

Crime against women in Brahmaputra valley

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Abstract

Crime and criminals existed from the beginning of civilization and has affected different facets of social life in any society. Every society has framed a structural framework as to how one needs to behave in it, but many a times breach of such regulation by individuals results in problems mainly relating with criminal activities. With passage of time the problem of crimes increased manifold throughout the world. Different forms of crime have contributed to overall composition of total crime. Brahmaputra valley of Assam falling in the same league with other counterparts of the country and the world has also witnessed increasing and recurring incidents of different forms of crime. However gender related crime forms an integral component or proposition in composition of total crime. Different kinds of crimes inflict the lives of women in their course of life. Newspapers report, published materials and official records beholds a very sordid picture of crime against women in the state of Assam. According to the reports of National Crime Records Bureau, Assam occupies 5th position among the top states recording a crime rate of 123.4 against 56.3 of national average. This paper focuses on the study of crime against women in Brahmaputra valley and attempts to investigate the spatio-temporal pattern of crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley. Further the paper correlates crime against women with other socio economic variables. It also tries to answer to the research question like does increase in total crime rate have any relation with increase in crime against women? Does socio economic correlates like female literacy and sex ratio influence crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley? This study is based on secondary data on crime against women in the state of the Assam as compiled by National Crime Records Bureau(NRCB) for the year 2011-2014 and district level data collected from Crime Branch of India, Assam. Other secondary sources like journal publication, newspaper reports have been taken into consideration for the purpose of study.

Key words: Brahmaputra Valley, crime, women.

Introduction

Crime and criminals existed from the beginning of civilization. Right from the birth of human civilization crime existed in some forms or other. Crime is a social incident which affects the well fare of the society, its organization and progress.

Hence, crimes are seriously looked upon by the society. Every society has framed a particular behavior pattern to have a firm foundation and management. As a result, there are norms and rules of behavior in society. But it does not mean that all individuals abide by the rules. Breach of rules

brings in crime problems. (vanamore, H. S, 2013). With passage of time the problem of crimes increased manifold throughout the world. Different forms of crime have contributed to overall composition of total crime. Brahmaputra valley of Assam falling in the same league with other counterparts of the country and the world has also witnessed increasing and recurring incidents of different forms of crime. However gender related crime forms an integral component or proposition in composition of total crime. The share of crime against women has profoundly increased in the year 2014 with a record number of cases registered on that behalf Crime against women is a reality in bitter sense. Crime against women has existed in the world over the ages in different form such as criminal violence, domestic violence and social violence. It is prevalent in every society although it varies in degree and kind. The United Nations Declaration on the elimination of violence against women states that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women” and that “violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men”. Different kinds of crimes inflict the lives of women in their course of life. Newspapers report, published materials and official records beholds a very sordid picture of crime against women in the state of Assam. According to the reports of National Crime Records Bureau, Assam occupies 5th position among the top states recording a crime rate of 123.4 against 56.3 of national average. Several studies have been carried out in the field of research in crime against women like

Spatial patterns of crimes in Maharashtra(a geographical perspective) by “Vanamore, H. S” where the incidents of crime has been related with geographical factors, gender related crime in greater Guwahati area by “Polly Vauquiline” etc. Joseph Cohen, in his paper Geography of crime correlates the occurrences of crime along with physical environment more specifically climate. Crime against women by Nancy J. Budd is a paper which correlates crime against women with politics. The thrust of the paper lies in the study of involvement of women in politics and political representation of women and changing pattern of crime in society. Aisha Gill in her article “Crime of honour” and violence against women in the UK explores relationship between gender and violence in communities where honor crimes are practiced. Here the author illuminates how the concept of honor is used to mediate femidal violence, demonstrating the ways in which the official UK criminal justice response is often at odds with day to day relationship of honor based violence women encounter. This paper focuses on the study of crime against women in Brahmaputra valley. The river Brahmaputra flowing across 720 kms of the state forms the Brahmaputra valley which is an important spatial unit of the state of Assam. The valley girdled by Arunachal Pradesh in the north, Barak Valley in the south, the state of Meghalaya to the southwest and Nagaland to the southeast. The total population of the valley is 26,377,882, out of which 12,873,107 are females. Different groups of people including both tribal and non-tribal inhabit the Brahmaputra Valley. Crime has been intricately associated in the Valley. The Paper attempts to investigate about the

