

# Media and its Preventive Role in Occurrence of Social Crimes

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**Abstract:** Today, whenever prevention (in any context) is discussed, the first thing that engages the mind would be the role of the media. Communicative media as a fundamental principle of society could lead to better and more efficient public participation in establishing and maintaining the security by familiarizing and informing the society about the crime and its forms and sometimes the legal, familial, social and economic levels that was related to it, so that the people could become the security agents themselves and involve in the process of achieving it. Other than those mentioned, the media played a role in crime production and its proceeds and also in crime prevention, so that its roles and functions had become the focus of attention. Because public knowledge of the crime and thereby ensuring justice was achieved largely from the media; so, the aim of prevention may be reducing the crime or limiting it or preventing its growth. Accordingly, what the authors emphasized in this paper apart from the function of media in various fields was the role of media by educating citizens and sensitization of specific groups and the general public about the crime, how to deal with it and its punishment.

**Keywords:** Media, Crime, Social Security, Society, Delinquency.

## Introduction

History will have an unbreakable link with the crime, links that are tied by men, in other words, whenever there is a society, there would be crime, so that Durkheim, in particular reading of the situation, believes that: "crime is part of the norm of society and an integral part of it" (White & Haines, 2004). In other words, he considered the occurrences of a certain amount of crime as commonplace and even as a cause of public health and it is probably for this reason that some criminologists have not considered a place for the issue of prevention and believed that they should talk about reducing the crime rate instead, because the ideal of crime destruction in practice have not been and will not be possible, so, the fans of this idea, which is called modern penology (measurement, estimation and calculation-based Justice) (actuarial justice) seeking to reduce its rate at a tolerable level for society with the belief in the impossibility of elimination of the crimes (Najafi Abrand Abadi, 2001).

Today, the information that is supplied by the mass media in various fields is the most important issue of human societies (Maskani, 2005), so that it could bring the society to the depths of human, moral and social values by precise planning, and lead them to perfection and human dignity. Some communication theorists believe that the importance of this issue is to the extent that today the authority of the world is in the hands of those who have

significant influence over the media. The mass media has been the most complex elements for planning in social deviations. Undoubtedly, the world's most powerful media around the world have done their efforts to mesmerize the cultures of different nations and dictate their own desired patterns and norms. New technologies with their tempting manifestations dominated societies, and changed the minds and beliefs of the people and their values and norms in accordance with their own desires (Ibid, 20). In today's world, the media have a great importance and power in the process of crime and the reflection of criminal events. Therefore, no social scientist can be indifferent about the role of this phenomenon and easily forget about it, and this issue rooted in bilateral mechanism of "security subversion" and "security expansion" of the mass media. The media can blur the roles and lines between reality and non-reality and hide the information, exhibit the confused and distorted figure of criminal, offenders, crime, delinquency, and social security and reactions, mock the minds and show people the intertwined world of secrecy and pretending, And they have such an ability to create foggy space to portray "nonexistence " as "existence" and "existence" as " nonexistence ", "true" as "false", "adequate" as "inadequate" and "security" as "insecurity" (Tajik, 2000).

Mass media has been one of the factors affecting all aspects of social life, but it was not always honest and did not seek the truth and reality, because of the nature of the media and their goal is to control society for specific interests and their position in relation to social issues required to study their activities more accurately for more accurate understanding of its effects on the society (Moore, 2003). Media plays a key role in communications and broadcasting technologies in the community, and this is especially due to their relationship with public opinion, in such a way that mass media and their effects influence the shaping of the public opinion (Ashena & Razi, 1997). There is no uncertainty about the effects of mass media in making mental images of crime for society, although the image is not always reality, the point is that the media can cause fear by incorrect and unrealistic reflection of the crimes, or somehow cause the slip of people into delinquency and norm-breaking. Research has shown that the media, before considering the reality, show the crimes more sensitive, for example, although the most common type of crime is the crime against property, but the media rarely cover it, and it cover more violent crimes (Yamin Pour, 2008). In this way, prevention methods the same as the crime itself, includes many types, types that take all the aspects of personal, social, moral, cultural, educational and criminal in final step, in fact, when the non-criminal methods are incapable of maintaining the values, the strongest tools which is the penalty would be appealed to help, so that the future offenses of the punishable offender and other community members would be prevented, and it is at this point that the link between deterrence and prevention will be celebrated (Dadban & Aghaei, 2009), and this celebration of deterrence is to discipline offenders and to prevent in order to terrorize the punishment by the community, which in this case both primary purpose of legal and penal would be fulfilled.

