

Reframing Identity: The Shift of Women's Images from Traditional Documentaries to Streaming Platforms

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ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the impact of media representation on public perception and legal outcomes in the high-profile criminal case of Jessica Wongso, who was accused of murdering her friend, Wayan Mirna Salihin. It explores how gendered stereotypes and societal expectations shaped both the media's portrayal of Wongso and the public's perception of her guilt. Traditional media coverage sensationalized her femininity and emotional responses, reinforcing negative stereotypes about women in criminal cases. However, the 2023 documentary *Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso* offered a more nuanced perspective, challenging these portrayals and questioning the fairness of the legal proceedings. Through a feminist lens and Émile Durkheim's *Mass Society Theory*, the paper highlights the intersection of gender, media influence, and legal systems, urging for a more critical and equitable approach to both media coverage and legal treatment of women accused of crimes. It calls for a reassessment of how gender and media shape justice.*

INTRODUCTION

Jessica Wongso's trial serves as a striking example of how societal expectations and gender stereotypes can profoundly influence perceptions of guilt and innocence, particularly when it comes to women accused of serious crimes. Throughout the case, Wongso, a woman accused of murdering her friend, Wayan Mirna Salihin, was subjected to intense scrutiny, with her behavior and character often analyzed through the lens of traditional societal norms. Women in criminal cases are often held to different standards than men, with their actions and motivations examined more harshly and through more rigid gender expectations. This bias can lead to assumptions about their character, such as the belief that women are inherently more emotional, manipulative, or morally flawed. These assumptions are not applied to male defendants in the same way, which can significantly impact both the jury's perceptions of guilt and innocence, as well as public opinion.

The media's portrayal of Jessica Wongso has been particularly pivotal in shaping public opinion throughout the trial and its aftermath. Sensationalized reporting often focuses not only on the details of the crime but on her femininity, personal life, and emotional expressions, which can overshadow the factual aspects of the case. In high-profile criminal trials, women are frequently depicted in one of two roles: as either innocent victims or as perpetrators driven by emotional or psychological instability. This dichotomy plays into broader stereotypes about

women being overly emotional or prone to violence under certain circumstances. The way the media framed Wongso's character in the case contributed to reinforcing these gendered narratives, presenting her as either a cold-hearted murderer or as a misunderstood woman. Such portrayals impact how audiences perceive her guilt or innocence, further entrenching societal biases and influencing the public's understanding of justice

The case of Jessica Wongso also highlights the broader power dynamics at play within the legal system, particularly in how women are treated when accused of serious crimes. Wongso, as a woman facing a complex and highly publicized murder case, may not have been fully understood or supported by a system that often fails to acknowledge the social pressures and gendered experiences that women face. Legal proceedings can be influenced by deeply ingrained gender biases that affect how women are perceived and how their testimony is interpreted. Feminist legal analysis critiques how these biases can shape the outcomes of trials, with women often facing disadvantageous treatment in a system that prioritizes male-dominated perspectives. Moreover, the media narratives surrounding the trial—emphasizing emotional responses or assumptions about her mental state—reinforced these gendered power dynamics, overshadowing the factual elements of the case.

Additionally, an intersectional approach to Wongso's case would consider how other aspects of her identity, such as race, class, and socioeconomic status, intersect with her gender and further complicate her treatment in the legal system. As a woman from an affluent background, Wongso's case presents an interesting intersection of class privilege and gender bias. In the media, the combination of her gender and social status may have added layers of complexity to how she was viewed, both as a suspect and as a person. Women of different racial and class backgrounds are often subject to distinct stereotypes and prejudices, and an intersectional analysis helps reveal how these various identities play a role in shaping legal outcomes and media portrayals.

