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## Shock content on TV: the problem of influencing the audience

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**Abstract.** The information society, characterized by innovative communication technologies, offers unprecedented opportunities for access to information and knowledge, enabling everyone to realize their potential and improve the quality of life. At the same time, the information society carries many risks and dangers. It is also necessary to take into account the increased influence of TV on society as a whole, its role in forming not only public opinion, but also public morals, social life, moral guidelines. Modern viewers often encounter violence on screen. This is due to a certain information policy, which includes aspects of the demonstration of power, superhero, lack of pity and compassion for living beings. The problem of broadcasting violence and aggression through television is a global one. The problem of the influence of the demonstration of this content on the person's psychosocial behavior is equally urgent.

**Keywords:** violence, aggression, media, content, television, television journalism, shock-content.

## Introduction

Today, when a person is in the information stream 24 hours a day, each TV channel faces the problem of quality content and efficiency of its submission. It is also necessary to take into account the increased influence of TV on society as a whole, its role in forming not only public opinion, but also public morals, social life, moral guidelines. The Doctor of Philology, Professor of Moscow State University E.L. Vartanova notes in her fundamental work "Media economy of foreign countries", that "the media and telecommunications industry is an integral and significant part of the service industry, which has become an important part of the national economy in the most developed countries of the world in the last decades of the XX century" (Vartanova, 2003).

The media have a great, special impact on today's youth. Television, computers, video games, social networking sites and more affect all aspects of the younger generation's life. Obviously, this influence can be as positive – acquisition of new knowledge, broadening of horizons, formation of personal worldview, etc. as well as negative, such as consumerism, selfishness, violence and discrimination. This can occur through advertisements, films, TV series, and news stories that can give out, for example, the manifestation of violence and aggression as correct behavior and hide negative consequences. Television and the Internet can also manipulate the thoughts and beliefs of young people. On television, manipulation is usually used in the most popular programs, among which various shows take a special place. They are becoming increasingly popular and are broadcast daily on most federal channels. It is therefore important that the media follow ethical principles and not use their power to manipulate audiences and shape negative values. In addition, it is important to take into account the cultural and social characteristics of the audience and to create "stories containing topics of crime, aggression, violence and sex occupy a considerable amount of time in TV programs" (Kuznetsov, Tsvik, Yurovsky, 2012).

The article will consider examples of such content and analyze its impact on the psychological health of the person. In this historical period, one of the priorities of the state policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the information strategy. This requires further implementation of socio-political and economic reforms carried out by the authorities, as well as professional and literate, systemic and effective implementation of information communication policy. It is important to note that this communication policy should be based on traditional, humanistic values, which have always been characteristic of Kazakhstan. Therefore, this study seems relevant from the point of view of creating a new, anti-aggressive information policy in the modern period. In addition, the relevance of the study is connected with the modern functioning of television journalism in the global information space.

## Methods and Materials of Research

In order to gather data, websites and databases were utilized, enabling analysis of the current realities of the information process in the world and in the country, which reflects the increasing degree of mass media influence on the formation of people's consciousness and

behavior. The quantitative content analysis method, along with the analysis and synthesis methods, significantly contributed to the examination of this research.

## **Literature Review**

Since this article deals with the problems of displaying scenes of violence on TV, the authors turned to the scientific works devoted to the functions of TV at the present stage. This issue is investigated in the works of Kuznetsov G.V., Kachkaeva A.G., Aliyeva M.M. Studies on the impact of violent scenes on the psychological state of the television audience include Melnik G.S., Bystrov A.N., Lemish D.N. As part of the study of violence broadcast on TV and its consequences, foreign researchers address topics such as bullying and suicide (Olweus D, Limber S., 2007; Brooke B., 2020). Back in the early 2000s, scientists, analyzing the increased influence of TV on the psychology of the younger generation, introduced the terms “aggressive television” and “television intoxication” (Blackbirds, 2001, Johnson M., 1996, Matos M, Ferreira J., 2012). The researchers conclude that violence on the TV screen shapes the life strategies of viewers, especially teenagers. By cultivating violence and aggression, they become antisocial individuals. It was therefore important for television channels not to degrade before exposing shocking scenes of violence and aggression.

