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Does The Consumption Of The Crime News Lead To The Fear Of Victimization Among The Egyptian Youth?

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of our lives, serving as a primary source of engagement and information, especially for individuals who lack direct experience with various issues. However, researchers have raised concerns about whether communication messages on social media rely too heavily on fear appeals, focusing more on problems and threats rather than conveying information clearly. This phenomenon has been criticized for contributing to the creation of a "culture of fear" since the 1990s, perpetuating a sense of generalized risk within local communities. This paper explores the role of social media in fostering a climate of fear through exposure to crime news and its impact on generating fear of victimization among Egyptian youth.. The cultivation theory serves as a framework to examine whether exposure to violence influences individuals' fears of victimization and to identify factors such as prior victimization, age, gender, and social media engagement with crime news that may influence the level of fear generated. Additionally, a new variable termed "normalization" is introduced, which may have varying effects on individuals exposed to crime news.

Keywords: social media, fear of crime, Egyptian youth, victimization

Introduction

Researchers' interest in studying how the media arouse public fears began early, spurred by incidents covered extensively by the media that had a significant impact on many communities. For example, a study by Burns & Crawford (1999) sought to investigate the incidents of school shootings in the United States of America. Through analyzing the content of 50 local newspapers in the United States, the study concluded that the media and politicians played an active role in fomenting fear among the public. Subsequently, studies continued, and recently, many studies have emerged that attempt to reveal the relationship between media exposure and the creation of fear motives in general.

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It The fact that the world has been inundated by social media cannot be ignored, especially Facebook, which boasts more than 42 million users in Egypt (Kemp, 2023). For many people, Facebook serves as a primary source of information, with numerous organizations and individuals posting news, including information about crime (Srinivasa & Thilagam, 2019). Research to date has shown that people's attitudes and perceptions regarding crime are influenced by the content they consume from the media. Additionally, individuals often obtain the majority of their information about crime from media sources (Gross & Aday, 2003; Surette, 2007).

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Taylor (1988) simply defines a person's emotional or affective concern for their safety as a "fear of crime." Additionally, people often equate a fear of crime with a dread of being victimized. However, victimization anxiety may stem from either general or specific violent or property offenses. Despite the common belief that individuals who fear crime have had personal experiences with it or with the criminal justice system, not everyone who fears victimization has actually experienced it. Many studies have focused on the relationship between fear of crime and social media. While some agree that this relationship is positive, a few studies have disagreed on this point. Top of Form

This recent study aims to examine the relationship between exposure to crime news on social media and its direct effect on individual fear of victimization. Additionally, the study aims to investigate the impact of social media as a platform where people share their worries and experiences. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify if other variables such as age, normalization, engagement, and gender affect a person's fear of victimization.

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Theoretical Framework and literature review

The cultivation theory

The cultivation theory, developed by Gerbner and his colleagues in the late 1960s, aimed to explore how television viewing could influence societal views and ideas. According to their findings, the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they are to adapt to its underlying message (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Resonance, a concept developed by Gerbner,

argues that individuals who have experiences similar to those portrayed in television messages are more likely to be affected by television viewing than those who do not. For example, women may be more vulnerable to television content depicting violent and aggressive acts because they are more fearful than men of falling prey to such crimes (Mosharafa, 2015). Several researchers have attempted to link the theory with exposure to news of violence. For instance, Shrum (2017) explained that studies on the cultivation theory found that heavy viewers who watch violent content are more likely to exhibit higher degrees of victimization, alienation, interpersonal mistrust, and insecurity than lighter viewers.

According to Nevzat (2018), social media has not been institutionally and theoretically studied to the extent that Gerbner did for television, despite its effects being far-reaching and longer-lasting than television. Moreover, Nevzat demonstrated that social media has cultivating effects similar to those of television. The recent study examines whether exposure to criminal content on Facebook, as an independent variable, cultivates a fear of victimization as a dependent variable and whether prior experience may mediate this relationship.

