

## THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES ON FEMALES: A STUDY OF PAKISTANI TV NEWS CHANNELS

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### ABSTRACT

*The main objective of this study was to explore the effects of news reports and crime shows based on sexual assault cases on female students of Punjab province. Research work used quantitative method to find out the effects on female students of Punjab province. Theoretical framework of the study was structured with the help of cultivation theory. Data was collected through Survey method. Population for survey method was comprised of female students of Punjab province. Sample size was selected using purposive sampling. Findings of the research study showed that female students of Punjab province have enormous effect after watching news reports and crime shows related to sexual assault cases. News reports and crime shows based on sexual assault cases evoke fear, stimulate aggression, cause anxiety and feeling of unsafe and isolation among female students of Punjab province.*

**Keywords:** Sexual Assault, News reports, Crime shows, Female Students, TV news channel.

### INTRODUCTION

People's perceptions of crime in the real world are significantly influenced by how it is reported. As a result of media coverage of criminal incidents, the audience's view of the prevalence of crime in their society changes (Davis 1952). People rely on the media to inform them about the level of crime in their area (Lowry, et al 2003). Romer, Aday, and Hall Jamieson (2003), O'Keefe and Reid-Nash (1987), and Gordon and Heath (1991) all offer enough empirical evidence to support the claim that people's feelings of discomfort and anxiety are influenced by crime coverage as a whole.

According to report Sexual Assault and the Media, revealed that News reports and unease are mutually reinforcing; those who are uneasy 'want' additional news on television. Information on sexual assault, break-ins, kidnappings, and other crimes are included. Media reporting of crimes like sexual assault has a significant effect on the public's perceptions and behaviour.

In Pakistan, 93% of women experience some form of sexual assault in public, while 70% of females experience physical and sometime sexual violence from close relationships over their lifespan. (Kazi, 2017). According to SAHIL, a non-governmental NGO, 2,327 instances of child sexual abuse were reported in 2018, with 51% of the incidents involving female children and 49% male children. Only 62% of these occurrences were reported outside of Punjab. Data from the report shows that there was a considerable 33% increase in occurrences of child sexual abuse in particular when compared to incidences that were recorded in 2017. (Imdad, 2019). Twelve girls between the ages of five and eight were reportedly murdered and violated in Kasur just in 2014 and 2015. Another dreadful occurrence. Twelve girls between the ages of five and eight were reportedly murdered and molested in Kasur just in 2014 and 2015. The death of Zainab in Kasur in 2018 is just another horrible incidence of child rape that took place there (Geo, 2018).

This study's main goal was to examine how reports on sexual assault have affected female students in Punjab. Furthermore, the study was aimed to incorporate the perspective of female students in Punjab and how they view the news stories on television in light of the recent revelations of multiple sexual assault events in Punjab. The present study also examined how these stories frequently influence participants' behavior, cause dread, or restrict their day-to-day social interactions.

The main objective of the study was to analyze that news reports and crime shows on sexual assault are evoking fear, insecurity, anxiety and isolation among female students of the Punjab province.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Schneider, et al (2010) conducted investigations into the prevalence, extent, and correlates of psychological harm experienced by women as a result of workplace sexual harassment. A survey of over 10,000 military women in active duty was conducted. The four main areas of unfavorable psychosocial reactions among sexual harassment victims include productivity concerns, attitudes toward the organization, emotional reactions, and relationships with family. The analyses looked at the connections between these psychosocial reactions and (a) the attributes of the harassing behavior (what happened and who committed it), (b) the characteristics of the victim, (c) the organizational climate in which the harassment occurred, and (d) the victim's coping mechanisms.

Butler & Schmidtke (2010) has explained sexual harassment at work place. The harassed individuals were chosen from a Canadian female (n = 1,990) who had been asked regarding their experiences with sexual harassment at work or in public. According to descriptive analyses, women generally exhibited a fairly passive response to harassment, particularly when it was not severe. Females also mentioned about policies about harassment at workplace. the majority of respondent agreed on this point that their coworkers who were even females, they did not view sexual harassment as a power issue. The degree of harassment, the source of the harassment, and working in a field were the main predictors of reaction assertiveness, per multivariate models.