## **Results and Discussion**

TV has become a factory for the production of meanings, images, emotions, a source of pleasure and a world of psychological unloading, which creates favorable conditions for the formation of new value orientations for the individual and the entire mass audience. Modern viewers are so used to displaying violent scenes that they gradually lose the ability to empathy - the ability to empathize and compassionate. In this difficult historical period, violence overwhelms all media. Television, of course, cannot stay away, but TV channels still try to limit the so-called “shock-content”, unlike social networks. This is facilitated by the legal and ethical norms that TV tries to observe, even to the detriment of notorious ratings. Therefore, it is important for TV channels not to slide to the demonstration of shocking scenes of violence and aggression. It is a question of forming a quality audience.

In the classical tradition, researchers distinguish seven functions of television journalism:

1. Information;
2. Cultural and educational;
3. Integrative;
4. Socio-pedagogical;
5. Organizational;
6. Educational;
7. Recreational (Vinogradova, Melnik, 2009).

At the present stage of television development the listed functions, of course, remain important. Television informs the audience, organizes it, broadcasts educational programmes, pursues a policy of society’s integration. However, it should be noted that television still puts a

recreational, entertainment function as the priority of its activities. As a consequence of these processes there is a transition from information groups to information and cultural corporations that combine information units and mass culture (Akimova, 2020). This is due to the increased needs of the mass audience in entertainment. It is known that the income from TV channels depends on advertising and sponsorship, the volume of which is connected with the rating of the TV channel. And the rating, in turn, is due to the ability of a channel to attract both real (target) and potential audience. So how do they get high ratings? The answer is simple: the rating is determined by the presence of entertainment components, the role of which is steadily growing in television.

The recreational function of television is to entertain the audience, to provide it with high-quality TV products that help the person relax and distract from pressing problems. In the modern period, the recreational function of television dominates among others, and sometimes exceeds the information function. Many TV executives rely on entertainment content, which, in their opinion, can provide the channel with high ratings. For example, modern television cannot be imagined without television shows, the main purpose of which is precisely entertainment. Content including violence, which also applies to the entertainment function of TV. Paradoxically, entertainment based on aggression causes great harm not only to the audience of a channel, but also to the whole society. When violence is perceived as a game, it leads to degradation of the individual and, as a consequence, to moral and spiritual decline.

The process of values formation begins with childhood, when parents and loved ones are the main sources of values. This process continues at school, at university, at work, in society and through the media. As a result, a person forms own system of values, which determines priorities, behavior, worldview and attitude to life. And in the system of these values there can be no place for aggression and violence, no matter how it is imposed by television programs, social networks and messengers.

Journalists and producers should take into account the increasing influence of the media on the audience, especially young people. In modern times, when national and spiritual values are being revived, it is very important, in our view, to broadcast content including information about spiritual and moral values, traditional culture, in order to form an adequate worldview and attitudes of youth.

A special shocking concept has been introduced to define the prohibited or socially unacceptable content of information resources. Shocking content includes scenes of fights and beatings, animal cruelty, descriptions or visualizations of such events. Shocking content can have a devastating effect on the human psyche: cause trauma, provoke feelings of despair, loneliness and fear, cause prolonged stress, etc. Shocking content can appear in films, documentaries, advertising. The first explorer of media violence was American psychologist Francis Fenton. He studied the concept of suggestion - a psychological influence on the human mind, in which there is an uncritical perception of beliefs and attitudes. F. Fenton believed that there was a direct link between reading newspaper articles on crimes and subsequent criminal acts (Sashchenko, 2011).

The human psyche is a very subtle structure, and if handled poorly, it can lead to various kinds of psychological problems and even mental illness. The mood of a person can be influenced

not only by events from real life, but also by information from various sources (the Internet, television, social networks, etc.).

That's why it is necessary to be very careful what the audience reads, with the visited web pages, with the watched television programs. Viewing content that contains violence can negatively affect a person's mental health. This can lead to various mental disorders such as depression, post-traumatic stress syndrome, anxiety, aggression and others. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a condition that can occur after a traumatic event such as an assault, violence, or catastrophe. Post-traumatic stress disorder can also be caused by the prolonged exposure of viewers to violent content. Therefore, authors often try to resort to disclaimers. Disclaimers are notices that help protect authors from possible legal claims and warn viewers that content may carry certain risks or restrictions. Disclaimers can take different forms and be used in different situations. For example, they may be used on sites where articles, blogs or other materials are published that contain information that can be interpreted as negative or aggressive.

