

Impact Of Media Accountability In Reporting Sub-Judice Criminal Cases

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at studying the impact of media accountability in reporting sub-judice criminal cases. The current trend of media on reporting cases commonly known as “Trial by media” has witnessed the sensation of self-manifested stories, half-baked truth resulting in the violation of the right of individuals, resulting in media reporting transforming into a media circus. In India, media trials have assumed significance. There have been several cases where the media had taken the case into their own hands and declared judgement against an accused contrary to fair trials in court. An empirical research is done with a sample size of 200. The sample frame is Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The main aim of the study is to find out the impact of media accountability reporting sub-judice criminal cases. The independent variables are age, gender, educational qualification and occupation. The dependent variables are the awareness of media accountability, media trials, its effect on judges, independence of judiciary, contempt of court and implications of media accountability on judiciary. The statistical tools used in the study are graphical representation and correlation analysis. The media is accountable for the negative impact on the reporting of sub-judice criminal cases.

KEYWORDS: Media accountability, Sub judice, reporting, criminal cases, Media trial, Indian judiciary, Effects, Independence judiciary.

INTRODUCTION:

Media is very essential for democracy. It serves the purpose of ‘gatekeeper’ and a ‘watchdog’ of the society. The media acts as a multifaceted institution with multiple activities. It takes the message simultaneously from all the parties involved and builds the opinion on an issue, which definitely threatens the establishment from violating rights with the growth of the number of news channels and in increasing popularity of “breaking news.” Reporting of Sub-judice Criminal Cases has come to play a major role in stirring public opinion and consciousness. Public advocacy outside the court through a well-established mechanism like lobbying, negotiations and mobilisation of public opinion has been effectively undertaken by the media. Freedom of media is the flexibility of individuals to be educated on on-going issues. Unlike the U.S. Constitution, Article 19(1)(a) does not expressly mention the liberty of the press i.e. freedom to print and to publish what one pleases without prior permission.

The current trend of media on reporting sub-judice criminal cases commonly known as “Trial by media” has witnessed the sensation of self-manifested stories, half-baked truth resulting in the violation of the rights of individuals, resulting in media reporting transforming into a media circus. It is often seen that media houses are acting as “public court” and are starting to interfere with the proceedings of the court which completely overlooks the vital gap between an “accused” and a “convict” keeping at stake the golden principles of “presumption of innocence until proven guilty” and “guilt beyond a reasonable doubt”. “Freedom of Speech and Expression” is provided through various processes; however, this right is not completely unrestricted and as already mentioned certain “reasonable restrictions” can be imposed. Like the need for maintaining and preserving “freedom of speech and expression” in a democracy. It is also important to put some restrictions on that freedom for the purpose of maintaining the social order.

In India, media accountability has assumed significance. There have been several sub judice cases where the media had taken the case into their own hands and declared judgement against an accused contrary to fair trials in court. There have

been quite infamous cases as well that outraged the public and impacted the Judiciary such as The Jessica Lal case, 2010, where the media rejoiced over their efforts in bringing justice to Jessica Lal and the trial court had acquitted the accused of all the charges. The Priyadarshini Mattoo case, 2006 where a law student was raped and murdered, and the judgment of this case was suspected to have been influenced by Media Trial. The Bijal Joshi rape case and Nitish Katara murder case gave credits to media where the accused would have gone unpunished if media would not have intervened. But on the other side, the media also pinpointed innocent people in the Malegaon blast and Maria Susairaj case ignoring the importance of accuracy.

MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY IN DIGITAL AGE

In the contemporary digital age, the intersection of social media, digital technology, and media trials has profoundly reshaped the landscape of justice and fairness. Media trials, traditionally defined as high-profile cases extensively covered by the media, have evolved significantly with the advent of social media and digital technology. What was once predominantly the domain of traditional media outlets has now expanded to include instantaneous and widespread coverage on platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The immediacy and reach of digital platforms allow trial proceedings, evidence, and opinions to be disseminated globally in real-time, shaping public perception and potentially influencing judicial processes.

