

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE P. DIDDY SEXUAL ASSAULT CASE IN *THE GUARDIAN*

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Abstrak

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This study aims to examine how The Guardian presents news coverage of sexual harassment cases involving Sean “P. Diddy” Combs. The research adopts a qualitative approach with a primary focus on discourse analysis to explore how media texts construct social meanings. Through this approach, the study is grounded in the assumption that the media do not merely transmit factual information, but actively shape public understanding through the selection of narratives, perspectives, and linguistic choices. Media discourse therefore plays a crucial role in defining how actors, events, and power relations are interpreted by the public. The analysis seeks to address three main aspects. First, it investigates how the alleged perpetrator is portrayed in the news coverage, particularly in relation to status, power, and legal positioning. Second, it examines how the victim is represented, including the extent to which victims’ voices are foregrounded or marginalized within the narrative. Third, the study identifies the dominant narratives that emerge across the coverage and considers how these narratives contribute to broader social understandings of sexual harassment. Based on the findings, the analysis reveals that The Guardian places greater narrative emphasis on the alleged perpetrator than on the victim. The perpetrator is frequently framed through references to professional status, public reputation, and legal processes, while the victim tends to occupy a secondary position in the overall narrative structure. When victims are represented, their experiences are often framed in emotional and dramatic terms, emphasizing suffering and trauma rather than agency or structural power imbalance. This pattern suggests that while the coverage demonstrates sensitivity toward victims, it simultaneously reproduces a discourse in which the alleged perpetrator remains the central focus of media attention.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment remains a serious and widespread social problem affecting various segments of society. This behavior includes acts of coercion, inappropriate conduct, and sexual exploitation carried out without the consent of the victim. The phenomenon is not limited to private spheres such as family or personal relationships, but frequently occurs in workplaces, educational institutions, and public spaces (Suvak et al., 2013). In many situations, cases of sexual harassment remain hidden and difficult to identify due to social pressure, fear of reporting, and victims' limited understanding of their rights (Miranti & Sudiana, 2021).

The consequences of sexual harassment are multidimensional, encompassing physical, psychological, and social impacts. Victims often experience prolonged trauma, anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of such experiences. Feelings of guilt, fear, and decreased self-confidence frequently become emotional burdens that are difficult to overcome. At the same time, persistent social stigma often positions victims as blameworthy, leading many individuals to refrain from reporting their experiences (Putri et al., 2022). This condition is further exacerbated by legal systems that, in certain cases, fail to provide optimal protection for victims, while perpetrators are not always held adequately accountable (Grubb & Turner, 2012).

One sexual harassment case that has attracted significant public attention involves the renowned artist Sean Combs, also known as P. Diddy. The initial allegation was filed by his former partner, Cassie Ventura, who submitted a lawsuit on November 16, 2023, accusing Combs of sexual violence. However, the lawsuit was withdrawn one day later following a statement that the matter would be resolved amicably. Subsequently, two other women filed lawsuits, including an anonymous woman and Joi Dickerson-Neal. In her report, Joi stated that she experienced sexual assault in 1991 and claimed that she had been drugged prior to the incident.

Another lawsuit was filed by a woman using the pseudonym Jane Doe, who claimed to be a victim of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. According to the lawsuit, in 2003, when she was 17 years old, she was allegedly subjected to gang rape involving Combs, former Bad Boy Records executive Harve Pierre, and another individual. In response to these allegations, on December 6, 2023, Combs issued a statement via social media asserting that the accusations against him were unfounded and motivated by financial gain. He stated that he would defend his reputation, his family, and the truth.

In 2024, further allegations emerged from a music producer known as Lil Rod, who accused Combs of physical abuse and coercive attempts to engage in sexual activity. Lil Rod also claimed that he was forced to procure sex workers, including individuals allegedly under the age of 18, to perform sexual acts for Combs. As reports increased, on March 25, 2024, agents from the New York Department of Homeland Security Investigations conducted searches of Combs' residences in Los Angeles and Miami as part of an investigation into alleged sex trafficking.