The degree and source of the harassment were the two elements that most accurately indicated that whether female f would quit her job as a result of harassment. The study examined two main variables together the lack of assertiveness in their reactions in terms of cultural and organizational duties and women's attempts to manage challenging workplace engagements. The idea that women should be in charge of regulating the emotional and sexual relations between the sexes has been ingrained in both men and women. These expectations may creep into the workplace and result in sexual harassment, if the workplace organization doesn't make a serious effort to address these concerns.

Pryor and Hughes (2013) in the study conducted by Pryor and Hughes, (2013) looked into the social-psychological causes of rape anxiety in college women. The study conducted through a survey data from 1,905 female students to assess the impact of five subjective perceptions about vulnerability and damage. These notions included: gender risk, individual invulnerability, defendability, shame, and injury attribution. Three types of criminal exposure were added into conceptual frame work that were prior sexual victimization, prior noncontact violent victimization, and structural risk determined by age, family's income, and ethnicity. In distinct measures of the dread of the stranger and the fear of acquaintance rape, variables are included that capture current versus prospective fear, fear on campus versus elsewhere, fear anytime versus at night, and so on. Study revealed that, rather than actual violent episodes, undergraduate female's phobia of being raped by male members of the society is mostly depends on constructed ideas of risk and harm.

Lane and Dahod, (2009) found in their study that Women are more afraid of crime than men, despite the fact that males are much more likely to be victims of all crimes, with the exception of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. The "shadow of sexual assault" theory postulates that women's fear of sexual assault outweighs their fear of other types of crime, especially violent crime. Building on prior studies by Ferraro (1996) and Fisher and Sloan, this study examined the individual and combined consequences of perceived threat and apprehension of sexual assault among college students (2003). Results indicate that fear of sexual assault is a stronger predictor of crime fear in women than perceived risk is in males.

Lian,et al (2009) When examining posttraumatic stress symptoms (PSS), health, and pre-trauma functioning, little study has been done on gender differences and pre-trauma functioning. The relationships between military sexual harassment and assault (MST), PSS, and perceived physical health were examined after taking into account pre-MST PSS, pre-MST health, and current depression. Recently supported MST relationships between 91 male Marines and 226 female Marines were examined independently (past 6 months). MST anticipated a rise in PSS, particularly for men and women. Higher levels of MST were associated with worse reported physical health in men, whereas lower levels of MST were associated with worse perceived health in women. In contrast to the lack of mediation seen in men without MST, there was some evidence that the connection between MST and PSS was somewhat mediated by PSS in men with MST.

Canan, et al (2018) claimed that rape and sexual assault are prevalent on college campuses. Fraternities and sororities and sexual assault are recurrent themes in literature focusing on sexual violence among college students. In order to evaluate rape-supportive views as well as victimization from rape and sexual assault among college students, the current study focused on gender and socioeconomic factors. Total of (N = 1,002) students to answered the questionnaire that contained the Token Resistance to Sex Scale (TRSS), the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale-Short Form (IRMA-S), and inquiries about prior non-consensual sex experiences.

Token resistance and rape myth acceptance were both studied using two regression models. Chi-square analysis examined between-group differences in experiences of rape and sexual assault. The gender (p.001), Greek status (p.001), and race/ethnicity (p.001) factors all predicted the TRSS scores (p.001). For IRMA scores, the variables of gender, Greek status, and race/ethnicity were all statistically significant (p.001). According to interaction terms, Greek men reported higher rates of token resistance and rape myth acceptance than any other group. Chi-square analyses show that women are more likely than men to report having been sexually attacked ( $X^2 = 31.75$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p.001$ ) and raped ( $X^2 = 25.57$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p.001$ ). Men report experiencing sexual assault at large percentages (40.8%), presumably because resisting was fruitless.

