

# THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF VIOLENCE AND THE MEDIA ROLE – BETWEEN CONDEMNATION AND APOLOGY

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The mass murders at the "Vladislav Ribnikar" Elementary School in Belgrade and in the vicinity of Smederevo and Mladenovac, in addition to general condemnation and anxiety of people, have also opened up many questions about dimensions of violence in society, everyday life and public space. And, as it usually happens after an event with such adverse consequences, the response to serious crimes is, above all, in the repressive sphere - in the increased presence of the state repressive apparatus, proposing stricter legal provisions and rhetoric in public space that is "coloured" by emotional responses to the issue. This period is followed by a review and analysis of various social processes and phenomena that, in a different manner, have contributed to the occurrence of such events. Therefore, on the pages of this paper, starting from the already postulated social experiences with violence in public space, in various times, in different localities and from different subjects, the attention is primarily focused on the social aspects of violence in reality. Although it cannot be said that the media are directly responsible for the recent massacres that have upset the Serbian society, the media narratives after these tragedies point to the presence of violence in the media that exceeds the limits of what is acceptable. The response of institutions and society, directed towards the incrimination of such media behaviour and public action, is imposed as one of the most important challenges faced by our society and state.

Key words: *violence, society, media, youth, condemnation, apology, tolerance, relativization*

*"If you live in a fictional world, then the fictional world becomes your reality"*

Emanuel Tanay

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## Introduction

Although violence in the media in the wider social discourse is directly related to violence in real life, one should be careful in scientifically concluding that this is the case *a priori*. The relationship between the media and violence, i.e. the degree of their causality, has changed from an academic point of view in the last few decades. In the paper "Violence on television - analysis of potential criminogenic effects", previously known ideas and scientific operationalization have been put in place, with the final message that a clear parallel cannot be drawn between the increase in aggressiveness on television with the increase in aggressiveness and committed violence in society. In particular, it is stated that "no empirical evidence can be given for an increase in aggressiveness that would be caused by showing violence in entertainment shows on television" (Kunzick, 1975:692), i.e. that "violent contents shown on television have no effect on the readiness of the information recipients to exhibit aggressive behaviour on their own" (Kunzick, gen. quote).

It is obvious that in the books written in the 1970s, there were no studies that would scientifically prove the connection between the media violence and violence committed in real life. Even then, what existed at the level of science and spectacle, were risky quasi-interpretations of facts. Many studies were implemented in such a way that they had to lead to the desired result – whether it was an increase in aggression through the media violence, its reduction or "just" ineffectiveness (Kunzick, 1998). If we take into account this kind of atmosphere in which the relations between violence in the media and the real one - which surrounds us, and also the lower level of violence and murders with elements of spectacle then, the thesis of ineffectiveness between the analysed categories, which was advocated and extended by Kunzick, seems as a completely correct academic view, adapted to the time in which it was established.

Even today, the research on the connection between the media and social violence has certain contradictions and shortcomings. Thus, for example, many studies still examine the same thematic aspects with the same methods, with only minor modifications, although the course of events in the "never faster century" demands an equally rapid scientific response. Therefore, the progress towards a more unambiguous understanding of this relationship is relatively weak. More recent studies, precisely due to the difficulty of providing a broader picture, have turned to insisting on specially posed questions and their analysis using simpler research methods, so that these "pieces of truth" would later fit into a more complex and broader picture of the problem.

The authors' interest in the phenomenon of violence in the media dates back to the 1930s, and the first analyses of the impact of violence in television programmes on the audience appeared in the US in the 1950s, with the findings that it is impossible to make a direct connection between violence on TV screens and violence in real life (Schupak, 2015). Nevertheless, from this time distance, it can be asserted without hesitation that knowledge about the circumstances under which violence in the media can have, first of all, an impact on children and young people (which is the primary and generational

determination of this analysis), has rapidly progressed in the meantime. Therefore, today the thesis about the ineffectiveness of the media violence is unsustainable and it is hardly possible for anyone to seriously consider this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

## Violence in the media and youth violence – some aspects of causality in theory and practice

Contemporary psychological theories of violence, which do not refer to the theory of evolution, mainly rely on learning models and the influence of modern life on violence, such as violence in the media, on film, in video games (Boxer et al., 2015: 671-673). Although the aforementioned factors from the media corpus have a potential role in the development of aggressive behaviour, they certainly cannot explain the long history of violence that is known on the basis of archaeological and paleontological findings, long before the development of the media and modern weapons, as well as the prevalence of aggressive behaviour patterns among modern traditional societies that are still not influenced by the media contents (Pejković, 2022: 104).