The main aim of the study is to find out the impact of media accountability in reporting sub-judicial criminal cases.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the consequences of media accountability and its impact on the Indian judiciary.
- To analyse the legal implications of media accountability in these digital platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Nimisha Jha (2015) discusses the role of media accountability and the impact of media trials on the principle of fair trial. Further, Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India provides the right to freedom of press. **A K Mittal (2016)** focuses on the history of freedom of press and the trial by the media and its impact on the judicial trial. It further discusses the need for a regulatory measure to stop the media trials. The 200th report by the Law Commission of India on Trial by Media discusses the Human Rights Convention, the Madrid Principles, The Constitution of India and the Contempt of Court Act; it also states how the publications in the media is affecting the judges' decisions (**Law Commission of India, 2006**). **Dr. S. Krishnan (2018)**, discusses the evolution of press as well as the concept of trial by media. It also describes the impact of media trials on the freedom of speech and expression as guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Further, the impact of media trials on the judicial proceedings is also discussed in the paper. **Arunav Talukdar (2018)** focuses on all the aspects of media trial, freedom of speech and expression and freedom of press in India. Starting from the role of media in a democratic country like India and its status in the country and then the misuse by the trial by the media. It further discusses the impact of trials by the media on the public minds of the Judges as well as the administration of justice in the country. **Anil Kumar (2021)**, discusses the freedom of press and how this freedom was included under the Constitution of India. Thereafter, the situation of media trials in India is also explained and how these trials are violating the rights of the accused as well as the victims of any case. **Bhaswat Prakash (2020)**, discusses the status of Media in India and the misuse of freedom of press by the media. The paper further focuses on the effects of trial by media on the justice delivery system which is a threat to the principle of fair trial. **Nitesh Tripathi (2018)** focuses on the impact of media trials on the public, accused, victims, judges as well as the administration of justice. Further, the paper explains how trial by media is violating the principles of fair trial and has been working as a 'public court' also known as the Janta Adalat. **Hon'ble Mr. Justice G.S. Singhvi (2012)** has discussed the evolution of freedom of media in India and its inclusion under the Constitution of India. Further, the paper also mentions the restrictions on media and suggests that there is a need to regulate the freedom of press to restrict them from crossing their boundaries by way of media trials. The investigative role of the press has been useful to set right the mal-administration of government, exposing crimes and unlawful acts and disseminating information of public interest. But the expression public interest has no fixed connotation. The Media trial has become an acute problem with the ever expanding role of media (**Rather et al., 2015**). The media can interfere with the administration of justice by scandalising the judges, interfering with witnesses, interfering with investigation procedures by tampering evidence and contentious publications in connection with the proceedings which are pending before the court. These interferences impose a threat to fair administration of justice and constitutional guarantee of fair trial (**Talukdar, 2018**). Freedom of speech and of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic

organisation, for without free political discussion, so essential for the proper functioning of the process of popular government, is possible (**Banerjee, 2010**). The researcher established that, generally, judges perceive media reports on disorders either negatively or positively. Yet almost every judge has encountered media reports on criminality and disorders that he or she felt were absolutely misleading and harmful to how the public perceive disorders. That means there have been media reports on the disorders and violent criminality as well as their correlation exposed to the public, including judges. It also means judges recognize the potential ill effects of negative media reports on the correlation (**Berryessa, 2014**). **Platania and Crawford (2012)** that when a juror utilises the extant media information in determining suitable verdicts, there is a high chance that he or she may not acknowledge the utilisation of the information, or could insist that previously observed information not be considered. The most critical concern relates to any media motivations to misrepresent justice systems. Ideally, the media should seek to generate and convey information that is newsworthy and that the public finds appealing. Media reports that do not cover newsworthy or extreme events are hardly appealing to the public. Consequently, there is a higher chance of the media reporting court proceedings that give rise to newsworthy or extreme determinations than other court proceedings (**Wentland, 2012**). The media in the United States is increasingly inclined towards interpreting the decisions arrived at by the Supreme Court from a frame that is essentially political, unlike in Canada where such interpretations are essentially legal (**Miljan, 2014**). The media sensationalises the criminal acts of those considered to be of odd natures, including those with mental disorders; occasioning negative, imprecise, public views regarding those under trial (**Gunasekaran and Chaplin, 2012**). **Larzarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudete (1948)** introduced 'Two-Step Communication Flow Theory', which states that the media effects on populations are indirect and that the media affects people via interpersonal influences of opinion formulators. The main consequence of the media was widely viewed as influencing societal realities. That means perception of the media as serving a typical social constructivist role as comprehensively captured by (**Gamson and Modigliani, 1989**). **Greenhouse (1996)** asserted that judges mostly pronounce themselves to the public via their own opinions, which the public finds difficult to comprehend and even access. Particularly, that is quite the case where politicians cede to judicial officers the challenging questions regarding the public. **Von Krogh, Torbjörn (2012)** has investigated the relationship between media accountability, media criticism, and media governance in Sweden over the past 70 years, showing how these elements interact. Using methods like editor surveys, parliamentary debate analysis, interviews, and document studies, the research highlights media criticism's key role in triggering accountability, especially when criticism is widespread. Governance, shaped by international, political, and technological factors, influences how media organisations respond to criticism, balancing societal influence with editorial improvement. **Susanne Fengler (2012)** has sought to explore the potential impact of new forms of media accountability in the digital age, such as media blogs and criticism through platforms like Twitter and Facebook, alongside the failure of traditional self-regulation mechanisms like press councils and media journalism. By employing North's theory of institutions, the study analyses why conventional self-regulation tools often fail to effectively monitor and sanction deviations from journalistic standards. Drawing on institutional economics, the author has developed a media accountability model that includes the audience in the digital age, suggesting that this audience-inclusive approach may be more effective as the 'costs of complaint' decrease. The paper concludes with implications for media policy, arguing that the role of 'digital media critics' could enhance media criticism in the long term. **Al-Najjar, Abeer (2020)** has examined the expanding flow of information, news, and views in the Arab world, particularly as countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran enhance their presence through new multiplatform journalistic networks. The study explores how Arab media users can influence media conduct to enhance journalists' commitment to ethical practices like accuracy and fairness. It reviews the current state of accountability in pan-Arab news media, especially state-funded broadcasters, and investigates emerging media practices and internet-based accountability. **Karniel, Y. (2020)** has investigated the phenomenon of public trials, particularly involving high-profile figures, examining how media influence precedes formal judicial proceedings. The study employs a comparative analysis of notable cases, such as those involving former Israeli leaders and international figures like Dominique Strauss-Kahn, to assess the effectiveness of sub judice rules. Methodologically, it analyses media coverage and judicial responses to these cases. The findings reveal that media institutions often overshadow the judiciary, leading to questions about the relevance of sub judice rules in contemporary society and their impact on public perception of justice. **Joanna Stevenson (2007)** has evaluated the implications of the Supreme Court of Appeal's decision in *Midi Television (Pty) Ltd v Director of Public Prosecution (Western Cape)* for press and media freedom in South Africa. The study employs a critical analysis of the judgement to assess how it reformulates the sub judice rule and addresses prior restraints on allegedly defamatory statements. The findings indicate that the decision serves as a crucial safeguard against legal censorship and reinforces the integrity of a free press, balancing freedom of expression with the need to preserve the administration of justice and