The growing number of allegations related to sexual harassment, sex trafficking, and property searches ultimately led to Combs' arrest in mid-September 2024 by U.S. federal authorities. By early October 2024, media outlets reported that

more than one hundred civil lawsuits had been filed by victims of various ages, including both men and women. The scale and pattern of these allegations reinforced public perceptions that the case was not an isolated incident, but rather part of an alleged systematic practice occurring over an extended period.

Public attention toward Combs has also been influenced by his association with the White Party, an exclusive event held regularly from the late 1990s to the late 2000s. The event was widely known as a gathering of entertainment industry elites, top celebrities, and influential figures, with an all-white dress code symbolizing luxury and social status. The White Party was often portrayed as a manifestation of the glamorous and extravagant lifestyle long associated with Combs' public image.

Over time, investigative reports revealed the existence of after-parties following the main White Party events, known as "freak-off parties," which were private and attended only by selected guests. Several testimonies and media reports suggested that these gatherings allegedly involved high-risk and extreme sexual practices, including group sexual activity, BDSM practices, and the use of psychoactive substances that could impair participants' awareness. These allegations reframed the events not merely as expressions of private lifestyle choices, but as spaces potentially facilitating unlawful activities.

Suspicion of illegal practices intensified following law enforcement searches of several Combs properties, including his Los Angeles residence. Authorities reportedly discovered hundreds to thousands of bottles of baby oil, hidden recording devices in multiple rooms, and narcotics such as ecstasy and GHB, substances often associated with sexual crimes due to their sedative effects. In addition, an AR-15 firearm with a defaced serial number was reportedly found, expanding the scope of alleged criminal activity beyond sexual harassment.

In response to these charges, Combs pleaded not guilty and has remained detained in New York while awaiting trial, which is scheduled for mid-2025. His legal team and personal representatives have consistently denied all allegations, asserting that Combs' activities were part of a consensual and private adult lifestyle. They further stated that there was no coercion, sex trafficking, or sexual violence as alleged by the plaintiffs.

When a public figure with significant economic and symbolic power such as Combs becomes the focus of serious allegations, the media function not only as conveyors of legal facts but also as arenas for the production of social meaning. Media coverage frequently highlights power relations between the accused and the victims, emphasizing that power is manifested not only through wealth or fame, but also through the ability to control narratives, silence victims' voices, and influence public opinion and legal processes.

Conversely, shallow reporting that is detached from the context of power imbalances tends to reproduce stigma against victims. This is reflected in public responses on social media and online discussion spaces that question the timing of victims' reports or the motives behind the lawsuits (Franiuk et al., 2008). Such responses contribute to a climate of fear that discourages other victims from speaking out. On the other hand, victim-support movements emerge from awareness of unequal power relations, although in some cases such support is also expressed through speculation or narrative constructions that oversimplify legal complexities.

Media coverage that places victims' experiences at the center with empathy and

depth tends to strengthen social solidarity and stimulate broader discourse, including calls for reform within the entertainment industry and stronger legal protection for survivors of sexual violence. The diversity of media outlets reporting on this case has generated a wide spectrum of interpretations among audiences (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). One international media outlet that has consistently covered this case with a critical and investigative approach is The Guardian, which situates the Combs case within broader frameworks of power relations, celebrity culture, and victim vulnerability in contemporary society.

The selection of The Guardian as the news outlet for this study is supported by data from the Ahrefs website, which indicate that although The Guardian originates from the United Kingdom, it also attracts a significant readership from the United States.

Traffic by location for theguardian.com

Location	Traffic	Share
GB United Kingdom	13M +407.4K	33%
US United States	10.7M +244.8K	27.3%
IN India	3M -705.3K	7.8%
AU Australia	3M -100K	7.4%
CA Canada	2M -4.4K	5%



LITERATURE REVIEW

1. SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Sexual harassment is widely recognized as a complex social phenomenon rooted in unequal power relations, gender hierarchies, and cultural norms. It encompasses a broad range of behaviors, including unwanted sexual advances, coercion, verbal harassment, and sexual exploitation, all of which occur without the consent of the victim. Scholars argue that sexual harassment is not merely an individual act of misconduct, but a structural problem shaped by social, institutional, and cultural contexts (Grubb & Turner, 2012).

