

Human Rights Violation in India: Whatsapp and Mob Lynching

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ABSTRACT:

The nerve-racking episodes of mob lynching in India are upshots of rumors and hate arousal. With the advent of social media, the spreading of rumors has become a child's play. Of all the social media platforms, the most used one is the Whatsapp for its advantage of less technical complexity. The increase of mob lynching in India shows the remorseless side of humans as people are lynched in the mere semblance of being 'child lifters' 'witchcraft practitioners' 'cow slaughterers' and so on. The inhuman torture and the unperturbed attitude of the court towards the victims have led to the excessive human rights violation. There are different reactions to the incidents of mob lynching- from the government subtly justifying such acts as 'emotional reactions' to certain immoral behavior of whosoever becomes the victim, referring them as accidents and shunning the concept of lynching itself to blaming the news channels for biased - reporting of certain incidents and so on. However, the need of the hour is to unanimously call off the horrendous activities of mob lynching and bring an end to the human rights violation with the adoption of stringent laws. This paper focuses on understanding the role of Whatsapp (forward) messages in instigating mob lynching and the extent of human rights violations.

KEYWORDS: *Whatsapp, human rights, mob lynching, rumors, social media*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Human rights are an inalienable part of life. The Universal Declaration of Human rights (1948) conceptualized the people's rights as rights with inherent dignity thereby providing a framework for universal application. Human rights are at stake bearing in mind the increase of mob lynching episodes in India. The pace of development that the government promises to adopt for the country cannot be carried forward by ignoring the human rights violation taking place in the country. The right to a dignified life and the liberty and security of a person have trembled. Lynching is a heinous crime because nobody has the right to take the law into their hands and torture or kill someone just on the mere presumption considering someone as an offender.

Lynching is when people take up law in their hands and punish a criminal on a mere suspect. Lynching is a modern form of tribalism, where enemies are differentiated based on caste, creed, color, religion, ideology is bracketed for elimination (Bhattacharjee, *The Lynching of a Nation*, 2017). The increase of mob lynching incidents in recent times has been often associated with the circulation of rumors through social media for vague reasons of cow slaughter, witchcraft, child-lifters, anti-nationalist, and so on. Rumours are a very old phenomenon that played their parts in momentous historical events. The role of rumours in the 'Great Panic', leading to the French Revolution and the seizing of Bastille on 14 July 1789, is well-documented (Sen, 2018). The 1857 uprising is also the role of rumours. In the 18th and 19th centuries, rumors were largely spread by word of mouth (Sen, 2018). Recent technology is aiding the spread of rumours, leading to unexpected and often brutal outcomes through Whatsapp. Whatsapp today has around 2 billion users worldwide and 400 million in India.

ROLE OF WHATSAPP :

Whatsapp is one of the most popular social media platforms. It has become a part of the day-to-day life considering its free messaging and less technical complexity which gives a better recourse to connect socially. Whatsapp chat groups can have a maximum of 256 people in which they forward photos, videos, messages. This provides the ground for sharing rumors that spread hate which has resulted in horrendous lynching cases. The failure of the state apparatus in taking legal action against the lynchers and protection of the citizens has to lead to continuous lynching cases. In many cases, the politicians apart from providing lip sympathy to the victim's family don't emphasize on taking action against the lynchers. The lynching cases are mostly politically motivated as the gaurakshaks, love jihadis, etc are protected from legal recourse to a certain extent which helps to create a sense of fear among the minds of people especially societies. Paul Brass in (*Brass, The Production Of Hindu-Mulsim Riot In Contemporary India*, 2004) talks about the institutionalized riot system in a conducive political environment which helps turn a minor riot to a major one. The BJP and the Jan Sangh are often

associated with communal riots considering the amount of political advantage they attained. The Congress party too is responsible as it failed to prevent the communal riot. The Hindu supremacist now doesn't have to create riots to expand its influence as a few Whatsapp forwards can do the work. Mob lynching seems to be a continuation of that pattern of low-intensity communal violence. The innocuous looking isolated incidents of mob lynching are a new pattern of low-intensity communal violence (engineer, mob lynching: let us act now, 2018). The objectives of sustained communal polarization can now be achieved by this method. (engineer, mob lynching: let us act now, 2018). However, the mob lynching incidents extend beyond communal sentiments to the activists who speak against the government, child-kidnappers, someone who doesn't belong to a particular area or don't speak their language, suspecting someone of practicing witchcraft, etc.

