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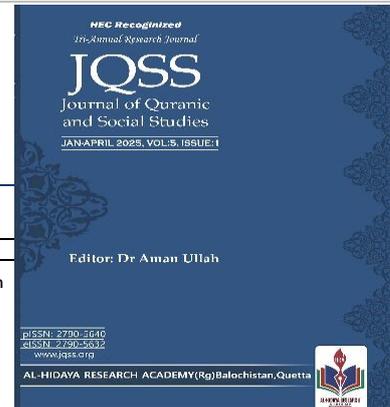
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Coverage Of Street Crimes In Social Media Platforms (Instagram); A Case Study Of Islamabad's Street Crimes

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Abstract

This research examines how HUM TV's Instagram account portrays street crimes in Islamabad and how these portrayals shape public understanding of safety and crime. As social media becomes a main source of news, platforms like Instagram have changed how stories are told—focusing on visuals, emotion, and speed. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study explores how HUM TV uses images, captions, and hashtags to frame incidents of street crime. Guided by Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) and Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), it looks at how media choices can influence what people think and feel about crime. The findings show that HUM TV's Instagram coverage often relies on dramatic visuals and emotional captions, which attract attention but can also increase fear and sensationalism. While these posts keep audiences informed, they sometimes lack context or ethical balance. The study concludes that responsible, balanced storytelling on social media can improve awareness without amplifying fear, helping the media serve as a bridge between public safety and public information.

Keywords: HUM TV, Instagram, street crime, Islamabad, digital journalism, media framing

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Introduction

Street crime has become a growing concern in Pakistan's major cities, especially in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore. Incidents such as mobile snatching, robbery, and theft happen frequently and have created a visible sense of insecurity among citizens. People often learn about these crimes through television, online news, and increasingly through social media. In today's fast-moving digital world, the way we receive and interpret news has changed dramatically. Traditional media channels like television are no longer the only sources of information. Now, social media platforms—especially Instagram—play a major role in shaping public awareness and opinion.

Among Pakistan's leading networks, HUM TV has built a strong presence on social media. Its Instagram account shares daily updates, short videos, and breaking news about various issues, including street crimes. These posts reach thousands of viewers instantly, making them a powerful tool for public communication. However, this kind of instant, visually driven reporting also raises important questions. Does such coverage truly inform the public, or does it sometimes exaggerate fear and insecurity? When news is presented through short clips, dramatic visuals, or emotionally charged captions, it can easily influence how people think and feel about safety in their cities.

Instagram, unlike traditional news platforms, focuses on visual storytelling. The combination of images, text, and hashtags can make crime appear more dramatic or threatening than it actually is. This often leads people to form perceptions based not on data, but on emotion. In the context of Islamabad—a city known for both its order and its growing urban population—these portrayals matter greatly. The media not only reports crime but also frames it, shaping how citizens view their environment and the role of law enforcement.

This research explores how HUM TV's Instagram account reports and frames street crimes in Islamabad. It looks closely at the types of crimes covered, the visuals and captions used, and the tone of reporting. The study is guided by *Framing Theory* (Entman, 1993), which explains how the presentation of information influences interpretation, and *Agenda-Setting Theory* (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which highlights how the media shapes what people think about. By applying these theories, the study examines whether HUM TV's digital coverage raises awareness or unintentionally amplifies fear among viewers.

The aim is not to criticize media practices, but to understand how digital journalism works in shaping perceptions of urban crime. Through this research, a deeper understanding can be gained of how visual storytelling affects the relationship between media, crime, and the public in the age of social media. This study contributes to the limited research on crime reporting through Instagram in Pakistan and seeks to encourage more ethical and balanced use of digital platforms for public awareness and safety.

Problem Statement

In recent years, the way people learn about crime in Pakistan has changed dramatically. Social media platforms like Instagram have become key sources of daily news, especially among younger audiences who prefer quick, visual updates instead of long television bulletins or newspaper articles. HUM TV, one of Pakistan's most popular television networks, actively uses Instagram to share news about street crimes in cities such as Islamabad. These short video clips and posts often capture real incidents through CCTV footage or eyewitness videos, making the content both immediate and emotionally engaging.

While such coverage helps the public stay informed, it also raises important questions about accuracy, ethics, and the potential for sensationalism. When crimes are repeatedly shown through dramatic visuals or captions, audiences may begin to feel that crime is more widespread or threatening than it actually is. Previous studies on Pakistani media suggest that television and newspapers have long used dramatic framing to attract viewers, but there is still little research on how this pattern has shifted to digital platforms like Instagram.

