



Navigating Privacy and Dignity: *The Victim's plight in the age of Media Trials*

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Abstract:

In the modern digital age, media often assumes an informal courtroom role, blurring the line between freedom of expression and an individual's right to privacy and dignity. Media trials, characterized by sensational reporting and premature conclusions, disrupt this balance, significantly influencing public opinion and affecting the privacy, emotional well-being, and societal perception of victims, particularly in high-profile cases. This study explores the dynamics of media trials, focusing on their implications for victims and the legal system in India, where media organizations frequently assume quasi-judicial roles in prominent cases. Through an analysis of case studies and judicial rulings, the research examines the consequences of media trials, including their impact on the right to a fair trial, the creation of public bias, and violations of personal privacy. While media trials aim to promote accountability, they often undermine judicial integrity and fairness, resulting in a conflict between public interest and individual rights. The study emphasizes the need for a robust legislative framework to regulate media coverage of ongoing legal proceedings, ensuring a balance between the media's role in ensuring accountability and the preservation of judicial sanctity and individual dignity. Additionally, the importance of ethical journalism is highlighted, stressing the role of the media in upholding democratic values while respecting due process and equity. Responsible media should act as a pillar of democracy, fostering informed public discourse without compromising the rights of individuals involved in legal matters.

Keywords: *Media trials, Digital privacy, Criminal justice system, Victim rights, and Responsible journalism.*

Introduction:

"The line between fact and fiction is blurred in media narratives, shaping public perceptions of guilt and innocence."



The protection of privacy and reputation is a fundamental aspect of human dignity, which is recognized by legal systems around the world, including in India. However, media coverage, especially in criminal cases, often violates this right, as sensationalized reporting exposes personal information and harms reputations. The media's duty to inform the public must be balanced with ethical responsibilities to prevent unwarranted intrusions into private lives. Indian courts have played a key role in safeguarding privacy, with landmark cases such as *R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu* (1994) prohibiting the unauthorized disclosure of personal details and reinforcing the need for responsible journalism (Khumalkar & Sharma et al., 2022).

The media in India serves as a crucial pillar of democracy, addressing pressing social issues, critiquing government policies, and promoting public awareness. While a free and independent press is vital for a functioning democracy, it is often compromised by biases and ethical lapses, especially in the digital era. The rise of "media trials," in which sensationalized media coverage shapes public opinion, raises significant concerns about privacy, dignity, and the integrity of the judicial process. These trials often involve prejudging individuals and exposing them to public shaming, which can violate their rights and undermine public confidence in the judicial system, highlighting the tension between media freedom and ethical responsibility.

While the Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech and expression, including press freedom, this right carries corresponding duties. Irresponsible media reporting in criminal cases can prejudice trials, stigmatize individuals, and violate privacy rights. In the *R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu* (1994) case, the Supreme Court affirmed that privacy is part of the fundamental right to life and liberty under Article 21, ruling that publishing personal information without consent violates this right. Later, in the *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* (2017) case, the Court further reinforced the right to privacy as an essential component of individual dignity. Despite these rulings, enforcing these rights remains challenging due to the growth of sensationalized reporting and the unchecked spread of information on digital platforms.

The rise of digital media has exacerbated privacy concerns, with social media platforms facilitating the rapid and unchecked dissemination of sensitive information. Unlike traditional journalism, digital media often lacks editorial oversight, leading to the premature disclosure of identities, particularly in criminal cases. This can have severe consequences, especially for vulnerable individuals, such as sexual assault victims or those accused but not yet proven guilty. The *Phoolan Devi v. Shekhar Kapoor* (1994) case, in which the Delhi High Court prohibited the release of the film *Bandit Queen* for violating Phoolan Devi's privacy and dignity, serves as a critical example of the media's ethical obligation to respect individual rights. As digital platforms continue to grow, the challenge of balancing privacy and freedom of expression becomes more complex. Legal frameworks like the Right to Information Act (2005) aim to strike a balance between transparency and privacy, offering mechanisms to regulate both traditional and digital media. However, stricter enforcement of ethical



standards is necessary to protect individuals from the harmful effects of irresponsible reporting.

This research explores the intersection of media freedom, privacy, and dignity, examining the legal and ethical challenges posed by media trials, the evolving nature of digital privacy, and the impact of unregulated media platforms. Through an analysis of landmark cases and legal precedents, the study advocates for a balanced approach that upholds free expression while protecting individual rights.