FEW CASES RELATED TO MOB LYNCHINGS IN INDIA:

1. Karbi Anglong mob lynching case(2018):

Two men were brutally beaten to death in Karbi Anglong, Assam on the pretext of being child-lifters.

2. Pehlu Khan lynching case (2017):

A 55-year-old man was beaten to death by cow vigilantes while he was transporting cows for his small dairy farm. The six men accused of killing him were set free on the benefit of the doubt.

3. Dhule lynching case(2018):

Five men in Maharashtra's Dhule district were lynched by a mob over suspicion of child trafficking.

4. Bidar lynching case (2018):

A well-educated engineer was lynched on the street in Bidar, Karnataka when he tried to offer chocolate to a kid over suspicion of a child lifter.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

(engineer, mob lynching: let us act now, 2018) this article discusses in detail the change like mob lynching after BJP came to power. It describes mob lynching as the continuation of low-intensity communal violence which helps to achieve sustained communal polarization. It draws similar aspects of mob lynching and communal violence to instigate violence. (halai, 2017) this paper stresses (Pandey N. N., 2018) the causes of mob frenzy, incidents of violence, and the need for stringent laws that could bring the situation under control.

OBJECTIVE:

- To understand the extent of human rights violations through mob lynching as a result of Whatsapp forward messages.
- To analyze the need for stringent laws and better justice delivery mechanism for upholding human rights.
- Suggesting alternative means to make the society aware of rumor circulation.

III. METHODOLOGY:

The methodology used for the research is a descriptive study. The data is collected from the primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data is collected through surveys and interviews with the help of a questionnaire filled by the respondents. The secondary data is collected from various websites, books, journals, research papers, newspaper articles. The area of study is based on North Campus, University of Delhi. The sample size is 70. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling under the non-probability sampling technique.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The data collected for this particular study is organized, coded, and analyzed using statistical tools for social science research.

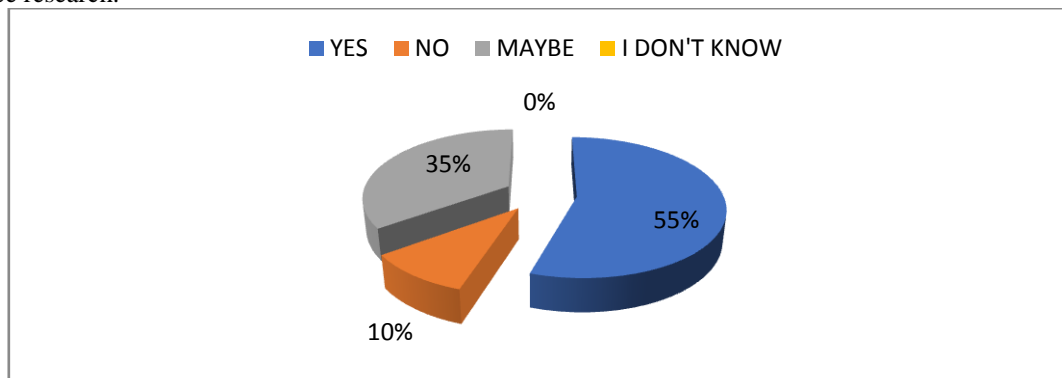


Figure 1: (if Whatsapp forward messages are responsible for mob lynching)

55% of the respondents consider Whatsapp forward messages responsible for mob lynching incidents in the country.

