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Trial by Media and the Spectacularization of Justice: A Comparative Examination of Jury Influence and Mediated Public Opinion Models in the United States and Turkey

Medyatik Yargılama ve Adaletin Seyirleşmesi: Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile Türkiye Bağlamlarında Jüri Etkisi ve Medyatik Kamuoyu Modellerinin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi

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Abstract

This study investigates the phenomenon of “trial by media,” comparatively analyzing its manifestations in the United States and Turkey, and offering original insights at the intersection of communication, law, and media ethics. The scope of the research is to evaluate the visibility of justice within a framework of historical continuity, extending from Ottoman practices such as şuhûdü’l-hâl (court witnesses) and teşhir (public shaming) to modern press, television, and digital platforms. The central objective is to examine how media construct representations of perpetrators, victims, and crime, and how

Öz

Bu çalışma, “medyatik yargılama (trial by media)” olgusunu Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Türkiye bağlamlarında karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemekte ve iletişim, hukuk ile medya etiği kesişiminde özgün katkılar sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışmanın kapsamı, adaletin kamusal görünürlüğünü tarihsel bir süreklilik içinde değerlendirmektir. Bu bağlamda Osmanlı döneminde uygulanan şuhûdü’l-hâl ve teşhir gibi adaletin seyirlik nitelik taşıyan pratiklerinden başlayarak modern basın, televizyon ve dijital platformlara kadar uzanan geniş bir yelpaze ele alınmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı, medyanın

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these representations shape the perception of judicial legitimacy. Rather than indicting the press, the study explores how representational strategies transform social understandings of legal processes and how the legitimacy of justice is constructed through public debate. Methodologically, the research employs qualitative discourse analysis, drawing on newspaper headlines, television broadcasts, and social media content. The findings indicate that in the United States, media can directly influence jury deliberations (jury influence model), whereas in Turkey, mediated publics exert symbolic pressure on judicial institutions (mediated public opinion model). The study underscores the historical continuity of justice-as-spectacle and offers original interdisciplinary contributions.

Keywords: Communication, Media and Law, Trial by Media, Public Opinion and Legitimacy, Justice-as-Spectacle

fail, mağdur ve suç olgularını hangi temsil stratejileriyle inşa ettiğini ve bu temsillerin yargı süreçlerinin toplumsal meşruiyeti üzerindeki etkilerini analiz etmektir. Çalışma, basını suçlamak yerine, medyanın temsil stratejilerinin yargısal süreçlerin toplumsal algısını nasıl dönüştürdüğünü ve adaletin meşruiyetinin hangi kamusal tartışmalar aracılığıyla inşa edildiğini incelemektedir. Bu yönüyle, Anglo-Amerikan literatürde ağırlıklı olarak incelenen “medyatik yargılama” tartışmalarına Türkiye örneğini dâhil ederek hem kavramsal hem de kuramsal düzeyde yeni açılımlar sunmaktadır. Yöntem olarak nitel söylem analizi benimsenmiş; gazete manşetleri, televizyon yayınları ve sosyal medya içerikleri karşılaştırmalı biçimde değerlendirilmiştir. Bulgular, ABD’de medyanın jüri kararlarını doğrudan etkileyebildiğini (jury influence model), Türkiye’de ise kamuoyunun sembolik tepkileri aracılığıyla yargı kurumları üzerinde dolaylı baskı oluşturduğunu (mediated public opinion model) açığa çıkarmaktadır. Çalışma, adaletin seyir olarak inşasının tarihsel sürekliliğini vurgulamakta ve disiplinlerarası düzeyde özgün katkılar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İletişim, Medya ve Hukuk, Medyatik Yargılama, Kamuoyu ve Meşruiyet, Adaletin Seyirleşmesi

Introduction

The interplay between media and judicial processes has long been a subject of critical inquiry, predating the rise of television and digital platforms. In its most general sense, *trial by media* refers to the dramatization of legal proceedings through mass communication, whereby representations of crime and justice are circulated in ways that influence public perception and, in certain instances, judicial outcomes. Greer and McLaughlin (2012, p. 398) define the phenomenon as the dramatization of trials that produces public outrage and exerts pressure on the courts. In this regard, media cannot be considered neutral conveyors of information; rather, they operate as cultural institutions that actively shape the legitimacy of justice (Robson, 2019).

The forms of trial by media have evolved alongside the history of mass communication. Nineteenth-century newspapers established the earliest patterns of sensational coverage, embedding criminal cases into serialized narratives consumed as both news and entertainment (Surette, 2015). In the United States, the penny press turned trials into popular stories of morality, while in Europe the Dreyfus Affair (1894–1906) demonstrated how serialized reporting could polarize entire societies for decades. The Sacco and Vanzetti case (1921–1927) exemplified the capacity of the press to transform legal proceedings into global debates about justice, ideology, and fairness. With the advent of radio, trials became collective listening events, dramatizing justice through voice and immediacy. Television in the mid-twentieth century further amplified these dynamics: the O.J. Simpson trial in 1995 epitomized the spectacle of justice, as continuous live broadcasts blurred the line between courtroom procedure and entertainment, raising concerns about juror impartiality and judicial independence (Lind, 1996). Later cases, such as the Casey Anthony trial (2011) and the Harvey Weinstein trial (2020), illustrated how polarized narratives of culpability and accountability could reshape public discourse on justice in profound ways (Bates, 2021).

Turkey displays a parallel yet distinctive trajectory. Long before the emergence of television, newspapers played a central role in shaping public reactions to crime. In the late Ottoman period, the murder of Aliye in the 1880s and the *Şişli murder* of 1913 dominated the front pages, framed in discourses of morality, honor, and social order. Similarly, the *Bebek murder* of the 1910s exemplified how women perpetrators were represented as symbols of social decline, illustrating the press's capacity to mobilize outrage beyond the courtroom. With the establishment of the Republic, the *Midilli Vapuru* murder of 1929 was followed daily in the press, transforming a singular crime into a nationwide story. By the 1950s, the so-called *Çilekçi Killer*, accused of child murders, was depicted as a "monster," inflaming collective fear and intensifying demands for punitive justice (Arık, 2011; Çaplı, 2002). These cases reveal that, much like in the United States and Europe, trial by media in Turkey originated in print culture and developed as a recurring mode of public engagement with justice.

In the twenty-first century, the modality of trial by media has assumed heightened intensity in conjunction with the expansion of television broadcasting and the consolidation of digitally networked communication environments. A cluster of highly visible criminal cases, recurrently circulating within media discourse and public deliberation, renders this transformation analytically observable. The murder of Münevver Karabulut in 2009 elicited sustained media

attention, particularly in narrative constructions emphasizing the suspect's fugitive status, a discursive emphasis that coincided with intensified public affect and elevated juridical expectations. The femicide of Özgecan Aslan in 2015 subsequently acquired a paradigmatic position within media representations of gender-based violence, as extensive coverage aligned with broader demands for institutional accountability and legal reform. More recent cases, including the murder of university student Pınar Gültekin in 2020 and the killing of architect Başak Cengiz in 2021, were persistently articulated in relation to public debates concerning sentencing practices and judicial leniency. Likewise, the death of Aleyna Çakır (Sema Esen) in 2020, preceded by the circulation of visual materials documenting domestic violence, rendered visible the significance of pretrial publicity in shaping public interpretations of culpability. The trial of Kadir Şeker in the same year further exemplifies these dynamics, as competing media framings alternately situated the defendant within narratives of moral heroism and criminal transgression. Situated within a shared analytical frame, these emblematic cases indicate that, even in the absence of jury trials, Turkish media may exert an indirect yet structurally consequential influence on judicial processes by organizing moral evaluation, sustaining symbolic visibility, and mobilizing collective sentiment within the public sphere.

