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MEDIA ROLE IN WRONGFUL CONVICTION

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ABSTRACT:

The criminal justice system faces a serious issue with wrongful convictions; estimates place the number of erroneous convictions at 2% to 5%. Through its coverage of crime and justice, the media can lead to false convictions and plays a significant role in influencing public perceptions of the legal system. This study looks at how the media covers examples of false convictions, with a particular emphasis on how media framing affects how the public views the reasons that lead to mistaken convictions. The public's perception of the issue can be distorted by the media's propensity to report on more serious crimes and penalties disproportionately, which can result in calls for harsher punishments for those who may not merit them. A poll of public opinion towards the judicial system and a content analysis of media coverage of wrongful conviction cases are part of the research strategy and methodology. The results show that the media frequently presents wrongful conviction instances in a way that prioritises some contributing circumstances over others, and that this framing might affect how the general public views the legal system. The case studies of erroneous convictions brought about by media coverage show how media coverage affects public opinion and legislative choices. The conversation focuses on the significance of the findings for preventative journalism, stressing the necessity for journalists to report on the police and the courts while keeping in mind their personal responsibility to avoid accusing the innocent. More training in preventive journalism and the significance of ethical reporting on the legal system are among the recommendations made for politicians and journalists. Future studies will examine how social media affects the public's view of erroneous convictions and how the media contributes to the criminal justice system's accountability and openness.

Keywords- wrongful convictions, media coverage, contributing factors, public perceptions, criminal justice system

Introduction:

In cases of wrongful conviction, the media is crucial since they can be a source of controversy as well as a critical eye on these injustices. On the one hand, strong public pressure—often stoked by media coverage—to solve crimes and condemn suspects can generate an environment of fear and public pressure that could result in erroneous convictions. However, the media can also act as a scrutineer, revealing and looking into cases of erroneous convictions while also bringing the matter to the public's attention. A critical component of this work is media framing, which has the power to alter public opinions about the justice system as a whole and the elements that contribute to unjust convictions¹. According to studies, media framing can skew public views of the main reasons for wrongful convictions and affect the public's desire for changes that prioritise addressing some contributing elements over others². The public's perception of the issue can be distorted by the media's propensity to report on more serious crimes and penalties disproportionately, which can result in calls for harsher punishments for those who may not merit them. This in turn may have an effect on the judgements made on public policy, since a public opinion survey would force decision-makers to take the people's viewpoint into account and may result in more severe penalties for individuals who may not have earned them³. In order to stop more unjust convictions and enhance the administration of justice, journalists must engage in preventative journalism by looking into wrongful convictions and reporting on the legal system in a responsible and knowledgeable manner.

Sensationalism And Crime Reporting:

The justice system and society at large may be significantly impacted by the use of sensationalism in crime reporting. Sensationalism has the power to alter public perceptions of crime in general, resulting in heightened anxiety and an undue focus on particular categories of criminal activity⁴. This biased representation may affect how the public views the issue and how legislators

¹ “Media Framing of Wrongful Convictions” Academic Works <https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=jj_etds>.

² Sidhu-S, “The Dualistic Role of the Media in Wrongful Convictions - Francis Gordon” (robsoncrim, January 23, 2021) <<https://www.robsoncrim.com/single-post/the-dualistic-role-of-the-media-in-wrongful-convictions-francis-gordon>>.

³ “Role of the Media & Public Opinion on Innocence Reform: Past and Future (From Wrongful Conviction and Criminal Justice Reform: Making Justice, 2014, Marvin Zalman and Julia Carrano, Eds., See NCJ-244328) | Office of Justice Programs” <<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/role-media-public-opinion-innocence-reform-past-and-future-wrongful>>.

⁴ “Wrongful Convictions | National Institute of Justice” (National Institute of Justice) <<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/justice-system-reform/wrongful-convictions>>.

respond, which could result in the adoption of ineffective criminal justice and crime prevention measures. For instance, when violent crimes like murders and sexual assaults are the focus of the media, resources may be disproportionately allocated to these crimes at the expense of other crimes like property crimes or white-collar crimes. As a result, there may be an imbalance in the criminal justice system, where some offences get more attention and resources than others.