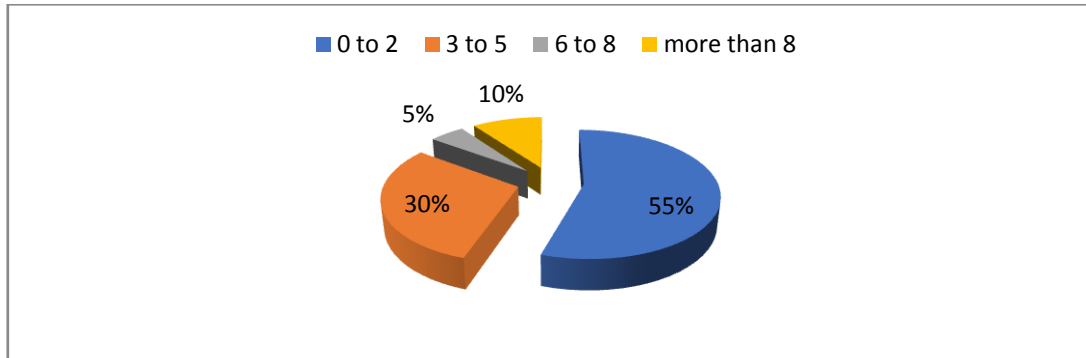


Figure 2: (no. of Whatsapp forward messages in a day)

A moderate amount of Whatsapp messages are forwarded on a day with 55% receiving only (0-2) messages whereas 30% receiving around (3-5) messages. 10% receive around more than 8 messages and only 5% receive around (6-8) messages a day.

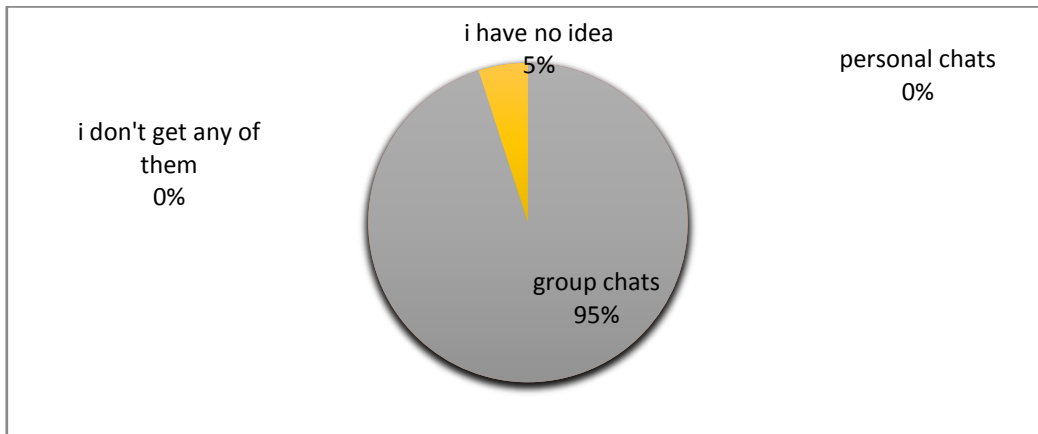


Figure 3: (maximum no. of forwarded messages in)

Many Whatsapp forward messages that were believed to have instigated violence were believed to have been shared with group chats having many members. 95% of the respondents receive forward messages in group chats.

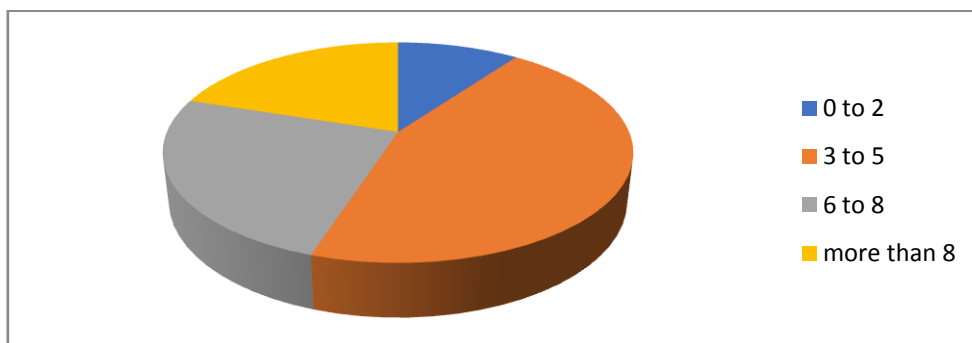


Figure 4: (number of Whatsapp group chats)

To the question of the number of Whatsapp group chats the respondents are part of- 45% are part of (3-5) groups, 25% are part of (6-8) groups and 20% are part of more than 8 groups. Only 10% are part of (0-2) groups.