Do media create crime in society? What effects will it have on public opinion to show crime and violence through the media? What are the factors that cause the influence of violent images by media on social crime? What feelings and attitudes does the news reflection of the crimes create on people? What are the features and components of media violence?

This article is written to answer these questions and to investigate the influence of media on the mental environment of audience and its induced effects, and to determine the relation of media with social control and stability. Media has been discussed not only as the causes of crime, but also as a factor that could cause both opportunities and threats, and by estimating these opportunities and threats, these two roles and their features in social security and control had been reckoned.

### **The necessity and importance of research**

Financial and personal damages from anti-social phenomenon have made the states to fight this phenomenon from the very beginning. About the necessity of the fighting, there is no conflict between scientists and experts in any way, and if there is any dispute, it is just about the methods of fighting, whether the fight should be only about punishment or even other ways should be considered. For fundamental struggle against anti-social phenomenon, the causes must be fought rather than the effects. For centuries, governments have considered the struggle merely to establish and intensify the punishments. This penal policy not only has not decreased the misdemeanor, but also their number has been increased day by day (Shoa Kazemi, 2006). But Iran's penal Code adopted in 2013, with regard to intermediate punishment (substitute for prison), had paid attention to this necessity in its ninth chapter. Today, the idea of replacing the punishment appropriate to the personality of the committed, such as community services, daily fines, imprisonment at home, probation and etc. instead of imprisonment that do not commit any treatment for the committed, has become the prior thoughts of criminologist and penologist (Bagheri, 2013).

## **History of the research**

Many studies have been conducted in the field of media's impact on human communities. A very few of them are about intimidation of crime and this is may be because this concept has entered the research literature of the social sciences, especially sociology recently and from the 1990s.

Bayat (2009) investigated a study about factors affecting the security of citizens of Tehran with an emphasis on mass media, by survey method and a sample including 788 residents of Tehran, Iran. Results of this study showed that the type of media includes the press, radio, television, friends and acquaintances, sites and satellite networks; and issues related to security feeling had the greatest impact on citizens' feeling of security. Also, Sadeghian (2009) analyzed theories and findings related to media and public opinion in a research study about the functional role of the media in national and public security, by a documentary method, and the results showed that in contrary to the expectations of some people, media was not in contrast to public and national safety, but rather it was considered as the complementary and most important factor for reinforcing public and national security, and to prevent any threats, media should be strengthened.

## **Discussion plan**

### ***The concept of social security***

One of the particular interesting issues of political units and other countries that reflect the power of a political system is its ability to create order and security in its different dimensions and aspects. Security has two negative and positive aspects. Security in the negative aspect means the absence of fear, danger, assault and aggression and violations of individual and collective rights by others; and the positive aspects refers to a situation that is likely to satisfy the needs, demands, requirements and assurance, personal and social unity, confidence and acceptance by the group and others (Mahmoodi, 1996).

Today's security has become a concept, and moved away from its military approach, and hardware parameters have been replaced by software parameters and also its civilian aspects has become increasingly less (Jahanbin, 2003). Criminal phenomenon has always preoccupied human heart and mind. Society reveals its personality better by taking the position that determines penalties against crimes. It must be acknowledged that this personality is an important element for identifying and measuring the current values in a society and investigating the evolution of thought and feeling of different social groups against some of the behaviors.

### ***Crime Prevention***

A. Concept of prevention: Although the definition and classification of prevention is presented by some experts in criminology, but in short, it can be said that prevention means to stop crime and disorder to prevent crime (Gassin, 1991). Thus, in terms of criminology, prevention includes measures in the form of identification and assessment of the crime risk and adaptation of strategies to prevent its occurrence (Shiri, 2007), and its aims is to reduce crime rate. However, the crime prevention was discussed by those lawyers that do not consider the criminal justice system enough to reduce the effects of crime. For example, one of the first pioneers in this issue is Jeremy Bentham, as he thought about complementary tools in searching of a solution to eliminate crimes, and he emphasized the role of education and religion and the government, along with punishment and taking advantage of its Preventive effect (Pradel, 2002).

It is worth noting that by talking about prevention, take advantage of its broad concept is intended, it means the criminal and non-criminal range of measures to counteract the causes of crime and to reduce the delinquency (Moazzami, 2007).

Therefore, prevention contained several criminal and non-criminal ways, although some scholars merely to believe in the narrow concept of prevention, which is the non-criminal prevention strategies (action), and they consider the reactional prohibition from the community out of the scope of the prevention (Gassin, 1991).

