

## **Criminal Media and Its Role in Shaping Violent Behavior - An Exploratory Study on a Sample of Students at Annaba University -**

الإعلام الإجرامي ودوره في تشكيل السلوك العنيف  
- دراسة استكشافية على عينة من الطلبة بجامعة عنابة -

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the impact of crime-related media on individual behavior specifically how it incites, motivates, and predisposes individuals to engage in criminal acts and to determine the attitudes of university students regarding the role of such media in the spread of violence and associated criminal behaviors. To achieve these objectives, the study employed a descriptive methodology and utilized a questionnaire for data collection, administering it to a sample of 80 male and female students at Badji Mokhtar University in Annaba. Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyze the data, specifically frequencies, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations. The results indicate that crime-related media plays a role in spreading violence among youth and the community at large, as well as in inciting, motivating, and preparing individuals to commit criminal acts.

**Keywords:** media; criminal media; criminal behavior; violence.

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## 1 – Introduction

Today, the world is living in the midst of an unprecedented communication and information revolution, which has turned the various forms of media and communication (traditional and modern) into a key player in shaping social reality and forming individual awareness. Media is no longer merely a mirror reflecting the events of society, but it has been transformed into a parallel socialization institution that possesses a remarkable ability to penetrate the value, moral, and psychological structure of the recipient. In the midst of this massive media flow, media content that greatly attracts public attention has emerged, foremost among it content related to the world of crime and deviance.

The race among various media outlets (television channels, social media networks, digital platforms), to capture attention and achieve the highest follow-up rates, has led to an intense focus on crime news, broadcasting scenes of violence, presenting details of criminal incidents, and even sometimes embodying them in appealing dramatic and cinematic forms. This continuous focus has produced what has come to be known in modern literature as “criminal media.” Although the stated goal in many cases may be warning or conveying reality, incorrect media handling and the continuous exposure of the recipient.

Because of these implications, this type of media has become a double-edged sword; in many respects it has turned into a fertile environment that contributes to destabilizing psychological well-being, normalizing crime, and weakening self-monitoring. From the perspective of sociology and criminology, the impact of criminal media does not stop at passive reception; rather, it extends to a direct influence on shaping and directing behavior. Repeated exposure to scenes of crime and violence leads to an unconscious process of “social learning,” in which sensitivity to the seriousness of criminal acts becomes dulled and moral standards are distorted. This, in turn, prepares the psychological and mental ground for aggressive ideas to move from the realm of imagination to the realm of actual execution, which directly contributes to the emergence of criminal behavior.

“Violence” in its various forms and manifestations (verbal, physical, symbolic) is considered one of the most prominent expressions of this criminal behavior and one of the most widespread in contemporary societies. Violence is no longer merely an instinctive reaction; it has, in many cases, become an acquired behavior inspired by models promoted by the media, where certain media content presents violence as a justified or “heroic” means of resolving conflicts or asserting oneself. This encourages its spread, especially among vulnerable groups that interact most with technology. Since the “youth” segment represents the backbone of society and its main driving force, it is the group that consumes the most media and digital content, and is the most exposed to its effects by virtue of the characteristics of their age group, which is marked by the search for identity, curiosity, and imitation. The category of “university youth” acquires double importance in this context; they represent the educated elite on whom reliance is placed to lead the future. However, the university environment-with its academic, social, and psychological pressures, and with unlimited media openness-may witness the infiltration of certain alien and violent behaviors that do not align with the sanctity of the university campus nor the level of knowledge of this group.

Accordingly, the focus of this study was to understand the reality of criminal media and the extent of its role in arousing criminal motives and encouraging the individual's behavior toward them, and how it prepares the way for criminal behavior to move into the stage of execution in the form of crimes, as well as the extent of the role that criminal media plays through its channels in spreading violence as one of the manifestations of criminal behavior. This is in order to reveal the seriousness of the problem and to alert society to its danger, which has become an imminent threat to generations, especially as its means advance day by day, through raising the following main problem: **Does criminal media have a role in the emergence of criminal behaviors accompanied by violence?**

From this, the following sub-questions emerged:

- 1- What is the reality of criminal media, and what is the reality of violence within the criminal media sphere?**
- 2- How can criminal media affect an individual's behavior and play a role in provoking, encouraging, and preparing him to engage in criminal behavior?**
- 3- What are the attitudes of university youth toward the role of criminal media and its contribution to spreading violence and some criminal behaviors associated with violence?**

#### **Study objectives:**

- 1- To understand the reality of criminal media, as well as the reality of violence in the criminal media environment.
- 2- To understand how criminal media can influence an individual's behavior and play a role in provoking, stimulating, and preparing them to commit criminal behavior.
- 3- To determine whether criminal media has a role in the spread of violence and the occurrence of criminal behavior, through the attitudes of university youth.

#### **Importance of the study:**

The importance of this study lies in what our Arab societies in particular are witnessing in terms of violence in all its forms, for which responsibility falls on all institutions of society, starting with the family as the primary institution and reaching the media, which is also responsible for the various phenomena present in society, and violence in particular. Hence, the importance of this study is as follows:

- 1- The phenomenon of violence has become widespread to a great extent and has begun to pose a danger to all members of society without exception.
- 2- This phenomenon has also become dangerous because of the media content and programs related to violence that are broadcast by the media.