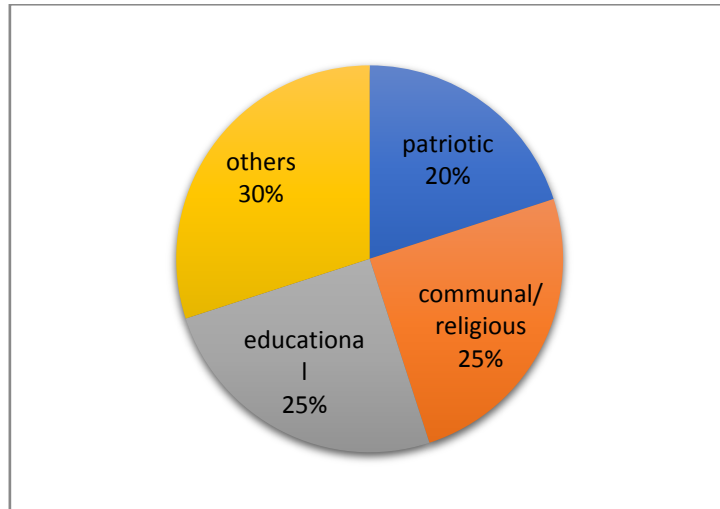


Figure 5: (kinds of Whatsapp forward messages)

While 30% of the respondents receive others(multiple) kinds of forwarding messages, 25% receive communal forward messages and 20% receive patriotic forward messages. 25% receive educational forward messages.

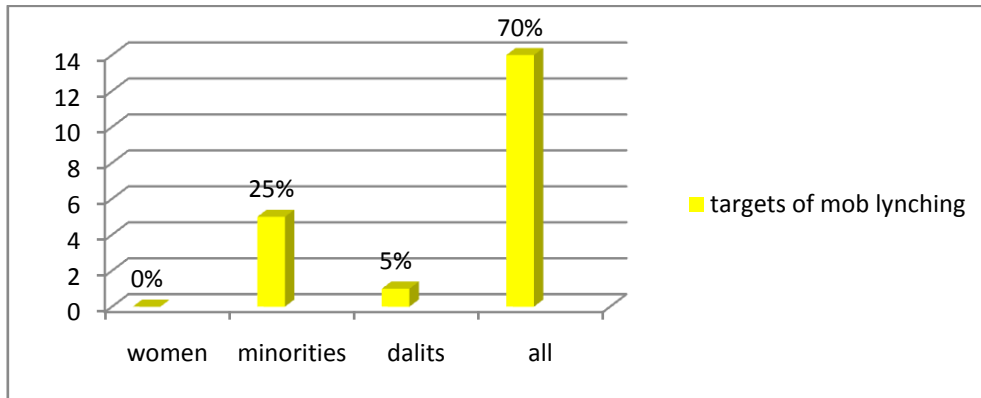


Figure 6: (targets of mob lynching)

According to the data analysis, 70% of respondents think that all are mostly the targets of mob lynching. 25% think that only minorities are mostly the targets, 5% of respondents think only Dalits are mostly the targets.

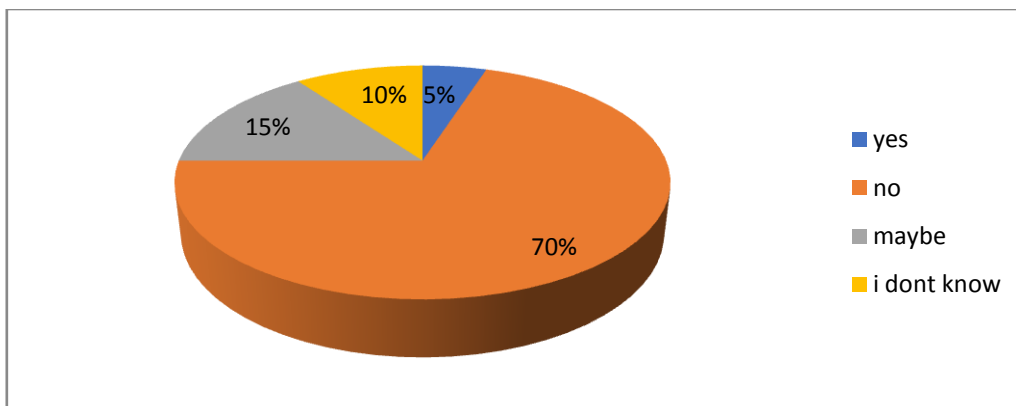


Figure 7: (compensation for the victim/victim's family)

70% of the respondents accept that the lynch victim or the victim's family is not fairly compensated by the government which is a human rights violation. Only 5% of respondents feel that the victim/ victim's family is fairly compensated by the government.

