news items in the two dailies and 45 news stories in two news channels were selected for coding. Each item was marked and then coded separately. (This study did not measure the length of the stories either in column centimetres or in volume. However, the relative size of the stories was determined on the basis of single/double column/half-a-page-or-more display and their importance in placement as first/second lead, etc.) The English newspapers had 328 news items while the Hindi ones had 255 news items. For the Television news channels, Hindi news channel Aajtak aired 27 stories whereas English news channel Times Now aired 18 stories related to gender issues.

To get an average, the total number of all stories in the individual newspaper and news channel was counted to check the proportion of gender related stories. The number varied between 8 to 12% stories approximately, depending on the day of the week and other such factors that determine the importance of the issues. We also counted the average number of stories in issues of newspapers and newscasts other than the 24 days picked up for content analysis just to check if there were significant variations in average number of news stories throughout the year, though such a variation was not found.

Specific observations about each story were later noted in the end to record specific peculiarities. The data was analysed using the statistical package for the social sciences

(SPSS) version 16. The frequencies of all the variables were later cross-tabulated to study most consistent patterns. Wherever the numbers were very small, they were not included in broad observations. However, the small variables were clubbed with other similar variables for re-tabulation.

The coding sheet had a column for noting the comment on the story about any possible gender bias or those without a bias. The idea was to capture only the manifest biases and not the latent ones. More refined research methods like semiotics or linguistics can lead to a more in-depth study of biases but here we simply noted the most obvious and visible slants.

3.6 Coding process and inter-coder reliability

The coding sheet lists several options under different variables. The initial variables pertain to the bare facts about the items such as the name of the paper or news channel and its date. Every item has a unique item number. The next five variables note the prominence, placement, accompanying visuals, author and whether the news is followed by feature, editorial etc. A slight variation in the coding sheet for television news was made in which audio/visual value addition and story type variables were added. No attempt is made to measure the news stories in terms of time space, wordage or column inches.

More importance is given to their position and display i.e. whether the news is a top story or the other story, or on the front page or any other page and whether it is displayed as first lead/second lead or in any other variable. Then there were different possible categories under which a gender related news has to be placed according to its content. This segment is same for both newspaper and Television news cast. Two sets of coding sheets were prepared by the researcher, one for the newspapers and one for the news channels.

For the present study two coders, one male and one female, and the primary researcher, participated in coding training sessions. The primary researcher provided the characteristics that were to be looked for when analysing each news story with the coders. This was done in order to guarantee that both coders understood the variables to be coded. Once each coder was clear on what to look for when coding, a trial round of newspaper and news channel

analysis was conducted in order to assure inter-coder reliability. Exactly 60 stories were examined from the newspaper and 15 stories were examined from the news channels.

The coders examined every single news story related to gender issues, which is also the unit of analysis, and filled the coding sheet according to theme of the story categorised. All variables were coded for each mention of the unit of analysis. The trial sample of data collection came from news stories outside the random sample generated for this study. The result found that out of 60 news stories from the newspaper, both the coders were in agreement on 53 stories for the variables pertaining to story's prominence and placement. For the dominant themes, the two coders were in agreement on 45 stories. As for the news channels, out of 15 news stories, both the coders were in agreement on 13 mentions regarding prominence and placement variables and 11 mentions regarding dominant themes variables.

Inter-coder Reliability: Inter-coder reliability is the widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion. Although in its generic use as an indication of measurement consistency this term is appropriate and is used here, but the more specific term for the type of consistency required in content analysis is inter-coder agreement. It is widely acknowledged that inter-coder reliability is a critical component of content analysis, and that although it does not insure validity, when it is not established properly, the data and interpretations of the data cannot be considered valid. . By establishing inter-coder reliability, the research reduced the number of errors that often occur unintentionally when using content analysis research.

The Holsti Inter-coder Reliability formula (1969)²² was used to measure the reliability or agreement between coders which takes the number of judgments that are the same and divides that by the total of judgments made by each coder. The Holsti's coefficient (Holsti, 1969) was selected for two reasons. First, it was not necessary to use a sophisticated coefficient like Krippendorff's Alpha – which is not easy to replicate – because the chance that two coders coded the same publish or broadcast story by chance as a substantive problem is considered negligible. Second, Holsti's coefficient gives a more comprehensive insight in the inter-coder reliability than per cent agreement.

Next, Holsti's (1969) formula to measure inter-coder reliability was applied to the coding outcomes. The Holsti's (1969) formula for inter-coder reliability explains, $2M/N1+N2$, where M is the number of coding decisions the two coders agree on, and N1 and N2 refer to the number of coding decisions made by each individual coder. Calculations using Holsti's method for prominence and placement variables for the newspaper, $(2(53)/60+60)$, revealed an inter-coder reliability of 88.33 % and 75% $(2(45)/60+60)$ for the dominant themes, and for television news casts it came to 86.67%, $(2(13)/15+15)$ for the prominence and placement variables and 73.3% $(2(11)/15+15)$ for the dominant themes during this initial coding phase.