Osman, (2016) investigated rape victim empathy based on Female rape victimization and acknowledgment labelling undergraduates from a mid-sized public university in the Northeast of the United States (Studies 1,  $n = 267$ ; Studies 2,  $n = 381$ ) completed the Rape-Victim Empathy Scale and Sexual Experiences Survey. In line with expectations, both analyses found that acknowledged "rape" victims shown greater levels of empathy than unacknowledged victims and nonvictims. This study also found that "rape" victims who acknowledged being raped showed greater empathy versus "sexually victimized" victims. According to studies, admitting "rape" and having been assaulted at the same time may foster more compassion for rape victims.

Mellgren & Ivert tested a theory the "shadow of sexual assault" theory in 2018 using a sample of more than 3,000 Swedish university students. The results corroborate past studies that examined the impact of rape panic. It also shows how differences in fear experienced by men and women may be attributed to a fear of sexual harassment. The study's findings suggest that efforts to reduce sexual violence should focus on all forms of violence against females.

Egen, et al. (2020) concluded that Sexual assault is widespread and frequently begins early in the victim's life. One in five women and one in 38 men in the US claim to have had a successful or faced failed rape attempt at a certain point in their life. Of these victims, 51.3% of men and 43.2% of women claim that they were raped for the first time before turning 18 years old. There is evidence that media socializes a wide range of social and health habits. The media can impact, reinforce, or change how the public reacts to incidences of sexual assault and their support by creating a prism through which the public can comprehend who is affected by sexual violence, what forms it takes, why it occurs, and who is accountable for addressing it.

After reviewing the existing literature, the present study has found the research gap and formulate the hypothesis as:

**H1:** News reports and crime shows of sexual assault are evoking fear, aggression, aggression, insecurity, isolation and anxiety among female students of Punjab province.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The cultivation theory is the basis of the researcher's hypothesis. It makes the claim that what people watch on television affects how they view reality. Research on cultivation has examined additional aspects of television's societal effects in addition to the hypothesis's well-known connection between media violence and viewers' propensity for violence. It has been proven that television affects how we perceive reality based on the aforementioned concept. This idea is used to explain a variety of television impacts using the cultivation hypothesis. As a result, we can infer details about people, locations, and things from made-up sitcoms, soap operas, and dramas as well as from crime-related programming and television news sources (Phillips & Bonds, 1999).

There are two ways to cultivate. The first is "mainstreaming," which describes the media's monopolization and dominance over other sources of knowledge and perspectives on the world. Heavy watchers should use it. The internalized social realities that people have come to believe in gradually merge with the prevailing reality, which is more closely related to the reality of television than to any

other real world. In no way is this prevalent reality mainstream in a political sense (Matelart & Mattelart, 1998). People who watch news reports about sexual assault learn facts and form opinions about rape as a result of the report; they don't even bother to verify the accuracy of the information since they accept it as fact and don't seek other resources to learn more about rape.

The second form of cultivation is "resonance," which takes place when TV viewers take in media that is most relevant to their own everyday lives. In this stage, people receive a double dose of cultivation since what they see on television has an impact on their daily lives. Higher consumption of TV has significant effects on some segments of people who are connected to violence but not on others, according to mainstreaming and resonance in cultivation theory (Severin & Tankard, 1992).

The origin of cultivation hypothesis has its rooted back violence-based studies. However, it has developed to the point where it also takes into account other cultural attitudes and values that are pushed by mass media, including television and other kinds of mass communication. Despite the fact that this theory offers us a novel viewpoint on how television impacts us, it ignores a number of elements that seem to have a considerable impact on the cultural values that form the foundation of society (Baran & Davis, 2003).

Gerbner categorised viewers into two groups. Light viewers are individuals who consume TV between two - four per day, or those who watch less than two hours of television each day are categorized as heavy viewers. His research focused mostly on heavy and light viewers. Gerbner has discovered via a variety of trials that people who watch TV a lot tend to share the beliefs and values of the programs they watch. He asserts that for frequent viewers, television has an edge over other sources of ideas and consciousness, leading them to have more faith in the information that television offers to him. Consequently, watching habits can influence how views are formed, and the results for heavy and light viewers are clearly different. (Mc Quail, 2005).