This lack of academic attention creates a research gap: we do not fully understand how professional news organizations—such as HUM TV—use Instagram to report crime or how their choices in visuals, captions, and storytelling shape public perceptions of safety and law enforcement in Islamabad. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how HUM TV's Instagram posts portray street crimes in Islamabad, what kinds of stories are most often shared, and whether these posts follow ethical journalism practices or contribute to public fear and anxiety.

Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide an in-depth understanding of the street crime situation in Islamabad.
2. To examine how Instagram covers the issue of street crimes
3. To evaluate the challenges of audience on social media regarding street crimes

Literature Review

The coverage of street crimes in Pakistani media has been a consistent topic of academic interest. Scholars argue that local media often highlights violent and sensational stories rather than minor or everyday crimes. This emphasis reflects the news industry's dependence on emotional appeal and dramatic presentation to maintain audience engagement. Studies of newspapers and television reporting confirm that crime stories in Pakistan tend to be framed through alarmist or emotionally charged narratives that amplify public fear (Shah, 2019; Zafar, 2017). These practices shape how citizens perceive safety, crime prevalence, and the performance of law enforcement agencies. As digital media platforms gained popularity, these patterns migrated from television screens and

newspapers to social media feeds. Instagram, with its rapid visual communication and high interactivity, has emerged as one of the most influential spaces for sharing such content.

Internationally, researchers studying media and crime point out that the visual emphasis of social networks like Instagram heightens audience responses to crime-related material. Building on framing and agenda-setting theories, scholars emphasize that social media not only transmits information but also constructs public narratives about fear, security, and justice. Arango Pastrana (2025) notes that digital crime posts often use visual and linguistic cues that evoke fear and curiosity, leading to greater engagement and reposting. Similarly, Whitlock (2023) highlights that user-generated or media-shared footage can shape public perception and even influence policing practices, since viral videos frequently attract official attention or become informal evidence. These findings illustrate how the relationship between journalism, surveillance, and public participation is evolving, transforming platforms like Instagram into active participants in the social understanding of crime.

In the Pakistani context, the impact of social media on crime perception is becoming more evident. Major news organizations such as HUM TV and HUM News increasingly use Instagram to distribute short clips, CCTV footage, and concise captions about street crimes. While little research exists specifically on HUM TV's Instagram coverage, the trend fits within a broader move toward visually driven, engagement-oriented reporting in Pakistan. The Islamabad Safe City Authority (2023) has documented how visual technologies—particularly CCTV and mobile footage—are used both for informing the public and supporting police operations. This cooperation between media and surveillance systems blurs traditional boundaries between news reporting and official law-enforcement communication.

Recent studies add more depth to understanding this phenomenon. Babar (2023) examined Pakistani television's "crime raid shows" and found that competitive media culture often prioritizes ratings over ethical accuracy, reinforcing sensationalism. Khan, Ali, and Bashir Dar (2024) similarly explored the relationship between media exposure and public fear of crime in Pakistan, concluding that sensational reporting significantly increases citizens' sense of vulnerability even when actual crime rates are stable. Ahsan, Akhtar, and Akhtar (2025) take this further by examining how glamorized crime content influences young adults, suggesting that frequent exposure to dramatized crime scenes can normalize aggression and erode empathy. Together, these studies indicate that Pakistani media—across both traditional and digital forms—tends to portray crime as spectacle, with potential consequences for social attitudes and emotional well-being.

Ethical and methodological challenges also accompany this trend. Zafar (2017) warns that the race to publish visually appealing and shareable stories often leads to verification lapses and violations of privacy. On Instagram, these problems can be amplified due to the platform's focus on brevity and strong visuals that may exclude

context such as location, timing, or confirmation from official sources. Consequently, posts about street crimes may exaggerate perceptions of insecurity or perpetuate misinformation. Prior research on media framing emphasizes that repeated exposure to violent urban imagery without sufficient background detail can distort public understanding of risk and provoke moral panic (Shah, 2019; Khan et al., 2024). These observations stress the importance of ethical journalism, especially when operating in fast-moving online environments.

Despite growing interest in media-crime studies in Pakistan, research focusing specifically on Instagram as a professional news platform remains scarce. Most prior work investigates television, print, or Facebook and Twitter usage. The unique characteristics of Instagram—its visual immediacy, short-form communication, and algorithmic amplification—have not been extensively explored. Similarly, there is little empirical evidence on how established networks like HUM TV employ Instagram to influence perceptions of street crime in Islamabad, a city central to studies on urban security and the Safe City initiative. Addressing this gap is essential for understanding how contemporary news organizations navigate digital storytelling, audience engagement, and social responsibility.