spatio-temporal pattern of crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley. Further the paper correlates crime against women with other socio economic variables. The paper also tries to answer to the research question like does increase in total crime rate have any relation with increase in crime against women? Does socio economic correlates like female literacy and sex ratio influence crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley?

Methodology

This study is based on secondary data on crime against women in the state of the Assam as compiled by National Crime Records Bureau(NRCB) for the year 2011-2014 and district level data collected from Crime Branch of India, Assam. Other secondary sources like journal publication, newspaper reports have been taken into consideration for the purpose of study. The collected data has been further analyzed by using statistical techniques like correlation and regression and presented using different cartograms and maps. The crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against women'. These are broadly classified under two categories in India:

1. The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) -Rape (Sec. 376 IPC), Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373), Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC), Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC), Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC), Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC), Importation of girls
2. The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL) - Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act, (1961), Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, (1986), Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 (Sultana, 2014).

This paper restricts itself to the analysis of five crimes in the Brahmaputra Valley- Rape, Dowry death, Cruelty by husband and relative, Sexual Harassment and Witch hunting.

Analysis and Findinds

Scenario of total crime in the Brahmaputra valley

Analysis of the crime data on crime against women reveals a clear picture of the scenario of crime in the Brahmaputra valley. Trend analysis from 2011 to 2014 highlights the fact that both total crime and crime against women has been on rise. The state as a whole has seen a rise in total no of cases under IPC crimes from 67415 cases in 2011 to 95979 in 2014 i.e 17.48 % rise. The Brahmaputra valley has too witnessed a increasing trend of total crime under IPC i.e 58056 in 2011 to 83667 in 2014 which accounts for a rise of 18.07%. Table 1.

Table 1: Trend of total crime in Brahmaputra Valley,

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total Crime	67415	77682	87912	95979

Source : Crime Branch of India, Assam

Looking into the composition of total crime in the composition of total crime in the Brahmaputra Valley a variety of crime can

be seen like murder, rape, robbery, extortion, burglary, theft, rioting, cheating etc. 63% of total crime comprise of miscellaneous crimes. Crime against women comprise of 17 %. Guwahati metropolitan records the highest number of total crimes, this can be well attributed to the high number of cases registered in heads of theft, burglary etc. which has implication from factors as high population density, high illegal immigration population, lack of proper employment opportunities which leads to large no of unemployed who are some way or other are related to those crimes in order to make easy money. Besides this the growing expansion of slums and low level housing squatters feeds as breeding ground of illegal activities and this contributes to the total crime scenario.

Crime against women in the Brahmaputra Valley

With the increase in total crime, crime against women has also risen from 11503 in 2011 to 19617 cases in 2014 in the state of Assam. And consequently the number of cases in the Brahmaputra valley has increased from 11388 in 2011 to 12440 in 2014 i.e 4.4% rise. These data may not be very much relevant with ground reality mostly newspapers reports shows a differential picture the rate is much higher than actual reports, because most crimes against women go unreported for understandable reasons: attached social stigma, distrust in legal mechanisms, and fear of retaliation, hesitation to reveal identity in fear of social isolation and so on. Institutional indifference makes matters worse. It is almost impossible to lodge a complaint against men in the police and the armed forces, or in government services

(Mukherji, Rustagi, Krishnaji, 2001). The total crime rate against women in the Brahmaputra valley computed as total number of cases registered in the valley against total number of cases in the state is found to be 63.41% in 2014. Crime against women in the valley comprises of different crimes which is illustrated in fig 1