Through a feminist lens, Jessica Wongso's case can be seen as a microcosm of larger societal issues, shedding light on the systemic gender biases that permeate both the legal system and media narratives. The way women are depicted in criminal cases, the assumptions made about their behavior, and the social pressures they face can all influence the trajectory of legal proceedings and the public's perception of justice. By critically analyzing how gender dynamics operate in Wongso's trial, we are prompted to question broader issues of equity and fairness in the legal realm. This analysis calls for greater awareness of how gendered biases shape legal outcomes and media portrayals, urging reform and the creation of a more just and equitable system for all

individuals, regardless of gender. It challenges us to reconsider how power, privilege, and gender intersect to influence not only the fate of women like Wongso but also the larger discourse on justice and equality in society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

After the Jessica Mirna cyanide coffee murder case from 2016 was closed, Jessica Kumala Wongso is still serving her sentence. In 2023, the Netflix documentary "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee and Jessica Wongso" lasting 86 minutes, ignited controversy among viewers. "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso" is a 2023 Indonesian-Singaporean true crime documentary directed by Rob Sixsmith, focusing on the controversial 2016 murder of Wayan Mirna Salihin, allegedly by her friend Jessica Kumala Wongso. The film examines the complexities of the case, including forensic evidence, media sensationalism, and the psychological implications for Wongso, who remains imprisoned. Through interviews with key figures—such as family members, defence attorneys, public prosecutors, witnesses, and journalists—the documentary presents various perspectives and critiques Indonesia's criminal justice system, highlighting perceived flaws in Wongso's conviction.

The film allows audiences to grasp Wongso's frustrations regarding how the media dramatized and misrepresented the case. Many feel that the media engaged in a "trial by the press" against Wongso, potentially shaping public opinion in a biased way. The documentary presents diverse perspectives to its viewers. Even with the same content, individuals interpret it differently, a variation influenced by three perception processes: selective attention, selective distortion, and selective retention. In the analysis of the shifting medium of women's images, particularly in the context of the Jessica Kumala Wongso case and the documentary "Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso" it would be useful to explore previous studies that examine media representation and its impact on public perception. By understanding the complex dynamics at play in the documentary and its reception, contributing to a broader discussion about women's images in media and society.

Research has highlighted how sensationalized media coverage can distort public perception, especially in high-profile criminal cases. Studies have shown that the portrayal of women in crime narratives often reflects societal biases and can lead to public vilification. There is a growing body of literature on "trial by media," which discusses how media narratives can influence the judicial process and public opinion before a formal trial. This is particularly relevant

to our focus on Wongso, as the documentary critiques this phenomenon. The concepts of selective attention, distortion, and retention have been widely studied in media psychology. Research such as "Social Media Effects on Young Women's Body Image Concerns: Theoretical Perspectives and an Agenda for Research." *Sex Roles*, 76(7-8), 391-403 Perloff, R. M. (2017), Indicates that these processes significantly affect how audiences interpret media content, often reinforcing existing biases.

Studies on the evolution of narratives around female criminals illustrate how media representations can change over time, particularly with the introduction of new information or perspectives, as seen with Wongso's case. Jessica Wongso's case serves as a compelling subject for feminist analysis, revealing several critical issues related to gender bias, media representation, and power dynamics within the legal system.

Before the Documentary

Before the release of the *Ice Cold* documentary on Netflix, public perception of Jessica Wongso was heavily shaped by sensationalized media narratives surrounding her trial for the alleged murder of her friend Wayan Mirna Salihin. From the beginning of the case, the media portrayed Wongso as a cold and calculating individual, and this framing became central to how the public understood the trial.

Dramatic courtroom scenes and emotional testimonies were often used to emphasize her supposed guilt, with much of the focus placed on her alleged motives and the forensic evidence that seemingly implicated her. This sensationalized coverage contributed to a polarized and largely negative view of Wongso, with many assuming her guilt long before the final verdict. Her behavior during the trial—often described as distant, unemotional, and unremorseful—was further exploited by the media, which fueled skepticism about her innocence. In this way, the public's perception of Wongso was significantly shaped by the emotional and biased narratives constructed around her, rather than a nuanced consideration of the evidence.

