

27 Impact of Media Coverage of Crime on Criminal Behavior in Ibadan Metropolis

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INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of criminality has been an inherent aspect of popular mass media since the inception of fictional films and later television. These forms of media often center on criminal activities, frequently depicted with excitement or violence. In recent years, there has been a rise in psychological thrillers, offering narratives from the perspective of criminals, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of their motivations (VanArendonk, 2019). Such content can create an impression of the power and desirability of criminal behavior, suggesting to viewers that it is both attractive and lucrative. The allure of crime shows stems from their ability to depict the darker facets of human psychology positively, allowing audiences to explore the most sinister aspects of human nature from the safety of their homes (VanArendonk, 2019). It enables viewers to engage in hypothetical scenarios and imaginative role-playing beyond legal boundaries (VanArendonk, 2019). The fascination with crime in the media is fueled by the inherent attraction to what is forbidden.

This allure is multifaceted, combining fascination, often linked to themes of death and destruction, with a sense of "corrupt" satisfaction (IvyPanda, 2022). There is growing concern about the impact of media consumption on individuals' perceptions of the safety of their communities. News media, in particular, often sensationalize stories about crime, violence, and other negative events, heightening public fear and insecurity (Jackson, 2018). This fear can lead to the avoidance of certain places or activities, changes in behavior, and support for stricter criminal justice policies (Jackson, 2018). While the media serves a positive role in providing information, entertainment, and education, there are instances where its negative influence prevails, whether by promoting competitive ideologies or contributing to the erosion of moral values.

The advent of electronic media, along with widespread computerization, mobile phones, music, and various technological advancements aimed at enhancing modern life and work, not only characterizes the sense of detachment experienced by individuals as a "new age" phenomenon but also instructs and encourages the "new man" to not always regard others as individuals (Bjelajac & Filipović, 2020a). Among these technological advancements, electronic mass media stand out for their

ability to signify and mold reality. Consequently, their influence is highly significant and inherently difficult to control, given the continual expansion of the audience and the abundance of available content. This phenomenon results in the widespread adoption of attitudes propagated by the media, whether through core programming or advertising, often without critical examination (Bjelajac & Filipović, 2020d).

The media subtly guide individuals to adopt a distorted perception of reality, leading to a skewed understanding of what is real, with digital violence blurring the boundaries between the virtual and the real world (Bjelajac & Filipović, 2021a). It is crucial to highlight the challenges children face due to exposure to inappropriate internet content, which subjects them to various security challenges, risks, and threats (Bjelajac & Filipović, 2021b; Bjelajac & Filipović, 2020b). Safeguarding children from online abuse should encompass physical, psychological, and moral dimensions of safety (Bjelajac & Filipović, 2020c). Addressing the influence of media on criminal behavior entails promoting media literacy, critical thinking, and responsible media consumption, particularly among youth.

Mass media, especially social media, frequently face criticism for disseminating disinformation and fake news. This phenomenon can have serious repercussions for society, including polarization, diminished trust in the media, political instability, and risks to public health. Fake news can manifest a wide array of adverse effects on society (Aïmeur, Amri & Brassard, 2023). Crime and deviance have become an integral part of storytelling across various mediums, including daily news broadcasts, films, reality shows, fiction, video games, and entertainment (Intravia, Thompson, & Pickett, 2020). However, mass media serve as a potent tool for socialization and should be recognized as such.

Mass media play a crucial role in disseminating information and have the potential to shape people's perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Korver-Glenn, Emmanuel, Campbell, & Keith, 2020). According to Ash and Poyker (2019), many media consumers tend to adopt the portrayal of crime depicted by the media as their reality, indirectly influencing the criminal policies of numerous industrialized countries. With rapid technological advancements in most Western cultures, the media landscape has undergone significant transformations over the past few decades (Choi, Yim, & Hicks, 2020). These changes have further amplified the media's role in shaping public perceptions of crime and criminal behavior.

Statement of the Problem

The influence of media on perceptions of crime and criminal behavior in Ibadan poses a significant societal concern that warrants thorough investigation. With the pervasive nature of media consumption in modern society, individuals are constantly exposed to various portrayals of crime through television, newspapers, social media, and other forms of electronic communication. However, the extent to which these

portrayals shape public perceptions of crime and criminal behavior in Ibadan remains inadequately understood. This knowledge gap is particularly pertinent given the potential implications for public safety, law enforcement policies, and the administration of justice within the state.

Understanding how media representations influence perceptions of crime is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, inaccurate or sensationalized depictions of crime may lead to heightened fear and anxiety among residents, contributing to the perception of Ibadan as a less safe environment than it actually is. This could have implications for tourism, investment, and overall societal well-being. Furthermore, distorted perceptions of crime may influence public attitudes towards law enforcement and criminal justice systems, potentially undermining trust in these institutions and impeding efforts to combat crime effectively.