Crime news on social media and its effects

Many studies have pointed to the responsibility of social media in spreading stress, violence, and crime in society, whether by regularly publishing crime news or by disseminating extremist views and hate speech targeting certain groups or classes in society. Several researchers have been interested in identifying the impact of exposure to violence on the **psychological** state of individuals. For example, Secker and Braithwaite (2021) conducted a study on 155 participants in London, concluding a relationship between the frequency of exposure to knives and crime-related news on social media and **secondary traumatic stress** (STS), which was more significant among participants living in towns and villages, females, and younger participants. This result was supported by the study conducted by Shoulders (2020) surveying 590 respondents in Los Angeles, which found that the level of fear of crime and the amount of media exposure both influenced social interaction anxiety, although exposure to the media did not significantly affect an individual's social interaction anxiety.

Kort-Butler & Habecker (2018) collected data from a survey of 550 Nebraska adults, concluding that viewing media violence intensified respondents' **worry and anger** about crime but did not clearly impact how they felt about the justice system when crime increased. **Regarding the fear of becoming victims,** Recobo (2022) surveyed 1,517 respondents aged 18 and older in the United States, concluding that a higher likelihood of fear of victimization is related to the consumption of traditional media. Moreover, crime content consumption on social media has exceeded traditional media in predicting public fear of crime. Dolliver & Kenney (2018) emphasized this relationship in their survey of a sample of 1,311 participants, concluding that this relation leads to higher **support for defensive and punitive criminal justice measures**. However, Silva & Guedes (2022) argued in their study, which used 20 semi-structured interviews with Portuguese individuals, that it is impossible to draw a direct connection between media use and feelings of insecurity.

Velasquez & Medina (2020) concluded through secondary analysis of Peruvian newspapers between 2013 and 2017 **that news stories with a negative slant may lead to an increase in crime perception,** while Raghul & Jayaprakash (2018) found, through a survey of 12 colleges and a sample of 600 respondents, a relationship between watching violent content and a change in **behavior to a more violent one among students**, especially in boys. El Hiti (2018) agreed with the previous study, conducting a descriptive study on violent content in media and its effects, revealing that violent content affects individuals with violent tendencies. However, Nwachukwu, Orim &Pyke (2019) did not agree with the previous findings, concluding from data collected from 148 countries in 2012 a strong negative correlation between the use of Facebook and crime in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), but a strong positive relationship with sub-Saharan Africa. Similarly, Rios (2018) discovered through data from the Mexican authorities between 2007 and 2011 that media coverage of crimes does not affect crime rates or increase violent crime actions as this coverage gives criminals a **stylistic inspiration** they try to copy.

Some researchers have examined the relationship between social media and the creation of fear among individuals, as well as the types of fear that are generated. While some studies emphasize **the relationship between the two**, others suggest that it depends on several variables. For instance, Aleem, et al. (2021) conducted a questionnaire in the Punjab province of Pakistan on a sample of 477 college students, by demonstrating that exposure to criminal offenses in violent television shows and movies **increases one's fear of being a victim of crime**. Park & Vieraitis (2021) surveyed 1,000 adolescents and adults aged 14 to 59 who use at least one of four SNS sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Kakao Story, and Cyworld), finding that exposure to social media increases fear of victimization, leading to greater fear overall. Correspondingly, Awais et al. (2020) conducted a survey questionnaire on 371 university students in Pakistan, discovering that repeated violent messages in crime news, drama, or social media crime videos can influence an individual's perception of criminal victimization. Moreover, Lee et al. (2019) found that incidents on social media have the strongest effect on the fear of victimization, as revealed by surveying 486 university students in South Korea. Additionally, Matthew et al. (2018) conducted an online survey on a sample of 1,311 U.S. citizens, revealing that the more respondents are exposed to crime-related media, the more likely they are to fear becoming victims of crime in the future.

According to previous research, gender affects one's fear of crime and victimization. Iqbal & Batool (2022) conducted a study using a focus group discussion with female Facebook users in Lahore, Pakistan, with a sample of 30 participants. They concluded that **women's fear and mistrust increased from exposure to violent Facebook content** and any previous personal experiences. Similar results were found in a study by Hildreth (2015), who surveyed students at a leading American university and concluded that female students had more fear than male students.