Wongso's trial underscores how societal expectations and stereotypes about women can influence perceptions of guilt and innocence. Women accused of crimes, particularly violent ones, are often subjected to harsher scrutiny than their male counterparts. Their behavior, emotions, and motivations are closely examined through the lens of traditional gender norms, which dictate how women should behave in society.

For example, women are generally expected to be nurturing, empathetic, and emotionally expressive. When they deviate from these expectations, especially in the context of a serious crime,

they are more likely to be viewed as cold, manipulative, or mentally unstable. In Wongso's case, her perceived lack of emotion or remorse during the trial was frequently highlighted, reinforcing these gendered assumptions. This societal bias plays a significant role in shaping both the jury's perception of the case and the broader public's opinion. Gendered expectations can thus influence how women's actions are interpreted, leading to a more biased and less objective assessment of their guilt or innocence, which is not typically applied to male defendants in the same way.

The media's portrayal of Jessica Wongso was pivotal in shaping public opinion about her guilt or innocence. Sensationalized media coverage often prioritized her femininity, personal life, and emotional responses over the factual details of the case. Media outlets frequently highlighted her background, appearance, and behavior, framing her as either a victim or a villain within an emotionally charged narrative. This focus on personal characteristics, rather than the legal complexities of the case, obscured the actual evidence and contributed to a distorted public perception. The tendency to portray women in criminal cases as either innocent victims or as emotionally unstable perpetrators reinforces gendered stereotypes. Women are often depicted in criminal narratives as tragic figures or as evil women driven by irrational motivations, which can further entrench harmful stereotypes about women's roles in society. Such media framing not only simplifies the case but also influences how audiences perceive the accused, skewing their judgment based on emotional reactions rather than an objective analysis of the facts.

Moreover, Wongso's case also reflects broader power dynamics within the legal system. As a woman accused of a serious crime, Wongso faced a legal process that may not have fully acknowledged the unique societal pressures and gendered experiences at play. Feminist legal theory critiques how power operates not just in courtrooms, but also in the broader societal context, where certain narratives are privileged over others. In this case, the media's framing of Wongso's character—emphasizing her emotional detachment and perceived lack of remorse—played into broader gendered power dynamics that shaped her treatment in both the public sphere and the legal system. Women in the criminal justice system are often treated differently than men, especially when they defy conventional expectations of femininity.

Wongso, as a woman accused of murder, was subjected to this gendered lens that may have influenced both the media coverage and how the legal proceedings unfolded. Feminist analysis highlights how power operates not just in legal proceedings, but in the narratives constructed by the media, often privileging male perspectives and experiences while marginalizing those of women.

An intersectional approach further illuminates how factors such as race, class, and socioeconomic status intersect with gender to influence the treatment of women within the legal system. While Wongso's case was not primarily framed through issues of race, understanding her social class and background adds important context to how she was portrayed and treated. Wongso, an educated woman from an affluent background, was likely seen as an "exception" in the public imagination, as women from such socioeconomic backgrounds are often not expected to commit crimes like murder.

The intersection of her gender and class may have led to more complex narratives around her culpability, with certain assumptions made about her capabilities and motivations based on her social status. An intersectional analysis of Wongso's case would also consider how these factors shaped the media's portrayal of her, and how different identities—such as race or class—might affect how women are treated in the legal system. Women from marginalized backgrounds often face even greater biases and prejudices, and understanding these intersections helps provide a fuller picture of the challenges women face in the criminal justice system.

Through a feminist lens, Jessica Wongso's case becomes a microcosm of larger societal issues, raising critical questions about the treatment of women in the legal realm and the implications of media narratives. This analysis reveals how gender dynamics can shape both legal outcomes and public perceptions, urging us to reflect on how societal expectations of women affect their treatment in the legal system. The way in which Wongso's case was handled—both by the media and the justice system—highlights the systemic biases that continue to impact women accused of crimes. This case underscores the necessity of addressing these gender biases and advocating for a more equitable legal process, one that does not prioritize harmful stereotypes or emotional narratives over evidence and fairness.