Moreover, the influence of media on perceptions of crime may vary across demographic groups, such as age, gender, education level, and socioeconomic status. Identifying these variations is essential for developing targeted interventions to mitigate the potential negative effects of media portrayals on vulnerable populations. Additionally, understanding how different types of media (e.g., news vs. entertainment) contribute to perceptions of crime can inform strategies for promoting more balanced and accurate representations of criminal behavior in the media.

However, while the impact of media coverage of crime on criminality reflects particularly the diverse public and media perception of it and how it shapes and directs criminal reports and crime statistics available for policy and further research use. Unfortunately, the extent to which these portrayals shape public perceptions of crime and criminal behavior remains inadequately understood. Hence, the study focus is to examine impact of media coverage of crime on criminal behavior in Ibadan metropolis. The study points to the nexus between media and criminality, public opinion and criminality, media exposure of and criminality, and the control of using media engagement.

Literature Review

Influence of Media on Individuals' Perception

Feliciano examined the relationship between social media usage and fear of crime (Feliciano, 2020), hypothesizing that increased social media consumption is associated with a heightened fear of crime. The study revealed that social media has a greater influence on individuals without direct crime experience, suggesting that those who feel safe are more likely to develop a fear of crime through social media use. Additionally, spatial analysis showed that crime hotspots in San Francisco, particularly in the northeastern areas, overlapped with hotspots of tweets expressing fear, despite some discrepancies. This supports the notion that areas with high crime

rates and areas prevalent in fearful tweets have spatial similarities. However, the study noted limitations in data sources and methods, necessitating further research to explore these spatial similarities in detail.

Intravia (2019) found that consuming specific social media content related to the punishment of criminals leads to more punitive attitudes toward criminals. This indicates that individuals who read or post about criminal behavior or sentencing tend to favor harsher punishments. The study also found a positive relationship between general social media news consumption and punitive attitudes.

Asongu (2019) investigated the correlation between Facebook penetration and crime rates, discovering that higher Facebook penetration is associated with lower levels of violent crime. This negative correlation is most pronounced in regions with the highest quintile of crime distribution, indicating that Facebook's impact on reducing crime is most effective in areas with already high crime rates. However, while this negative relationship holds in the Middle East and North Africa, it is positive in Sub-Saharan Africa, suggesting a complex correlation. Asongu proposes that this complexity might be due to the exchange of contentious or hateful information among social media users. Conversely, social media also provides users with resources and solutions for societal issues, which can reduce violence and crime. Thus, the effectiveness of social media in crime reduction varies by region, making it a double-edged sword.

In Zimbabwe, Mugari (2021) found that social media spreads fake news, causing public panic, and facilitates violent protests by being used to organize and disseminate protest information. Despite these negative aspects, social media also plays a crucial role in preventing crime. Local police use it to educate citizens on crime prevention strategies and to receive crime reports. It is also a valuable tool for gathering information about crime and engaging with the public. According to Mugari, while social media can be exploited by criminals, it holds significant potential for law enforcement applications.

Media, Criminality, and Criminal Justice

It is posited that the media's most significant impact is on attitudes toward crime and the tradition of criminalizing behavior. Media content, heavily focused on crime and immorality, is believed to potentially encourage deviant behavior (Martin, 2018; Nix, Ivanov, & Pickett, 2021). Psychiatrist Fredric Wertham likely first proposed the "direct effects" hypothesis, suggesting that crime comics and television could influence children's thoughts and behavior. Despite criticism (Harris, Baumann, Teasdale, and Link, 2022), Wertham's idea has persisted, evident in media campaigns against violence worldwide. The media is thought to amplify antisocial behavior, heightening the public's fear of crime and leading to stronger state control and harsher penalties, a concept known as "moral panic" (Graziano, 2019).

Extensive research links increased fear of crime to regular exposure to crime stories in the media (Graziano, 2019; Smith, 2022).

A third perspective, "social constructivism," emerged as a counterpoint to the criminogenic focus on behavior and the moral panic's explanation of the media's political impact on crime coverage (Button, 2022). This approach examines how reality is socially constructed. It suggests that, for many people, the media is a crucial source of information about what behaviors are considered unlawful or immoral. Social constructivists explore how social constructs are formed and how humans acquire knowledge and perceive reality (Intravia, Wolff, & Piquero, 2018). They argue against a uniform and direct media influence, proposing that media provides a patchwork from which individuals construct their own reality (Korver-Glenn et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the media's role in shaping public perceptions of crime and justice is significant. George Gerbner's "cultivation hypothesis" posits that heavy television viewers (more than three hours a day) are more likely to perceive society as violent and crime-ridden. His theory suggests that extensive media consumption fosters attitudes more aligned with the televised world than with real life (Harris et al., 2022).