It was believed that girls experience certain emotions when exposed to news reports regarding sexual assault on a frequent basis. The regular consumption of these news stories causes people's attitudes and values to change, and they start accepting the crime of sexual assault. They become accustomed to tolerating violent and aggressive behavior as a result of their continual exposure to news reports about sexual assault, and finally they realized that they cannot trust anyone.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of news stories and crime shows based on sexual assault on female students in the Punjab region. Cultivation theory describes the direct effect of television on its viewers. A study examined the ways in which news coverage and crime dramas based on sexual assault incidents shape the attitudes and behaviors of female students in the Punjab province. The study applied a survey tool to try and determine how news stories about sexual assault affected female students in the Punjab area. Researchers have attempted to determine whether, according to Gerbner's definition of heavy and light viewers, heavy viewers are more affected by the sexual assault report than are light viewers. As a result, these aggressive acts prompt individuals to engage in the behaviors they have seen in news stories and crime shows, leading them to start embracing and believing that these claims of sexual assault are true as well as this occurrence.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Survey research necessitates meticulous preparation, execution, and evaluation of a broad range of possibilities and concerns. The process of choosing a significantly larger sample of respondents from a predetermined population and then gathering a relatively small amount of data from those participants is known as a survey, even though the word "survey" has many different meanings (Kelley, K. 2003). Surveys are developed to provide a "snapshot of how things are at a specific period" (Denscombe M. 1998).

Surveys method was applied and this quantitative instrument used to examine the effects of news and crime shows featuring sexual assault on female students in the Punjab province. The main tool used in survey research is the questionnaire.

A questionnaire is a series of questions distributed to individuals in order to compile data on a specific topic. Questionnaire can be a vital tool for drawing conclusions about specific people, groups, or entire populations. It is an efficient method for getting a variety of data from a large number of respondents (Roopa & Satya, 2012). The researcher created a questionnaire for the current study in order to examine the psychological consequences on females, such as fear, insecurity, anger, isolation, and anxiety. The universe of this study consisted of public sector women's universities in Punjab

province that have been accredited by the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The study's subject matter was limited to universities in general. The universe's subset is called the population. The population of interest was women enrolled in undergrad programs in Punjabi public sector women's universities that are recognized by the HEC. Only 9 universities in Punjab province are included in the general category of female universities for the purposes of the current study.

Sampling is the process of choosing a sample of the entire population that is representative of the whole. From the population, a sample of 2000 respondents have been chosen for the present study. Female students of each Women University who indicated that they had at least once in the previous twelve months viewed news reports and crime shows based on sexual assault cases were chosen as sample by applying the purposive sampling technique. 2000 respondents from the Punjab province who were female students made up the study's sample.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Questionnaire was distributed purposely among female students online and data was collected. According to the findings, in terms of qualification majority of the respondents were graduates that is 1223 respondents from 2000. While 433 female respondents were those who have done intermediate and only 344 respondents were post graduated that is only 17.2 percent of total population.

### **1. Viewing patterns of News Stories**

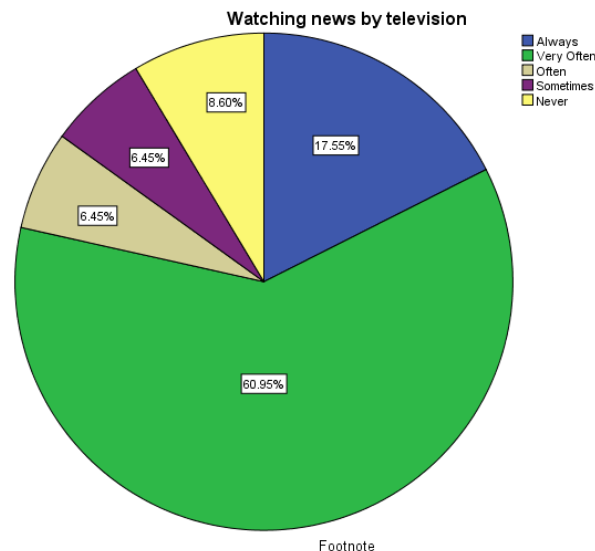


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the consumption of news related to sexual assault. The majority of the respondents 60.95 % agreed they very often watch the news on television whereas 6.45% respond that they watch news on TV often and sometimes.