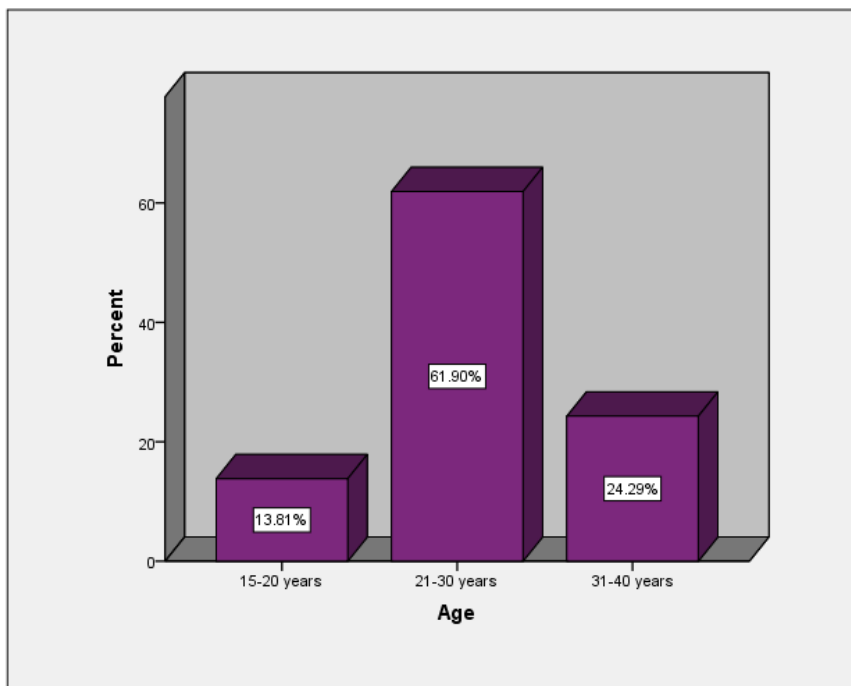
the right to a fair trial.

METHODOLOGY:

The type of research adopted here is empirical research. A total of 200 samples have been collected. The samples have been collected through a random sampling method. The sample frame taken here is through online, in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The independent variables are age, gender, marital status, educational qualification and occupation. The dependent variables are the awareness of media accountability, its effect on judges, independence of judiciary, contempt of court and implications of media accountability on judiciary. The statistical tools used in the study are graphical representation and correlation analysis.

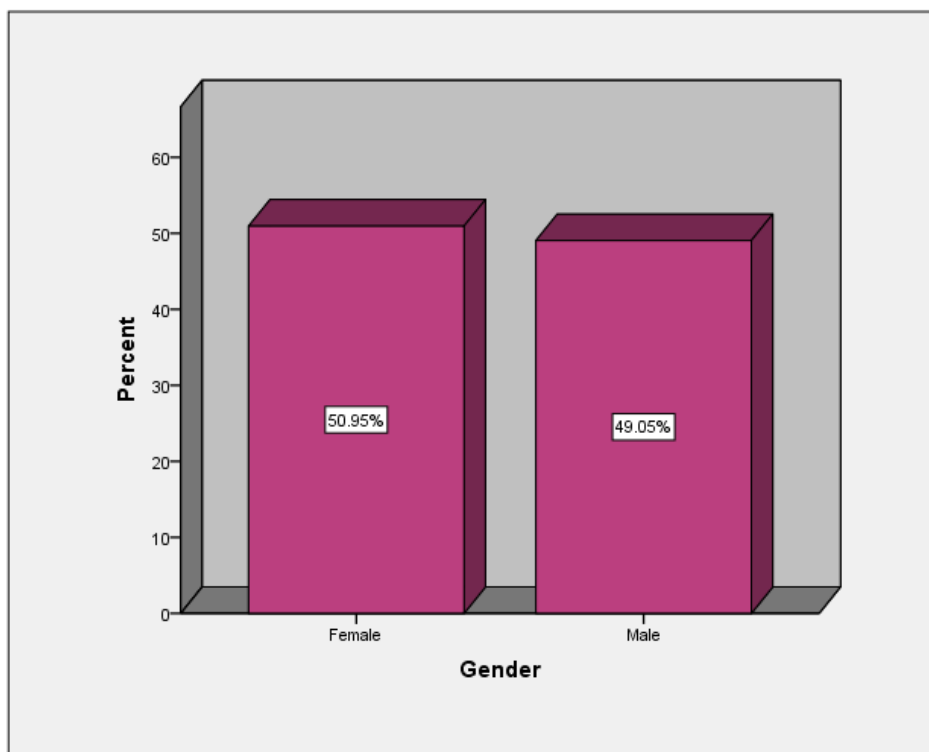
ANALYSIS:

