

The "Imperfect Victim" in the Media Construction: The Relationship between Public Opinion and the Image of the Victim Media Coverage Research

Yidan Wu*

Sichuan Normal University, musicology, academy of music, Chengdu, Sichuan, 610101, China

*p18358504564k@qq.com

ABSTRACT

In order to explore the hidden infringement of 'imperfect victims' under the unequal relationship of power and the way of media coverage of such incidents, this paper takes the 'Wuhan falling mother' incident as an example to study the secondary damage suffered by the imperfect victim when there is a deviation between the image of the victim and the public opinion and the universal view of the media. According to the analysis, such victims are more vulnerable to hidden infringement under a specific power structure. Therefore, it is suggested that the media should adopt a more sensitive and responsible attitude when reporting such public crisis events, so as to prevent similar incidents from happening again and causing further harm to the victims.

KEYWORDS

Public Crisis Events; Imperfect Victims; Online Public Opinion; Media Coverage; Public Opinion Guidance.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's information age, the media is not only the transmitter of information, but also an important force to shape public opinion and guide public opinion. Especially in the case of public crisis events, how the media reports crisis events, transmits information, guides the public to understand and take countermeasures plays a vital role in maintaining social stability. However, in media reports, there are often stereotypes and prejudices against women's imperfect victims. With the recent hit of the TV series 'Imperfect Victims', the audience is truly taken to understand the plot and outcome of the case from the perspective of 'victims', and the word 'Imperfect Victims' is brought to the public's vision and aroused heated discussion. Therefore, this article mainly takes the 'Wuhan falling mother' incident as an example to deeply explore the media's reporting methods of imperfect victims in crisis events, and the social and cultural significance behind this reporting method.

First, by reviewing and synthesizing the research in related fields, this paper will show the current status and development trend of the media's coverage of public crises, as well as the role and influence of the media in public crisis events.

Secondly, this paper will continue to study the unresolved issues, such as gender bias and discrimination in the media's coverage of public crises, as well as the cognitive bias created by emphasizing "imperfect victims". On this basis, this paper will propose new research methods and ideas to solve the problems. Through in-depth analysis of specific cases, this paper will analyze the media's coverage of imperfect victims (women) in crisis events, and explore the power structure and gender bias behind it. At the same time, the paper will also focus on how the media shapes the public's

sympathy and understanding of the victim through its coverage, and how this shaping affects the public's reaction and handling of the crisis event.

Finally, this paper will summarize the results of the study and present an outlook for future research. Through in-depth analysis and exploration of the way the media report on imperfect female victims, this paper aims to raise public awareness of the influence of the media, and to promote the media to report on crisis events in a fair and objective manner, so as to promote social justice and progress. At the same time, this paper also hopes to provide reference and inspiration for the formulation and implementation of relevant policies, so as to better protect female victims of crisis events and maintain social justice and fairness.

2. ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPORTS

2.1. The Incident

On May 23, 2023, a first-grade student at Hongqiao Primary School in Hanyang District, Wuhan City, was hit by a teacher's car and died after being sent to the hospital. Previously, there were comments on the appearance of the mother in the camera, "wearing exquisite makeup, as if deliberately dressed up before rushing over," "This mother is trying to become a netizen" and so on with a teasing and even insulting tone of evaluation of the mother, shifted the focus of the incident, On the afternoon of June 2, 2023, the mother fell to her death.

2.2. Event Analysis

There are many factors that cause the mother to fall down in Wuhan, such as the secondary rolling of the accident vehicle, the disregard of the school, and the fruitless return of justice for the child... This article will focus on the irreversible consequences of the biased impression of 'imperfect victims' caused by online public opinion and the cognitive bias of netizens. Because 'Wuhan falling mother' is well-dressed, has a complete facial make-up, and has a thin body, she has suffered from 'good shape', 'the child was hit and there is still time for make-up' and other unbearable evaluations. [4] It can be seen that due to the cognitive bias of netizens, they think that victims must be weak and weak, and they cannot accept the image of "bright and beautiful" victims, resulting in the concept of "imperfect victims." Then under such a huge network violence, under the potential unequal relationship, 'Wuhan falling mother' suffered a network violence may be the cause of its fall. So, in this process, is it necessary for the media to bring the cry, prayer and so on of 'Wuhan falling mother' to the public? [1]