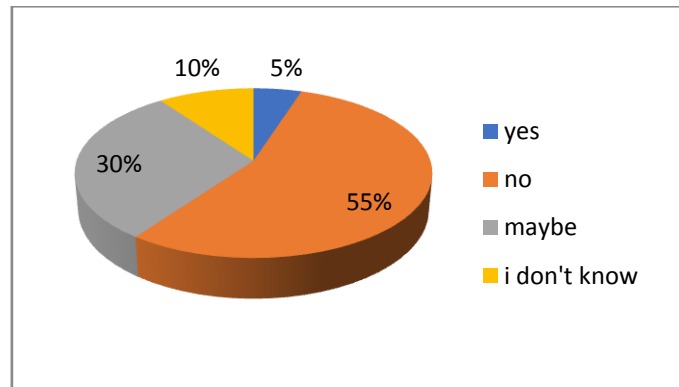


Figure 8: (Courts fairness towards lynch victim's justice delivery)

According to the analysis, only 5% of respondents say that courts are being fair towards the lynch victim's justice delivery whereas 55% of respondents say that courts are not being fair towards lynching victim's justice delivery. 30% of respondents say 'maybe' and 10% don't know.

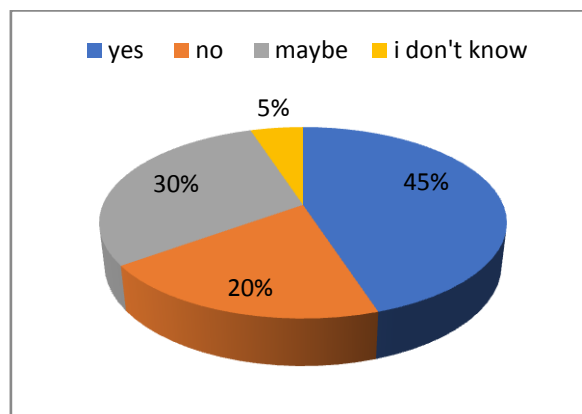


Figure 9: (stringent laws against Whatsapp)

45% of respondents want stringent laws against Whatsapp to evade the mob lynching incidents taking place and 30% of respondents say 'maybe'. 20% of respondents don't want stringent laws and 5% don't know.

The open-ended question asked about the suggestion for alternative approaches that could be adopted for creating awareness against Whatsapp rumor circulation, 70% of respondents answered the question, out of which 40% of respondent's answers are irrelevant. 15% of respondents apart from suggesting an alternative approach emphasizes strict regulation of Whatsapp message forwards. 10% of respondents say awareness drives by NGOs and govt, rallies, nukkadnataks should be organized for spreading awareness. Tv advertisements, influential people in the society must use public platforms to spread such awareness. The rest 5% asserts that strict laws and actions against lynchers would help in curbing the current scenario.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION:

The increase of mob lynching incidents in the country is a matter of grave concern, as the mob mentality is generally pre-determined by suspicion of the 'other' being a threat to the community or the society at large. Such a form of behavior is a threat to the democratic fabric of the country itself. It also has led to excessive human rights violations. During the research, it is found that Whatsapp forward messages are one of the main causes of mob lynching episodes and the lack of ability to provide justice and compensation is a denial of human rights. The right to life, liberty, and security of a person as mentioned in article 3 of UDHR is violated. In the study, it was also found that although there is a need for stringent laws and faster justice delivery mechanisms to abolish such heinous crime. Apart from this, the need for unbiased investigation and political will for execution is also of supreme necessity. The present study suggests to impose regulation of Whatsapp forward messages and organize social awareness campaigns to spread awareness.

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