THE MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES ABOUT PUNITIVENESS

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Abstract

Public attitudes about punitiveness have a significant impact on penal policy in the societies. Punitive penal policy and increased imprisonment of offenders are often seen as a reflection of the public support for harsh punishment. (Cullen et all, 2000). Criminological research often links the attitudes toward punishment with the socio-demographic characteristics of the public (gender, age, race, ethnicity, political ideology, education, income, religion), their possible direct or indirect victimization, the fear of crime, their perceptions about crime and the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. In addition to these factors, in the last two decades the attitudes have also been linked with the increasing presence and use of the media. The empirical research analyzes the issue of the connection between the media consumption and shaping public attitudes toward punishment, especially for certain crimes. Hence, the subject of this paper is the impact of media consumption on the public attitudes about punishment, with the purpose to determine to what extent and in what direction is that influence. The impact of different types of media and different types of media content or programs on public attitudes about punitiveness will be analyzed.

In general, the research shows that different types of media and news, such as watching television news (local and national) and crime-related programs, have influence on the attitudes about punishment (Intravia, 2019). However, the direct impact cannot be fully and clearly determined, because the research uses a different methodology in terms of the media consumption and media content. In addition to traditional media, from research perspective, special attention is given to the connection between the use of social media and their impact on punitiveness. The importance of analyzing their impact on public attitudes is primarily due to the increasing number of individuals who use social media, which are a major source of crime-related news and often providing access to news or information shared by others. These features related to social media (especially social networks) allow individuals to virtually participate in issues related to crime and punishment, which in turn can change someone's opinion and position on the topic of discussion. (Anderson & all, 2014).
1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the media have been the main source of information for the public regarding any topic of the social life and crime have been one of the common topics. Although crime has long been a major topic in American news, the proportion of media news devoted to crime increased during the 1980s and 1990s, especially on television (Cavender & Fishman, 1998; Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001; Fox & Van Sickel, 2001) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011) Crime news accounts for one-fifth to one-third of local television news (Surette, 1992) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011) and is often the leading story in the media (Gerber, 1996; Romer, Jamieson, & De Coteau, 1998) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). It is believed that although crime rates are declining, in fact the visibility of crime is increased because more people are "exposed" to intense media coverage of crime. (Costelloe, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2009)

With the increasing media coverage of issues about crime and justice (Mason, 2003; Potter and Kappeler, 2006) cited in (Boda & Szabo, 2011) but also with their increased consumption, there is an opportunity for the media to influence on public attitudes and opinions about criminal justice policy. Because most people have little or no direct experience with crime, they often rely on media for information about crime, victimization, and the reaction of the legal system. (Chermak, 1994; Surette, 2003) cited in (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018) Thus, using their power, the media often report in a way that distorts or creates a false image of crime in the community or society. The media, consciously or unconsciously, use or abuse the opportunity to manipulate with what is true and what is not, with facts and interpretations. (Jewkes, 2004) cited in (Стефановска, Медиумското прикажување на криминалитетот во дневните весници во Република Македонија, 2015) The sensational and selective approach in the media coverage of crime is essentially done for the purpose of higher rating between viewers and readers, but such an approach opens the possibility of creating a false image and beliefs among the public about crime or criminal justice. The process of selecting for which crimes media should report and how they are presented, can give a distorted picture for the real crime situation. (Stefanovska, 2015) Numerous studies have found that the media disproportionately give more attention to serious violent crimes and the most heinous crimes (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011), thus providing millions of people with daily information on murders, rapes and drug abuse (Greer, 2005) cited in (Boda & Szabo, 2011) According to Stefanovska’s research (2015), in the printed media in the Republic of North Macedonia, there is a disproportionate representation (coverage) of violent crime versus property crime, which means that although these acts are less frequent, their representation in some of the media is higher. (Stefanovska, 2015) As a consequence, individuals tend to overestimate the prevalence of violent crimes, to consider the system as inefficient, to think that the penalties are too lenient and to believe that crime rates are rising. (Callanan, 2005; Hough & Roberts, 1999; Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). Misconceptions sometimes lead to change in public beliefs and attitudes, especially regarding punishment, so the media might exert an influence on creation of punitive public attitudes and even attitude for returning the death penalty for certain crimes. Additionally, the general public thinks that the authorities which are supposed to combat crime are ineffective, i.e., they do not believe that governments have done enough to protect victims and to strengthen public safety (Shi, 2021). All of that can influence on the public to put pressure on the governments to introduce a more punitive penal policy for perpetrators. Recent research also shows that policy makers and practitioners respond to public inclinations toward certain criminal policies (Brace &
Boyea, 2008; Nicholson-Crotty, Peterson, & Ramirez 2009) cited in. (Shi, 2021) From this point of view, increasing incarcerations rates sometimes are driven by the increasingly punitive public (Demker, Towns, Duus-Otterstrom, & Sebring, 2008) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011), greatly and under the influence of the media.