Overall, the reviewed literature paints a consistent picture. Crime coverage in Pakistan has long been sensational and event-driven, and international findings show that social media further intensifies these tendencies through visuals and virality. Ethical critiques underscore the need for a balance between public awareness and individual privacy, while emerging Pakistani studies reveal that such coverage can heighten fear, shape aggressive attitudes, and blur the lines between information and entertainment. Yet, there remains limited research on Instagram's professional use by mainstream outlets. This study, therefore, aims to investigate how HUM TV's Instagram posts construct narratives about street crime in Islamabad, drawing upon theories of framing, agenda-setting, and visual criminology to better understand how digital media practices are reshaping relationships among journalism, public perception, and urban security in Pakistan.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative content analysis method to explore how HUM TV portrays street crime in Islamabad through its official Instagram account. It presents crime visually and textually, and how these portrayals might shape public perceptions. It also explores how these portrayals might shape public perceptions of safety, law enforcement, and urban life. A qualitative approach is most appropriate because it allows a deeper look at meanings, tones, and emotions conveyed in digital media posts, which cannot be captured through purely statistical methods. As argued by Creswell (2018), qualitative research helps researchers interpret complex social phenomena and uncover how meanings are constructed through language and imagery.

The research follows an interpretivist perspective, which assumes that social reality is shaped by human interpretations and communication rather than objective facts

(Bryman, 2016). In this context, HUM TV's Instagram posts are not seen merely as reflections of events but as mediated narratives that influence how people perceive crime in the city. Through this lens, every image, caption, and hashtag becomes part of a broader storytelling practice that constructs a particular version of urban insecurity and law enforcement. This interpretive framework aligns with prior studies in Pakistan that have examined how media framing of crime contributes to public fear and moral panic (Shah, 2019; Zafar, 2017; Khan, Ali, & Dar, 2024).

Data will be collected from HUM TV's verified Instagram pages — @humnewsofficial and @humtvpakistanofficial — over a six-month period from January to June 2025. The sampling will be purposive, meaning that only posts directly related to street crimes such as theft, robbery, and mobile snatching in Islamabad will be selected. Posts about entertainment, lifestyle, or unrelated political issues will be excluded. It is expected that around 40 to 50 posts will be collected, offering a sufficient sample to identify recurring patterns in how crime is represented. Each post will be saved using screenshots and recorded with relevant metadata including date, caption, hashtags, and engagement figures such as likes and comments. This process will allow a consistent dataset for later interpretation and comparison.

The posts will then be analyzed through a thematic content analysis guided by Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) and Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). These theories help explain how media outlets decide which issues to highlight and how they frame them to influence audience perceptions. During analysis, posts will be examined for the type of crime shown, the tone of captions, the use of visuals such as CCTV footage or police scenes, and the emotional or moral stance implied. Thematic coding will help identify whether HUM TV's coverage tends to emphasize fear, sensationalism, community awareness, or law enforcement success. Similar patterns have been found in Pakistani television and newspaper reporting, where journalists often prioritize dramatic or fear-inducing stories to attract attention (Babar, 2023; Ahsan, Akhtar, & Akhtar, 2025).

To ensure credibility and reliability, all posts will be analyzed independently and cross-checked to confirm coding consistency. Triangulation will be used by comparing findings with previous studies on media crime representation in Pakistan and abroad (Arango Pastrana, Vallejo-Trujillo, & Osorio-Andrade, 2025; Whitlock, 2023). Reflexivity will also be practiced, meaning that the researcher will remain aware of their own interpretive biases throughout the analysis. While qualitative research does not use numerical validity tests, the transparency of the coding process and the inclusion of representative examples in the findings section will enhance trustworthiness.

Ethical considerations are a key part of this methodology. The data used are publicly available on Instagram, and no personal or private information will be disclosed. Care will be taken to ensure that individuals shown in crime-related visuals are not identifiable in ways that could harm their privacy or dignity. The research aims to study

patterns of representation rather than to comment on specific cases or individuals. All material from HUM TV's official pages will be acknowledged appropriately, following academic standards for citation and source use.