FIGURE 1:



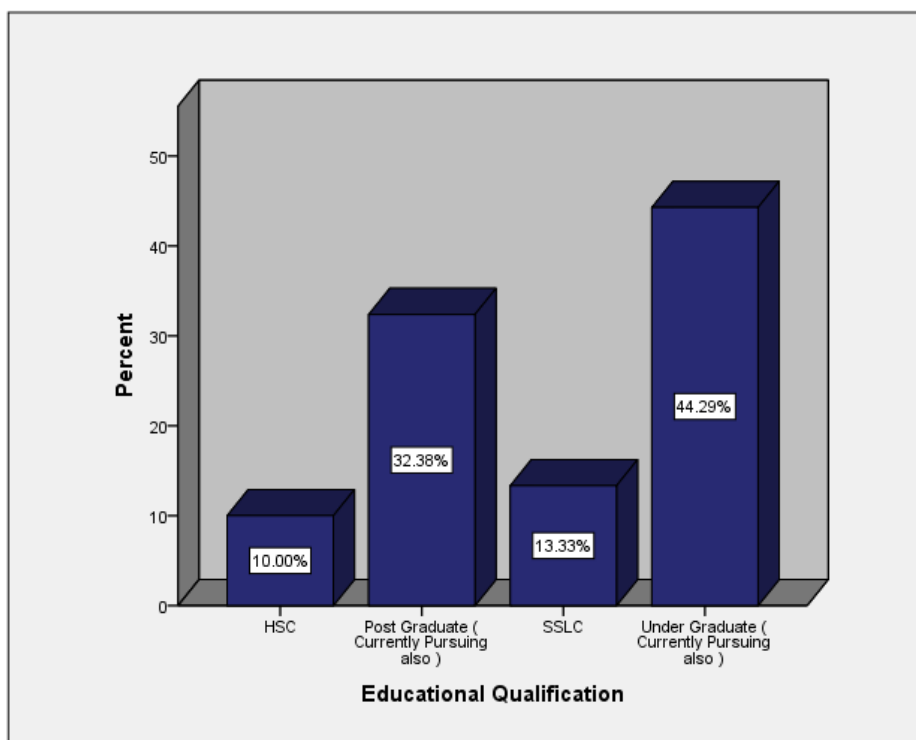
Legend: Fig.1 Shows the age distribution of the respondents.

FIGURE 2:



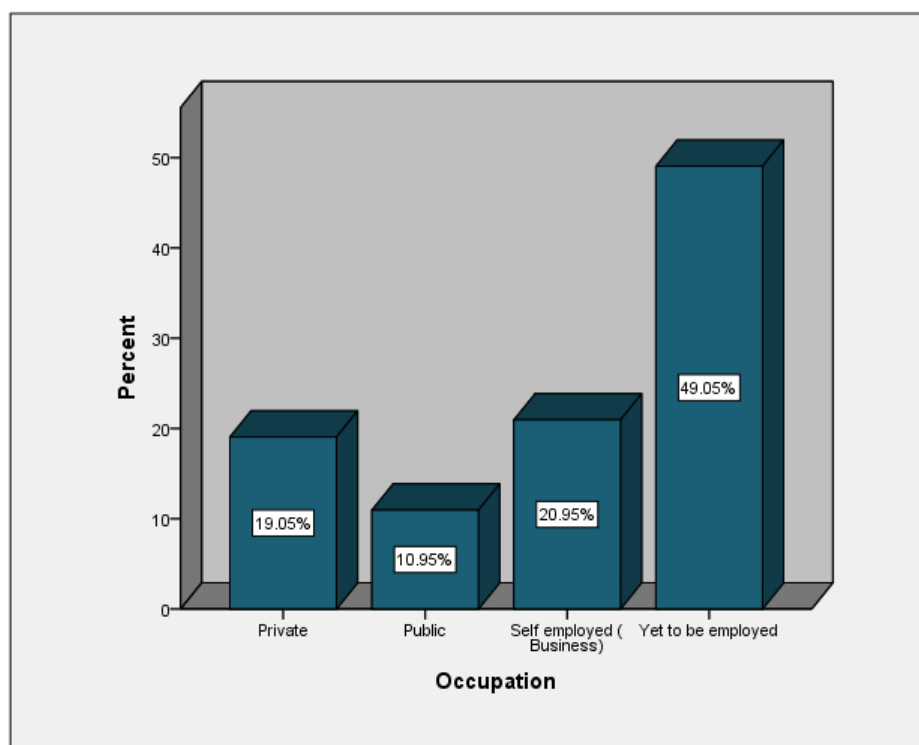
Legend: Fig.2 Shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