In summary, the media likely influences public perceptions of crime and the judicial system. However, this influence is complex and multifaceted. Increased media consumption, particularly of television news and tabloids, is associated with heightened fear of crime, anxiety, and more punitive attitudes toward crime (Deuchar, Crichlow, & Fallik, 2020). While only a few studies directly link media consumption to beliefs in justice, some findings suggest that media does affect perceptions of judicial systems (Intravia, Thompson, & Pickett, 2020). Early analysis indicates significant correlations between media exposure, fear of crime, trust in the judicial system, and punitive views (Deuchar et al., 2020).

Fear of Crime and News Consumption

In recent decades, extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between the frequency of crime news consumption and the overall fear of crime. Much of this research has focused on traditional media. Studies indicate a correlation between the amount of time people spend watching crime news and their fear of crime (Intravia et al., 2018; Korver-Glenn et al., 2020). Graziano (2019) summarizes current studies, highlighting a strong link between people's reported fear of crime and their willingness to report crimes. David Altheide, a leading expert in the field, argues that the media has significantly contributed to the development of what he terms "the language of dread" (Smith, 2022).

Previous research has primarily examined traditional media's role, with limited studies on the modern cross-media ecosystem (Martin, 2018; Nix et al., 2021). Shachar et al. (2020) suggest that the fear of crime is also undergoing a digitization process, although this remains underexplored. It has been shown that using the internet as a source of crime news does not increase fear of crime, whereas local television does. Additionally, Gilmour (2022) found no significant connection between crime-related social media usage and fear of crime, considering this a perplexing finding in studies using campus samples. Thus, it is unsurprising that increased media exposure correlates with heightened punitive attitudes arising from public opinion and criminal justice perspective.

Effect of Media on Public Perceptions of Criminal Justice.

According to Choi, Yim, and Hicks (2020), 24-hour news coverage of criminal issues fosters a culture of fear, negatively impacting public perceptions of crime and crime prevention strategies. Media portrayals of violent crime increase awareness of crime and justice, thereby influencing public policy. Crime prevention experts emphasize the need for long-term actions and comprehensive diagnoses that consider the complexity of crime. Regehr, Regehr, and Birze (2022) highlight those certain crimes, such as white-collar and environmental crimes, often go unreported by the Pakistani media. This politicization of crime leads to misperceptions and poor policy decisions, rendering crime control programs ineffective. Public opinion significantly shapes criminal justice policy (Button, 2022; Regehr et al., 2022), and trust in the Criminal Justice System is crucial for proper justice implementation. The media's influence on public perceptions of crime and punishment has led to misconceptions, causing the public to lose faith in the system and demand harsher penalties (Wozniak, Drakulich, & Calfano, 2021; Schneider, 2022).

Schneider (2022) asserts that both the public and the media are consistently fixated on crime, with crime stories being a popular cultural issue throughout the twentieth century due to extensive media coverage. Acknowledging the existence of a problem is the first step in advancing public policy (Choi et al., 2020), followed by issue formulation, policy demand, and agenda formation. Media coverage can boost newspaper circulation but also shapes public perception of crime as a major societal issue (Button, 2022; Regehr et al., 2022). The extent of crime-related media content varies based on community definitions of crime. Deuchar et al. (2020) studied how media engage in developing social deviance, which involves behaviors that deviate from accepted norms and standards. Journalists often highlight deviance, making it noteworthy as projection of both psychology and social impact of media. This case, though metaphorical, supports the idea that modern media can exert significant influence, with both positive and harmful consequences, affecting society and individual psychology (Jewkes, 2011).

Psychological and Social Impacts of Media

There is a consensus that media influences people's behavior, not necessarily in terms of crime but in social interactions and personal perceptions. This area of study, known as effects research, originates from mass society theory and behaviorism. Although rooted in sociology and psychology, both theories suggest that human nature is unstable and highly susceptible to external influences (Jewkes, 2011).

Mass society theory emerged post-WWII, during a time when society was fragmented and individuals felt alienated from moral and ethical values. Mass media was initially seen as a support for people's well-being in difficult times but also became a tool for influencing thoughts and directing political or economic actions. Behaviorism, developed by J.B. Watson in the early 20th century, posits that individual identity is shaped by responses to external environments, resulting in observable behavior patterns. Given its pervasive presence, mass media acts as a significant external influence on modern lives (Jewkes, 2011).

The hypodermic syringe model, another term for effects research, conceptualizes the relationship between media and audiences as a mechanistic process where media "injects" values, information, and ideas into passive receivers, producing direct effects on thoughts and actions. A notable example is the mass panic caused when H.G. Wells's "War of the Worlds" was read on broadcast radio, with some listeners believing it to be real.

