How does the Media represent Felons?

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A research based on perceptions of US residents revealed that it is a common belief among people that African American men are most likely to engage in crime than any other racial category. This belief is based on statistics as the number of African Americans men is highest for arrests and incarcerations as compared to the white suspects with alike offenses or with same to longer felonious histories. It is observed that African Americans are more likely to serve in jail than whites by a factor of six. Many people have similar stories to tell or are related to someone with similar background. Yet, many disbelieves that there is any racial biasness existing in the justice system of America. Years after years, stories of people who suffered more because of racist criminal-justice system, are evident that the there is a need to reconsider basis of judgment.

As over time, there are more cases surfacing about racial judgment and criminal discrimination prevailing in the criminal system of US, more researchers are developing interest to point out the purpose of these circumstances. The researchers have hardly taken humiliation as offenders’ psychological state, but this can severely impact on the behavior of the offender after being released from jail (Kelly, June P., & Stuewig, 2015).

Media in the world of today, is a power source to make or change the believes of people. People believe what they see and hear. Recently, numerous TV shows, documentaries, talk shows and movies are produced and on-aired, which tempts everyone who is intrigued by crime and actions. It is a common fact that white criminals are shown glamourous and idealized whereas, mostly people of color are portrayed as criminals or weak. This leads to large population believe that in real life people are color are either oppressed or criminals mostly.

The purpose of this study is to assess in ways and up to extent, media can represent the felon in a society and this research also evaluates how impactfully the media shapes the mind of people which effects the lives of offender after release from prison.

**Literature** **Review**

The statistics reveal that astonishingly a greater number of the population which belong to working class of US has committed at least a minor felony. However, it is also observed that during detection, some experiences lead to the job loss or restriction to even apply for jobs.

A research is conducted on about hiring prospects for minority with conviction as compared to the white people who were convicted of felons. Through an example, the article subjected that the minority with criminal background is treated harshly in comparison with the white people who have committed same crime. It also mentions that the some of the long and intense convictions removes the convict from job inevitably. The main concern of the research is that the white people readjust quicker as compared to black people with similar background who do not. This is based primarily on the perspective of the community people in hiring departments (Barry Goldman, Dylan Cooper, & Tamar Kugler, 2019). The perspective is usually set by the media through coverage and shows. The stats appearing on the media tend to become the reason people believe in a certain way. The influence of media and traditional perspective impacts Higley on the lives of minority and the way they are treated.

The research also put forward some applicable suggestion to improve the current situation. Firstly, the organizations should recruit people based on fair assessment of skills and capabilities. The hiring manager should also be considerate of the circumstances of the ex-convict applicants. Secondly, the organization should take necessary measures to educate the other employees about this matter. However, the employees should be aware of any possible threat from the former convict. In addition, organization should also revise the background check system of convicts. Usually the employees with criminal record, no matter how minor, are suspended or removed from job immediately (Barry Goldman et al., 2019).

The ex-convicts are not only despised by society, but the government also believes that ex-convicts are not eligible to vote and cannot decide the future of country. In article, Klump, Mialon and William, support the idea that ex-convicts should be considered an integral part of society and allowed to vote. The article not only defended the right of ex-convicts to vote but also described the consequences of restricting the felon from voting. Multiple studies demonstrate that this restriction is advantageous to Republican Party. It is due to a fact that the minorities are in favor of Democratic parties but because of large number of convictions, they are unable to vote. Decrease in number of votes of one part contributes to the winning of other political party (Klumpp, Mialon, & Williams, 2019). If the ex-convicts were allowed to vote the political atmosphere would be different from what it is now.

The article by Hirschfield and Piquero, suggest the approaches that can help lessen the humiliation faced by those who have served in prison. A phone survey of over 2,000 individuals was conducted which shows that White, Non-Hispanics, Southern residents and conservatives has significantly more negative impression of ex-convicts. The research also revealed that if persona acquittance have lenient attitude towards the past offenders but when it comes to the courtroom hearings, the confidence tends to roughen the attitudes. The communities have developed strong negative of ex-convicts and this hugely impacts the ex-convict psychology and financially (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010).

Usually people who are released from the correctional facilities get almost no facilities and resources to readjust into the society. They also face hatred and distrust from the community, due to which ex-convicts face difficulties maintaining a lifestyle and meet daily needs. (Candalyn B. Rade, Sarah L. Desmarais, & Roger E. Mitchell, 2016).

Mosley conducted a research about the process of decision making when it comes to hiring someone with criminal record. The article on this research demonstrate the point of view of mangers clearly. The decision of hiring manager can depend on multiple factors including race or ethnic background of the criminal, intensity and type of offense, and duration of imprisonment. The conclusion of this research draw attention to the role of media in building the image of felons in front of whole society. The author has provided better approaches for the legislature and the hiring managers, for hiring the ex-convicts. It is seen that the hiring managers are biased on the opinion that people charge with crime must not be part of their companies. To cater this issue, some of the states of US has excluded the question about conviction from the job application forms. If more such laws are regulated, a positivity will emerge in the society which will reduce the re-offense, provide them better facilities and improve the economy (Mosley, 2019).