From a sociological perspective, sexual harassment is closely linked to power imbalance, where perpetrators often occupy positions of authority or influence that enable abusive behavior to persist while silencing victims. This imbalance is particularly evident in workplaces, educational institutions, and industries characterized by rigid hierarchies, such as the entertainment sector. Victims frequently face barriers to reporting, including fear of retaliation, reputational damage, and social stigma (Suvak et al., 2013).

Moreover, cultural narratives surrounding sexuality and gender frequently contribute to victim-blaming practices, in which victims are questioned, discredited, or portrayed as complicit in their own victimization. Such narratives reinforce silence and normalize abuse. Understanding sexual harassment as a socially constructed phenomenon allows researchers to examine how meaning is produced, legitimized, or contested through discourse, including media representations. This perspective is essential for analyzing how news coverage frames perpetrators and victims, and how public understanding of sexual violence is shaped through language and narrative selection.

2. MEDIA REPRESENTATION AND FRAMING OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Media play a central role in shaping public perceptions of sexual violence by selecting, framing, and narrating events in particular ways. News coverage does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it through language, imagery, and emphasis. Framing theory suggests that media highlight certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, guiding audiences toward specific interpretations (Entman, 1993). In cases of sexual harassment, media framing often influences whether victims are perceived as credible and whether perpetrators are held morally accountable.

Previous studies indicate that media frequently prioritize sensational elements, legal drama, or the status of high-profile perpetrators over the lived experiences of victims (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). Victims are sometimes portrayed emotionally, focusing on trauma and suffering, while structural issues such as power imbalance and institutional failure receive limited attention. Conversely, perpetrators especially celebrities are often framed through narratives of success, influence, and reputation, which may implicitly legitimize their authority.

Media representations also shape public discourse through repeated use of specific labels, metaphors, and quotations. Terms such as “alleged,” “consensual,” or “private lifestyle” can significantly influence interpretations of responsibility and guilt. As a result, media coverage becomes a key site where meanings of consent, violence, and justice are negotiated. Analyzing media discourse is therefore crucial for understanding how sexual violence is normalized, challenged, or contested within the public sphere.

3. DISCOURSE, POWER, AND MICHEL FOUCAULT’S PERSPECTIVE

Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse provides a critical framework for examining how power operates through language and knowledge. According to Foucault, discourse is not merely a reflection of reality but a system of representation that produces meaning, shapes truth, and regulates social practices. Power, in this sense, is not only repressive but productive, as it determines what can be said, who can speak, and which narratives are considered legitimate (Foucault, 1980).

In media contexts, discourse functions as a mechanism through which power relations are reinforced or challenged. News texts are embedded within broader institutional structures, including legal systems, political interests, and cultural norms. Through selective framing and repetition, media discourse can privilege dominant voices such as state authorities or powerful individuals while marginalizing alternative perspectives, particularly those of victims.

Foucauldian discourse analysis emphasizes the relationship between power and knowledge, focusing on how certain interpretations become dominant while others are silenced. This approach is particularly relevant in cases involving powerful public figures accused of sexual violence. It enables researchers to explore how media narratives construct authority, normalize inequality, and define the boundaries of acceptable discourse. By applying this perspective, researchers can uncover how media coverage contributes to the reproduction of power imbalance and shapes public understanding of justice and accountability.

4. CELEBRITY CULTURE, POWER, AND MEDIA DISCOURSE

Celebrity culture plays a significant role in shaping media narratives, particularly in cases involving allegations of sexual violence. Celebrities possess symbolic, economic, and cultural capital that extends beyond their professional achievements, granting them

visibility and influence over public opinion. Media coverage of celebrity scandals often reflects this imbalance, as fame can function both as a shield and a source of scrutiny (Driessens, 2013).

In sexual harassment cases involving celebrities, media discourse frequently oscillates between admiration and condemnation. On one hand, celebrities are portrayed as powerful figures with successful careers and vast influence; on the other, allegations threaten their public image and legacy. This tension often leads to narratives that emphasize legal uncertainty, reputation management, and presumption of innocence, sometimes at the expense of victims' voices.