What further casts doubt on the validity of academic discussions about violence in the media is the fact that many researchers cannot agree on the assessment of what could be classified as violent contents in the media, that is, which contents should be unambiguously characterized in this manner. A great number of different definitions consequently leads to different research results, which makes it impossible to monitor the actual situation regarding the increase, that is, the decrease of violent contents in the media, as well as the possibility of comparing the results of numerous studies in this area. Precisely because of this, the results that are not the product of the research on the same definitions of violence can neither be compared, nor conclusions can be drawn on the basis of such research about changes in the presentation of violence in the media (Potter, 1999: 79-80).

The starting postulates in the study of violence emphasize the existence of three key elements according to which the definitions of this term are modelled using supremacy. The first of them is definitely *intention*. This element is marked by the question whether for a violent act there has to be an intention to commit violence or whether accidents and natural disasters can also be considered violent acts? The other key difference in definitions is *damage* caused by a particular violent act. In other words, is only pain inflicted directly on people, or other living beings, i.e. animals, plants, considered violence? Are acts committed against material goods also considered violence? The third difference between definitions is the verification element concerning the type of violence, that is, is only *physical violence* or also *verbal violence* considered violence (Kanižaj, Ciboci, 2011:15)?

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<sup>1</sup> To tell the truth, among the authors who have continued to emphasize the absence of an increase in violence in society with the increase in violence in the media, we should mention the work of Jib Fowles (Fowles, 1999), in which he limits himself to television as a medium, while in later discussions, which are related to the connection between electronic media and violence, he often emphasized the possibility of their correlation.

Furthermore, as it is usually the case with the range that covers the definitional framework of some term, the broader the definition of violence is, that is, the more elements it includes, the more violent contents will be registered. On the contrary, a definition with fewer included elements will result in less violence recorded on such a calculated "violence detector". Therefore, violence has to be viewed in a broader context, freed from the cumulative nature of its elements, i.e. in the criteria framework that allows by the fulfillment of any of the elements of violence to characterize certain act as violence. Thus, for example, in the definition offered by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2002: 5), the element of denial - deprivation is added to the elements that mostly refer to the commission of violence, which greatly changes (expands) the criteria framework for defining some behaviour as violent.

Transferring the measurability of violence to the level of public space and the media, due to the particular sensitivity of the media and a potential impact on the audience, the definition of violence in the media is most often resorted to, which would include as wide a range of constituting elements of violence as possible. Nevertheless, one of the "newer" definitions, which has been most used recently, is exactly Potter's (Potter, 1999: 69) definition of the media violence, according to which violence is "an injury to one's physical and emotional well-being", which, in a simple, and also sufficiently precise manner, summarizes all the elements mentioned so far.

We are witnessing the increasingly pronounced influence of modern media on society and individuals with violent topics and descriptions. The availability of violence that showers us from the media makes many people prone to consuming such contents, they do not have a problem watching it, they even share it by electronic platforms and talk about it. "A great number of viewers, who watch the scenes of beheading and other horrific acts, do not move a muscle. It means that they have reached a point where their feelings are numb" (Dosari, 2015). The bad news is that tolerance of violence has a price. According to many studies in the field of psychology, sociology and criminal behaviour, the exposure to this type of violence on various media channels leaves long-term and/or short-term consequences on those who watch it.

On the basis of various research on the relationship between violence, the broadcast in the media, and the influence on the later behaviour of the audience, it can be claimed without any hesitation that violent contents have a greater impact on younger population. This is mainly explained by some simplification with which young people follow the contents, primarily due to insufficiently developed cognitive capabilities of a young person. Therefore, their attention is most attracted by fast scenes - those in which something happens, and the scenes of violence are precisely the content presented in such a way.

