

# Modern Media and Changing the Functions of Family (With Emphasis on Individualism)

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## **Abstract**

Compared to traditional media, an important characteristic of modern media is that it taps on electric and electronic means and it has extensive coverage.

The most important characteristic of traditional media is that it creates a face-to-face communication between addresser and addressees. Modern media has its roots in modernism and is a direct consequence of modern societies.

Modern media especially visual media represent the dominant values in the society and has altered the function of family toward more individualism, and individual behavioral patterns. Under the influence of modern media, families are losing their traditional function and are experiencing new functions.

A function geared toward more individualism and catering for the individual needs of family members, a function that challenged the traditional dominant values of the family. Among all the contributing factors, modern media in their various forms and comprehensive advertisements, have played a pivotal role in internalizing characteristics of modern world and specially individualism among family members.

The current study aims to investigate the new functions of family in accordance with the role played by visual media in the modern society.

**Key Words:** Family, Modernism, Media, Individualism

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## **Introduction**

As the most important social institution, Family is increasingly important in social harms. Media as a powerful tool affects thinking and attitudes of couples and influences parent children relationship. Media can have negative influence on all members of the society, however the influence of media is greatest on institutions like family.

Media uses various tools for creation of programs and can present concepts in diverse forms and interesting modes to viewers. In the present era, families are faced with numerous problems such as a sharp decline in having children, filiarchy, working mothers and a shift in the roles played by men and women.

A shift in the role played by women in society alongside other social factors have caused a massive change in the family structure. These changes have been brought up by various factors and agents, an important and effective of which is media. All these alterations can be categorized in two broad classifications.

Some of the changes are favorable and positive such as an increase in the awareness of family members toward general health improvement, mental and spiritual health improvement, a reform in personal and group behavior, etc.

Negative changes are as follows: increase in divorce rate, domestic violence and social crimes or misconducts. Media can exert considerable influence on issues such as child upbringing and internal family conflicts.

A thorough investigation of the consequence of media and its opportunities and threats in all these domains can provide a clear perspective for the condition and function of family in the present era.

In the present study, the effect of modern media on the functions of family and the consequence of media in accordance with opportunities and threats will be investigated.

## **Key Concepts Defined**

### **- Family**

It enjoys various definitions, however the definition used in the present study is the most comprehensive and the most all-embracing. Family is the first institution in society, it is the center for all social interactions.

From a pragmatic perspective, filial and parent children relationships are satisfying the first human need for survival. These requirements are as follows:

1. Adjustment of sexual relationships,
2. Biological support for all members of the society specially infants and children,
3. Socialization, that is making children ready to acquire certain skills for healthy roles and relationships that can be used for later stages of their lives,
4. Fair social support for children and adults,
5. Adjustment and channeling initiation of adults in economic and productive situations and reproduction in society.

### **- Modernism**

The term modern stands for newness, novelty and being up-to-date, its meaning is in sharp contrast to obsolescence and being out-of-date. The term was first introduced in late 15<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary with renaissance period.

In the next two centuries the term modernism started to be widely used in intellectual controversies of scholars in Western Europe.

The term modernism refers to innovativeness and regeneration. Modernism was first conceived of in the works of Jean Jacques Russo in 18<sup>th</sup> century. Then it became popular in the works of Russo's contemporary writers. Modernism denotes a state of being or quality of, characteristic or experience of being modern or belonging to the modern era. It suggests newness, innovativeness and unprecedentedness in a way that it breaks up with the past, discontinues with the past experience and enters the approaching future.

The scope of modernism is includes attitudes and ideas, innovativeness, newness and creativity, pioneering, improvement and advancements, growth, and evolution, current taste of society and fashion. The opposite of modernity is past-longing, obsolete–cherishing, recession, backwardness, and being old-fashioned. Modernism has principles and components as follows:

1. Experimentalism: in other words, paying attention and focusing on experience in any research and in human and natural sciences without any attention to philosophical and intellectual issues.
2. Humanism: A firm belief in centrality of human beings in all affairs and issues.
3. Rationalism: a belief that states human thinking is capable of managing everyday affairs independent of divine revelations and teachings, and that human beings are capable of comprehending and solving all problems.
4. Liberalism: seeking freedom outside the framework provided by religion.
5. Welfare and civilization: stands for an elevation in the level of material life and welfare of societies and improvement of culture.