Associations with Real-World Criminal Activity

There is considerable anecdotal evidence suggesting that crimes have been inspired by mass media and popular culture, but empirical evidence explaining the influence of media on individual criminal behavior is limited. Nonetheless, researchers and experts generally agree that mass media wields a powerful influence on behavior. The wide reach of mass media allows it to impact a large audience, including those who are at risk or who grow up in environments where crime is prevalent. The cultural impacts of media, such as imitative effects of violent behavior like mass shootings, are also significant. Researchers focus less on how a specific media form causes behavior and more on how media influences motivate and shape criminal behavior. In postmodern society, criminal events, identities, and styles are formed in a media-saturated environment, where motivations are drawn from crime representations and social cues evolve from these perceptions (Helfgott, 2018).

The influence of media coverage on violent crimes and crime styles remains controversial. Rios (2018) identifies two theories that explain this potential correlation: the General Aggression Model and the Self-Determination and Uses and Gratifications theory. The General Aggression Model, also known as the 'trigger theory,' suggests that exposure to violent crimes, even in media form, can fundamentally alter an individual's personality and 'trigger' aggression. For instance,

the Virginia Tech shooter in 2007 was notably inspired by violent action films. This model posits that mass media desensitizes individuals to pain and suffering, leading to aggression and deviant behavior.

Conversely, the Self-Determination and Uses and Gratifications theory argues that the tendency to commit crimes is influenced more by environmental factors and psychological predispositions than by media exposure. This theory suggests that the interaction between media and behavior is mediated by the audience, meaning that violent media affects those with existing violent tendencies rather than the general population. Empirical evidence supports this view, highlighting those violent crimes in mass media impact individuals with predisposed violent tendencies more than the general public (Rios, 2018).

This ongoing debate underscores the complexity of media influence, suggesting a nuanced interaction between media exposure, individual predispositions, and environmental factors. Further research is needed to unravel these intricate relationships and develop a more comprehensive understanding of media's role in shaping behavior.

Media on Age

Age is a crucial factor in crime reporting, significantly influencing how crime stories are presented (Surette, 2011; Stevens, 2011). Recently, there has been a rise in media coverage of violent crimes committed by juveniles, despite the fact that only a small number are arrested for such offenses each year (Dorfman & Schiraldi, 2001). However, the media's exaggeration and distortion of youth violence and crime have notably decreased compared to the recent past. Fear of Crime statistics indicate that younger individuals, especially male teenagers and young adults, are at the highest risk of becoming crime victims (NCC, 2009).

Gender and Crime

Gender and crime reporting is another significant factor that has drawn considerable attention from prominent scholars regarding its portrayal in the media. Although men commit approximately 80–85% of crimes compared to women, crimes committed by women have been notably exaggerated by the mass media (Greer, 2003). Women are often depicted as victims of male crimes in news media (Greer, 2003), yet about one-third of crime stories focus on female offenders (Greer, 2003). Generally, societal expectations dictate that women should behave differently from men due to their biological and physical nature. Women are predominantly expected to exhibit affection and tenderness, in line with their roles in childbirth and nurturing (Jewkes, 2011; Greer, 2003). However, when women deviate from these expected behaviors, both their actions and their characters are socially condemned.

Media on Ethnic Minorities

Media reports and presentations of crimes committed by ethnic minorities often appear misrepresented, with an exaggerated fear of crime associated with these groups. The public tends to automatically link minorities with higher criminality (Mastro & Robinson, 2008). Numerous studies empirically show that media depictions of crime involving ethnic groups do not align with actual crime statistics (Dowler, Fleming, & Muzzatti, 2006). The media's portrayal of ethnicity as a cause of crime stems largely from constructing an 'us' versus 'other' narrative (Jewkes, 2008). This misrepresentation leads the public to associate certain crimes with specific ethnic groups, resulting in an overestimation of crime frequency among these groups. This fosters the belief that 'we' are civilized while minority ethnic groups are dangerous and must be controlled.

As a result, racial stereotyping by the mass media has significantly harmed certain ethnic minorities. Research shows that Black individuals are less likely to be named in TV news reports and are more often depicted being physically restrained or arrested compared to white suspects (Dixon, Weeks, & Smith, 2019). Additionally, when ethnic minorities are victims, they are underrepresented in news reports compared to white victims (Dixon et al., 2019).