In the last decade, the increasing use of social media is very actual, as well as the fight for domination over traditional media. Hence, the question is whether and how the consumption of social media is related with public attitudes about punishment. The analysis of their impact is significant for several reasons. First, reports show that not only the number of individuals who use social platforms increased, but almost 2/3 of Americans (67%) receive news from social media pages (Shearer & Gottfried, 2017) cited in (Intravia, 2019). Accordingly, the use of social networks sites as a major platform for content and information on which the public relies is increasing. Second, social media pages provide many unique features as opposed to traditional media platforms (e.g., television, newspaper, radio). Social media users can access news and information shared by others, engage in conversations (for example, by commenting on a post or stories), and to search for or to filter certain content. Moreover, by serving as a tool for communicating with others, social media allows users to participate in a virtual discussion on any topic, which can in turn influence on someone's opinion or position for the topic of discussion. (AA Anderson, Brossard, Scheufele, Xenos, & Ladwig, 2014) cited in (Intravia, 2019). This means that the social media can potentially tighten the attitudes towards punishment, which in turn can affect as a pressure for change of the penal policies and criminal justice practices.

2. THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF THE MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES ABOUT PUNITIVENESS

The reflection of the dominant interests and perceptions expressed through the manner and selection of crime news in the media can directly influence on individual attitudes and perceptions about crime. Crime stories shape the opinion, they create or encourage a feeling of fear and insecurity, stimulate stigma, stereotypes, intolerance and demands for punitive policies. (Стефановска, Медиумското прикажување на криминалитетот во дневните весници во Република Македонија, 2015, стр. 17)

There are a number of theories or models that explain how the media can influence on public attitudes. In the range of theories or models, there are some explanations that claim that media news is extremely powerful and that it can shape certain public views. On the other hand, researchers argue that the media has little effect on individuals due to a variety of mediating conditions, including their selective exposure to media that conforms with their views, selective perception according to previous beliefs, and selective retention on a content that conforms with their views and preferences. (Beale, 2006)

Among the first theoretical approaches for explaining the media influence on public attitudes was the "cultivation model" or “cultivation theory” set by George Gerbner in the Cultural Indicators Project in the 1970s. This model suggests that heavy television consumption encourages a view of the world that reflects more what is seen on television than what reality is. (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). Because television is oversaturated with depictions of crime and violence, those who watch too much television develop a view of "mean world" (Gerbner et al., 1977) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011) and have views, attitudes and beliefs, consistent with what is presented in the media. (Boda & Szabo, 2011) (Intravia, 2019). In fact, Gerbner et al.’s (1977, 1980) focused their research on television consumption and the effects of exposure to a particular type of content, regardless
of the medium. Most of their research focused on examining the "violence profile" and the "violence index" - measures of the frequency and intensity of violence on television. (Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016)

Contemporary researchers criticize the original cultivation model as too simple, because it fails to take into account the way that different people interpret the same televised depictions, as well as differences in the content and framing of different crime-related genres (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). In fact, what complicates the assessment of the potential effects of the media, is the recognition that media consumers should not be seen as a homogeneous, passive or silent mass. (Boda & Szabo, 2011) The field of communication studies has increasingly regarded the reception of media messages as a dynamic process in which viewers actively interpret and perhaps reconstruct those messages in light of their personal backgrounds and experiences, (Dahlgren, 1988; Gunter, 1987) cited in (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004), as well as related to other aspects of daily life. In this regard, researchers (including Gerbner) are beginning to include certain characteristics of the audience to determine whether they influence on different interpretations of the same media coverage (Intravia, 2019). Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argue that the mass media have the potential to produce strong effects on readers' attitudes, but these effects depend on the predispositions and other characteristics of readers, which affect how they process the messages projected in the mass media (Chan & Chan, 2012). Most frequently examined characteristics of the audience in the research about the media influence on public attitudes are race/ethnicity, age, gender, and experience with crime or the criminal justice system. (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). (Intravia, 2019) In fact, based on the cultivation theory, taking these characteristics into account during assessing the media influence on public attitudes, is part of the "differential reception thesis" or "audience reception theory". There are four key perspectives of this theory that explain the differences in the characteristics of media users, which can influence on their views and perceptions related to crime and the criminal justice system.