6. Technological improvement: attention to unprecedented technological improvements in industrial products
7. Democracy and justice: a belief in the fact that all human being regardless of their religions, race and ethnicity are born equal.
8. Capitalism: attention to capitalism and laissez faire a free economy.
9. Individualism: a belief in originality of individuals and a belief in precedence of individuals over economy.
10. Secularism: the governance of scientific and non-religious leaders, and seclusion of religious authority from social arenas and spread of a material and worldly culture.

## **The Effect of Media on Functions of Family**

### **1. Media, Family and Child Upbringing**

Family plays the most important role in child upbringing. As a matter of fact, beliefs, religious ideas and socialization are first formed in the family institution.

In the words of Kohn, a direct result of industrialization was to bring huge changes to family structure and the most important consequence was the transition from a traditional family to a civil industrial family. Gradually extended families of the past decades were substituted by nuclear families of the modern era.

As a result, families gave the role of child upbringing to schools and educational institutions, it can be argued that profit seeking replaced passion and merits replaced moralities in the family circle, the traditional families with their traditional functions have been marginalized in the modern era.

From the viewpoint of Carlson, nowadays western societies are moving toward a group like extended families, whose main and most important value is flexibility.

Furthermore, media with their influence on the unfavorable parent children relationship can be source of change in the child upbringing process. Compared to previous ones, the current generation is less likely to be embracing the values dictated by the family.

In sum, it can be safely argued that not only mosques, schools and other disciplinary institutions play a role in child upbringing but also media plays a specifically influential role. Children usually choose their role models in media. No surprise that actors and actresses in movies and soap operas play a more significant role than university professors or school teachers as a role model.

- **Family Environment and Parental Behavior in Media**

Total lack of control or shortcoming in controlling children will increase the risk of social malfunctions. Weakness in social control or family control indicates chaos and upon witnessing chaos in family upbringing children may be tempted to behave in a way that runs counter to the expectations and beliefs of parents.

On the other hand, some parents might strive toward controlling their children but some might not have found the proper method and way of controlling them, these parents will show serious contradictions in their behavior toward children.

Some parents in their way of handling the problems and affairs of children may show serious weaknesses and children are well aware of their parents weaknesses in this regard.

It is in this area that we need to point out to the active and effective role played by media in children upbringing. Programs created for counselling distraught parents in TV or radio often give suggestions as to how to eradicate their lack of control over children. When parents fail to exert control over their children and see their intentions not fulfilled, they will normally resort to using violence.

In other words, when some deviations or aberrational behavior is depicted as leading to success or when an aberrational agent lands in success, then this deviation will lose its non-standard quality and in some cases will not be regarded as one.

The control theory holds that unless people are taught not to commit misconduct, they will take up antisocial acts and will commit misconducts throughout their adult years. Rock states that education in this regard plays a pivotal role in children behavior and an effective role in their future behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Children need this form of education, if families fail to provide it, wrong behavioral patterns will find their way into the minds of children.

### - **The Effect of Media on Couple's Relationship**

It is worth noting that family environment is not restricted to parents' attitudes. Parents' behavior toward each other and their treatment to each other is an important agent in upbringing and children will copy that behavior.

Violence in family environment has diverse forms, mistreatment of children is at one end of this continuum and harsh and violent attitudes and words of parents will be the other end of this continuum.

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1. Rock, 1996, p.182.

Bandora holds that children will be completely exposed to the living examples of force, coercion and aggressions by their parents, their parents' actions will show these methods as the favorable way of settling disputes, showing interests and satisfying needs.<sup>1</sup>

Their parents' behavior will be regarded as the most favorable way to imitate in similar situations. By influencing couples relationships, media can exert a huge influence on children upbringing, it can act directly on couples' mentality and children upbringing. These effects can even bring massive changes to the family structure.