Media and choice of Language

The choice of language in news reports significantly contributes to the distortion of crime events by the media. The language used in media reports and presentations is crucial in shaping the consumer's reality and perception of crime (Bailey, Giangola, and Boykoff, 2014). When youth violence is the central theme, specific language choices are essential in constructing reality and ideas about crimes committed by young people. Bailey et al. (2014) argues that the media's language choices in constructing opinions about certain groups lead to stereotypical labels and a distancing between "us" and the criminals. This style of narrative creates an image in consumers' minds that young people are dangerous and that violence is so pervasive that immediate intervention is necessary.

This approach leads to labeling certain groups as criminals and creates a distinction between the 'normal' or 'us' and the 'abnormal' or 'other' (Bailey et al., 2014; Jewkes, 2008). In crime reporting, when young people are portrayed as criminals, the language used often focuses on the irrationality of the offense, the youth's past crimes, their innocent victims, and a heightened concern for safety and security. This narrative creates binary opposites in news discourse, such as good vs. evil, black vs. white, and guilty vs. innocent, which constantly compare offenders and victims. For youth offenders, labels like 'brutes,' 'monsters,' 'animals,' and 'the spawn of Satan' are frequently used, especially in cases involving violent crimes against young children.

Research Methods and Material

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze survey data. Chi-square, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and Univariate Analysis of Variance, were employed to examine relationships between the variables. **Culturalist theory**, developed in the 1980s and 1990s, merges elements from other sociological theories, asserting that individuals interact with media to "create their own meanings out of the images and messages they receive" (Fadul and Estoque, 2010; Doran, 2010). People interpret media content based on their own knowledge and experiences. Limited-effects theory. **Limited-effect theory** posits that the impact of media on shaping people's thoughts, attitudes, and actions is minimal due to various intervening factors (Baran & Davis, 2012). It argues that because individuals typically select media content that aligns with their existing beliefs, the influence of media remains insignificant.

Results presentation, analysis and interpretation

Analysis of Demographic Information

The frequency distribution of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in this section below

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	245	61.3
Female	155	38.7
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The result in table 4.1 above revealed that 245 (61.83%) of the respondents were male while 155 (38.7%) were female.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Below 18 years	40	10
18-24 years	166	41.5
25-29 years	112	28
30-35 years	82	20.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The result in table 4.2 above revealed that 40 (10%) of the respondents were within age bracket below 18 years; 166 (41.5%) were within age bracket 18-24 years; 112 (28.0%) of the respondents were within age bracket 25-29 years; and 82 (20.5%) of the respondents were within age bracket 30-35 years.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	289	72.2
Married	95	23.8
Divorced	9	2.2
Separated	7	1.8
Total	400	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The result in table 4.3 above revealed that 289 (72.2%) of the respondents were single; 95 (23.8%) were married; 9 (2.2%) of the respondents were divorced, while 7 (1.8%) of the respondents were separated.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
WAEC/SSCE	50	12.5
OND/NCE	113	28.3
HND/BSC	234	58.5
MSC/MED	3	0.7
PHD	-	-
Other	-	-
Total	400	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The result in table 4.4 above revealed that 50 (12.5%) of the respondents were holders of WACE/SSCE; 113 (28.5%) were holders of OND/NCE, 234 (58.5%) were holders of HND/BSc while 3 (0.7%) were holders of Master Degree. No respondent has Ph.D. and other qualification.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents by Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	21	5.2
Unemployed	359	89.8
Student	20	5.0
Total	400	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

The result in table 4.5 showed that 21 (5.2%) of the respondents were employed; 359 (89.8%) of the respondents were unemployed; and 20 (5.0%) of the respondents were students.

Data presentation and analysis in accordance with the research statements
Responses relating to the media outlets that affect public perceptions of crime in Osun State.

Table 4.6: **I rely on newspapers as my primary source of crime news.**

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	189	47.2
Agree	160	40
Undecided	19	4.8
Disagree	18	4.5
Strongly Disagree	14	3.5
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 189 respondents (or 47.2 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 160 respondents (or 40 percent of the sample) agreed, 19 respondents (or 4.8 percent of the sample) were undecided, 18 respondents (or 4.5 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 14 respondents (or 3.5 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the majority of respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Table 4.7: **Television news significantly shapes my views on crime in Osun State.**

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	195	48.8
Agree	180	45.0
Undecided	5	1.2
Disagree	12	3.0
Strongly Disagree	8	2.0
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 195 respondents (48.8 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 180 respondents (45.0 percent) agreed, 5 respondents (1.2 percent of the sample) were undecided, 12 respondents (3.0 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 8 respondents (2.0 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the vast majority of the respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Table 4.8: Online news platforms are my main source for crime-related information.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	204	51.0
Agree	161	40.2
Undecided	25	6.2
Disagree	7	1.8
Strongly Disagree	3	0.8
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 204 respondents (or 51.0 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 161 respondents (or 40.2 percent of the sample) agreed, 25 respondents (or 6.2 percent of the sample) were undecided, 7 respondents (or 1.8 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 3 respondents (or 0.8 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. Thus, majority of the respondent were strongly agreed about the question.