Scholars argue that celebrity status can complicate notions of accountability, as public fascination may overshadow the seriousness of the allegations (Franiuk et al., 2008). Media outlets may prioritize dramatic storytelling, focusing on trials, raids, or public statements rather than structural issues such as exploitation and coercion.

Consequently, celebrity cases become symbolic sites where broader social debates about power, consent, and justice are played out. Examining media discourse within celebrity culture is therefore essential to understanding how sexual violence is framed and interpreted in contemporary society.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research methodology refers to a series of systematic procedures employed by researchers to obtain and manage research data. In this study, a qualitative approach is applied. This approach aims to explore meanings and concepts through data or information presented in a descriptive-analytical form, without relying on numerical representation. Qualitative research places greater emphasis on an in-depth understanding of how a phenomenon occurs within its natural context (Abubakar, 2021).

The data collection technique in this study utilizes news texts published by the online mass media outlet *The Guardian*. Data were collected through the selection and documentation of news articles published from the initial emergence of the case on September 16, 2023, until the most recent developments recorded on July 2, 2025. The analysis conducted in this study seeks to reveal how news narratives construct representations of the victim, the perpetrator, and the dominant discourses present in the coverage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the development of the case observed from the first report to the most recent court proceedings on July 2, 2025, five news articles were collected.

No	Chronology	Summary (English)	News Link
1	First report by Cassie Ventura (ex-girlfriend)	Cassie Ventura, the singer known as Cassie, filed a lawsuit accusing Sean	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/nov/16/sean-combs-diddy-cassie-sexual-assault-lawsuit

“Diddy” Combs of rape, physical abuse, and controlling behavior over more than a decade. The lawsuit detailed severe allegations, including forced sexual encounters and abuse; Combs denied the claims. ([The Guardian](#))

- 2 Raid on P. Diddy’s properties Federal agents from the Department of Homeland Security executed search warrants at Combs’s properties in Los Angeles and Miami as part of an ongoing sex-trafficking investigation . Combs was not publicly charged at the time, and his lawyers condemned the force <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/mar/26/se-an-diddy-los-angeles-miami-properties-raided-federal-investigation-sex-trafficking>



		used. (The Guardian)	
3	Arrest of P. Diddy	Sean “Diddy” Combs was arrested in New York after being indicted by a federal grand jury in connection with the wider investigation linked to multiple sexual assault allegations. He was taken into custody and expected to be arraigned. (The Guardian)	https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/sep/17/sean-diddy-combs-arrest-new-york-grand-jury-indictment-ntwnfb
4	First trial hearing	Combs’s federal sex-trafficking and racketeering trial began with jury selection in New York City. The judge provided prospective jurors with an overview of the charges; opening statements and	https://www.theguardian.com/music/2025/may/05/sean-diddy-combs-sex-trafficking-trial-jury-selection



		testimony were expected soon. (The Guardian)
5	End of the trial	The criminal trial concluded with a mixed verdict: Combs was acquitted of the major sex-trafficking and racketeering charges but convicted on two lesser counts of transportation for prostitution. Dozens of civil lawsuits continue to move forward. (The Guardian)

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2025/jul/03/sean-diddy-combs-civil-suits>

To conduct a deeper examination of the coverage published by The Guardian, discourse analysis using Michel Foucault’s approach was applied to identify and uncover the narrative constructions shaping the news. This approach focuses on the relationship between power and knowledge that mutually influence the production of discourse, enabling an exploration of how news does not merely convey facts but also represents reality through particular frameworks.

The first analysis examines the article “Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs accused of rape and severe physical abuse by ex-girlfriend Cassie.”