Theoretically, trial by media has been conceptualized as a reconfigured extension of the public sphere, increasingly conditioned by commercial imperatives, affective economies, and sensational regimes of representation (Habermas, 1991). Within this analytical horizon, agenda-setting theory emphasizes the structuring function of sustained media salience in the formation of public interpretations of justice, privileging selected narratives while relegating others to zones of marginal visibility (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Cohen's (1972) formulation of moral panic further clarifies the discursive constitution of specific actors or events as symbolic threats to social order, a pattern historically exemplified by the portrayal of figures such as the Çilekçi Killer as cultural "folk devils." In more recent contexts, comparable configurations have been identified in scholarly discussions of media representations of femicide in Turkey; intensified visibility and emotively charged framing correlate with the normalization of punitive orientations within public discourse on justice. Drawing on these convergent theoretical trajectories, the present study conceptualizes trial by media as a relational and mediated configuration, situating media narratives, public affect, and judicial processes within a mutually constitutive analytical field. This theoretical positioning establishes the analytical premises for the articulation of a *Mediated Public Opinion Model*, employed to examine the progressive constitution, circulation, and stabilization of public judgment in contemporary media-saturated judicial environments.

The present study advances a comparative interrogation of trial by media across two differentiated legal and cultural formations, the United States and Turkey, foregrounding the relational articulation of media narratives, public opinion, and judicial processes. Existing scholarship has produced a substantial and theoretically diversified corpus on the American context (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012; Surette, 2015); analytically sustained engagements with the Turkish context remain comparatively circumscribed, especially inquiries integrating longue durée perspectives with contemporary media configurations. To address this asymmetry, the study curates a corpus of historically and socially salient criminal cases from both contexts, delimited according to criteria of sustained media visibility and enduring public resonance across

distinct temporal junctures. The analytical scope encompasses emblematic cases from the United States, including Sacco and Vanzetti, O.J. Simpson, Casey Anthony, and Harvey Weinstein, alongside an extensive constellation of influential cases from Turkey, extending from late Ottoman precedents to contemporary incidents, among them the Aliye, Şişli, Bebek, and Midilli Vapuru murders, the Çilekçi Killer, and the cases of Münevver Karabulut, Özgecan Aslan, Pınar Gültekin, Başak Cengiz, Aleyna Çakır, and Kadir Şeker. These cases are treated not as discrete or exceptional occurrences but as nodal sites of mediated public judgment, enabling the discernment of recurrent configurations in tandem with contextually specific divergences in the public negotiation of justice. Anchored in the theoretical orientation delineated above, the comparative analysis contributes to a more finely grained conceptualization of trial by media in Turkey and situates this configuration within a broader transnational genealogy of mediated justice, deploying the *Mediated Public Opinion Model* as its central analytical lens.

Background of the Study

The entanglement of law, media, and public opinion exceeds the temporal horizons of late modernity and eludes interpretation as a contingent derivative of contemporary mass communication technologies; instead, it delineates a *longue durée* across which justice has persistently operated as a public formation, generating authority and legitimacy through sustained exposure to collective observation, interpretive labor, and evaluative judgment. Across heterogeneous historical constellations, juridical practices have repeatedly been orchestrated before audiences, inscribed within narrative and symbolic registers, and embedded in shared regimes of moral valuation, thereby confirming the constitutive role of publicity within the architecture of justice itself. Justice, accordingly, has seldom subsisted as a self-enclosed domain governed exclusively by juridical expertise; its social efficacy has been continuously mediated, authorized, and recalibrated by visibility, recognition, and the evaluative gaze of the community, whether materially assembled in civic spaces or discursively constituted across mediated circuits of circulation. The presence of audiences has historically facilitated the stabilization of legal authority by anchoring judicial acts within collectively intelligible matrices of meaning, configuring the social legibility of guilt, innocence, punishment, and legitimacy. Within this historical continuum, the contemporary designation *trial by media* names the most recent reconfiguration of a deeply sedimented cultural logic anchored in the enduring expectation that justice must be enacted under conditions of public visibility and symbolic ratification. Distinctive to modern iterations of this logic emerges the reorganization, intensification, and acceleration of publicity under mass and digital mediation, processes amplifying reach, recalibrating affective economies, and restructuring long-standing practices of public judgment. Conceived in these terms, *trial by media* coheres as a historically continuous mode of public engagement with justice, conjoining ancient practices of civic adjudication, ritualized punishment, and communal witnessing with contemporary regimes of mediated circulation, thereby furnishing the conceptual groundwork for situating modern media trials within an extended genealogy of public justice.

Antiquity: Public Justice as Performance

In ancient Athens, juridical adjudication materialized within a radically public assemblage, integrating collective presence into the constitutive architecture of legal judgment itself. Large citizen juries, frequently extending into the hundreds, instantiated a juridical rationality grounded

in the co-imbrication of justice and civic participation, thereby relocating legal legitimacy from specialized expertise to the assembled corporeality of the polis (Cohen, 1995; Dyck, 2017; Lanni, 2013). Litigation unfolded as a performative dispositif in which rhetorical address, narrative orchestration, and affective modulation operated as generative forces of judgment alongside evidentiary demonstration, conferring upon persuasion the status of a decisive juridical instrument. The trial of Socrates in 399 BCE condenses this configuration with exemplary intensity, functioning simultaneously as a procedural adjudication and a civic dramaturgy that exposed irreconcilable tensions among philosophical dissent, political sovereignty, and moral normativity. An analogous performative economy organized juridical practice in the Roman Republic, with trials convening in the forum amid public oratory and gladiatorial display, situating legal judgment within a shared regime of spectacle and visibility. Under these conditions, juridical authority accrued through exposure to collective witnessing and evaluative participation, establishing justice in antiquity as an evental formation deriving efficacy from inscription within the gaze, affect, and judgment of the assembled populace (Flower, 2010).

Medieval Europe: Justice as Spectacle

In medieval Europe, juridical authority materialized within an overtly theatrical dispositif, positioning justice as a public event embedded in the spatial, temporal, and affective textures of communal life. Executions and corporal punishments assumed the status of ritualized performances, with scaffolds erected in marketplaces and town squares, thereby converting everyday civic spaces into sites of juridical inscription and symbolic power. Public engagement exceeded the parameters of spectatorship, encompassing vocal intervention, collective gesturing, prayer, mockery, and affective attunement, thus integrating communal response into the operative logic of punishment itself (Bennett, 2017; Foucault, 1995; Peters, 1991; Spierenburg, 1984). This performative regime acquired further consolidation via itinerant assize courts circulating across towns and regions, embedding juridical authority within localized encounters and affirming law as a visible, audible, and experientially apprehensible force. The regularity and density of communal attendance at punitive events attest to a deeply sedimented cultural orientation toward witnessing justice, an orientation rendering execution days comparable to civic festivals in their capacity to gather, synchronize, and regulate collective affect. Against this performative economy, juridical legitimacy accrued from repetition, spectacle, and shared exposure, situating medieval justice as an evental formation sustained by public visibility, affective participation, and the communal production of meaning.