The greatest discrepancies between coders were regarding the dominant themes of the stories and marking them in the appropriate category. This knowledge allowed the researcher to modify code sheets (see Appendixes A and B) before full coding commenced, making minor corrections to improve clarity and simplicity for the coders.

Again 60 stories were examined from the newspaper and 15 stories were examined from the news channels during the final training period. The coders reached 100% agreement $(2(60)/60+60)$ on newspaper name, story's prominence and placement, author and whether story is accompanied by visuals. A 93.3% $(2(56)/60+60)$ agreement was reached for the theme determinant as per the categories. Similarly, for news channels, the coders reached 100% agreement, $(2(15)/15+15)$, on prominence and placement variables and an agreement coefficient of 93.3%, $(2(14)/15+15)$ was achieved on dominant theme variables.

3.7 Data Analysis

This research project is textual and the research tool is essentially thematic content analysis. According to Wright (in Berger, 2000:173)²³ content analysis is a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain qualitative analysis or both.

Content analysis is a non-intrusive way of conducting research. McQuail (2000:493)²⁴ describes content analysis as, "a technique for the systematic, quantitative and objective description of media texts, that is useful for certain purposes of classifying output, looking for

effects and making comparisons between content and 'reality'. Content analysis provides an empirical basis for monitoring shifts in public opinion. According to Van Zoonen (1994:69)²⁵ the general aim of content analysis is to compare features of media output with concomitant features in reality.

Van Zoonen (1994)²⁶ maintains that interpretive research can vary widely. According to Glaser and Strauss (in Van Zoonen, 1994)²⁷ interpretative research is an inductive procedure to arrive at empirically grounded understandings and explanations of social phenomena. Van Zoonen authenticates Glaser and Strauss's statement by stating that interpretative refers to a particular inductive research strategy and design, and qualitative concerns a particular non-quantitative way of gathering and analysing data. Van Zoonen (1994) maintains that qualitative techniques of data gathering are most adequate to gain insight into the meanings of everyday life. Van Zoonen (1994)²⁸ states that qualitative methods of data analysis use words, texts and language as primary units, as opposed to the numbers of quantitative analysis.

According to Fowler (1991)²⁹ a meaning interrogated is often not the surface meaning, but the deeper meaning. Thus, the researcher will examine more implicit social meanings. Fowler (1991)³⁰ describes this as "an enquiry into the relations between signs, meanings and the social and historical conditions which govern the semiotic structure of discourse, using a particular kind of linguistic analysis". The researcher has chosen this method to point out the ideological perspective from which the story is written. Fowler (1991)³¹ states what is ideological can be identified as that which presents itself, as the obvious, natural way of representing an issue, including what is not said, or what other views are not represented.

Talbot, Atkinson and Atkinson (2003:4)³² state that a common perspective is that language plays a vital role in constituting people's reality and this insight has evident implications for the power and influence of media language. Hall (1997)³³ through his work has focused on the way that media keep those who are powerful in society in control, while at the same time, keeping the powerless people powerless. His main concern is how the media creates support for the ideology of capitalism, which he describes as a 'hegemonic' system. In other words, it is a dominating system that imposes control over people.

Hence, the researcher has highlighted the particular choice of words, phrases, or the logic of sentences and their implied meaning to show the different ways that it can be read. The analysis is thus mostly interpretative.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

The interpretation of the news stories and articles is subjective to the researcher's interpretation. However, the interpretation is grounded in the Literature review and the theoretical framework adopted for this study (see chapter 2). Weber (1990)³⁴ notes "To make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent". Thus, the researcher's deductions from the analysis of the news stories and articles are grounded on the various theories discussed in the theoretical framework.

Furthermore, the analysis has incorporated previous research that has been conducted regarding media coverage on gender issues. According to Padgett (1998:88)³⁵ it is always necessary to judge the soundness of the research to identify if its findings are authentic and its interpretations credible. Therefore the reliability and validity of this study is discussed. However the concept of 'trustworthiness' is also explored. According to Steinmetz in Padgett (1998:92)³⁶ trustworthiness implies that the study is carried out fairly and ethically and its findings represent as closely as possible the experiences of the respondents.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:276-278)³⁷ maintain that validity can be tested using the trustworthiness approach. Trustworthiness is an approach that can be used to clarify the notion of objectivity in qualitative research. It can be assessed using four principles, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformity.

These four principles and how they relate to this study are discussed below.

- **Credibility** is the "compatibility between constructed realities that exist in the minds of the respondents and those that are attributed to them" (Babbie and Mouton, 2001)³⁸. This study has used the method of triangulation to achieve credibility.