#### **1- The conceptual framework of the study:**

##### **1.1- The concept of media:**

The word "I'lām" (media) did not originate in an Arab context but is a foreign word translated from the term "information." It is derived from the verb "a'lama," and its use comes as a synonym for other words that give the same meaning, such as "akhbara"

(to inform) or “anba’a” (to notify), all of which aim at the meaning of providing or conveying information or news to someone. Dr. Sami Dhibyan defines media as “the process of investigating current and factual news and disseminating it as widely as possible through modern media means.” (Dhibyan, 1987, p. 49)

According to scholars and researchers, media consists of conveying all new information that we do not know, with the aim of informing and reporting it through specific means. This information may be facts, events, incidents, or truths, and it essentially carries within it a benefit for the recipient. Sociologists affirm that media is one of the most powerful ideological weapons, and among the strongest in its influence on people’s minds. It is capable of revealing truths to the masses, liberating their minds from intellectual rigidity and fanaticism, and guiding them in a scientific and objective manner that distances them entirely from currents of war, sectarianism, and bias. (Mohamed, 1994, p. 154)

Thus, media is the dissemination of information, news, ideas, and opinions among people in a way that expresses their inclinations, orientations, and values, with the intention of influencing them.

### **1.2 - The concept of criminal media:**

Criminal media is considered a specialized form of media that falls within a specific field, namely the field of crime in all its types: killing, assault, theft, rape,... and so on. Its focus is on publishing crime news, amplifying it, and highlighting the manifestations of the development of criminality, its means, and its methods. It is the type of media that takes crime as news material, where the journalist attempts to track crimes, how they occur, the judicial procedures related to them, and who committed them ... and so forth. Criminal media is a non-purposeful type of media that negatively affects the recipient through its messages, and it is not truthful in terms of its content.

Criminal media is a term that refers to the media’s coverage of crime, whether actual crimes or imagined crimes, and this term usually includes the analysis of crimes, providing details about the perpetrators and the victims, and attempting to explain the reasons that led to their occurrence. Criminal media often focuses on the most controversial or most violent crimes, and this focus may lead to exaggerating the impact of crime on society. In addition to that, criminal media can have a major impact on the public’s perception of crime, and may lead to increased fear and insecurity, or it may lead to a better understanding of crime and its causes. Forms of criminal media include: news reports, television programs, documentaries, and even some types of fictional films.

In general, it can be said that criminal media is an important part of the media landscape, but it carries within it challenges related to presenting an accurate picture of crime and avoiding the exaggeration of its impact on society.

### **1.3 - The concept of violence:**

Violence is defined as the use of pressure or force in an unlawful manner, or in a way that does not conform to the law, which is likely to influence an individual’s will. This pressure and force give rise to chaos, so people do not recognize the legitimacy of duties as long as rights are not acknowledged, hostile relationships spread in society, and groups or collective blocs emerge that direct their violence at individuals’ will or property with the aim of subjugating the authorities or other groups, and the two methods may

combine until it becomes terrorism that is more violent. It is also defined by “Jaber Abdel Hamid and Jaber” as hostility and intense anger through the use of force directed toward persons or property. (Mohamed Sofiane, p. 25)

#### **1.4 - Criminal behavior:**

Criminal behavior is defined as deviant behavior originating from a psychologically disturbed personality. Accordingly, the criminal's personality does not essentially differ in its core and basic structure from that of a psychiatric patient. He sees every criminal act as nothing more than a sign and an expression of psychological conflicts that drive its perpetrator toward crime. “Mustafa Fahmy” also defines it as anti-social behavior that includes rebellion, vandalism, rumors, disobedience, as well as cheating, forgery, fraud, embezzlement, bribery, and murder, which are referred to as social behavioral manifestations. (Masouda, 2021, p. 06)

Thus, criminal behavior is nothing but a relative, changing social phenomenon that is subject to modification and alteration. One of the characteristics of behavior is that it can be modified, changed, adapted, and developed according to the external influences acting upon the individual or the consequences that result from this behavior. Criminal behavior is therefore nothing but behavior that is anti-social, and a form of abnormal pathological behavior that requires treatment just as mental illnesses require treatment and care. (Sharifa, 2017, p. 862)

#### **2 – The role of criminal media in spreading violence in society:**

Through numerous social and media studies on the impact of the media in spreading violence, we find two main approaches: the first minimizes its importance and considers it only one of the causes leading to the spread of violence, while the second emphasizes the existing relationship between media and the spread of violence in society. “Bandura,” within the framework of the Social Learning Theory, has demonstrated that children tend to imitate the behavioral patterns they see on television, whereas “Gerbner,” in the Cultivation Theory, emphasizes cumulative exposure to media content, explaining how regular and long-term television viewing leads to a specific perception of the reality we live in. In a particular way among children, it is therefore affirmed that the most significant real danger left by television violence is the viewer's feeling that the world we live in is a dangerous and unsafe place. (Ajwa, 2004, p. 245)

Many studies have also been conducted to understand the impact of media in spreading violence, and among the most prominent of these is the study that examined a group of delinquent children, male and female, residing in various reform institutions. This study included 368 delinquent boys and girls. Ten percent of them stated that cinema had a direct influence on them, while 49 % of the male delinquents said that cinema had aroused their desire to carry a lethal firearm, and 28 % of them learned some methods of theft shown in movies. Furthermore, 20 % learned how to escape arrest and avoid legal punishment, and 45 % found in delinquency and crime a quick path to sudden wealth, as cinema portrayed it for them. In addition, 26 % learned cruelty and violence by imitating some criminals in their lifestyle, which cinema presented to them through violent movies. (Rashwan, 2005, p. 198)

Adolescents and children are also considered among the groups most affected by what they see in media because they lack sufficient information and experience, and they tend to imitate the heroes of films or cartoons, which has often led to the commission of

crimes. Another of the most famous studies confirming the strong link between the increase in violence and media is a long-term study conducted by Eron and others at the University of Illinois in Chicago. They began this study in 1960 on third-grade children in a small town in the Hudson Valley in the state of New York, and the number reached 875 children (boys and girls), and these researchers examined a large number of behavioral and personality characteristics of the children. They also collected data about their parents and the home environment they came from. It became clear that children who preferred violent television programs at the age of eight were among the most violent group of children at school. About 10 years later, the researchers were able to meet a group from the original sample, numbering 427 children, to determine the relationship between learning conditions and the children's behavior at age eight compared with their behavior 10 years later at age 18. The results showed that children who were considered aggressive at the age of eight remained aggressive at the age of 18, indicating the stability of aggressive behavior.

