

An exploratory media framing of the extradition of a serial rapist: a corpus assessed study in the Malaysian English newspapers

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of media framing in shaping public perceptions of crime and criminal behaviour through the analysis of the case of Selva Kumar Subbiah, a serial rapist from Malaysia who targeted young women in Canada, was charged, served time, and extradited to the country of origin. Employing a corpus and computer-assisted textual analysis methodological approach and framing theory, this study examines the discourses in news articles from two national English newspapers (n=27) of the case in 2017 focusing on news sources and used frames. The study also explored the pertinent issues discussed on the Facebook page of the news portals about the news articles using thematic analysis based on 2738 posted comments. The study highlights the importance of understanding media framing and shaping public perception. The analysis suggested that the media framed the extradition through the focus on criminal offender, public safety, legal and law, family, police monitoring, and the victim. The study highlights the importance of understanding media framing in shaping public perceptions of crime and calls for further research to explore the implications of media representations of crime and criminal behaviour. By exploring how the media portrayed Subbiah's story, this paper seeks to shed light on the complex relationship between media representations of sexual violence and public perception.

Keywords

national, framing, offender, discourse, comparative

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Introduction

Selva Kumar Subbiah was a 57 years old man and a serial rapist who committed dozens of sexual assault cases in Toronto, Canada (The Star, 2019). He was a psychopath serial rapist who was reported to have committed dozens or more rapes by drugging women and sexually assaulting them without their consent. It was his modus operandi that he would undress and rape them unconsciously by giving them drugs in drinks; taking nude pictures, and he would give rankings for the women who satisfied his pleasure by recording it in a black diary (Malay Mail, 2017; The Star Online, 2019).

In August 1991, law enforcement found him with a black diary book containing 170 victims' names (Malay Mail, 2017). His extradition to his native Malaysia made headlines in every media outlet to ensure the public was aware of his return from Toronto to Malaysia (The Star Online, 2019). According to media reports by *Toronto Star*, the serial rapist Subbiah was punished by the Canadian Ontario Court and served 24 years of jail term on 21 December 1992 after being charged 28 times of dealing with drugs or poisoned substances, 19 times of sexual assaults, ten times of other assaults and a dozen charges on him (Ram, 2017). Malaysians were not so conscious because of the unfamiliarity with serial rapes and serial rapists as it is known as a rare and unpopular crime in Malaysia (Ahmad et al., 2020). In Malaysia, the number of rape cases has been steadily increasing every year. This is evident in the 2022 Telenita Quarter 1 Report by the All Women's Action Society (AWAM), which states that their Telenita hotline received 204 cases in the first three months of the year.

These cases included various forms of violence such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. The report also indicates that the number of cases has been steadily increasing each month since January of that year (Ova, 2022). This indicates that the issue of rape in Malaysia is alarming. Therefore, this research aims to study how the rape case, particularly the Selva Kumar Subbiah case is framed in the media by examining the types of news frames utilized and prioritized by Malaysian media. The use of frame may affect and shape the way people perceive rape or in this case, serial rape as well as rape culture in the country. This is significant as the media plays a vital role in informing, educating, and empowering society.

1. Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2013) has defined sexual violence as encompassing various actions that involve coercion and are directed against a person's sexuality. These actions include attempts to engage in sexual acts, unwanted sexual comments or advances, trafficking, and similar behaviors. Rape is a significant concern within the realm of sexual violence.

Serial rape is three or more separate acts of sexual coercion with or without penetration that occur over more than 72 hours. The offenders deliberately seek, hunt, or lure victims (Wright, 2014) and attacks are linked together by the police, the media, or both by some set of offense characteristics, including the offender's characteristics, a popular style of attack, or victim characteristics while having brief contact with their victims. Fesmire (2015) discovered that, compared to single sexual predators, serial rapists were much more likely to engage in more criminally sophisticated behaviours to avoid detection. Solitary rapists were likelier to use the confidence-style approach and were frequently known to their victims. In contrast, serial rapists were often unknown to victims and used blitz-style attack methods (Fesmire, 2015). These

previous studies prove that serial rapes are violently sexual victimizing multiple people by the serial rapist who is an extreme psychopath with unsatisfied pleasure and demonstrates a severe type of behavioral expression that is demonstrated to a great extent, and intended before the crime is committed (De Wet, 2008). Rape and sexual assault are serious crimes that require accurate representation in the media. With its ability to reach a wide audience, news media plays a crucial role in disseminating information. Furthermore, the internet and social media provide platforms to share news articles globally. Hence, journalists need to uphold credibility and honesty in their reporting, as the public depends on them for reliable information, especially in crimes like rape where wrong or inaccurate reporting can hinder their role in informing and educating people.