However, does consuming more crime content in the media always lead to more fear of violence? **Several researchers have demonstrated a positive correlation between consumption of violent crime news and fear of violence.** For example, Näsi et al. (2020) conducted a study based on the Finnish National Crime Survey (FNCS-2017), which was conducted in the fall of

2017 on 6,201 respondents aged from 15 to 74. They concluded that the consumption of violent crime news and fear of violence are strongly associated. Similarly, Intravia et al. (2017) found that social media consumption of general news and crime-related content significantly increased the fear of crime. They conducted a survey among adults on three college campuses in the United States during the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017, with a sample of 918 participants.

On the other side, Silva & Guedes (2022) conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with a sample of 12 women and 8 men of different ages ranging from 20 to 60. Seven were students, and the remaining participants held jobs in various sectors such as law, home care, etc. The findings revealed that the media's role in instilling fear of crime depends on the experience of victimization (direct or indirect), the place of residence, and the individual's characteristics.

On the contrary, several studies argue that crime content on social media is not necessarily related to fear of crime. Kunz (2022) examined crime-related posts on Reddit using a single primary crawler, revealing that high reported crime rates and high crime discussion rates do not correlate with communities that discuss crime more frequently. Additionally, Curiel et al. (2020) investigated crime-related tweets on Twitter, collecting data from Twitter users in 18 Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America. They argued that less than 1 percent of tweets are related to crime or fear. **Surprisingly, according to their results, neither traditional nor entertainment media are linked to the fear of crime.** Shi (2021) concluded from a study of 398 international university students in the United States that exposure to crime news on U.S. social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter) is unrelated to fear of crime. Moreover, Williams & Myers (2021) surveyed a sample of 371 students attending non-residential community colleges and university campuses in Washington State. The findings revealed no relationship between Facebook consumption of news and fear of crime or perceived risk of victimization. Despite the frequency and duration of Facebook use among participants, exposure to non-U.S. social media crime news (such as WeChat and Weibo) is positively correlated with respondents' fear of crime. However, Galal &Ghada (2019) results differed as they surveyed a sample of 1795 university students in Egypt from four universities varying from private to governmental institutions. Their findings revealed that young people who do not frequently use social media are more afraid of becoming victims of crime.

Previous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between media exposure and an individual's fear of being a victim. However, some studies have disagreed on this relationship. It has also been noted that social media may have a greater cultivating effect than traditional media. Most studies have focused on gender and age as mediating variables while neglecting factors such as engagement and normalization due to the reptation. The methods of data collection vary, ranging from surveys to semi-structured interviews and focus groups. This research aims to address the neglected mediating variables, including engagement and normalization, in addition to age and gender variables, as applied in Egypt.

Significance of the study

In the shadow of recent events, it was seen that social media was a significant factor in spreading crime news, sometimes as a trend that may trigger individual fears of victimization. This research focuses on filling the gap in studying the crime content on social media and its effect on the fear of victimization by including new factors like engagement and normalization to make it more compatible with Egyptian culture. The study also may be an indicator for the authorities to issue codes of ethics related to the way crimes may be presented in the media.

Research Problem

Based on the results of many studies, the effect of social media on individuals has increased as it has become an important part of our daily lives. Moreover, many researchers argue that exposure to crime news on social media has a direct effect on shaping individuals' fear of crime, especially as it serves as a medium for interaction and engagement where people share their worries and experiences. Consequently, the main problem of this research is examining whether there is a relationship between exposure to crime news on Facebook and shaping youth's fear of violent victimization, in addition to identifying if variables such as age, normalization, engagement, gender, and prior experience will affect that fear of victimization or not?

Objectives

1) Determine the relationship between the fear of victimization and exposure to crime news on Facebook.

2) Identify the mediating variables affecting exposure to social media news crime and fear of victimization.

3) Applying the Cultivation theory to social media and its role in cultivating fears.