Although most of these studies confirm the relationship between watching violent television programs and aggressive behavior in both children and adults alike, media alone cannot be considered the sole source of violence, given that violence has been known to humankind since ancient times and exists in all urban and even rural areas that lack media presence. This supports the view of "Marx," who considers that the contradictions present in society play a major role in increasing manifestations of violence. In Algeria, for instance, there is a noticeable increase in the rate of violence due to economic and social problems, alongside the decline of certain values and customs without the simultaneous establishment of new and clearly defined values. There are many variables that influence violence, whether by increasing or reducing its levels, and fundamentally it is difficult to isolate the effects of media from other factors that influence our behavior: the family, the school, the workplace, ... etc.

### **3 - The role of the media in arousing criminal motives:**

The various media outlets affect members of society negatively if they deviate from their mission of spreading culture, science, knowledge, and awareness. In such cases, they become a psychological factor that drives the criminal motives latent in human nature. Criminal behavior is represented in the act or activity that the law criminalizes for violating a right or interest protected by law, whether the behavior is positive or negative. Although motive is not, in principle, one of the pillars of the crime, this does not diminish its importance, as it drives the will and creates in the offender the idea of the crime to satisfy his goal; and hence, strengthens and stimulates criminal behavior, pushing the individual to commit the crime. This is what the research will address by presenting the role of different media in influencing the individual's motives and driving him to commit criminal behavior.

#### **3.1 - The role of print media in arousing criminal motives:**

Print media, represented by the press, leaves a profound impact on individuals; indeed, journalistic magazines do not only affect individuals but also exert influence on public opinion. Newspapers do not merely publish crime news; they publish the crime itself, describing it in detail and explaining the circumstances of its commission. They also follow the news of court sessions and convey to public opinion what takes place during them when the session is public, which stirs public opinion and drives it to positive sympathy with the offender or the opposite, leaving its mark on the judiciary. This

influence may even prompt the judge to issue a ruling that does not match the punishment, as some newspapers tend to publish news in an exciting manner and place headlines that attract the reader, and these headlines may be incorrect in order to make them more exciting, which leads to increased audience demand for them.

The press also teaches new methods of crime, such as what newspapers publish about the latest ways to steal cars, how to alter their real features, and various methods of forgery, thus making some newspapers a source for teaching crime. Many newspapers portray crime as a wonderful act, depicting the criminal as a hero, which leads some individuals, especially juveniles and teenagers, to imitate and emulate them and to admire the criminal, pushing them onto the path of crime.

Moreover, the press contributes in one way or another to arousing desires and instincts by publishing images that highlight the attractions of the female body and presenting articles that glamorize vice (Al-Wafaa, 2016, p. 47). These news items, with their elements of suspense and excitement, are among the sections most young people wish to read. There is no doubt that this can stir up latent criminal motives and drive an individual to commit criminal behavior, and under their influence he may commit sexual crimes (Mahmoud and Sabrin Jaber Mohammed, 2020).

We also notice that there are newspapers specializing in reporting incidents and news related to crimes, where the crime is presented with its full details and described in a comprehensive manner, and may even be embellished with a scenario that makes the reader more eager to follow it. It is obvious to everyone what impact this may have, not only on individuals in particular, but on public opinion in general.

### **3.2 - The role of audio-visual media in arousing criminal motives:**

Audio media includes everything the public hears from the radio or various audio means, and many internet programs present it as audio material related to events and news. This may lead to the deviation of individuals if it contains content that stimulates criminal behavior within a framework of suspense and excitement in presenting information or news, especially if it does not contain the truth and is not characterized by accuracy. Audio media, represented by radio, occupied a high position in the time before television and other visual media, and thus had a great impact on listeners. However, this role has diminished compared to visual media, and consequently that impact is no longer comparable to the influence and danger resulting from visual media, because the visual image is far stronger than the audio image. (Al-Wafa, 2016, p. 57)

Nevertheless, opinions have not agreed on considering the media as a motivator of criminal behavior, as views differ regarding the role of media outlets in causing crime, between those who defend them as tools of awareness and education and those who accuse them of being a school for teaching crime.

In the light of the foregoing, we find that the role of the media in pushing an individual toward criminality lies in conditioning criminal behavior and driving the individual to crime, which is a matter of dispute among jurists. The truth is that the media, as previously mentioned, is a double-edged sword: just as it can be used correctly to transmit values, principles, and accurate information, and to perform a guiding and educational role for members of society through the works it presents, we also cannot deny the impact of the media. Through its various means, it can act as a factor in crime

when the material it presents is not regulated and not offered in a correct and purposeful manner. Unfortunately, different media have become a source of many deviant and even criminal behaviors that are not accepted by any values, society, morals, or religion. The clearest evidence of this lies in the immoral works presented in films and series that contain vice, violence, and criminality and promote them under the pretext of highlighting societal problems in order to find solutions. In reality, they are nothing but corrupting influences attacking society in ways that do not conform to morality or religion. It is in no way possible for corruption to be presented in order to bring about benefit or provide solutions to societal problems, for the Islamic principle holds that preventing harm takes precedence over bringing benefit or interest, not the reverse-assuming, for the sake of argument, that there is any benefit at all in what this kind of lowly media presents. Nevertheless, we believe that the media is not the only factor driving crime; rather, there are multiple factors that combine to push an individual toward criminality.