By various means, media can create a mentality of correct behavior for diverse situations and correct responses to these situations. This effect is different from unofficial social control which is exerted in society or schools and educational institutions. Its effect is specifically related to internal tools. Media can highlight specific needs such as love, sense of belonging and respect and can influence people in these specific domains.

Furthermore, recent sociological theories emphasize the role of religious beliefs in having family calmness and comfort. Scholars like Peter Berger hold that religion is a sacred shelter that protects human beings from ravages of misfortunes and disappointments.

Thus, if a family fails to cherish religious, moral beliefs and values in children, the ground will be paved for children to commit various misconducts. Religious beliefs play a pivotal role in families to provide spiritual equilibrium and stability, it also heightens the feelings of happiness and mental satisfaction.

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1. Bandora, 1973, p. 47.



Religiosity gives essence to life and provides spiritual support for people, it increases social solidarity and provides control over their behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the role played by media is positive or negative depends on the nature and content of the programs. In fact, both the sender and the receiver of the message are specifically important. In healthy, united, and harmonious families TV increases unity. However, in unstable and insecure families, TV and media can worsen the situation.

By providing trust in the family environment, media can pave the ground for acceptance of social values from the family in the children.

What is witnessed nowadays is a clear indicator of the fact that in families where close, friendly relationship between parents and children exist, parents can control children behavior, and they can transfer social and religious values to their children.

On the contrary, in families where role models and behavioral patterns have been adopted from outside, the role models acted in contrast to the desires and wants of parents.

## **2. Media: Family and Social Solidarity**

Family is a dynamic group. Groups are not just a cluster of individuals but indeed groups display the nature and form of relationship between the members. Groups can be considered as some individuals who communicate with each other and have shared activities and follow a collective, common goal.

In categorizing groups, families can be thought of as small groups who abide by the rules of bigger groups but with very slight differences.

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1. Stark, 1996, p. 8.

A basic principle of these groups is their evolutionary and transformational nature.

As a form of collective structure, groups are constantly changing and evolving. From the outset, families will undergo similar changes and will have like processes.

Going through these stages of development is essential for the system to pursue special targets. The main goal of the family as a group is to elevate itself to a higher level in order to keep its integrity and stability.

This goal can be labelled as family integrity or family solidarity that gives family group a stable personality. In other words, group solidarity is the higher level of family as a group.

When group members can satisfy each other's need in order to achieve an individual or a collective goal, then the group is generating solidarity. Put it differently, group solidarity as a higher form of evolution depends on cooperation, pursuing targets and appropriate measures in accordance with satisfying the needs of group members.

On this basis, family solidarity is the most important factor in dynamism and maintenance of families.

#### **- Factors Contributing to Betterment of Emotional Bonds in the Family**

Group solidarity as the cause that maintains the lifeline of the family requires certain characteristics that ensure the group's stable character. From a psychological point of view, emotional bond is a factor that facilitates the emotional environment of the group for the easy achievement of previously set targets and an increase in group solidarity.

The reason is the motivational power of emotional bonds, that results in group members in actively participating to satisfy each other's' needs.

Emotional bonds are formed and spread for various reasons. One of the best grounds for the cultivation of family bonds is proper and effective communication between members of the group. The emotional bond will not be created firmly unless group members interact with each other with mutual understanding and knowledge.

One of the reasons that increases emotional bond is verbal communication. Verbal communication is to have conversation as a medium of communication between two or more people. In communication environments, conversation is not just a normal habit but a pattern that forms the dominant emotional and spiritual conditions of social situations.

As a form of verbal communication that meets the needs of communication and interaction, conversation has two certain characteristics or better to say two requirements:

- The ability to listen, the ability to show empathy. By making proper use of these skills, one can use verbal communication to increase mutual understanding and find common ground in a relationship.

Hearing is entirely different from listening. Hearing is a biological function of human beings that includes receiving an audio message from the channel of ears.

Hearing is but a minor part of listening process. Listening is a process that has diverse elements such as receiving a message, understanding, paying attention, meaning assignment and a response to the message.

Another point worth mentioning is that listening is always accompanied by visual contact.