FIGURE 3:



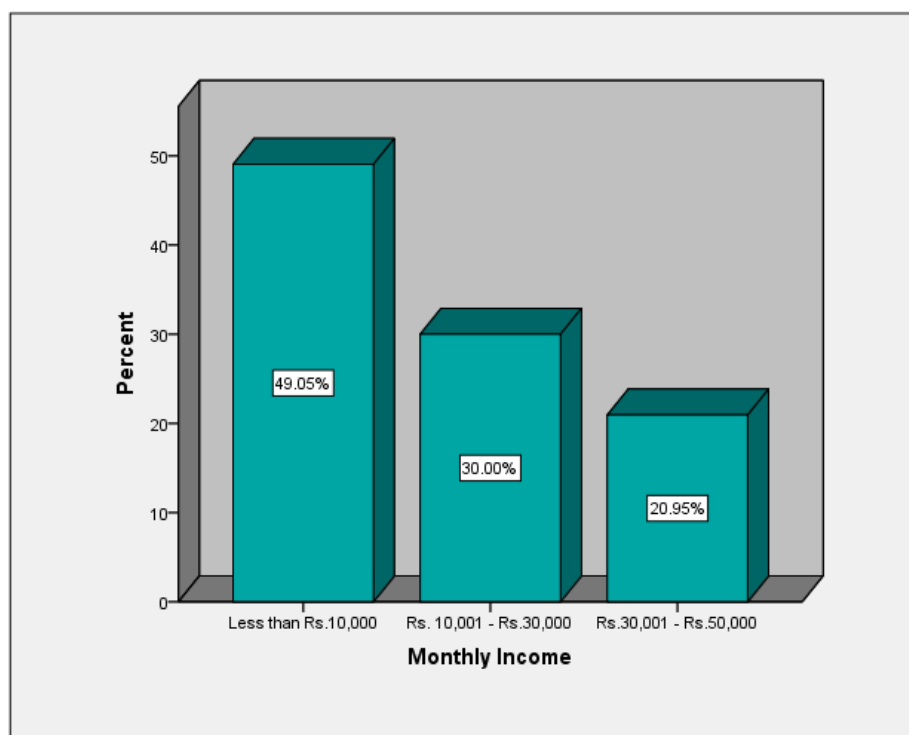
Legend: Fig.3 Shows the educational qualification of the respondents.

FIGURE 4:



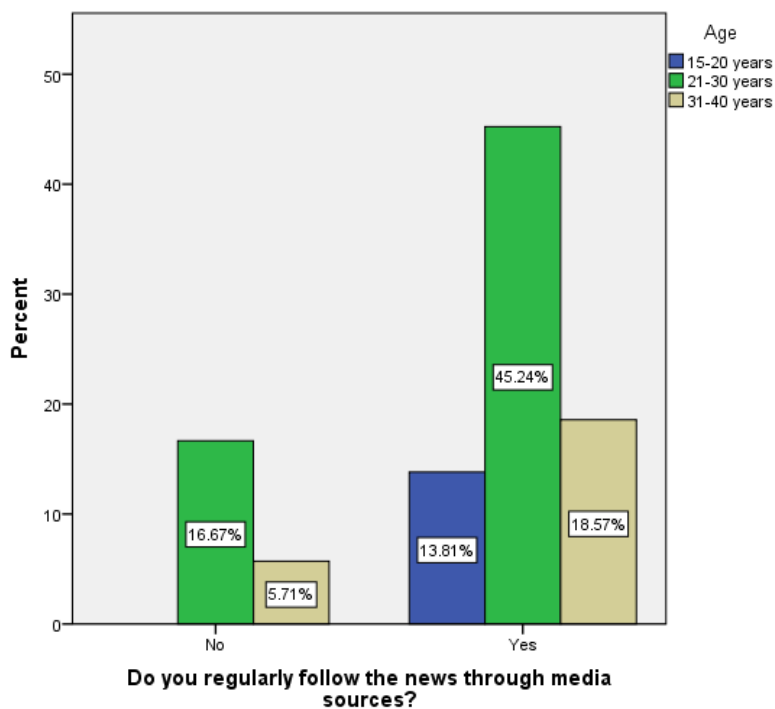
Legend: Fig.4 Shows the occupation of the respondents.