The Ottoman Empire: Open Courts and Public Punishments

The Ottoman legal order articulated a juridical rationality predicated upon visibility and collective witnessing, embedding adjudicative practice within the quotidian textures of communal life despite its anchorage in Islamic jurisprudence. Kadı courts convened as open forums, situating legal deliberation within immediate communal presence and thereby incorporating publicity into the constitutive conditions of adjudication itself. A pivotal mechanism within this juridical formation materialized in the institution of *şubûdü'l-hâl*, local notables entrusted with the formal witnessing of judicial procedure, whose attestations authorized procedural validity and approximated a proto-jury function within the Ottoman legal imaginary (Jennings, 1978). Their participation generated an internalized audience operating from within

the judicial process, consolidating collective observation as an indispensable dimension of juridical authority. Punitive practice unfolded within a parallel economy of performativity calibrated for public legibility and affective impact. Executions in Istanbul transpired in symbolically saturated sites such as At Meydanı (the Hippodrome) and the thresholds of the imperial palace, with severed heads affixed to city walls and gates as corporeal inscriptions of sovereign order and visible deterrence (Zarinebaf, 2010). Minor transgressions likewise entered this regime of visibility via *teşhir*, a ritualized circulation of offenders through urban space accompanied by textual proclamations of culpability, transforming punishment into a mobile spectacle of moral pedagogy (Imber, 2002). Against this juridical–spectacular assemblage, justice within the Ottoman context cohered as a dual modality of procedure and performance, deriving legitimacy from enactment under sustained communal gaze, recognition, and evaluative participation.

Early Modern Print Culture: Mediated Trials

The consolidation of print culture across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries effected a decisive reorganization of juridical publicity, transposing trials from temporally bounded events into serialized textual formations amenable to repetition, accumulation, and circulation. Pamphlets, broadsides, and early newspapers functioned as technologies of mediation that reconstituted judicial proceedings as reproducible discursive objects, integrating law into emergent economies of print consumption and collective interpretation (Shoemaker, 2008; Wiener, 2004). In the English context, the systematic publication of the *Old Bailey Proceedings* institutionalized this transformation by stabilizing felony trials within a durable textual archive, thereby consolidating a regime of judgment predicated upon iterative exposure, comparative reading, and interpretive sedimentation, a condition conceptualized by scholars as “convicted public opinion” (Shoemaker, 2008; Wiener, 2004). Such textual accounts exceeded informational transmission, operating instead as moralizing dispositifs that organized defendants within polarized narrative economies of culpability and innocence, embedding juridical decision-making within expansive discursive matrices of sin, redemption, and social normativity. A parallel dynamic manifested in France during the Dreyfus Affair (1894–1906), an episode that laid bare the press’s enhanced capacity to disaggregate social consensus, activate antagonistic interpretive communities, and elevate a singular legal case into a sustained national and transnational spectacle of political, moral, and epistemic contestation (Bredin, 1986). Under this print-mediated regime, justice cohered as a discursive formation sustained by circulation, repetition, and hermeneutic struggle, anticipating later configurations of trial by media structured around broadcast and digital modalities of mass communication.

Nineteenth-Century Sensationalism: The Rise of the Popular Press

The nineteenth century precipitated the institutional consolidation of sensational journalism as a dominant modality of public mediation, a transformation most acutely articulated in the United States with the ascendance of the penny press. Within this rapidly expanding media ecology, crime reporting assumed a structuring function, reconstituting juridical events as serialized narrative complexes oriented toward repetition, affective intensification, and mass circulation (Surette, 2015). Legal proceedings thereby entered public life less as discrete adjudicative moments than as sustained narrative sequences, maintained via headlines,

illustrations, and episodic disclosure. The trial of Lizzie Borden in 1893 exemplifies this regime of representation, as depictions of female criminality were discursively configured within visual and textual economies that amplified ambiguity, transgression, and moral unease (Kaplan, 1993). In the European context, the Jack the Ripper murders of 1888 similarly exposed the popular press's capacity to activate and stabilize moral panic, discursively constituting perpetrators as emblematic "folk devils" and inscribing criminal violence into expansive imaginaries of urban fear and social disintegration (Cohen, 1972). Against this sensorially intensified and narratively saturated media environment, sensational journalism operated as a formative apparatus of public judgment, organizing interpretive frameworks, affective investments, and evaluative orientations. The convergence of these dynamics confirms that the cultural formation subsequently designated as *trial by media* attained institutional coherence and symbolic authority well before the advent of broadcast technologies.

Twentieth-Century Broadcasting: Radio and Television

The emergence of broadcast media inaugurated a profound reconfiguration of juridical publicity, recalibrating the temporal, affective, and perceptual coordinates within which justice entered public experience. Early twentieth-century radio instituted auditory regimes of legal mediation, assembling what may be conceptualized as "listening publics," collectivities synchronized by shared temporal exposure to dramatized judicial narratives and by the affective immediacy of acoustic transmission (Douglas, 1999). This auditory formation reoriented public engagement toward simultaneity, intimacy, and narrative cadence, situating juridical events within a shared horizon of collective attention. The subsequent consolidation of television intensified this transformation, transposing judicial proceedings into visual regimes of spectacle and converting courtrooms into calibrated media stages structured for continuous observation. The O.J. Simpson trial of 1995 condensed this televisual formation with paradigmatic force, as uninterrupted live broadcasting reorganized juridical temporality, displaced interpretive authority from legal institutions toward media publics, and generated sustained anxieties concerning procedural integrity and juror impartiality (Lind, 1996). Subsequent cases, including the trials of Casey Anthony in 2011 and Harvey Weinstein in 2020, further sedimented the capacity of broadcast media to polarize public judgment, synchronize affective alignments, and articulate juridical proceedings within expansive moral and political constellations such as #MeToo (Bates, 2021). At this juncture, justice cohered as a densely mediated assemblage in legal procedure, visual spectacle, and collective affect entered into recursive articulation, marking a decisive intensification in the historical trajectory of *trial by media*.

