CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

The methodology embraces the entire scientific quest and provides the ultimate and decisive answer to the question of the study. Based on the review of related literature, methodology for the present study was designed and is discussed as follows.

Aim of the study

The aim of the present study was to find the importance of crime news among the newspapers and its impact on the readers.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the crime reporting in English and Tamil newspapers through content analysis.

2. To analyse the readers' opinion on crime reporting in newspapers and

3. To study the attitude towards crime reporting among the crime reporters through focus group discussion.
Hypotheses of the study

1. The Tamil newspapers concentrate more on crime coverage than that of English newspapers.

2. No significant difference will exist between the four newspapers in space devotion for crime news.

3. Among the English newspapers selected for the study, The New Indian Express concentrates less on crime coverage than that of The Hindu.

4. Among the Tamil newspapers selected for the study, Dina Dhanthi concentrates more on crime coverage than that of Dina Malar.

The methodology followed for the present study is presented under three sections.

A. Content analysis

B. Quantitative analysis of the Data collected from the readers

C. Focus Group Analysis

A. CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis gives to a certain extent an accurate view of investigation and has been taken as a tool of investigation for the purpose of this study. It is a time tested method and several researchers in the field of mass communication has
adopted and also advocated content analysis as an effective tool for research purposes. Berelson (1971) was one of the earliest who employed content analysis in communication research. Content analysis is the research method used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within text or set of text. Researches qualify and analyse the presence, meaning and relationship of concepts and then may derive inferences about the messages within the text (McTovish and Pirro, 1990).

Walter and Weiner (1978) define content analysis as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information; Krippendorf (1980) defines it as a research technique for making replicable and valid references from data to their content of recorded information. Kerlinger’s (2000) definition is fairly typical: content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables.

Content analysis could determine the extent of newspaper reporting in terms of amount of space or number of articles (Roberts, 1989). The present study adopted content analysis to study the space devoted for crime coverage in selected newspapers published in Chennai.
The two types of content analysis are conceptual and relational analysis. The present study involved conceptual analysis. In conceptual analysis, the concept chosen for the examination for the present study was crime reporting and the analysis involved quantifying and tallying its content on crime reporting.

Selection of the newspaper

Reading a newspaper is a daily habit among the residents of Chennai. The two major English dailies published from Chennai are The Hindu and The New Indian Express. These newspapers mainly cater to the upper and middle class segment. Among Tamil dailies, Dina Thanthi, Dina Malar, Dina Mani and Dhinkaran are widely circulated.

According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation [ABC] (2002), Dina Thanthi has a daily circulation of 6,62,258, Dina Malar has 5,34,033, The Hindu 9,25,257 and New Indian Express 2,22,080. Based on this, the high circulation newspapers were selected for the study. Two English newspapers, The Hindu, The New Indian Express and two Tamil newspapers, Dina Malar and Dina Thanthi were chosen. These four newspapers served as the mirror of the progress and happiness of the people for the development of the nation and smooth sailing of the government where crime events are an indicator.
A systematic random sampling procedure was adopted to select the four newspapers on the alternate days for a period of six months from the January 2002 to June 2002. Therefore 90 copies of alternative days of each of the paper were selected for the study.

Analysis of crime coverage

A thorough reading of various newspapers magazines, textbooks and journals were made to understand the different types of crime. Then a close analysis was done to categorise the crime into 9 categories in the crime news in the newspapers.

Crime related terms were listed and based on the National Crime Records Bureau, the researcher has classified crime into 9 categories.

1. **General crime** – Crimes relating to petty offences where the victim is not physically injured, like bag lifting or pocket picking, vehicle thefts are classified in this category.

2. **Sensational crime** – Crimes which cause severe hardship to the victims including, murder for gain and cases involving prominent personalities which are bound to be of interest for the readers.

3. **Extremist/ Terrorist Crime** - Crime involving fundamentalist, extremist and terrorist groups in Tamil Nadu.
4. **Crime against women** - Cases of dowry harassment, domestic violence, prostitution and death due to burns.

5. **Political crimes** - Cases involving political leaders and corruption by politicians.

6. **Economic offences** - Cases involving financial frauds (banks, non-banking finance companies), counterfeiting, bogus share, smuggling and antique theft.

7. **Crimes related to prohibition and narcotics** - Cases on drug peddling and prohibition offenders.

8. **Juvenile crime** - Cases involving juvenile offenders.

9. **Police image building** - Reports on the positive role of police, cases solved schemes for police, press briefings by police officers on achievements.

But this categorisation of crime was done only for the purpose of convenient study. Keeping in mind the terms associated with the above-mentioned crime categories the crime coverage in the four newspapers an indepth analysis was done on crime news represented in the newspapers.

The researcher studied keenly the reports which appeared in the main edition of the newspaper and calculated the space devoted for crime coverage. Advertisements supplement were not the part of the study. The space of the crime news was physically measured in centimeters using a scale. The area of crime news
was calculated in column centimeters. In the newspaper, each column in the newspaper is 4.5 cms width. The total area was calculated adding the areas of all crime reports in each newspaper for the specific day of study separately for the nine categories of crime used in the study.

B. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Quantitative analysis was carried out to find the opinion of the readers towards crime reporting in newspapers.