The media has a social responsibility to provide truthful and reliable information, and at the same time, the media also needs to maintain the balance of social ideology, promote public awareness and rational thinking. In this study, nearly fifty official media accounts were found through Weibo, of which 18.367% of the media reports about the news, meanwhile, 67% of the official media reported that the image of the victim's mother was exposed in the news. Therefore, it is asked how the traditional and official media should maximize the protection of the privacy of the victims so that they will not be reduced to a group that does not meet the criteria of victims in the eyes of the general public. Should the media be able to report true and reliable news to the maximum extent possible while at the same time safeguarding the rights and image of the victims. Due to the lack of the media in protecting the rights and image of the victims, thus causing secondary damage to the victim's family [2], exposing her to the online public and allowing verbal violence to proliferate, which led to the victim's family's fall.

3. REASONS FOR THE BIASED ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PUBLIC CRISES

In an in-depth discussion of the role played by the media in public crises, the study found that the current tragedy deviates from the original intent of news reporting, which can be attributed to the following three key reasons:

3.1. The Problem of Media Orientation Should Not Be Ignored

Some media tend to show a certain tendency when reporting public crisis events. In the case of the mother who fell from the building in Wuhan, for example, the media may overemphasize her departure from traditional social values and portray her negatively, such as “the child's mother makes good use of the power of public opinion, and is a master of network hype, and is only interested in profit”. This kind of oriented reporting not only exacerbates the plight of the mother who fell from the building in Wuhan, but may also affect the public's perceptions and attitudes towards the incident, thus further exacerbating the problem of gender inequality [3].

3.2. Audience Demand Has an Impact on the Content of Media Reports

In public crisis events, there are differences between the definition of ' perfect victim ' and the actual situation. [6] Some audiences tend to see the image of victims in line with traditional moral concepts, and this expectation may affect the way the media reports on imperfect victims (women). If the media pursues high click-through rate and high attention, it may tend to meet the expectations of this part of the audience, thus ignoring the principle of fair and objective reporting. In the ' Wuhan falling mother ' incident, the official media that exposed the image of the victim 's mother accounted for 67 %. Many media did not put a mosaic on the mother when reporting, protecting her privacy, making some netizens comment on the incident from an objective perspective.

3.3. Lack of Media Norms and Morality

In the process of reporting, the media should abide by certain norms and moral standards, such as describing facts according to facts. However, in reality, some media choose to exaggerate their negative characteristics and even carry out personality attacks for commercial interests or other reasons. For Wuhan 's falling mother, after a long period of negative comments after the news report, the marketing number media saw the wind and spread a lot of conspiracy theories about Wuhan 's falling mother 's 'wearing high heels ' and 'Wear red lips ', which caused secondary damage to Wuhan 's falling mother. This practice not only hurts the victims, but may also create a stereotype that exacerbates discrimination and prejudice against women in society. [7] [8]

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ANALYZING MEDIA COVERAGE OF CRISIS EVENTS

Summarizing the above analysis, given the significant influence of the media in public crises and its key role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes, the study offers a series of recommendations on media practices when reporting on related events. These recommendations aim to promote more responsible, impartial and sensitive reporting by the media to ensure accurate dissemination of information and balanced maintenance of public interest. Specific recommendations are set out below:

4.1. Enhancing Media Professionalism

Media practitioners should receive education in professional ethics and professional training to enhance their understanding of and concern for imperfect victims of public crisis events. By

enhancing professionalism, media personnel can report events more objectively and comprehensively, avoid biased portrayals, and promote in-depth exploration of the plight of victims. For example, media personnel can learn how to accurately present the experiences of victims and avoid language that may exacerbate discrimination and prejudice, while ensuring that coverage includes a plurality of voices and perspectives.