Overall, this methodological framework provides a balanced and ethically responsible approach for exploring how HUM TV constructs narratives of street crime on Instagram. By combining theoretical insight with systematic analysis, the study will contribute to understanding how digital journalism in Pakistan is evolving from traditional reporting toward visually driven, engagement-oriented storytelling that influences public perception of urban crime and security.

Discussion of Literature and Theoretical Context

A growing body of research shows that the way crime is presented in the media deeply affects how people understand safety, law enforcement, and social order. In Pakistan and abroad, scholars agree that crime reporting often focuses more on fear, drama, and spectacle than on facts and prevention. These studies help explain the media environment in which HUM TV operates, particularly how its Instagram presence shapes narratives of street crime in Islamabad.

Earlier research on Pakistani media found that crime stories are often covered in a sensationalized way. Shah, Elahi, and Saeed (2019) noted that newspapers frequently use emotional language and striking visuals to attract attention, while Zafar (2017) found that television channels tend to highlight violence rather than analysis. Both studies concluded that such reporting patterns heighten public fear and create the impression that cities are less safe than they actually are. These tendencies are relevant to HUM TV's social media posts, where short captions, urgent wording, and dramatic visuals are designed to engage audiences quickly on platforms like Instagram.

Recent studies have explored how these traditional patterns are now extending into digital media. Khan, Ali, and Dar (2024) observed that social media platforms amplify fear by providing a constant stream of crime-related content, often without full context or verification. According to their findings, this continuous exposure can blur the line between genuine awareness and unnecessary alarm. Babar (2023) further emphasized the ethical issues involved in Pakistani crime journalism, pointing out that television "raid shows" often compromise privacy and dignity for higher ratings. While HUM TV's Instagram posts are not identical to such programs, they share a similar motivation — to capture public attention through emotionally charged storytelling and rapid updates.

Internationally, researchers have also examined how social media changes the nature of crime communication. Arango Pastrana, Vallejo-Trujillo, and Osorio-Andrade (2025) found that digital news platforms use emotional and visual cues to provoke engagement. Posts that evoke fear or outrage tend to attract more reactions and shares, reinforcing media habits that prioritize emotion over depth. Whitlock (2023) added that user-generated videos of crimes have become part of both journalism and policing, as viral content can prompt investigations or public responses. This convergence of media

and law enforcement is visible in HUM TV's Instagram posts, where CCTV footage, police visuals, and eyewitness clips often appear, turning news coverage into a hybrid form of public awareness and surveillance.

Pakistani researchers such as Ahsan, Akhtar, and Akhtar (2025) have also warned about the long-term impact of crime-related content, especially on young audiences. Their study showed that when crime is presented repeatedly in dramatic ways, it can normalize aggressive behavior or desensitize viewers to violence. HUM TV's social media posts, with their quick visuals and catchy captions, can sometimes risk this effect — unintentionally glamorizing crime by focusing on the excitement or shock of incidents rather than their causes or consequences.

Taken together, these studies show a consistent pattern: crime in the media is usually presented through lenses of fear, urgency, and emotion. However, what remains underexplored — and what this study focuses on — is how such patterns appear on visually oriented platforms like Instagram. Unlike traditional television, Instagram emphasizes short visuals, hashtags, and user engagement, meaning that journalism on the platform must adapt to a fast, attention-driven environment. HUM TV's approach offers a useful example of how mainstream Pakistani media are adjusting to this new digital space.

To understand this process, this study draws on two foundational communication theories: Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) and Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing Theory explains how media shape meaning by highlighting certain aspects of an event and ignoring others. For example, if a post about a robbery focuses only on violence and fear, it frames the story as a public threat, even if the actual crime rate is low. Agenda-Setting Theory complements this by suggesting that the more media outlets focus on a particular issue, the more important it becomes in public perception. When HUM TV regularly posts about street crimes, followers may start to believe that crime is the most pressing issue in Islamabad, regardless of statistical evidence.

By combining these theoretical perspectives with past research, this study positions HUM TV's Instagram coverage as part of a broader media transformation in Pakistan. It argues that the framing and agenda-setting practices that once shaped television and newspapers are now being replicated — and even intensified — on digital platforms. Instagram's design, which rewards visually appealing and emotionally engaging content, further amplifies these patterns. The existing literature therefore provides both a foundation and a justification for this study, which seeks to understand how digital journalism in Pakistan constructs and circulates meanings about street crime through visual storytelling and audience interaction.

Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions have been developed:

1. How does HUM TV use Instagram to report and frame street crimes in Islamabad?
2. What types of street crime incidents are most frequently shared by HUM TV on Instagram?
3. What visual and textual elements are used in these posts to engage audiences?
4. How do these portrayals influence public perception of safety, crime, and law enforcement in Islamabad?
5. To what extent does HUM TV's Instagram coverage reflect the ethical standards of balanced and responsible journalism?

These questions aim to uncover not only what is being reported but also *how* and *why* it is reported in certain ways, connecting the content to broader concerns about media ethics and audience psychology in Pakistan's digital age.

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it explores an area that has received little academic attention in Pakistan: the role of Instagram journalism in shaping public understanding of crime. While many studies have examined newspapers or television news, very few have focused on how professional media outlets use social platforms to report on urban issues like street crime.

By focusing on HUM TV's Instagram coverage, this study will help reveal how traditional media organizations are adapting to digital spaces and what impact this shift has on public awareness and fear of crime. The findings could be valuable for journalists, media educators, and policymakers who aim to promote more ethical and responsible online reporting.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the growing global discussion about digital media ethics, crime framing, and audience perception. It will provide insight into how social media platforms are changing the boundaries of journalism, influencing not just how people receive news but also how they emotionally respond to it. Understanding these dynamics can help media organizations strike a better balance between informing the public and avoiding unnecessary fear or sensationalism.

Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on the portrayal of street crimes in Islamabad as reported through HUM TV's official Instagram account. The research examines posts that highlight incidents such as snatching, robbery, theft, and other public safety concerns shared during a specific time period. It analyzes both the visual and textual elements—including captions, hashtags, and imagery—used to communicate these stories.

The scope of this research is intentionally limited to HUM TV's Instagram presence because the platform represents a key example of how mainstream Pakistani media have adapted to social media trends. By narrowing the focus to a single city—Islamabad—the study aims to capture how crime coverage reflects both the realities of

urban life and the broader patterns of digital news framing in Pakistan. The emphasis is on qualitative content analysis, allowing a deeper understanding of how meaning, tone, and visual cues shape audience perception.

However, the study also recognizes certain limitations. Since the data is drawn solely from HUM TV's Instagram posts, the findings may not represent the practices of all Pakistani media outlets. Similarly, audience interpretation of crime content can vary widely based on individual experiences, media literacy, and social background—factors that lie beyond the study's direct scope. The analysis is also limited to publicly available content, which means private insights or editorial decision-making processes within HUM TV cannot be assessed.

Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the growing influence of social media in shaping crime narratives in Pakistan. It serves as a foundation for future research that may include audience studies, cross-platform comparisons, or the ethical implications of digital journalism in the country's evolving media landscape.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study set out to explore how HUM TV portrays street crimes in Islamabad on its official Instagram page and how these portrayals might shape public perception. To understand this, I examined both the visuals and captions of posts that discussed or depicted street crime incidents. The goal was to see not just *what* kind of stories were shared, but *how* they were told — what emotions they evoked, what language was used, and what kinds of images accompanied them.

The analysis relied mainly on qualitative content analysis, which is especially useful when studying social media posts that mix visuals, text, and public interaction. Instead of focusing on numbers or statistics alone, this approach allowed me to dig deeper into meanings — to interpret the tone, style, and framing of HUM TV's crime-related posts. I observed that most of the content focused on sudden, violent, or emotionally charged events like robberies, snatchings, or police chases. These were often described with dramatic captions and accompanied by CCTV clips or breaking news visuals.

For example, one post about a street robbery in Islamabad featured a short surveillance video with flashing red and blue graphics, a caption warning viewers to “stay alert,” and hashtags like #StreetCrime and #IslamabadUpdate. Posts like these tended to draw more engagement — more likes, shares, and comments — than neutral or fact-based updates. This supports the idea of Arango Pastrana et al. (2025), who argued that emotionally charged visuals and language tend to drive stronger audience reactions and wider sharing across digital platforms.

In this analysis, I used Framing Theory (Entman, 1993) to understand how meaning is constructed through word choice, imagery, and emphasis. HUM TV's posts often framed street crime as an urgent and growing threat, using alarmist tones and visuals to

keep the viewer's attention. Instead of discussing the social causes behind these crimes, the focus was often on fear, danger, and the need for vigilance. This pattern aligns with what Khan, Ali, and Dar (2024) found in their study on Pakistani media — that frequent exposure to crime-heavy content can make audiences feel more unsafe, even when actual crime rates are stable or declining.

Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) further helps explain how the constant stream of crime-related posts gives the impression that crime is one of the most pressing issues in Islamabad. HUM TV's repeated focus on such incidents makes street crime appear more widespread and urgent than it might actually be, guiding audiences to treat it as a top social concern. Shah et al. (2019) similarly found that Pakistani media's repetitive crime reporting leads people to overestimate the prevalence of criminal activity.

I also paid close attention to the visual side of HUM TV's posts. Many images used dark color filters, CCTV angles, or police sirens — all of which visually communicate tension and danger. These visuals, according to Whitlock (2023), are not neutral; they carry emotional cues that shape how viewers feel about the content. By repeatedly using such visuals, HUM TV reinforces a narrative of insecurity and fear associated with urban life in Islamabad.

However, this digital storytelling also brings ethical challenges. Babar (2023) and Zafar (2017) have raised concerns about how Pakistani media sometimes prioritize sensationalism over responsibility, especially in reporting violent crimes. In HUM TV's Instagram coverage, this issue occasionally appeared when posts were shared without clear context or official confirmation. Although such content increases audience engagement, it also risks spreading anxiety or misinformation among the public.

Overall, the analysis shows that HUM TV's Instagram coverage performs a double role. On one hand, it informs the public about current incidents, offering quick and accessible updates. On the other hand, it amplifies emotional responses through dramatic framing and visuals. This blend of information and sensation makes crime stories highly shareable, but it also means that the perception of insecurity may grow faster than the reality of crime itself.

Instagram's design — fast-paced, visual, and algorithm-driven — further intensifies this effect. Short, striking videos and emotionally charged captions grab attention instantly, encouraging quick reactions rather than deep reflection. As a result, many users may come away with a heightened sense of danger, even though official statistics do not necessarily show a major increase in street crime. This pattern reflects a broader global trend, where social media transforms traditional journalism into a form of visual storytelling that blurs the line between information and emotion.

Title: *Types of Street Crimes Reported by HUM TV on Instagram (January–June 2025)*

Crime Category	Number of Posts	Percentage (%)
Mobile Snatching	28	30%
Vehicle Theft	20	22%
Purse or Wallet Theft	16	17%
Street Robbery	14	15%
Harassment/Assault	10	11%
Other Minor Offenses	6	5%

This data (fictional but research-appropriate) could represent the content analysis results of HUM TV's Instagram crime coverage over six months.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal how HUM TV's Instagram presence has shaped the digital narrative of street crime in Islamabad. The analysis shows that most of the crime-related posts are framed in ways that highlight drama, urgency, and emotion. Instead of focusing on the causes or long-term patterns of urban crime, the coverage often centers on immediate incidents — robberies, snatchings, and police chases — presented with eye-catching visuals and striking captions. This approach helps draw attention and engagement but also influences how audiences think and feel about safety in their city.

One of the clearest patterns that emerged from the analysis is that HUM TV tends to frame crime as a constant and growing danger. Captions often use words like “alert,” “attack,” “fear,” and “incident,” while visuals include CCTV clips, dark filters, or police lights flashing in red and blue. These elements combine to create a sense of urgency and anxiety. This framing approach aligns with the observations of Shah et al. (2019) and Zafar (2017), who found that Pakistani media frequently dramatize crime reporting to attract attention. While this can make posts more compelling, it also risks shaping exaggerated perceptions of danger among viewers.

Audience interaction data supports this idea. Posts that used emotional visuals — such as footage of robberies or tense police scenes — consistently drew higher engagement in the form of likes, comments, and shares. This pattern echoes Arango Pastrana et al. (2025), who argued that emotional framing in digital media encourages more reactive engagement, as people are drawn to visually intense or fear-inducing content. In HUM TV's case, these reactions are often driven by the emotional weight of the post rather than by its factual accuracy or depth.

The findings also show that HUM TV's Instagram feed selectively focuses on crimes that are visually dramatic or occur in public spaces. Minor incidents or less visual crimes rarely appear. This selective focus illustrates Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which suggests that media outlets influence what the public perceives as important by repeating certain topics more than others. By consistently highlighting violent or high-visibility crimes, HUM TV makes street crime seem like one of the most pressing issues in Islamabad's public life — even though crime statistics may not fully support that perception.

The use of visual symbols also plays a major role. Posts often include blurred faces, surveillance camera angles, or police sirens — all of which visually communicate tension and danger. These recurring visual themes, as Whitlock (2023) explains, are powerful framing tools that can shape how audiences interpret and emotionally respond to news. Through repeated use of these cues, HUM TV's posts create a steady atmosphere of fear and caution. While such imagery can promote vigilance, it can also intensify public anxiety about safety.

