Review

The influence of mass media on the development of deviant personality

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Abstract

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Numerous scientific research has come to the conclusion that mass media (television in particular) offers a lifestyle through which the universe approaches the human, making the act of reading and thinking superfluous, in other words, it has a reduced pedagogical value by flattening passions, by identifying well-being with happiness. The media favors morality and virtue only by flattening, being responsible for the doubling of crime rate in the last 15 years, according to the rate of television viewing, especially by minors. Lombrosa (2006), in his work, highlights the connection between media and delinquency, mentioning that "newspapers excite people's appetence", and the model offered by Goethe's "The Sorrows of Young Werther", led to an increase in the suicide rate. In the 1990s, in America, reports of suicide cases were presented through media, enhancing this phenomenon seven times over. Studies conducted in 1968 on the press articles in Toronto have correlated the suicide modalities with 56 similar cases, and in 1971, 30 press articles have been correlated with 3265 suicide cases (Littman). On the contrary, in Detroit, suicides and crimes have decreased by 40% as a result of the journalists' strike for 265 days. By means of television, violence scenes and the mode of operation are reproduced in detail, multiplying the risk of murders and suicide, the same way pornographic scenes favor the transition to sexual violence. According to the FBI, the number of young people who have committed crimes by gun use has increased by 80% in recent years. They are "exposed" to violence scenes more oftenly, even cartoons providing violent episodes, and television movies are becoming inspiration sources for violent behaviors.

Keywords: Violence, Media, Suicide, Delinquency, Media coverage

INTRODUCTION

Preventive criminal action – an imperative priority

Combating and preventing crime is a difficult and complex approach based on two categories of means: legal (normative framework) and empirical (institutional framework). From a preventive point of view the main objective must be to consider the general impact of "manipulation" through media, artistic productions (movies, books), and violent pornography and the intervention on such means, as the effectiveness of the preventive approach might have a macrosocial impact.

The interest in violence is present in music, literature, movies, and the themes being approached are presented in such a way to impress, to have the greatest impact. Excessive and detailed media coverage of criminal offenses can sometimes lead to a "perverse" distortion of values. The killer becomes a "celebrity" when he is caught, his media exposure gaining great

momentum. Groups of "fans" are formed and thus fascination can occur instead of disapproval, and this has a negative impact of massive proportions on young people and especially on their mentality through the desire of imitation. When the figures of serial killers appear in commercials, such as (ex. On the American market, inside the cereal boxes the figures of famous killers can be found for collecting, and on the back the result of their "performance", the subliminal message is extremely dangerous and should cause concern.

Another link of the violence industry is represented by artistic creations. In many books and movies there are main characters in the role of criminals, and the subject of these creations is constituted by the detailed description of deeds and means used as operating techniques that aim the torture and killing the victims, acts of cruelty as impressive as possible, and the special effects of cinematic creation features unlimited possibilities as a model. Some of the subjects are inspired by real facts and are reproduced in almost documentary style, freely cultivating violence.

The third link is represented by violent pornography. Sometimes there are scenes of sexual violence shared on the Internet or real networks that deal with the release of pornographic movies and materials with scenes of violence and cruelty, having children as protagonists, sometimes of extremely young ages.

The issue of the effects of media coverage of violence among the population, either of real-life cases or violence promoted in cinematography, has sparked controversy. Some support the contagious nature of these acts of violence, others consider that their exposure would have a calming effect on the "consumers", but the contagious effect of extreme violence can not be ignored, and most of the time even the perpetrators admit that they were inspired and took on the model offered by the movie scenes, stimulating their fantasies about the pleasure of killing, making it easier for them to act.

This industry of media coverage of impressive cases is geared towards maximizing profits, which is why there is a tolerance of the internal authorities and international bodies. As long as extreme violence is profitable it will continue to be produced on a large scale. Authorities have two reasons to justify no-action: on the one hand it would be "profit-sharing through the tax system, and, on the other hand, fear of being accused of restricting freedoms by applying censorship. To conclude, in order to limit the negative effects of the violence industry there is a need for a strategy that combines intelligent regulation of violence industry at both national and international level, with a long-term educational campaign at family and school level, in which non-violent values become attractive again. Finding such formulas is a priority in combating crime and violence of any kind.