Questions

This study will address the following research questions to examine the relationship between exposure to crime news on Facebook and fear of victimization.

- Focus group discussion questions.

1- To what extent are participants exposed to crime news on Facebook?

2- What are the patterns of participants' engagement with crime news?

3- How does repeated exposure to crime news contribute to shaping the fear of victimization, normalization, and perceived reality?

4- Is there a bias in crime news coverage according to gender?

5- What are the participants' suggestions regarding the content of crime news on social media?

- In-depth interview questions

1) How does exposure to crime news on Facebook affect youth?

2) Does exposure to news of crime and violence on social media have an impact on the mental

health, feelings, and behavior of young people?

3) What are the factors affecting the fear of victimization, such as personality, prior victimization, and demographics?

4) In their expert opinion, what is the media supposed to do to maintain mental health concerning publishing news and stories related to crime?

5) What are the suggestions of psychiatrists and psychologists regarding the content of crime news on social media?

Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that uses both focus group discussions and in-depth interview methods to collect the data needed for achieving its objectives.

Sample

- Focus group discussion. The study included three focus groups as the following;

Table 1. Focus group description

No. of groups	No. of participants	Gender	Participants' affiliation	age	Time of discussions
Group 1	6	Male	University Students, faculty of Mass Communication	18-23	minutes 38:37
Group 2	7	Female	Masters Students, faculty of Mass Communication	22-24	minutes 29:55
Group 3	7	Females	Parents	40+	hour 1:15:17
Total	participants 19				

In-depth interviews

The study conducted six in-depth interviews with psychiatrists and psychology graduates within April to May 2023.

The interviewees were:

1- Dr. Ibrahim Azazi (Psychiatrist)

2- Dr. Gamal Farweez (Psychiatrist)

3- Dr. Mohamed Hany (Psychiatrist)

4- Dr. Shimaa Desoky (Psychiatrist)

5- Shahd Zulifkar Rakway (Psychologist)

6- Kanzi el Rakway (Psychologist)

Theoretical and operational Concepts:

Concept	Theoretical	Operational
Fear of victimization	The emotional fear of crime is a response to crime or symbols associated with it, which is different from risk perception. Risk perception refers to the likelihood of victimization perceived by an individual, such as the likelihood of being a victim of burglary in the next 12 months (Guedes et al., 2023).	It was measured in this study by asking the participants about their fears after being exposed to crime news.
Normalization	Normalization entails the process of imposing, creating, restoring, maintaining, or accepting a specific order of normalcy (Visoka & Lemay, 2022).	In this study, this concept refers to participants' attitudes towards the repetition of crimes and exposure to their news on Facebook and whether it could influence them or have a normalization effect.
Engagement	The phrase "social media engagement" refers to a broad range of behaviors that indicate and quantify how much the audience engages with posts. Likes, comments, and shares are examples of social media involvement; however, these metrics vary by platform (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).	It can be examined in the current study by asking the participants how they engage with crime news and the effect of their engagement on a crime news post.

Results and analysis

This research collected the needed data by conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The following part will show the results of both methods.

1- Focus group discussion results

The study included three focus groups with a total of 19 participants and the discussion about crime news can be presented as the following:

The exposure to crime news on Facebook and level of engagement.

- Exposure:

All of the participants of the three groups mentioned they were exposed to and followed crime news on Facebook in the last period. Some of them agreed that **some of the crime news became a trend**, such as the coverage of the "Nayera" killing, the Mansoura University student. She was killed by a young man in front of the university because she refused to marry him. Social networking sites covered this story and its details, and society was divided between supporters and opponents of the young man's behavior. Shortly after that, the same crime was repeated with the same details, leading some to believe that expressing anger at rejection has become a trend. The discussions pointed to some remarkable points:

- The results indicate **that parents were much more exposed to crime news on Facebook** than other groups and gained knowledge about the crimes' details, although they aren't as exposed to crime news as youths. This may be due to their fears related to the safety of their kids. The female group described the trend as the repetition of crime news, whether it was by the source or the people sharing it.