The viewer may suffer from recurring nightmares, fears, aggression, and other symptoms, which may have a negative impact on his overall condition. Depression and anxiety can also be the result of prolonged viewing of violent content. The viewer can begin to experience constant fear and anxiety, avoid communication with people, stop enjoying the usual activities. Gradually this can lead to depression. Also, it can lead to aggressive behavior. A person can become more irritable and more prone to conflict. This can lead to various problems, including domestic violence and other social problems.

Researchers identify three levels of possible media impact: emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. The emotional level is when watching violence triggers an immediate or long-term emotional response. Cognitive level is when watching violence affects the viewer's perception of the real world. Behavioral level is when watching violent scenes affects the behavior of the viewer.

There are several main categories of behavioral effects:

1. Excitement;
2. Disinhibition – as viewers become accustomed to scenes of violence and cruelty, the negative reaction diminishes;
3. Imitation – viewers learn the behaviors seen on TV and sometimes try to reproduce them (this, first of all, applies to young people who identify themselves with the characters of the movies and try to imitate them);
4. Desensitization – with regular viewing of violence scenes, viewers are less and less aware of violence on screen and more willing to take violence in real life (Sashchenko, 2011).

However, it is important to note that the impact of violence on audiences can be differentiated and depends on a variety of factors, including the age of the viewer or player, their personal experience and education, and the context and form in which violence is depicted.

Many countries have laws prohibiting the dissemination of violent content and violence in general. In particular, the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the law "On the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development" in 2015 (Kazakhstan's Law on the Protection of Children from Information Harmful to their Health and Development, 2015). The law prohibits information products based on cruelty and

violence that incite children to life-threatening acts, including suicide. In 2021, the chairman of the Investigative Committee of Russia Alexander Bastrykin made a proposal to remove reality TV shows, which demonstrate physical and moral violence, to protect young people from the influence of shock-content. The infamous reality show “Dom-2” was closed at the request of TV viewers, but anyone can find it on YouTube.

YouTube is a popular media platform where anyone can see things that aren’t on TV. However, YouTube is also prohibited from posting content depicting violence or cruelty intended to shock or disgust viewers. Users also cannot upload content to the platform that encourages viewers to be aggressive. “If you find content that violates this policy, report it” - written in the rules of YouTube (Rules for content with violent scenes and unpleasant images, 2019). Content depicting violence or cruelty intended to shock or upset viewers is prohibited on YouTube. It is also prohibited to upload content that encourages users to be offensive. In recent years, social media has become an integral part of our lives. Instagram is one of the most popular platforms that allows people to express themselves and share their lives with others. Recently, however, Instagram has seen an increase in violent content accounts. These accounts contain photos and videos showing assault, cruelty and crime.

However, in an attempt to combat this problem, the portal decided to introduce a new feature – hiding unwanted images from the eyes of users. It works in such way that if several people complain about the photo, instead of the photo there will be a very blurry image, and on its background the warning message and the crossed-out eye icon.

If after this message the user still wants to see the image, he can always click on the “view image” button at the bottom of the screen. In this way, particularly sensitive people can avoid the risk of inappropriate appearance, even for a short time. Even if someone goes to the user’s page, the images will be hidden by this screen. It should be noted that incompatible and potentially discordant material are different concepts. Instagram claims that photos that violate social network rules will be deleted, and inappropriate will be hidden. For example, if the photo is tormented by an animal or a person, the picture will be removed forever. However, if the photo does not torture anyone, but some people think it is cruel, they can complain. And if there are more people like that, Instagram will hide the photo.

Modern media content is trying to respond to the challenges and needs of its audience, and the image of violence can be used to transmit important social messages or challenge action against violence in real life. For example, violent scenes in dramatic films can serve to convey important ethical and moral lessons, such as the need to fight for justice and protect the innocent. In addition, some types of media content, such as action movies, fantasy movies, and violent television series, may serve to distract and amuse and in such cases, the images of violence may not have a negative impact on the viewers.

On the other hand, the fascination with shocking content on the TV screen can negatively affect the audience’s consciousness and affect the “desensitization” factor - addiction to pain, suffering. When you look at rivers of blood pouring out of the screen, it’s hard to stay in a normal psychological state. A striking example is the series, which claims the genre “historical” and is very popular – “Blood Lady”.