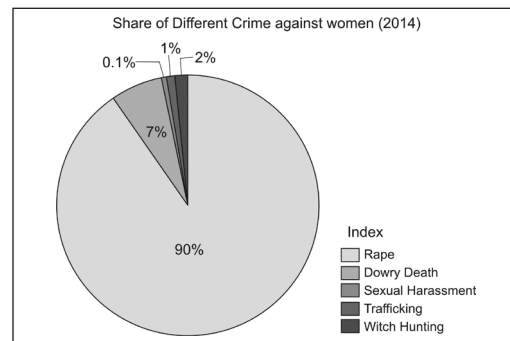


Fig 1: showing composition of different crime in crime against women category

Taking into consideration the spatial coverage of crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley, a differential picture emerges. Though it is difficult to set a normative criteria to demarcate and classify the districts of the Brahmaputra Valley as high or low crime zones. So simple statistical criterion such as percentage out of total crime against women in Assam has been calculated for the year 2014 and based on that data, the districts of the valley has been grouped into low, medium and high when arranged in ascending order Fig 3. The districts of Nagaon, Barpeta and Dhubri falls in the very high crime zones, while Guwahati metropolitan falls in high crime against women zone. The districts of Sivsagar, Golaghat, Goalpara, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Darrang, Kamrup and Dibrugarh etc. falls in Medium zone and

falling in the low crime against women zone includes the districts of Kokrajhar, Chiring, Bongaigaon, , Dhemaji, Udalguri, Baska, Nalbari, Tinsukia, Morigaon etc. A spatial pattern emerges which show that the high crime zones are located in isolated pockets but has a common element among the three districts of very high illegal immigrant and a low literacy rate. The large chunk of illegal immigrants mainly from Bangladesh area contributes highly to the increase of crime against women in the districts. Continuity in the pattern of crime is seen where the high crime zones are griddled by medium crime zone and subsequently the low crime

zones. Two distinct clusters can be seen in the medium crime zones, one cluster formed by Kamrup, Goalpara and Nalbari in western part of the Brahmaputra valley and another in eastern part stretching from Darrang to Lakhimpur in the north bank and another from Golaghat to Tinsukia in the south Bank. The low crime zones is mostly found in western Assam and this coincides with the tribal belt of the valley, which is mostly having high status of women, except for one heinous crime i.e witch hunting that contributes mostly to the crime composition. (fig. 2)

Table 2: Distribution of Cases of Crime against women in Assam, 2014 (total cases registered)

Low	Medium	High	V.high
1. Morigaon 523	1. Goalpara 605	1. Kamrup 1321	1. Dhubri 2093
2. Dhemaji 275	2. Golaghat 630		2. Barpeta 1871
3. Tinsukia 478	3. Kamrup 614		3. Nagaon 1877
4. Nalbari 399	4. Darrang 857		
5. Udalguri 205	5. Sonitpur 658		
6. Kokrajhar 284	6. Lakhimpur 554		
7. Baska 108	7. Sivsagar 610		
8. Chirang 108	8. Jorhat 665		
9. Bongaigaon 280	9. Dibrugarh 566		