#### **4 - Patterns of criminal media:**

The term “criminal media” or “crime media” refers to the way in which the media, through its various channels, deals with the phenomenon of crime, criminals, victims, and even security and judicial agencies. In criminology and the sociology of crime, the media is not viewed merely as a conveyor of news, but as an influential factor that may contribute to shaping societal awareness or even to generating the crime itself. Experts also warn of the profound impact of the media in fueling criminal tendencies among individuals and societies if it is not controlled. The patterns of criminal media can be divided into four main types based on their purpose and means:

##### **4.1 - Informational Pattern (Traditional Media):**

This pattern focuses on conveying news of daily incidents and crimes (newspapers, news bulletins, and news websites). It is characterized by certain features:

**4.1.1 - Exaggeration and sensationalism:** focusing on gruesome, violent, or strange crimes (such as serial killings or heinous crimes) to attract the largest possible number of readers and viewers, which gives an exaggerated impression of the true extent of crime in society.

**4.1.2 - Directed framing:** focusing on the offender as a “monster” or focusing on the victim to elicit sympathy, without usually addressing the social and economic conditions that led to the crime.

##### **4.2 - Entertainment and Dramatic Pattern:**

This is the type of media that uses crime as material for fun and entertainment, and includes: feature films, police series, novels, and true crime programs.

##### **4.3- Digital and Online Pattern (Modern Crime Media):**

With the development of the Internet, a new pattern emerged in which the criminals themselves became the producers of media content, for instance: live-streaming crimes, where some criminals or terrorists broadcast their crimes live through social media to gain fame, spread fear, or send political messages. Also, recruitment and organization, and the use of digital media platforms (especially on the deep web or closed rooms) to recruit individuals into organized crime gangs, promote drugs, or engage in electronic extortion.

##### **4.4 - Investigative and Awareness-Raising Pattern:**

This is the positive side of crime-related media, where it goes beyond merely conveying the news to exploring the roots and causes, such as: investigative journalism, where journalists investigate major corruption cases or expose organized crime gangs, thereby helping justice agencies uncover the details of complex cases or the preventive media, via programs and reports that aim at raising citizens' awareness of criminal methods (such as awareness against financial fraud or cybercrimes) in order to reduce their chances of becoming victims. (Al-Hayti & Sabrin Jaber Mohammed, 2020)

Thus, crime-related media plays a dual role: it can either be a tool of social control that contributes to awareness-raising and crime deterrence, or a risk factor that contributes to spreading exaggerated fear and teaching new criminal methods through imitation and copying.

## **5 - Methodological procedures:**

**5.1 - Human scope:** What is meant by the human scope is the individuals on whom we conducted the research, by dealing with a group of male and female students at Badji Mokhtar University, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences - Annaba.

**5.2 - Temporal scope:** The period was limited to the month of February 2025.

**5.3 - Spatial scope:** In our study, we relied on students from Badji Mokhtar University, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences – Annaba.

**5.4 - Study population:** The population is the main target and is considered the principal component of the researcher's procedural reservoir. After we define the research problem and its questions, and before determining the data collection tool, the study population must be specified, because the formulation of the questions takes the form of a question consisting of variables that indicate the characteristics of individuals or things that make up the statistical population. Our study population consisted of a group of students whose number was estimated at 780 students in the Department of Social Sciences.

**5.5 - Sample size and method of selection:** The sample was estimated at 80 units from male and female students in the Department of Social Sciences.

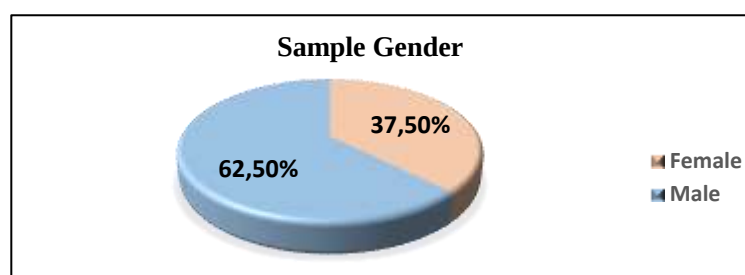
**5.6 - Method used in the study:** Choosing the correct and appropriate method must first refer to the type and nature of the research, which makes us adhere to one specific method rather than other methods. Given the nature of the topic, which aims to identify the reality of criminal media and its role in the emergence of criminal behavior among some segments of society, we used the descriptive method, which relies on describing, interpreting, and analyzing the problem from all its aspects, in addition to the statistical method in order to translate the obtained data into numerical form.

**5.7 - Type of study:** This study is considered one of the descriptive studies, and its purpose is to identify the reality of violence in the media environment and the extent of the role it plays in imparting deviant and criminal behavior to its viewers.

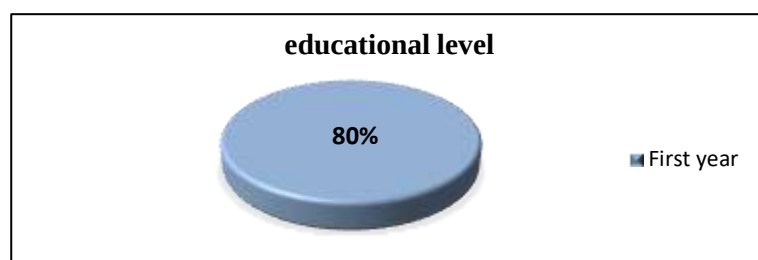
**5.8 - Study tools:** In our study, we relied on the questionnaire as a tool for collecting information.