At the basis of the scenario - the life description of the Russian landowner Darya Saltykova, known in history under the nickname "Saltychikha", which became common name because of its cruelty and ruthlessness towards people. In each episode of the film, the viewer sees horrific scenes of violence, constant physical abuse of people. And the idea of the script does not claim "historical accuracy", as stated in the initial credits of the series. And this is understandable, because the exact data about the life of Saltykova were destroyed in the early 20th century. Therefore, the authors focused on showing the horrors of physical abuse and love scenes. The film is intended for viewers with an age of 18+, however, the Youtube platform has a 16+ age limit. Will a young viewer be able to watch this show without psychological consequences? This is especially true of the ritual murders committed by Saltykova herself - ripping out a girl's heart, drowning living people, night executions, and even a bath of virgin blood, which Saltykova regularly takes (Blood Lady, 2021). Everything is shown very naturalistic, the authors as if enjoy showing such shock-content. The question arises as to the legitimacy of the television products produced by clearly unhealthy people with psychological disabilities and possibly survivors of violence.

Popular reality show "Patsanky" evokes different opinions and assessments in the society, some consider it funny and interesting, others - scandalous and promoting negative values. However, "Patsanky" remains one of the most popular and discussed reality shows on TV (What does the show "Patsanky" teach, 2017). This is a Ukrainian television series that tells about the lives of young people in one of the Kiev districts. The show describes the diversity of youth life in Ukraine, including interpersonal relationships, sexuality, crime, drugs and violence. The show showcases violent scenes such as fights, beatings, murders, violent attacks, threats and others. These scenes are often key moments of the plot and may include physical abuse, threats, and emotional abuse. Although the violence in the show may be perceived as extremely cruel and unacceptable, it should be borne in mind that it is just a fictional story that is created for the entertainment of viewers. Nevertheless, images of violence can have a negative impact on the mental health of viewers, especially children and adolescents.

"Patsanky" show is a television series that may contain violent scenes and other unpleasant events. Some of the ways in which violence can be presented in this show include:

**Physical Violence:** the series may feature physical violence, which may include blows, kicks, slaps, jerks, fights, and other forms of physical aggression. These actions can occur both between characters of the same sex and between characters of different sexes.

**Psychological Violence:** the series may also feature psychological violence, which may include threats, intimidation, blackmail, insults, humiliation, and other forms of psychological aggression. These actions can lead to emotional stress and psychological trauma in the victim.

**Sexual Violence:** "Patsanky" show may feature scenes of sexual violence, which may include rape, sexual harassment, sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence. These scenes can be very unpleasant and potentially trigger for viewers.

**Violence against Children:** The series may also feature violence against children, which may include physical, psychological and sexual violence. These scenes can be particularly shocking and disturbing for viewers (What does the show "Patsanky" teach, 2017).

Some studies show that viewing violent programs can increase the likelihood of violent behavior among children and youth. However, this connection is not absolute and depends on many factors such as the personality, upbringing and environment of the viewer.

## Conclusion

Violent shows can have a negative impact on the health of viewers, especially if they spend a lot of time watching such content. To minimize risks, it is recommended to limit viewing time and monitor the emotional state of viewers after watching violent programs.

In addition, research shows that viewing programmes that contain violent images can increase the likelihood of violent behavior among children and young people. Although the link between watching violent programs and violent behavior is not direct and absolute, some studies show that some viewers may be tempted to repeat the behavior they saw on the screen. In such cases, viewing violent programmes can be one of many factors that can lead to violent behavior.

It should be borne in mind that violent programming can include highly indecent or offensive content that can cause emotional pain and trauma to viewers, especially those who have a personal experience of violence or the victim was a loved one. This can exacerbate the psychological consequences of watching violent programs.

In general, although violent shows can be interesting and exciting for viewers, they can also have a negative impact on the psychological and emotional state of viewers. To reduce the risks associated with viewing violent programs, it is important to limit viewing time and monitor the emotional state of viewers after viewing.

Perhaps violent shows can have a positive impact on viewers in some cases. For example, in some films and television series, violence can be used to transmit important social messages or challenge action against violence in real life. Viewing violent programs can help viewers learn to distinguish between good and bad behavior in different situations and learn to react to violence and defend themselves.