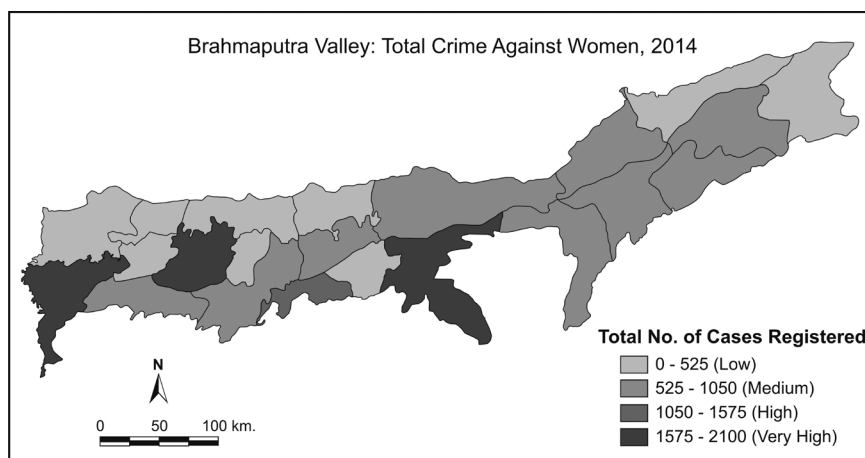


Fig 2: Source : Crime Branch of India, Map Prepared by Arc Gis 10.2

Even though it has not grown exponentially but a very increasing trend emerges. Various crimes comprise the totality of the picture. But micro level analysis of different crimes show how each of the crime has contributed to this trend. Figures 3,4,5,6 illustrate the trend of different crimes. The cases of sexual harassment has exponentially risen, this trend may be as a result of increasing awareness and urge for justice among females which has led to increase of reporting of such cases. The

cases of rape have shown a slightly negative trend which is showing a positive climate for the society. Other cases also like dowry death, with hunting have shown a rising picture. Such cases against the presence of strong law, highlights the loopholes law and police machinery inability to control law. Often done as a community crime, witch hunting, difficulty arises in punishing the victims which sends a very depressing image of law thereby enhancing the occurrences of such crimes.