**6- Presentation, analysis, and discussion of the table data:**

| <b>Table (1): Shows the gender of the study sample</b>                         |           |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Sample gender                                                                  | Frequency | Percentage |
| Female                                                                         | 30        | 37,50 %    |
| Male                                                                           | 50        | 62,50 %    |
| Total                                                                          | 80        | 100 %      |
| <b>Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire</b> |           |            |

**Figure (1):** Shows the gender of the study sample**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

From the data in Table (1) above, it is clear that 62.50 % of the study sample were males, and 37.50 % were females.



| <b>Table (2): Shows the educational level of the study sample</b>              |           |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>The educational level of the study sample</b>                               |           |            |
| Educational level                                                              | Frequency | Percentage |
| First year                                                                     | 80        | 100 %      |
| Total                                                                          | 80        | 100 %      |
| <b>Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire</b> |           |            |

**Figure(2) :** It clarifies the educational level of the study sample**Source :** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

It is clear from the data in Table (2) above that 100 % of the respondents had a first-year educational level.

| <b>Table (3): Shows university youth attitudes towards criminal media</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| University youth attitudes towards criminal media                              | Frequency | Percentage | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Positive attitude                                                              | 25        | 31,25 %    | 50              |                    |
| Negative attitude                                                              | 55        | 68,75 %    | 55              |                    |
| Total                                                                          | 80        | 100 %      | 1.31            | 0.47               |
| <b>Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire</b> |           |            |                 |                    |

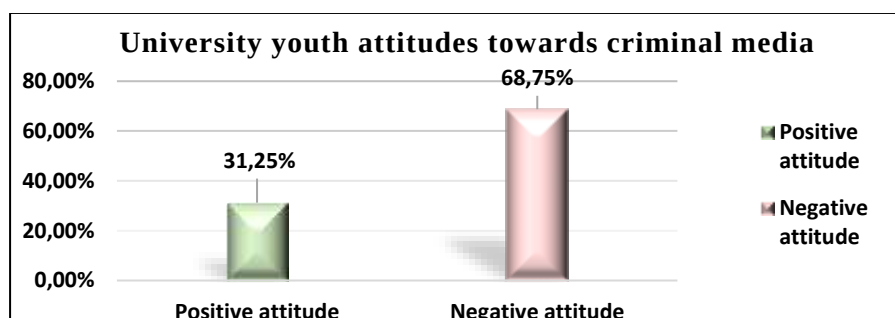


**Figure (3):** Shows university youth attitudes towards criminal media  
**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

It is clear from the data in Table (3) that the distribution of the study sample, which numbered (80) respondents, is according to the nature of their attitudes toward media outlets that present criminal content. The statistical data indicate that the majority of the sample adopt “negative attitudes” toward these media, with a frequency of (55) respondents, representing (68.75%) of the total. In contrast, (31.25%) of the respondents (25 in number) expressed “positive attitudes.”

This divergence in attitudes and the tendency of the majority toward rejection or a negative orientation can be interpreted through several indicators related to the characteristics of the sample. First, there is critical awareness and academic maturity: the fact that the sample belongs to the category of “university youth” (specifically in the field of social sciences) grants them advanced critical awareness and intellectual immunity, enabling them to recognize the dangers of criminal content and its negative impact on societal stability and the growth of violence. This awareness is directly translated into aversion or a rejecting attitude toward what these media channels broadcast. Added to this is their perception of media instrumentalization: the negative attitude can be explained by the students’ awareness that some media outlets deliberately exaggerate crime or, in other words, seek media sensationalism and higher viewership at the expense of moral values, which creates in them a counter-reaction rejecting such consumption.

As for the remaining percentage (31.25 %), which represents the positive attitude, their viewing or positive orientation can be interpreted as stemming from curiosity or a search for excitement and suspense, such as what is shown in police movies and crime documentaries, or from their desire as students to understand the psychology of the criminal and the motives behind deviance as part of their prospective scientific interests.

**Arithmetic Mean (1.31):** Indicates that the overall attitude of the university youth sample leans towards a “**Negative attitude**”. (Assuming the negative attitude is coded as “1” and the positive as “2”, the mean of 1.31 is much closer to 1).

**Standard Deviation (0.47):** This is a low value, indicating **high homogeneity and low dispersion** in the responses. This means the respondents' opinions are very close to each other, firmly concentrated around the rejection of criminal media, with no sharp divisions in their views.

The measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation) align with the frequencies and percentages, where the majority (68.75%) forms a negative attitude towards criminal media, compared to a minority (31.25%) that adopts a positive attitude. The high level of agreement, indicated by a low standard deviation, confirms that this negative stance is the prevailing and stable opinion among the sample. Accordingly, this overall negative attitude can be attributed to the high level of intellectual and critical awareness among university youth. They are generally conscious of the risks and destructive impacts of criminal media on society, such as justifying crime, spreading a culture of violence, or negatively influencing teenagers. This homogeneous rejection reflects their maturity in consuming media content, their capacity to critically filter information, and their refusal to be drawn into the sensationalism frequently promoted by this type of media.

**Table (4): Shows the degree of prevalence of violence in our Arab societies**

| The degree of prevalence of violence in our Arab societies | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes                                                        | 80        | 100 %      |
| No                                                         | 00        | 00 %       |
| Total                                                      | 80        | 100 %      |

**Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire**



**Figure (4):** Shows the degree of prevalence of violence in our Arab societies

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

It is clear from the data in Table (4) above that we notice 100 % of the responses of the respondents of both genders (male and female) affirmed that violence is widespread in our Arab societies to a great extent. However, the sample's 100 % acknowledgment of the spread of violence does not necessarily reflect the actual magnitude of crime in the field reality as much as it reflects the perceived reality that criminal media has constructed in their minds. According to George Gerbner's approach, intensive exposure to violent and criminal content through the media leads to the phenomenon of the "Mean World Syndrome," where criminal media implants in the recipient's consciousness a stereotypical image suggesting that the surrounding society is a dangerous environment filled with violence, and this explains the complete convergence in the sample's responses.

On the other hand, criminal media is considered an active independent variable in shaping the social representations of youth (the age group to which the study sample belongs). The intense media focus on crime news, violent dramas, and “social media” content of a criminal nature creates an amplification of the criminal phenomenon, leading respondents to believe that violence is the prominent and fundamental characteristic of Arab societies.

In addition, from a psychological and criminological perspective, the absolute perception (100 %) of the spread of violence is a dangerous indicator of the occurrence of a process of “normalization” with violent behavior. When an individual becomes convinced that violence is the rule rather than the exception, their moral and social restraints recede, and a process of “desensitization” toward crime occurs. This psychological and cognitive state represents a fertile ground for the emergence of “features of criminal behavior,” whereby resorting to violence becomes justified as a mechanism of defense or adaptation to this violent reality portrayed by the media.