Segment	Quotation	Analysis
How the media frames P. Diddy	“Combs began aggressively pursuing Ventura, immediately exerted his power and influence”	This quotation shows that <i>The Guardian</i> positions P. Diddy as a figure with substantial power from the very beginning of the relationship. The media emphasizes his dominance by highlighting his



		influence, authority, and ability to control the situation, framing him not merely as an individual but as a powerful industry figure capable of shaping others' lives.
	<i>"Her volatile and abusive partner who also owned her label and therefore held her future success in his hands had fully exerted control over every aspect of her life"</i>	The media reinforces the imbalance of power by stressing Combs's dual role as both romantic partner and label owner. This framing underlines structural domination, where economic and professional dependence becomes a tool of psychological control and abuse.
	<i>"Hip-hop icon and the founder of Bad Boy Records"</i>	By repeatedly referring to Combs as a hip-hop icon and founder of a major record label, the media foregrounds his elite status, reinforcing the idea that the alleged abuse occurred within a context of fame, wealth, and institutional authority.
	<i>"Business empire"</i>	The phrase "business empire" amplifies Combs's image as a powerful capitalist figure, suggesting that his influence extends beyond music into broader economic and social spheres, which may have enabled prolonged abusive behavior.
How the media frames the victim	<i>"Years in silence and darkness"</i>	This phrase frames the victim as someone who endured prolonged suffering in isolation. The media highlights the emotional weight of silence, emphasizing trauma, fear, and the difficulty of speaking out against a powerful figure.
	<i>"Finally ready to tell my story"</i>	This quotation constructs the victim's narrative as one of courage and empowerment. The media frames the disclosure as a turning point, symbolizing resistance against long-standing oppression and control.
Dominant narrative	<i>"Used his powerful network to keep her trapped in a violent relationship"</i>	This dominant narrative suggests that violence was not merely personal but systemic. The media emphasizes networks of power and protection that enabled the abuse to continue, shifting the focus from individual misconduct to structural complicity.
	<i>"He lured her into an 'ostentatious, fast-paced, and drug-fueled lifestyle'"</i>	The media frames the abuse within a lifestyle shaped by excess and manipulation, suggesting that glamour and indulgence were used as tools to normalize and conceal violence.

“Though his ‘loyal network’ witnessed his assaults, they were unwilling to do anything meaningful to stop Mr Combs’s behavior”

This quotation reinforces the idea of collective silence and complicity. The dominant narrative portrays a social system that protects powerful individuals while marginalizing victims, further legitimizing the framing of abuse as structurally enabled.

The second analysis focuses on “Raids turn up legal heat on Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs in sex-trafficking investigation.”

Segment	Quotation	Analysis
How the media frames P. Diddy	<i>“The rapper and mogul Sean Combs is facing mounting legal troubles after federal agents searched his properties in Los Angeles and Miami as part of a sex-trafficking investigation.”</i>	The media portrays P. Diddy as a highly powerful figure who is now under increasing legal pressure. The use of the terms “rapper and mogul” emphasizes his elite status in the entertainment industry, while “mounting legal troubles” frames the situation as a serious crisis threatening his public image and authority.
	<i>“Bad Boy Records founder”</i>	By repeatedly identifying Combs as the founder of Bad Boy Records, the media reinforces his position as a music industry powerhouse. This framing highlights the contrast between his long-established authority and the legal challenges he is now facing.
How the media frames the	<i>“On Monday morning, US Department of Homeland Security agents in tactical gear and armored vehicles raided two of Combs’s mansions as part of an investigation by federal authorities in New York.”</i>	The description of law enforcement officers wearing tactical gear and using armored vehicles creates a dramatic and extraordinary image. This framing suggests the seriousness of the investigation and amplifies public attention toward the scale and intensity of the federal response.
	<i>“An attorney for Combs confirmed the searches on Tuesday, which he described as a ‘gross overuse of military-level force’, and said Combs had cooperated with authorities.”</i>	The lawyer’s statement introduces a counter-narrative that frames Combs as a cooperative individual and potentially a victim of excessive use of state power. By including this perspective, the media presents a tension between allegations of serious crime and claims of procedural injustice.
How the media frames the	<i>“In November, the singer Cassie, who dated Combs, accused him of rape and</i>	The victim is framed as someone who endured prolonged abuse. Emphasizing the duration of “more than a decade”