- Most of the respondents indicated that the majority of **the covered crimes on Facebook** are those related to homicide. Even though males and parents argued that they were more interested in harassment news as they feel afraid and worried about their daughters and sisters being subjected to harassment, the females group weren't interested in this type of news except for one participant. She explained that she liked reading this kind of news since she was a child. This can be explained by the fact that girls being exposed to such news may make them feel excessively afraid to go out, which prompts them to choose the easier alternative, which is not to be exposed to harassment news.

- The majority of the participants mentioned **they prefer to read the crime news on Facebook** rather than watching videos, which they find frightening and causing stress and anxiety. However, in every group, a few participants are willing to watch the crime videos, especially among males and some parents, to check whether what's written in the crime news is accurate or not.

- Engagement

The results in the following part explain various levels of engagement as commenting and sharing crime news.

- All 19 participants mentioned they are **keen to read the comments** on the video to recognize others' opinions. Parents emphasized the importance of knowing the comments and opinions of people near to the crime, such as victims and residents living where the crime happened. One male participant stated, **"I used to comment on crime posts, but after the repetition of this kind of posts, I got used to it and gradually became not interested in engaging with crime posts."**

- Regarding **sharing crime posts** on Facebook with others, the participants of the parents and males groups stated that they do not share crime news on their timelines. Males mentioned they refuse to share them on Facebook to prevent making crimes a trend, and they only share it in private groups. Female participants emphasized that they used to share the crime news only, not videos; some share it on their timeline, and others share it with their close friends, such as their daughters, to warn them or state their opinion on the crime.

- The parents stated that sharing news has its pros and cons. With the pros, they let people be aware of what is going on and what types of crimes are happening. The cons include sharing crime news causing depression and motivating some youths to imitate these crimes.

Exposure and fear of crimes

The majority of participants stated that when they are exposed to crime news on Facebook, they **feel sad, worried, pessimistic, and distrustful.** Two female participants stated, **"Exposure to this type of news affects my mental health and could lead me to depression."** Even though parents and females cannot deny the importance of crime news in **raising awareness** and being cautious, they also express suspicion towards their surroundings and reluctance to trust anybody

due to fear of becoming victims. One participant expressed, **"He gets anxious about what the future will be like, and when he has kids, he will make sure that they will know what to do if they get into any sort of difficult situation".** Moreover, females argued that the trend of marriage killings on social media affected them differently; one participant developed trust issues with marriage, affecting her personal life, while another married participant felt afraid due to exposure to domestic violence news and videos, causing horror and prompting her to make plans in case of such an occurrence. However, they also acknowledged that this news helped them be more cautious with their choices and recognize potential red flags in relationships. **The age factor** did not appear to influence the participants' opinions in the discussion, as all participants shared the same fears and worries. The results of the focus group discussions indicated a group of variables related to exposure to crime news on Facebook, as follows:

- Perceived reality

Realizing that the **reality in which we live is worse than our expectations** is one of the effects of exposure to crime news. All of the participants expressed their surprise at having these types of crimes they read about in Egypt. For example, a female stated, **"After being exposed to this news, I feel astonished and afraid as to how these kinds of crimes happen."** Even males expressed feeling agitated and unable to sleep due to being exposed to this crime news on Facebook.

Fear of victimization

Fear of being **a victim** is one of the major impacts of being exposed to crime news. One female participant said, **"When I am exposed to that kind of post, I feel afraid of being a victim, and others have shared similar news about me too on social media, and I didn't want to die that way."** Surprisingly, males also have **a fear of victimization.** They think about their sisters or their family and how they are more afraid that they could become victims of a crime. One of the females stated that, due to the fear of victimization, **"I feel unsafe in Egypt and want to leave the country."**

- Normalization

All the participants agreed that due to the repetition of posting crime news on Facebook, it has become **normal news in our lives**, as they were not surprised like the first time. One male participant thinks that as people got used to reading about crimes like sexual harassment of girls on public transportation, they started to care less about this matter. As a result, this type of crime is not trending anymore. According to a parent's point of view, **"Even if it is normal to be exposed to crime news, it is still a shock, and we are really afraid, as crime is still a hideous thing and it is new to our society."**