In recent years, children and teenagers have been using the media much more, partly due to the expansive increase in the use of mobile phones. More than 80 percent of teenagers today have smartphones, and more than a half says they are "often" online and "addicted" to their devices in some way (BBC NEWS, 2022). 41 studies on "the problematic use of the so-called smartphones" involving 42,000 young people have been analysed in the research published in the international

journal *BMC Psychiatry*. The findings are devastating: 23 percent of the respondents behaved like real addicts (Davis, 2019). An intense form of anxiety was also recorded during the period when their phone was out of reach. This type of addiction is related to other problems, according to the authors of the study, such as stress, depressed mood, the lack of sleep and reduced achievement in school (Davis, gen. quote).

Moreover, an increasing number of research analyses shows that explicit scenes of violence in the media, such as television, social networks, films, music and video games, represent a serious threat to the mental health of young people. The findings suggest that experts have reached a consensus about the reality of the impact of the violent media on children. Experimental studies have convincingly shown that in the short term, the exposure of children and adults to the media violence increases the possibility of aggressive behaviour, reduces prosocial behaviour and causes violent desensitization. Furthermore, longitudinal experimental studies provide convincing evidence of this causality and show that children's exposure to violence in electronic media will lead to a long-term increase in the risk of exhibiting aggressive and violent behaviour (Guo, 2022). The results of these studies refer to stimulus theory, which tries to explain the connection between the depiction of violence and violent behaviour. "According to this theory, a certain (violent) stimulus (priming) is needed in order to encourage some (aggressive) behaviour" (Glomazić, Pavičević, 2016: 74).

The 2002 report by the US Secret Service and the US Department of Education, which studied 37 incidents of targeted school shootings and attacks on schools from 1974 to 2000, found out that "more than a half of the attackers had shown an interest in violence through films, video games, books and other media" (Vossekuil et. al., 2002). In the "2009 Media Violence Policy Statement", the American Academy of Pediatrics noted that "extensive research evidence indicates that the media violence may contribute to aggressive behaviour, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and a fear of harm" (Council on Communications and Media, 2009). This is also indicated by the theory of habituation, which states that constant exposure to television violence increases the threshold of tolerance for violence, so that, in the end, it becomes normal and considered a common behaviour (Kunczik and Zipfel, 2007).

The Media Violence Commission of the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA), in its report on the media violence, pointed out that "over the past 50 years, a great number of studies conducted around the world has shown that viewing violent contents on television and playing violent video games increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour" (Media Violence Commission, 2012). One of the comprehensive meta-analysis of the effects of violent video games indicates that "evidence strongly suggests that the exposure to violent video games is a causal risk factor for increased aggressive behaviour, aggressive cognition and aggressive affects, as well as decreased empathy and prosocial behaviour" (Anderson et al., 2010).

Despite the majority of the research that insists on the connections between the media violence and aggression, it is important to point out that the media violence is only one of many risk factors for later aggressive and violent behaviour. Moreover, extreme violent behaviour never occurs when only one risk factor is present. Thus, "a healthy, well-adjusted person with few risk factors will not become a school shooter just because they start playing a lot of violent video games or watching many violent films" (Gentile, Bushman, 2012).

Knowing students' risk of aggression can help school staff determine which students are more likely to argue or perhaps bully other students. Gentile, who manages the Media Research Lab at Iowa State University, points out that one can predict with "over 80% accuracy" which child is at risk of bullying other children if three things are known: "whether it is a boy or a girl, whether they have fought over the past year and whether they consume a lot of the media violence" (Gentile, Bushman, gen. quote). The same authors emphasize that "the best individual predictor of future aggression in a sample of elementary school students was the previous aggression, followed by violent media exposure, and followed by being a victim of aggression". They added that their approach to risk factors can "cool down" the heated debate about the effects of the media violence, because "the exposure to violent media is not the only risk factor for aggression" (Gentile, Bushman, gen. quote).

