



The Print Media and Crime: Values and Issues

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Abstract

That the press sensationalizes crime stories, over reports violent crime stories like homicide, assault etc in comparison to non-violent stories and that violent stories are usually reported disproportionately compared to their incidence in official crime statistics or victim surveys, and that sensational reporting of crime contribute to concern over crime among the public is point of concern. This stimulates fear of crime which is now being recognized as a distinct social problem and issue for public debate. This paper examines the print media and the creation of fear of crime, amount and sources of crime in the print media and patterns of crime reporting bringing out some core values. The paper acknowledges reporting of crime as epidemic and examines some vital suggestions towards uplifting the values of the press in crime reporting. The paper concludes that print media play vital roles in shaping public perception of risk-factors in criminality, crimes, stimulate public awareness and impact on the criminal justice system. Therefore, concern for such issues and values of the media in crime reporting could also help in preventions and control of criminalities.

Key Words: Crime reporting; Nigeria; print media; patterns of crime.

Introduction

Crime narratives, like other news items, are, and have always been a prominent part of the content of all mass media. In every society, crime, features prominently in the news presented to the public by the media. Rationalizing why crime coverage has become so important to newspapers, Amari (1999) submitted that it is news: 'the best crime stories have drama, conflict, good and evil', and that for these reasons, newspapers have institutionalised crime coverage. This for Amari accounts for why virtually every

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newspaper has a police reporter that is always there when something 'news worthy' happens. Soola (2003) also affirmed that media operators, and by extension the media, savour and feed on crime and violence because it makes and sells headlines and news programmes: 'Crime and violence make news reports juicy; they are sensational, dramatic, and at times colourful'. Since media owners are in business to make profit, and since crime and violence sell newspapers and programmes causing circulation figures and programme ratings to soar, no media operator is likely to spew out a juicy rape, bank robbery, murder or a monumental fraud. To that extent, crime and violence are not only attractive, but they are also tempting to media operators (Soola, 2003). Aside being attractive to the media however, crime stories are also attractive to consumers of media products. It is in this vein that most people are fascinated by crime news. So by covering crimes, the media are in media parlance giving the audience what they want. Meanwhile, people get news as part of daily routine for public safety. In other words, crime reporting may promote self-responsibility in terms of security. Similarly, the West Australian newspaper has observed that it would be failing in its responsibility to its readers if it did not report crimes and reflect community anxieties about them. Agenda-setting perspective stipulates that audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis placed on it by the media.

The elements involved in agenda-setting, according to Folarin (1998) include the quantity or frequency of reporting; prominence given to the reports-through headline display, picture and lay out in newspapers, magazines, films, graphics or timing on radio and T.V.; the degree of conflict generated in the reports and cumulative media specific effects over time. Accordingly, agenda-setting implies that the media pre-determine what issues are regarded as important at a given point in time in a given society. Although the theory does not ascribe to the media the power to determine what people actually think, it does ascribe the power to determine what the public are thinking about. This view is evident and buttressed in Merenin (1987); Agbese (1987) and Chermak's (1995) assertion of the media's role in shaping and moulding public opinion. The press role and functions in the society aid in identifying and setting the tone of public debate on issues. By its agenda-setting activities, the press may consequently influence public perception on crime, create new categories of crime and impact the criminal justice system by the way it reports crime.

From the earliest studies, Davis (1952); Cohen (1972); Chibnall (1977); Fishman (1980) to the latter studies, Dambazau (1994); Kirby et al (1997); Amari (1999); Dubois (2002), the studies have not been complimentary of the press' crime reporting efforts. Rather, they have all strived to reveal how the press creates crime waves and induces fear among the public. Following this, the paper aims to examine relationship between crime, the press and fear of crime, amount and sources of crime stories and pattern of crime news.

Crime, fear of crime and the press

Discourse about crime, a phenomenon present in all human societies is as old as civilization itself. What crime is and what crime is not have engaged the attention of scholars over time and in different climes. What becomes obvious from the discourse is that crime, apart from being relative and changing with time, also has both legal and social dimensions.