One of the female participants stated that sharing crime news on social media with the full details **teaches people about particular crimes** and how they can be committed in certain ways, as was the case of Naira, the university student who was killed by a young man whom she rejected, and then the crime was repeated with the same details one month later. Moreover, participants argued that **a lot of crimes are happening** because there is a lot of crime news shared; therefore, the idea of having crimes in our society is normalized, especially for the young generation, and this is why parents in the discussion express their fears of the impact of this news on their children. Although reading about crimes and being informed about them has become normal for participants, there is still a fear of **victimization.**

- Prior victimization

There were two participants in the three discussion groups who experienced prior victimization. They confessed that when they are exposed to news of crimes similar to those they experienced before, they feel more terrified as it reminds them of what happened. **As a source of information,** all of the female participants stated that they would not share their prior experience in public or even in private groups; they would only share them with their close ones.

Bias in crime news coverage according to gender

Most of the respondents confirmed the bias in covering crime news, noting that the focus tends to be on cases where a woman is the victim, while those with a male victim are often overlooked. One male participant expressed, **"There should be equality in covering crime news, as I believe both genders are exposed to the same danger."** Some male participants attributed the inequality in coverage to **societal culture**, where men are expected to handle crimes on their own without complaint. Surprisingly, female participants also acknowledged the inequality, interpreting it in light of societal norms emphasizing men's strength.

Parents agreed, noting that females are more likely to speak up about their experiences compared to males, who often choose not to speak about what they've been through. They explained this inequality by pointing out that women are more likely to experience crime, leading parents to be more concerned about their daughters' safety. However, parents' opinions shifted when reminded about incidents of harassment committed by a dentist against his male patients, acknowledging that men should speak up about such incidents.

Male participants stated that they would not share if they were harassed, even in private groups, unless the crime was major, such as blackmailing. Female participants attributed the inequality in crime news coverage to **extremist groups** on social media that focus on women and blame them for crimes, even when they are the victims. These groups share crime news extensively to emphasize the role of women in their occurrence.

Focus groups recommendations:

The three discussions ended with participants' suggestions regarding the content of crime news on social media. All participants acknowledged that they can't impose censorship on Facebook as it is a user-generated medium. Therefore, they unanimously agreed that the punishment should be included in the crime news to show the audience the consequences of committing crimes. Additionally, parents suggested adding moral and religious advice in the posts, while male participants recommended raising awareness in schools and creating awareness campaigns in the media.

2- In-depth interviews results

The current study conducted six in-depth interviews with psychiatrists and psychologists. The results will answer the research questions covering the following topics:

The impact of exposure to crime news on Facebook

All the interviewees agreed that crime news may impact people's behavior and create a fear of crime that can lead to instability, unproductivity, expecting to be hurt, victimization, and isolation.

Dr. Shimaa Desoky argued that this impact can be related to **the level of exposure to violent content** on social media platforms and the specific details focused on the crime. Shahd Zulifkar Rakway and Kanzi El-Rakway agreed with her and **positively linked** the degree of exposure to crime news with the degree of stress and feelings of instability.

The interviewees discussed many **negative effects of the repetition of crime news** on social media, the most important were:

- The imitation of crimes: The interviewees criticized the repetition of posting videos or photos on social media as a way to motivate youth to imitate similar crimes, especially when they are posted without including the efforts made to catch the criminals and the consequences that ensued.

- All participants stressed the effect of exposure on **fear of crimes and victimization**. They gave examples, such as how crime news may shape parents' fear of letting their children go out and live a normal life.

- Dr. Ibrahim Azazi added, **"Individuals could have nightmares due to the consumption of crime news on Facebook which shape their fear of victimization"**.

- Youths' **desire to obtain fame and large views** may push them to engage in crimes, even if they are perceived as simple ones, and then create videos and upload them on social media platforms.