### **2. Viewership of different content on News channels**

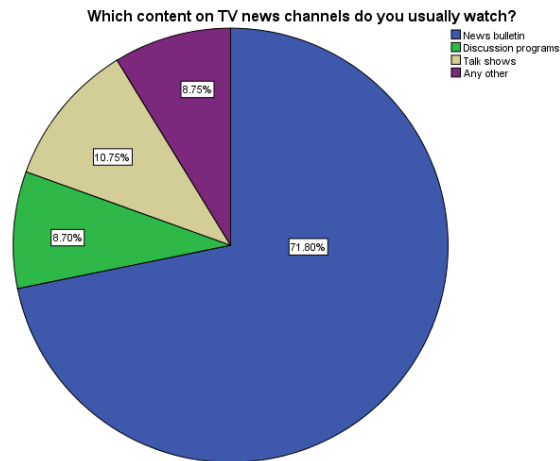


Figure 2  
Figure 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents (71.8%) typically watch news stories followed by 8.7% for discussion shows, 10.8% for talk shows, and 8.8% for other television opinion based programs.

3. Presentation of rape related news as breaking News

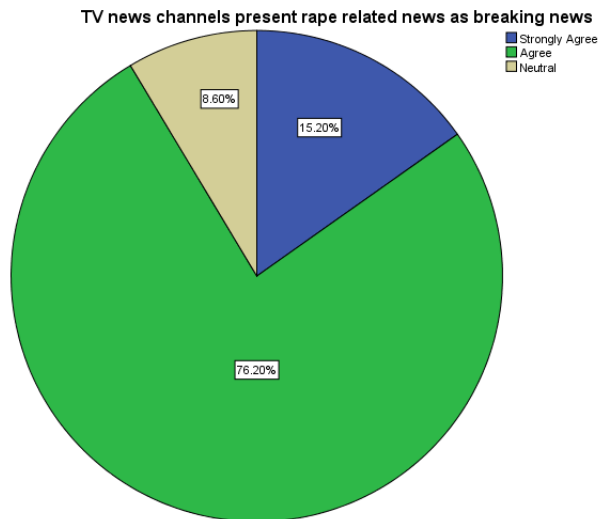


Figure 3  
Figure shows that he majority of respondents 76.20 strongly agreed that TV news channels frequently report rape-related news as breaking news whereas 8.60% were have neutral point of view about this.