Psychological experiences clearly show that the art of listening that can have therapeutic effects always comes with visual contact. Findings also show that visual contact is an important requirement of creating security and paying attention to others. When in verbal communications, listening is accompanied by visual eye contact, participants in the communication will have mutual respect and attention from each other and this will increase their empathy and mutual understanding.

Thus listening without eye contact will lose its essential value and is demoted to hearing as a biological function of human beings. These two factors cannot be easily separated from each other. On the same basis, families that have eye contact while carefully listening to each other, will create better and stronger emotional bonds.

Empathy is an emotional, cognitive process wherein one person becomes aware of another's emotions, feelings and cognition. Some argue that empathy is a shared feeling of emotion in two people. Karl Rodgers defines empathy as the ability of a person to accompany another in his feelings so that the feelings of that person is shared between the two.

When, as a result of conversation, and with due regard to factors contributing to listening and empathy, an emotional bond is formed, a mutual effect is created in the family, enhancing the environment toward more interaction and more family solidarity, and this cycle moves toward evolution and betterment unless there is distortion in the process of transformation and evolution.

As a direct result of interaction environment, fusion of attitudes and exchange of ideas will happen between the members of the family.

Thus interaction, emotional bond and family solidarity are variables that altogether have a positive and significant correlation and facilitate each other.

- **Harmful Agents in the Formation of Emotional Bonds Within a Family**

There are some factors that are detrimental to the emotional bonds of family and endanger the family solidarity. One such factor is individualism. Individualism creates a division or cleavage between family members.

In today's fast pace of technology, there are various devices that consume individual person's attention and stop them from interacting with other members of the society. Mass media are one of such devices. However, this does not negate the benefits of technological tools in our daily lives. But uncivilized and uncultured use of technological tools has created a condition whereby their use is only geared toward promoting and enhancing individualism.

In other words, if the process of culturization of media tools is operationalized to its full extent, the disadvantages will decrease sharply and its true function will take its proper place within society and family. However, some scholars hold that since electronic tools are constantly changing in nature, they cannot provide calmness for the users. In fact these scholars argue that electronic tools are detrimental to family calmness. Still some others say that these views are radical and one-sided.

The function of mass media especially auditory media, which is not interactive, , has gradually replaced inter-personal and face-to-face relationships in family and society, media caused that individual atmosphere instead of collective and emotional atmosphere be dominant and prevailing within the families.

It can be safely argued that there is a direct link between the spread of auditory and computer media and individualism and a move away from the emotional and warm circle of the family.

In other words, these tools gradually harm the emotional and spiritual atmosphere of interaction in any inter-personal communication. Members of the family group are thus moved toward divergence instead of convergence, and step by step group people only share the physical surrounding of their living quarters and have no interaction whatsoever.

As time goes by, the common goals pursued by all members will break apart and diverge. In such an environment, instead of having interaction with other members of the family in human-to-human environment, members will interact via electronic devices in a virtual world. Since electronic devices have charms and attractions unmatched by human channels of communication, some form of cultural panic and individual passivity will be formed in individuals.

Therefore, instead of having warm interactions with each other that will lead to strengthening of family ties and increasing the family solidarity, family members will resort to electronic channels of communication, a form of communication that is void of emotional and spiritual load. In the words of Fokoyama, due to the endangering of morality and the quality of life in the present era, we will gradually witness a complete downfall of the humanity.

This downfall will happen in moral institutions and specifically in families. Communication pitfalls normally occur in two kinds of communication, first, in communication between parent and children and in communication between husband and wife.

Findings suggest that there is correlation between the decrease in communication between parents/children or couples due to the changes in the addressees, and the emotional bond and cognitive harmony between members of the family.

these negative changes will happen proportionately leading to a decrease in the family solidarity.

### **3. Media, family and future challenges**

#### **- Evolution of family in modern era**

In the present era, families have undergone massive changes, these transformations can be categorized under two classes:

1. Structural transformations: these changes have moved families from extended families to nuclear and to single-person and single-parent families, these changes have popularized shared living without marriage.
2. Value transformations: in the modern era, traditional values such as loyalty of couples, reproduction, relationship with relatives and protection and authority of men over their families, have lost their significance.
3. Functional transformations: the traditional roles of men and women inside family have undergone massive transformations. The role of man as the sole provider of income for the family is now not restricted to man. With the massive entrance of female work force to workplaces and industries, women's power of haggling has increased massively.