Marshall (1996), underscoring the legal perspective conceives crime as an offence which goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibited rules and laws to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and which requires the intervention of a public authority (the state or a local body). Okunola's (2002) views are no different as he defines crime simply 'as an act or omission punishable by the state'. However, both authors, like most sociologists are quick to add that a legal definition of crime is not sufficient as it only takes cognisance of infractions against certain proscribed laws which is known as crime only when it gets to official attention and is processed by an enforcement agency. The extent of crime for Okunola (2002) goes beyond the detected and recorded crimes to include two other categories that are the undetected or unknown, and the detected or known, but unrecorded crime. The notion of social infraction signifies that not all social deviance constitute crime. There are some deviant behaviours prohibited in the society as manifest of degraded moral values but can not be tried in the law court. It is in this vein that crime differs from deviance.

Socially, crime is seen as violation of the socio-cultural mores and norms of a group which is frowned upon and which attracts sanctions from other members of the group. As a social phenomenon, crime is increasing in both developed as well as developing countries (Rodney 1992), and as such is becoming one of the top concerns of the public and policy makers. The concern of crime to the public authorities in most countries is seen in crime control measures like increased funding to the police and recruitment of more police officers. Other measures by the government to control crime in some parts of world include the introduction of a community policing scheme, aimed at involving the public in issues of their own security and safety plus other sundry measures to control the crime situation in the country and inauguration of specialized agencies as in control of corruption and financial crime, anti-drug agency and so on. All this could also explain concern of crime in the public.

Concern and fear of crime among the public on the other hand is indicated in territorial markings which includes items such as fences, no trespassing signs, external surveillance devices etc. Dambazau (1994) and Okoro (2001) allude to this as they added the formation of neighbourhood security association, and the installation of burglary proofs on windows and doors as strategies being taken by the public to protect themselves against falling victim of crime. Fear of crime is now being recognized as a distinct social problem and issue for public debate (Ditton and Farrel 2000; Hope and Sparks 2000). It has been defined as the amount of anxiety and concern that persons have of being a victim (Sundeen and Mathieu, 1976). A possible way to operationalize this definition would be to ask the individuals to choose their most serious personal problem from a list of issues which include fear of crime as well as other issues such as income, health and housing. The confounding effect of persons who might not be able to name fear of crime as their most serious problem because of the equal salience of other problems could be mediated by allowing respondents to name up to three problems if necessary. If the amount of anxiety and concern that persons have about being a victim is high, they would most likely define it as among the three most serious problems.

Though researchers almost never explicitly define fear of crime, their measurements suggest that such fear is implicitly defined as the perception of the probability of being victimized. Maxfield (1984) in agreement with this conceives fear of crime as perceived threats to personal safety rather than threats to property. In societies where there is security threat, the fear of crime is alarming and all facet of public life is

adversely affected. Garland (2001) considered crime reporting by the mass media and in particular on television as a factor that had significantly altered social perceptions of crime. With the horrible news of crime in the print media, the public might perceive crime trend to be rising despite the opposite. This assertion is similar to the finding of Pfeiffer et al (2005) in a study conducted in Germany. This perception of increasing trend could generate perpetual fear of crime among the public. It was also observed that these perceptions of rising crime are closely associated with preferences for stiffer sentences among the public. This suggests that media reporting has had an important influence on preferences for harsher sentences and thus may impact on the criminal justice system.

Fear of crime varies according to sex, race, gender and age. Reynolds and Blyth (1976) showed the inverse relationship between life cycle and 'perceived threat of victimization'. When they found that 'senior adult' perceived the lowest personal threat of victimization while 'dependent youths' perceived the highest personal threat. Perceived threat of victimization was measured having the subjects estimate the frequency of a specific crime happening to them. When bivariate analysis was used, females were usually found to have more fear than males. Riger et al (1978) argued that there are two possible sources of explanation of this sex-difference; those focusing on the peculiar characteristics of crime, such as rape which affect women disproportionately. Regan (1977) also underscored the racial differentials in fear of crime by reporting that Black females were more fearful than Black males, and that the fear of crime and perceived susceptibility were similar for both sexes among White people and Mexican Americans. Social class and race are two other independent variables, which have consistently been reported as being related to fear of crime. The United States Department of Justice (1977) reported that, on the whole, Black people and other racial groups were more fearful than the whites.

The perceived seriousness of the problem of fear of crime has made scholars conclude that if left unchecked, it can destroy the fabric of civilized society, causing us to become suspicious of each other, locking ourselves in our homes and offices, relinquishing our street to predators, which ultimately will affect our recreational lives. More importantly, it is a reflection of diminishing confidence in criminal justice system. Hence, the active role of crime control agents could reflect on the level of confidence reposed on the agents and influence the concern and fear of crime.