- Getting used to being exposed to such news, which includes a lot of violence, can be called **"normalization,"** a term that Dr. Mohamed Hany emphasized for its negative effect on youths' mental health, emotions, and behaviors. The majority of interviewees confirmed that constantly seeing scenes of violence and blood makes such news less impactful on individuals, and they may

also make jokes about it as a form of sarcasm. Dr. Ibrahim Azazi expressed surprise that many groups on Facebook include crime news and portray the criminal as a hero, justifying what happened in a biased way.

Factors affecting fear of victimization

Participants empathized that exposure to crime news does not have **the same effect on all those exposed to it**. Psychiatrists have confirmed that there are **mediating factors** affecting this relationship, as follows:

- Personality is one of the most important variables. For instance, a hysterical person (showy) or a psychotic person with criminal inclinations may try to imitate the crime. Moreover, a neurotic personality can be delusional and may experience feelings of victimization, which exposure to crime news can exacerbate.

- Demographics which include many variables;

■ **Gender:** The majority of psychiatrists agree that women are more affected by crime news than men, as they link gender to the ability to handle stress or anxiety. Dr. Ibrahim Azazi explained that girls are more affected by crime news than boys, as it induces fear and panic attacks in them. Only one of the psychiatrists stated that the personality of the individual, regardless of gender, is the main factor that affects the fear of crime. Dr. Shimaa Desoky added that a lot of research has shown that women are more likely to follow crime news than men, which may be due to their desire to protect themselves from theft, rape, and kidnapping. Dr. Ibrahim Azazi claimed, **"In Egypt, we find that the feeling of victimization is greater among females than males, which is due to the cultural norms of society and the way the news is presented."**

■ Psychiatrists argued that **age** is one of the most influential factors in exposure to crime news. Young people search for it more and are influenced by it because they are at an age where their culture and behavior are still being formed, in addition to their curiosity. Younger people may be considered more affected by news of crime because they sometimes perceive violent behavior as indicating strength, so they may have a desire to imitate it without fully understanding the consequences.

- Prior victimization: Most of the psychiatrists emphasized that crime news has a greater impact on individuals who have been suffered of similar crimes before, as it makes them recall their bad experiences. Being exposed to such news again makes them feel depressed and afraid of being exposed to crime again. They argued that crime news consumption could lead people with prior victimization to physical symptoms such as: headaches, blurred vision, dry throat, a high heart rate, shivers, sleep disturbances, and eating disorders. It is worth mentioning that the symptoms and the duration of the post-effects can vary depending on the intensity of the trauma and how severely the person was affected when it happened.

Their Recommendations

Recognizing the seriousness of the phenomenon of young people's repeated exposure to crime news, psychiatrists and psychologists have put forward many important recommendations to reduce the negative effects, the most important of which are:

- All psychiatrists and psychologists have agreed on the need to change the way in which crimes are presented through the media in general and social media platforms in particular. They agreed that the way crimes are presented on Facebook makes them interesting, especially for young people.

- Moreover, they stated the importance of the media's role in spreading crime news and misinformation, as there is no censorship on articles and posts with a false context or manipulated content. This may prompt others who suffer from the same problems to imitate these crimes especially if the penalties and consequences of the crimes are not mentioned. Furthermore, they suggested that there should be censorship on platforms that spread crime news and frame it in a way that shape a negative stereotype of Egyptian youth. Also, Dr. Ibrahim Azazi emphasized that media should not mention the details of crimes especially some of them show the criminal as a victim or hero, it either creates empathy or fear. Dr. Shimaa Desoky added the importance of warning people that the content being presented is violent and punishment should be included in the news to make others afraid of committing similar crimes.

- Lastly, they recommended families to provide emotional and mental support to their children to protect them from the negative effects of social media and to make them aware that criminal behavior has consequences.