**Table (5): Shows the media outlets that display the most violence**

| Media outlets that display the most violence | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Television                                   | 45        | 56,25 %    |
| Social networks                              | 35        | 43,75 %    |
| Newspapers                                   | 00        | 00 %       |
| Radio                                        | 00        | 00 %       |
| Total                                        | 80        | 100 %      |

**Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire**

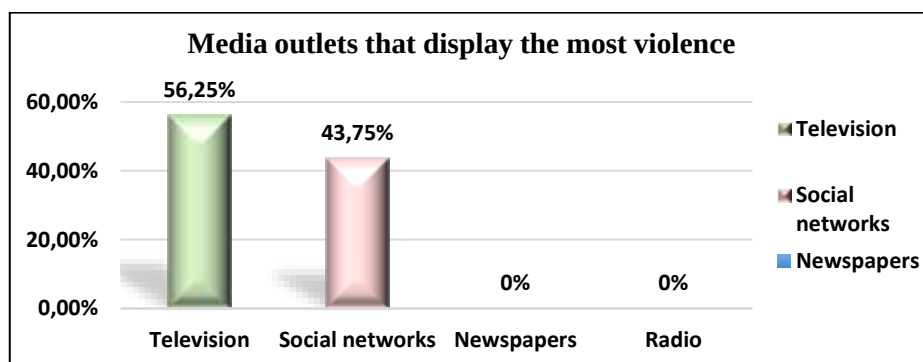


**Figure (5): Shows the media outlets that display the most violence**

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

From the data in Table (5) above, we note a variation in respondents' perceptions of the media outlets that most frequently present scenes of violence. Television ranks first, with a rate of 56.25 %, and is considered the most prominent medium in broadcasting crime-oriented content through its various programs. In contrast, social media networks occupy second place with a close rate of 43.75 %, as alternative and effective platforms for disseminating violent clips, whether in the form of dramatic scenes (action films and series) or realistic coverage of wars and conflicts.

The dominance of television (at a rate exceeding half) likely reflects its status as a fundamental “socialization institution” within the family. From a sociological perspective, television imposes a “mass culture” that the family jointly consumes within

the domestic space. The repeated presentation of criminal scenes through its programs and series leads to a state of “sociological normalization” of violence, whereby criminal acts, over time, shift from being behavior that is socially condemned to becoming a familiar, everyday spectacle. This weakens society’s disapproval of such acts and eases their acceptance as part of lived social reality.

As for social media networks and the crisis of social control, the fact that social media networks received a rate of 43.75 % carries significant sociological implications related to a “crisis of social control.” Unlike television, which may be subject to some form of family or institutional monitoring, social media networks represent an open, individual space in which young people free themselves from traditional surveillance authorities (family, school, society). This intensive and unconstrained use creates virtual “subcultures” that glorify violence and power, and satisfy the individual, with these contents and without guidance, later experiences a state of “anomie,” where traditional societal values clash with violent values imported through these networks.

Hence, the integration between the two media (classic television and modern digital networks) contributes to reshaping the social representations of crime among members of society. Violence is no longer seen only as a destructive act; it has come to be presented in dramatic and interactive forms that portray it as a legitimate tool for resolving conflicts or imposing authority. This transformation in collective consciousness justifies for the individual (especially youth) resorting to criminal behavioral patterns in their reality, believing that these are the most effective methods and the ones most in line with the language of the age promoted by the media.

| <b>Table (6): Shows the role of criminal media in spreading violence</b>       |           |            |                 |                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| The role of criminal media in spreading violence                               | Frequency | Percentage | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Yes                                                                            | 50        | 62,50 %    | 150             |                    |
| Sometimes                                                                      | 30        | 37,50 %    | 60              |                    |
| No                                                                             | 00        | 00 %       | 00              |                    |
| Total                                                                          | 80        | 100 %      | 2.625           | 0.487              |
| <b>Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire</b> |           |            |                 |                    |

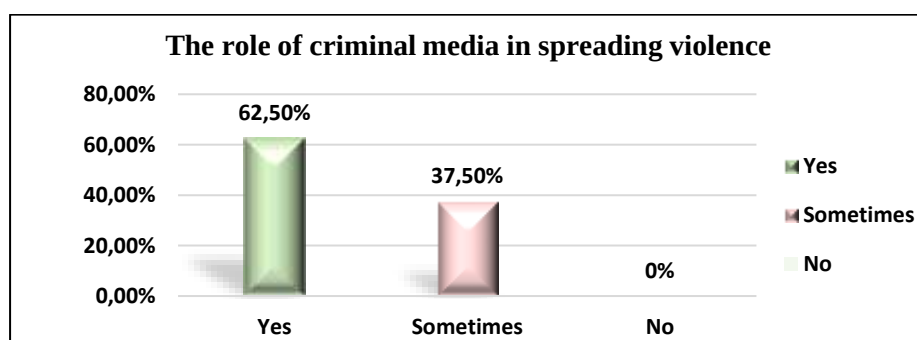


**Figure (6):** Shows the role of criminal media in spreading violence  
**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

Through the data in Table (6) above, we observe a complete consensus among the sample members regarding the contribution of criminal media in spreading violence, as

the majority, at a rate of (62.50 %), affirmed its direct role in this, followed by (37.50 %) who considered that this role appears “sometimes,” with a total absence (0 %) of any denial of this relationship. Sociologically, this absolute consensus reflects the formation of a “collective awareness” that recognizes the danger of the media as an alternative socialization institution that works to socially reproduce a culture of violence through normalizing and justifying criminal scenes, thereby creating a state of “social contagion.” Meanwhile, the answer “sometimes” highlights the complex overlap between media and the social environment, where the magnitude of media influence is linked to the strength or fragility of social control mechanisms (such as the family and school). The result thus concludes that criminal media plays the role of a central social actor in shaping the “social representations” of youth, thereby contributing to the justification of deviance and preparing the fertile ground for the emergence of criminal behavior patterns in lived reality.