- **Transferability** is the “extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts” (Babbie and Mouton 2001)³⁹. Since qualitative research is not intended to generalise, it is the responsibility of the researcher who wishes to generalise these findings to assess their transferability. This is be made possible by providing sufficient detailed data that has been collected by the researcher.
- **Dependability** implies that, if a similar study were conducted with similar participants, then a similar finding would be made. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985)⁴⁰ there can be no credibility without dependability. The fact that the credibility of this study has been justified means that the findings must be dependable.
- **Conformity** according to Lincoln and Guba (1985)⁴¹ is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not the biases of the researcher. Source material: tape recordings, transcripts, newspapers and news stories will be made available on request to assess the quality of the findings.

One of the most powerful techniques to enhance trustworthiness is Triangulation. Furthermore in qualitative research, validation takes the form of triangulation. According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:194)⁴² triangulation is used “...to corroborate findings according to at least three different approaches.” This not only increases the validity of the study, but increases the “...enriching and completing [of] knowledge... [and] increase [the] scope, depth and consistency of methodological proceedings.” Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993)⁴³ state that triangulation lends credibility to the findings by incorporating multiple sources of data, methods, investigators, or theories. According to Denzin (in Padgett, 1998)⁴⁴ there are four types of triangulation.

- **Theory triangulation** – the use of multiple theories to interpret the data. Many dominant theories including framing theory, agenda setting theory and feminist media theory was used in this study to address the media’s impact on public opinion.
- **Methodological triangulation** – use of multiple methods in a single study, often a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. According to Bowen (1996:10)⁴⁵

methodological triangulation can enhance, illustrate and clarify research findings thus improving the validity of a study. Although this study uses the qualitative methodology primarily, some degree of quantitative analysis has been included for example, the frequency of news stories and proportion of male and female journalists or reporters in newspapers and television newscast.

- **Observer Triangulation** – use of more than one observer in a single study. This was achieved by engaging different set of coders in the coding process to get inter-coder reliability.
- **Data Triangulation** – use of more than one data source. Different types of data were collected in the study and multiple data types can be seen as the main source of triangulation in this study. Firstly the researcher reviews literature and discusses the dominant theories that address the media’s impact on public opinion and theories that pertain to this study. Secondly analysis of media texts that is news stories on gender issues in *two newspapers and two TV news channels* over a six month period i.e.in two quarters of the year.

It is important to recognise that a methodology is always employed in the service of a research question. As such, validation of the inferences made on the basis of data from one analytic approach demands the use of multiple sources of information. It is for this reason that the researcher has included many other studies that have been done regarding media representation of women to serve as a sort of validation study built into the design.

The analysis is mostly interpretative. According to Marshall and Rossman (in Van Zoonen, 1994)⁴⁶ ideally, interpretative research does not rely on a single type of data but takes advantage of triangulation, “the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point.” By including previous studies regarding representation of women in media, the researcher hopes to enhance the quality and value of this study.

On the issue of ‘what’ will be published or presented, gatekeeping could be regarded as essential. Most news media receive more news than allowed for in terms of space (newspaper) or time (radio and television). Only that which is regarded as the most important

is selected and, in the process, that which is regarded to be of no value is left out. As a result, readers, viewers and listeners are presented with only part of daily reality. Further to this, readers get a ‘constructed reality’ determined by factors such as economic power and editorial alignment.

The researcher has examined the media’s coverage on gender issues by reading and watching news stories to analyse objectivity of media’s coverage, language used in the coverage and visual imagery that are presented to readers and viewers.. Babbie and Mouton (2001)⁴⁷ maintain that validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concepts under consideration. Validity is concerned with the idea that the research design fully addresses the research questions and objectives you are trying to achieve.

This study has also incorporated the conceptual premise of the framing theory of mass communication. Previous framing research describes how media portray news stories. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007)⁴⁸ explained that media framing is based on the notion that how an issue is characterized in news reports can have an impact on how the audience interprets the story. The way individuals classify information also adds to the framing theory and framing is a macro level and a micro level construct. “As a macro construct, the term ‘framing’ refers to modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007)⁴⁹

Journalists use framing as a way to reduce the complexity of the story. Micro construct explains how individuals use the information they receive to form impressions about the issue. Each of these variables contributes to the public’s view of certain issues. Media has the power to generate a specific reaction from the public by the way the story is portrayed.

From the above it can be concluded that considerable effort has been made to ensure the validity and reliability of this study. It is also evident that this study meets the requirements of trustworthiness. The triangulation approach and the trustworthiness approach will ensure that the data collected and analysed is valid and reliable.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology, outlining the research instrument, reliability and validity and data collection methods for this study. Firstly the research design involving the qualitative approach was explained and thereafter the chosen method being the content analysis was explained and justified. Secondly the data collection methods and the research instrument were outlined. Thirdly data analysis techniques and strategies were explained. Fourthly, the reliability and validity of the study was explored.

In Chapter Four the researcher has analysed the data and has provided a clear interpretation of the results. Core themes have been developed from the Literature Review and the theoretical framework and the researcher has analysed the news stories based on these themes.

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