The **mainstreaming perspective** illustrates that regardless of group differences, heavy media consumption homogenizes individuals to share similar views (Gerbner et al., 1980; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2014) cited in (Intravia, 2019). From this perspective, the influence of the media on punitiveness would be uniform among demographic characteristics and the social backgrounds of the consumers. The **substitution perspective** is based on the view that the effects of the media can be more pronounced among consumers without personal experience with crime and the criminal justice system. (Gunter, 1987; Liska & Baccaglini, 1990). (Intravia, 2019) Hence, the influence of the media on punitiveness would be more pronounced among women, those with lower emotional responses to fear (Intravia, 2019) or those living in areas with a low crime rate. (Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016)

Contrary, the **resonance hypothesis** suggests that people whose life experience is more related to what is depicted on TV are more likely to be affected by the television messages. (Wu & Li, 2017) For people who knew someone victimized by crime, seeing violence on TV shows amplified their anger about crime but diminished their support for the justice system. (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018) From this point of view, the influence of the media on punitiveness may be more pronounced among those who have characteristics that are generally found to have more punitive views such as whites, men, religious, those who identify themselves as conservative. (Intravia, 2019) The **vulnerability perspective** argues that media messages will be more noticeable among individuals who are vulnerable or sensitive to crime and violence (Skogan & Maxfield, 1981) cited in (Intravia, 2019) From
this perspective, the impact of the media on punitiveness may be more pronounced among victims of crime, those with higher emotional responses to fear such as women and the elderly (Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016), and those with lower incomes and education. (Intravia, 2019)

In the literature three mechanisms for explaining media influence on public attitudes can be found: agenda setting, priming and framing. (Chan & Chan, 2012, p. 215)

Data collected from hundreds of simulations and surveys confirmed the "agenda-setting" and "priming" effects of the media. Agenda setting refers to the ability of the media to turn the public’s attention to certain topics (questions), (Beale, 2006) for example, by enlarging the placement of coverage, which will affect the importance attributed to these issues (McCombs and Shaw 1972). cited in (Chan & Chan, 2012) That implies that the eye-catching content may provide readers easily to pay attention to those issues and even to recall the memory afterwards. (Chan & Chan, 2012) Additionally, many scholars such as McCombs (1981) and Rogers and Dearing (1988) added that the basis of the agenda setting comprised the media do not directly influence people’s opinions or what they think but the agenda of issues they think about when the media highlighted some issues meanwhile ignore others (Chan & Chan, 2012). Priming describes the ability of the media to influence on the criteria by which the public judges public policy, public officials, or candidates for certain positions. (Beale, 2006) This occurs when news content suggests to readers what to use as benchmarks in order to assess some specific issues. (Chan & Chan, 2012) When agenda setting and priming are combined, the two phenomena show that the media’s emphasis on crime makes the issue more salient in the minds of viewers and readers, which causes the public to perceive crime as a more severe problem than real figures indicate (Beale, 2006) and to support more punitive policies. (Beale, 2006) On the other hand, framing differed from the two models while the concept addressed on how an issue portrayed in the media news can create effects on how readers perceived it. (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). (Chan & Chan, 2012)

Regarding the question of whether the media have a direct impact on changing public attitudes, there are several models in the literature that give explanation about that relationship, “one step flow model” (or magic bullet model), “two step flow model” and “multi-step flow model”. According to the one step flow model, media messages are directly received and consumed by audiences. (Hilbert, Vásquez, Halpern, Valenzuela, & Arriagada, 2017) However, this model was criticized shortly after its establishment and a new model was introduced, the two-step flow model of communication, by sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld et al. in 1944 and elaborated by Elihu Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955 and in subsequent publications. This model assumes that ideas flow from mass media to opinion leaders and from them to a wider population. (Wikipedia, n.d.) The stimulus that the media can generate is still in the focus of this concept, but the effects of the media are indirect. The model suggests that information and narratives in the mass media are channeled to people through the opinion leaders who have privileged access to the media. (Boda & Szabo, 2011) The key point of this two-step flow model is the demonstration of the complex interaction between the contents in the media and the personal predispositions in shaping public attitudes and opinions on certain topics. (Boda & Szabo, 2011)