Although separation of children from family in Iran is quite different from that of the west, and the emotional relationship between children and parent continues well after their puberty, and in some cases economic dependence on parents is a common phenomenon for children, still structural transformation in families is quite tangible and noticeable in Iran.

- **Modern media: opportunities and challenges**

Important questions to be asked are whether media can hinder or speed up the process of transformations, whether media can soothe or worsen the pace of changes, or whether these changes are inevitable and uncontrollable.

Obviously, governments strive to exploit the potential of media and use media for their own benefit and manipulate public minds and exert influence on institutions such as family. Governments strive to create conducive conditions so that they can play their own roles in social control properly.

Therefore, prior to program production media must have a thorough understanding of the status quo and the conditions prevailing in the families and the larger framework of society. Media need to design their programs in accordance with this understanding.

In our country, two sectors work hand in hand: traditional and modern. Whereas the modern and new form of family is seen in big cities, in rural areas and small towns the family institution is still very powerful.

Thus, since media is targeting a very wide range of addressees. Programming is not only difficult, but also very delicate and sensitive.



In other words, first a comprehensive definition of the functions of family needs to be provided so that the kind of programs for that family and goals pursued by these families will become clearer and program production will be more target-oriented.

If media depicts a blurred and wrong image of family, contrary to the prevailing values and realities of the society, the addressees will have great difficulty accepting them.

In some TV series, the phenomenon of working women are depicted as positive and as a sign of cooperation between couples, in these series working outside is depicted as a contribution of women to society while in some others this issue is depicted as a social plague and the program strives to create a link and attribute the shortcomings in children upbringing and coldness in marital relationships to working women.

In fact, media is obliged to have a unified policy toward prevalent phenomenon in society. The other transformation relates to the internal structure of family relationships, media has brought along some changes in the roles played by members of the family.

Public media especially TV has depicted these differences as negative and destructive factors. Depicting scenes of people living in Ghettos who have very strong family ties despite their destitute, juxtaposed with rich families living in best quarters of the city with weak and broken up family ties is a usual phenomenon in Iran's public media.

In fact, public media is showing clichéd pictures of families, pictures which remains stable and constant while change is an indivisible part of human life. What is even more important than change itself is the readiness of human beings to face the consequences of any change.

In societies where the pace of change is faster than the readiness and capacity of people to embrace them, not only social misconducts will surface but also the expectation and mentality of people about change will be negative.

The current plight of Iranian Family is an example of such contradictions. In the transitional phase between tradition and modernity and along with the massive cultural upheavals that come with it, Iranian families are experiencing comprehensive and massive transformations. Understanding these transformations and expecting their consequences will be particularly important from certain aspects.

Just as there are massive differences between families with religious tendencies and upbringings, there exist vast and unimaginable differences among families that are indifferent to religion or are less religion-oriented.

Iranian families still hold on to concepts and principles of the past, and from another side need to face modernism. Iranian families are on their way toward modernism. Although this divergence need not always be a site of conflict, lack of clarity in this situation is creating and will create serious conflicts.

due to the aforementioned conditions, Traditional concepts such as next of kin and Others, jealousy and protectiveness, relatives, obedience to elders, family dignity and face, and so on have acquired different meanings and definitions in Iranian families.

We can label some of the behaviors of families whose social conduct is different from us as moral corruption or promiscuity, or else we can label them as signs of transformations and start of a transition from tradition to modernity.

Under these circumstances, media must take an approach so that while it preserves values and traditions of the past, it also pays attention to massive changes that are happening in the modern world.

#### **4. Media and Domestic Violence**

Media exert influence on family members and family relations in various forms. Different radio or TV programs can promote certain behavioral patterns in the form of movies, TV series or radio programs. These behavioral patterns are internalized in individuals from early childhood, and will create a certain mentality toward husband and wife relationships.