victim	<i>severe physical abuse spanning more than a decade.</i> <i>“Cassie alleged that Combs had subjected her to ‘a cycle of abuse, violence and sex trafficking’, forced her to have sex with male prostitutes, and used his powerful network to keep her trapped in the relationship.”</i>	strengthens the perception of sustained suffering and reinforces the credibility of the allegations. The phrase “cycle of abuse, violence and sex trafficking” depicts the abuse as systematic and repetitive. Words such as “forced” and “trapped” highlight extreme exploitation and coercion, while the reference to a “powerful network” underscores structural power relations that enabled control over the victim.
Dominant narrative	<i>“Federal agents searched his properties in Los Angeles and Miami as part of a sex-trafficking investigation.”</i> <i>“Gross overuse of military-level force.”</i>	The dominant narrative centers on intense federal legal pressure against a highly influential public figure. The raids function as symbolic acts demonstrating the state’s seriousness in addressing alleged major crimes. This quotation strengthens the narrative of conflict between state authority and individual power. It reflects an attempt to frame the law enforcement action as excessive, introducing debate over the proportionality of the investigation.
	<i>“While Combs has not been named as the target of the investigation, it follows numerous sexual assault allegations.”</i>	This statement ties the investigation to a broader pattern of accusations. Although Combs is not formally named as the main target, the accumulation of prior sexual assault allegations legitimizes the investigation and frames it as part of a wider, ongoing issue rather than an isolated event.

The third analysis addresses “Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs arrested in New York after federal indictment.”

Segment	Quotation	Analysis
How the media frames P. Diddy	<i>“Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs, the hip-hop mogul.”</i>	The media portrays P. Diddy as a major figure in the hip-hop music industry by emphasizing his high social and professional status. The term “mogul” frames him as an elite and influential individual whose prominence amplifies the public impact of the allegations against him.
	<i>“Combs was once one of the most</i>	This quotation highlights Combs’s



successful rappers in the US, with a string of hit tracks including US No 1 singles Can't Nobody Hold Me Down. But his reputation has been damaged since the allegations, which he has denied."

past achievements while contrasting them with his current reputational decline. The media acknowledges his musical success but frames it as overshadowed by allegations that have tarnished his public image, even as it notes his denial of the accusations.

How the media frames the victims

"Last November, his former protégé and girlfriend, the R&B singer Cassie, became the first of several people to sue him for sexual abuse."

In this coverage, the victims are mentioned briefly, as the primary focus remains on Combs's arrest and legal status. The victim is clearly named and identified by her professional role as a singer, lending credibility while limiting deeper exploration of her personal experience.

"Another of Combs' accusers was a woman who said the rap producer raped her two decades ago when she was 17."

The media frames the victim through the seriousness of the allegation rather than through personal narrative. The mention of her age at the time of the alleged assault underscores vulnerability, yet the reporting remains concise and factual.

"Last week a man who accused Combs of sexually assaulting him ..."

This quotation further reinforces the presence of multiple accusers. The brevity of the description suggests that individual victim stories are secondary to establishing the pattern and scale of allegations against Combs.

Dominant narrative

"Since then, his career has been plagued with sexual assault lawsuits and a federal investigation."

The dominant narrative presents Combs's career as being overshadowed by ongoing sexual assault lawsuits and a federal investigation. The framing suggests a sustained and cumulative impact of the allegations on his professional life.

"In recent weeks New York mayor Eric Adams has demanded Combs return the ceremonial key to the city he was awarded in September 2023, while Howard University rescinded Combs' honorary degree, discontinued a scholarship

This quotation emphasizes the institutional and symbolic consequences of the allegations. The withdrawal of honors and recognition by public and educational institutions frames the accusations as having serious



programme in his name and returned a \$1m donation.”

reputational and social ramifications beyond the legal sphere.

The fourth analysis reviews “Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs’s sex-trafficking trial begins with jury selection in New York.”