Review of Literature:

1. Carrie A. Rentschler's article, *"Victims' Rights and the Struggle over Crime in the Media,"* examines how the U.S. victims' rights movement uses media to frame crime victims, especially murder victims' families, as marginalized and lacking rights. It highlights how victim-oriented journalism shapes public perceptions and policy, linking media narratives to social movements and criminal justice. (Rentschler, 2007).
2. Dr. Gifty Oommen's article, *"Privacy as a Human Right and Media Trial in India,"* explores the tension between the right to privacy and media trials. While privacy is implied under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, media trials often violate this right and the presumption of innocence, emphasizing the need for legal frameworks that balance privacy protection and press freedom.(OOMMEN, 2014).
3. Dr. S. Krishnan, in "Trial by Media: Concept and Phenomenon," argues that while media ensures accountability, "media trials" undermine legal proceedings and the right to a fair trial. He stresses that sensationalism for TRPs should not compromise justice. Media independence must be balanced with accountability, self-regulation, and court oversight. Prioritizing truth, justice, and human dignity over profit is crucial for restoring credibility and public trust in the media. (Krishnan, 2018).
4. Jaypie C. Verdadero and Robino D. Cawi's article, *"Trial by Media: Role and Impact on the Administration of Justice,"* explores how media trials disrupt justice by violating the presumption of innocence, invading privacy, and creating public prejudice. These practices undermine fair trials and judicial authority. The study highlights the need for stricter regulations and responsible journalism to balance press freedom with judicial integrity, protecting individual rights and public trust in the justice system.(Verdadero and Cawi, 2023).
5. Amith S. M., Mohan Kumar K., and colleagues, in "Impact of Media Trials on the Judicial Process and the Fundamental Rights of the Accused in India," argue that media trials violate privacy, dignity, and the right to a fair trial. They call for responsible journalism, judicial interventions, and stronger law enforcement to protect judicial integrity. A collaborative approach is necessary to uphold individual rights and democratic values. (S M & Kumar K & et al., 2024).



6. Niyati's article, "Sensationalism in Media: How it Leads to Losing Credibility of Indian Media," critiques the rise of sensationalism in Indian journalism, where dramatic stories overshadow meaningful reporting. Using cases like the 2008 Noida Double Murder, the article argues that sensationalism erodes media credibility, shifts attention from critical issues, and undermines investigative journalism. Driven by competition for ratings, the media often resorts to exaggerated or paid news. Niyati advocates for responsible journalism that prioritizes accuracy, integrity, and the media's democratic role over sensationalism. (Niyati, 2018).
7. Deepti K., Shilpa S., and colleagues, in "Rights of Accused and Victim against Media Victimization: A Critical Examination," stress the importance of ethical journalism in protecting privacy and ensuring justice. They argue that sensationalism harms human rights and public trust, advocating for a balance between the rights of the accused, victims, and the public's right to know. The article calls for robust legal frameworks, ethical training for journalists, public education, and accountability for digital content to uphold fairness, dignity, and the media's democratic role while respecting freedom of speech and privacy. (Khubalkar & Sharma & et al., 2022).
8. Anjum Saxena and Dr. Mohd Imran, in "Impact of Media Trial on Judiciary," explore how sensationalized media coverage harms India's judiciary. Media trials often violate the presumption of innocence, shape public opinion, and undermine the fairness of legal proceedings. Motivated by the race for viewership, these practices infringe on privacy and human rights. The authors call for responsible journalism and legal frameworks that balance media freedom with judicial independence to protect justice from external influences. (Anjum Saxena and Dr. Mohd Imran, 2023).
9. Madhu Bala, in "The Media Trials in India: An Analysis," explores the growing influence of media on India's justice system, particularly through media trials. The article discusses the shift from responsible reporting to sensationalized media-driven investigations, driven by ratings. This shift pressures the judiciary and affects the constitutional rights of the accused and victims. Drawing on 25 cases from 2013 to 2023, the study calls for regulatory measures to protect judicial integrity and advocates for balancing press freedom with fair justice to preserve the system's integrity. (Bala, 2024)
10. Ramchandani, S., in "The Constitutionality of Media Trials in India-A Critique," argues that media trials challenge the authority of the courts by acting as a public court. The media, often working with limited information, presents biased viewpoints before a court ruling, which undermines judicial impartiality. This dynamic pressures courts to align their decisions with public opinion, potentially disrupting justice and undermining societal peace when court rulings conflict with media-driven narratives. (Ramchandani, 2020)



Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the research undertaken:

1. To examine how the line of probity has been blurred in the name of public interest, compromising journalistic integrity and victim rights.
2. To Analyze the impact of media trials on victims' privacy, dignity, and psychological repercussions.
3. To Explore ethical and legal challenges of sensationalized media coverage, focusing on victim rights and journalistic integrity.
4. To Propose enhanced guidelines for responsible journalism and suggest reforms to protect individual dignity in the digital media age.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a mixed methodology, combining doctrinal legal research with empirical case analysis to explore the impact of media trials on individual rights and the legal system, with a particular focus on India. Prominent cases, particularly those involving high-profile public figures, are analyzed to evaluate how media coverage shapes public opinion, affects judicial impartiality, and influences individual rights. The research also reviews legal frameworks, including the Contempt of Courts Act and key judicial precedents, to explore the limits of media reporting in sub judice matters. This methodology emphasizes the intersection of media ethics, legal constraints, and the delicate balance between transparency and judicial fairness.

Understanding Media Trial

The term "media trial" refers to the influence of media coverage on ongoing legal proceedings, shaping public opinion about an individual's guilt or innocence before a court issues a verdict. Media trials have been prevalent since the 1980s and are considered a form of "public protests through the media." They can continue even after a verdict is reached, especially if the public disagrees with the judicial outcome. The media, recognized as the fourth pillar of democracy, has a significant role in influencing public perception, particularly in India over the past decade (Dash, 2021). However, as media outlets increasingly engage in trials alongside the courts, they often disregard the presumption of innocence and the principle of "guilty beyond reasonable doubt," raising concerns about the ethical and legal implications of such practices (Bhosale, 2022).

While media trials have played a pivotal role in ensuring justice in some high-profile cases, such as the Jessica Lal murder, the Nirbhaya case, and the prolonged legal proceedings surrounding Ajmal Kasab, they also raise serious concerns. In these instances, media coverage and public outcry pushed the judiciary to act decisively.



However, the issue lies in whether these media trials, conducted without formal authorization, undermine the legal system or violate media ethics. On one hand, media trials can serve as a form of public intervention when the judicial system fails to deliver justice, pressuring the courts to act or leading to reforms. On the other hand, they risk defamation, contempt of court, and damaging the credibility of the judiciary by issuing judgments without a fair trial (Dash, 2021).

The negative implications of media trials are evident, as they may affect how victims receive justice and interfere with the trial process. Media coverage can create a presumption of guilt, potentially swaying the accused and making it harder for them to establish their innocence. This practice not only challenges the integrity of the judicial process but also violates ethical standards in journalism. The dilemma arises in determining whether public commentary should wait for a fair trial to conclude or if media intervention is justified when systemic injustices occur. While media serves to keep citizens informed, it must balance the right to report with the need for fair legal proceedings (Bhosale, 2022).

Victim's Rights to Privacy and Dignity

Victims of crime have a fundamental right to privacy and dignity throughout the criminal justice process. This right is clearly outlined in the *Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985. According to the declaration, victims should be treated with compassion and respect, with robust measures implemented to safeguard their privacy and protect them from further harm (United Nations General Assembly, 1985).

a. Safeguarding Privacy in the Justice System

Confidentiality plays a critical role in preserving the dignity of victims. This is particularly important in cases involving sexual violence or abuse, where the unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information can lead to stigma, emotional distress, and even re-victimization. Breaches of privacy in such cases often result from inadequate legal safeguards or careless dissemination of information during judicial proceedings. A lack of mechanisms to ensure confidentiality can deter victims from coming forward, thereby denying them justice and perpetuating systemic failures (OHCHR, 1985).