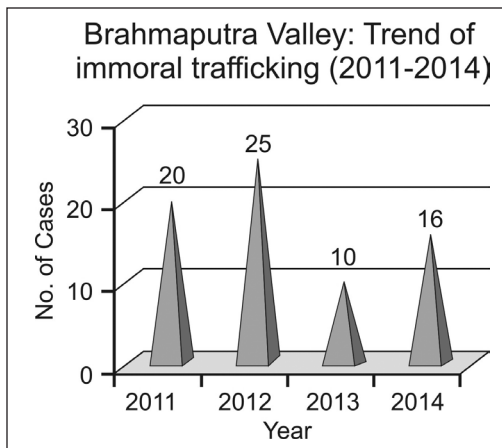


Fig 3: showing the trend of trafficking, Source : crime Branch of India

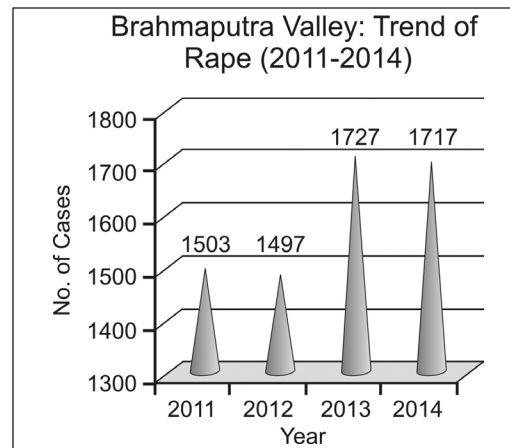


Fig 4: showing the trend of Rape Source : crime Branch of India

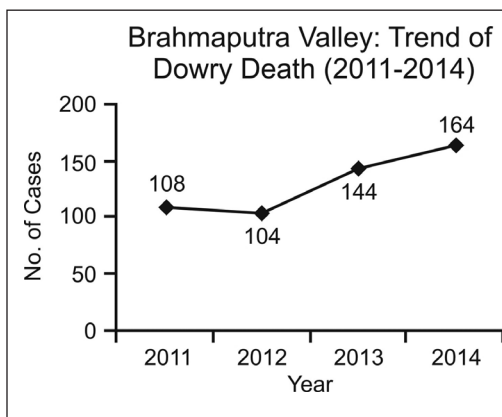


Fig. 5

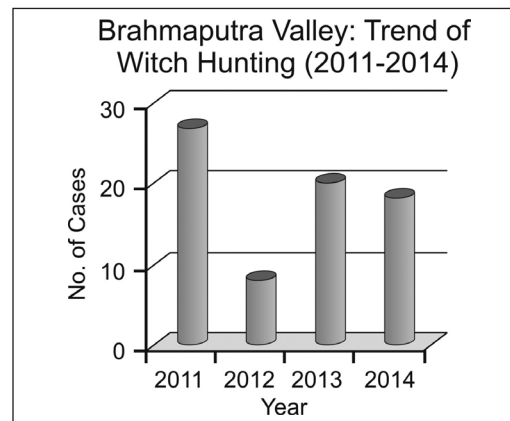


Fig. 6

Correlation between crime against women and total crime

From the analysis of data on crime against women, 2014 it is very much evident that with growth of total crime, crime against women has also risen in the Brahmaputra valley. Various types of crimes like rape, sexual harassment, dowry death etc. constitute the crime against women in the valley, but the highest chunk of crime against women is constituted mainly by rape and cruelty by husband and relatives. This can be as a result of changing social fabrication of society, and can be linked with its influence of patriarchal structure of society, growing influence of other states of the country and most importantly declining status of women in society. This can be intractably webbed so with increasing loopholes in the jurisdiction and law system of the state and in most cases delaying justice gives a impetus to the persons committing crimes that they can escape from the engulf of law. Correlation between the two, i.e total crime and crime against women shows a positive correlation with a R value of 0.668, where

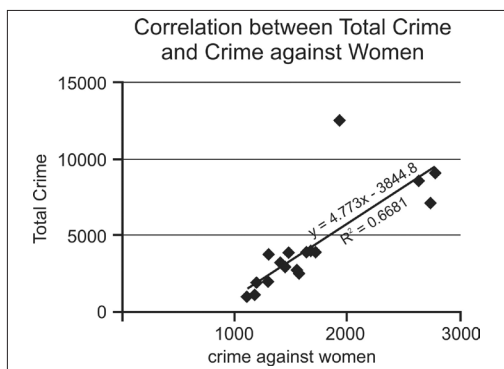


Fig 7: sowing spatial distribution of rape in the Brahmaputa Valley. Data source: Data compiled by Crime Branch Of Indian, Assam.

increase in total crime leads to increase in crime against women.

Spatial Pattern of different crimes against women in the Brahmaputra valley at district level

Different forms of crime constitute the totality of the picture of crime against women. Varying in degree and kind several crimes inflict the lives of women mentally, physically, emotionally and socially. It is very often seen that more than the crime, the imprints left on the victims' life is far reaching and deep. On a wider scale a variety of incidents compose the entire arena of crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley. Few among them, however shows the highest proportion and shows a rising trend over the past years. Based on this criteria some of the crimes has been considered for detailed analysis.

RAPE: Recurring incidents of rape cases seems to occur in most of the districts of the valley. Analysis of the data on rape for the year 2014 a spatial picture emerges which has its implications from many socio-cultural factors like low sex ratio, low literacy etc. Fig: 7 shows a graphical representation of the intensity of the incidents of the crime. The districts of Dhubri has the highest number of cases followed by Guwahati in very high crime zones. Nagaon and Barpeta falls in high zones followed by districts of Goalpara, Sonitpur, Morigaon, Golaghat in medium zone and Kokrajhar, Baska , Bongaigaon, Baska, Nalbari, Udalguri etc districts in low zones. The very high and high zones of crimes coincides with the high immigrant population and high Muslim Population.

