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# **CONSTRUCTING CRIME: THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION AND INFLUENCING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IN INDIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Relationship between media and the criminal justice system has changed considerably in the contemporary era with the rise of media's power to affect the way people perceive crimes. In particular, media is one of the main sources of information for the population and it impacts their view of criminal acts. Hence, this research paper will examine how media impacts society's understanding of crime and, consequently, how it affects the functioning of criminal justice system in India. The analysis will show how selection, framing, and narration used by media create an artificial reality in which crimes happen very often. Moreover, the issue of fear that results from media reports as well as social stereotypes will be examined. The phenomenon of trial by media and its effect on the concept of presumed innocence as well as fair trial will be studied.

To achieve these objectives, the use of doctrinal as well as analytical methodologies is appropriate. In particular, several relevant cases, including the cases of Aarushi Talwar, Jessica Lal, Nirbhaya, and Sushant Singh Rajput, will be analyzed. Additionally, this research will examine judicial decisions and media regulations in India and evaluate how effective they are.

This paper will demonstrate the role that media plays in shaping the perceptions of crimes as well as judicial process in general. Media, although is very important for promoting democracy, has some drawbacks. They will be discussed in the context of cases analyzed as well as existing court decisions and regulatory mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Media Influence, Public Perception, Crime Reporting, Trial by Media, Criminal Justice System, Freedom of Speech, Fair Trial, Digital Media.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

It should be noted that the relationship between media and society has changed radically in recent years, especially in the context of crimes and criminal justice system. Previously, information about crime was transmitted through conventional methods, such as newspapers, official records, etc. Nowadays, however, with the development of technology, in particular the appearance of television and Internet, the way how media works is becoming fundamentally different. Modern media does not act just as a medium but becomes a significant player shaping societal perception of crimes.

Media is considered as the fourth pillar of any democracy, playing a critical role in ensuring transparency, responsibility, and accountability. At the same time, it plays an important part in creating narratives related to crime. Crime always evokes an emotional response on the part of an individual and includes a feeling of anxiety, anger, and desire for justice. Moreover, the image of crimes created by media has a direct impact on people's perception of criminals and their activities and the overall performance of criminal justice systems.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned above, the development of 24-hour news channels, as well as social media, has dramatically changed the role played by media. Namely, nowadays, the competition is very high, and media organizations try to draw more attention to their stories, and crime seems to be the most effective theme. In other words, nowadays crime stories are mostly associated with sensationalism; at first sight, this approach is quite successful since it increases viewership, but raises serious issues about the accuracy of reports.

Nowadays, the development of social media changes the role of media players in another way since everyone can participate in creating narratives about crime and share the information they have. On the one hand, it is possible to note that social media democratizes news making process, but on the other hand, there is a risk that people will share inaccurate information that may lead to prejudice in the public sphere.

Considering the case of India, where there is a great socio-cultural diversity and development of digital platforms is quite active, the role of media in perceiving crime stories is significant.

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Surette, *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities, and Policies* 45–50 (5th ed. 2015)

High profile criminal cases become a subject of discussion and debates in media and the whole society. Media contributes to raising public awareness of the problem and helps to hold those responsible for crimes accountable for their actions. At the same time, it might cause prejudiced reports and "trial by media".

Thus, the relationship between media and criminal justice can be viewed as a complex process, having both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, media plays an important role in the process of exposing the wrongdoing and promoting societal change. On the other hand, it can distort perceptions of events, leading to bias and undermining the right for fair trial.

### **1.2 Research Problem**

It should be noted that there is a research gap that concerns the analysis of the influence of media on society's views on crime. It is important to understand how media shapes the public perception of various types of crimes. Besides, it is significant to find out what effects this process may have on the operations of the criminal justice system.

As the central research question of this study is concerned, it should be stated that this paper will explore what media's representations of crimes can influence the operations of the criminal justice system. Thus, it is expected that some distortions of media coverage of various types of crimes can affect the way people view these problems.

Firstly, the research problem implies the difference between the real nature of crimes and their representation in the media. In fact, media tends to pay attention only to violent or spectacular cases of criminal activities. As a result, media creates the impression that the mentioned issues take place much more frequently than they actually do.