4. Coverage of sexual assault increase crime rate

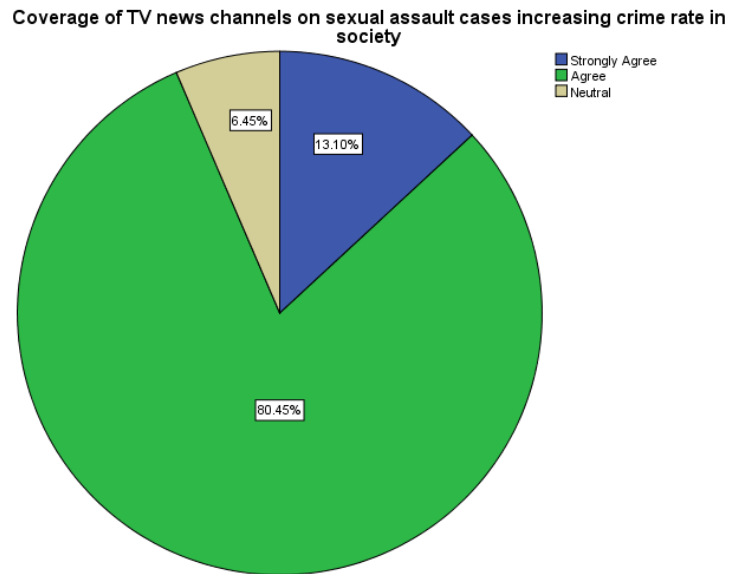


Figure 4

5. Coverage of sexual assault cases provoke fear among females students

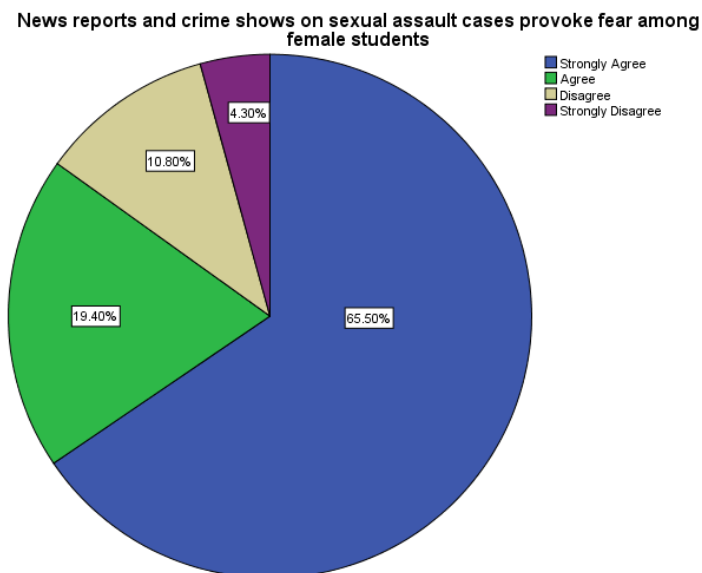


Figure 5

Figure illustrates that 65.4 % strongly agree that coverage of sexual assault cases on TV provoke fear among females whereas only 4.30 % were strongly disagree with this notion.

6. News Reports and crime shows on sexual assault cases increase feeling of unsafe and to being out alone among female students

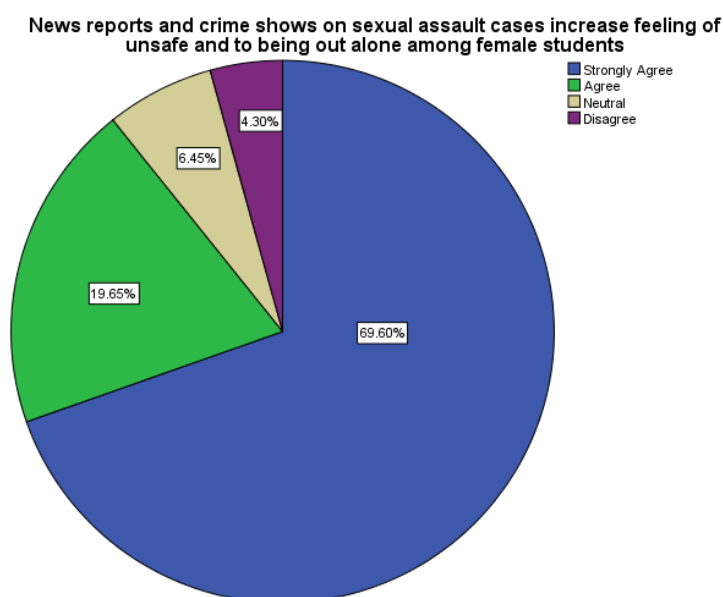


Figure 6

The above figure indicates that a high ratio of respondents 69.60% were strongly agreed that after consumption of news reports on sexual assault increase feeling of being unsafe whereas only 4.30% disagree with this statement.