Nowadays we can consider domestic violence from the viewpoint of child harassment and violence in couples' relationships. The latter form of violence can be approached in two ways: Violence against men and violence against women. However, the dominant form is violence against women that is a man using violence against women is higher in quantity than the other way round. Since this form of violence happens in the family environment and is rarely publicized, the current statistics cannot be a true indicator of its properties.

In fact, media can discreetly form certain cultural clichés and mindsets in a person's mind. This clichéd form can be a form of authority or dominance of men over women or an unhealthy relationship of men with children.

When being male is introduced as a the cause of dominance and superiority over other members of the family in a TV program, when rightful requests of family members are blatantly disregarded, or when the response of men or women are depicted as a form of aggression, then domestic violence is advertised and propagated in media.

The purpose of its creators might not be to fan the flames of family and domestic violence, quite the contrary, they might strive to strengthen the pillars and foundation of the family, however, there is a widening gap between what we name as purpose and what happens in reality in media programs.

It is even possible that avarice and greediness of children and their luxurious life demands will create a series of false needs and desires in the viewers and encourage them to achieve such luxuries.

New theories in family violence are attempting to investigate the fundamental reasons that make families prone toward violence.

According to recent theories, violence against women is not restricted to only a person or a family, but is in fact a reflection of the widespread sexual and economic inequality in the whole society.

These scholars believe that violence against women is not an infraction of the social order, but it is indeed a form of endorsement of certain kinds of social order. The roots of such behavior can be traced to the socio-cultural belief that describe women as inferior and not equal to men.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, media is not simply a propagator of certain forms of behavior, media in this case is just reflecting beliefs and values that the society has tacitly approved.

From the viewpoint of social learning, children that are exposed to family violence from early childhood, are more prone to be violent in adult years. This theory point to the experience and exposure to violence from the early childhood.

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1. Dobash, 1979, p. 15.

This experience might be formed from the content that is depicted by TV, or might even be encouraged by that.

It can be argued that inducement of an ideology or a wrong way of thinking in all aspects or behavioral grounds can lead to worsening or formation of new social misconducts. The role of media is related to proposing needs and demands of people.

In some TV series married people are accused of having secret affairs and extra-marital relationships with other people. Although these series aim to show the wrongness of such a behavior, some viewers might have superficial understanding of the aim of the movie and be influenced by it somehow.

Media is a powerful device in culturalization process, reforming social behavior and family relations. Therefore, it is expected that the nature of programs be harmonious with these targets, but what we experience in reality is moral decadence, and a weakening of internal relationship between family members.

Family violence is an inevitable consequence of these causes. Thus, media can't take measures in order to reduce family violence without a proper understanding of its nature.

It is worth mentioning that violence can be transferred from generation to generation. A child exposed to parental or relatives' violence is not only more prone to have emotional disorders, but is also more likely to be victim of violence or violent behavior (Rafifar, 2007:8).

#### **- The Role of Media in Violence Against Women**

Violence against women is rampant in many countries, but unfortunately it remains unknown, and is tacitly accepted as an everyday practice.

Mostly, men use violence against their wives. Physical and mental violence at homes will not only have physical harms, but also humiliate and belittle children.

Nevertheless, many cases of domestic violence remain unknown and undiscovered, possibly because some women see themselves deserving violence since they have neglected to fulfill their duties, they might fear further violence for disclosing secrets of the family, or else they might feel humiliated because of violence and refuse to publicize it.

Unfortunately, there are no laws to protect families against domestic violence in some cases. Violence has diverse personal and social dimensions. The personal effects of violence is that it decreases efficiency of a person in workplace, decrease the learning rate, and leads to a failure of people in having social interactions.

The minimum effects of domestic violence are failure to have social interaction, running away from home, suicide, failure in participating in public meetings and discussions, failure in expressing personal views, having negative mentality of one's own, social seclusion, fear and anxiety, lack of independence, failure in the realization of one's true potentials and talents, and most importantly, continuation of violence. World health organization has set its priority goal in its campaign against domestic violence "understanding the issue of violence against women".