By examining Jessica Wongso's case through a feminist framework, we are prompted to question how deeply ingrained gender dynamics affect the broader justice system. Women are often subject to harsher scrutiny and more biased treatment, especially in cases involving violent crimes. This analysis not only encourages greater awareness of how gender influences legal outcomes and public perception but also calls for reform in the justice system. A more nuanced understanding of how gender, power, and privilege intersect in criminal cases is essential for achieving greater equity and fairness in the legal process. This case serves as a powerful reminder of the urgent need to address gender biases in justice, both in legal proceedings and in media portrayals, in order to ensure that women receive fair and unbiased treatment.

After the Documentary

Following the release of the *Ice Cold* documentary, there was a noticeable shift in public perception of Jessica Wongso's case. The film offered a more nuanced exploration of the events surrounding the alleged murder of Wayan Mirna Salihin, presenting multiple viewpoints, including those of Wongso's defense team and experts who raised questions about the validity of the evidence and the fairness of the trial. By providing a broader context, the documentary allowed viewers to reconsider their initial judgments. Many people who had previously assumed Wongso's guilt now began to express doubts about her involvement in the crime. The film brought to light the flaws in the Indonesian criminal justice system, highlighting the influence of media representation on public opinion and the judicial process. This new perspective prompted a more empathetic understanding of Wongso's situation, with some viewers even advocating for a re-evaluation of her conviction, urging a closer examination of the case's complexities and inconsistencies.

Ice Cold has garnered widespread acclaim for its gripping storytelling and striking visuals, particularly in how it portrays Jessica Wongso. The documentary's ability to engage audiences, combining a critical investigation of the crime with a deeper exploration of the media's role in shaping public opinion, has resonated with viewers across various platforms. Many were struck by how the film challenged preconceived notions and invited a more critical, thoughtful examination of the events. For instance, a Kompas netizen, @zhajoon, expressed doubt about Wongso's guilt after watching the documentary, remarking, "It turns out that after being documented, it creates a new perception. Did Jessica really kill Mirna or not? There's a lack of evidence, but Jessica's behavior is very suspicious—calm and laughing." This comment reflects the shift in perception that many viewers experienced, where the sensationalized media portrayal of Wongso as a cold and remorseless figure was questioned in light of new information and multiple viewpoints.

Similarly, another viewer, @sungcamn, pointed out the ambiguity of the case, writing, "I think it's strange from both sides. Jessica's behavior is really odd, but there's also no strong evidence proving that she actually killed anyone. It's such a plot twist. Jessica, if you didn't kill her, why is your behavior so suspicious? But if you did kill her, then why is there no evidence?" This comment captures the internal conflict felt by many viewers, who found themselves torn between skepticism about Wongso's behavior and doubt about the strength of the evidence against her. The documentary's exploration of these contradictions has sparked a broader conversation about

how we evaluate guilt and innocence in high-profile criminal cases, particularly when media representation plays such a significant role in shaping public opinion.

In addition to the mixed reactions on social media, many Google reviews reflect a blend of sympathy and skepticism. Some viewers expressed empathy for Wongso's situation, particularly in light of the documentary's emotional depth and exploration of the flaws in the justice system. Others, however, remained unconvinced of her innocence, pointing to the lingering uncertainties surrounding the case. The documentary's ability to provoke both emotional responses and critical questioning speaks to its effectiveness in challenging viewers' assumptions and encouraging them to think more critically about the complexities of the case.

The film's critical examination of the Indonesian court system also sparked heated discussions among audiences, with many viewers questioning the integrity of the legal proceedings. For example, John Gilbert, a viewer, emphasized how *Ice Cold* exposed the farcical nature of the legal process in high-profile cases, particularly how external pressures appeared to influence judicial outcomes. Gilbert appreciated the documentary not only for its investigation of the crime but also for shedding light on the broader societal and institutional dynamics that shaped the trial. The film's critique of the judicial system resonated with many viewers who were previously unaware of the procedural irregularities and power imbalances at play in the case.