FIGURE 5:



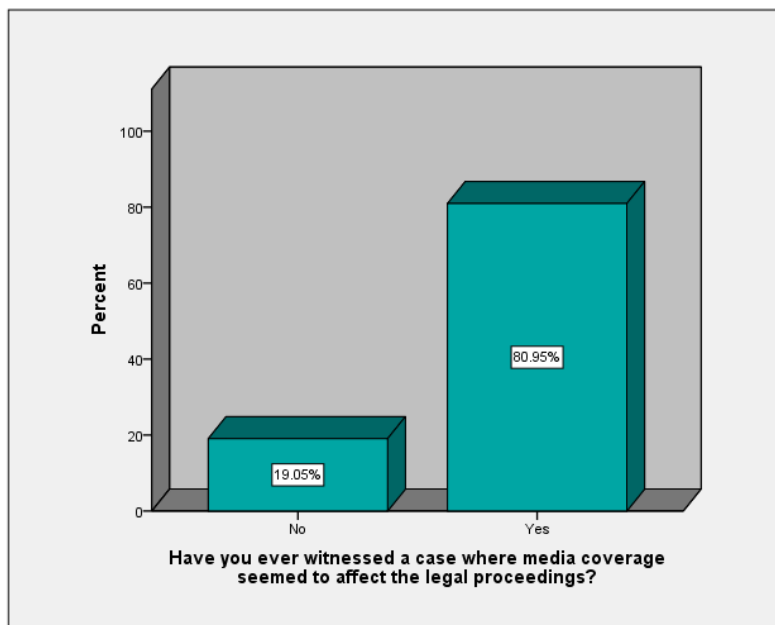
Legend: Fig.5 Shows the monthly income of the respondents.

FIGURE 6:



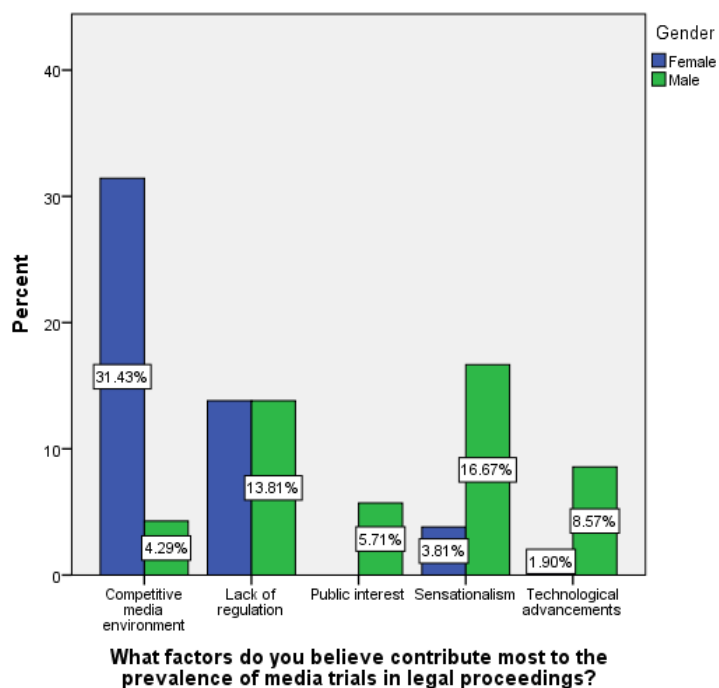
Legend: Fig. 6 shows the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources.

FIGURE: 7



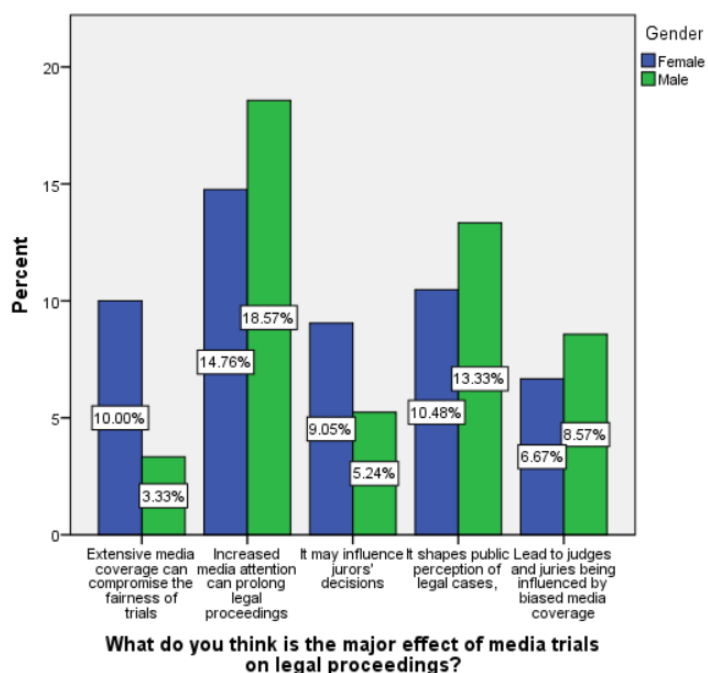
Legend: Fig.7 Shows the respondent's opinion regarding whether they have witnessed any case where media coverage seemed to affect the legal proceedings.