Responses relating to how the media portray crime and influence public views.

Table 4.9: Crime stories in the media are often sensationalized

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	205	51.3
Agree	156	39.0
Undecided	10	2.2
Disagree	16	4.0
Strongly Disagree	13	3.3
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 205 respondents (51.3 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 156 respondents (39.0 percent) agreed, 10 respondents (2.2 percent of the sample) were undecided, 16 respondents (4.0 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 13 respondents (3.3 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. Thus, majority of the respondent were strongly agreed about the question.

Table 4.10: The media provides an accurate representation of crime in Osun State.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	198	49.5
Agree	155	38.7
Undecided	15	3.8
Disagree	17	4.2
Strongly Disagree	15	3.8
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 198 respondents (49.5 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 155 respondents (38.7 percent) strongly agreed, 15 respondents (3.8 percent of the sample) undecided, 17 respondents (4.2 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 15 respondents (3.8 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the majority of respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Table 4.11: Media coverage of crime increases my perception of danger in my community.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	209	52.3
Agree	166	41.5
Undecided	12	3.0
Disagree	5	1.2
Strongly Disagree	8	2.0
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 209 respondents (or 52.3 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 166 respondents (or 41.5 percent) agreed, 12 respondents (or 3.0 percent of the sample) were undecided, 5 respondents (or 1.2 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 8 respondents (or 2.0 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the majority of respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Responses relating to how media exposure and demographics interact to affect crime perceptions.

Table 4.12: My perception of crime is influenced by the frequency of my media consumption.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	173	43.2
Agree	157	39.2
Undecided	27	6.8
Disagree	31	7.8
Strongly Disagree	12	3.0
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 173 respondents (or 43.2 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 157 respondents (or 39.2 percent of the sample) agreed, 27 respondents (or 6.8 percent of the sample) were undecided, 31 respondents (or 7.8 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 12 respondents (or 3.0 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the vast majority of respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Table 4.13: Demographic factors such as age and gender affect how I interpret crime news.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	160	40.0
Agree	175	43.8
Undecided	17	4.2
Disagree	27	6.8
Strongly Disagree	21	5.2
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 160 respondents, or 40.0% of the sample, strongly agreed, 175 respondents, or 43.8% agreed, 17 respondents, or 4.2% of the sample, were undecided, 27 respondents, or 6.8% of the sample disagreed, and 21 respondents, or 5.2% of the sample, strongly disagreed. As a result, the majority of respondents agreed on the issue.

Table 4.14: I discuss crime news differently with people of varying demographics.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	163	40.8
Agree	172	43.0
Undecided	37	9.2
Disagree	16	4.0
Strongly Disagree	12	3.0
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 163 respondents representing 40.8% of the sample strongly agreed, 172 respondents representing 43.0% of the sample strongly agreed, 37 respondents representing 9.2% of the sample undecided, 16 respondents representing 4.0% of the sample disagreed, and 12 respondents representing 3.0% of the sample strongly disagreed. As a result, the majority of respondents agreed on the issue.

Responses relating to the impact of improper media portrayals of crime on public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Table 4.15: Improper media portrayals of crime reduce my trust in the criminal justice system.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	203	50.8
Agree	162	40.5
Undecided	10	2.5
Disagree	14	3.5
Strongly Disagree	11	2.7
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 203 respondents (50.8 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 162 respondents (40.5 percent) agreed, 10 respondents (2.5 percent of the sample) were undecided, 14 respondents (3.5 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 11 respondents (2.7 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. Thus, majority of the respondent were strongly agreed about the question.

Table 4.16: Sensationalized crime reporting affects my confidence in law enforcement.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	164	41.0
Agree	138	34.5
Undecided	40	10.0
Disagree	30	7.5
Strongly Disagree	28	7.0
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 164 respondents (41.0 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 138 respondents (34.5 percent) agreed, 40 respondents (10.0 percent of the sample) were undecided, 30 respondents (7.5 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 28 respondents (7.0 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the vast majority of respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Table 4.17: The media's portrayal of crime impacts my perception of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Strongly Agree	183	45.8
Agree	127	31.8
Undecided	32	8.0
Disagree	31	7.7
Strongly Disagree	27	6.7
Total	400	100

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

According to the table above, 183 respondents (or 45.8 percent of the sample) strongly agreed, 127 respondents (or 31.8 percent of the sample) agreed, 32 respondents (or 8.0 percent of the sample) were undecided, 31 respondents (or 7.7 percent of the sample) disagreed, and 27 respondents (or 6.7 percent of the sample) strongly disagreed with the argument. As a result, the vast majority of respondents strongly agreed on the issue.