Bruner and Potter (1964) shows that television violence is very dangerous for 3-4 years old children as they do not have the cognitive ability to distinguish violence from non-violence. Children become more aggressive in their games, and in adults EEG and polygraph recordings reveal disturbances of brain biocurrents after violent scenes. All these findings have made television violence coupled with pornography and drug addiction to be considered a true criminogenic cocktail of modern times and to develop Parks's paradigm according to which any negative and dissonant information has disturbing cognitive effects on human behavior.

Mass media and cognitive effects

Roseman (1984) has shown that television favors negative socialization by disengaging aggressive instincts, develops behavioral, occupational, and clothing stereotypes. Studies have been conducted in California that have confirmed the "reversed" relationship between the amount of TV viewing and knowledge acquisition (school performance), showing that it decreases and with it decreases the need for an effort that leads to passivity. Intelligence is influenced by the difficulty of distinguishing the real-life experience of the fantastic realm (Clifford, 2014), by lowering the IQ, in relation to the number of hours watched.

In behavioral terms, children of disorganized families perceive violence as a realistic way of solving life problems, which leads to a learned behavior and patterned by imitation (Bandura, 2001). Television develops imitation and engaging in voluntary actions as true behavioral patterns, so the images seen by children shape their sensitivity and spirit in a harmful direction.

Liberman et al. (1967) argues that mass media has a great effect on a small percentage of people and a small effect on a large percentage of people. The main effect is imitation (especially in children) and disinhibition (informing about the techniques of violence and mobilizing on their knowledge). Those who are prone to violence adopt the given scenarios because mass media produces emotional desensitization, reduces empathy, and often generates a state of catharsis. Thus, violence, even innate or learned (through negative socialization or by the provocation of situational events), can be unwinded by viewing violence scenes in the imaginary plane (Freud's thesis), or by engaging in activities such as sports.

Mimetic mechanisms of imitation and psychological contagion have turned television into a "virus of interiority". Imitation favors transition to take an action and shapes deviant behavior according to the content of the movie, often by identifying with the actors of these violent scenes (Eron, 1987). Their repetition can generate cumulative effects with negative consequences on self-control, emotionally disinhibiting and desensitizing (Bandura, 2001).

As a catharsis factor of frustation, television also

exacerbates the effect of violent scenes in the memory, and in 70% of cases determines a detached or passive behavior towards violence (Levine, 1999), or, on the contrary increases the feeling of insecurity in front of it, with fear and anxiety, as shown by the studies initiated by the Council of Europe.

The media, for some fragile personality structures, provides solutions through violence patterns as a unique way of solving conflicts, because they tend to build an artificial world instead of the real one, the world of people. But many other variables emphasize the effects of television: the aggressive parental pattern, the level of cognitive and social maturity, the misunderstanding of the consequences of the scenes viewed, gender, age, native aggressive predispositions, adults' attitudes toward violence scenes, etc. (Astărăstoaie et al., 2002).

Future strategies

Although television defends itself by justifying the aggressive content of programs as a result of public demand that seeks to know the act committed, the cause of punishment, and the circumstances of committing violent acts. The improvement of these programs is in the attention of all states and of the Council of Europe, so that countries like Sweden and England have forbidden the exhibition of violence scenes to the public and the exposure of the 16 massacred children.

It is believed that open societies, attached to the liberal order, agree with a certain censorship of violence so that the freedom of speech does not turn against them, distort the hierarchy of values, and lead to the inefficiency of the law (Astărăstoaie et al., 2002). Television programs are required to stimulate generosity, cooperation, adhesion to law, remove fear to help develop prosocial behaviors rather than violent behaviors (Hobson, 1984).

Currently, international bodies such as UNESCO and UNICEF are elaborating the issue and are more concerned about it.