Secondly, it is significant to note the peculiarities related to the practice of 'trial by media'. Indeed, people can face some difficulties if the media covers their criminal case because their reputation might be affected, thus making it harder for them to be judged according to the laws.

Thirdly, the development of digital media has made the problem even more complicated. Social networks allow sharing any type of information including news. Sometimes, users can publish false facts and misleading narratives that are used to manipulate people's opinions.

Finally, this research will focus on the influence of media narratives on the public perception of the criminal justice system. On one hand, media narratives can be used to highlight all the shortcomings of the work done by the criminal justice system. On the other hand, they can mislead people about what actually happens during judicial procedures.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The first aim of this study is to analyze the ways media influences the operation of the criminal justice system and impacts people's attitudes towards certain issues. At this stage, it is essential to reveal how this influence is formed.

Besides, the purpose of this research is to investigate what mechanisms of media representation can cause certain distortions of crime. To reach the mentioned goal, it is necessary to find out how selection, framing, and repetition techniques operate.

In addition, the research will analyze the legal and ethical questions related to this topic. It means that the issues connected to the right to a fair trial and the presumption of innocence will be discussed.

Finally, the purpose of this study is to reveal both advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned processes. In order to achieve the set goal, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive investigation.

### **1.4 Research Questions / Hypothesis**

These questions aim at delving into the different aspects of influence exercised by media in society. The first question revolves around the degree to which media influences public perception concerning crime and the criminal justice process in general. It is intended at assessing whether the public opinion of what constitutes crime and the criminal justice process is heavily influenced by media narratives.

The second question revolves around the accuracy of depiction of crime trends by media and whether it leads to distortion or rather serves as an accurate reflection. Additionally, it explores how media practices may influence the rights of the accused persons and the process of administration of justice as well.

In this regard, the working hypothesis advanced for the study is that media heavily influences public perception about crime through media narratives which sometimes lead to distortion. This hypothesis is premised on the assumption that media narratives influence the social and institutional processes.

### **1.5 Research Methodology**

The methodology used in this study can best be described as doctrinal and analytical in nature. This is because the study will focus on exploring legal doctrines, court cases, judgments, legal issues involved among others. The sources of data in the research will be statutory sources, constitutional sources, judicial sources and books.

The research will use an analytical method where theory and empirical evidence will be critically evaluated to establish the influence of media on crime. Furthermore, the study uses case-based method where particular instances will be used for illustration purposes.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

The scope of this study is restricted to examining media influence on public perception of crime. It specifically deals with the Indian case though there are some global considerations as well. In this regard, the study deals mainly with the influence of news and digital media in influencing public perception.

## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND MEDIA-CRIME RELATION**

### **2.1 Theories of Media Influence**

The effect of media on perception has been widely discussed and examined under different theoretical approaches that attempt to explain the processes of information processing. One of such popular theories is the agenda-setting approach which claims that media determines the agenda of issues considered important. The way media covers some topics makes the public concerned about them, thus setting the agenda.<sup>2</sup>

The next popular approach is framing. Unlike agenda-setting, framing refers to information

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<sup>2</sup> Maxwell E. McCombs & Donald L. Shaw, The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media, 36 PUB. OP. Q. 176, 177-80 (1972)

presentation. Media frames affect the way information is perceived by the audience. A frame emphasizes some aspects of a story or issue and hides other facts. For instance, a criminal activity may be explained as an individual decision or as the result of social inequality.<sup>3</sup>

Cultivation theory examines the process of creating a vision of reality influenced by media. Prolonged exposure to certain media materials may form a biased picture of life. In relation to crime, cultivation means that a person will have a wrong perception of the danger level of their environment. Such a view may be called "mean world syndrome."<sup>4</sup>

All these approaches demonstrate the methods used by media to build social reality and make audiences perceive it in a particular way.

## **2.2 Media Representation of Crime**

First, it should be noted that media covers not all crimes committed. Usually, dramatic stories are preferred as the best material. Thus, some patterns of crimes become evident as the result of this selectivity. It means that the general public does not understand the real nature of crimes.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, framing influences the interpretation of crime. Media often simplifies information and does not provide detailed explanation of the reasons.