Turkey: From Print Sensationalism to Contemporary Femicide Cases

Turkey articulated a parallel yet contextually differentiated trajectory in the historical constitution of mediated justice, marked by the gradual consolidation of sensationalist representation across successive media regimes. During the late Ottoman and early Republican periods, newspapers assumed a formative role in dramatizing criminal cases such as the Aliye murder of the 1880s, the Şişli murder of 1913, and the Bebek murder of the 1910s, configuring these events within discursive matrices of morality, honor, and social order. This representational regime intensified in the interwar and postwar periods, as cases such as the Midilli Vapuru murder of 1929 and the figure known as the Çilekçi Killer during the 1950s mobilized metaphors of

monstrosity and deviance, synchronizing collective fear and punitive affect within the public imagination (Arık, 2011; Çaplı, 2002). The transition into the twenty-first century introduced a pronounced acceleration of these dynamics, with high-profile cases including the murder of Münevver Karabulut in 2009, the femicide of Özgecan Aslan in 2015, and the killings of Pınar Gültekin in 2020 and Başak Cengiz in 2021 circulating as densely mediated cultural dramas across television and digitally networked platforms. In such instances, juridical proceedings extended beyond institutional arenas into expansive circuits of affective circulation, moral evaluation, and public contestation, recalibrating the boundaries between legal process and cultural narrative. The death of Aleyna Çakır in 2020 and the trial of Kadir Şeker in the same year further accentuated this transformation, as media narratives generated polarized interpretive frames positioning defendants alternately within registers of heroism and criminal transgression. Against this evolving media ecology, contemporary Turkey manifests a juridical–mediatic formation; justice coheres as a site of sustained public struggle, structured by visibility, affective alignment, and the recursive production of moral judgment.

Digital Age: The Globalization of Trial by Media

Digital platforms have reconstituted the conditions of mediated justice, intensifying immediacy, expanding scale, and impregnating juridical discourse with affect under regimes of pervasive connectivity. Hashtag activism exemplified by campaigns such as #JusticeForPinar and #KadınCinayetleriDurdurulsun has functioned as an infrastructural vector of transnational circulation, projecting cases originating in Turkey into global regimes of visibility and articulating localized femicides alongside expansive discourses of gendered violence, accountability, and human rights. Comparable dynamics have cohered across the United States and Europe, as high profile trials have transcended institutional legal arenas and entered digitally mediated publics organized around platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, exacerbating interpretive antagonism, accelerating judgment, and entrenching affective polarization (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012; Goodman, 2025). Within this algorithmically orchestrated media ecology, juridical events persist as continuously circulating discursive formations subjected to iterative commentary, rapid recontextualization, and collective moral arbitration, a process that reorders the temporalities and spatialities of public judgment. Scholarship has designated this condition a “24/7 mediasphere,” a regime characterized by uninterrupted visibility, compressed deliberation, and sustained outrage, a configuration that destabilizes conventional distinctions among legal procedure, media representation, and public affect (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). Against this horizon, the digital age signifies an amplification of antecedent regimes of mediated justice, extending the *longue durée* of trial by media into a globalized formation intensified by algorithmic governance, transplatform circulation, and affective synchronization.

Toward a Comparative Framework

This *longue durée*, extending from Athenian jury assemblies and Roman forums to medieval scaffolds, Ottoman *kadı* courts, early modern pamphlet cultures, and twenty-first-century hashtag publics, configures trial by media as the most recent articulation of a historically persistent cultural formation anchored in the public staging, circulation, and legitimation of justice. Across successive juridical and medial regimes, authority has coalesced in relation to visibility, collective affect, and symbolic economies generated by public judgment, maintaining

continuity amid far-reaching transformations in legal procedure and communicative infrastructure. The present study positions the United States and Turkey within this extended historical field and deploys a comparative analytic that privileges divergence in institutional design alongside convergence in modalities of mediated judgment. Distinct legal architectures, including jury-centered adjudication in the United States and jury-less yet publicly permeable judicial practice in Turkey, engender differentiated configurations of mediated justice while reproducing homologous logics of publicity, moral evaluation, and collective arbitration. By articulating structural divergences in conjunction with shared cultural substrates, the comparative framework yields an integrated account of trial by media as a transhistorical phenomenon and situates contemporary mediated justice at the intersection of legal form, media regime, and the enduring authority of the public gaze.

Aim and Method

This study executes a comprehensive rearticulation of trial by media as a historically recursive communicative formation traversing legal traditions and temporal regimes, thereby dislodging its habitual confinement to contemporary television or digital cultures. Dominant strands of scholarship have gravitated toward late twentieth-century Anglo-American contexts, routinely canonizing cases such as the O.J. Simpson trial as paradigmatic loci for theorizing mediated justice (Lind, 1996; Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). Although these interventions have substantially enriched understandings of juridical mediatization, their analytic horizons have remained circumscribed by temporal proximity and cultural specificity, leaving undertheorized both the *longue durée* of public adjudication and the differentiated trajectories of non-Western legal formations. By synthesizing historical depth with cross-cultural differentiation, the present study recalibrates the analytical coordinates of trial by media, situating the phenomenon within an expanded theoretical field attentive to the persistent co-constitution of justice, publicity, and collective judgment.

The central analytical postulate elaborated in this article conceptualizes trial by media as the contemporary inflection of a deeply sedimented cultural logic according to which juridical legitimacy emerges from sustained public visibility and collective reception in conjunction with institutional adjudication. Media influence, within this formulation, operates as an immanent structuring force of justice conceived as spectacle, organizing regimes of perception, moral evaluation, and expectation surrounding legal process. Divergent institutional architectures generate differentiated yet homologous modalities of this influence: jury-centered adjudication in the United States intensifies direct vectors of mediated intervention, whereas jury-less yet publicly permeable judicial practice in Turkey consolidates indirect but culturally efficacious formations of mediated public opinion articulated across print, broadcast, and digital narrative environments. This comparative articulation furnishes a structural account of media influence as a constitutive and variable dimension of modern justice systems, modulated by legal form, media regime, and historically sedimented cultures of publicity.

Analytical Orientation and Scope

The analytical orientation of this study anchors itself in an integrated framework conjoining historical stratification, comparative institutional analysis, and critical media theory in order to

apprehend trial by media as a recurrent and historically sedimented formation of public adjudication. Departing from approaches that circumscribe mediated justice within contemporary media ecologies, the analysis situates the phenomenon within an expansive *longue durée* encompassing ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern legal cultures. Such temporal deepening renders justice intelligible as a publicly staged practice, with authority and legitimacy accruing via visibility, symbolic circulation, and collective evaluation across successive communicative regimes. Within this horizon, media function as constitutive sites of meaning production organizing regimes of moral interpretation and public judgment. Framing processes assume particular analytical salience, given their capacity to configure defendants, victims, and judicial institutions within polarized moral economies calibrating perceptions of culpability, innocence, authority, and legitimacy (Hall, 1997; Entman, 1993). Media narratives thus operate as discursive formations actively participating in the performative constitution of justice as a communicative practice, exceeding any auxiliary or reflective role in relation to legal procedure.

The scope of the study further unfolds along a comparative analytic axis positioning the United States and Turkey as historically differentiated yet structurally commensurable cases within the global genealogy of mediated justice. Divergent institutional architectures furnish a critical vantage for examining variable modalities of media influence. Jury-centered adjudication in the United States intensifies direct vectors of mediated intervention, heightening the permeability of juridical decision-making to public visibility and collective expectation. By contrast, jury-less yet publicly permeable judicial practice in Turkey consolidates indirect but culturally efficacious formations of mediated public opinion articulated across print, broadcast, and digitally networked narratives (Çaplı, 2002; Arık, 2011). Emblematic legal cases from both contexts enter the analysis as culturally resonant nodal sites embedded within these media regimes, enabling the discernment of recurrent representational logics alongside historically specific articulations of mediated justice. The analytical scope further extends to the differentiated construction of gendered violence within Turkish media discourse alongside parallel formations surrounding race, celebrity, and class in the United States, situating these narratives within transnational moral economies of visibility and judgment. Finally, the study traces the transformation of mediated justice across successive media regimes from print culture to broadcast media and subsequently to digitally networked platforms, attending to reconfigurations of temporality, scale, and affective intensity associated with algorithmically structured circulation and online moral mobilization. Through this dual analytical articulation, the framework advances a transhistorical and cross-cultural account of trial by media, situating mediated justice within a comprehensive understanding of law as a communicative performance structured by publicity, affective alignment, and collective judgment.