In the era of digital social media, with the increasing number of those who use them (Pew Research Center 2012) cited in (Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016), it is more likely that the impact of the content from the social media on the views and opinions of users will increase. Thus, the two-step flow model, which is six decades old, again finds an interest in explaining the impact of social media content on public attitudes. Some empirical research
has found that modern social media platforms like Twitter, (Wikipedia, n.d.) Facebook or Instagram, show clear evidence of a two-step flow of communication. Many social media users receive news from public person, celebrity or other amplifying opinion leaders. (Wikipedia, nd) However, as Katz notes back in 1957, "opinion leaders themselves often reported that their own decisions were influenced by still other people" (Katz, 1957; p.68) cited in (Hilbert, Vásquez, Halpern, Valenzuela, & Arriagada, 2017). Therefore, there is probably more than just two straightforward steps, i.e., there may be "multi-step flow models" with many different flow directions and iterations. (Hilbert, Vásquez, Halpern, Valenzuela, & Arriagada, 2017)

Based on the Lazarsfeldian concept, Joseph Klapper (1960) argued that the media had a greater opportunity to strengthen than to change people's attitudes and behavior. He believes that media consumption and the way media messages are consumed depend on a wide range of phenomena, which he labeled as mediating factors. These mediating factors include: individual predispositions, group membership (peer group and family), opinion leadership, and the role of the media in society (Klapper, 1960: 47–52). (Boda & Szabo, 2011) John Zaller's (1992) model of forming public opinion is compatible with the two-step flow model in a sense that it identifies individual and contextual variables that effect on the exposure and understanding of media messages by people. (Boda & Szabo, 2011)

Zaller describes public opinion as something that is essentially unstable, vague and difficult to reach - not only because of methodological problems in researching of public opinion, but also because of the very nature of public opinion. If mass opinion is difficult to be determined, the same applies to the role of the media in shaping public opinion. Zaller offers evidence of the short-term effects of the media on people's attitudes without permanently changing their basic attitudes (Zaller, 1992: 78). (Boda & Szabo, 2011) In the longer term, the media can contribute to attitudes’ change, but they potentially compete with other influences, and their messages are contextualized by individual or social interpretive mechanisms. (Boda & Szabo, 2011)

3. RESEARCH RESULTS REGARDING MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD PUNITIVENESS

Among the empirical research we can rarely find studies that are solely focused on analyzing the influence of the media on public attitudes toward punitiveness. However, from the available research, the findings show mixed results. (Dowler, 2003)

One of the earliest studies that analyze the influence of the media on attitudes toward crime is Gerbner et al’ study in the 1960s, which found that individuals who heavily watched television were more likely to feel more threatened by crime, to believe that crime is more common than statistics show and that they take more action against crime. They found that crime on television was portrayed as more violent, accidental, and dangerous than "real-world" crime. Researchers have claimed that viewers internalize images from the media and develop a "mean world view". This view is characterized by "mistrust, cynicism, alienation and perceptions of higher-than-average levels of threat of crime in society" (Dowler, 2003, p. 110). Despite the criticism of Gerbner's research methodology, the findings suggest that people who heavily watch television, tend to support more harsh measures for perpetrators. (Boda & Szabo, 2011) but these effects may vary based on consumer characteristics such as demographic characteristics, past experiences, and social backgrounds. (Intravia, 2019)

In the preliminary analysis of the EURO-JUSTIS pilot survey, Boda et al., some statistically significant relationships between media consumption, on one hand, and fear of
crime, trust in justice and punitive attitudes, on the other, are also possible to establish. (Boda & Szabo, 2011) Boda & Szabo's assumption is that the media have influence on attitudes, but this effect is not necessarily direct and too strong: that effect is filtered through individual and social interpretive processes and is evidently one of many influencing factors which are shaping people's opinions on certain issues. (Boda & Szabo, 2011)

The initial studies for media and their influence were criticized that they provide one measure for media consumption, which is the total number of hours of television viewing (see Gerbner et al., 1977; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1978) cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). However, more recent studies that have explored specific forms of crime-related media, such as newspapers or television news, or different genres of crime-related media (for example, crime TV dramas or reality crime television programs) indicate that media channels and genres have different influences. (Dowler, 2002; Eschholz, Mallard, & Flynn, 2004). (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011)