Another possible effect of sensationalism in crime reporting is the instillation of dread. Constant exposure to crime stories—especially those that arouse strong emotions—may be a factor in the development of "mean world syndrome"⁵. This syndrome characterises the occurrence when people seek more severe penalties and stringent law enforcement procedures because they believe the world is more dangerous than it actually is. In response to these demands, politicians eager to calm a frightened public could enact measures that lack scientific backing or that disproportionately affect particular communities⁶. This may set off a vicious cycle of fear that results in more severe penalties and stringent law enforcement procedures, all of which may further skew public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system.

Importance of media role in wrongful conviction cases:

The media plays a critical role in cases of wrongful conviction because it may expose the tales of innocent people who have been wrongfully convicted, call attention to the shortcomings in the legal system, and mobilise popular support for exoneration. In addition, the media can operate as a watchdog by investigating the activities of law enforcement, prosecutors, and courts, and holding the legal system responsible⁷.

Nonetheless, there may be drawbacks to the media's involvement in cases of unjust conviction. The way the media covers crime and justice can lead to erroneous convictions due to sensationalism, skewed reporting, and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes. A false perception of the overall crime landscape can be produced by sensationalism in media coverage of crime and justice, which can amplify feelings of fear and place an undue emphasis on particular

⁵ Stephen Handelman, "Attracting Readers vs. Sensationalizing Crime" (The Crime Report, September 1, 2016) <<https://thecrimereport.org/2011/04/05/2011-04-attracting-readers-vs-sensationalizing-crime/>>.

⁶ "Why Do Wrongful Convictions Happen? | Korey Wise Innocence Project | University of Colorado Boulder" <<https://www.colorado.edu/outreach/korey-wise-innocence-project/our-work/why-do-wrongful-convictions-happen>>.

⁷ "The Media's Role in Wrongful Convictions" The Crime Report <https://thecrimereport.s3.amazonaws.com/2/0f/6/2343/1/krajicek_cjj_media_and_wrongful_convictions_final_edit_2-17-14.pdf>.

sorts of crimes⁸. This biased representation may affect how the public views the issue and how legislators respond, which could result in the adoption of ineffective criminal justice and crime prevention measures.

Inaccurate convictions can also result from biased reporting, as it can foster a climate in which the accused perceives that everyone is against them⁹. One-sided and presumptively guilty media coverage can create a terrifying reality in which the media's portrayal can influence the proceedings within the courtroom. One cannot undervalue the influence that the media has on public opinion, and it is important to recognise this influence. In instances of unjust conviction, the media's involvement is crucial for keeping the legal system responsible. By closely examining the activities of law enforcement, prosecutors, and the courts, the media can operate as a watchdog. By doing this, the media can contribute to the maintenance of a just and fair legal system and prevent the wrongful conviction of innocent people.

Contributing factors to wrongful conviction:

One important way to influence public opinion and understanding of the criminal justice system is through the framing of contributing reasons to erroneous convictions in the media. Studies and investigations have demonstrated the impact that media coverage, particularly in situations involving racial bias, can have on how criminal defendants are portrayed. The way the media presents criminal cases, particularly the language they use, the images they employ, and how they portray offenders and victims, can lead to unjust and inconsistent verdicts in the courts¹⁰.

Additionally, the use of imagery in media coverage might reinforce guilt-based assumptions and reinforce stereotypes¹¹. For instance, the use of mugshots in media reports might contribute to the assumption of guilt even before a trial has started by reinforcing unfavourable preconceptions about Black men. This may affect the public's perception of a case and have an effect on the verdict.

⁸ Vanguard Administrator, "Looking Back: The Role of the Media in Setting the Stage for Wrongful Convictions | Davis Vanguard" (Davis Vanguard, August 16, 2020) <<https://www.davisvanguard.org/2020/08/looking-back-the-role-of-the-media-in-setting-the-stage-for-wrongful-convictions/>>.

⁹ "A Qualitative Analysis of Sensationalism in Media" Research Repository <<https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4222&context=etd>>.

¹⁰ Aaron Straus Garcia, "A Look at Racial Bias and Inequity in Media Coverage of Criminal Defendants in the U.S." (Global Strategy Group, December 16, 2021) <<https://globalstrategygroup.com/2021/12/16/a-look-at-racial-bias-and-inequity-in-media-coverage-of-criminal-defendants-in-the-u-s/>>.

¹¹ Tia Fasano, "The Effect Media Has on Juror Bias" [2019] Digital Commons <https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1336&context=honorscollege_theses>.