7. News reports and crime shows on sexual cases stimulate aggression amongst female students

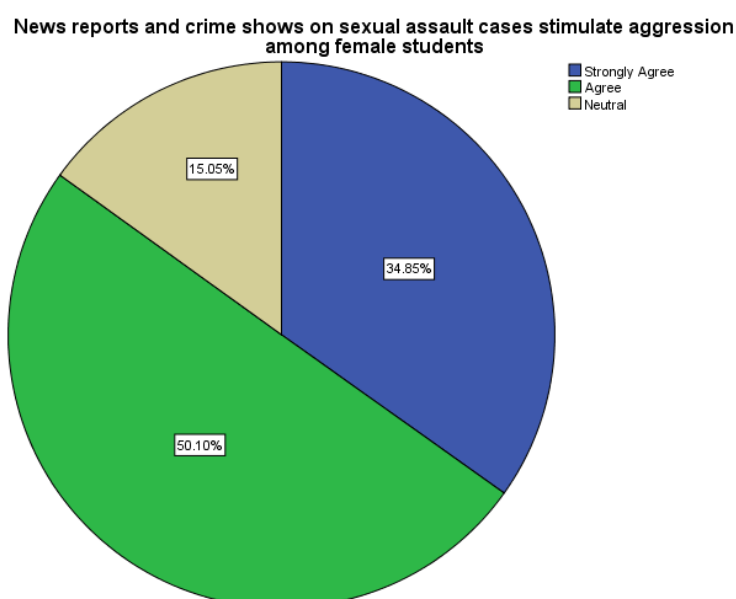


Figure 7

Figure shows that Majority of respondents agree that coverage of sexual assault cases on Tv stimulate aggression among females.

8. News reports and crime shows on sexual assault cases arouse insecurity among female students



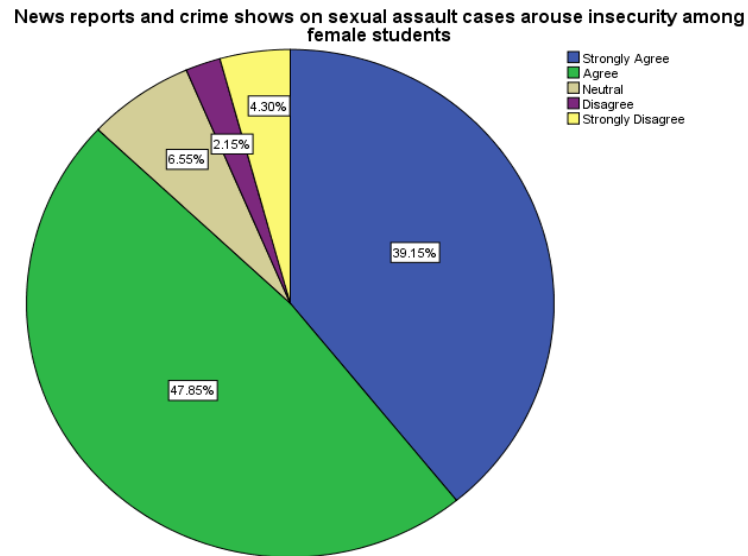


Figure 8

The above figure indicates that a high ratio of respondents 47.85 were agreed that after consumption of news reports on sexual assault arouse insecurity among females whereas only 4.30:% disagree with this statement.

9. News reports and crime shows on sexual assault provoke isolation among females

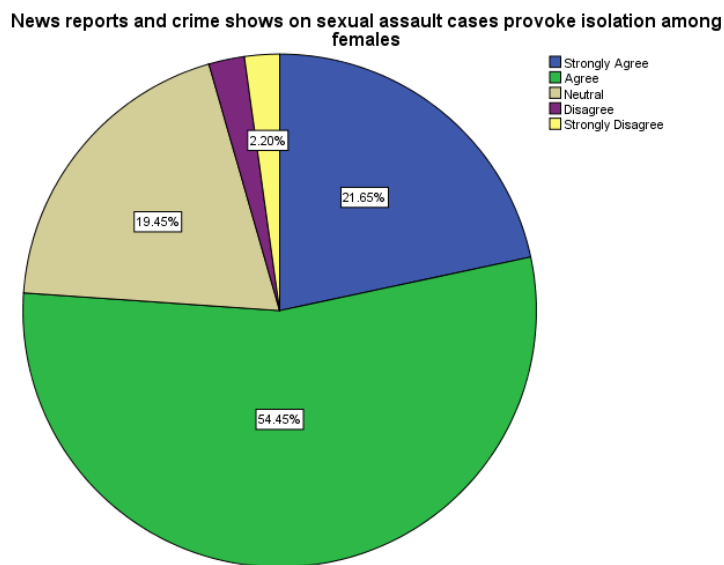


Figure 9

The above figure shows that Majority of respondents 76.1% agreed that consumption of sexual assault news stories provoke isolation among females whereas only 2.20% disagree with this statement.