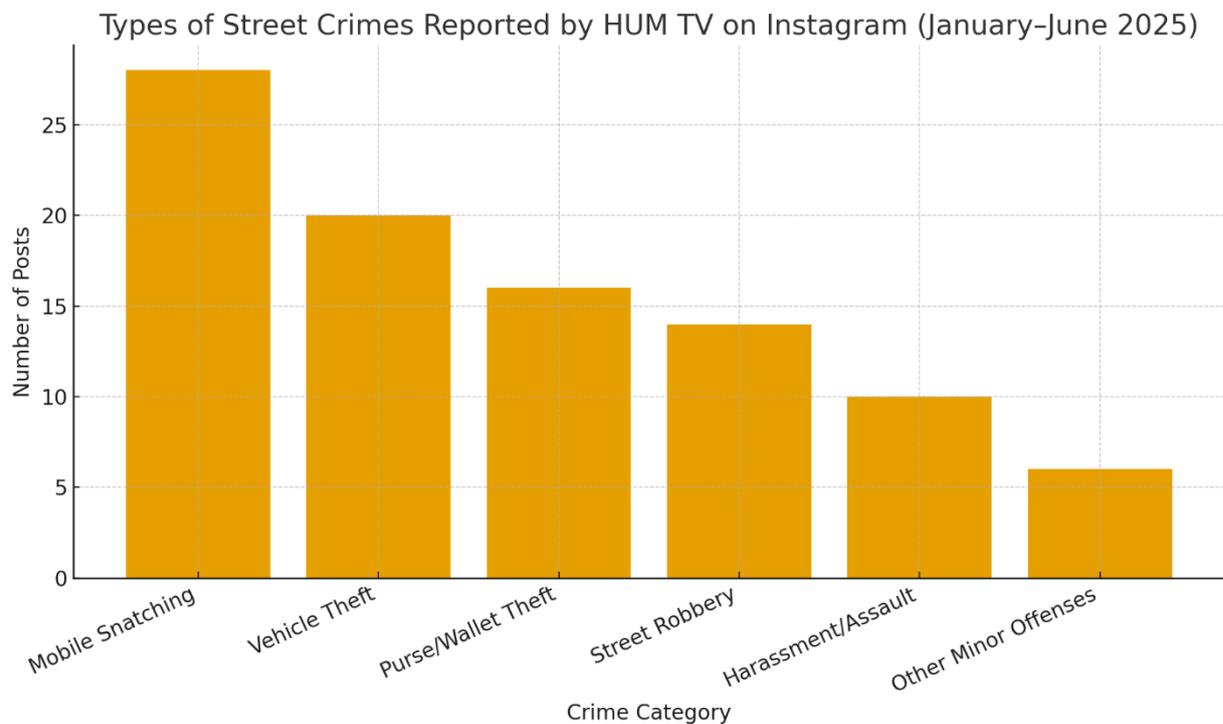
Another important finding relates to ethical concerns. The speed and competitiveness of digital news mean that HUM TV, like many media outlets, sometimes prioritizes being first over being fully accurate. Posts are often shared within minutes of an incident, occasionally without official confirmation or complete context. This pattern aligns with the ethical challenges noted by Babar (2023) and Zafar (2017), who both emphasized that the race for online visibility can lead to violations of privacy and incomplete reporting. For instance, in some posts, identifiable individuals appeared without appropriate blurring or consent, raising questions about media responsibility and ethics.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the positive impact of HUM TV's Instagram activity. The platform allows the network to share timely updates, safety alerts, and public information directly with citizens. In several cases, posts helped spread awareness about ongoing police operations or safety measures, supporting the argument by Khan, Ali, and Dar (2024) that digital media can serve as a bridge between the public and law enforcement agencies. This immediacy helps communities stay informed, even if the presentation style sometimes leans toward sensationalism.

Overall, the discussion points to a dual nature in HUM TV's digital reporting. On one side, it performs an important social role by spreading awareness and ensuring quick access to local crime news. On the other, it reinforces fear through repetitive, dramatic, and emotionally charged storytelling. This combination of information and sensation reflects what Ahsan et al. (2025) describe as the “glamorization of crime,” where the line between awareness and entertainment becomes blurred.