The first five priorities of the violence against women campaign are as follows: making binding policies for the public, creating supportive environments, revision in government services, betterment of social action to combat domestic violence against women, and development of social and individual skills in people for a non-violent co-existence.

Media play an active role in all the above-mentioned areas. In some cases, the immediate impact of a TV series can easily be seen in the words and behavior of some people. Radio programs also play an active role in decreasing domestic violence, by tackling family and social issues.

Violence against women is worrying in all countries of the world even in advanced countries that have progressive laws to prevent violence in families.<sup>1</sup>

In advanced countries, media are used as an effective tool in reducing domestic violence, in fact these are the wants and needs of government and social institutions. However, in the other side of the coin, the commercial film production companies and cable TV programs are worsening the situation by showing action movies.

It can be deduced from the status quo that social benefits that governments are seeking are in contrast to material and monetary goals that film production companies are pursuing. Depiction of violence in movies will stimulate violent behavior, since violence does not curb the temptation for violence. In fact violence stimulates violence and foments aggression and violent behavior among people.

On the other hand, victims of the family violence (mostly women and children) look for ways to tackle this situation. Programs that talk about equality of men and women's rights, roundtables that pay attention to family issues with guests such as lawyers, counsellors, psychologists and sociologist in media are valuable attempts to increase awareness of family members about their range of responsibilities and rights.

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1. Clein, 2004, p. 25.

In order to appreciate the value of such attempts, a brief look at the corporal punishment of children at school and compared to couple of decades ago will suffice us.

Women have been striving and still strive to elevate their social and family status by various means. The huge increase in the number of women who enjoy having academic education cannot be regarded as not having influenced by media. A very important function of media is depicting a picture of women who have equal social status and perform similar social functions to men.

In sum, media are effective tools in controlling and spread of family violence. The general orientation of media is dependent on the policies and purposes that they aims to pursue.

### **5. Media, family and social misconducts**

From the viewpoint of many scholars, social misconducts are the direct result of family problems. In their definitions of family problems, scholars point to various issue that can be summarized as emotional abandonment of children by parents, lack of emotional support and failure to have emotional bonds with children.<sup>1</sup>

Some scholars point to lack of family solidarity,<sup>2</sup> lack of control over children and remarrying of parent as the main causes of social misconduct and family problems.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, news from radio and other media display a specific picture of crimes and are very influential in forming institutions such as police. Media play a substantial role in forming public opinion about crimes and social misconducts.

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1. Gorman, 1998, p. 319.

2. Weist, 1998, p. 32.

3. Pagani, 1998, p. 489.



It can be argued from above discussion that by affecting family structure from one hand and specific portrayal of crime from another, media exert influence on the formation and decrease of social crimes.

The effect of media can directly lead to social misconducts, however, this effect is not general, only sporadic cases. Witnessing a bank robbery or a shop lifting act or a family theft can tempt a teenage viewer to commit the same crime.

The influence of satellite channels or movies that do not come from the filter of government and thus lack censorship and control is even graver and worse. Sexual crimes are often committed under the influence of such movies and the wrongdoers mostly confess that.

TV programs, especially soap operas that are created in one's country, are very popular depending on their themes and quality of production. However, in some cases such TV programs blatantly violate the principles that the society needs. Propagation of luxurious lives, and depiction of very wealthy persons whose lives and houses can only be seen in dreams will have severe consequences on families and the society at large.

Theory of Social Reflection of Crime states that by continuously showing seductive and pleasant pictures of crimes, and depicting criminals as heroes, media are weakening our self-control. This theory has been investigated in psychological theories about decontrolization and desensitization of formation of motivations for committing crimes.

Hirschi social control theory states that when people are indifferent or not sensitive about social constraints, they will become criminals and commit misconducts.<sup>1</sup>

In these theories, media play a meaningful role in the depiction of general picture of crime in a society. The spread of this effect is so vast that all mentalities and mindsets the people hold about a crime are all products of media. This theory can be called popular media images of crime.