Segment	Quotation	Analysis
How the media frames P. Diddy	<i>“The federal sex trafficking trial of Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs, the hip-hop entrepreneur whose wildly successful career has been dotted by allegations of violence.”</i>	As in previous coverage, the media frames P. Diddy as a hip-hop icon with a highly successful career who is now confronted with serious sexual violence allegations. Instead of repeatedly naming him, <i>The Guardian</i> often uses labels such as “the hip-hop entrepreneur” or “hip-hop mogul,” emphasizing his elite status while linking it to recurring accusations of violence.
	<i>“He wore a sweater over a white collared shirt and grey slacks, which the judge had allowed rather than jail clothing.”</i>	The description of Combs’s courtroom appearance highlights his privileged treatment within the legal process. By noting that he was permitted to wear civilian clothing instead of prison attire, the media subtly reinforces his status and the formality of the judicial setting.
How the media frames the victims	<i>“A video of the hip-hop mogul hitting and kicking one of his accusers in a Los Angeles hotel hallway in 2016.”</i>	The reference to video evidence strengthens the framing of Combs as a powerful figure implicated in physical violence. The continued use of the term “hip-hop mogul” juxtaposes his celebrity status with the alleged brutality, intensifying the moral contrast presented to readers.
	<i>“Prosecutors say women were manipulated into drug-fueled sexual performances with male sex workers that Combs called ‘freak offs’.”</i>	The victims are framed through the perspective of the prosecution, which emphasizes manipulation, coercion, and exploitation. The language portrays women as being systematically controlled and abused within an environment shaped by drugs and power imbalances.
	<i>“To keep women in line, prosecutors say Combs used a mix of influence and violence... resorted to violent acts including beatings, kidnapping and arson.”</i>	This quotation constructs the victims as individuals trapped within a system of coercion supported by violence and threats. The media highlights the severity of the alleged acts to underscore the seriousness of the accusations, while also noting that these claims are part of the prosecution’s narrative.

Dominant narrative	<i>“Combs and his lawyers say he’s innocent and any group sex was consensual.”</i>	The first dominant narrative comes from the defense, which frames the events as consensual and denies any coercion or criminal intent. This perspective emphasizes individual consent and rejects the prosecution’s characterization of systemic abuse.
	<i>“They say there was no effort to coerce people into things they didn’t want to do, and nothing that happened amounted to a criminal racket.”</i>	This reinforces the defense’s narrative that the alleged acts do not meet the legal definition of organized criminal activity, positioning Combs as wrongfully accused rather than a perpetrator.
	<i>“Arun Subramanian, who reminded them that Combs had pleaded not guilty and was presumed innocent.”</i>	The second dominant narrative emphasizes legal neutrality and the presumption of innocence. By citing the judge’s reminder, the media balances the reporting of allegations with a procedural safeguard, reinforcing journalistic objectivity in covering the trial.

The fifth analysis examines “Sean ‘Diddy’ Combs faces growing wave of civil suits as criminal trial ends.”

Segment	Quotation	Analysis
How the media frames P. Diddy	<i>“The jury acquitted the 55-year-old music mogul of the most serious charges – racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking – but found him guilty on the two lesser counts of transportation to engage in prostitution.”</i>	As in the previous four news reports, the media consistently frames P. Diddy as a “music mogul,” emphasizing his elite status. The coverage highlights that he was acquitted of the most serious charges, while being convicted only on two lesser counts. This framing positions the verdict as a partial legal victory for Combs.
	<i>“Outside the courthouse on Wednesday, a crowd of Combs’s supporters gathered to celebrate the partial acquittal, chanting his name and cheering as members of his family exited the building.”</i>	By describing celebrations by supporters and family members, the media reinforces the narrative of relief and triumph surrounding Combs. This portrayal emphasizes public sympathy and solidarity toward him following the verdict.
How the media frames the victims	<i>“But while his fans rejoiced, many victims’ advocacy organizations expressed disappointment in the verdict.”</i>	<i>The Guardian</i> explicitly contrasts the celebration of Combs’s supporters with the reaction of victims’ advocacy groups. This