Dowry Death

Spatial analysis shows that the districts of Nagaon and sonitpur falls in very high and high crime zones, while the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Darrang , Morigaon, Chring, Kamrup falls in medium and Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Baska, Nalbari, Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Dhemaji, Tinsukia in low crime zones. Fig 8: shows spatial distribution of dowry death. Spatially if consider the distribution a pattern emerges, the very high and high zones are isolated pockets but the pattern gradually increases around this zones to middle and low crime zones. The high crime zones are mostly located in western part of the valley while the low crime zone in eastern and northern part this low crime zones also coincides with high sex ratio and literacy rate. Low sex ratio and literacy pushes women to a subordinate position to a large extent. With lower literacy there occurs increasing dependency for financial means on male counterparts and lack of knowledge about legal mechanism makes them more vulnerable to the crimes.

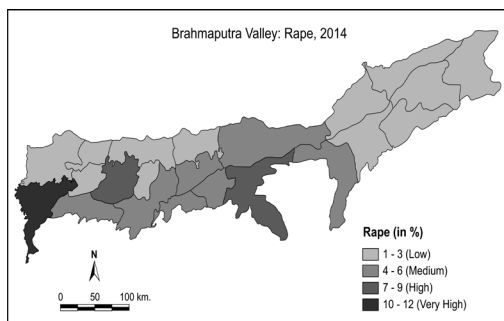


Fig 8: showing spatial distribution of rape in the Brahmaputra Valley. Data source: Data compiled by Crime Branch of Indian, Assam.

Even though such crimes was not heard off in this part of the country, but in recent times with growing influence in the mindset of people of western part of the country mainly has led to growth of such crimes

Cruelty by Husband and Relatives

Cruelty by husband and relatives forms among the high percentage of share among crime against women. Spatially the high and low zones are almost continuous stretch from east to west with some segregation in the middle portion of the valley. Leaving aside few districts like Nagaon, Barpeta, Kamrup, Sonitpur & other districts has relatively low rate of this crime. Fig 9. The diversity in ethnicity coincides with the districts of high crime zones. The causes of this crime may not result from uniform cause. Many facts such as alcoholic nature of husbands, suspicion, degrading family relations, deteriorating family relation and very often religion to large extent play significant role in rise of the crime. the districts of Nagaon and Barpeta has a significant Muslim population and district of Sonitpur high tea tribes population, the status of women in such groups is usually low, and coupled with low literacy exaggerates such types of crime.

Sexual Harrasment

Nalbari and Barpeta records the very high rate of this crime and is substantially low in other districts. This should not be misinterpreted as such crimes do not occur, but very often actual field reality varies a lot from registered data due to societal norms, cultural values, fear of stigma such cases are very less reported even though in reality

occurrences are at par with other crimes. Fig 10. But with growing consciousness and increasing awareness regarding justice among women leads to more reporting thereby making a sharp increase.

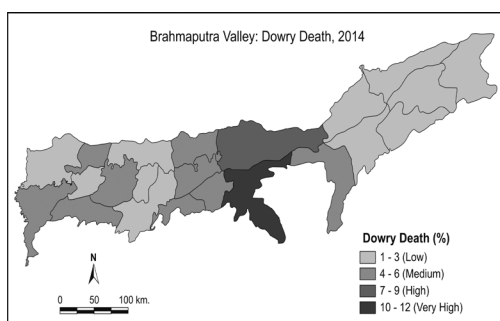


Fig 9: Showing distribution of dowry death cases in the Brahmaputra valley, Data source: Data compiled by Crime Branch Of Indian, Assam.

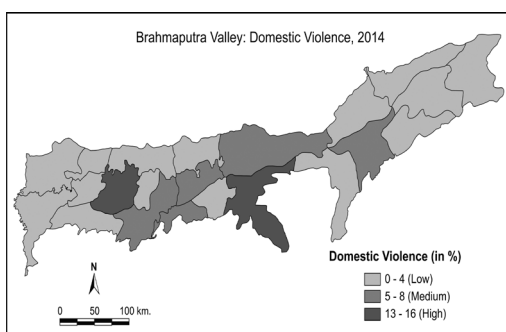


Fig 10: showing distribution of domestic violence cases in the Brahmaputra valley, Data source: Data compiled by Crime Branch Of Indian, Assam.