FIGURE: 8



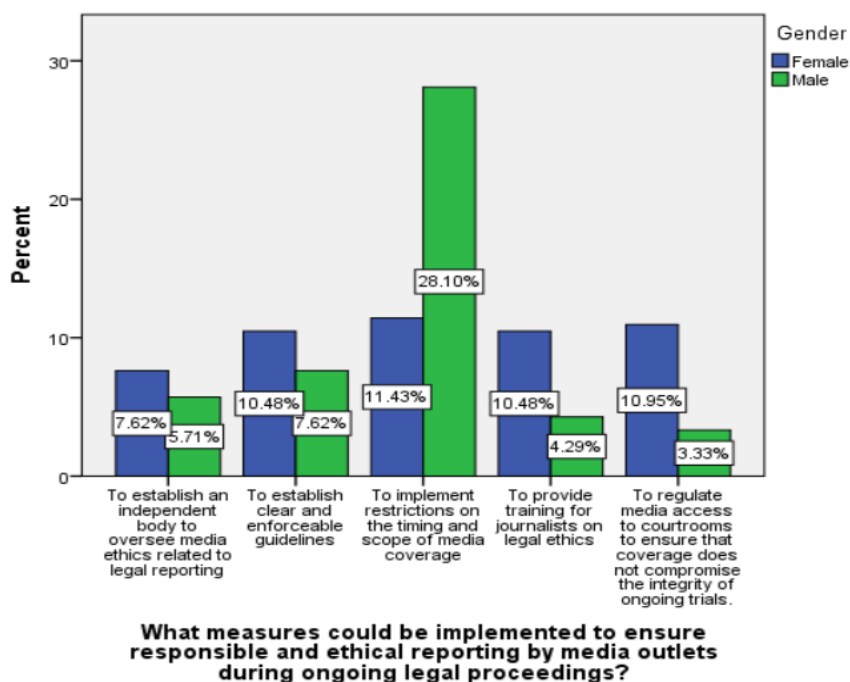
Legend: Fig.8 shows the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings.

FIGURE: 9



Legend: Fig.9 Shows the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings.

FIGURE: 10



Legend: Fig.10 Shows the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings.

TABLE:1

Ho-There is no association between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources.

Ha-There is an association between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.945 ^a	2	.007
Likelihood Ratio	16.210	2	.000
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.49.

Legend: Table.1 represents the relationship between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources.

TABLE:2

Ho-There is no association between the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings.

Ha-There is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	81.136 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	93.422	4	.000
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.89.

Legend: Table.2 represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings.

TABLE: 3

Ho-There is no association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings.

Ha-There is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.195 ^a	4	.024
Likelihood Ratio	11.548	4	.021
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.73.

Legend: Table.3 represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings.

TABLE: 4

Ho-There is no association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings.

Ha-There is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	30.198 ^a	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	31.296	4	.000
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.73.

Legend: Table.4 represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings.

TABLE: 5

Ho-There is no association between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

Ha-There is an association between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	127.812 ^a	14	.000
Likelihood Ratio	141.987	14	.000
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 11 cells (45.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .97.

Legend: Table.5 represents the relationship between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

TABLE: 6

Ho-There is no association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

Ha-There is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	92.902 ^a	7	.000
Likelihood Ratio	118.523	7	.000
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 6 cells (37.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.43.

Legend: Table.6 represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

RESULTS:

Figure.1 Shows the age distribution of the respondents. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group between 21-30 years (61.90%) and the minority of the respondents belongs to the age group between 15-20 years. **Figure.2** Shows the gender distribution of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were female (50.95%) and the minority of the respondents were male (49.05%). **Figure.3** shows the educational qualification of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were UG graduates (44.29%) and the minority of the respondents were HSC qualified ones (10.00%). **Figure.4** shows the occupation of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were yet to be employed (49.05%) and the minority of the respondents were from the public sector (10.95%). **Figure.5** Shows the monthly income of the respondents. Majority of the respondents earns less than Rs.10,000 (49.05%) and the minority of the respondents earns between Rs.30,001-Rs.50,000 (20.95%). **Figure.6** shows the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. Majority of the respondents were between the age group 21-30, stated as yes (45,24%) and the minority of the respondents were between the age group 31-40 years, stated as no (5.71%). **Figure.7** Shows the respondent's opinion regarding whether they have witnessed any case where media coverage seemed to affect the legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents stated as yes (80.95%) and the minority of the respondents stated as no (19.05%). **Figure.8** shows the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents were female, stated as competitive media environment (31.43%) and the minority of the respondents were female, stated as Technological advancements (1.90%) as a factor that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings. **Figure.9** Shows the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents were male, stated as increased media attention can prolong legal proceedings (18.57%) and the minority of the respondents were male, stating extensive media coverage can compromise the fairness of trials (3.33%) as a major effect of media

trials on legal proceedings. **Figure.10** Shows the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents were male, stated to implement restrictions on the timing and scope of media coverage (28.10%) and the minority of the respondents were male, stated to regulate media access to counterrooms to ensure that coverage does not compromise the integrity of ongoing trials as an effective measure that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings (3.33%).