Since the media are among the sources of information people count on to mould their opinion of the world around them (Agbese 1987 and Merenin 1987), it can be safely asserted that the people also form their opinion of the crime situation in the society from what they see and read in the media. Graber (1979) confirmed this in a survey that showed that up to 95% percent of people rely on the media as the primary source of information on crime. Chermak (1995) also advanced that the media are among the most influential sources used by the public to develop opinions about crime and the criminal justice system. It is now common for the public to read on the pages of newspaper celebrated cases of rape, gang robbery, corruption and so on. But when crime is rampant or in the neighbourhood, it might aggravate concern and fear of crime.

With specific reference to fear of crime and the press' role in inducing it, literature uncovered the existence of a connection between crime, press coverage of criminal events and public opinion. In a pioneering study of four newspapers in Colorado, United States, to test the hypothesis that one, there is no consistent relationship between the amount of crime news in the Colorado newspapers, and the state's crime rates and two, public opinion about Colorado crime trends reflects trends in the amount of newspapers

coverage than in actual crime rates, Davis (1952), presented evidence indicating that official crime rates and crime news coverage are unrelated, and that the public conception of crime reflects the picture of crime presented in the newspapers more accurately. Another illustration and often cited study of how newspapers can cause 'moral panics'- a term coined by sociologists to refer to an exaggerated fear or outrage by the media and the audience over an issue that has been blown out of proportion by the media in the first place- is Cohen's (1972) study of how British papers exaggerated the 1964 *mods* and *rockers* disorders at some British seaside towns and the effect of the sensational reporting on the public, police and government.

Cohen presented evidence showing that owing to over-reporting of the disorders by the press, members of the public became worried, police activities increased and young people themselves created and joined gangs that were presented to them by the press as fashionable and exciting. Fishman's (1980) study of how the press created a crime wave of crimes against the elderly in New York is another study detailing the relationship between sustained press reporting of criminal events and fear of crime. Fishman proved that the crime wave, which lasted for seven weeks, and was a major news theme in three daily newspapers and five local T.V. stations, in comparison with New York Police Department Crime Statistics for the period of time covered by the media crime wave showed that crimes against the elderly were not increasing. In fact, homicides against the elderly were down 19 per cent from the previous year.

Browne (1992) also advanced the same position and showed the stages involved in how the press creates moral panics and crime waves. Deviancy amplification has been the major criticism against the press (Kirby et al, 1997). First, a small group of people commit some act of deviance then the media picks up on an 'interesting story' and produce headlines, stories, and photographs to interest readers and viewers. Such headline would fascinate would draw the attention of readers, generate public debate and thereby attract more circulations. Second, to maintain reader's interest, original deviance is amplified through exaggerated and sensationalized reporting. Causes of the original deviance are simplified for easy explanation (such as lack of discipline by parents and teachers, decline in moral standards and so on). Third, the group are labelled as folk devils and stereotyping occurs through various appellations and historical descriptions of similar occurrence. This may lead to moral panic as public concern is aroused at the real or imaginary 'threat' to society; the media campaign for 'action' to be taken against this perceived threat and project reoccurrence. Lastly, more social control - politicians, police and magistrates respond to public demands as shown in the media, and law and order campaigns are begun to stamp down hard on the deviants. The public then wait anxiously for the outcome of the criminal justice system on the perceived 'epidemic' crime. In order words, crime reporting may stimulate criminal justice system to protect their image by taking drastic action in curbing the wave of criminalities.

In similar vein, Dambazau's (1994) appraisal of crime news in Nigerian newspapers also gave credence to the relationship between crime reporting and the fear of crime among Nigerians. Dambazau highlighted the negative impact of this on the public, law enforcement agents and on the national economy. Another angle to the discourse is profit making motive as the reason why the press sensationalizes crime stories and ultimately heightens fear of crime among the public (Kirby et al, 1997; Soola, 2003).

Amount and sources of crime news

The amount of crime stories featured in the press varies with the definition of crime used by the researcher and the type (market position) of the paper used for the study. Reiner (2002) for instance contends that the proportion of media content that is constituted by crime items depends on the definitions of crime used. Reiner further contends that most content analysis studies of the amount of crime in the media focus more narrowly on a legally defined category of crime unlike Ericsons et al's (1987) study of Toronto newspapers that adopted a broad definition of deviance.