The data clearly indicates an absolute consensus among the sample regarding the role of criminal media in spreading violence. This consensus is confirmed by the high arithmetic mean (2.625) and the very low standard deviation (0.487). Most importantly, 100% of the respondents acknowledged this role to varying degrees (62.5% definitively answered "Yes", and 37.5% conditionally answered "Sometimes"), while the negative response was completely absent (0% for "No"). This reflects a firm, unified conviction with no room for doubt.

This complete agreement can be attributed to the critical awareness of university youth regarding the cumulative psychological and social impacts of media content. They clearly realize that the intense and continuous focus on crime, along with presenting its intricate details, goes beyond mere news reporting and actively plays a role in:

1. **Normalizing violence:** Frequent exposure to such scenes breaks down the psychological barrier of the audience, making them perceive violence as a familiar and acceptable part of daily life.
2. **Learning by imitation (crime contagion):** The sample recognizes that certain media coverage might inspire vulnerable groups and teenagers to copy the criminal methods being broadcast.
3. **Glamorizing the criminal:** The media sometimes presents the criminal in a dramatic or heroic light, which indirectly justifies their behavior and contributes to spreading a culture of violence.

In conclusion, the total absence of a "No" response serves as conclusive evidence of the sample's maturity. It demonstrates their firm belief that the media is a primary partner (whether intentionally or unintentionally) in shaping societal behavior, and that criminal media, in particular, constitutes a fertile environment for breeding violence and exporting it to society.

**Table (7): It shows the role of criminal media in imparting some criminal behaviors to youth.**

| The role of criminal media in imparting some criminal behaviors to youth.      | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes                                                                            | 65        | 81,25%     |
| No                                                                             | 15        | 18,75%     |
| Total                                                                          | 80        | 100%       |
| <b>Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire</b> |           |            |

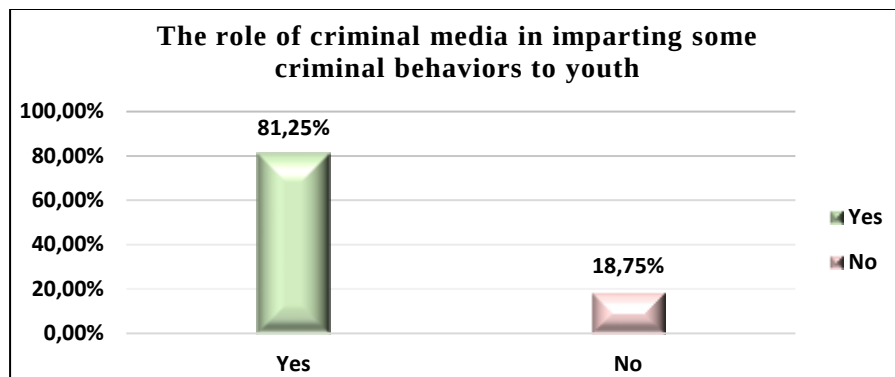


**Figure (7):** Shows the role of criminal media in imparting some criminal behaviors to youth

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

Through the data in Table No. (7) above, we note that 81.25 % of respondents confirmed that criminal media play a role in imparting to young people certain deviant and even criminal behaviors. This percentage highlights the seriousness of criminal media and the extent of its ability to reshape the behavioral perception of youth and children. From the perspective of Albert Bandura's "Social Learning Theory," continuous exposure to violent content such as action movies, violent cartoon series, and investigative programs that delve into crime cases like "Crime Scene" and "The Red Line" provides the audience with ready-made models for imitation. Although these programs claim to address crime, they often indirectly teach the audience the tactics of criminal acts, and in the absence of guidance, a "psychological and social normalization" occurs with serious crimes (such as murder, rape, suicide, and theft). Normative barriers dissolve, and these acts shift from social taboos to behavioral options that can be justified or imitated.

As for the remaining percentage, estimated at 18.75 % of the sample, who answered "no" and stated that criminal media are not necessarily what instill in people various deviant and criminal behaviors, this percentage reflects a crucial sociological awareness within the remaining segment that rejects "absolute media determinism" and affirms the principle of "multiplicity of factors" in the making of crime. Media do not operate in a vacuum; rather, their effectiveness is influenced by the degree of cohesion or fragility of traditional social control institutions, foremost among them:

**-The family (primary socialization):** A breakdown in educational methods, family disintegration, or the practice of symbolic and physical violence within the family creates a fertile environment for producing personalities with aggressive tendencies. The family is the first filter through which values pass, and the weakening of its role makes the young person an easy prey to external influences.

**-The peer group:** where the “differential association theory” of sociologist Edwin Sutherland becomes evident, which affirms that criminal behavior is acquired through interaction and direct contact with surrounding peers. The adolescent acquires techniques and justifications for deviance from the peer group before, or in parallel with, what he watches on screens.

In the end, we conclude from these data that the relationship between criminal media and deviant behavior is an interactive, complementary one. Criminal media acts as a “catalyst” and “accelerator” for the emergence of criminal behavior through what it presents of techniques and justifications for violence; however, the basic seed of deviance often finds its roots in the failure of the primary socialization institutions (the family and the peer group) to perform their functions of control, guidance, and care.