Gerbner holds that the lessons taken from TV in early childhood are probably the foundations of our general worldview in later stages of life. TV is a meaningful source for general values, clichéd beliefs, ideologies and attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

In other researches, internal and external causes of crimes and social misconducts have been investigated. Some factors are specifically influential such as: parent children affinity described as the presence of parents in family circle, mother's loyalty to children and not marrying after divorce, attention and encouragement of parents to children, family tranquility, and warm relationship between teenagers and parents, to name a few.

Findings of these researches suggest that stability of family condition is very effective in prevention of crimes in teenagers.

In teen years, teenagers look for role models and acquisition of identity for themselves, and the role of parents becomes especially important. It can be argued that families who fail to preside over the behavior of children, families that are less likely to have rules and standards regarding irrational behavior of children and are not strict in giving a firm response to children's misconducts and antisocial behavior are just paving the ground for future mischiefs and misconducts.

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1. Reiner, 2000, p. 212.

2. Gerbner, 1994, p. 31.

In fact, the role played by media is that it can weaken or strengthen the common norms and values of the society. When one's beliefs and standards are weakened vis-à-vis a certain issue, a form of behavioral nonchalance starts to happen, so that the person sees himself liberated from the restrictions and limitations of the past. If one firmly believes that certain deviational behaviors are not acceptable, then taking part in that action will become unimaginable for that person.<sup>1</sup>

Thompson argues that the effect of family, peers and gangs on crimes is a lot more powerful than other factors, and family plays a specifically sensitive role prevention and control of crimes.<sup>2</sup>

Alongside family, some scholars point to some other factors that might have external or internal causes, but all these scholars emphasize the depth and effectiveness of media on our lives.

In sum, it can be argued that these theories emphasize that radio and visual media with their glorious crime depiction weaken the badness and immorality of criminal behavior. They portray crimes as natural incidents happening in all societies. In this situation we gradually get used to immoral behavior and social misconducts, and the ground is paved for decadence of social values and corruption of healthy norms in the society.

Another social harm that happens in our society is divorce. A very important issue in divorce is emotional separation. Hidden divorce or emotional divorce means co-existence without empathy and mutual feelings and emotions. Emotional divorce paves the ground for official divorce.

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1. Robertson, 1995, p. 176.

2. Thompson, 1991, p. 45.

Studies show that divorce rate is rising, and marriage age is increasing, reproduction delays for couples are longer, number of children are more limited, and huge number of women have academic education. These changes are affecting the structure of family institution.

Like any other social phenomenon, divorce is affected by many factors, influence of media in this regard can be direct or indirect. In fact media play a key role in forming pressure of Anomic Strain in people.

By depicting a desirable picture of luxury and fashionable living and lighting the flame of jealousy and keeping up with the latest fashion, media can worsen the feeling of social deprivation, and may cause pressure in the struggle to reach the top levels of the society.<sup>1</sup>

Without considering divorces that happen as a result of lack of familiarity and commonalities, or divorces that happen only due to economic reasons, a general principle is that couples fail to satisfy each other's expectations.

Media are very effective in formation of these expectations and demands. Expectations that are formed in public by movies or TV series or any other form are very attractive and people usually strive to achieve these expectations.

Media can show a favorable picture of working women, although working women can be evaluated as positive, but this phenomenon can create a condition for formation of family conflicts. Even showing divorce as an easy process and reducing its bad quality can be effective in couples' decisions to file for a divorce.

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1. Siegel, 2003, p. 193.

## **Conclusion**

Nowadays, media affect many aspects of our lives, and families don't hold on to their traditional functions, families are experiencing new functions adopted from modern media.

Modern media in the one hand have strengthened some social values, and at the same time have weakened some other values.

What can increase the positive function of modern media is thorough and scientific understanding functions and characteristics of modern family.

Only then can media produce programs that are appropriate for the pre-set purposes and reduce additional side effects. By having direct or indirect impact in the family, media can reduce abnormalities and antisocial behavior and contribute to the welfare and wellbeing of the family.

It is crystal clear that media present role models for children. Presenting role models for children is an arduous task for parents. By presenting appropriate role models, the function of modern media will not only be to strengthen authentic and worthy beliefs, but also to correct irrational behavior.

All these attempts will be taken in order to lead to desirable changes and a reform in people's behavior, which is the ultimate goal of any educational system.

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