Table.1 represents the relationship between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. Since $P < 0.05$, the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. **Table.2** represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$, the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings. **Table.3** represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$, the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings. **Table.4** represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$, the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings. **Table.5** represents the relationship between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$, the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. **Table.6** represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$, the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

DISCUSSIONS:

Figure.6 shows the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. Majority of the respondents were between the age group 21-30, stated as yes (45,24%). The higher percentage of “yes” responses among the 21-30 age group could be attributed to several factors. First, individuals in this age range are often considered “digital natives,” having grown up with easy access to digital media. They are more likely to follow news through online platforms, social media, and news apps. Second, news consumption tends to align with personal interests and relevance. Younger adults may find news topics more pertinent to their lives, leading to regular media engagement. Third, people in their 20s typically have more flexible schedules, allowing them to allocate time for news consumption. Finally, peer influence and social norms play a role, if friends or acquaintances in this age group actively follow news, others may follow suit. **Figure.7** Shows the respondent’s opinion regarding whether they have witnessed any case where media coverage seemed to affect the legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents stated as yes (80.95%). The majority of respondents (80.95%) reported witnessing cases where media coverage appeared to impact legal proceedings. Several factors could contribute to this observation: firstly, Sensationalism - Media outlets often sensationalise high-profile cases, shaping public perception and potentially influencing jurors, judges, and witnesses. Secondly, Trial by Public Opinion - Intense media scrutiny can create a “trial by public opinion,” affecting the fairness of legal proceedings and thirdly Confirmation Bias - Once media narratives are established, individuals may seek evidence that aligns with those narratives, potentially swaying legal outcomes. **Figure.8** shows the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents were female, stated as a competitive media environment (31.43%). This observation could be influenced by factors such as media competition for breaking news, sensationalism, and the need to attract viewership. **Figure.9** Shows the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the effect of media trials on legal proceedings. Majority of the

respondents were male, stated as increased media attention can prolong legal proceedings (18.57%). This perspective may stem from the understanding that extensive media coverage can lead to delays, sensationalism, and complex legal battles. **Figure.10** Shows the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings. Majority of the respondents were male, stated to implement restrictions on the timing and scope of media coverage (28.10%). This perspective aligns with the idea that regulated media access can prevent sensationalism, protect privacy, and maintain the integrity of legal processes.

Table.1 represents the relationship between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. The Null hypothesis states that there is no sign association between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources and the Alternative hypothesis states that there is a sign association between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. Since $P < 0.05$ (0.007), the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the age of the respondents and their opinions regarding whether they regularly follow the news through media sources. **Table.2** represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinions on the factors that contribute most to the prevalence of media trials in legal proceedings. 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Since $P < 0.05$ (0.000), the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion towards the measures that could be implemented to ensure responsible and ethical reporting by media outlets during ongoing legal proceedings. **Table.5** represents the relationship between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. The Null hypothesis states that there is no sign association between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings and the Alternative hypothesis states that there is a sign association between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$ (0.000), the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the age of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. **Table.6** represents the relationship between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. The Null hypothesis states that there is no sign association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings and the Alternative hypothesis states that there is a sign association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings. Since $P < 0.05$ (0.000), the Null hypothesis is rejected which indicates that there is an association between the gender of the respondents and their opinion regarding the effectiveness of current media guidelines in

ensuring ethical reporting during ongoing legal proceedings.

LIMITATIONS:

The study was carried out in chennai limits and the results cannot be generalized to the rest of the population. The sample is not balanced as regards gender, because it was incidental, which means that our interpretation of this variable is limited.

CONCLUSION:

From the above analysis it can be concluded that the media accountability has a negative impact on the judiciary. The media trial has a subconscious effect on the judge's decision. The media also hampers the independence of the judiciary and affects judicial functioning. Media should only engage in acts of journalism and not act as a special agency for the court. Though the media acts as a watchdog and brings us a platform where the people can know about the things happening in a society, it is important to know that this has only led to the whole of the world being biased against one community or a single person.

Media should understand that its role is to raise issues which the public is facing. Media can be a voice for those who can't speak for themselves. Media should not deliver judgement because in India we have a judiciary for this purpose. Media should maintain its code of laws and ethics, social responsibility and credibility by not interfering in the matters of court so early.

Media accountability in reporting sub-judicial criminal cases is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the judicial process. Social media platforms, with their speed and accessibility, often serve as informal forums for public discourse, where opinions and judgments are formed long before a court reaches a verdict. While these platforms can help in democratising information and providing updates, they also have the potential to influence public opinion and even judicial outcomes. The rapid dissemination of unverified or biased information can skew public perception, pressurising legal entities and compromising the fairness of trials. Such premature judgments undermine the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty,' placing undue emphasis on public sentiment rather than the rule of law.

Furthermore, social media's lack of editorial oversight raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding privacy and the fairness of trials. Sensitive details about the accused, victims, or witnesses can easily be shared, often without regard for the legal implications or the potential damage to reputations. The broadcasting of personal information may not only impact the parties involved but also affect the impartiality of proceedings, as judges and juries may inadvertently come across biased opinions online. In this context, the media must exercise restraint, adhering to legal and ethical standards that ensure both transparency and fairness, without compromising the rights of individuals or the sanctity of the judicial process.

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