Intravia (2019) research shows that individuals who have consumed more crime-related content on television are associated with a higher degree of punitiveness. (Intravia, 2019) Crime news and crime-reality programs seem to emphasize the “faulty criminal justice frame” that posits crime stems from an inefficient criminal justice system that does not deter criminal behavior because of lenient sentencing. Hence, the solution proposed by this framework is to "be tough" on crime by enacting more punitive laws and policies. Therefore, with this manner of shaping crime stories, it should be expected that media can influence the viewers punitive attitudes. In addition, most of the crime presentations are focused on explanations at an individual level, such as greed or anger, and they rarely shape stories involving structural factors that lead to crime. (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). A focus on the causes of crime on individual level can make viewers more punitive in regard to perpetrators if they view criminal behavior solely as a matter of choice. (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011)

Roberts and Doob (1990) studied crime stories in newspapers and found that shorter stories elicited more punitive responses from readers than longer and more detailed stories. (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). Similarly, the study by Demker, Towns, Duus-Otterstrom, and Sebring (2008), found a link between tabloid consumption and punitiveness, for example, regular tabloid readers more frequently support introduction of death penalty than non-tabloid readers or those who seldom read tabloids. (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014)

Certain authors connect the structure and presentation of media content with the public opinion on criminal policy. Sotirovic found that the consumption of complex media content that shows different perspectives on an issue, is associated with a more complex thinking about both crime and crime prevention policies (Sotirovic, 2001) cited in (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014). For example, Brady's research found that increased time of watching violent movies and TV was associated with women's punitive attitudes. Brady (2007, p. 519) cited in (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014) From that point of view, exposure and attention to the simple infotainment formats of various reality-based pseudo news, talk, and crime drama shows, is related to lower levels of complex thinking, and therefore a preference for punitive criminal justice policies. (Sotirovic, 2001) cited in (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014) It is interesting to note an opposite example, Baumgartner, DeBoef and Boydstury (2008), in the book The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence, suggest that the news media's recent focus on innocence cases has led to reduced support of the death penalty on the grounds of fairness. (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014).

171
Dowler (2003) tested the effect of watching TV crime programs on punitiveness, but he did not find correlation between the media and punitive attitudes. (Dowler, 2003) The strongest indicators of punitive attitudes in his research were race, education, income, fear of crime, and marital status. (Dowler, 2003) However, his study does not distinguish different genres related to crime (reality, drama or news) (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011). In the same direction are the research results by Grabe and Drew (2007), which found a weak correlation between any form of media and perceptions and opinions about crime and justice. (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014)

Rosenberger and Callanan (2011) examined whether media consumption increase the odds that individuals support criminal sentencing goals such as punishment, incapacitation, deterrence, and rehabilitation. (Intravia, 2019) Using a sample of more than 4,000 Californians, and rehabilitation as a reference category, the authors found that individuals who consumed TV news and TV crime reality programs were more likely to support punishment over rehabilitation. (Intravia, 2019) In this regard, the research of Oliver and Armstrong (1995) found that the constant watching of reality-based crime programs and increased enjoyment of these programs, is correlated with punitive attitudes (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014). Goidel et al. (2006) found that consumption of TV news was related to individuals' beliefs that rehabilitation was not as effective as incarceration in crime prevention (see also Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000) cited in (Intravia, 2019), while Holbert, Shah's research, and Kwak (2004) showed that watching television news is negatively related to the endorsement of capital punishment. In the Rosenberger and Callanan study (2011), consumers of television crime dramas were more likely to choose incapacitation (as opposed to rehabilitation) as the most important sentencing goal. (Intravia, 2019) In this regard, the research of Holbert, et al. (2004) and Kort-Butler and Hartshorn’s (2011) found that watching television crime drama was directly correlated with attitudes toward the death penalty. (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014) (Kort-Butler & Sittner Hartshorn, 2011) However, there is some research that found a weak relation between the consumption of television crime dramas and attitudes towards crime and criminal justice. (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Dowler & Zawilski, 2007; Eschholz et al., 2002). Cited in (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011) Perhaps television crime dramas have little effect on viewers' opinions because these fictions are not seen as real. Another reason why television crime dramas fail to provoke such reaction on viewers as television news, is that in each episode, crime is solved and justice is restored. (Sparks, 1992). (Rosenberger & Callanan, 2011)