		framing underscores the emotional and moral divide between those who view the verdict as a success and those who see it as a failure of justice.
	<i>“UltraViolet, a women’s rights organization, said the verdict was ‘not just a stain on a criminal justice system that for decades has failed to hold accountable abusers like Diddy, it’s also an indictment of a culture in which not believing women and victims of sexual assault remains endemic’.”</i>	By quoting advocacy organizations directly, the media amplifies critical voices that frame the verdict as a broader systemic failure. The focus shifts from individual guilt to structural issues within the justice system and cultural attitudes toward survivors of sexual violence.
	<i>“Douglas Wigdor, an attorney for Ventura, said that ‘although the jury did not find Combs guilty of sex-trafficking Cassie beyond a reasonable doubt, she paved the way for a jury to find him guilty of transportation to engage in prostitution’.”</i>	This quotation frames the victim’s role as instrumental in achieving partial accountability. The media presents Cassie not only as a victim but also as a catalyst for legal consequences, reinforcing her significance within the broader narrative of justice.
Dominant narrative	<i>“The outcome was widely seen as the best outcome Combs and his legal team could have hoped for, outside of a full acquittal.”</i>	The dominant narrative positions the verdict as largely favorable to Combs and his legal team. By framing the outcome in terms of strategic success rather than moral resolution, the media emphasizes legal pragmatism over the unresolved concerns raised by victims and advocacy groups.

Based on the analysis of these five articles, the perpetrator is portrayed as a high-profile music figure possessing substantial power derived from both status and wealth. Across the coverage, he is consistently referred to as a “mogul,” a term associated with individuals who wield significant influence, particularly in business and the entertainment industry. This framing is reinforced through dramatic narratives emphasizing his business empire and involvement in serious criminal allegations. Consequently, the perpetrator is represented as a powerful figure accused of abusing his authority, while simultaneously being positioned as a defendant entitled to legal protection, as reflected in references to the principle of presumed innocence.

Narratives concerning the victims receive relatively less attention compared to those focusing on the perpetrator. Victims are often presented as supporting elements that reinforce the ongoing legal case. However, when victims are foregrounded, their representation is emotionally charged and designed to evoke empathy from readers. Expressions such as years in silence and darkness depict prolonged suffering, culminating in statements like finally ready to tell my story, which frame the victims as

resisting domination. In later coverage, public support for the victims is highlighted, positioning their voices not only as expressions of personal trauma but also as catalysts for broader change in addressing sexual violence involving powerful public figures.

As the case progresses, media attention shifts toward legal and institutional dimensions. Federal raids on Combs' properties are described with high visual and narrative intensity, featuring armed officers and armored vehicles. This representation reinforces the impression that a once-powerful public figure is now under state scrutiny. At this stage, victims' experiences receive diminishing narrative space, replaced by statements from law enforcement officials, legal representatives, and speculation surrounding the investigation.

During trial coverage, the media presents a contestation of narratives between prosecutors and the defense. Prosecutors describe alleged sexual exploitation, manipulation, and violence enacted through mechanisms of control and intimidation. Conversely, Combs and his legal team frame the incidents as consensual sexual activities within a private adult lifestyle. While the media does not explicitly take sides, its selection of quotations and emphasis continues to foreground power imbalance as a central issue.

Coverage of the court verdict further underscores divergent interpretations of justice in the public sphere. Combs' acquittal on the most serious charges is celebrated by supporters and family members as a legal victory. At the same time, victim advocacy organizations express disappointment, viewing the verdict as evidence of systemic limitations in holding powerful perpetrators of sexual violence accountable. The media presents these contrasting responses side by side without reconciling them narratively.

Overall, this analysis demonstrates that media framing in the Sean Combs case operates through three main patterns. First, the construction of the perpetrator as a powerful figure enables the prolonged concealment of alleged violence. Second, victims are initially represented with empathy but become increasingly marginalized as media focus shifts toward legal proceedings and the perpetrator's reputation. Third, the legal system emerges as a discursive arena where meanings of consent, violence, and justice are negotiated publicly. In this context, the media functions as an active agent shaping social understanding of sexual violence and power relations beyond its informative role.

CONCLUSION

Media coverage of the Sean Combs case illustrates that the media do not merely convey legal facts but actively shape public understanding of sexual violence. Combs is portrayed as a figure with immense power, framing the alleged violence as a consequence of power imbalance. Initially, victims are depicted empathetically, with emphasis on their experiences. However, as legal proceedings advance, media attention increasingly centers on courtroom dynamics and the perpetrator's defense, resulting in the marginalization of victims' voices. The contrast between allegations of violence and claims of consensual activity reveals the limitations of the legal system in addressing victims' sense of justice. This conclusion underscores that media framing plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of sexual violence.



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