Furthermore, media trials frequently compromise victims' rights by publicizing their identities and private details, often without consent. This type of reporting can exacerbate the psychological and emotional harm victims endure, leaving them feeling exposed and unsupported. The overemphasis on sensationalism rather than ethical reporting not only undermines victims' dignity but also erodes public trust in the media and judicial systems (*State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh*, AIR 1996 SC 1393).



b. Challenges of Data Privacy and Digital Media

In the digital age, victims face additional challenges related to data privacy. Sensitive information about victims is often stored and shared across multiple platforms, increasing the risk of misuse or unauthorized access. Inconsistent data protection laws and weak enforcement mechanisms further compound the problem, leaving victims vulnerable to breaches of confidentiality. For instance, the lack of a unified regulatory framework in many jurisdictions allows for the exploitation of victims' data, compromising their right to privacy and increasing their emotional distress (Bala, 2024).

c. Balancing Freedom of the Press and Victims' Rights

The right to freedom of the press is a cornerstone of democracy, but it must be balanced with the need to protect victims' privacy and dignity. Media outlets have a responsibility to report ethically, ensuring that their coverage does not cause undue harm to victims. Legal frameworks, such as the Contempt of Courts Act in India, are essential in preventing media interference with ongoing trials and protecting victims from public scrutiny (*Anukul Chandra Pradhan v. Union of India*, (1996) 6 SCC 354).

The judicial system must prioritize the well-being of victims by fostering an environment that respects their rights and upholds their dignity. By addressing the gaps in current legal and ethical practices, society can ensure that victims receive the justice and support they deserve, while maintaining the integrity of the judicial process.

Impact of Media Trials on Victims

The role of media in ongoing judicial trials is often viewed as integral to the functioning of a democratic society. Media plays a dual role—promoting transparency while raising public awareness. However, its involvement, particularly through investigative reporting, has significant consequences. These consequences are often negative, especially for victims, who face privacy breaches, mental trauma, and emotional distress. Media trials frequently interfere with court proceedings, disseminate sensitive information prematurely, and create biased public perceptions, ultimately jeopardizing the judicial process (Bala, 2024).

a. Effect on Victims and the Accused

Media trials disproportionately affect victims and accused individuals in ways that are often detrimental. For victims, especially in cases of sexual violence, media sensationalism can result in significant emotional harm. Public scrutiny, fueled by aggressive media coverage, not only breaches privacy but can lead to stigmatization and re-victimization. This is particularly true when sensitive details about the victims are publicized, which



compounds their trauma and undermines their dignity (OHCHR, 1985).

Similarly, accused individuals suffer reputational damage and public hatred when media prematurely labels them as offenders. Even after being acquitted, the accused often face societal ostracism due to the influence of biased media coverage. Such media practices infringe upon the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" and can have lasting repercussions, including mental health crises or even suicides (*Zahira Habibullah Sheikh v. State of Gujarat*, AIR 2006 SC 1367).

b. Effect on Witnesses and Evidence

Witnesses and evidence are also significantly impacted by media trials. Publicizing witness identities not only endangers their safety but also deters them from testifying in court. Furthermore, when evidence is made public, it risks tampering or destruction, thereby compromising the integrity of the judicial process. Such actions weaken cases and can result in a miscarriage of justice (*Anukul Chandra Pradhan v. Union of India*, (1996) 6 SCC 354). This highlights the detrimental role media can play in investigative and judicial processes, emphasizing the need for stricter regulations on media conduct during trials (Bala, 2024).

c. Effect on Society

Media trials shape public opinion by disseminating biased or inaccurate information, creating prejudices against victims and accused individuals alike. In some cases, even after the judiciary declares an accused innocent, the stigma of the media's portrayal persists, creating a lasting societal bias. The *K.M. Nanavati v. State of Maharashtra* case illustrates how media coverage can sway public opinion, undermining trust in the judiciary (AIR 1962 SC 605). These prejudices erode the foundational principles of justice and fair trials, distorting public perceptions of the judicial system (Bala, 2024).

d. Effect on Judges and Advocates

Judges and advocates also face undue pressure from media trials. Aggressive reporting often creates public expectations that can influence judicial decisions. Judges may feel compelled to align their rulings with public sentiment rather than adhere strictly to legal principles, jeopardizing the independence of the judiciary (*R.K. Anand v. Delhi High Court*, (2009) 8 SCC 106). Advocates are similarly affected, as media-fueled public perceptions deter them from representing accused individuals. This violates the accused's right to legal representation and a fair defense, undermining the judicial process (Bala, 2024).