Regarding generally punitive views, Roche et al. (2016) found that consumption of local television news and television crime programs was associated with increased punitiveness. Spiranovic et al. (2012) found that those who were less critical towards media and those who consumed more television news were positively associated with punitive attitudes, (Intravia, 2019) In contrast Kort-Butler and Hartshorn (2011) found no correlation between watching television news and public attitudes. (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014)

The experimental research by the American researchers Wakschlag, Vial and Tamborini (1983), supports the hypothesis that watching television can cause more punitive attitudes. (Wood & Viki, 2001) Wakschlag et al manipulated with participants' initial opinion by showing them either a crime documentary or a neutral film (i.e., a film containing no reference to crime). Participants had choice of watching a film with some victimization and then how justice is restored, or a film where it was not restored. The analysis showed that participants who watched crime documentary were more concerned about crime than participants in control group. Although this study does not directly assess attitudes toward crime and punishment, the results suggest that watching crime programs on television may
increase people's desire perpetrators to get real punishment in order to restore justice. (Wood & Viki, 2001)

Data on the use of social networks around the world show a continuous increase in the number of users. Hence, in the contemporary research, it is necessary not only to assess the role of traditional media but also the role of social networks in framing public opinion, especially on issues related to crime and justice. The analyses of previous research in this area show that only a few recent studies have incorporated some questions related to social media into assessing the media impact on attitudes toward crime, fear of crime, criminal justice system, and punishment. Roche et al. (2016) are among the few researchers who have analyzed the correlation between internet news exposure with punitive attitudes and support for the death penalty. The results of their research do not show that there is a positive relationship between the consumption of online news and punitive attitudes. In fact, despite disaggregating the samples to investigate differential relationships by audience traits, very few significant relationships emerge. Those who have some relationships, are negative, the opposite direction of what would be expected on the basis of cultivation theory, for example, their research found statistically significant negative relationship between the consumption of internet news and the support of the death penalty. (Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016) Roche et al. (2016) argue that, although internet news reaches a wider audience, people can still be selective regarding the news they watch, whether it is through the filters on their social media pages or by visiting news-oriented pages, and with that to allow users more latitude in framing their own stories about crime. (Roche, Pickett, & Gertz, 2016) (Kort-Butler & Habecker, 2018) Although the research of Britto et al. (2014) showed that certain forms of media (radio, TV, and certain TV genres) have a poor statistically significant impact on the increased support for the death penalty, their research did not confirm that Internet use is statistically significant related to the attitudes toward death penalty. (Britto & Noga-Styron, 2014) Part of such results may be due to the fact that individuals with certain characteristics choose media content that is consistent with their perspectives.

Intravia (2018) in certain models that he tested, found that individuals who consumed more social media are more likely to be punitive, but after including consumption of different social media content in other models, it was found that there is a connection with punitiveness only when there is an increased consumption of news and information on Facebook about punishment, but not when there is consuming information and news about crime. (Intravia, 2019)

Such mixed results regarding media influence on attitudes about punitiveness indicate that in future it would be necessary to include research questions for different types of social media (and different social networks) and through a combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the impact of each particular type on attitudes about punishment.
4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The positive role of the media in the process of shaping criminal policy is slowly changing and there is a danger that they may exacerbate the fear of crime, the distrust in law enforcement institutions and to have negative influence on public attitudes about punishment. (Kury, 2001) (Jovanova, 2010)

Regarding media influence on public attitudes about punitiveness, we should avoid both extreme positions, neither to overestimate the significant influence nor to underestimate or to claim that it does not exist. Recent research results do not support the strongest view that the media can completely determine the views and opinions of the public that consumes different types media. However, strong evidence suggests that the media play a significant role in increasing the importance of crime among the public and increases the support among public for punitive policies. (Beale, 2006) Although the media are not the only ones that can influence the public opinion, yet, they communicate and amplify other key influences that may lead to increased punitiveness. (Beale, 2006)

In future perspective, studies related to the media influence on public attitudes about punishment should focus on several things. First, beside the inclusion of individual and social factors related to the public, the analysis should include more qualitative methods for deeper analysis and receiving a bigger picture for connection. Second, world wide data show that we have an increasing number of people in the world who use social media, not only for communication, but also as a platform on which they receive information about crime. Hence there is a need for assessing the impact of social media on public attitudes, because in the literature few studies regarding their impact can be found. And third, it is necessary to establish more sophisticated theories which will explain the media influence on shaping public opinion (Boda & Szabo, 2011), although it is really difficult to determine, measure and conceptualize this influence.

5. REFERENCES