This probably accounts for the observed variations in the amount of crime reported by each study. Graber (1980) in a study of American newspapers found that crime and justice topics accounted for 22 to 8% of stories in the papers studied, 20% on local television news and 12 to 13% on network television. Marsh (1991) similarly found considerable variation in the proportion of crime in a literature review of American content analysis conducted between 1960 and 1980 from 1.61 percent to 33.5%.

A study of six Scottish newspapers also found that an average of 6.5 percent of space was given to crime news (Ditton and Duffy, 1983; Smith, 1984; Schlesinger et al, 1991). However, a rise in the percentage was supported and confirmed by a later study that compared coverage of crime in 10 national daily newspapers for four weeks (Williams and Dickinson, 1993).

Reiner et al (2000) and Reiner (2001) also found a generally upward, (albeit fluctuating trend) in the proportion of stories focussed on crime in *The Times* and *The Mirror* for each year between 1945 and 1991 with the sharpest increase occurring during the late 1960s, when the average annual proportion of crime stories almost doubled from around 10% to around 20% in both papers. Okoro (2001) revealed that the percentage of crime stories in two Nigerian newspapers, which editions were randomly selected from 1993 to 1998 was 5.98 percent, coming behind issues such as government activities, politics etc.

Crime stories reported by the newspapers most often originate from the police and criminal justice system which control much of the information on which crime reporters rely (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1991; Amari, 1999). Thus, crime stories fed the papers by official sources, appears more in the papers than stories from other sources. Being dependent on official sources for crime news however is unacceptable to Sandman et al (1976) who contend that the approach almost invariably favours the official viewpoint since the reporter is unlikely to meet face to face with the accused and made aware of the suspect's protestations of innocence. More importantly, unreported and undetected crimes are not covered in this regard.

Chibnall (1977) also criticized sourcing crime stories from official sources because crime reporters tend to develop a symbiotic relationship with such contacts. The use of police or court officials is also faulted because it often leads to de-contextualised reporting. One in which the reporter denies the audience the necessary background to put the story in context. The reporter may likely report the view of the official agents in ways that would project their image. In other words, the official agents might provide information that they want the reporter to know. This might be contradictory to general press practice in some instances because even when the reporters' source crime stories independently, they still confirm from the police. Thus, the practice of crosschecking crime stories with the police may account for why official sources predominate in the findings of this study.

Pattern of crime news

Crime news exhibit remarkably similar patterns in studies conducted at different times and places. From the earliest studies onwards, analysis of news reports have found that crimes of violence are featured disproportionately to their incidence in official crime statistics or victim surveys.

Sheley and Ashkin's (1981) comparison of crime trends reported by the police and the press did not correspond. A review of 36 content analysis of crime news in the United States between 1960 and 1988, and 20 studies in 14 other countries between 1960 and 1987 indicated more interpersonal crime in the papers than to official statistics. The ratio of violent-to-property crimes appearing in surveyed newspapers was 82 to 2 while official statistics on the other hand reflected a property-to-violent crime ratio of more than 9 to 1 (Marsh, 1991).

Over-reporting violent and interpersonal crime (rape particularly) compared to official statistics and under reporting property offences was highlighted by Soothhill and Walby (1991) as they found out that between 1951 and 1985, the number of rape trials in Britain increased nearly four times, from 119 to 450. In the same period, the number of rape cases reported in the press increased more than five times from 28 to 154. Studies conducted in the 1990s show the same pattern of over-reporting violent and interpersonal crimes and under-reporting non-violent crimes (Chiricos et al, 1997; Beckett and Sasson, 2000). Coverage of environmental crime in Hillsborough country, found that of the 878 chemical spills reported to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) only nine were reported in the *Tampa Tribune*.

Reiner et al's (2000) historical study of two British newspapers since the Second World War further reinforced the press over reporting tendency of violent crimes as the study found that homicide was reported most, accounting for about one-third of all crime-news stories throughout the period. It was further observed that property crime in which no violence occurred declined. Reiner further revealed that property crimes feature frequently in news stories during the 1940s and 1950s but after the mid 1960s, they were hardly ever reported unless some violence ensued from them. On the other hand, some offences began to feature prominently in news stories only after the mid 1960s, notably drug offences, which by the 1990s accounted for about 10 per cent of all crime stories (Reiner et al, 2000; Reiner, 2001).