## **2.3 Trial by Media: Concept and Evolution**

The concept of trial by media reflects how media platforms now possess greater power to sway public opinion about current criminal investigations. Through extensive coverage and speculative commentary, media can create a perception of guilt or innocence before judicial determination. The phenomenon brings about two main problems because it violates the principle of presuming innocence and it disrupts the judicial process.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Entman, Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm, 43 J. COMM. 51, 52–60 (1993)

<sup>4</sup> George Gerbner et al., Living with Television: The Dynamics of the Cultivation Process, in *PERSPECTIVES ON MEDIA EFFECTS* 17, 20–25 (1986)

<sup>5</sup> Denis mcquail, *mcquail's Mass Communication Theory* 95–100 (6th ed. 2010)

## **CHAPTER 3: MEDIA AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF CRIME**

### **3.1 Representation of Crime in Media**

Media representation plays an important role in forming public perception, sometimes defining both how people perceive crime and its nature. It should be noted that the media is not an objective channel for informing society; instead, it actively constructs its vision of reality via selecting certain pieces of information, framing the story and repeating it. Media representation differs from the reality in many cases, reflecting more a constructed rather than real picture of crime.

One of the features of crime representation is the use of selectivity. Media outlets work within a very competitive environment; hence, they choose those stories that will grab attention and interest their audience. Thus, violent crimes, sex offences, cases that involve vulnerable victims tend to attract media attention, while less sensational crimes are left behind in favor of the latter. Selectivity results in people overvaluing crimes that are violent in nature and undervaluing all the others.<sup>6</sup>

Another aspect that defines how the audience perceives crime is the process of framing. The way media outlets frame stories is crucial because some aspects receive much attention, while others – do not. Most importantly, it is likely to focus on those crimes that require no systemic explanations, instead being seen as consequences of personal deviance. In addition, media tends to portray crime victims as well as offenders in oppositional roles creating binary oppositions.

The development of visual and digital media increased the power of crime representation dramatically. Graphic depictions as well as dramatic stories can affect how people feel crime reality; thus, the audience can develop the feeling that there is too much violence out there. Social networks have added to the speed and efficiency of spreading information, thus adding to media impact on public perception.

In addition, media is guided by commercial interests when telling stories. That is, to attract an audience, media tend to choose those stories that will appeal to people's preferences rather than be informative. The result is obvious – the reality constructed by the media can be biased or even completely fictional.

In conclusion, the described processes lead to the formation of particular image of crime within society that may not reflect the actual state of things.

### **3.2 Sensationalism and Fear of Crime**

One of the most distinctive features of modern crime reporting is sensationalism. Sensationalism refers to the use of exaggerated, dramatic, and emotionally intense elements that grab people's attention. Although this type of approach could make content appealing to readers, it also leads to distorted perception and intensification of the fear of crime.

The connection between sensationalism and the fear of crime is well-documented. Media coverage of crimes that are particularly gruesome and bloody creates the illusion that such events are relatively common occurrences. In other words, sensational news leads to the creation of the "mean world syndrome." Thus, regular consumers of the media that report crime stories tend to see the world as a scary place.<sup>6</sup>

Sensationalism can be explained by the repetition of the same stories over and over again. The repetition of narratives makes people believe that crimes happen quite often. The way the stories are told also plays an important role because dramatic language is used to engage viewers/audience members in discussions. The sensational details and pictures are used to create an atmosphere of tension.

Fear resulting from sensational media stories influences individual behavior at a personal level. People are prone to changing their habits due to the increased perception of danger, and they take precautions to avoid potential threats. Besides, society tends to become more punitive in response to the growing fear of crime. New regulations and criminalization of particular behaviors emerge in a bid to protect people from criminals and prevent crime. However, some actions taken in pursuit of security end up being counterproductive because they erode individual freedoms.

Digital media can be considered an aggravating factor in this regard because social media websites are aimed at engaging users in discussion. Therefore, any content that evokes strong

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<sup>6</sup> George Gerbner et al., Living with Television: The Dynamics of the Cultivation Process, in *Perspectives on Media Effects* 17, 25–30 (1986)

feelings tends to become popular very quickly. Sensational crime stories get viral within hours due to the high speed of communication on social media websites. Consequently, fear of crime can grow to an unprecedented degree, especially when the information is unverified.

In conclusion, it needs to be stated that sensationalism is not the property of modern media but a result of particular approaches and strategies used.