Swedish news media coverage of rape and sexual assault stated that rape, sexual violence and assault primarily victimise women, and the crime is committed by men (Lindqvist, 2017) and there were unexplored sexual crimes that have never been to court since there is fact that 11 percent of reported rape crimes in Sweden has never led to a conviction. This is echoed by Capodilupo (2019), who defines systemic or institutionalized sexism as the stereotyping, unfair treatment, and discrimination faced by women and girls simply because of their gender. This form of sexism is deeply ingrained in our society's structures and institutions, leading to advantages and benefits predominantly enjoyed by men. Consequently, some studies have found that rape cases are often overlooked by society or fail to receive significant attention and fair reporting from the media. Serial rape crimes are considered a sensation, and news coverage of this crime potentially portrayed more racial bias where the media reinforced the racial and ethnic bias in the profile of the serial rapists in United States prominent newspapers Wright and Watts (2022). For instance, the finding of this research analysed that white offenders are constantly trying to humanise but do not apply to non-white offenders. The media in different regions within the United States are more likely to impersonate white serial offenders who need more sympathy from the public, and non-white serial offenders are demonised and pictured as the people to be feared or dealt with (Wright & Watts, 2022). The scholar indicates that most media outlets in the United States are triggering negative stereotypes on the serial rapist profiles and not lifting the issue as necessary since their focuses are more on implanting existing negative stereotypes into the public's mind rather than creating awareness of serial rapist crimes and prove that framing plays a significant role in the media in portraying societal issues related this crime.

According to Nwabueze and Oduah (2015), three Nigerian dailies, the Daily Sun, Vanguard, and Guardian, looked at the research on how rape cases were framed and shown in the publications. It was discovered that innocence framing, in which rape victims were shown to be innocent of the crime, predominated over re-victimisation framing, in which victims were shown to be at fault for the incident. The results of the study showed that while incidences of rape are reported by Nigerian media, the three selected Nigerian newspapers gave only scant attention to these cases, notably *The Guardian*. The three newspapers, *The Guardian*, Vanguard, and *The Daily Sun*, placed most of their news stories on rape inside their newspapers rather than on the front or back pages. While most of the reported cases in the three selected newspapers appeared in straight news reports, very few editorials on rape were published (Nwabueze and Oduah, 2015). The study also showed that the majority of rape victims do not report their crimes out of concern for social stigmatisation and that the relatives of these victims are typically the ones who alert the public about the crime.

Similarly, it was found in Anderson (2015) that the media frequently depicted the alleged perpetrator as innocent by redirecting the blame toward the victim. This practice of blaming the victim for their assaults serves to diminish the accountability of the actual perpetrators. The way media reports may lead to wrong interpretations, which can affect the way people perceive the issue of rape. This is emphasized by Layman (2020) that the media has a responsibility in creating and shaping the perception of “rape culture” in society. This is because the entire social system, including the media, is structured to reinforce the belief that women are inferior or subordinate to men. Consequently, it fosters a shared indifference towards the mistreatment and exploitation of women, which further perpetuates misconceptions and myths surrounding rape victims. Elmore, Scull, Malik, and Kupersmidt (2021) also found in their study that news media often reinforce the misconception about sexual assault instead of challenging them when reporting rape cases. The result also showed that people tend to align their thoughts with what is being reported in the media, indicating the significant role media messages about sexual assault play in shaping people’s reactions and responses to the issue of rape.

Women are often portrayed as bearing some responsibility for being swindled, a notion highlighted by Brownlow et al. (2023), who observed that female victims are frequently perceived as complicit because they “allowed” themselves to be deceived by male perpetrators. This aligns with Vitiello’s (2022) assertion that labels, media reporting, and public opinion can distort fundamental principles of criminal law, particularly regarding offender culpability. Vitiello emphasized the power of victim-blaming narratives in shaping public opinion, often misleading the public. For instance, *The Guardian* reported striking evidence from government-funded researchers, indicating that myths about rape—such as the belief that a woman’s behavior contributes to her rape—are commonly accepted by police officers investigating such crimes (Topping, 2023).

Rape, as a criminal offense, requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt for establishing guilt. However, in many cases, the crime occurs without eyewitnesses, complicating the judicial process. Under Section 375 of the Malaysian Penal Code, rape is defined as sexual intercourse under circumstances such as against the woman’s will, without her consent, or with her consent obtained through fear of death or harm, among other conditions. The burden often falls on the victim to provide evidence of physical violence to prove the act was against her will. However, as Nadesan (2002) noted, the absence of injuries does not necessarily imply consent; victims may not resist due to fear or shock, which reduces the likelihood of visible physical attacks.