Non-criminal prevention (active or anterior) is the appropriate non-criminal action before the occurrence of criminal phenomenon by reducing or eliminating or neutralizing the causes of crime and showing the criminal situations as inappropriate to prevent the occurrence of crime, and it is considered in the two area of social prevention (community-based and developmental-oriented) and situational prevention (Shiri, 2007) and in another category in the two areas of primary prevention (according to the criminal terms) and secondary prevention (according to groups at risk of delinquency) (Moazzami, 2007).

But criminal prevention (reactive or a posterior) refers to the criminal actions before and after the crime, which seeks to reduce crime by taking advantage of the mechanisms of criminal justice, which is realized in some part through criminal sanctions imposed on perpetrators of criminal acts and subsequently showing the seeds of terror in

the hearts of potential and actual criminals and in another part, through reforming and rehabilitating offenders during punishment (Dadban & Aghaei, 2009).

B. the Process of crime prevention: Successful prevention of crime is often dependent on a range of measures and requires a set of measures that are relevant to a range of different topics not just the crime itself, and involve numerous organizations. Good planning system alone cannot solve the problem of the crime, but when combined with other measures such as media; it can have a significant contribution (Schneider & Kitchen, 2008).

Prevention of crime is typically not available through fixed and stereotypical solutions, but it can be seen rather as implementing the basic principles in various stages of a process. In the scientific models for crime prevention, the following issues are usually examined:

1. Identifying the issue of crime and targeting; In other words, it is determining the pattern of the risk of crime. This is done by analyzing the pattern of crime or targeting the criminals.

2. Pathology of the causes of crime; causes of crime can be divided into immediate causes and mediate causes.

By the Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity, crime is the product of the effect of immediate causes which is happen when they would gather together.

3. Selecting specific measures and providing operational solutions; preventive measures lead to the disruption of the Conjunction of Criminal Opportunity and reduce the risk of the occurrence of criminal events.

4. The implementation of prevention strategies; implementing prevention includes targeting and performing program, that is performing the appropriate action on the causes of crime in an efficient, effective, sustainable and acceptable manner, which targets the specific and prior needs of victims and society (Mohammad Nasl, 2008).

### ***The relationship of Crime and media***

Mass media is based on communication, and communication is the process by which the "message" is transmitted from one person to another regardless of its content and the employed means, and so, the interaction would be possible. Set of conditions, which is prevail in the face of communication can be searched in physical dimensions (communication environment, etc.), cultural (values and attitudes, etc.), psychosocial (situations and contexts, etc.), and the time (time of communication). Mass media has the power and broad range of action among the people so, they can be understood as social institutions (Jahanbin, 2003). Among various factors related to the crime, the role of media is important, and in fact, the possibility is very low that television, radio, press, cinema and ... have no influence on the beliefs that people defend or proper and normal behaviors. However, it is wrong if we consider some people in abstract terms and consider them affected directly and unconditionally by the media. Attitudes and behaviors of individuals are influenced by their social relations, for example the first groups (families, groups of friends, close colleagues, etc.) have a significant effect in this area.

A. Theoretical approach of crime and media: The main feature of the first theories regarding the relationship between crime and media are strongly negative attitudes that have been expressed about the role of media and the impressionability of the audience. In a period it was believed that more social interaction was influenced by external factors rather than individual choices, in this period, the emerging mass media was the focus of theories that explained the harmful effects of these external factors. By the viewpoints of some thinkers of the early twentieth century, new media were the alien invaders that induced their messages, thoughts and concepts directly to the minds of their audience. Although, some scholars were seriously opposed to the efforts that seek to express the causal relationship between crime and media (Farajiha, 2006).

Generally, there are two general viewpoints in the field of crime and media, expressing them shows how much disagreement is in this area. Followers of a viewpoint believed that the media not only is the factor in creation of crime in society, but also it has the undoubted role of complicating the crime and organizing it. Another viewpoint suggests that media have no effect on the formation of crime or it has a very limited effect. The relative validity of these two opposing views, which is the centrality of the media on the one hand and their insignificance on the other hand, caused a disturbance in the analysis of the experts in this field. And this is the point which was mentioned earlier that we should analyze the relationship between crime and media with an absolute and unidirectional viewpoint. It must be admitted that the analysis of this relationship is somewhere between these two spaces (Two recent theories), researches in parodistic crime provides a brief evidence of the criminal effects of the media. In fact, according to the second view, an individual, who is subordinate to the law, cannot be converted to a criminal by the media alone, and it is not appropriate to notice the media alone as the cause of crime. Maybe that's why the selected strategies based on this theory had little effect in controlling social deviations so far. In other words, radio, television, motion pictures, press and other means of information are not consider as the cause of crime, but they are rather a tool that can be used by arbitrary shapes (Hadian, 2011).