Benica Ventilacion raised important concerns about the presumption of innocence within the Indonesian criminal justice system, suggesting that public opinion can sometimes overshadow legal principles. Ventilacion observed that the chaotic nature of the trial, as depicted in the documentary, left some viewers confused about the actual events, as both the prosecution and defense struggled with the procedural aspects of the case. This confusion, along with the polarized media coverage, created an environment where the focus shifted from a fair trial to a battle for public opinion. Ventilacion's comments highlight a broader concern about how media-driven trials can undermine the integrity of legal proceedings, particularly when public sentiment and sensationalized reporting play such a significant role in shaping the outcome.

Sandra Salazar's perspective also underscored the documentary's ability to provoke doubt about Wongso's guilt. Salazar noted that while public sentiment at the time of the trial had swayed towards conviction, the evidence presented did not convincingly support the accusations. Her comment illustrates how *Ice Cold* successfully challenged the notion of guilt by media spectacle, showing that the case's complexities and the flaws in the judicial process had been overshadowed by sensational media narratives. This points to the broader issue of how public perception,

influenced by media frenzy, can distort the judicial process and lead to unjust outcomes. Salazar's remarks reflect the film's effectiveness in questioning the fairness of a verdict influenced by sensationalism, encouraging viewers to critically examine the judicial system and its susceptibility to external pressures.

Overall, *Ice Cold* has sparked significant discourse around Jessica Wongso's case, not only questioning her guilt or innocence but also the fairness and integrity of the legal system in Indonesia. By exploring the complexities of the case and the role of media in shaping public perception, the documentary has forced viewers to confront difficult questions about justice, the impact of sensationalism, and the need for reform in the criminal justice system. The diverse range of reactions—from empathy to skepticism—illustrates how the documentary has prompted a more thoughtful and critical engagement with the case, urging viewers to reconsider not only the fate of Jessica Wongso but also the broader implications for the legal system and media representation of women in crime.

METHOD

The analysis of Jessica Wongso's case through a feminist lens aims to explore the intersection of gender, justice, and public perception, specifically how gendered narratives shaped both media coverage and the public's view of the trial. Wongso, an Indonesian woman accused of murdering her friend, Wayan Mirna Salihin, by poisoning her iced coffee, became a highly publicized case that garnered significant media attention. By examining how gender dynamics influenced the portrayal of the case, this analysis seeks to address broader issues of women's representation in both legal and media spheres. A qualitative approach is ideal for investigating this case because it allows for the nuanced examination of media narratives, which are often more complex and layered than quantitative data alone can reveal. The methodology used in this analysis combines textual analysis and media analysis, focusing on digital articles, particularly from Kompas, a major Indonesian news outlet, and Google reviews from the public. These sources provide insight into how the case was framed before and after the release of the "Ice Cold" documentary, which sparked new discussions and reconsiderations about Wongso's trial and the possible biases influencing it.

Media framing refers to the way in which news outlets highlight certain aspects of a story while downplaying others, ultimately shaping the way the public understands it. In the case of Jessica Wongso, several frames were employed by different media outlets, and these frames were

often gendered in ways that both influenced and reflected societal perceptions of the case. One prominent frame focused on emotional vs. forensic evidence. The portrayal of Wongso's emotional state—particularly her demeanor during the trial—was a common focal point. Many articles and media reports highlighted her facial expressions, body language, and emotional responses, often framing her as cold, detached, or unremorseful. This framing, while possibly rooted in her actual behavior, also played into stereotypes about women being emotionally volatile, manipulative, or cold-hearted when they commit crimes. In contrast, forensic evidence and expert testimonies were often secondary, even though they were key to the case.

From a feminist perspective, this framing of Wongso's emotionality could be seen as a reflection of gendered expectations about women's behavior. Women are often judged more harshly for perceived emotional coldness, while men might be excused or even celebrated for the same behavior. Wongso's gender became a factor in how her emotional demeanor was read, leading to a narrative of her as a "monster" or a "calculating woman," which aligns with historical stereotypes of women as deceitful and untrustworthy. Another key media frame was the societal implications surrounding the case, which focused on issues of gender, privilege, and class. Wongso, as a woman from an affluent background, was often positioned within a narrative of privilege. Discussions around class and the idea that a woman like Wongso might be perceived as more capable of committing such a crime due to her education and social status added another layer to the story. This framing might have subtly influenced public perception by implying that her actions were a result of personal failings exacerbated by her class background—thereby blaming individual characteristics rather than considering the structural and societal factors at play.