Victim-blaming extends into courtroom proceedings. Defense attorneys often focus on a rape victim’s sexual history during cross-examinations, questioning their relationships and past sexual encounters. Before the women’s rights movement gained traction in the 1970s, such tactics were common. Rape shield laws were introduced to limit these practices, as legislators feared jurors might infer consent based on a victim’s prior sexual activity or, worse, dismiss the issue of consent entirely by believing that certain women “deserve” rape (Vitiello, 2022). Despite these reforms, using a victim’s past as evidence remains a persistent form of victim-blaming. This is further pointed out by the case of Brock Turner, where the offender claimed ignorance of the victim’s non-responsiveness during the assault, stating, “At no time did I see that she was not responding. If at any time I thought she was not responding, I would have stopped immediately.” Such narratives exemplify the subtle ways victim-blaming infiltrates legal defenses.

In Malaysia, societal attitudes further perpetuate victim-blaming and gender-based violence. A study by the Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO) revealed troubling beliefs: 53.3% of

respondents viewed domestic violence as a "normal" reaction to stress, while 43% believed that women could provoke men into violence. Additionally, 30% blamed women who flirt for their partners' jealousy-driven violence, and 26.5% considered domestic violence "forgivable" if the perpetrator acted out of uncontrollable anger. Furthermore, 83.4% of respondents attributed rape to men's inability to control their desires, and 51.3% believed women's attire contributed to such crimes (Loheswar, 2021). The Malaysian press often focuses on the perpetrator and legal processes and quickly silences the issue (Shahid, Shanthi, and Admed Shamsul, 2020). In their study, they highlight the issue of media sensationalism and its influence on public opinion. Therefore, it is crucial to carefully assess how the media gives voice to victims and promotes awareness and social responsibility when reporting sexual crimes. Based on the previous studies on media coverage of international serial rapists, the researcher concluded that there are insignificant previous studies found on serial rapes. The researcher also found that each of the studies stated that coverage of media on serial rapists is minimal especially when the criminal offender is a foreigner committing the crime in said foreign country. Therefore, this study explores the types of news sources and news frames used in reporting the extradition of Subbiah to Malaysia and explored and investigated the role of media literacy in shaping individuals' ability to critically evaluate media coverage of sensitive issues like sexual violence.

2. Theoretical framework

Framing theory argues that the way a story is presented can influence how people perceive and understand it. This theory involves selecting and highlighting certain aspects of events or issues to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution. Frames can be implicit or explicit, and they can vary depending on the context and audience. According to Entman (1993), media frames consist of selections of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda, and the emphasis placed on those attributes in a particular media portrayal.

How information is presented in the media can shape how individuals perceive and interpret events. Framing can influence individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and can even shape public policy decisions. Media frames not only highlight certain aspects of an issue but also downplay or exclude others. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) assert that framing can even shape public policy decisions.

Framing theory suggests that media frames consist of selecting and emphasizing certain attributes related to an issue. The emphasis placed on these attributes can have a significant impact on how individuals perceive and interpret events. According to Entman (1993), the media can shape how people perceive and interpret events by framing the information they present. One way to communicate media frames to the public is through newspapers. Scholars – particularly historians – have used newspapers as a source to document how news organizations have shaped reality (Hansen and Paul 2015). Newspapers contain a rich cultural history to investigate how the public interact, understand, and archive events. Journalists draw upon a range of viewpoints and discourses, including their own, that contribute to their audiences' media frames (Navarro and Higgins, 2023, p. 3).

Media frames can influence public opinion by selectively highlighting certain aspects of an issue while downplaying or excluding others. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the potential for media frames to shape public perception and to be critical of the information presented in the media. Media literacy and critical thinking skills can help individuals to

identify and analyze media frames and their potential effects on public perception and decision-making.

The theory highlights the importance of how information is presented in the media. Media frames can shape how individuals perceive and interpret events, influence public opinion, and even shape public policy decisions. It is important to be aware of the potential for media frames to shape public perception and to be critical of the information presented in the media. Media literacy and critical thinking skills are essential for individuals to identify and analyze media frames and their potential effects on public perception and decision-making. Framing can influence the way people think about crime and criminal behavior. For example, media frames can shape public perceptions of who is most likely to commit crimes, the causes of crime, and the appropriate responses to crime (Surette, 2013). In the case of Subbiah, media framing may have played a role in shaping public perceptions of his crimes and public reaction to his extradition back to Malaysia. This study aims to analyse Selva Kumar Subbiah's news coverage by Malaysian media outlets, *The Star* (TS) and *Malay Mail* (MM), and wanted to explore the effectiveness of media coverage of the serial rape news of Subbiah and the public opinion on this case in Malaysia.