It is important that we can distinguish between the concepts of controlling a crime or fighting a crime and the concept of crime prevention. Crime prevention is not necessarily a matter of law enforcement or routine activities of police and judicial system such as persecution, courts and prisons, which are considered as an interdependent complex. But rather preventing crime is about attempting to use community resources to change the circumstances that people are predisposed to commit a crime in it. Crime prevention programs, includes social programs designed to improve the social circumstances. The ultimate goal of crime prevention programs is to create a healthy society and actively attempt to engage all sectors of society for the prevention of crimes. This set of programs has caused the use of mass media as a powerful tool in the prevention of crime.

B. role of media in occurrence of crime: Media should consider the level of education and awareness of the audience in analyzing the event and its details, because any analysis of crime may pave the way for the crisis and social movements, and this issue is so important that today, it is become the center of attention in global media. A media that do not making any culture, not only is underdeveloped in compared to other media, but also it won't have a successful future. Sometimes the media itself taught revenge and by humiliating confrontations with the defendants makes this idea increasingly reasonable. Before occurrence of crime, the media is obliged to affect the audience's mind on the issues by attempting to make culture and to give information, so, it can thereby prevent crime. But, now the media has this criticism that why it does not reflect the news events prominently after occurrence of the crime (Maskani, 2005).

The mass media is considered one of the most effective tools to control the powerful and influential institutions and processes due to this potential. Reporters, news editor of the newspaper and managers responsible for news regulation and reporting play a key role in determining the scope of crime and deviance by choosing the information and the way of transferring to the people. By choosing criminal incidents and how to reflect it, they in fact define the permissible behaviors and offer some standards in this regard. Thus, on the one hand, the media has the ability to intensify the feeling of insecurity, and promote delinquency and encourage people to commit crime; On the other hand, they can be effective in reducing occurrence of crime and providing a sense of security by playing the responsible role of information provider and promoting healthy living patterns (Farajiha, 2006).

Some believe that the mission of media is informing and providing information, and the media shall not consider itself as the guardians of people and release news according to their own desire. This approach that has a commercial viewpoint to professional journalism, by choosing subjects that attract more viewers, gives special attention to satisfy the curiosity of the reader. In this situation, social benefits and interests, including preventive function of the media, would be described in next priorities. Another approach in the field of representation of crime by the media is the negative perspective that believes visual, audio and text media destroy the obscenity and hideousness of criminal behavior in the community by reflecting the criminal news and events and showing the crime as commonplace and normal. In this conditions society getting used to this obscenity after some time, and the context for the fall of social values and healthy life norms will be provided. Some proponents of this view absolutely believe that the criminal news should not be published in the media, and others believe in cautious covering of criminal incidents (Rahmanian, 1999).

So, considering the various functions of the features such as being wide, audience diversity, transfer rate and extent of release, the media's role in the prevention of crime is very high. Media is the most important monitoring tool in the society, and act as the eyes of society, and they can inform the Criminal authorities of the crime preparations and cause the suppression of the offense in its formation stage. Media has good capabilities in this regard, and can expose situations of choosing crimes, especially economic crime, which is difficult to fight, and these actions would help to increase the social security. Media can also use people in this regard, because people can easily provide their messages and reports and disclose some crimes. Strengthening the public intimidation of punishment is another media functions in the prevention of crime. The media should highlight the aspects of intimidation of punishment, so that everyone could understand that anyone who commits a crime will be punished for his action. The other important issue is the creation of social obscenity and sensitivity in society. In some communities, certain crimes are not consider as obscenity, for example, tax evasion in a country is considered a cleverly act, even offenses such as trafficking in some countries is not considered as obscenity. Social media have an important role in creating this obscenity and community sensitization and increasing Public Security in this manner (Shayegan, 2010).

Media may teach people the ways to fight crime and its prevention. By portraying an individual process of being a delinquent, they can teach the audiences that how they can prevent their own delinquency and those around by adopting educational, economic and social measures. Of course, it is said that the reflection of crime news in the media would be corruption, but since the crime is an unusual matter and in most cases it does entail victims, and it would damage some feelings, if no media cover it, it will still raise in an informal way and not just as it happened, but on the basis of the perceptions and preferences of reflecting people, and it reach the ears of the public. Not