Findings of Dubois (2002) study on press reporting of organized crime in Australia similarly buttressed the fact that the press glorifies violent stories compared to non-violent stories, and that precedence is given to extreme forms of crime of those that involve vulnerable victims. Another consistent finding from the literature is the predominance of stories about criminal incidents, rather than analysis of crime patterns or the possible causes of crime. Criminal incidents are described in short and terse news items in some few paragraphs rather than writing extensive and analytical feature stories (Garofalo 1981; Marsh 1991 and Amari 1999).

Sherizon (1978) however criticizes the practice of writing only news items on the grounds that it only provides citizens with a public awareness of crime based upon an information rich and knowledge-poor foundation and that those interested in learning about crime from the media are only treated to examples and incidents. Sasson (1995); Barlow (1998) and Beckett and Sasson (2000) also hold Sherizen's ideas as they argue that crime stories in newspapers consist primarily of brief accounts of discrete events, with few details and little background materials.

Furthermore, the proportion of news devoted to crime of different types and the prominence with which it is presented varies according to newspapers' consideration of readers' interests. Williams and Dickson (1993) for instance revealed that the percentage of stories dealing with crimes involving personal violence, and the salience they were given, measured by where they appeared in the layout and the extent of pictures accompanying them increased considerably depending on the popularity of the newspaper.

An indirect consequence of the pattern of offences reported by the newspapers is an exaggeration of police success in clearing-up crime (resulting largely from press reliance on police sources for stories). Marsh (1991) argued after a review of 56 content analysis in 15 different countries between 1960 and 1988 that the over reporting of violent crimes is advantageous to the police because the police succeed more in solving violent crimes than property crimes. The position however is not reflective of the situation in weak state as most crimes (violent and non-violent), may not be resolved by the police. Thus, there is no exaggeration of police success in clearing-up crime in most weak states. Hence, situation in most third world usually reflect the inefficiency of the law enforcement agents.

Patterns of crime reporting also indicate the values of the press. The press indicates high risk areas in the society through risk-laden reports. This kind of report as Sherizon (1978) observed provide public awareness. This in most time assists the general public in implementation of precautionary efforts. It does not only inform the public about the areas but also the kind of people involved in such criminalities. This is usually portrayed in mask-unveiling reports. This directs the anger and cautionary efforts of the public. Another value-laden report may take the form of blame-laden report. There are reports that take the form of 'where-were-the-police'. In cases where crimes are committed with impunity and without the trace of the law-enforcement agents, the press reports tend to blame the inefficiency of the agents in curtailing crimes in the society. This (in most cases) account for the 'reprisal' call on the press when a big round-up is made by the law-enforcement agents.

Pattern may also take the form of coverage-proven. When it is such, the aim of the media is to vindicate and eulogize their coverage. Such reports normally are international news; other news apart from crimes news could also serve similar purpose. Most importantly, the undertone of such reports is 'we-are-concerned' and 'we-were-there'. Meanwhile, like some other news that is magnified, sooth-captioned, some crime news is also returns-laden. The essential of this is to attract the general public for patronage. Such reports will attract more printing and plough a lot of returns. Kirby et al (1997) and Soola, (2003) posited that profit-making motive is central to most crime reports as the public would be interested in how and where such events happen; so they buy papers.

Reporting crime as epidemic

A radical approach to reporting crime due to the present lapses in its nature and form is reporting crime as an epidemic. The approach proposes that crime be reported as a public health problem and that the effects of insensitive sensational reporting on victims of crime be considered. Now gaining currency among scholars, the approach contains suggestions on how the media should begin to concern themselves with how to equip the public with information and knowledge on how to protect themselves against gangsters, armed robbery, burglaries, rapes etc as against inducing fear of crime and creating crime waves.