## Violence in the media and audience satisfaction – a step towards an apology

Nowadays, it is said that the relativization of crime is more dangerous than the crime itself. It is the same with all forms of violence in modern societies. The relativization of violence comes from the refusal to take responsibility. We usually blame society for all phenomena, which is legitimate, but the fact is that the contribution can also be individual. As individuals, we can act when we recognize different types of violence and try to prevent them, not relativize them. The mass media that make a sensation out of violence and publish horrible footage, and which should inform about an event and the threatened punishment for the perpetrators, are often subjected to relativization.

The other effect of the media violence impact on children is desensitization to violence as a cause of pain inflicted on others (Gentile, 2003). This results in increasing the tendency to retaliate and increases the perception of violence towards others who behave violently towards them. Violence in the media serves as a justification for violence committed by children and increases their violent tendencies due to the lack of fear of consequences. It also results in children's lack of empathy for the pain of other people, which increases their tendency to be violent towards them (Freedman, 2002).

The viewing rate of violent television contents has been increasing since the beginning of the new millennium and is a source of concern for society, due to the increase in cases of violence around the world. According to the American Psychological Association, a child or teenager in the US watches about 10,000 murders, rapes and aggravated assaults on television alone every year (Scarborough, 2022). This can be partly related to the fact that viewers enjoy such contents. Many researchers in this field point out that one of many reasons people enjoy violent entertainment is to satisfy their need for excitement. Violent images can trigger strong emotions in young people and make them more likely to act violently or fearfully. One of the reasons is that "violence for youth represents a type of rebellion, through which catharsis is experienced" (Đorić, 2009:36). Otherwise, catharsis theory believes that violence in the media reduces violence in reality, because through violent media contents the viewer/reader experiences catharsis.

Moreover, discrimination and hate speech in the media do not only hurt the feelings of individuals or communities they target. They can also contribute to crimes committed against them and fuel a flame of an armed conflict, and encourage or justify the commission of crime against ethnic or national groups, as well as incite violence against certain demographic groups such as women, children, refugees, minorities or political opposition figures. Hate speech, generated through the mass media, incites violence, especially those who are prone to violence, "by raising the level of their aggressiveness and directing them towards a targeted culprit" (Subotić, 2010:311).

The study entitled "Social media mechanisms for right-wing political violence in the 21st century", based on the research conducted in Sweden in 2020, showed a correlation between tweets and Facebook posts about refugees and the number of attacks on this population in a given period. According to the study, the more tweets and posts with the word "refugee" (*flykting*), the more attacks on refugee camps in this country by extremists (Khamaiseh, 2021). The study explained that social media algorithms help produce "echo chambers", meaning that individuals are more exposed to content that matches their personal preferences than any other.

In other words, these algorithms provide increased opportunities for individuals with racist tendencies to view media content that presents immigrants and refugees as a danger to society, creating an apologetic framework for the violence perpetrated against them (Khamaiseh, gen. quote). In short, for those who have predispositions towards extremism, means of communication contribute to the development of a pattern according to which "resorting to violence is justified, sometimes even fatal" (Subotić, Dimitrijević, 2022:124).

## The opportunities in the social and public space of Serbia

The mass murders from the beginning of May 2023, in only two days, have upset Serbia. Firstly, in the crime that Serbia has not faced so far, in the morning hours of May 3, a thirteen-year-old student of the "Vladislav Ribnikar" Elementary School in

Belgrade shot and killed nine students and a security guard, and seriously wounded five more students and a teacher. While the public was in shock due to the event that was naively believed to be impossible in this area, just a day later, in the vicinity of Belgrade, in the villages near Smederevo and Mladenovac, a new mass crime took place - eight were killed and fourteen young people, aged 15 to 25, wounded.

These events have opened up many issues related to violence in public space, which have plagued society for decades, and also raised some new ones, such as causes, responsibility, and also the general mental state of the nation, primarily young people. Moreover, it seems, like never before, that public questioning of attitudes towards violence has been expressed. Is it time for relativizing and apologizing of violence to give way to unequivocal condemnation of all its social varieties? Is it time for violence to stop changing only by person, as with possessive pronouns, so "mine" and "our" are allowed, but "your" and "their" are not? To what extent is violence in the media responsible for embodied violence in real life and what do the citizens of Serbia think about it? There are many questions.