Data Presentation and Analysis Based on the Research Hypotheses

The hypothesis was revised and validated in this section of the research analysis to ascertain the validity and efficacy of the research using chi-square, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics and Univariate Analysis of Variance at 0.05% level of Significance.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in public perceptions of crime in Osun State based on the type of media outlet used.

Ho2: The portrayal of crime by media does not significantly influence public views on crime.

Ho3: There is no significant interaction effect between media exposure and demographic factors on public perceptions of crime.

Ho4: Improper media portrayals of crime have no significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Table 4.18 Chi-square results for Hypothesis One

Ho1: There is no significant difference in public perceptions of crime in Osun State based on the type of media outlet used (newspapers, television, or online platforms).

Contingency Table

Media Typ	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Newspaper	189	160	19	18	14	400
Television	195	180	5	12	8	400
Online News	204	161	25	7	3	400
Total	588	501	49	37	25	1200

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Expected Frequencies Table:

Media Type	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Newspapers	196	168	16.4	12.4	7.0	400
Television	196	168	16.4	12.4	7.0	400
Online News	196	168	16.4	12.4	7.0	400
Total	588	501	49	37	25	1200

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

	There is no significant difference in public perceptions of crime in Osun State based on type of media outlet used.
Chi-Square	26.79
Df	8
P-value.	0.001
Sig.	0.05

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024 Decision rule:

Since the p-value is much smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there are significant differences in public perceptions of crime based on the type of media outlet used.

Table 4.19 Chi-square results for Hypothesis Two

Ho2: The portrayal of crime by media does not significantly influence public views on crime.

Response	Crime Stories Sensationalized	Accurate Representation	Increases Perception of Danger	Expected Frequency
Strongly Agree	205	198	209	204
Agree	156	155	166	159
Undecided	10	15	12	12.3
Disagree	16	17	5	12.7
Strongly Disagree	13	15	8	12
Total	400	400	400	1200

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

	The portrayal of crime by media does not significantly influence public views on crime
Chi-Square	11.99 ^a
Df	8
P-value.	0.0015
Sig.	0.05

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Decision rule:

Since $p > 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that the portrayal of crime by media significantly influence public views on crime.

Table 4.20 Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics results for Hypothesis Three

Ho3: There is no significant interaction effect between media exposure and demographic factors on public perceptions of crime.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.916	the result is significant at $p < .05$.
Sample Size (N)	400	
Degrees of Freedom (df)	2	
P-value (p)	<0.00001	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024 At a significance level of 0.05, a p-value of less than 0.00001 provides strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is significant interaction effect between media exposure and demographic factors on public perceptions of crime.

Table 4.21 Univariate Analysis of Variance results for Hypothesis Four

Ho4: Improper media portrayals of crime have no significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Squares (MS)	F-statistic	p-value
Between Groups	20332.0	4	5083.0	544.8	0.0001 ^b
Within Groups	3685.6	395	9.330		
Total	6422.0	399			

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2024

Table above shows that improper media portrayals of crime have significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system. Based on the provided statistical results above, there is strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis. This implies that improper media portrayals of crime have significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Discussion of Major Findings

This discussion synthesizes the key findings related to media outlets that affect public perceptions of crime in Ibadan, how the media portray crime and influence public views, how media exposure and demographics interact to affect crime perceptions, and the impact of improper media portrayals of crime on public confidence in the criminal justice system. Media outlets that affect public perceptions of crime vary based on the findings of the study. The vast majority of the respondents strongly agreed and rely on newspapers, television, and news platforms, and all these shapes their views and perceptions on crime in Ibadan significantly. The research employed the Chi-square (X^2) test to scrutinize the significant difference in public perceptions of crime in Osun State based on the type of media outlet used (newspapers, television, or online platforms). The calculated X^2 value of 26.79a at a significance level of less than 0.001 emphatically supports the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that there are significant differences in public perceptions of crime based on the type of media outlet used. A study by Adesanya (2009) also found differences in public perceptions of crime based on media outlet type. It aligned with the conclusions of research by Morgan and Shanahan (2010) that people who consume crime news on television become more pessimistic about the nature of crime than those who get their media information from newspapers or social media.

Providing a similar perspective, Ojebode (2018) claims that print media gets in-depth explanation stories; news about crime gets episodic; and the sensationalized nature of TV/radio station framing also provides crimes with possible diverse public perception. The majority of the respondents strongly believe that crime stories in the media are often sensationalized, and the way the crimes were covered increases their perception of danger in their community.