Particularities of criminal personality

A psychological assessment of the criminal offence consists in analyzing how the personality of the offender manifests itself in the preparation, committing of the criminal act, and in the post-criminal attitude.

The offender has an atypical, deformed personality that allows him to commit antisocial actions, conflicting with the norms and values of the society in which he lives. Research has revealed some common psychological particularities to those who violate the law. In this regard, we will elaborate, as follows:

- *Emotional instability and instability in action* – in most cases, due to precarious, poor education or major

trauma, a disharmonic personality can be structured, inable of self-control, of objective assessment of possibilities, inappropriate assessment of oneself and others, through a weak development of superior feelings and affective autonomy. Reactions quickly move from one extreme to the other toward external stimuli. Intellectual imaturity – does not overlap with a low intelligence coefficient (IQ), but rather a reduced ability to be cautious, to establish a fair ratio between losses and gains. He lives mostly in the present and does not anticipate the negative consequences of his actions. Duplicitous behavior – the criminal plays the role of the right, honest person. Most of the time this mask makes him increasingly isolated from society, under the normal aspect of life.

- *High sensitivity* – some environmental stimuli exert a great influence on them that makes them act without inhibitions, regardless the consequences, leading to excessive mobilization of physical and mental resources.

- *Social inadequacy* – crimininals usually have an education deficiency- they come from disorganized families and therefore become inadequate in a social-cultural environment where the existence of daily regime rules was not possible.

- *Frustration* – occurs in conditions of deprivation of certain moral or material rights, which he considers to be entitled to, or when obstacles intervene in obtaining these rights. Frustration is felt as an affective-cognitive dissonance that disrupts cortical activity at some point, generating, at the same time, subcortical overdrive.

- *Inferiority complex* – is perceived as a state of impotence, of personal incapacity, often generated by certain intellectual or physical (real or imaginary) deficiencies, also maintained by other people by their contemptuous, offensive, manifest or tacit atttitudes.

- *Affective imaturity* – is manifested through an infantile behavior characterized by a major gap between cognitive and affective processes. Emotional crises, outbursts of crying are frequent in them. Affective imaturity associated with intellectual imaturity pushes the criminal to serious impulsive and antisocial manifestations.

- *Egocentrism* – the criminal relies on his own person, being situated at the centre of "the Universe". The egocentric exacerbates his qualities in comparison with his flaws that he minimizes, is always right, pursues his own interests and goals without caring about the others. Instead of recognizing his mistakes, he attacks violently, accusing of being permanently persecuted.

- *Affective indifference* – is closely related to egocentrism and is one of the main deficiency in childhood, caused by the malfunctioning of the family structure. The criminal does not grow a real conscience or does not have feelings of guilt, is not aware of his own state of emotional inhibition, which makes him be cold-hearted and calm.

- **Lability –** this also implies affective imaturity, the person is subject to influences and suggestions, being unable to inhibit his impulses and desires that may have legal implications.

- **Aggressiveness –** can be directed against one's own self through self-mutilation and suicide and heteroaggression that involves violence against other people through various forms, such as: rape, robbery, attempted murder, etc. Aggressiveness can be occasional, caused by jealousy (passionate crime).

Eschewing from social-moral constraints, the lack of ethical values make the perpretator indifferent to his condition, becoming impassible with his own life. These listed characteristics are presented in general terms, but there may be many exceptions, depending on the causal, situational, motivational elements. In addition to these characteristics, Giacono Canepa, quot. T.Butoi, distinguishes in habitual offenders a reduced ability to correctly perceive reality; they perceive others as being hostile and unsympathetic to them, the presence of indecision and a great difficulty in self-representation.

A good knowledge of these psychological particularities will alow the development of social reeducation and reintegration programs, on the one hand and, at the same time, can provide help to the bodies in the justice system to the legal settlement of the causes.

CONCLUSION

The scientific evidence shows that the pursuit of violence through the media increases the frequency of aggressive thoughts and feelings and the level of psysiological activation, reducing the frequency of prosocial support behavior. With the dissemination of materials containing unwanted acts, the media can inform the public about the above-mentioned negative consequences.

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