### **3.3 Stereotyping and Bias in Crime Reporting**

Stereotyping and bias are common aspects of crime portrayals in the media and are highly influential in public perception of crimes. The depiction of crimes associated with particular social groups contributes to public prejudices and reinforces biases against disadvantaged social classes, thus furthering the stigma associated with certain communities in society. Gender stereotyping is common in media reports of crimes. Female victims are usually described in the media using adjectives like vulnerable and innocent in order to enhance empathy among the public. On the other hand, men are more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crimes. While these descriptions could be true, they might contribute to generalizing the situations. In the same vein, the reporting of crime cases involving marginalized communities would most probably contain biases, thus influencing public perception of certain classes of people in society.

Media portrayals of crime are also informed by class and socioeconomic factors in some ways. For example, crimes committed by persons of low socioeconomic status would most likely get harsh coverage compared to similar crimes committed by rich persons. Media bias can also be evidenced through the choice of news items to report on.<sup>7</sup>

Public perception of crime is not only determined by media portrayals but also affects institutions such as the criminal justice system. Public attitudes formed as a result of media reports are capable of informing criminal justice practices at various levels of the process including policing, adjudication, sentencing, etc.

To address the issue of bias and stereotyping in media depictions of crime cases, media organizations need to ensure ethical reporting of crimes and other related matters. They should

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<sup>7</sup> Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* 190–195 (6th ed. 2010)

avoid making generalized comments about any group in the community.

## **CHAPTER 4: IMPACT ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

### **4.1 Presumption of Innocence vs Media Trials**

One of the key principles of criminal law is the presumption of innocence, which guarantees the defendant is considered innocent until proved guilty. The problem is associated with an emerging concept of media trials, which poses a threat to this fundamental principle. Speculative discussions of the crime case, including the examination of evidence, the analysis of the case, and other similar aspects, may influence public opinions about the defendant and the verdict.

Such issues lead to reputational damage of the defendant, social stigma, and even psychological harm. In case if the person is found not guilty after being accused by media, the consequences may be rather serious. Apart from the negative impact on the life of the defendant, such cases raise many concerns regarding the work of the criminal justice system as well.

Public opinions that form because of the media trial case can significantly affect the work of both investigative agencies and judges. Therefore, the media trial case can negatively affect the criminal justice process in general since it will no longer be free.

Some of the decisions made by the courts were related to postponing of hearings and investigations to prevent any form of prejudice. Judicial pronouncements also include the call for protection of the presumption of innocence.<sup>8</sup>

### **4.2 Influence on Investigation and Policing**

Media plays a crucial role in how an investigation is conducted and handled. In most high profile cases, there is bound to be considerable media coverage of the investigation and the actions taken by police. This coverage will put more pressure on the investigation team to work fast and decisively, which is beneficial; however, haste can cause lapses in procedure.

Through its coverage of a certain case, media may push a story in a certain direction. An investigative agency will tend to pursue information in a direction dictated by public

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<sup>8</sup> Sahara India Real Estate Corp. Ltd. v. SEBI, (2012) 10 SCC 603

expectations, ignoring other lines of inquiry, which may be more productive. Furthermore, information can be misused and misrepresented.

Information sharing is one area in which a media company is likely to face difficulties. It is crucial for police and investigative agencies to share as much information about their process as possible. On the other hand, the information should not be too revealing, as this might jeopardize the investigation.

The advent of digital media technology has created new challenges for police and investigative agencies. This has increased their burden, as the news will come out faster and people will participate actively through social media. Such participation can provide information and tips, but at the same time, it increases risks of manipulation.

#### **4.3 Impact on Judiciary and Fair Trial**

The judiciary plays a central role in administering justice. It is responsible for overseeing the implementation of laws and ensuring that a fair trial is accorded to each person involved in a criminal case. The influence of media on such processes poses a risk to the right to a fair trial.

Right to fair trial includes the right to a fair and impartial tribunal and presumption of innocence. Media companies, therefore, must respect the right to fair trial and avoid actions that might interfere with the court's activities.

Digital media presents several challenges to the judiciary. The rapid movement of news means that there is no way to keep prejudicial information from reaching the public. Furthermore, public discourse online affects the impression that people get from ongoing court processes.