The analysis extended to exploring how the media portray crime and influence public views. The calculated X^2 value of 11.99a at a significance level of less than 0.0015 emphatically supports the rejection of the null hypothesis. This implies that the portrayal of crime by the media significantly influences public views on crime. Consistent with global trends, Nigerian media's portrayal of crime influences public perceptions, as found in a study by Oyero (2015). Consequently, Chadee & Surette (2016) argue that the media, in most cases and even more so in developing countries, regularly reports on violent crime, decimating a general feeling of high levels of occurrence regardless of whether it outweighs any real frequency. In contrast,

studies like Dowler, Fleming, & Muzzatti (2006) argue that media portrayals do not always necessarily result in direct changes in public perception. But it's to say that crime stories are commonly filtered through prior beliefs and societal circumstances, making media more likely to strengthen pre-existing ideas than generate new ones. This might help to explain how people who are exposed to exactly the same content can also differ in their opinions of crime, particularly if they differ along demographic lines such as age or education levels, or are male or female. The frequency of their media consumption strongly influenced most of the respondents. Also, demographic factors such as age and gender affect how they interpret crime news.

The study delved into how media exposure and demographics interact to affect crime perceptions. At a significance level of 0.05, a p-value of less than 0.00001 provides strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant interaction effect between media exposure and demographic factors on public perceptions of crime. Research by Obiorah (2017) also revealed significant interactions between media exposure and demographic factors, such as age and education, on public perceptions of crime in Nigeria. Improper media portrayals of crime reduce the trust of the majority of the respondents in the criminal justice system. Weitzer and Kubrin (2004) find that young people and those of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be influenced by media portrayals of crime than older individuals from high or higher levels of income when demographic variables are controlled by perceptions of how serious it is wrong. One of these factors that has received widespread attention regarding media messages is the age of individuals, specifically as it relates to how they process these messages. Older participants would seek more information about crime from traditional media such as television and newspapers, while younger people are influenced by social media (Callanan, 2012).

Open forums on social media allow for a broader demographic of content with even less regulation, often magnifying crime into the expansive vacuums where predators willingly indulge. Additionally, education has been found to be a buffer. Empirical evidence suggests that those with higher levels of education are more apt to react cautiously to media messages and less inclined to be swayed by crime news (Romer, Jamieson & Aday, 2003). The study also found that sensationalized crime reporting affects the confidence the respondents had in law enforcement, and the media's portrayal of crime impacts their perception of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

The study also found that improper media portrayals of crime have a significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system. Based on the provided statistical results, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that improper media portrayals of crime have a significant impact on public confidence in the criminal

justice system. Findings by Akinade (2015) and Okunola (2015) found that negative media portrayals of crime can erode public confidence in the criminal justice system. Indeed, research by Dowler (2003) suggests that the media's continual portrayal of the criminal justice system as incompetent or corrupt leads to reduced trust in it. That is even more the case in Nigeria, where the press are almost daily awash with awful reports of police brutality, corruption, and criminal justice failings. These types of reports give the public a bad image about how crime is contained and make them wonder if there are laws that favor criminals. But some researchers maintain that the effect of these depictions on public confidence is overblown. This is in line with Surette (2014), who says the way that media shows things does have an effect on what other people see, but at the end of it all, personal experience remains the significant driving force in public confidence toward the justice system.

Summary of Findings

1. There is significant difference in public perceptions of crime in Osun State based on the type of media outlet used.
2. The portrayal of crime by media significantly influence public views on crime.
3. There is significant interaction effect between media exposure and demographic factors on public perceptions of crime.
4. Improper media portrayals of crime have significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Conclusion

The study discovered that there are significant differences in public perceptions of crime based on the type of media outlet used. The media sources, such as newspapers, television, and online platforms, influence the way people perceive crime, highlighting that media choice is a crucial factor in understanding public perceptions in Osun state. The portrayal of crime by media significantly influences public views on crime. The media influence public on the perceptions of crime and criminal behavior. The study found that there is significant interaction effect between media exposure and demographic factors on public perceptions of crime. The study discovered that the public perception on the crime and criminal behavior differs based on the demographic factors such as age, gender, education and media exposure. Improper media portrayals of crime have significant impact on public confidence in the criminal justice system. The study discovered that sensationalized reporting can lead to mistrust and undermine the perceived effectiveness of law enforcement and judicial processes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Media organizations should consider tailoring their crime reporting based on the audience demographics they serve.
2. Media outlets should strive for objectivity, ensuring that their portrayals do not

- unduly influence public opinion or stir unnecessary fear.
3. Authorities and media regulators should work together to promote public awareness about how media consumption and portrayal can affect perceptions. Educating the public on critical media consumption could help mitigate the impact of sensationalized news.
 4. There should be stronger regulatory oversight to ensure that crime reporting is responsible and does not undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system.

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