However, it is important to note that a positive impact on viewers is not a guaranteed result of watching shows with violence. Influences on viewers may depend on a variety of factors, including age, personal experience, and education, as well as the context and form in which violence is depicted in the show. Furthermore, it must be remembered that any type of violence can cause emotional pain and trauma to spectators, especially those who have experienced violence or have been victims of violence.

As a result of the research the authors can conclude that TV programs with violent content have a negative impact on the viewer. The following results were graded:

1. Aggressive behavior. Visualization of violence can cause aggressive behavior in viewers. Research shows that viewing violent material can lead to increased levels of aggression and violence in children and adults. This can happen because the viewer starts to think of violence as normal behavior in real life.

2. Psychological health. Viewing programmes containing an element of violence may have a negative impact on the psychological health of viewers. People who often watch programs that contain violence may experience stronger feelings of anxiety, depression and fear, which can lead to mental health problems.

3. Differences in perception. Each viewer perceives violence in television programs differently. Some people may feel no negative influence, while others may experience stress and anxiety. It



is important to note that children and adolescents may perceive violence more than adults on TV.

4. Negative attitudes towards victims. Programs using shock-content lead to negative attitudes towards victims. Viewers may begin to believe that victims deserve violence, or that violence can be a real-life solution.

5. The risk of repeated violence. People may start repeating the violence they saw on TV in real life. This can lead to real violence that can harm both the victim and the perpetrator.

In general, the display of violence and aggression on television screens causes irreparable harm to the psychological perception of the audience and subsequently to the behavior in society. A person who has “absorbed” violence as a norm of behavior will never be able to become a decent citizen, showing empathy, tolerance and respectful attitude to others.

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### **Теледидардағы шок-контент: аудиторияға әсер ету проблемасы**

**Андатпа.** Атрибуты инновациялық коммуникациялық технологиялар болып табылатын ақпараттық қоғам ақпарат пен білімге қол жеткізудің бұрын-соңды болмаған мүмкіндіктерін ашады, әр адамға өзінің әлеуетін іске асыруға және өмір сапасын жақсартуға мүмкіндік береді. Сонымен бірге ақпараттық қоғамда көптеген қауіптер мен қауіптер бар. Сондай-ақ, теледидардың жалпы қоғамға әсер ету дәрежесінің артуын, оның қоғамдық пікірді ғана емес, сонымен бірге қоғамдық моральды, әлеуметтік өмірді, адамгершілік бағдарларды қалыптастырудағы рөлін ескеру қажет. Қазіргі заманғы телекөрсетімнің экрандағы зорлық-зомбылық көрінісі жиі кездеседі. Бұл күш, супер қаһарман, жанашырлық пен жанашырлықтың жоқтығын көрсету аспектілерін қамтитын белгілі бір ақпараттық саясатқа байланысты. Теледидар арқылы зорлық-зомбылық пен агрессияны тарату мәселесі бүкіл әлемде өзекті. Осы мазмұнды көрсетудің жеке тұлғаның психоәлеуметтік мінез-құлқына әсері мәселесі де өзекті.

**Түйін сөздер:** зорлық-зомбылық, агрессия, БАҚ, мазмұн, теледидар, телевизиялық журналистика.

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### **Шок-контент на ТВ: проблема влияния на аудиторию**

**Аннотация.** Информационное общество, атрибутом которого являются инновационные коммуникационные технологии, открывает невиданные ранее возможности доступа к информации и знаниям, позволяет каждому человеку реализовать свой потенциал и улучшить качество жизни. В то же время информационное общество несет многочисленные риски и опасности. Также необходимо принять во внимание возросшую степень влияния ТВ на общество в целом, его роль в формировании не только общественного мнения, но также общественной морали, социальной жизни, нравственных ориентиров. Современный телезритель часто сталкивается с проявлением насилия на экране. Это объясняется определенной информационной политикой, в которой заложены аспекты демонстрации силы, супергероя, отсутствие жалости и сострадания к живым существам. Проблема трансляции насилия и агрессии посредством телевидения актуальна для всего мира. Столь же актуальна проблема влияния демонстрации данного контента на психосоциальное поведение личности.

**Ключевые слова:** насилие, агрессия, СМИ, контент, телевидение, телевизионная журналистика, шок-контент.

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