3. Method

Content and textual analysis is a research methodology that involves the systematic examination of texts to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. This methodology was used to discuss the key features of content and textual analysis and its application in this research. With a high internet penetration rate of 96.8%, Malaysia stands at the impressive 10th position worldwide in terms of internet usage as of 2023. In 2022, the country boasted approximately 30.25 million social media users, accounting for a significant 91.7% of Malaysia's total population of 33.5 million. Among the various social media platforms, Facebook takes the lead with an 84.8% user base, closely followed by Instagram at 74.3%, and Tik Tok at 59.9% (Commission Factory, 2023). For the purpose of our research, we selected Facebook as our primary data source due to its popularity and widespread usage.

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3.1. Newspaper selection

Both *The Star* and *Malay Mail* hold significant positions in Malaysia's media landscape, each with distinct characteristics that make them valuable platforms for addressing issues of public concern.

According to its official website, *The Star* has a rich history as Malaysia's first news website, launched in 1995. In 2014, it was recognized by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers as one of Asia's best news platforms. As a trusted source for English-language news, *The Star* is widely regarded as one of Malaysia's top print and digital media outlets, appealing primarily to urban, middle-to-upper-class readers with its detailed and comprehensive reporting (Lim, 2024). The *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2024* identified *The Star* as the most trusted English news portal in Malaysia, boasting a brand trust score of 58% (The Star, 2024, June 18). Owned by Star Media Group, which is affiliated with the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) holding a 47.23% equity interest (Lim, 2024), *The Star* endeavors to provide balanced reporting. However, its ownership ties may introduce subtle leanings toward corporate and government perspectives (Bunyan, 2020). Despite this, the publication prioritizes meaningful coverage, emphasizing societal issues and policy implications over sensationalism. *Malay Mail* holds the distinction of being Malaysia's oldest

newspaper, established in 1896. Initially launched as a free lunchtime paper with a circulation of 100,000 copies in the Klang Valley on December 14, 1896, it has evolved into a trusted digital platform delivering local and international news that resonates with Malaysians (Tan, 2021). Previously owned by New Straits Times Press Berhad (NSTP), a company linked to Media Prima with close ties to the government, *Malay Mail* was part of a portfolio that included publications such as *New Straits Times*, *Berita Harian*, and *Harian Metro*. By 1997, it had become NSTP's most profitable unit, primarily due to its dominance in classified advertising (Tan, 2021). In 2012, ownership shifted to Redberry Media Group, which expanded the newspaper's reach across print and digital platforms. Recognizing the shift toward digital media, *Malay Mail* ceased its print edition in 2018 after 122 years, fully transitioning to a digital platform (New Straits Times, 2018). With its tagline, "*The Paper That Cares*," *Malay Mail* has maintained a strong focus on public interest stories. Known for its tabloid format, it engages a broad audience with local news, exclusive stories, and updates on sports and international events (Tan, 2021). Its reputation for community-centered reporting makes it a fitting platform for addressing significant public concerns, such as the Serial Rapist Kumar case. The selection of *The Star* and *Malay Mail* in this context is strategic, given their respective strengths. While *The Star* brings credibility, wide readership, and a focus on policy-oriented reporting, *Malay Mail* contributes with its historic legacy, community-focused journalism, and attention to public interest stories. Together, they offer complementary perspectives for discussing issues of societal relevance.

To delve into the realm of news topics, we conducted a computer-assisted textual analysis (CATA) of the collected news headlines (Burrows, 2007; Lucas et al., 2015).

“Although textual analysis is a traditional research technique (Adolphs, 2006), its application in social sciences and humanities is witnessing a surge with the advent of AI-powered software and platforms (Brier & Hopp, 2011; Wiedemann, 2013). This approach enables the efficient analysis and summarization of large text corpora for research purposes (Wiedemann, 2013). In CATA, two main types of techniques are employed: basic and advanced (MonkeyLearn, 2020). While basic techniques are widely used, advanced methods demand greater technical expertise and efficiency. The basic method encompasses three primary analytical features: word frequency, collocation, and concordance (Adolphs, 2006). Word frequency analysis aids in tallying the most frequently occurring words in the text corpus, thereby revealing expressions and thematic patterns within the dataset” (Al-Zaman, 2023: 3).