Since young people are recognized in the above-mentioned research as the easiest target for mental manipulation, followed by potential violence, it is important to find out what the research shows on the topic of the mental state of young people in Serbia and the countries of the region. In the "Alternative report on the position and needs of youth", which was published in 2021, young people rated their mental health relatively worse than their physical health. It is the age of late adolescence that points to the problem, as young people between 15 and 19 rate their mental health the worst compared to the age groups of 20 to 29, while in a gender context, the research shows that young women rate their mental health lower than the equivalent age group of men. According to the research "Young people's opinion and attitudes about anxiety and mental health" (Dragić, et al., 2022), which was conducted by the creative collective *Pneuma films*, in cooperation with the Critical platform, and whose respondents were young people from Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as many as 92.4% of the respondents state that they have once felt anxious (Stjepić, Subotić, 2022:59). Furthermore, the results have shown that the family often lacks an understanding for the feelings of other members, and mental health problems are not taken seriously or are ridiculed (Stjepić, Subotić, gen. quote).

The results of the research related to the representation of young people in the media indicate the fact that the youth in Serbia is increasingly being reported as the protagonists of the crime columns, where they are often related to violence. The violence that is discussed in the media, and whose actors are young people, can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, we are talking about young people who are victims of violence, and on the other hand, attention is focused on young people as the perpetrators of violent acts. "The youth in the media mirror 2022" is one of the more recent studies that sheds light on the ungrateful position of young people in the national media and indicates that the "profit-oriented media report on young people when they find themselves at the centre of a scandal or gossip and do not see the need to write about problems or needs of this generation, while in the *main stream*



media young people mostly appear in the crime columns" (Đorđević, 2023). According to the same research, as many as 40 percent of the media reports show young people in a negative context, while the percentage of the media reports with an affirmative narrative about young people accounts for only about 20 percent of the total media reports (Stjepić, Subotić, gen. quote).

Two conclusions can be drawn from these examples. One is that there are indeed troublesome data on violence, whose perpetrators or victims are young people. The second, viewed in a long-term context, is perhaps more worrying because it shows that positive reporting is less and less becoming news, and the number of views in the media related to violence testifies to the toxic relationship between consumers of media contents and those who produce news.

When we talk about the identification of certain contents in the Serbian media, which to a greater or lesser extent influence the increase in violence in society, the survey conducted by the "Centre for Local Self-Government" in May 2023, on a sample of 5120 citizens of Serbia, is indicative. According to the results of the survey, tabloid journalism is most to blame for the increase in violence in society, followed by reality shows (CLS, 2023).

33.9 percent of the survey respondents believe that tabloid reporting on crime and violence is a "trigger" for further violence, and 32.1 percent believe that it is reality shows. Citizens recognize violent contents on social networks as the following media category that promotes violence in society, while, in their opinion, films, series and music have the least influence on violence in society (CLS, 2023).