including the crime news in the media would raise the people's curiosity to know the truth about the issue, because they will receive the necessary news even from invalid resources anyway. It should be noted that putting off the news and events by the media and not covering them would also cause worry and panic in the people, because on the one hand they witnessed the events and insecurity in a city or place they living and on the other hand, they would not be informed by proper analysis and interpretation of events (Shayegan, 2010). So, it is possible that they would turn to any device to find answers, and take wrong interpretations and lead to more insecurity. Therefore, it is better for people to hear the truth from more reputable and pervasive sources such as media.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Although, the media had the large and unique role of enlightenment in society and considered as a tool for awakening public opinion, but it cannot confound the rational approach to community events by emotional impact. One of the cases in which the media faced with it emotionally is the hasty and undocumented judgment about criminal events. The main function of the news in media is to response to the society's thirst of knowledge, thus, if the rationality and documentary basis of these news would be more, the task will be done more properly.

Complex relationship of the media and crime and justice can be regarded as a type of interaction and also as type of peaceful coexistence, because the media should have access to the authorities of the criminal justice system, while gathering data needed to adjust the news on time and edit their plans, and the authorities in the criminal justice system (police, judiciary and prisons) also requires the media, so that they could show the people their sensitive and important role in the society, and be able to support citizens and people. Of course, some problems lie at the heart of this dual interaction. For example, the most important problem of such interactions is the type of illustrating and reflecting the image and performance of the police in dealing with crime, disorder and criminals. These interactions becomes more complex when it is known that the nature of media demands that sensory and emotional aspects prevail the other aspects of working, which in meantime may incur the greatest losses to the police.

Crime may not be at the top of the problems of society, but according to the media, crime is the most important social problems, this makes the media to pay too much attention and sometimes far from reality to the crime and its dimensions and effects in the society. Fear of crime among citizens and supporting the punitive policies and guidelines can be considered as unfavorable results of the type of illustrating the crime phenomena in the media and exaggeration in depicting the problems of crime in society, especially the visual media.

Social security in the sense of relief and comfort, which is provided by the society for its members, is one of the inalienable and essential rights of the people by the rulers. Government is obliged to provide the necessary security for the socio-economic and political lives of people, so that they can have a healthy and thriving life by this security. In providing social security, various elements and factors are involved, and the mass media is one of the factors. Mass media with the features such as being wide, audience diversity, transfer rate and extent of release, have a very important and significant role in guiding public opinion and creating social and psychological security of society. Media can influence social phenomena, according to multiple and important functions they have in society, including environmental monitoring function, the ability to create social cohesion and transmission of social heritage from generation to generation. One of the functions of the media is its educational function, and by taking advantage of this function, media can teach people observing the social norms and values to increase the social security.

At the end, two issues of media are considered: One of them is the ways in which mass media can be effective in crime prevention, and where the mass media is able to encourage the crime or encourage people to commit a crime. In other words, the first issue shows the way in which the mass media have had a leading role in crime detection in many countries. The second issue is that the media may be a means to commit a crime; if the media shows the crime in a popular display and news, it will have a profound effect on listeners and viewers. Generally, the power of mass media to influence and change the society is like a double edged sword. Media can be the cause of increase in crime of the community and at the same time can be a tool to prevent crime.

So, as it can be seen, despite the various theories regarding the powerful media and its impact on the audience, today, with the expansion and diversification of the means of mass media, especially when the contents of media are become more personal and comply with different tastes of audience in the society (In terms of age, sex, occupation, taste), the strong influence of these devices is undeniable, and they made the experts and scholars to focus and study on this issue. As previously mentioned, the media itself does not have beneficial or harmful effects, but these tools are considered as an intermediary for the transmission of the messages.

Consistency of the content of the message with the type of media, necessity or unnecessary of showing violent programs, the benefits or harms resulting from broadcasting, all are returned to the owners and authorities of the media. Therefore, the powerful influence of the media on public opinion is necessary to identify the mental needs of

audience before anything else, and to produce and broadcast programs, according to the environmental conditions, in cultural, social, economic and political terms. If a society possesses a strong level of knowledge and value fundamentals, it will be less distorted despite the violent broadcasts, and if the people of a community have low media literacy and low perception, the smallest broadcasting of violent programs will deviate the society.

### **Suggestions**

1. It is recommended that the related authorities in crime prevention, such as police force, by more interaction with the media, especially the press, remind them the role and the important mission of crime prevention, so that they would not teach how to commit a crime when they are writing the events.
2. There should be a logical contact with the press that show negative and incapable face of police, and increase the feeling of insecurity in society.
3. In Islamic culture, the media should be the support, hope and the maintainer of the values and rights of the people, and cause awareness, knowledge, insight and the security. The mass media in this area has the main guidance role and they should be aware of their role.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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