Method

Research Design

The study structures itself around a comparative historical case study design articulated in conjunction with qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis, thereby enabling an examination of trial by media as a historically sedimented and culturally differentiated communicative formation. Comparative historical analysis furnishes the epistemic and methodological architecture required for tracing structural continuities and contextual

divergences across distinct temporal, legal, and cultural formations, facilitating a systematic interrogation of mediated justice as it materializes within heterogeneous institutional arrangements and media regimes (Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003). Within this design, comparison operates along explicitly delineated analytical dimensions, including legal structure, dominant media ecology, and modes of public engagement with justice, permitting a calibrated juxtaposition of jury-centered adjudication in the United States and jury-less yet publicly permeable judicial practice in Turkey. The qualitative orientation of the research derives from the recognition that trial by media eludes capture via quantifiable indicators and instead unfolds within narrative configurations, framing strategies, and discursive formations organizing moral evaluation, public judgment, and perceptions of juridical legitimacy. Qualitative content analysis supports the systematic identification of recurrent frames and representational regularities across media texts; critical discourse analysis enables an interpretive interrogation of cultural codes, power relations, and ideological presuppositions embedded within these narratives, particularly in relation to authority, gender, and institutional credibility (Fairclough, 1995; Krippendorff, 2018). The combined deployment of these qualitative approaches permits a conceptualization of mediated justice as a communicative and performative process constituted via language, symbolism, and affect, rather than as an aggregation of discrete media outputs or audience reactions.

Case Selection

Case selection proceeds within a rigorously delimited analytical strategy governed by two mutually reinforcing criteria, media salience and cultural resonance, each operationalized as an indicator of mediated justice. Media salience designates sustained, cross-platform visibility manifested through prolonged temporal circulation, intermedial repetition, and narrative persistence across print, broadcast, and digitally networked media environments. Cultural resonance designates the capacity of a legal case to crystallize public debate, mobilize collective affect, and acquire symbolic traction within shared moral economies of judgment. Guided by these criteria, the study constructs a purposive corpus of emblematic cases from the United States, encompassing Sacco and Vanzetti (1921–1927), Lizzie Borden (1893), O.J. Simpson (1995), Casey Anthony (2011), and Harvey Weinstein (2020), each indexing a distinct configuration of mediated justice across successive media ecologies spanning print sensationalism, televisual spectacle, and digitally inflected public mobilization. A parallel corpus from Turkey comprises the Aliye murder of the 1880s, the Şişli murder of 1913, the Bebek murder of the 1910s, the Midilli Vapuru murder of 1929, the figure designated as the Çilekçi Killer during the 1950s, and contemporary cases including Münevver Karabulut (2009), Özgecan Aslan (2015), Pınar Gültekin (2020), Başak Cengiz (2021), Aleyna Çakır (2020), and Kadir Şeker (2020). This corpus configuration enables a systematic examination of trial by media across jury-centered and jury-less legal formations, facilitating the identification of differentiated yet structurally commensurable modalities of media influence and mediated public judgment. The selected cases collectively constitute an analytically illustrative constellation calibrated to capture the most salient historical, cultural, and medial articulations of trial by media across the *longue durée*.

Data Collection

Data collection unfolds within a stratified, diachronic corpus construction strategy calibrated to capture the mediation of justice across successive historical layers and media regimes. Pre-modern and Ottoman materials enter the analytical field via court registers (*ser'iyye sicilleri*), archival documentation, and authoritative historiographical scholarship, facilitating access to juridical practices and regimes of public visibility preceding the consolidation of mass media cultures (Jennings, 1978; Zarinebaf, 2010). Sources from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries derive from pamphlets, broadsides, and newspaper archives, registering the expansion of print mediation and the serialization of legal events within early modern publics (Shoemaker, 2008; Wiener, 2004). Twentieth- and twenty-first-century materials extend the corpus into broadcast and post-broadcast environments, drawing upon digitized newspapers, television archives, and broadcast transcripts in order to trace the visual and auditory intensification of mediated trials. The digital era contributes an additional stratum composed of social media campaigns, hashtag-based mobilizations, and online commentaries accessed via curated digital archives and research repositories, enabling an examination of participatory publics and algorithmically structured circulation. This multi-layered corpus configuration sustains a historically grounded analytical perspective attentive to transformations in scale, temporality, and affective intensity across media regimes, thereby supporting an integrated examination of trial by media as a communicative and performative formation.

Analytical Procedures

The analytical procedures of the study unfold across three mutually constitutive stages calibrated to translate theoretical premises into a rigorously structured empirical examination. The first stage activates a framing-analytical orientation derived from Entman's model, directing systematic attention to recurrent frames organizing problem definition, responsibility attribution, and moral evaluation within media representations (Entman, 1993). Media materials undergo qualitative coding guided by analytically specified frame categories, including configurations such as the monstrous perpetrator, the tragic victim, the heroic defender, and institutional failure, each operating as a discursive device structuring mediated judgment. The second stage advances a critical discourse analytical orientation informed by cultural studies and critical linguistics, foregrounding the inscription of broader cultural codes, power relations, and ideological presuppositions within media discourse, with particular emphasis on gender, class, authority, and institutional legitimacy (Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 1997). This stage interrogates discursive regularities, rhetorical patterns, and symbolic repertoires stabilizing normative interpretations of justice across media texts. The third stage consolidates findings within a comparative analytical synthesis, juxtaposing materials from the United States and Turkey to discern structurally recurrent logics alongside contextually differentiated articulations of mediated justice. This synthesis enables the identification of shared patterns such as the dramatization and moralization of legal process, alongside divergent modalities of media influence, including direct implications for jury-centered adjudication in the United States and indirect yet culturally efficacious formations of mediated public opinion in Turkey. Collectively, these interrelated analytical stages sustain a multi-layered investigation of trial by media as a communicative and performative

formation constituted across legal structures, media regimes, and culturally specific modes of public judgment.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the inquiry delineates a focused analytical field centered on high-profile legal cases distinguished by sustained, intensive, and multi-platform media visibility, thereby delimiting the investigation to instances that activated pronounced public engagement and extended discursive circulation. Analytical attention privileges the communicative and symbolic processes responsible for the transposition of juridical events into culturally legible narratives of justice, excluding normative evaluation of judicial verdicts from the study's purview. The temporal range spans the late nineteenth century to the present, a calibrated horizon that entails selective coverage oriented toward analytically salient and emblematic articulations of trial by media across successive media regimes. Such selectivity facilitates concentrated examination of dominant structural logics and recurring representational patterns without pursuing exhaustive historical enumeration. Methodological constraints arising from archival accessibility, uneven documentation, and the comparative alignment of heterogeneous legal cultures receive explicit acknowledgment within the analytical design. In response to these constraints, triangulation across historical records, media archives, and contemporary digital materials enhances interpretive rigor and supports the credibility of the study's analytical claims. Within these parameters, the articulated scope and acknowledged limitations jointly sustain a methodologically disciplined framework for examining trial by media as a communicative and performative formation.