Thematic Considerations

a. Victims' Security

The right to a fair trial includes protecting the dignity and privacy of victims. Media trials often violate these rights by disclosing sensitive details, leading to societal stigma and emotional harm. High-profile cases intensify these issues, as sensational reporting prioritizes public curiosity over victims' security. This highlights the urgent need for ethical reporting standards and stricter media regulations (OHCHR, 1985).

b. Freedom of Information and Media Regulation

While press freedom is vital to democracy, it must be balanced with responsible reporting. The Supreme Court has stressed the need to regulate digital news platforms to prevent harmful content. Establishing grievance redressal mechanisms and promoting responsible journalism are essential to ensuring media serves the public interest without compromising justice (Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record-Association v. Union of India, AIR 1994 SC 268).

c. Evidentiary Matters

Premature media release of evidence compromises investigations and increases the risk of tampering. This undermines the confidentiality required for fair trials, particularly in sensitive cases, such as those involving juveniles. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016, stress the importance of protecting evidence from unnecessary public exposure (Juvenile Justice Rules, 2016).

d. Independence of the Judiciary

Media trials can undermine judicial independence by influencing public opinion, which may pressure judges to align with popular sentiment, compromising impartiality. Landmark rulings, such as Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record-Association v. Union of India, emphasize the importance of maintaining judicial independence to uphold democracy and separation of powers (AIR 1994 SC 268).

Media trials present significant challenges to the judicial process, particularly in protecting victims' rights and ensuring fair trials. While the media plays a crucial role in promoting transparency, its involvement must be regulated to prevent privacy breaches, emotional trauma, and undue influence on the judiciary. Ethical reporting, robust oversight, and legal safeguards are essential to preserve the integrity of the justice system.

Legal and Regulatory Challenges

The presumption of guilt in the media obviously violates the right to counsel, which is an essential part of the



right to a fair trial. It may also scare attorneys into not taking on cases involving accused individuals. Aside from suspects and accused, victims and witnesses also experience excessive publicity and privacy violations. Police morale also suffers as a result of the media's negative portrayal of them. (Kanchi, 2015)

The privacy and dignity of victims of crime are frequently violated in the era of media trials, which poses serious legal and regulatory issues. Laws designed to protect victims' identity, like Section 72 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita or comparable foreign provisions, are regularly broken by sensationalist reporting. Because regulatory agencies do not adequately enforce ethical standards, victim pain is made worse by the tension between press freedom and the right to dignity. Minors and marginalized communities are among the vulnerable groups that are more likely to be exposed and stigmatized. Furthermore, victims are exposed to cross-border privacy intrusions as international media platforms circumvent domestic law protections. Legislators and courts must uphold ethical journalism, bolster privacy laws, and give victims recourse against media interference. To strike a balance between victims' rights to privacy and dignity and the public's right to know, technology-driven safeguards and public awareness are also crucial. As the fourth pillar of democracy, the press or media has rights derived from Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution's guarantee of freedom of speech and expression, although these rights are also subject to reasonable limitations.(Arora, 2024)

In cases of sexual offenses, where the media probes the victim's sexual past and occasionally discloses it, the portrayal is the worst. As is often the case, this causes severe societal stigma and may lead to the sufferer taking their own life. The victims' and accused's reputations are at risk because they are handled like news stories. (Dash, 2021)

For victims, media trials in India pose serious legal and regulatory obstacles that can jeopardize their reputation, privacy, and dignity. Even though the media is essential for spreading information, unbridled sensationalism frequently skews public opinion and threatens the presumption of innocence, which is a fundamental component of justice. Although there is some protection from legal measures like Article 21 of the Constitution, the BNS's defamation rules, enforcement of these laws is still uneven. Victims frequently suffer the most from false or invasive reporting, including psychological anguish and social disapproval. Stricter enforcement of privacy laws, judicial supervision, and media accountability are necessary to overcome these problems. To maintain justice and equity in India's judicial system, it is essential to strike a balance between the freedom of expression of the media and the rights of victims to privacy and dignity. (Bala, 2024)