On the other hand, media companies can help improve the transparency of the judicial process and promote judicial accountability.

#### **4.4 Media as a Tool for Accountability**

The media provides obstacles to society but enables criminal justice systems to use media as a strong mechanism for maintaining accountability. Investigative journalism has exposed instances of corruption, misconduct, and inefficiency, prompting institutional reforms and

enhancing transparency.<sup>9</sup>

Media coverage brings attention to cases of injustice, which leads to public support that forces authorities to solve the problems. Media outlets enable public discussions, which create a society that possesses better knowledge and active participation.

## **CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDIES AND JUDICIAL APPROACH**

### **5.1 Introduction to Case-Based Analysis**

The relationship between media and the criminal justice system is best understood not only through theoretical discourse but also through practical illustrations. Case studies provide valuable insights into how media narratives shape public perception, influence investigative processes, and interact with judicial decision-making. In the Indian context, several high-profile cases have highlighted the dual role of media as both a catalyst for justice and a potential source of prejudice. These cases demonstrate how media coverage can affect the trajectory of criminal proceedings, sometimes reinforcing accountability and at other times undermining fairness.

The following analysis examines selected cases that have attracted significant media attention, focusing on their impact on public perception and the functioning of the criminal justice system. These case studies reveal recurring patterns in media behavior, including sensationalism, narrative construction, and the tendency to pre-judge outcomes.

### **5.2 Aarushi Talwar Case: Media Speculation and Narrative Construction**

The Aarushi Talwar murder case remains one of the most prominent examples of media influence on public perception in India. The case involved the murder of a teenage girl and subsequently her family's domestic help, with the investigation initially implicating the victim's parents. From the outset, the case received extensive media coverage, characterized by speculation, conjecture, and the dissemination of unverified information.

Media narratives in this case often focused on sensational aspects, including alleged motives and personal details, which were presented in a manner that implied guilt. The portrayal of the accused in the media contributed to the formation of strong public opinions, effectively shaping

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<sup>9</sup> David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* 160–165 (2001)

the perception of the case before judicial determination. This phenomenon highlights the role of media in constructing narratives that influence societal attitudes.

The judicial outcome of the case, including the eventual acquittal of the accused by the High Court, underscored the discrepancy between media narratives and legal findings. The case serves as a cautionary example of the dangers of trial by media, demonstrating how speculative reporting can undermine the presumption of innocence and affect the integrity of the justice system.

### **5.3 Jessica Lal Case: Media as a Catalyst for Justice**

The Jessica Lal murder case demonstrates how media channels must operate as watchdogs to hold people accountable and deliver justice. People reacted with extreme public anger after the trial court released its first decision to acquit the defendants which news outlets broadcasted throughout the country. The news organizations through their television broadcasts and newspaper articles showed various faults throughout the investigation process while they gave evidence about how the legal proceedings treated defendants unfairly.

The case received renewed investigation because of ongoing media coverage which created public demand that resulted in the arrest of suspects who later received conviction. The case demonstrates how media acts as a watchdog function by showing institutional weaknesses which lead to necessary solutions. The media function in this case proved essential for creating public support which helped protect judicial integrity.

The case demonstrates how media systems create boundaries which determine their ability to influence people. The public pressure which depended on media support produced a positive result because it showed how outside elements might affect judicial procedures. The need for a balanced solution exists because of media benefits which require protection of judicial independence.<sup>10</sup>

### **5.4 Nirbhaya Case: Media, Public Outrage, and Legal Reform**

The Nirbhaya case marks a crucial turning point which connects media and public opinion with the process of improving criminal justice systems. Public anger about the crime increased after

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<sup>10</sup> Manu Sharma v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2010) 6 SCC 1

media organizations broadcasted its details which resulted in people demanding fairness in the case. Media outlets played an essential role to create awareness about the issue throughout the country and abroad while they encouraged people to participate in public discussions and join together to fight for their cause.

The case coverage emphasized two main aspects which included the serious nature of the offense and the requirement to establish new systems for justice. The media coverage of this case maintained its commitment to reporting accurate facts while showing how the event affected social systems which extended beyond the actual incident. Media coverage of the event established a public reaction which resulted in major legal changes through new sexual offense laws and their corresponding amendments.