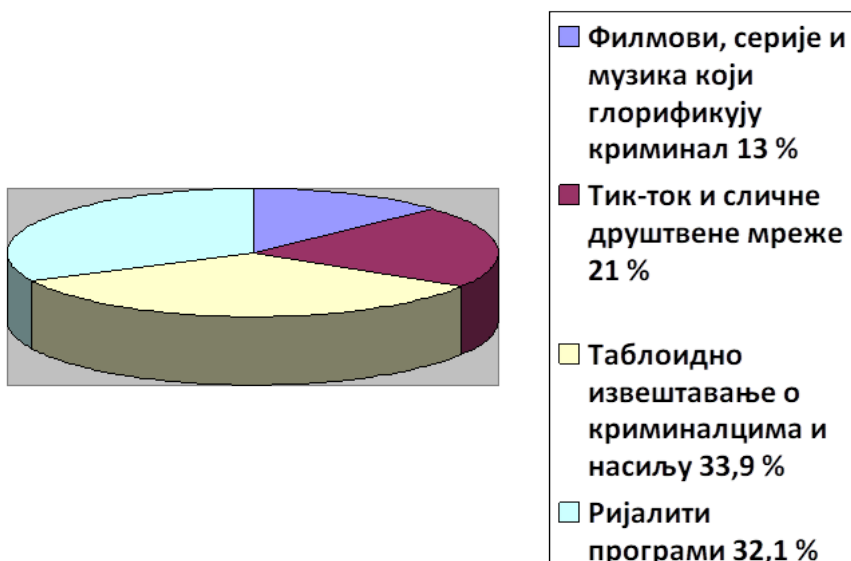


Figure 1 – The citizens of Serbia on the causes of the increase in violence in society (graphic processing by the authors)

It has already been pointed out that there are numerous studies on the relationship between viewing violent content and creating tolerance, some would say resistance, towards violence itself. It can be said that the media in Serbia is increasingly reaching for sensationalism and that it abounds in contents with various forms of violence. The style of communication with elements of open aggressiveness is becoming rather noticeable, which can be seen from reality programmes, through *talk shows*, and all the way to broadcasting the National Assembly sessions. The covers of circulation tabloids increasingly spread extremist narratives, call for lynching some groups and individuals and/or are a "noticeboard" for headlines and photos with elements of violence and general intolerance. By analysing the covers of daily newspapers, mainly tabloids, in the period from the mass murder in the "Vladislav Ribnikar" School on May 3, until July 11 of this year, it can be unequivocally concluded that the media reporting of violent events further disturbs the public and legitimizes violence as ubiquitous.

In support of this thesis, we list only some of the headline news in the analysed period, arranged in chronological order: "Boy monster: I don't regret it, they deserved it" (Srpski Telegraf, May 4); "Nazi-psycho killed eight young people" (Informer, May 6-7); "Monsters practiced killing in the same shooting range" (Informer, May 9); "They had little blood, they search for more" (Alo, May 10); "Shot at children, then killed them" (Srpski Telegraf, May 11); "Kosta's ancestor killed and set fire to 7 people" (Srpski Telegraf, May 12); "A boy smashed a woman's head with an ax, then stabbed her son" (Alo, May 15); "Threats of killing and raping children" (Informer, May 18); "The opposition is stepping over dead children" (Alo, May 23); "How to kill among ourselves" (Srpski Telegraf, May 26); "I killed them, so that my mother would suffer" (Srpski Telegraf, June 7); "A Russian slaughtered his wife, strangled his son, then hanged himself" (Alo, June 7); "The hunt for people in the streets has begun" (Srpski Telegraf, June 12); "Costa is pure evil" (Informer, June 19); "Slaughtered his wife, then threw her body into the bathtub" (Alo, June 19); "Slaughtered his wife and a dog, then walked naked down the street" (Alo, June 20); "The prosecutor's son broke the skull of a beer bar guest" (Kurir, July 3); "The uncle tried to rape the actor" (Alo, July 4); "He strangled Noa, then he cut her with a cleaver and put her in acid" (Informer, July 8); "Tore a TikTok girl to pieces, then invited a friend for beer" (Alo, July 9); "He destroyed Noa's body, but saved a part of her thigh" (Srpski Telegraf, July 11).

This kind of atmosphere is the most destructive for children, but according to the principle of "merged judgements", it also negatively affects adults. Therefore, it can be said that, from television to publishing, our culture is limited to "populist patterns that uncritically and deliberately allow for contents of political extremism, intolerance, pornography and the relativization of crime" (Subotić, 2013:177).

Does the atmosphere in the Serbian society, articulated after the tragic events at the beginning of May this year, represent a new opportunity to ask the question: can we, and how much, protect children from such contents or whether, and if so, to what extent and why have we become indifferent, tolerant or, even worse, apologetic about such contents in the media, and then in real life situations? What is impossible

to expect in the corporate media management, where "violence sells products", is to "cleanse" them of violence, but we can certainly restore the culture of general social dialogue. In this regard, frameworks and mechanisms should be found to stimulate and provide means for recording and broadcasting programmes with content that would have a positive impact on children and young people, as well as adults.