In analyzing digital platforms like Kompas and Google reviews, we see how public opinion shifted over time. Before the release of the "Ice Cold" documentary, many online discussions were highly polarized, with some viewing Wongso as guilty due to the nature of the crime and her demeanor, while others questioned whether she had been unfairly framed by the media or legal system. However, the documentary brought new perspectives, including potential issues of judicial bias and the possibility that Wongso's case was influenced by gendered stereotypes. Public reactions on digital platforms allowed for more democratic participation in the discourse, but they also revealed deep-rooted societal attitudes towards women and crime. The online comments reflected a mixture of sympathy, condemnation, and skepticism toward Wongso, and analyzing these comments through a feminist perspective reveals the ways in which gendered judgments were often at the forefront of people's opinions. Many online users used her gender as a lens

through which to judge her actions, often framing her as either a victim of malevolent societal forces or as an inherently flawed woman who had succumbed to dark impulses.

A key theme that emerges from this analysis is the representation of women in both the legal system and in media narratives. In the case of Jessica Wongso, her gender played a crucial role in shaping her public image. Feminist scholars have long pointed out that women are often treated differently within the legal system, with their actions frequently scrutinized through the lens of gendered expectations. For example, the emphasis on Wongso's emotionality may have been a tool used to undermine her credibility and moral standing in the eyes of the public and the jury. Furthermore, the media's portrayal of women in high-profile criminal cases often involves a gendered double standard. Women who are accused of violent crimes, particularly in cases like Wongso's, are often depicted as exceptions to the norm, as women are stereotypically seen as less violent and more nurturing than men. When a woman does commit a violent crime, there is often an assumption that something must be "wrong" with her—psychologically, emotionally, or socially. The portrayal of Jessica Wongso's case was no exception, and these gendered narratives served to shape how she was perceived both in the courtroom and in the public eye.

By analyzing the case of Jessica Wongso through a feminist lens, this study sheds light on the complex ways in which gender dynamics influence public perception, media framing, and the judicial process. The public's view of the case was heavily influenced by the way Wongso was framed in the media as emotionally detached or cold-hearted while also considering her background and gender in the process. This analysis also underscores the ongoing issues related to how women are represented in the legal system and media, and how these representations can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes that affect the outcomes of trials and the public's understanding of justice. Ultimately, a feminist perspective offers a crucial lens for understanding the complexities of the case, revealing how gendered narratives can shape not just individual cases but also broader societal views on women, crime, and justice. It also calls for a more nuanced and equitable approach to media portrayals of women in the legal system, as well as a rethinking of how gender is integrated into legal analysis and criminal justice processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Jessica Wongso's case reveals significant shifts in public perception before and after the release of the "Ice Cold" documentary, highlighting the impact of media representation and gender dynamics on societal attitudes. Initially, the public's perception of Wongso was largely negative, driven by sensationalized media narratives that portrayed her as a

calculated murderer. The coverage emphasized emotional testimonies and forensic evidence, leading many to view her as guilty without fully understanding the complexities of the case. This perception was reinforced by social media discussions that echoed the media's framing, resulting in a polarized opinion that characterized Wongso as suspicious and unremorseful.