Bias in media coverage can also result from linguistic decisions. Certain words and phrases have the power to perpetuate stereotypes and increase guilt-related assumptions. The term "thug" is often used to characterise Black defendants, which can reinforce unfavourable preconceptions and increase the likelihood of guilt. Comparably, highlighting a defendant's criminal past in court proceedings might raise the possibility of a presumption of guilt, affect public opinion of the case, and possibly affect the verdict.

Impact of media coverage on public opinion and Decision making:

One important area of political communication research is the effect of media coverage on public opinion and governmental decisions. Public opinion, policy preferences, and political conduct are all influenced by media coverage of politically significant subjects¹². Policymakers' attention to issues and their decisions about policies, notably those related to budgets, can also be influenced by the media.

Studies have indicated that public opinion surveys and perceptions of popular attitude can be influenced by media coverage. For instance, a study that was published in the Public Opinion Quarterly discovered that polling behaviour can be influenced by media coverage, with people being more inclined to support a candidate or cause if they think it has widespread support from the public¹³.

In a similar vein, research published in the American Political Science Review discovered that media coverage of policy topics signals the significance of those concerns to the public and politicians, reflecting and influencing public opinion and policy change.

The media has the power to affect lawmakers' decisions and attention to topics¹⁴. According to research, the priority that citizens place on issues can be communicated to politicians through media coverage, and vice versa—media coverage of policy topics influences the agenda for policy.

¹² "Media Coverage Polls" (Oxford Academic) <https://academic.oup.com/poq/pages/media_coverage_polls?login=false>.

¹³ "Reading Public Opinion: The Influence of News Coverage on Perceptions of Public Sentiment on JSTOR" www.jstor.org <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2749580>>.

¹⁴ Emiliano Grossman, "Media and Policy Making in the Digital Age" (2022) 25 Annual Review of Political Science 443 <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051120-103422>>.

But there is a complicated and reciprocal relationship between public opinion, media coverage, and policy actions. Though public opinion and policy decisions are influenced by media coverage, media coverage is also influenced by public opinion and policy decisions.

It was discovered that public perceptions of public sentiment can be influenced by media coverage, and that public perceptions of politically significant problems can be shaped by media coverage.

But there is a complicated and reciprocal relationship between public opinion, media coverage, and policy decisions; public opinion and policy changes are both reflected in and influenced by media coverage.

Role of social media in shaping public perception:

Social media is become a potent instrument for influencing public opinion, even in situations where someone has been wrongfully convicted. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have grown to be important debate and informational tools for a large number of people, and it is impossible to overlook how they affect public opinion and the formulation of public policy¹⁵.

Social media can have a significant impact on how the public views the accused, the victim, and the legal system in cases of wrongful conviction¹⁶. Social media sites can be used to exchange ideas, disseminate information, and rally support for a cause. On the other hand, there are drawbacks to using social media in wrongful conviction cases, such as the propagation of false information, the maintenance of damaging stereotypes, and the instillation of fear.

Social media can influence public opinion in cases of unjust conviction by using images, among other things¹⁷. Even before a trial has started, the usage of mugshots in media coverage of criminal cases can bolster suspicions of guilt. Comparably, disseminating pictures of the accused or the victim via social media can also have a similar outcome, especially if the pictures are chosen to support unfavourable preconceptions or to advance a specific story.

¹⁵ The Law Offices of Brian J. Cooke, "How Does Social Media Affect Court Cases?" (The Law Offices of Brian J. Cooke, February 15, 2024) <<https://stlouiscriminaldefense.com/how-does-social-media-affect-court-cases/>>.

¹⁶ "How Does Social Media Shape Public Perceptions? | 4 Answers from Research Papers" (SciSpace - Question) <<https://typeset.io/questions/how-does-social-media-shape-public-perceptions-k61nb80nj6>>.

¹⁷ "UN-MAKING A MURDERER: NEW MEDIA MAKING A MURDERER: NEW MEDIA'S IMPACT ON (POTENTIAL) WRONGFUL CONVICTION CASES" Scholarlycommons <<https://scholarlycommons.law.cwsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1648&context=cwlr>>.

The way that wrongful conviction cases are covered on social media can potentially be biased by the language used. Certain words and phrases have the power to perpetuate stereotypes and increase guilt-related assumptions. The term "thug" is often used to characterise Black defendants, which can reinforce unfavourable preconceptions and increase the likelihood of guilt. Similar to this, language that highlights the offender's criminal past might raise suspicions of guilt, but language that highlights the innocence of the victim can do the opposite.