## Instead of conclusion

"The one who educates you has the greatest power to make you a genius, and also a madman", is a paraphrased old Indian proverb. Although it was believed that the beginning of the 21st century would be marked by a great increase in the number of educated and enlightened people, unfortunately that did not happen. The role of the one who decides what to turn the consumer of media contents into, especially in the population of people with low education, has largely been taken over by the mass media. The affirmative influence of the media in modern society is highly significant and cannot be questioned. However, the way in which they report on negative social phenomena, above all, violence, is also important, because they have a great influence on the development of individual value judgements.

Analysing the impact of violence in the media on the expressed violence in real life, despite differences among researchers, what can be unequivocally highlighted is that, based on the findings in science so far, an important consensus has been established that in some circumstances the connection between the consumption of the media violence and real aggressive behaviour of certain people and groups can be noticed. Bringing attitudes closer has been done on the basis of the generally accepted thesis that the media violence in certain (marginal) circumstances increases the aggressiveness of a person. The thesis is based on the assumption that many, otherwise very weak connections (correlations), which are interpreted as indicators for the absence of some relationship, nevertheless indicate the existence of some relationship in conditions when integrating factors are present. Moreover, a connection that is on average weak or relatively weak for all respondents of a sample, for some respondents, that is, for certain parts of the population, can have great intensity.

Drawing a parallel between this thesis and the current situation in the Serbian society, we are more inclined to understand the fact that terrible events that are capable of being caused by violent individuals or groups can happen without "epidemic" proportions for the wider community, or at least for all parts of the population, at the moment of the commission of the crime. However, with each act of violence and its media coverage, accompanied by messages that are also violent, the chances for an adequate social and institutional response are greatly reduced. Finding solutions aimed at affirming dialogue and general de-extremism of narratives in public space is one of the most important challenges faced by our society and state. The role of the media in this endeavour, which is persistently absent, and which we wish for, is one of the key ones.

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## Summary

Since the study of violence in the media, especially relating it to violence in real life, is a particularly delicate problem, a special caution is necessary when drawing conclusions and generalization in relation to this issue. An attempt to simplify in relation to the media - violence transmission and conclusions based on emotions, bad intentions or, simply, insufficient knowledge, would indirectly contribute to the conditions for further polarization in society. Although the authors dealing with this relationship do not agree on the degree of causality of the media and violence, based on previous, especially recent research, it can certainly be

concluded that the expansive and uncontrolled broadcasting of violence by media providers represents a serious social problem, as well as that great exposure to violent contents in the media can lead to unwanted consequences for the consumers of these contents. The consequences are different, and vary from adopting socially unacceptable norms and values, distorting the image of objective reality, creating a feeling of indifference and resistance to violence, all the way to apologising for violence, which is only a step away from the state in which the viewer actually becomes the bully.

According to relevant studies, the degree of influence on consumers first of all refers to the state in which the consumers of the media violence find themselves even before broadcasting violent contents, as well as the time during which they are exposed to the media violence. Due to the unequivocal influence of modern media, especially on the younger audience, which is also the most vulnerable group that follows them, it is necessary to understand the importance of control and supervision of the media today that report on violence, because they have a great (decisive for certain categories of the audience) influence on the development of their value judgements.

It cannot be said that the media are directly responsible for the recent massacres that have upset the Serbian society. However, what can be unequivocally concluded is that the level of violence in the national media has long been beyond the acceptable limit and that, unless systemic measures are undertaken to regulate this issue, the uncontrolled contamination with violence will continue, probably intensify, as well.

Raising awareness of the scale of danger in the Serbian society that the media violence carries with it can only initially contribute to finding a balance between the right to information and obeying other human rights, i.e. between a man's need to be informed and respect for basic human dignity. The social condemnation of violence after the aforementioned unfortunate events gives room for hope. We would like to believe that the institutions of the system will also follow these messages.

*Key words: violence, society, media, youth, condemnation, apology, tolerance, relativization*

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