Following the release of "Ice Cold," there was a marked shift in public opinion. The documentary provided a platform for multiple perspectives, including those of Wongso's defence team and legal experts who challenged the validity of the evidence presented during the trial. Viewers began to reconsider their initial judgments, with many expressing doubts about Wongso's guilt. Comments from netizens like @zhajoon and @sungcamn illustrate this change, as they articulated uncertainty about the evidence and questioned the portrayal of Wongso's behaviour. This shift indicates that the documentary successfully fostered a more empathetic understanding of Wongso's situation, prompting calls for a re-evaluation of her conviction. The results underscore the crucial role media representation plays in shaping public perception, especially in high-profile cases involving women. The documentary's nuanced exploration of the case highlights how sensationalism can distort public understanding and reinforce gender biases. Wongso's initial portrayal as a villainous figure is contrasted with a more complex image presented in the documentary, demonstrating the potential for media narratives to either vilify or humanize individuals based on their gender.

Jessica Wongso's case can be critically analysed through a feminist perspective, illuminating issues of gender bias, media representation, and the dynamics of power within the legal system. From the beginning, Wongso was portrayed in a sensationalized manner, often depicted as a cold and calculating figure, which reflects historical stereotypes that demonize women involved in criminal cases. This portrayal not only influenced public perception but also shaped the narrative of her guilt, emphasizing emotional and behavioural expectations traditionally placed on women. The media's focus on her demeanour characterized as suspicious or unremorseful demonstrates how women's behaviour is scrutinized differently than men's, often leading to harsher judgments. Such gendered scrutiny can detract from an objective evaluation of the evidence, reinforcing societal biases that label women in ways that serve to uphold patriarchal narratives. According to Solnit (2014) and Faludi (1991), discusses how women's narratives are frequently viewed with skepticism, especially in contexts of violence and the portrayal of women's experiences often emerges from a framework of doubt, impacting their credibility in societal discourse.

Furthermore, the trial highlighted issues of privilege and class, as Wongso's educational background and social status may have affected the perceptions of both the media and the public. Feminist critiques of the criminal justice system emphasize how these biases can shape outcomes, suggesting that women, especially those who defy traditional roles, are often viewed through a more critical lens. From a feminist perspective, the case exemplifies the intersection of gender and justice. Wongso's portrayal as suspicious aligns with historical narratives that frame women in criminal cases through a lens of mistrust. The documentary challenges these narratives by highlighting the flaws in the criminal justice system and the biases that women often face. It invites viewers to consider the broader implications of how women's stories are told and the societal expectations that shape their representation.

Overall, the analysis of Jessica Wongso's case illustrates the profound impact of media narratives on public perception and the necessity for a critical examination of gender dynamics in legal contexts. The shift in perception following the "Ice Cold" documentary emphasizes the importance of diverse voices and perspectives in fostering a more informed and empathetic understanding of complex legal cases involving women. This case serves as a reminder of the ongoing need to challenge stereotypes and advocate for justice that truly reflects the intricacies of individual circumstances.

CONCLUSION

The murder case of Jessica Kumala Wongso, involving cyanide-laced coffee in 2016, generated significant public interest and reaction, fueled largely by extensive media coverage. From the outset, the media played a crucial role in shaping public perception, positioning Jessica as the primary suspect in the murder of her friend, Wayan Mirna Salihin. Through dramatic reporting, the media framed Jessica as the sole accused, often portraying her as cold, calculating, and emotionally detached. This portrayal was amplified during the trial, especially with the live broadcasts that aired extensively, making the trial a spectacle in the eyes of the public. The media's focus on sensationalizing Jessica's behavior and personal life created a negative stigma surrounding her, which persisted throughout the trial and beyond. Even the judge's use of the term "Defendant Sister" served to reinforce the stereotype of Jessica as an outsider, further contributing to her vilification. The emotional intensity of the media coverage also had a significant social impact. It not only fostered public outrage but also fueled a wave of hate speech and social condemnation directed at Jessica. As media coverage continued to frame her as a villain, it influenced the way

society viewed her, with many people forming opinions about her guilt or innocence before the court had rendered a final verdict. This phenomenon of shaping public opinion prior to judicial decisions is often referred to as "trial by media," and it underscores the power the media holds in influencing societal responses to criminal cases. Jessica's case became emblematic of how media narratives can shape the course of justice, often overshadowing facts in favor of more sensationalized, emotional stories.