Witch Hunting

One of the most heinous crimes of today's time is witch hunting. Even though materialistically the society has advanced but presence of such superstitious crimes questions the advancement of society. A micro level spatial analysis of witch hunting presents a depressing picture. High occurrences of such crimes are found in the Brahmaputra valley with extreme forms in some districts such as sonitpur, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Udalguri. This crimes occurs mostly in some isolated and some continuous pockets inhabited by different groups of people. But highest occurrences are found among the groups of population of Tea tribes, Rabhas, Boros. While the western part is dominated by Rabhas and Boros population in the crime zones but tea tribes dominated in eastern part. Fig 11. The prominent causes which had led to the increase of cases of witch hunting can be related to property related matters, infused jealousy regarding some personal wellbeing and gain, increasing popularity of any women in field of local medicine which hampers the business of local bej, restriction to unwanted sexual advancement and mostly personal grudges intricately and intelligently webbed with superstition. The resultant effect of such cases can led to isolation, stigma, payment of fines, restriction on use of public property, forced to eat human excrete, force migration from village and in extreme cases can also led to death of the victim. The reasons however mainly relates to economic gain or sexual advancement. And the instigator mostly known person of victim intelligently camouflages his own hidden agenda into a socially superstitious belief in society.

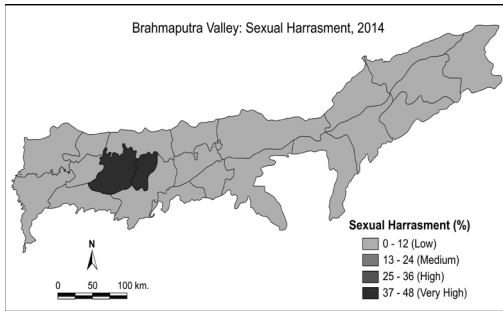


Fig 11: shows the distribution of witch hunting cases in the Brahmaputra valley

Socio economic Correlates

Different indicators like female literacy, sex ratio, work participation etc. are associated with status of women. And very often status of women is having implication in crime against women in the area. It is generally believed that with high status of women the crime against women has a decreasing trend. So for further analysis of crime against women it has been correlated with indicators like sex ratio (females per thousand males) and female literacy rate (percent) has been taken into consideration for 2011 census. It has been observed from the analysis that correlation with female literacy and sex ratio and crime against women show a negative trend with a correlation value of $R (-0.0519)$ and female literacy alone and crime against women also depicts a negative coefficient of correlation values with R being -0.0238 . This implies that with increase in sex ratio and literacy, crime against women decreases. This also addresses the research question that socio economic indicators influence crime against women. This trend is because with better education people became aware

of rules and laws of the state and females come forward to assert their rights and raise their voice in case of injustice and crime, which to a greater extent pushes back the instigator from committing crime. It may mentioned here that higher sex ratio indicates that there is lesser differential treatment between male and female child, and acceptance of the female child boosts the mental strength and status of women in such areas. This has much implication towards crime against women in a very much positive direction in those societies.

Conclusion

Although the official data from diverse sources provides a scenario of crime against women in the Brahmaputra valley, the newspaper reports a different story of crime. It is often seen that the crime rate published in newspaper exceeds the official tabulated data, as many crimes go unreported. However this official statistics cannot be denied as they very well depicts a distinct picture of different crime zones, with the high crime zones located in isolated pockets, the medium and low crime zones shows continuity and gradual decreases outward from high crime zones. Some crimes like rape and witch hunting emerges as a menace. The correlation with socio economic variables shows a real picture of how status of women is linked with decreasing crime against women. The Brahmaputra valley has more or less uniform distribution of crime against women with some isolated pockets. Further studies on these areas can be done interlinking various variables which will possibly cause many of associated factors which integrate and influence crime against women.

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