In the end, biased social media coverage can impact the fairness and accuracy of court procedures by feeding stereotypes, maintaining a guilt presumption, and creating a skewed perception of crime and justice. In order to solve this problem, steps must be taken to stop prejudice from entering the criminal justice system, inform the public about how social media coverage affects criminal trials, and motivate social media users to report on criminal trials objectively and fairly. By doing this, we may contribute to ensuring that justice is carried out and that the accused is given a fair and impartial trial.

Pre-trial publicity and fair trial rights of media coverage:

Pretrial publicity and how it affects defendants' rights to a fair trial in the criminal justice system are important issues that call for a careful balancing act between press freedom and the right to a fair trial. Pretrial publicity is the term used to describe public discourse and media attention to a case prior to trial, which may have an impact on potential witnesses, juries, and the trial's general fairness¹⁸.

Particularly in high-profile cases, media coverage has the power to sway public opinion, engender prejudice, and even bias juries. The right of the defendant to be presumed innocent till proven guilty may be compromised by the widespread and frequently sensationalised reporting of criminal cases, which can result in an assumption of guilt even before the trial starts¹⁹.

Various legal remedies and techniques are used to protect the defendant's right to a fair trial in order to address the issues presented by pretrial publicity²⁰. Among them are:

¹⁸ "PRETRIAL PUBLICITY IN CRIMINAL CASES OF NATIONAL NOTORIETY: CONSTRUCTING A REMEDY FOR THE REMEDILESS WRONG" Digital Commons <<https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1365&context=aulr>>.

¹⁹ "Prejudicial Publicity in Criminal Trials: Bringing Sheppard v. Maxwell Into the Nineties | Office of Justice Programs" <<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/prejudicial-publicity-criminal-trials-bringing-sheppard-v-maxwell>>.

²⁰ "Is a Fair Trial Possible in the Age of Mass Media?" <<https://teachdemocracy.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-11->
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Voir Dire: In this procedure, prospective jurors are questioned to determine their objectivity and capacity to make decisions based on the evidence that is presented in court rather than preconceived ideas based on media coverage.

Continuance: Delaying the trial to give prospective jurors time to forget or become less swayed by media coverage, as well as to mitigate the effects of pretrial exposure.

Sequestration: Preventing biased information from influencing jurors' decisions during the trial by removing them from external influences, such as media coverage.

Change of Venue: Transferring the trial to a new site in order to mitigate the influence of local press coverage and public sentiment on the jury pool.

The public's right to knowledge, the press's freedom of speech, and the defendant's right to a fair trial must all be balanced by the courts²¹.

Jury bias and decision making:

Media coverage, especially in the form of pretrial exposure, can have a substantial impact on jury bias and decision-making. This phenomena relates to how a case is discussed and covered by the media before to trial, which may have an impact on witnesses, juries, and the trial's general fairness²².

According to a study, pretrial publicity that is biased against the prosecution or defendant can have a significant impact on jurors' perceptions, interpretations of the evidence, and verdicts²³.

Juror judgements can be influenced by media coverage of legal matters in a number of ways. For instance, a wide range of legally relevant material obtained from media sources, such as newspaper articles, radio and television news, advertisements, motion pictures, televised crime series, and courtroom scenes, may have an impact on jurors' decisions.

Juror deliberations can mitigate the influence of pretrial publicity on jurors' decision-making, while this remedy's efficacy is debatable. While some studies contend that collective decision-making can result in poor decision performance and extreme, biased positions, others contend

1-a-is-a-fair-trial-possible-in-the-age-of-mass-media>.

²¹ "ClaireCatonSecondPaper - CompPrivConst - TWiki" <<http://moglen.law.columbia.edu/twiki/bin/view/CompPrivConst/ClaireCatonSecondPaper>>.

²² "Bias in the Eye of the Beholder: Impact of Pretrial Publicity on Jurors' Decision-Making" <<https://concept.paloaltou.edu/resources/translating-research-into-practice-blog/bias-in-the-eye-of-the-beholder-impact-of-pretrial-publicity-on-jurors-decision-making/>>.

²³ Edith Greene, "Media Effects on Jurors." (1990) 14 Law And Human Behavior 439 <<https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01044221>>.

that deliberations may help the courts limit juror bias²⁴.

