AI-GENERATED CRIME SCENE RECONSTRUCTIONS IN NEWS MEDIA: ASSESSING THEIR ROLE IN STIMULATING COPYCAT CRIMES AND SHAPING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

Samadhi Lewke Bandara Karunarathne*

Department of Law, Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT), Kandy, Sri Lanka

*samadhik@apiit.lk

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is progressively used by news media organisations to create realistic crime scene reconstructions. While these representations can enhance audience engagement and understanding, they raise legal, ethical, and societal concerns regarding their potential to shape perceptions of crime, normalise criminal conduct, and encourage copycat behaviour. This study critically examines AI-generated crime scene reconstructions in news media, focusing on their potential relationship with copycat behaviour and implications for media accountability and public safety. It also evaluates whether existing legal and regulatory frameworks adequately address emerging risks associated with AI-assisted crime reporting, while balancing responsible journalism and freedom of expression. The study adopts a mixed-method approach combining doctrinal (Black-Letter) approach, comparative legal analysis, systematic literature review, media content analysis, and expert interviews. Sri Lanka serves as the primary jurisdiction, while the United Kingdom and Australia are examined as comparative jurisdictions. Data are drawn from legislation, case law, academic literature, media reports, regulatory instruments, and stakeholder interviews. Rather than seeking to establish a direct causal relationship between AI-generated crime scene reconstructions and criminal behaviour, the study examines potential pathways through which AI-generated crime reconstructions may influence perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural responses. The study contributes to emerging scholarship on AI-assisted journalism by identifying gaps in existing legal and regulatory frameworks and proposing recommendations to promote transparency, accountability, and harm prevention while maintaining an appropriate balance with freedom of expression.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Crime Scene Reconstructions, Copycat Behaviour, Media Regulation, News Media