

A Critical Analysis of “Sensationalist Headlines” in the Representation of Criminal News in Light of News-Making Criminology: An Approach to the Iranian Media System

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Extended Abstract

Purpose

The main purposes of the present paper are as follows:

1. Recognizing the concept and features of sensationalist headlining in the information and media system with emphasis on crime news
2. Studying the current bases and elements of news-making criminology as a new thinking approach within the sphere of critical criminology
3. Raising a critical analysis of sensationalist headlining from the perspective of news-making criminology
4. Analyzing the role of selected Iranian media outlets in disseminating sensationalist headlining

Design/methodology/approach

As an overall approach, the present paper explores the disadvantages of sensationalist headlining and the lack of scientific and analytic attitudes toward representing crime news in the information and media system. It also examines the function of the information and media system in Iran in terms of its trend toward using sensationalist headlining from a critical viewpoint. The paper seeks to evaluate the attitude of certain active media in Iran toward using sensationalist headlining as a method of representing crime news in the media and press system. From a theoretical perspective, the theory of news-making criminology as a new area of critical criminology is the focal point of this paper.

Findings

1. One of the significant parameters for evaluating sensationalist headlining is news-making criminology. It contributes to enhancing public awareness regarding criminal phenomena and their prevention. News-making criminology seeks to provide a scientific and rational approach to representing crime news in the media. Consequently, sensationalist headlining is considered an important challenge facing the media and information systems in Iran and other countries as well.

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2. Sensationalist headlining as one of the notable subjects of news-making criminology is a considerable problem within the information and media world. It is rooted in deception and seduction and cannot be regarded as a reasonable and conventional practice. The consequences of sensationalist headlining should be deliberated beyond deviance in news writing because it requires that someone be deceived and acts as a barrier against the audience's knowledge and insight. This feature turns sensationalist headlining into a subject that should be accurately analyzed.

3. Due to the governmental characteristics of the media system in Iran, focusing on the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, there is no considerable context for realizing news-making criminology within the domestic mass media. This problem could be seen as an obstacle to recognizing news-making criminology in Iran.

4. The main problem in the Iranian media system is the lack of research work relating to crime and delinquency and their causes, as well as their preventive measures being appropriately covered by this system. In other words, there is no official, systematic, and consistent educational approach concerning criminological doctrine and theory in our media system, and citizens receive no useful information and knowledge relating to crime causes and prevention. Moreover, there is a significant lack with respect to the participation of criminologists in discussing and analyzing crime and deviance in an understandable way for the public in the domestic system. The presence of criminologists in the media system could be provided by radio and television programs consisting of panel discussions or interviews.

Research limitations/implications

The authors have not had comprehensive access to all active media in Iran. Thus, the analysis and evaluation of the function of this system in terms of its trend toward using sensationalist headlining and its reflection in the process of representing criminal news have been impossible.

Practical implications

The results of this research could provide a critical analysis concerning the function of the information and media system, particularly in relation to the nature of the representation of crime news in Iran. It could be said that the consistent invitation of criminologists for research and evidence-based in-depth interviews in newspapers, magazines, and other news agencies, as well as providing field research and local surveys with the participation of criminologists and media experts, especially in subject-oriented journals, are the most important ways to help realize news-making criminology within the domestic media system.

Social implications

The results and findings of the present research could reinforce diagnostic skills for distinguishing sensationalist headlining cases from experience-based and research-based media activities, and could turn the audience of the media system into an analytic and experimental claimant group, particularly in relation to the representation of crime news.

Originality/value

The significant innovation of this research is its analysis of the function of the active information and media system in Iran, especially in the context of using sensationalist headlining in the representation of crime news in light of news-making criminology. Therefore, there is no such research background in the Iranian legal literature.

Keywords: Sensationalist headlining, News-Making Criminology, Critical Criminology, Representation of Crime News, Iranian Media System