Findings

Comparative examination of legal cases from the United States and Turkey substantiates the operation of trial by media as a recurrent cultural formation that rearticulates juridical disputes within regimes of mediated spectacle. The empirical material consolidates around three analytically discrete yet structurally interdependent dimensions. First, symbolic frames function as organizing principles that render legal events morally legible within media narratives. Second, mechanisms of media influence manifest across discursive, visual, and affective registers, orienting public judgment and calibrating collective expectations surrounding justice. Third, structural differentiation between jury-centered and jury-less legal formations generates divergent institutional pathways for mediated influence, yielding distinct configurations of public engagement with legal process. In support of these qualitative findings, an illustrative frequency-based textual scan supplements the interpretive analysis, supplying empirical texture and corroborative emphasis without invoking claims of statistical generalizability.

Media Frames and Cross-Cultural Variations

Media reports relied on a limited repertoire of symbolic frames, *monstrous perpetrator*, *tragic victim*, *heroic defender*, and *institutional failure*. While these frames appeared in both U.S. and Turkish contexts, their inflections varied according to cultural codes.

Frame	U.S. Example	Turkey Example	Representative Media Quote
Monstrous Perpetrator	<i>Lizzie Borden trial (1893)</i> : tabloids highlighted “unnatural female crime.”	<i>Münevver Karabulut (2009)</i> : <i>Hürriyet</i> labeled Cem Garipoğlu “canavar” (monster).	<i>Hürriyet</i> (2009): “Cem Garipoğlu hâlâ firarda: Kamuoyu tepkili” (“Cem Garipoğlu still at large: Public opinion outraged”).
Tragic Victim	<i>Casey Anthony (2011)</i> : CNN reduced defendant to “Tot Mom.”	<i>Özgecan Aslan (2015)</i> : <i>Sabah</i> declared “Tüm Türkiye Özgecan için ayakta” (“All of Turkey rises for Özgecan”).	<i>Cumhuriyet</i> (2020): “Pınar Gültekin davasında ‘iyi hâl indirimi’ tartışması” (“Debate over ‘good conduct’ sentence reduction”).
Heroic Defender	<i>Sacco & Vanzetti (1920s)</i> framed as “martyrs of justice.”	<i>Kadir Şeker (2020)</i> : <i>Milliyet</i> asked “Kahraman mı, katil mi?” (“Kadir Şeker: Hero or murderer?”).	<i>Milliyet</i> (2020): “Young man intervenes in violence, faces murder charge.”
Institutional Failure	<i>O.J. Simpson (1995)</i> : commentary emphasized flawed jury system.	<i>Pınar Gültekin (2020)</i> : “iyi hâl indirimi” framed judiciary as complicit.	Social media hashtag: <i>#AdaletYok</i> (“No justice”).

The cross-cultural comparison shows convergence in symbolic frames but divergence in cultural emphases. In the United States, frames are often tied to race, celebrity, or systemic critique, whereas in Turkey they are saturated with gender, morality, and honor.

Frequency of Key Terms

A textual frequency scan of 100 news articles (50 U.S., 50 Turkish) revealed notable differences:

Frame Category	Keyword (English/Turkish)	U.S. Press (n=50)	Turkish Press (n=50)
Monstrous Perpetrator	<i>Monster / Canavar</i>	12	18
Tragic Victim	<i>Innocent / Kurban</i>	15	21
Heroic Defender	<i>Hero / Kahraman</i>	7	9
Institutional Failure	<i>Failed / Adalet yok</i>	10	14
Cultural Amplification	<i>Justice / Adalet</i>	11	17

The Turkish press used “canavar” and “kurban” more frequently than their U.S. counterparts, emphasizing gendered and moral dimensions. U.S. coverage relied heavily on “innocent” and “failed justice,” reflecting concerns about institutional credibility and systemic inequality.

Mechanisms of Media Influence

The findings articulate a triadic configuration of media influence operating across linguistic, visual, and performative dimensions, each constitutive of the mediation of justice as a culturally legible and affectively charged process. At the linguistic register, media discourse mobilizes metaphorical signifiers such as *canavar* (monster), *kurban* (victim), and *kahraman* (hero), lexical formations functioning as symbolic classificatory devices structuring moral intelligibility and public evaluation. Such formations inscribe legal actors within dramatized narrative schemas, orienting public affect and situating trials within moral economies organized around transgression, innocence, and virtue. At the visual register, representational regimes generate affective persistence and produce symbolic fixation. In the United States, the O.J. Simpson trial assembled a repertoire of televisual images whose repetitive circulation sustained emotional engagement and stabilized interpretive frames. In Turkey, femicide cases circulated visual portrayals of victims framed by flowers, candles, and protest iconography, images reproduced across broadcast and digitally networked platforms that reinforced emotional identification and consolidated dominant narrative readings. At the performative register, public rituals of justice materialize as mechanisms of mediated judgment. In jury-centered adjudicative contexts in the United States, mediated narratives permeate deliberative processes, modulating legal reasoning in indirect yet consequential ways. In Turkey, the absence of juries redirects this dynamic into the public sphere, as demonstrations, commemorative practices, and hashtag campaigns such as *#KadınCinayetleriDurdurulsun* operate as iterative acts of collective judgment. These practices externalize mediated narratives and perform symbolic verdicts within the sphere of mediated public judgment, generating moral authority and exerting sustained symbolic pressure upon judicial actors without formal juridical mandate.

Historical Continuities

The findings further foreground transhistorical continuities in the public mediation of justice, extending from pre-modern juridical practices to contemporary digital cultures. Ottoman

courts institutionalized publicity via *şuhûdü'l-hâl*, a mechanism embedding communal witnessing within adjudicative procedure, alongside punitive practices such as *teşhir* and executions staged in highly visible urban spaces including At Meydanı, practices anchoring juridical legitimacy in collective observation and symbolic display (Jennings, 1978; Zarinebaf, 2010). These configurations articulate a cultural logic positioning visibility as a constitutive condition of justice. Contemporary digital campaigns such as *#JusticeForPinar* activate an analogous logic, converting visibility, circulation, and collective attention into sources of moral authority and public legitimation. The historical displacement of the scaffold and the marketplace by television broadcast and hashtag activism signals a transformation in media form rather than a rupture in juridical dramaturgy. Across these successive regimes, the demand for collective witnessing persists as a structuring principle of mediated justice, sustaining continuity in the performative enactment of legitimacy across centuries.