The social influence of pretrial publicity on juror biases emphasises the necessity of collaboration between social psychologists and the legal system to identify practical measures to reduce pretrial publicity's biasing effects²⁵.

Challenges faced by the exonerees in rebuilding their lives:

After being falsely convicted, exonerees must overcome numerous obstacles in order to start over²⁶. These obstacles are numerous and diverse, including mental and practical barriers that may have a major effect on their reintegration into society²⁷. Among the main obstacles exonerees must overcome to start again in their new lives are:

Problems with Mental Health: The trauma of unjust incarceration causes exonerees to suffer from a variety of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These mental health problems may significantly affect their capacity to reintegrate into society after release from jail and to regain their self-worth.

Social Stigma: Exonerees must deal with social stigma, which can make it very challenging for them to find housing, work, and the help they require. Reintegration might be hampered by the stigma attached to an incorrect conviction, which can also cause feelings of social estrangement and loneliness.

Financial Strain: Those who have been wrongfully convicted frequently return home with little money to support their rehabilitation and self-restoration. Years of unjustified imprisonment can put exonerees in a difficult financial situation that makes it difficult for them to meet their basic necessities, find stable housing, and get access to services.

Lack of Support Systems: Exonerees may find it more difficult to reintegrate into society if they do not have sufficient support networks. In the absence of a robust support system comprising social, material, and emotional help, exonerees could find it difficult to deal with the challenges of reconstructing their life after being freed.

Legal Difficulties: In their efforts to clear their records, obtain recompense for their false

²⁴ "Cognitive and Human Factors in Legal Layperson Decision Making: Sources of Bias in Juror Decision Making" (National Center for Biotechnology Center) <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9198394/>>.

²⁵ "Pressing the Verdict: The Social Influence of Pretrial Publicity on Juror Biases" Scholarship <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4229&context=cmc_theses>.

²⁶ "Rehabilitation: Rebuilding Lives after Exoneration - FasterCapital" (FasterCapital) <<https://fastercapital.com/content/Rehabilitation--Rebuilding-Lives-after-Exoneration.html>>.

²⁷ "Exploring the Challenges Faced by Wrongfully Convicted Individuals" (Free Michael Hart, March 27, 2024) <<https://freemichaelhart.com/insight/exploring-the-challenges-faced-by-wrongfully-convicted-individuals>>.

conviction, and obtain resources to ease their reintegration into society, exonerees frequently run into legal difficulties. For exonerees, navigating the legal system and fighting for justice can be difficult and time-consuming tasks²⁸.

Recidivism Risk: Tragically, some exonerees may experience recidivism as a result of inadequate support networks and reintegration difficulties, which feeds the unjust cycle. Exonerees may find it difficult to surmount the challenges they encounter in reconstructing their lives in the absence of the required tools and assistance.

Case studies of wrongful conviction:

Wrongful convictions have been a major problem in India, and media coverage has been a major factor in shaping these verdicts. Sensationalism and political reporting by the media have frequently resulted in the conviction of innocent people; examples of this include the incidents of the 2002 Gujarat riots and the Nithari killings. In these instances, political and social prejudices had a significant impact on the media's reporting, which distorted the public's understanding of the incidents and the participants.

Mohinder Singh Pandher was wrongfully convicted in the Nithari killings case due to the media's sensationalised reportage and the police's reliance on it. A public demand for justice was sparked by the media's heavy coverage of the case, which included vivid details of the murders and the accused. As a result, the police raced to identify a culprit and utilised shaky evidence to condemn Pandher.

Similar to this, political and communal prejudices greatly influenced the media's coverage of the 2002 Gujarat riots, which distorted the public's perception of the unrest and the government's response.

When it came to covering the riots, the media frequently highlighted the violence of one community while downplaying or ignoring the violence of the other, which resulted in a skewed perception of the events and the participants.

The criminal justice system can be significantly impacted by the sensationalism and biased reporting of the media, which frequently results in erroneous convictions and a skewed

²⁸ Heather Weigand and others, "REBUILDING a LIFE: THE WRONGFULLY CONVICTED AND EXONERATED," vol 18 (2009) <<https://www.bu.edu/pilj/files/2015/09/18-2WeigandSymposium.pdf>>.

perception of the facts. To ensure that justice is done and the public is informed in a responsible and unbiased manner, it is imperative that the media report on these matters honestly and accurately, taking into account the intricacies and nuances of the legal system.