10. News reports crime shows on sexual assault cases increases anxiety among female students

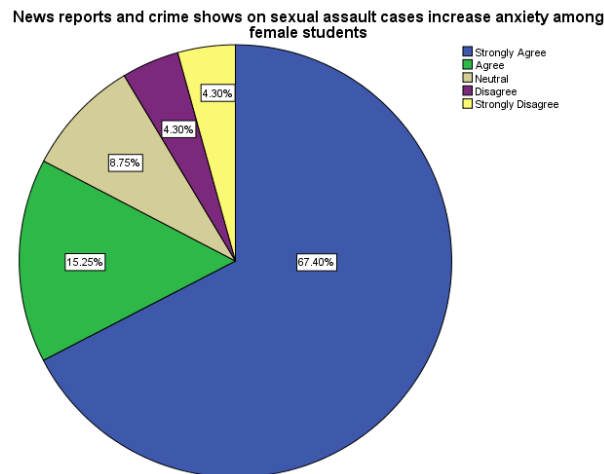


Figure 10

The above figure shows that Majority of respondents 67.40% agreed that consumption of sexual assault news stories increase anxiety among females whereas only 4.30% disagree with this statement.

## DISCUSSION

Researchers used quantitative data to gauge how female students responded to situations of sexual assault. Present study has added questions related to fear, isolation, anxiety, insecurity and aggression. Findings revealed that 65.5% female students agreed that news reports and crime show on sexual assault cases played significant role to evoke fear. News reports on sexual assault evoke fear among students of Lahore Pakistan as mentioned in the study conducted on presentation of sexual assault in news reports of satellite TV channels. (Malik, 2012). Findings about to feel insecure and unsafe revealed 70% agreed to this fact that consumption of sexual assault cases through TV increase feeling of unsafe and insecure. (Merken & James, 2020). The study found that 50% of female students believed that crime shows and news stories about sexual assault cases are to be blamed for stimuli of aggression among female students. (Custers & Van, 2013; Paap et al, 2022). Findings revealed that 68% female students strongly agreed that news reports and crime shows on sexual assault increase anxiety among female students. Also mentioned in a study conducted on “the effects of multiple exposure to filmed violence against women. (Scarpa, 2001).

Present study formulated a hypothesis “News reports and crime shows of sexual assault are evoking fear, aggression, insecurity, and anxiety among female students of Punjab province”. To test the hypothesis present study applied Chi square test on each dependent variable separately.

### Chi-Square Tests

|                              | Value                | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 165.561 <sup>a</sup> | .000                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 232.687              | .000                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 73.967               | .000                  |

N of Valid Cases 2000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.25.

Results of the above table shows that there is a strong relationship between exposure towards news reports and crime shows of sexual assault and all the dependent variables evoking fear, aggression, insecurity, and anxiety. Result of chi square shows a significant P value which is less than .005 which means hypothesis is accepted.

## CONCLUSION

The current study conducted to examine the Effects of sexual assault cases on females of Punjab province. The study also explored how news reports and crime shows based on sexual assault cases are

responsible to evoke fear, aggression, insecurity, and anxiety among female students of Punjab province. To gauge the effect of news reports and crime shows based on sexual assault cases present study has applied survey method based on closed ended questions through a questionnaire. The present study took the support from Gerbner's cultivation theory which is bases on heavy viewers and light viewers. Current study has formulated a hypothesis as "News reports and crime shows of sexual assault are evoking fear, aggression, insecurity, and anxiety among female students of Punjab province and applied chi square test. Results of hypothesis showed the significant relation between exposure towards news reports and crime shows based on sexual assault and fear, aggression, insecurity, and anxiety with the P-value.

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