Collocation refers to the occurrence of words in specific sequences, such as bigrams (combinations of two words), trigrams (combinations of three words), or multigrams (combinations of more than a few words). This process helps unveil the semantic structure of the text and highlights key insights (MonkeyLearn, 2020). Concordance, on the other hand, contextualizes words and phrases to provide a deeper understanding of the data. It involves presenting a series of words along with the search term to shed light on their meaning (Adolphs, 2006). For our text analysis, we utilized Voyant Tools (<http://voyant-tools.org>), a platform developed by Stéfán Sinclair and Geoffrey Rockwell. This open-source automated text analysis tool is widely acclaimed among humanities and social science scholars for its user-friendliness, extensive documentation, simple user interface, and data export capabilities (Hetenyi et al., 2019; Miller, 2018; Welsh, 2014).

Voyant tools facilitate the process of text mining in order to reveal insightful interactive knowledge patterns. Text in any format is uploaded and it starts diversifying text mining processes and have the inbuilt potential of online crawlers to scrape large texts automatically. “Voyant Tools offers a unique environment for text analysis, with automated computational approaches and multidimensional visualized reports. When entering texts, the platform produces varying textual descriptions within seconds, including, but not limited to, single words, collocates, clusters, and phrases. The platform also permits the exploration of statistical information (e.g., word ratios, distributions, and significances)” (Alhudithi, 2021: 48).

One of the main features of content and textual analysis in this study is its reliance on newspaper articles (n=27) and Facebook comments (n=2738) as the primary source of data. The texts were analyzed using a set of determined categories or themes that reflected the research objectives. The categories were deductively derived from existing theories and inductively generated from the data. The focus includes determining whether Selva Kumar Subbiah is being criminalised, victimised, or humanised. Besides, it examines whether the media emphasize legal processes in reporting the issue and to what extent that media raises awareness about public safety regarding the return of serial rapist Selva Kumar Rubbiah to the country. The focus may also be on whether the media provides a detailed background of the serial rapist to alert the public. The content and textual analysis of this study were done systematically and objectively. The process involved breaking down the text into meaningful units, such as words, sentences, paragraphs, or entire sections, and assigning them to the relevant categories. The analysis was done manually by all three researchers. The results of the analysis are then interpreted in light of the research questions and objectives. The application of content and textual analysis were used in various ways especially to identify and analyze the themes and patterns in media content (n=27) (Table 1). For example, the researchers used content analysis to examine the representation of sources and news frames in the news coverage of Subbiah’s extradition from Toronto, Canada to Malaysia, and textual analysis was used to analyze the language, discourse, and rhetoric in a way to support or influence public opinion.

4. Frames of reporting and public opinion

There are many ways to optimize the credibility of a frame, such as consistency, empirical credibility, and using claim makers who make statements about partners (Benford and Snow, 2000). In order to frame certain issues, media focus on formal state actors (such as the police, and ministry) and less on the victims or offender and this alters how media frames are constructed and filtered (Beckett 1997; Frost and Phillips 2011). Therefore, the discourse of news making criminology can shape receivers’ interpretation of media content (Frost and Phillips 2011).

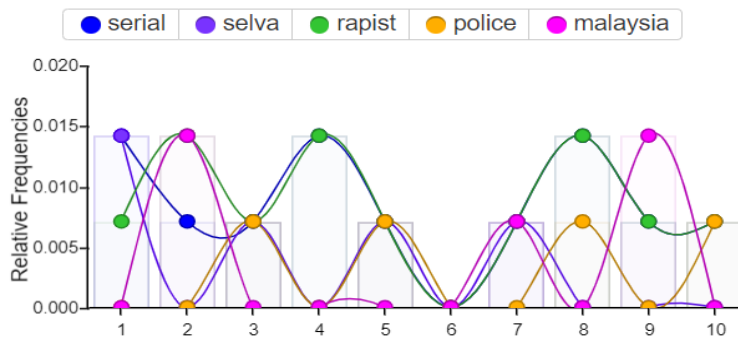
Table 1. Types of news and news sources used by *The Star* and *Malay Mail* to cover Selva Kumar Subbiah's case.

Newspaper	Types of News		News Sources				
	Straight News	Opinion	A	P	M	NGO	OT
The Star	17	1	4	2	1	1	1
Malay Mail	8	1	6	1	0	0	2
Total	25	2	10	3	1	1	3

The visualization in Figure 1 represents the frequencies of terms across documents in a corpus or across segments, depending on the mode. Each series in the graph are words associated with each other. This includes the words ‘police’ ‘rapist’ and ‘Malaysia’ which appear in all news headlines and are focused upon to create a reoccurring theme. The criminal offender theme presents Subbiah as a dangerous individual with a history of criminal behavior, specifically as a "serial rapist.". This theme is used to emphasize the potential threat he poses to society and to justify the measures taken to monitor and restrict his movements.