4.2. The Media Should Focus on the Substance, Guide Positive Public Opinion and Promote Comprehensive Understanding

The media have a great responsibility when reporting on public crisis events and their victims. First, the media should focus on the core issues and root causes of the incident, rather than focusing excessively on the personal characteristics or imperfections in the behavior of the victims. By directing the public's attention to the essence of the problem, the media can minimize unnecessary negative comments about the victims, while at the same time promoting in-depth thinking and discussion among all sectors of society about the deeper issues behind the crisis event.

Therefore, the media should adopt diversified reporting angles to present a true and comprehensive image of the victims. By presenting the real performance of women (or men, depending on the specific incident) with different backgrounds and experiences in crisis events, the media can break the stereotype of the “perfect victim” and help the public recognize the diversity and complexity of victims. Such reporting can help promote social understanding and recognition of imperfect victims, and enhance public sympathy and support for victims.

In addition, the media should resolutely avoid using victims' experiences as material for speculation and refrain from excessive condemnation or blame. In the process of reporting, the media should maintain an objective and impartial attitude and respect the privacy and dignity of the victims. By providing valuable information and solutions, the media can guide the public to shift their attention from mere hype and condemnation to actions to solve real problems.

Finally, when reporting on public crisis events and their victims, the media should shoulder the responsibility of guiding positive public opinion and promoting comprehensive understanding. By focusing on the essence of the event, presenting diverse images of the victims, and avoiding hype and condemnation, the media can provide the public with a more realistic, comprehensive and positive perspective to scrutinize and understand crisis events and the social issues behind them.

4.3. Improving Public Media Awareness and Literacy

The media should raise the public's media awareness and popularize media literacy education to help the public identify and criticize possible biases in the media, so as to form a more rational perception of the coverage of imperfect victims.

4.4. Balanced and Inclusive Reporting

In the dissemination of news, the media should adhere to the principles of a balanced and inclusive narrative. This means that when reporting on victims' stories, the media need to remain objective and neutral, and at the same time, the reporting should show deep sympathy and support for the victims, avoiding labeling or blaming, so as to ensure the truthfulness and fairness of the information. Inclusive reporting is also crucial. The media has a responsibility to reflect the diversity and inclusiveness of society, and to reveal the common challenges and dilemmas faced by victims by showing groups of victims with different backgrounds and experiences. This type of reporting not only helps to enhance public understanding and respect for different groups, but also promotes overall social harmony and progress.

The principle of a balanced and inclusive narrative is therefore an important and indispensable part of news dissemination, requiring the media to be objective and fair in reporting the stories of victims, while at the same time demonstrating social diversity and humanistic concern.

4.5. Integrating Human Resonance and Education and Guidance

In the face of the phenomenon of “imperfect victims”, the media is not only a platform for information transmission, but also an important force that can trigger social resonance and promote public awareness and action.

First, by emphasizing the humanity and emotions of the victims, the media can break the public's inherent prejudice and indifference towards “imperfect victims”. Telling the stories of victims and showing their resilience, courage and pursuit of justice can inspire public sympathy and empathy. This humanized approach to reporting allows the public to see that victims are not just symbols in the news, but people with flesh and blood, emotions and dreams. This empathy not only enhances the public's support for the victims, but also prompts them to think more deeply about the social problems and injustices behind the phenomenon of “imperfect victims”.

Secondly, the media should also take the responsibility of educating the public while generating empathy. Through in-depth reporting and analysis to reveal the nature and impact of the “imperfect victim” phenomenon, the media can help the public recognize their own prejudice and discrimination, and lead them to reflect and discuss, cultivating critical thinking and empathy.

By combining the strategies of human empathy and education, the media can have a greater social impact when reporting on the phenomenon of “imperfect victims”. By emphasizing the humanity and emotions of the victims, the media can trigger public empathy; through in-depth reporting and analysis, the media can educate the public and stimulate their thinking. The combination of the two not only helps to improve the situation of victims, but also promotes fairer and more equal treatment of everyone in society, thereby building a more tolerant and understanding social environment.

5. GOVERNMENT, MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC BUILD THE FOUNDATION OF FAIR REPORT.

In the process of building a healthy media environment, the government, the media and the public are indispensable. From the following three aspects, combined with the media supervision reform, social attention to promote, media self-discipline and morality and media diversification in four aspects.