The integrity of the legal system is seriously threatened by media coverage that tampers with court processes. Such reporting could prejudice cases, undermine the presumption of innocence, and erode public trust in the system by breaking the sub judice principle and the prohibitions of the Contempt of Court Act, 1971. The impartiality of justice may be compromised by high-profile media trials that put undue pressure on



prosecutors, judges, and even witnesses. Enforcing greater adherence to legal frameworks, encouraging responsible journalism, and making sure that the media serves as a vehicle for public awareness without sacrificing judicial justice are all crucial to maintaining the integrity of the legal system. (Manisha & Rawat, 2021)

Media sources occasionally sensationalize personal information, especially in situations of sexual violence, despite legislative safeguards like Section 149 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam and Section 366 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which are designed to preserve the victim's privacy and prohibit unnecessary disclosures. Such actions discourage others from coming forward to seek justice in addition to violating the victim's rights. Strict legal protections, media accountability, and a reporting culture that values the privacy and dignity of those participating in judicial procedures are all crucial for protecting victims.

Recommendations and Suggestions

The Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology has identified critical gaps in the media's moral oversight and proposed several reforms. A key recommendation is to restructure the Press Council of India into a more robust and inclusive body with the authority to enact laws ensuring compliance from all media outlets. The Committee also stresses the need to amend the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act to enable rule-based enforcement and prompt resolution of ethical violations. To tackle issues like TRP manipulation, the Committee advocates for a transparent and fair measurement system that includes rural representation. Moreover, implementing strong grievance redressal mechanisms at all levels and clarifying vague terms like "anti-national attitudes" are crucial steps toward establishing accountability. These suggestions aim to balance media freedom with moral responsibility, ensuring that public trust is preserved (Committee Reports, n.d.).

To mitigate the harmful effects of media trials, a comprehensive approach is necessary. This should include stronger media regulations that enforce impartial reporting during ongoing trials, preventing media outlets from influencing the judicial process. The enforcement of existing laws, such as those against defamation, contempt of court, and privacy violations, should be enhanced to hold media accountable for spreading misleading or harmful content. Furthermore, stricter safeguards are needed to protect victims' privacy, particularly in sensitive cases such as sexual offenses, ensuring their identities are not disclosed without consent. Public awareness campaigns are vital to educating society about the dangers of media trials and the importance of allowing the judicial process to unfold without external interference. Lastly, creating more accessible legal recourse for victims of media trials is essential, ensuring that defamation claims are resolved quickly and privacy violations are addressed promptly. Collectively, these measures can reduce the harmful effects of media trials and protect the rights of victims.



To effectively protect the rights of victims, it is crucial to implement both legal and ethical safeguards. First, courts and law enforcement agencies should establish strict confidentiality protocols to safeguard sensitive victim information. Media organizations must adopt ethical guidelines that prioritize the dignity of victims, avoiding sensationalism in their coverage. Additionally, robust data protection laws should be enforced to prevent unauthorized disclosure of victims' personal details. Finally, comprehensive victim support services, including counseling and legal assistance, should be available to help victims navigate the justice process while preserving their dignity. These measures are essential to creating a system that respects and upholds the rights of victims.

Conclusion

The weak enforcement of laws, coupled with the amplifying role of social media, significantly contributes to the prevalence of media trials in India. While legal frameworks like defamation, contempt of court, and privacy laws exist to protect victims, their poor enforcement allows media outlets to sensationalize cases with minimal consequences. Court interventions are often delayed or ineffective, leaving victims with little recourse and subjecting them to irreversible harm to their reputations before legal proceedings even begin. Social media exacerbates this issue by providing an unchecked platform for unverified, defamatory claims to spread rapidly. Unlike traditional media, social media lacks robust regulations, allowing biased opinions and false information to circulate freely. This amplification of media trials through online platforms exposes victims to hate campaigns and trolling, intensifying emotional distress and reputational damage.

In this environment, the balance between privacy and public interest often tilts in favour of sensationalism rather than ethical responsibility. Victims, already suffering from trauma, face further harm through public exposure, which worsens their mental well-being. The lack of stronger legal protections only deepens the issue, allowing media outlets to profit from exploiting vulnerable individuals. Addressing this problem requires a multifaceted approach that includes stronger legal safeguards, responsible journalism, and increased public awareness. Legal reforms should ensure timely enforcement and hold media outlets accountable while fostering a media culture that prioritizes empathy and dignity. These measures will help create a more ethical media environment that informs the public without sensationalizing or exploiting the suffering of victims.

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