Both newspapers focus on these words as a high-risk individual who poses a threat to society and mentions his history of sexual offenses and his status as a convicted criminal. For instance, the phrase "Serial rapist back in Malaysia," describes Subbiah as a "convicted rapist," and notes that he has been "jailed for raping women." This emphasizes the danger he poses to the community (TS, MM). Some of the articles on Selva Kumar also frame him as a victim of unfair treatment by the authorities (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Frequency distribution of the case study headlines in *The Star* and *Malay Mail*.



Source: Own r.esearch using Voyager app.

In the context of the given data in Figure 2, frequency distribution here refers to how often specific terms or words appeared in the headlines related to Selva Kumar. The graph in the image visually represents this distribution over time. The height of each colored line at a specific point indicates how frequently that term (e.g., "Selva Kumar," "serial rapist", "Malaysia", "police", "rapist") was used in headlines around that time. The horizontal axis represents the time period, likely spanning several months or years but in this case it was from 1st February 2017 to 17th February 2017 which is the extradition period of Selva Kumar to Malaysia, Peaks in the graph signify periods when media coverage of Selva Kumar was intense, with those terms being used more frequently in headlines.

Conversely, troughs indicate periods of lower media attention. By analyzing the frequency distribution, we can infer that the peaks and troughs reveal fluctuations in media interest in Selva Kumar and his case. The graph identifies news cycles that triggered increased media coverage and frequency of certain terms (e.g., "serial rapist") and gives insights into how the public perceived Selva Kumar and his actions.

4.1. Themes and frames

The public safety theme is used to present the issue of Subbiah's return to Malaysia. This theme emphasizes the need to protect the public from individuals like Subbiah, who are considered to be high-risk and potentially dangerous. The element of fear, concern, and urgency among the public is then reiterated in "*Hostile reception for Selva Kumar: Sabah describes Penangite as 'high-risk' individual and bars him from entering Sabah*" and "*Serial rapist back in Malaysia*" portrays Subbiah's return to Malaysia as a significant and alarming event, with the potential for danger and harm to the public. Meanwhile "*A free man, but there are questions: Many say convicted serial rapist Selva still considered a person*" illustrates Subbiah as a person who has completed his sentence and paid for his crime but also highlights public concern over his potential to re-offend (TS). The phrase "*rapists among us*" (MM) denotes the story around the prevalence of sexual assault in Malaysian society and focuses on the need for greater awareness and action to prevent sexual assault and hold perpetrators accountable.

The legal theme is presented to illustrate the issue of Subbiah's citizenship and his right to return to Malaysia. This theme emphasizes the legal and bureaucratic obstacles to preventing his return and the need for the government to take action to prevent potential harm. TS phrases "*Sexual offenders' registry: which explains the best form of protection Malaysians have waited long enough for implementation*" case as evidence of the need for a sexual offenders' registry, which would provide the public with greater protection and awareness of potential dangers while MM focused on the legal and administrative aspects of Subbiah's return and focused on the decision by the Canadian government to deport the offender and the potential complications and challenges that may arise during his return on "*Canada to deport serial rapist to Malaysia after prison term ends*". The article "*Police Checking if Canada sending convicted serial rapist back to Malaysia*" from MM illustrates the story around the legal and administrative aspects of Selva Kumar's return to Malaysia and focused on the logistics of Selva Kumar's return, rather than the emotional or personal impact of his crimes.

The family background theme is used to present Subbiah's upbringing and education. However, this theme is not used positively, but rather to suggest that his criminal behavior is unexpected given his family background. TS portrays Subbiah as a member of a respected and educated family, "*Selva Kumar, serial rapist from a family of educationists*" suggesting that his actions were unexpected and out of character for someone from his background. Meanwhile, the phrase "*Leave us alone, says brother of a serial rapist*" (MM) focused on the impact that Subbiah's actions have had on his family and the brother stressed the fact that Subbiah as a person has served his time and is trying to move on from his past, and is being unfairly targeted by the media and the public. The monitoring theme then presented the measures taken to monitor Subbiah and prevent potential harm. This frame emphasizes the need for constant surveillance and vigilance to prevent him from reoffending. This can be depicted in the article "*Police to keep a close eye on deported serial rapist*" where Subbiah is portrayed as someone who needs to be closely monitored and supervised by the authorities to ensure public safety while the phrase "*IGP: Police will keep tabs on serial rapist*" (TS) and phrases the offender as someone who will be under constant police surveillance and scrutiny. The phrase "*convicted serial rapist agreed to go under police watch*" (MM) frames the story around the measures being taken to monitor and control Subbiah's movements. The victim theme presents the past or background to the case, emphasizing the various techniques used by the criminal to gain leverage and to commit the crime. "*I will never forgive Subbiah, says rape victim*" from MM frames the story

around the victim's experience and trauma. The framing is emotional and personal, centered on the impact that Subbiah's actions had on the victim.