The approach believes the crime reporter to rethink the routine, conventional approach to crime coverage in favour of treating crime and violence stories as he/she will treat stories about an epidemic (Amari, 1999). Three classes of information to be included in crime stories as further advanced by Amari are: first, perspective which unfolds how common is the crime in the community, second, identified risk factors which could precipitate or facilitate occurrence of criminality. This could address questions such as: what is the relationship of those involved? Was alcohol (or drug) involved? Do the people involved in the incident have jobs? If a gun was used, who manufactured it? Where was it obtained and how much did it cost? Lastly, the consequences and costs of the incident ought to be examined by providing answers such as what happens to the families of those involved in this incident? Who pays for their hospitalisation? Will the children be split up, put in foster care? Unarguably, the press would positively contribute more to crime control measures in by incorporating Amari's suggestions into their crime reporting activities as well as suggestions by Stevens (1998) on reporting crime as public health issues.

Some of Stevens suggested that there should be elimination of short briefs that offer no context or useful information for a more broad and in-depth analysis. It is also recommended that there is need for creation of a local violence database that list violent incidents accumulated from a variety of sources, including law enforcement (police reports), criminal justice (coroner reports, restraining orders) linked to a Geographic Information System (GIS) component so that reporters and editors can more easily identify crime trends. This would also provide data base for researchers and the general public. A story-mapping component can also be included in the database so that reporters and editors can see, at a glance, what stories have been published in which categories. More so, for violent incident reported (high profile or common), information could be added as text or graphic to put each reported violent incident in the context of local violent incidents and also incorporate relevant risk factors, such as the type of weapon, relationship of victim to perpetrator, whether alcohol or other drugs were involved, whether the perpetrator and victim have families. In addition, the consequences should not be overlooked. This could create crime historical mapping and serve as reference point all the time for interested public.

Seymour and Lowrance (1988), concentrating more narrowly on concerns of crime victims in regard to press coverage of crimes listed interviewing at inappropriate times, glamorising the offender, using euphemisms to describe victims and offenders, photographing and filming scenes with bodies, body bags and blood as some of the issues victims of crime would like the press to address. The imperative of reporters behaving responsibly and objectively in covering crimes in order not to traumatize victims further takes pre-eminence in the St. Louis Post Dispatch's 1992 document, Guideline on Privacy Issues, some of which recommendation include: presenting details about a crime in a fair, objective and balanced manner; recognizing the importance of publishing or broadcasting information that can contribute to public safety and, at the same time, balance this need with the victim's need for privacy; provide a balanced perspective relevant to a criminal act that reflects the concerns of the victim and offender; never report rumours or innuendoes about the victim, the offender, or the crime unless such information has been verified by reliable sources; refrain from using information gained from private conversations of victims or their relatives who are in shock or distraught; never identify the names of victims in case of crimes that tend to humiliate or degrade the victim without the victim's prior consent and approach the coverage of all stories related to crime

and victimization in a manner that is not lurid, sensational or intrusive to the victim and his or her family.

Conclusion

The paper unveils some of the major lapses in crime reports in the print media. From the discourse so far on the fear of crime, amount and sources of crime news, patterns of crime news and the suggestions and recommendations in the preceding sections, it is evident that the print media play vital roles in shaping public perception of risk-factors in criminality, crimes, stimulate public awareness and impact on the criminal justice system. Therefore, concern for such issues and values of the media in crime reporting could also help in preventions and control of criminalities. Hence, the criminal justice system should be appraising current ideas in the field of crime reporting that would make crime reporting more beneficial to both the victim, offenders and the general public and policy makers. Everywhere, especial where standard patterns are deficient, there should be guidelines on how crime should and should not be reported by the press. Also, guidelines should also refrain from glamorizing or trivializing crime. The reliability of source of undetected, detected, verified or unverified criminal act should also be questioned at all time.

Lastly, crime reports either directly or indirectly shape the image of the criminal justice system. This greatly influences public trust in the Justice system. In most cases, where fresh crimes are reported, the media often neglect or most of the time is not concerned with the outcome of the investigation. Hence, such outcomes are not glamorized, thereby giving impression of ineffective justice system. It is for this and other aforementioned issues that the debate on crime reporting needs to be advanced into the mainstream of legal, social and political spheres. This will not only revitalize the roles of the media in crime reporting but also ensures that crime coverage takes into account public interest. In view of the foregoing, there is need for more researches on the impact of crime reporting n criminal justice system. This would pave way to addressing other emerging related issues. There is need to more empirical studies on the specific direction of relationship between the media and perceptions of crime and subsequent influence on the criminal justice system. The awareness of such direction would help in mitigating the consequent effects.

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