Wrongful convictions have a significant effect on the family of the falsely convicted in addition to the difficulties exonerees encounter in starting over. The falsely convicted and their families can suffer from unimaginable psychological trauma and emotional suffering, which frequently leaves them with lifelong scars that continue to affect their mental health long after they are freed²⁹.

It is crucial to investigate the reforms and actions that can lessen the likelihood of miscarriages of justice in order to prevent erroneous convictions. Enhancing police education in areas like identifying eyewitnesses and questioning methods is critical, as is putting best practices and oversight in place to protect the rights of the accused. Another essential is making sure that everyone, regardless of income level, has access to quality legal representation a step in preventing wrongful conviction.

Habil Sindhu vs The state of Odisha³⁰

The individual in question was accused of triple murder and had served nearly 19 years in prison. He was given a life sentence by the additional district and sessions judge, but an appeal was then filed at the supreme court. When they discovered there was insufficient evidence to convict him, the top court dropped all of the charges against him. Later, he made a statement to the media in which he said that although though his family does not accept him now, he will work hard to win back their confidence (Suffian).

Ankush Maruti Shinde . vs State Of Maharashtra³¹

Six people were found guilty by the Supreme Court of killing and raping a lady and her fifteen-year-old daughter in the aforementioned case. One of the six individuals was underage when they were sentenced. These men were members of a socially conservative community who were unfairly convicted. The other four individuals were recognised by the eyewitness as the culprits, but the police had closed the case without looking into it further. Thus, an ineffective government was the cause of these six men's suffering. The state was ordered by the court to compensate each

²⁹ “General Issues & Reforms to Reduce the Wrongful Convictions in India - Ignited Minds Journals” <<http://ipublisher.in/I/a/306148>>.

³⁰ Habil Sindhu vs State of Odisha 2021 (I) ILR – CUT -767

³¹ Ankush Maruti Shinde . vs State Of Maharashtra AIR 2019 SC 1457

of the five lakhs of people who had spent sixteen years in prison for a crime they had not even committed³².

Conclusion:

The sources emphasised the importance of journalistic ethics when covering criminal cases. When reporting on crimes involving victims, journalists can refer to a code of ethics provided by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) for guidance. Seeking the truth, preventing harm, acting on one's own initiative, and being open and honest are all stressed in this code³³. The pursuit of truth and the possible harm that their reporting may do must be balanced for journalists, particularly when covering delicate subjects like child abuse or crimes linked to gangs.

Journalists covering criminal cases are urged to use original sources whenever possible, take accountability for the quality of their reporting, and double-check information before publishing it³⁴. Throughout the course of a news story, they should also collect, update, and correct information. They should also be watchful in keeping those in positions of authority accountable and providing a voice to the voiceless. Journalists are also recommended to refrain from catering to lurid curiosity, show sympathy for individuals impacted by news coverage, and weigh the public's desire for information against potential discomfort or injury.

Furthermore, while dealing with minors, victims of sexual offences, and sources who might be inexperienced or unable to give consent, journalists should take cultural differences into account in their approach and treatment³⁵. To ensure that reporting on criminal cases is done ethically and responsibly to preserve the principles of truth, honesty, and sensitivity towards people engaged in the case, it is imperative to strike a balance between the right of a suspect to a fair trial and the public's right to know.

³² LawBhoomi Content Team, "The Innocence Lost: A Comprehensive Study of Wrongful Convictions" (LawBhoomi, September 25, 2023) <https://lawbhoomi.com/the-innocence-lost-a-comprehensive-study-of-wrongful-convictions/#Case_laws>.

³³ Natalie Yahr, "Doing No Harm: The Call for Crime Reporting That Does Justice to the Beat - Center for Journalism Ethics" (Center for Journalism Ethics, August 23, 2019) <<https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/2019/08/22/doing-no-harm-the-call-for-crime-reporting-that-does-justice-to-the-beat/>>.

³⁴ "The Ethics of Reporting Misdemeanor Crimes" (School of Journalism and Communication) <<https://journalism.uoregon.edu/news/ethics-reporting-misdemeanor-crimes/>>.

³⁵ "The Intersection of Journalism Ethics and Cases of Violence against Children" Frederick County <<https://frederickcountymd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/295587/The-intersection-of-journalism-ethics-and-cases-of-violence-against-children>>.

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