The research design for this section was ex-post facto (descriptive study) in nature. Ex-post facto research is a systematic, empirical inquiry in which the scientist does not have control of the independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred or because they are inherently not manipulated (Kerlinger, 2000). Survey method was followed for this section of the study. It was cross-sectional in nature.

Selection of the sample

(1) As this research pertained to the study of the Chennai Edition of the four newspapers the sample was taken from Chennai city. Moreover, as the main thrust of the research was on content analysis this feedback was taken to substantiate the study on the reader’s response.
The sample selected for the present study were readers of anyone of the four newspapers chosen for the study.

The sample size was 100 and the readers were selected using random sampling technique.

The address of subscribers of the four selected newspapers was got from the newsagents. From the list of readers given by the newsagents, the readers were selected randomly.

Tools used for the study

After careful examination of the available research techniques, questionnaire was found to be the most appropriate procedure for collecting the necessary data for the study. A questionnaire, simple and comprehensive in nature, keeping in view of the objectives of the study was developed to collect the pertinent information. The questions were framed in English to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire consists of ten simple questions designed with the view to find whether crime stories appeared to be making a distinctive contribution or merely to be reiterating or reinforcing ideas that were otherwise current.

The pilot study was conducted to check the questionnaire. The pilot study helped the investigator to equip with an understanding of the overall objective of the tool and what it is trying to measure precisely. The pilot study enabled easy and
convenient elicitation of information from the representative sample. A small number of sample, i.e., 25 readers were selected for the pilot study.

The questionnaire was found to be highly reliable and the content validity was checked by experts in this field and was found to be highly valid.

C. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Qualitative research was carried out through focus group discussion to gather information about the various aspects of crime reporting from the viewpoint of crime reporters to analyse the importance of crime reporting and its impact among the readers.

Selection of the sample

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select the participants of focus group discussion. The respondents involving in the focus group discussion were a group of 20 crime journalist who had minimum three years journalist experience. Their ages varied between 25 years and 45 years. They belonged to different newspapers and electronic media.
Tools used for the study

Focus group discussion was used to elicit information about the various aspects of crime reporting from the viewpoint of crime reporters. Focus group discussion (FGD) is particularly useful for obtaining data on social norms and cultural expectations on various issues. The aim of the focus group is not specifically to gather information on individual reactions and behaviour, except in very general terms rather, the group approach is used to get a feel for the language, the values expressed by this language, the range of meanings and to identify areas in which there is agreement or disagreement between members.

A topic guide was formulated to conduct the focus group discussion among the women entrepreneurs. The questions, prompts and the aids used for the focus group discussion are presented in Appendix II.

a. General topic guide for focus group discussion

i. Importance of crime reporting in society

ii. Different types of crimes reported

iii. Impact of crime reporting

iv. Status of crime reporters

v. Ways to improve the status of crime reporters
vi. Information network

vii. Ethics in reporting

viii. Police and press relationship

ix. Problems of victims

x. Interaction with criminals

xi. Role of crime reporters in society

b. Specific topics

- High priority crime among reporters
  - Murders for gain
  - Crime against women

- Status of crime reporters
  - On the professional front
  - Status in society
  - Need for self assessment among crime journalism

- Need for development of sources

- Code of ethics in reporting

- Socio economic status of criminals

- Skills necessary for a crime reporter

- Ways to improve style of crime reporting
The researcher also collected relevant information from books, reviews and from the experts on the conduction of the focus group discussion on the importance of crime reporting and its impact on readers. The information gathered through various sources, including the informal discussion with the crime journalists helped the researcher to conduct the FGD in the effective manner by adopting appropriate procedures for preparing the topic guide. The content of FGD in the form of topic guide was placed before the experts in the field or qualitative research for discussion and the content was validated.

Conduction of the study

The focus group discussion was conducted for about 2 hours duration. The researcher acted as a facilitator to co-ordinate the interaction and to elicit information based on the guidelines by keeping in mind the objectives of the study. The facilitator was responsible for making the participants feel relaxed, arranging settings to encourage equal participation, maintaining discipline and setting the tone for proper discussion. Another major responsibility for the facilitator was to non-judgementally urge each participant to explore the items under discussion thoroughly and think about accurate responses while, at the same time, expressing their thoughts and feelings freely and openly. The facilitator stayed neutral and did not allow his personal views to dominate the discussions.
Discussion was triggered from a number of open-ended key questions pertaining to participant’s role in crime reporting. The facilitator was supported by a documenter to document the opinion of the participants. The documenter was a silent observer. The discussion was conducted in a private room with less noise and disturbance. Focus group discussion was conducted in the month of March, 2003.

Qualitative analysis was carried out on the information gained through focus group discussion.

Processing and analysis of data

The data obtained by content analysis was quantified and analysed. The statistical methods used for inferential analysis were ‘t’ test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The data obtained through the questionnaire were coded, classified and tabulated for further statistical analysis. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to present the responses of the readers.

Qualitative analysis was made on the information gained through focus group discussion.
Limitations of the study

1. This study confined to crime reports, which are relevant only to Chennai.

2. Only nine areas of crime were classified and taken up for the study but it should be noted that crime is a broad area of study.

3. A clear cut demarcation between crime and non crime news was difficult as some times a simple case could turn out to be serious crime during course of investigation.