Structural Divergences and Conceptual Contribution

The most consequential divergence identified by the comparative analysis concerns the institutional pathways governing media influence upon legal process. In the United States, trial by media consolidates within a jury influence model, as saturation coverage, interpretive commentary, and affective framing intersect with jury-centered adjudication, generating conditions under sustained media exposure that shape juror perception and deliberative reasoning, a pattern repeatedly observable in the Simpson, Anthony, and Weinstein trials (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012; Stroud, 2022). In Turkey, trial by media coheres within a mediated public opinion model, as the absence of juries redirects media influence toward broader publics, mobilizing outrage, headlines, and hashtag-based circulation as symbolic instruments exerting moral and reputational pressure upon judicial actors without procedural incorporation (Kaya & Çoban, 2023). This analytically derived typology distinguishing jury influence and mediated public opinion articulates the study's principal conceptual contribution, destabilizing U.S.-centric assumptions equating trial by media exclusively with jury systems and advancing a structurally adaptive account of media influence calibrated to institutional design, legal culture, and regimes of public visibility.

Comparative Insights

The comparative findings converge upon a central analytical insight concerning the recurrent dramatization of justice as spectacle across legal and cultural contexts. Across both national settings, mediated justice assumes performative form, yet modalities of mediation diverge in relation to institutional configuration and patterns of public engagement. In the United States, jury-centered adjudication incorporates media discourse into deliberative practice, allowing symbolic frames and affective narratives to inflect juridical reasoning from within courtroom processes. In Turkey, the absence of juries rechannels this dynamic outward, as mediated publics mobilize protest, commemoration, and digital activism to instantiate collective judgment in public space. These differentiated configurations generate distinct yet homologous pathways of mediated influence, corroborating a shared cultural logic according to which juridical legitimacy depends upon narration, contestation, and collective witnessing. The comparative perspective thus elucidates justice as a communicative performance sustained across institutional variation, disclosing continuity in spectacle alongside divergence in mediating mechanisms.

Recent Scholarly Resonance

Recent scholarly interventions consolidate the analytical field surrounding trial by media, positioning mediated justice, public judgment, and communicative power as interlocking problematics within contemporary legal and cultural theory. Conway et al. (2019) introduce the notion of social media platforms as “parallel courts of opinion,” reframing juridical authority as a contested domain increasingly articulated within digitally networked publics. Stroud (2022) scrutinizes the ramifications of pervasive digital saturation for jury-centered adjudication, demonstrating the attenuation of deliberative insulation and the intensification of entanglement between legal reasoning and continuous media exposure. Yardley (2021) situates true crime media within a broader cultural economy of participation, tracing the conversion of criminal trials into serialized narrative forms that solicit affective alignment, moral positioning, and audience co-authorship. Within the Turkish scholarly context, Kaya and Çoban (2023) conceptualize femicide coverage as a site of “ritualized indignation,” theorizing hashtag circulation as a performative mechanism generating symbolic verdicts and collectivized moral sanction. Extending these insights across national and cultural registers, Smith (2024) documents the transnational reverberation of localized legal cases, foregrounding digital circulation as a force synchronizing moral discourse, amplifying visibility, and embedding mediated justice within global communicative assemblages. In their cumulative theoretical force, these contributions corroborate the present study’s findings, situating trial by media as a historically continuous, technologically adaptive, and structurally differentiated formation operating at the intersection of law, media, and public judgment.

Summary of Contribution

This study consolidates trial by media as a historically continuous, culturally adaptive, and institutionally variable formation within the extended genealogy of public justice. By situating Ottoman juridical practices, contemporary Turkish femicide cases, and jury-centered trials in the United States within a unified comparative analytical horizon, the research formulates two interlocking scholarly contributions. First, the analysis develops a typological differentiation that distinguishes jury influence and mediated public opinion as discrete yet structurally homologous modalities of media power, each calibrated to specific configurations of legal authority, institutional design, and public engagement. Second, the study advances a continuity-oriented conceptualization of justice-as-spectacle, tracing the persistence of public legitimation across successive media regimes, from scaffold and marketplace to broadcast image and hashtag circulation. These contributions collectively reposition trial by media as a durable communicative logic anchored in visibility, symbolic authority, and collective recognition, operating across historical periods and cultural contexts without confinement to particular technologies or juridical arrangements.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The discussion foregrounds the broader interpretive implications of the empirical analysis by conceptualizing trial by media as a historically continuous and culturally adaptable formation shaped by institutional design and media ecology. The comparative examination of the United

States and Turkey indicates that mediated justice operates via a patterned constellation of symbolic frames, mediating mechanisms, and structural pathways that collectively configure public engagement with legal process. The frames of monstrous perpetrator, tragic victim, heroic defender, and institutional failure, together with mechanisms of linguistic framing, visual circulation, and ritualized public response, operate in concert to generate differentiated configurations of media influence. These configurations consolidate into two analytically distinct models, jury influence and mediated public opinion, each reflecting the adaptive capacity of media power within divergent legal systems. Framed in this manner, the findings invite a reconsideration of trial by media as an integral dimension of contemporary juridical visibility, grounded in enduring traditions of public adjudication and collective witnessing.

The discussion rearticulates the findings within a dense theoretical constellation addressing the dramatization of justice as a constitutive feature of mediated public life, extending established frameworks of moral panic, framing, and representation into a comparative and transhistorical analytic horizon. The salience of symbolic framing accords with Cohen's (1972) formulation of moral panic, Entman's (1993) theorization of framing as a structuring logic of interpretation, and Hall's (1997) analysis of representation as a site of cultural power, together foregrounding the centrality of culturally legible signifiers in the organization of public narratives of legality. Media constructions that figure perpetrators as *canavar* ("monster") and victims as innocent or tragic subjects exemplify the mobilization of moralized semiotic repertoires rendering juridical conflict intelligible within affectively charged narrative economies. Within the Turkish context, these repertoires acquire heightened gendered and moral inflections, substantiating Kaya and Çoban's (2023) conceptualization of femicide coverage as a practice of "ritualized indignation" anchored in collective moral performance. The comparative perspective further engages Habermas's (1991) conception of the public sphere by foregrounding mediated visibility as a constitutive condition of juridical legitimacy, positioning justice within an economy of exposure, narration, and contestation. From Ottoman dispositifs of *şubûdü'l-hâl* and *teşbir* to contemporary digital mobilizations such as *#KadınCinayetleriDurdurulsun* and *#JusticeForPinar* (Jennings, 1978; Zarinebaf, 2010), the analysis traces a persistent dramaturgical demand for collective witnessing traversing legal forms and media regimes. This trajectory reaffirms Foucault's (1995) insight into punishment as spectacle, yet simultaneously displaces that insight into digitally networked environments, as publics assume participatory roles in the circulation, interpretation, and symbolic adjudication of justice, intensifying the entanglement of legality, affect, and communicative power.

To clarify this divergence, the study developed a typology that distinguishes between two models of trial by media influence:

Dimension	Jury Influence Model (U.S.)	Mediated Public Opinion Model (Turkey)
Institutional context	Jury trials; citizens directly deliberate on verdicts.	No juries; professional judges decide.
Channel of influence	Media discourses penetrate jury deliberations through saturation coverage.	Media narratives construct collective outrage, expressed via protests, hashtags, and opinion columns.
Mechanism	Jurors consume news, commentary, and televised trials; impartiality is challenged.	Public opinion acts symbolically: courts respond to legitimacy pressures rather than direct deliberation.
Cultural emphasis	Race, celebrity, class.	Gender, honor, morality.
Key cases	O.J. Simpson (1995); Casey Anthony (2011); Harvey Weinstein (2020).	Münevver Karabulut (2009); Özgecan Aslan (2015); Pınar Gültekin (2020); Kadir Şeker (2020).
Media platforms	Live television, tabloids, courtroom broadcasts.	Newspapers, TV news, digital platforms, hashtag campaigns <i>(#KadınCinayetleriDurdurulsun, #JusticeForPinar)</i> .
Outcome	Media directly risks altering verdicts (jury swayed).	Media indirectly pressures institutions via “symbolic verdicts” in the public sphere.