Discussion

Social media platforms such as Facebook have become the source of information, especially for crime news, as youngsters depend on it for news updates. Crime news captures the attention of users, so there is a need to understand the effect of exposure to crime news on Facebook and its relationship with fear of victimization on youth. The study concluded that there is a relationship between exposure to crime news on Facebook and fear of victimization. The study proves that many variables may affect that fear of victimization as level of engagement, normalization, prior victimization, and demographics. All participants and interviewees stressed how fear of victimization impacts their behavior in general, as it could create instability, unproductivity, and expectation of being hurt, victimized, and isolation. These results are congruent with many of the previous studies. For example, Shoulders (2020) stated that the amount of media exposure and the level of fear both impacted social interaction anxiety, and Matthew et al. (2018) argued that the more exposure to crime-related media, the more likely individuals are afraid of becoming victims of crime in the future. Intravia et al. study (2017) agreed with the previous studies and states that social media consumption of general news and crime-related content greatly affected the increase in fear of crime.

Moreover, the level of engagement with crime news on Facebook influences the fear of victimization, as the participants and interviewees stated that due to the high level of engagement, certain crimes have become trends and spread faster. However, most participants do not interact with the crime news; they are only keen to read the comments. The study concluded that most of the participants would prefer to read the crime news rather than watch videos due to their ability in raising fears. Prior victimization is one of the major factors affecting fear of victimization, as interviewees elaborated that individuals who had previously been victims are more affected by the crime news. Furthermore, some participants had prior victimization experiences that affected their fear of victimization more and triggered the incident again. These results are congruent with Silva and Guedes (2022) study that argued experience of victimization is one of the main factors that impact the media's role in creating fear of crime. Both participants and interviewees agreed that women are more afraid of being victims than men, as they stated that gender determines the ability to handle stress and anxiety. Furthermore, there is a bias in covering crime news, as they stated that women's crime news is covered more than men's. Iqbal & Batool (2022) aligned with the previous results by stating that women's fear and mistrust increase from exposure to violent Facebook content, and Hildreth (2015) concluded that female students had more fear than male students. Additionally, interviewees mentioned that youngsters are more affected by crime news than elders. These results are congruent with Recobo (2022) study that stated that respondents over the age of 18 are more likely to show fear of victimization in response to crime news on social media. Additionally, normalization of crime news emerged as an important factor influencing participants' fear of victimization. Due to common and repeated exposure to crime-related news, individuals developed a sense of normalization regarding the crimes, which resulted in adapting to seeing these crimes without being shocked. Interviewees added that normalization has a negative effect on youth mental health and emotions, resulting in normalizing crime and memes about it. These results are congruent with Awais et al. (2020) study that found that repeated violent messages in crime news, drama, or social media crime videos can influence an individual's perception of criminal victimization.

The resonance concept in cultivation theory provides a framework for understanding how these factors interact to influence youth's fear of victimization. It states that people who have similar experiences would be more affected than those who have not, as proven by the participants and psychiatrists that it has an enormous effect on their mental health due to prior victimization. A new variable has surfaced that is considered a game-changer: normalization. Both participants in focus groups and in-depth interviewees agreed that there is a normalization towards crime due to the repetition and exposure of this news on Facebook because of the engagement feature that social media have. This concludes that exposure to crime news on Facebook has a cultivating effect, as it cultivates the fear of victimization, which results in increasing the fear of victimization.

Conclusion

Many studies pointed to the increase use of social media platforms. In Egypt, Facebook has become one of the most important platforms for obtaining crime news, as youth browse news and interact with it by sharing, liking, and commenting. It is essential to recognize the impact of crime news that posted on Facebook and its effects on individuals' well-being and perceptions of safety. Through various studies and research findings, it has become evident that social media, particularly Facebook, plays a crucial role in shaping people's perceptions of crime and their fear of victimization. The study concluded that exposure to crime news on Facebook has various effects on youth fear of victimization, and this effect is mediated through some factors such as prior victimization, gender, age, and normalization. It is proven that Facebook has a cultivating effect on youth due to the excessive crime news content, which also leads to normalization. Moreover, the way crime news is presented on Facebook, including the frequency of posts and the nature of the content, can influence individuals' engagement with such news. While some may choose to comment, share, or react to crime posts, others may become desensitized or disengaged over time.

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