**Table (8): Shows the sample’s opinion on the existence of a relationship between television as a means of criminal media and criminal behavior**

| The sample’s opinion on the existence of a relationship between television as a means of criminal media and criminal behavior | Frequency | Percentage | Arithmetic Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Yes                                                                                                                           | 65        | 81,25 %    | 195             |                    |
| No                                                                                                                            | 00        | 00 %       | 00              |                    |
| Sometimes                                                                                                                     | 15        | 18.75 %    | 30              |                    |
| Total                                                                                                                         | 80        | 100 %      | 2.812           | 0.393              |

**Source : Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire**

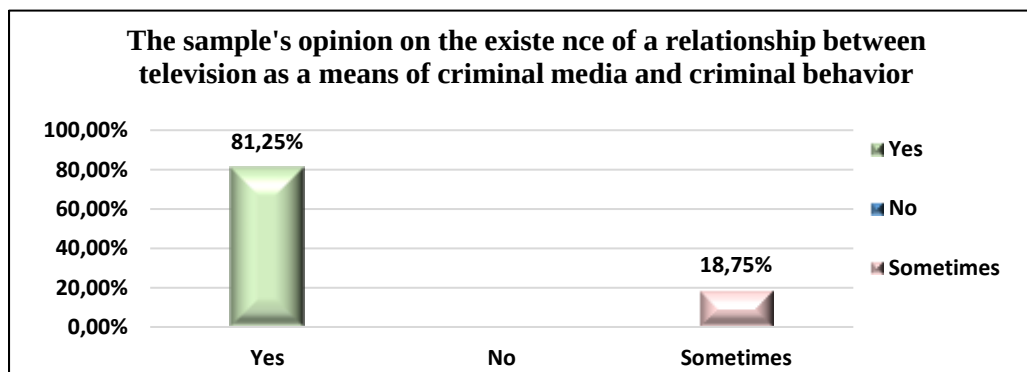


**Figure (8): Shows the sample’s opinion on the existence of a relationship between television as a means of criminal media and criminal behavior**

**Source:** Prepared by the researcher based on the research questionnaire

Through the data in Table (8) above, we note that 81.25 % of the study sample confirmed in their answers that there is a relationship between television as a medium of criminal media and criminal behavior. They indicated that the criminal behaviors and violence accompanied acts committed by some young people are the result of their being

influenced by what is shown on television in various programs. This high percentage from the study sample explains the direct impact of television and its classification as a medium of criminal media, a medium that functions as a dominant agent of socialization. Television does not merely transmit reality; it constructs a media reality that glorifies power and presents crime as a dramatic solution to problems. From the perspective of the sociology of crime and the “social learning” theory, the repeated presentation of criminal and violent scenes offers young people “ready-made behavioral models for imitation.” These models are internalized into the psychological and cognitive structure of the young person, transforming mere passive viewing into actual practice and real world imitation, which explains the emergence of violent and criminal behaviors among them.

As for the remaining percentage, represented by 18.75 %, they answered that sometimes there is a relationship between television as a medium of criminal media and criminal behavior. This supports the idea of multiple factors, as television does not operate in an absolute vacuum; rather, it acts as a “sociological accelerator” whose degree of effectiveness is influenced by the fragility or cohesion of traditional social control institutions (such as the family, school, and peer environment). The conclusion is that television prepares the cultural ground and offers justifications for deviance, while the actual commission of crime remains dependent on the nature of the social environment surrounding the viewer and the extent of its ability to exercise supervision and guidance.

The statistical data strongly confirms a near-absolute and stable consensus among the respondents regarding the existence of a direct relationship between television (as a medium of criminal media) and criminal behavior. This is clearly highlighted by the exceptionally high arithmetic mean (2.812), which leans heavily towards the definitive confirmation option "Yes" (81.25%), accompanied by a very low standard deviation (0.393). This low standard deviation reflects a high degree of homogeneity and a complete lack of dispersion in opinions, further reinforced by the total absence of negative responses (0% for "No").

This strong agreement can be attributed to the university youth's deep awareness of the visual appeal and profound psychological impact of television screens. They recognize that television possesses a superior ability to vividly portray crime and its intricate details, often presenting dramatic models that can entrench violence or stimulate viewers—especially vulnerable groups—to imitate and simulate criminal acts. Ultimately, this reflects the sample's mature, critical awareness of the significant danger that television content poses in shaping, normalizing, or reinforcing behavioral and societal deviations.

## **7 – Results of the study:**

Through the results of the study, we note that the vast majority of the sample had negative attitudes toward criminal media, as they confirmed in their answers that violence is widespread in our Arab societies to a large extent. In addition, the media plays a major role in spreading violence, including television, which is considered one of the criminal media outlets that most frequently shows violent scenes through its various programs in all fields. These include violent programs such as action movies and even cartoons for children, or some programs that deal with crime issues, for instance: Crime Puzzle, Crime Scene, The Red Line, ... etc., and murder, rape, suicide, theft.... On the other hand, it

also plays a role in arousing, encouraging, and preparing individuals to engage in criminal behavior and in imparting to young people some deviant as well as criminal behaviors.

## **8 - Conclusion:**

Based on the analytical data and the results yielded by this exploratory study entitled "Criminal Media and its Role in Shaping Violent Behavior" among a sample of students at Annaba University, we arrive at a scientific fact: contemporary media has gone beyond its traditional role as a channel for transmitting information, and has been transformed into powerful sociological socialization institutions that re-engineer the value system of society. The analytical approach of the study has demonstrated that imported media content, especially Western drama and films, carries out a systematic cultural invasion aimed at erasing national and religious identity and dismantling the connection of youth to their Islamic teachings and authentic traditions. This is achieved through attractive dramatic formats that normalize deviance and justify criminal behaviors such as theft, fraud, and premeditated murder, portraying them as legitimate pragmatic means of achieving quick wealth and fame, which leads to the spread of selfishness and the destabilization of social stability. What deepens the magnitude of this crisis is the systematic marginalization of educational scientific and technological content in the face of the flood of destructive entertainment programs, in a paradox that reflects a deliberate intention to keep our societies within the circle of consumption and dependency. In the light of these findings, the study recommends the urgent need to activate "media education" in university settings to build critical awareness among students, along with the necessity of concerted institutional efforts to create purposeful national media that offers a cognitive and value-based alternative capable of safeguarding the minds of young people and protecting the internal cohesion of society.

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