Overall, these themes work together to present Subbiah's story as a matter of public concern, emphasizing the potential danger he poses to society and the need for constant monitoring and protection. The legal and bureaucratic obstacles to preventing his return are also emphasized, suggesting that the government has limited power to prevent individuals like Subbiah from returning to Malaysia. The media also highlights the need for greater protection and awareness of sexual offenders, framing Selva Kumar's case as a call to action for legal and policy changes. Finally, the media also tends to tie the case with an extended crime where Subbiah's case was juxtaposition with the child sexual abuse advocacy for the creation of a sex offenders registry. This framing emphasizes the need for a systematic approach to preventing sexual offenses and identifies the registry as a solution. For instance, the phrase "*create sex offenders registry now, urges Women, Family, and Community Ministry*," stresses the call of the ministry for the creation of a registry to "*protect the public from sex offenders*." This framing emphasizes the need for a systematic approach to preventing sexual offenses. Strong language is used to convey the seriousness of the problem, "*bill vital to tackle child abuse*," "*crucial*" and that it will "*provide a much-needed boost in the fight against child abuse*," emphasizing the urgency of taking action to address child sexual abuse and sexual predators.

4.2. Public opinion

As much as the news articles reflect how media framing can influence public perception of a particular event or issue and the media uses language to create a particular image of Subbiah, emphasizing his criminality and potential danger to the public the media coverage of Subbiah also focused heavily on the threat he posed to Malaysian society. The Facebook post highlighted the "public outcry" that ensued after the announcement that Subbiah was to return to Malaysia, emphasizing the fear and anxiety that his crimes had generated in the community. The comments reiterated the reactions of Malaysian officials and community leaders, emphasizing their condemnation of Subbiah's crimes and their efforts to distance themselves from his actions.

I barely know this guy and he's been in jail for almost my whole life, but reading everyone's sympathy on giving him a second chance and saying he's probably turned a new leaf has got me cringing...And I emphasize the word 'lack of remorse' You think, if he's not sorry, why should we put ourselves in danger to such disgusting imbeciles? I don't believe in second chances, especially for people who lack remorse.

The public constructed him as a deviant and immoral individual who brought shame to the Malaysian community, constructed him as a threat to Malaysian society, and reinforced existing social norms and values around safety and security. Nevertheless, there were comments from readers who also reacted with sympathy towards the criminal offender by encouraging forgiveness and giving him a second chance.

*if the man has changed and he is sorry for what he did let him live he is already half dead by reading all of your comments ... don't kill him more ... forgive
People have gone thru years of jail+rehab. And has already agreed to police monitoring. People can change and repents over time and had different priority*

after those years. Why do public still need to curse and judge from their own puny thought?

Clearly states that the public needs to move on from this incident and that the offender has served his time and needs to be forgiven. This is also reiterated by another comment stating that the media and public not give him any more coverage or highlight his case:

He looks cheeky. Let him amuse himself with the internet and that will keep him busy and hopefully, he won't have time to wonder out of his room. I won't be surprised if someone will make a movie about him and make him rich and famous. Now he is getting free publicity already. Best is to not write about him anymore and let him amuse himself online.

The public also highlighted the impact of Subbiah's crimes on his victims, emphasizing their trauma and suffering and described Subbiah as a criminal who preyed on young, vulnerable women.

Some people is so righteous to say stuffs like give him a second chance or stop judging him. Talk is cheap, especially at the expense of others. Will you say the same if you or your family members are the victim? Please keep in mind that when the word 'serial' was used to describe an offender, it is something the public has to worry about. Better to be safe than sorry.

Give him a second chance. Tell that to the victims and their families... easy for u to say but if this horrific crime would have happened to your sister, mother, daughter, or friend, trust me... u will have second thoughts. I'm a full supporter of the death penalty because these sexually related assaults Cannot be cured.

Another notable aspect of the comments is the way in which Subbiah's crimes have been used as a cautionary tale, a warning to women to be more cautious and wearier of their surroundings.