The article by Chiricos presented a comprehensive view of the label attached to a convicted person. The convicted felon even after hen he has served his/her punishment has to face a lot after release. They are deprived of the right to vote, own a weapon, to be appointed in a public office, and to serve on jury. In addition to this, many states do not provide student loans, and job for state-licensed positions or companies to the ex-convicts. The article presented an example of a better approach in Florida. The judge in Florida can rule “withholding adjudication” of guilt for convicts who are on probation. In this way, the ex-convict can retain the right to vote. Moreover, during filling out job application they have privilege to omit the felony conviction. The media is a source of placing the label of conviction over a felon (Chiricos, Barrick, Bales, & Bontrager, 2007). According to the Labeling theory in criminology,  formally labeled as an offender which means being convicted and incarc-erated, leads to denouncing attitudes, abandoning from conservative and traditional society, and adapt a aberrant personality. (Edward, 1974)

In the starting era of media and film, the industry was controlled entirely by the Whites and they presented the image of Black according to their own likeness. It was hard for African Americans to present their original beliefs, sentiments and stories.(Kulaszewicz, n.d.)

To summarize, it is evident from past researches that the media influences the image of a felon in a society and it becomes intense in case of people of color.

**Methodology**

 The aim of this paper is to find out how media represents the image of those convicted. The audience most affected by the media today are university students and young professionals. Thus, the qualitative research, apart from the literature review, is conducted to analyze the effects from direct source. Interviews are generally considered the best way to conduct the qualitative research. It helps examine the behavior, response and opinions of the subject with minimum probability of error in interpretation.

So, for this research detailed and precise questions were asked to find out about the impact media on lives of felons.

To determine the perspective of people, interviews at a local university were conducted. A total of 40 people categorized on basis of gender, age and race were part of research. The views of every interviewee are analyzed keeping these categories in view.

Out of 40, 25 were men and rest were women of an estimated age groups of 23 to 32. 13 of them, belonged to diverse background and minority. 78 percent stated that media was significant part of their lives while 60 percent of total consider media as reliable resources.

All interviewees were asked similar set of questions which included how long they indulge in media sources daily, do they believe what they read or hear, do they learn about criminal activities through media and lastly about general image of a felon in their minds.

**Discussion**

 From the interviews, one thing was clear that media is used commonly, and it affects the mindsets immensely. 78 percent of the total stated that they use media sources specifically to gain knowledge on a recent topics or highlighted news. This finding established the outcome that media does play huge role in providing information and shaping opinions of the public. However, according to 40 percent, the reports and analysis conveyed on media sources are not entirely accurate. If the responses of interview are analyzed considering gender, 70 percent of the men stated that they learn mostly about crime through media sources. On the other hand, 95 percent of women said that media is only source, from which they learn about crime stories. Hence majority of people use media to know about current situations.

 13 interviews belonged to races other than white. According to 83 percent of the people of color stated that image of people of color portrayed by the media sources is different from reality. However, majority of white and people from other races, confirmed that color of people in their surrounding are usually targeted more than white people. They also state that people who were convicted, were usually transformed after serving in prison, unlike depiction in media sources.

 16 people were related to someone with criminal background. They told that people who were convicted faced numerous difficulties in life after being released from prison or rehabilitation centers. The number of white people who got job after being convicted was as twice as that of people from other races. Mostly including white people, were of the opinion that people of color struggle more. 85 percent of them, agreed on the opinion that this racial discrimination is caused by the image as portrayed by media.

# Conclusion

The response found from the interview is in line with the literature review obtained from the past researches.—of the interviewees has assumed that the people of color are more indulged in the criminal activities. – of them provided stats as the base of their belief while rest were of this opinion because they heard this in community or through media channels.

It is a common fact that public familiarity with justice and crime system is mainly derivative from multiple media sources. This paper examined the stimulus of media usage on image of felon, fear of working with them, attitudes and perception about biasness of justice system. African-Americans are more likely to give poor ratings of police effectiveness.

The impact of media is proven strong over the believes of the communities. In conclusion, media is marked as basic instrument in creating a negative image of a felon in minds of public. Moreover, further research should be carried out to determine how the negative influence of media over a felon can be changed to a positive approach to readjust them into society.

**Interview** **Questions**:

1. How long do you indulge in media sources every day?
2. Do you believe that what is conveyed through media sources is true?
3. Name sources from which you learn about crime and justice system.
4. What is the image of a felon as portrayed by media?
5. Do ex-convicts suffer after being release from prison? If yes, is race the reason some people suffer more?

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