However, the release of the 2023 documentary *Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso* marked a significant shift in public perception. The documentary provided a more balanced, nuanced exploration of the case, offering insights into Jessica's frustrations with the media's dramatization of her story. It questioned the validity of the evidence against her and raised doubts about the fairness of the legal proceedings. By presenting multiple perspectives—including those of Jessica's defense team, experts, and people close to the case—the film encouraged viewers to reconsider their initial assumptions. It sparked critical reflections on the nature of justice, media influence, and the complexities of the case, creating a space for public discourse that was more empathetic and questioning. In many ways, the documentary gave a voice to Jessica, allowing her to be seen not just as a defendant but as a person whose story had been overshadowed by media sensationalism.

The documentary's impact can be analyzed through Émile Durkheim's Mass Society Theory, which emphasizes the role of mass media in shaping public opinion and societal norms. Durkheim argued that mass media plays a central role in influencing collective consciousness and creating social cohesion—or, in the case of the *Ice Cold* documentary, a shift in societal understanding. In the context of Jessica Wongso's case, the media played a dual role: initially, it constructed a narrative of guilt, reinforcing societal views that women, especially those accused of violent crimes, must conform to certain behavioral expectations. The documentary, however, challenged this dominant narrative, offering an alternative perspective and encouraging viewers to critically examine the case. It highlighted the concept of "trial by media," where public opinion can be shaped long before the formal judicial process is complete, and emphasized how the media's portrayal of a person can profoundly influence the legal system itself.

This shift in perception underscores the significant role media plays in shaping societal views on justice and gender. Jessica Wongso's case is a powerful example of how gender dynamics intersect with media representation to influence public opinion and legal outcomes. The sensationalized portrayal of Jessica as a cold and unfeeling woman accused of murder illustrates

how gender stereotypes can skew public perceptions of women involved in criminal cases. Women in the criminal justice system are often held to different standards than men, with their behavior and emotional responses subjected to greater scrutiny. This phenomenon, where societal expectations of femininity clash with the reality of criminal accusations, is central to the feminist critique of legal systems. The documentary invites viewers to question these assumptions and consider the impact of gendered narratives on justice.

In addition to the gendered dimensions of the case, Jessica's situation also raises broader questions about the relationship between media portrayal and the fairness of the legal system. The case serves as a cautionary tale about how media narratives, whether rooted in sensationalism or bias, can shape public understanding of justice and influence legal outcomes. The public's premature judgment of Jessica's guilt, based largely on media representations, exemplifies the dangers of "trial by media" and the need for a more critical approach to how legal cases are covered by the press.

Ultimately, Jessica Wongso's case highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of how gender, media, and legal processes intersect. The release of *Ice Cold* serves as a reminder that justice should be determined through evidence and fair legal proceedings, not through the court of public opinion. It encourages viewers to reflect on the role of mass media in shaping not only public perception but also the broader societal discourse on justice. By challenging preconceived notions and offering a more complex understanding of the case, the documentary contributes to a broader conversation about gender, justice, and the impact of media on legal outcomes, urging society to rethink its assumptions and consider the implications for women accused of crimes.

SUGGESTIONS

Future research could explore the shifting identities of women in the criminal justice system through a comparative analysis of traditional media portrayals versus digital platforms in other contexts, such as social media or podcast narratives. While the Jessica Wongso case exemplifies the role of streaming documentaries in reshaping public perceptions, a broader study could investigate how digital media—specifically platforms like YouTube, TikTok, or true-crime podcasts—contribute to the construction of women's identities in high-profile criminal cases. These digital platforms allow for more diverse voices, including those of defense teams, experts, and even the public, to contribute to the narrative. Analyzing how these platforms democratize or complicate the portrayal of women in criminal cases could shed light on the evolving dynamics of

media influence and public perception, as well as the impact of digital storytelling on justice, identity, and gender norms. Such research could also examine the intersectionality of race, class, and gender as it is portrayed across different media forms, deepening our understanding of how women's identities are constructed and contested in both traditional and digital spaces.

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