This typology distinguishes jury-centered media influence in the United States from mediated public opinion as the dominant source of legitimacy pressure in Turkey.

Normative Implications

The findings foreground a densely articulated constellation of normative implications bearing upon ethical media governance and the institutional endurance of judicial authority amid pervasive mediation. Trial by media engenders effects extending beyond adjudicative outcomes to encompass defendants, victims, and their relational ecologies, as symbolic labels such as *canavar* (“monster”) or *kahraman* (“hero”) operate as stigmatizing or idealizing classifications that sediment durable moral inscriptions and propagate long-term psychosocial sequelae. Smith’s (2024) examination of transnational media exposure demonstrates the propensity of intensified visibility to precipitate secondary trauma, prolong grief, and entrench regimes of social stigma across familial and communal networks. These dynamics compel the formulation of more exacting ethical frameworks within media institutions, prioritizing disciplined lexical selection, rigorous

visual framing, and a calibrated negotiation between public interest and the safeguarding of individual dignity. Convergent normative pressures confront judicial institutions embedded in saturated media ecologies. Stroud (2022) documents the attenuation of deliberative insulation in jury-centered systems subjected to continuous media circulation, and Goodman (2025) identifies platform-mediated arenas such as TikTok as emergent sites of participatory judgment and symbolic adjudication. Within the Turkish context, the absence of juries rechannels these pressures toward mediated publics performing quasi-judicial arbitration of legitimacy, intensifying reputational exposure and moral constraint upon judicial actors. Such conditions necessitate institutional architectures capable of modulating excessive media pressure alongside transparency and communication protocols attuned to democratic participation, thereby preserving judicial autonomy and acknowledging the constitutive presence of mediated publics in contemporary cultures of justice.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The concluding discussion consolidates the analytical trajectory of the study by situating trial by media as a historically continuous and culturally adaptive formation, operative modalities vary in accordance with institutional configuration and media environment. Comparative examination of the United States and Turkey indicates patterned differentiation in the circulation and impact of media influence across jury-centered and jury-less legal systems, alongside recurrent symbolic and performative logics organizing public engagement with justice. The analysis delineates a stable constellation of symbolic frames, mediating mechanisms, and structural pathways that collectively generate distinct configurations of mediated justice. These configurations attain analytical coherence in two conceptual models, namely jury influence and mediated public opinion, each reflecting the adaptive capacity of media power within divergent legal architectures. Articulated in this manner, the findings prompt a reconceptualization of trial by media as a constitutive dimension of contemporary juridical visibility, grounded in enduring practices of public witnessing and collective evaluation and extending beyond confinement to particular technologies or juridical arrangements.

The originality of the present study articulates itself across three analytically discrete yet conceptually interlocking dimensions. First, existing scholarship has largely privileged Anglo-American legal contexts and has recurrently canonized the O.J. Simpson trial as a paradigmatic reference point in discussions of trial by media. In contrast, the present analysis repositions Turkey within the comparative framework as a structurally consequential site in media influence assumes distinctive institutional and cultural configurations. The Turkish case extends the global literature by demonstrating that trial by media operates independently of jury systems and materializes via mediated publics capable of exerting symbolic and reputational pressure upon judicial institutions. Second, the study recalibrates the temporal scope of analysis by mapping a *longue durée* of juridical visibility that connects Ottoman practices such as *şubûdü'l-hâl* and *teşhir* with contemporary forms of digital circulation and hashtag-based mobilization. This temporal continuity foregrounds the persistence of justice-as-spectacle as a cultural logic that predates mass communication technologies and reasserts itself across successive media formations. Third, the analysis encompasses multiple media modalities, including print journalism, broadcast television, and digitally networked platforms, thereby furnishing a comprehensive account of the adaptive

capacity of trial by media across communicative channels, historical periods, and institutional environments.

The comparative selection of the United States and Turkey proceeds from a deliberately constructed analytical strategy oriented toward institutional contrast and theoretical amplification. The United States exemplifies a juridical configuration in which jury-centered adjudication generates heightened susceptibility to media saturation, allowing symbolic framing, affective narration, and interpretive commentary to intersect directly with deliberative processes. Turkey, by contrast, foregrounds a juridical environment devoid of juries, within which mediated publics assume quasi-judicial functions and negotiate legitimacy via protest practices, headline circulation, and digitally intensified outrage. This comparative optic elucidates national differentiation while simultaneously foregrounding a transhistorical dynamic anchored in the cultural demand for visible, witnessed, and collectively contested justice. On this basis, the study advances a twofold theoretical contribution. First, it formulates a typological distinction between jury influence and mediated public opinion, differentiating direct and indirect pathways of media power and revising U.S.-centric assumptions that confine trial by media to jury systems alone. Second, it elaborates a continuity model situating trial by media within an extended genealogy of justice-as-spectacle, linking Ottoman practices of public witnessing to contemporary broadcast and digital formations and thereby forging conceptual bridges among media studies, legal history, and cultural theory. The broader significance of this intervention traverses disciplinary boundaries: within communication studies, the analysis reconceptualizes trial by media as a global and historically embedded formation; within legal studies, it underscores the necessity of apprehending media as a constitutive dimension of public legitimacy; within media ethics, it foregrounds the enduring consequences of symbolic labeling practices, emphasizing the responsibility borne by journalistic and platform-based actors when deploying moralizing categories that recalibrate reputational trajectories, familial experience, and collective judgment.

Prospective implications of the present inquiry unfold across comparative, methodological, and interdisciplinary planes, foregrounding trial by media as a constitutive modality of mediated justice demanding sustained analytical engagement. Comparative extension encourages systematic testing of the mediated public opinion model across additional jury-less legal systems, including Southern European and Middle Eastern jurisdictions, thereby probing analytical portability under divergent institutional configurations. Methodological expansion via computational text analytics facilitates longitudinal identification of framing regularities across extensive media corpora, complementing interpretive insights through pattern-level corroboration, whereas ethnographic and experimental designs enable examination of public appropriation, affective investment, and contestation of media narratives at the level of moral judgment. Interdisciplinary collaboration between legal scholarship and communication research assumes critical importance for formulating ethical guidelines and institutional protocols capable of negotiating persistent tensions among publicity, legitimacy, and procedural fairness. Against this horizon, the study consolidates trial by media as a structurally embedded and historically continuous formation, tracing trajectories of visibility, differentiating analytically discrete models of media influence, and positioning Turkey alongside the United States in a comparative frame that clarifies institutional variation without relinquishing transhistorical continuity. Justice

thereby acquires authority via visibility and collective witnessing, simultaneously generating normative friction between legitimacy and impartiality, spectacle and procedure, exposure and restraint, an intersection that increasingly delineates the terrain of contemporary adjudication.

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