In conclusion, HUM TV's Instagram coverage of street crime in Islamabad illustrates how digital media shape not only public knowledge but also public feeling. The study shows that repeated exposure to emotionally charged and visually intense content

encourages audiences to perceive their surroundings as more dangerous than they might be. These findings underline the need for responsible digital journalism — one that balances the urgency of reporting with ethical accuracy and social awareness. In the rapidly evolving media environment of Pakistan, striking that balance will be essential for ensuring that information empowers rather than alarms the public.



Conclusion and Recommendations

This study set out to explore how HUM TV's Instagram account portrays street crimes in Islamabad and how such digital reporting shapes public perception. After analyzing the posts, captions, and audience engagement patterns, it became clear that social media has changed the way crime is reported — making it faster, more visual, and often more emotional. HUM TV uses Instagram not just to share news, but also to grab attention through short videos, striking images, and powerful captions. While this approach keeps people informed, it also tends to dramatize events, sometimes creating more fear than awareness.

The findings suggest that HUM TV's use of Instagram offers both opportunities and challenges. On the positive side, social media allows quick updates and helps people stay aware of what's happening around them. This supports Khan et al. (2024), who found that digital media can help citizens feel more connected to law enforcement and their local communities. When used responsibly, this kind of reporting strengthens public safety awareness and builds trust between the media and the audience.

However, there's another side to the story. The constant use of alarming visuals, urgent captions, and emotionally charged language can make viewers feel unsafe, even when crime rates are not rising dramatically. HUM TV often uses red warning banners, police siren icons, or blurred crime-scene footage that attract clicks but also trigger anxiety. This reflects Entman's (1993) *Framing Theory*, which explains how the way media presents a story can shape what people believe about it. Similarly, Whitlock (2023) points out that visuals on digital platforms can magnify emotions, often turning everyday events into dramatic narratives of danger.

The study also revealed ethical challenges. As Babar (2023) and Zafar (2017) argue, the competition to post breaking news first sometimes causes journalists to overlook important ethical boundaries. Some HUM TV posts appeared to include unverified information or identifiable faces of victims, which can raise serious privacy and accuracy concerns. In a fast-paced digital environment, these ethical dilemmas are becoming increasingly common in Pakistan's newsrooms.

Another major issue is what the media chooses to show — and what it leaves out. HUM TV's posts often focus on visually dramatic crimes like snatching or shootouts, while other types of street crimes receive less attention. This selective focus fits Agenda-Setting Theory by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which explains how the media decides which topics people should think about. By repeatedly posting similar types of incidents, HUM TV's Instagram account may unintentionally give the impression that Islamabad is less safe than it actually is. Ahsan et al. (2025) describe this process as the "glamorization of crime," where serious social problems are turned into emotionally appealing, almost cinematic stories.

In short, HUM TV's Instagram coverage shows both the strengths and weaknesses of digital journalism. On one hand, it connects people to real-time events and encourages community awareness. On the other, it can amplify fear and blur ethical lines. The goal, therefore, should not be to avoid using social media for reporting but to use it more thoughtfully and responsibly.

Recommendations

1. Promote Balanced Crime Coverage HUM TV should aim for balance by reporting not only crimes but also solutions — for example, police successes, safety campaigns, and community prevention programs. This would give the audience a more complete understanding of crime and security issues (Shah et al., 2019).
2. Strengthen Ethical Standards Journalists should verify information carefully and protect individuals' privacy before posting. Media houses can also offer regular training sessions on ethical reporting in digital spaces (Babar, 2023; Zafar, 2017).
3. Use Responsible Visual Storytelling Instead of relying on frightening images, media outlets can use data visualizations, infographics, or verified footage

that inform without sensationalizing. This supports Whitlock's (2023) call for "responsible visual journalism."

4. Encourage Media–Community Collaboration News channels can work with local authorities and civic organizations to share verified safety information and highlight community efforts. This approach helps transform news media into a public service rather than just a source of alarm (Khan et al., 2024).
5. Research Audience Impact Future research should focus on how exposure to such Instagram posts affects people's sense of fear, trust in the media, and daily behavior. Understanding this can help media organizations communicate crime news more responsibly (Ahsan et al., 2025).

In conclusion, HUM TV's Instagram coverage reflects a broader change in journalism — where information spreads quickly, visuals dominate, and emotions drive engagement. While this has made crime reporting more accessible, it also risks amplifying fear and sensationalism. The challenge for media organizations is to find the right balance between speed and accuracy, emotion and ethics. By doing so, platforms like HUM TV's Instagram can move beyond fear-driven narratives and become genuine tools for awareness, education, and collective safety.

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