The case demonstrates how media functions as a force which drives both social transformation and government policy changes. Media platforms function as tools which enable public participation to identify system problems which lead to legal development and institutional progress. The case demonstrates how journalists should practice responsible news reporting to achieve an equal distribution of their two roles which require them to advocate and provide objective information.

### **5.5 Sushant Singh Rajput Case: Digital Media and Fragmented Narratives**

The death of Sushant Singh Rajput demonstrates how digital media brings modern-day challenges to our society. The case attracted unprecedented media attention, with both traditional and social media platforms contributing to the dissemination of information and speculation. The coverage displayed multiple opposing stories together with conspiracy theories which resulted in high levels of public involvement. Social media played a major role in shaping how people thought about things because users took part in conversations while they shared information. The rapid spread of information, which included unverified content, created a situation where different stories existed at the same time, which shaped how people thought about things. The situation became more complex because multiple agencies investigated the case while the media continued to monitor it.

The case demonstrates how digital media platforms create problems because they allow information to spread rapidly while they lack effective systems for verifying content and maintaining accountability. The need for accurate reporting requires strong systems which

function as verification tools to stop information from spreading while also handling reporting responsibilities.

### **5.6 Judicial Approach to Media Trials**

The judiciary has played a crucial role in handling media trial difficulties while establishing limits for public speech rights and fair trial rights. The judicial system requires protection of legal procedures together with permits for media activities in democratic systems according to judicial statements. The court system has shown that media coverage can harm judicial processes in multiple cases while warning against methods that create unfair conditions. The judiciary has established that postponement orders function as a mechanism to manage media coverage because it serves to protect competing rights.<sup>11</sup>

The judicial system has established that media outlets must not act as judges because only the court system can decide guilt or innocence. The two principles established guidelines for responsible news reporting while they showed how essential it is to protect judicial independence.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary of Findings**

The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that media plays a significant and multifaceted role in shaping public perception of crime and influencing the criminal justice system. Through representation, framing, and dissemination functions media develops narratives which control public understanding of crime. The study highlights the dual nature of media influence which demonstrates both its positive effects and its capacity to create false impressions. Media functions as an effective instrument to establish transparent operations and responsible practices yet its operational methods result in sensational news coverage which produces biased information and undermines essential legal standards.

### **6.2 Critical Analysis**

The evaluation of media operations shows how commercial interests create conflicts with journalistic standards. The search for audience participation leads media organizations to develop sensational content which emphasizes exciting stories that create false impressions of

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<sup>11</sup> Sahara India Real Estate Corp. Ltd. v. SEBI, (2012) 10 SCC 603

reality and damage judicial fairness. The emergence of digital media has established a new set of difficulties which include false information and algorithmic discrimination and the fast spread of information. The rise of decentralized information production has enabled greater media reach but it has decreased traditional methods of governing media operations.

The legal system considers free speech rights and fair trial rights to be essential conflicts. Judicial interventions have attempted to resolve this conflict but their success remains restricted because media operates in an ever-changing environment which creates difficulties to be enforced.

### **6.3 Recommendations and Legal Reforms**

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations for the management of the challenges of media influence could be put forward. Firstly, the reinforcement of ethical standards in the media sector is required in order to ensure that information provided in the media is objective and accurate. Media regulation policies should be adjusted to meet the needs of today's media market, especially taking into account new challenges associated with the rise of social media.

Secondly, raising the level of media literacy among the population should help reduce the negative consequences of the media industry. In addition, the development of legal regulations concerning the freedom of expression and fair trial is necessary to guarantee that there would be sufficient conditions for proper media coverage of current cases. Legal reform will also allow creating effective mechanisms of enforcing these rules.<sup>12</sup>

### **6.4 Concluding Remarks**

The role played by media in the formation of public opinion about crime and criminal justice can be viewed from two perspectives. On the one hand, media influences society significantly because of their ability to provide information to the audience, change public opinion, and create public mobilization. On the other hand, this phenomenon raises serious concerns, since the improper use of such tools leads to severe consequences.

However, the adoption of ethics, media regulation, and education will ensure that media plays

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<sup>12</sup> Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* 230–235 (6th ed. 2010)

a constructive role in the processes of democracy promotion. At the same time, the process of media use should comply with the principles of fairness and justice to prevent serious violations of human rights.<sup>13</sup>

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