There are many crooks living among us. The onus is on ourselves to be alert & be smart to safeguard our lives & ppl we loved.

Referring to the fact that the offender has been in hiding with close monitoring by the police and the public seem to declare that the public may be living around the offender without realizing he is present. Since 2000, the media coverage of Subbiah's story in Canada has been extensive, with several newspapers reporting on his life in prison, legal proceedings, and attempts to seek parole. This has not been the case with the Malaysian media that reported on his extradition back to Malaysia and focused mainly on police monitoring upon his return. The media coverage of Selva Kumar Subbiah's story has significant implications for how the public perceives and understands sexual violence. The little background of this case in the Canadian media could only be assessed via the internet and the public did not know the gruesome details of his case. However, the public discussion focused on the social and served time that may have helped to shift public attitudes towards a more empathetic and understanding approach. Moreover, the media coverage of Subbiah's story has helped to raise awareness about sexual violence and the need for effective measures to prevent it. The media's role in keeping the public informed and engaged in issues related to sexual violence cannot be overstated, and the extensive coverage of Subbiah's story has helped to keep the conversation going. The media

briefly reminded readers of his crimes but did not get into details of his victims, assaults and psychology.

Discussion and conclusion

The media framing of Selva Kumar Subbiah in the Malaysian newspapers reveals how news outlets use language, images, and narratives to shape public perception and attitudes towards crime and immigration. The analysis of media coverage reveals that the framing of Subbiah's story in Malaysian newspapers emphasized his ethnicity, gender, and the shame he brought to the Malaysian community, and very subtly constructed him as a dangerous and deviant outsider who posed a threat to not just to the Canadian society but his return is said to pose a potential threat to Malaysian society. However, the media also has a responsibility to report on crime and social issues in a way that is fair, accurate, and respectful of individuals' rights and dignity. The media framing of Selva Kumar Subbiah in the Malaysian newspapers provides a valuable case study for understanding how news outlets cover the said crime and how the public responds to the stories with their own opinions. Public opinion discourse on Facebook regarding a serial rape case reveals the power and complexity of social media as a platform for voicing emotions, seeking justice, and fostering awareness. Throughout the discussions, we witness a spectrum of emotions, ranging from anger, sorrow, and empathy to calls for accountability and solidarity with the survivors. The prevalence of discussions on such sensitive and disturbing topics demonstrates the importance of creating safe spaces for survivors to share their stories and receive support. It also highlights the urgent need for society to address the issue of sexual violence and work collectively to prevent its occurrence.

The framing of Selva Kumar Subbiah's extradition and crimes in Malaysian newspapers, as examined in this study, reveals how media outlets utilize specific frames to shape public perception. The primary frames identified—criminal offender, public safety, legal processes, family, police monitoring, and victim experiences—serve to construct a narrative emphasizing both the danger posed by Subbiah and the societal need for heightened legal and safety measures. These frames interact with the social context in Malaysia, where sex crimes of this nature are often less publicly acknowledged compared to other jurisdictions like Canada. Reading the details of what a rapist puts his victim through is not an easy task for journalists, readers and specifically the victims and knowing serial rapists are not satisfied with torturing just one woman makes this crime more heinous. By applying framing theory as the analytical model, this study demonstrates that while the core frames of crime reporting may be universal, their application is deeply contextual. Malaysian media, reflecting its socio-political landscape, prioritizes themes of collective safety and legal accountability over in-depth explorations of systemic issues like rape culture or victim support. This contrasts with media in other regions, which may focus more heavily on systemic or institutional critiques.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that the digital realm can also become a breeding ground for misinformation, victim-blaming, and harmful narratives. To combat this, users should exercise critical thinking and empathy while engaging in such conversations, ensuring that discussions remain respectful and sensitive to the experiences of survivors.

Furthermore, this discourse on Facebook underscores the role of social media as a catalyst for social change. The power of collective public opinion can lead to increased awareness, mobilization of resources, and pressure on authorities to address the issue effectively. As we navigate public opinion discourse on such grave matters, it is crucial to approach the subject with empathy, respect, and a commitment to positive change. By fostering constructive

conversations, supporting survivors, and advocating for systemic improvements, we can contribute to a society that is more empathetic, just, and safe for everyone. The limitation of the study is that it only analyzed media coverage of Selva Kumar Subbiah's extradition to Malaysia. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other countries or contexts. Additionally, the study did not explore the impact of the media coverage on Subbiah's victims or their families, which could provide valuable insights into the effects of media framing on those directly affected by sexual violence.

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