5.1. Government Level

The government should strengthen the formulation and enforcement of laws and regulations, clarify the professional code of conduct and bottom line to be observed by media practitioners, and impose legal sanctions against misconduct such as false news and discriminatory reporting. At the same time, the government should encourage and support the development of private, public and community media, promote diversity in media ownership, and strengthen support and funding for multicultural media. In addition, the Government can promote social attention to specific issues (such as the problem of female victims of imperfection) by organizing thematic seminars and conducting awareness-raising campaigns.

5.2. Media Level

Media organizations should strengthen their self-regulatory mechanisms and set up internal oversight bodies, such as ethics review committees, which are responsible for formulating and enforcing professional codes of ethics. Media practitioners should receive regular professional ethics training

to enhance their ethical sensitivity in reporting public crisis events. At the same time, the media should endeavor to provide diversified content and services to meet the needs of different groups and consumers, especially when reporting on public crisis events, by adopting diverse perspectives and voices.

5.3. Public Level

The public should be actively involved in the process of constructing the media environment. By increasing the level of knowledge about specific issues (e.g., the issue of female imperfect victims), the public can change the public opinion environment and provide greater support for improved news media coverage. In addition, the public can monitor and evaluate the quality and fairness of media reports through monitoring and feedback mechanisms, and push the media to report more professionally and responsibly.

Therefore, the government, the media and the public should work together to build a healthier, more pluralistic and fairer media environment from their respective levels, combining the four aspects of media regulatory reform, social concern promotion, media self-regulation and ethics, and media pluralism. This will help to gain more justice and respect for imperfect victims of public crisis events, promote public understanding of and response to public crisis events, and reduce the occurrence of such tragic events.

6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the media has a significant influence in reporting on “imperfect victims (women)” in public crisis events in a way that shapes public perceptions and may exacerbate social prejudice and discrimination. This study emphasizes the role of the media in shaping public perceptions and the image of female victims, identifies problems in current reporting, and makes recommendations for improvement. In terms of policy and practice recommendations, it is suggested that the media establish a correct journalistic philosophy, strengthen the gatekeeping of social news, and report on female victims with the principles of objectivity, neutrality, and proportionality, while focusing on emotional and psychological interventions to minimize secondary victimization. This study may be limited by specific cases or data sources and fails to comprehensively cover all types of public crisis events and media reports. Future research could further explore the differences in media coverage of female victims in different types of public crisis events, as well as the impact of media coverage on the image of female victims in a cross-cultural context.

REFERENCES

- [1] Liu Xiangyun. Research on media construction and communication of female suicide events [D]. Soochow University,2018.
- [2] Zhou Zhihan. The Third Person Effect of Reporting on Women's Public Safety Issues [D]. Lanzhou University, 2021.DOI:10.27204/d.cnki.glzhu.2021.000663.
- [3] WEI Tianyao,XIE Mei. The problem of tendency in news reports on women's victimization--taking “the murder of air hostess Li” as an example[J]. Journalism Research Guide,2018,9(18):59-60+97.
- [4] Liu Ning,Ding Jiadi,Zeng Aini et al. A study on the image of female victims in news reports--taking the WeChat public number of Xinjing Daily as an example[J]. Journalism Research Guide,2022,13(03):35-39.
- [5] Tan Haiyan. Analysis of media bias in the reporting of female victimization[J]. Northern Media Research, 2019(01):62-63.DOI:10.19544/j.cnki.bmyj.2019.0024.
- [6] Lin Zesheng. Research on the analysis of women's image and public opinion guidance countermeasures in emergencies [D]. Chongqing University,2015.
- [7] LIN Duo. Analysis on the phenomenon of “secondary damage” in catastrophic news reports[J]. Journalism Research Guide,2016,7(16):85.

- [8] Shi Zijng. Reflections on the “secondary damage” of China's catastrophic reports from the perspective of psychology[J]. Journalism Research Journal,2016,7(20):56-57.
- [9] Shehzadi, Shaista, A. Ali, and Ayyaz Mahmood. "The Portrayal of Violence against Women in Pakistani Urdu Newspapers." International Journal of Linguistics and Culture (2022).
- [10] Eichel, D.. "News Coverage Of Violence Against Women." (2016).