



The impact of television on the mental health of audiences in Albania

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Abstract

Matters related to mental health, including the identification of issues, treatment processes, and recovery, are highly complex and all too often receive limited attention in television discourse involving journalists, hosts, and healthcare professionals. However, over the years, numerous studies referenced in this research have demonstrated that television does indeed affect the mental health of its audiences. Beyond identifying how audiovisual media influence mental health, through systematic monitoring and analysis of both expert insights and audience viewpoints, this study aims to shed light on the potential role that such media can play in promoting and protecting psychological well-being. How can television reduce its negative impact on mental health while simultaneously enhancing its positive effects? To explore this question, we conducted a questionnaire to capture audience concerns regarding Albanian television programming, as well as their expectations and desires. The study concludes that media influence is multidimensional and can carry significant implications for viewers' mental health. News content, particularly that involving traumatic or distressing events has the potential to provoke emotional and psychological harm, contributing to heightened anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. Importantly, audiences themselves are aware of these effects and have proposed concrete solutions: increasing the presence of content that addresses mental health, minimizing aggressive or harmful content, integrating mental health professionals into programming, and ensuring greater diversity in the content offered by audiovisual media.

Keywords: mental health, audience, television, news avoidance, constructive journalism

1. Introduction

In a recent literature review on media reporting Zhang and Firdaus (2024) stated that positive media coverage can offset negative impacts on mental health topics by cultivating awareness, empathy, and support because media has the potential to become a catalyst for change, promoting empathy, awareness, and supportive attitudes. Hu and Zhang (2023) found that TV

viewing for long periods of time increases the risk of mental illness. Schaller et al. (2025) stated that in regard the transactional relationships between individuals' media experiences regarding COVID-19 coverage and their mental distress over time, "...identified media-related fear and issue fatigue as significant experiences related to individuals' mental health during public health crises." But on the other hand, Van Antwerpen et al. (2022) show with their findings that constructive journalism can have mixed effects. However, constructive journalism on television has a positive emotional impact on the audience (Rusch et al., 2022). Some findings revealed that a news article providing restorative narratives makes people feel more positive after reading it (Schäfer et al., 2022). "Shifting minds Understanding the Development, Representation & Impact of Mental Health Storytelling in Entertainment" report concludes that "Finally, research showed powerful audience impacts of stories that feature inclusive and nuanced stories about mental health by providing evidence for the ways in which these stories influence audience knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to mental health." Although constructive journalism and solution reporting are seen as an effective form of building relationships between media and audiences, Djerf-Pierre and Ekström (2025) note that solutions-focused news stories are generally quite uncommon and hardly prioritized in the newsrooms.

Currently, within the academic landscape, the concept of news avoidance is increasingly articulated. This academic discussion is closely linked to the public's mental health and their capacity to curate the flow of information, especially during the global COVID-19 pandemic (Mannell, R., & Meese, J., 2022). Other studies suggest that British youth, during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely avoided the "infodemic," limiting their exposure to news about the pandemic and its consequences from both primary media sources and secondary sources such as social networks, to protect their mental health (Cardwell, S., 2007). One of the reasons for the deterioration of audiences' mental health is also the spread of fake news. According to a study by the University of Michigan, people in the United States actively avoid news by choosing not to expose themselves to media programs and news coverage. This is also because they find it very difficult to distinguish between fabricated stories and information based on facts. Nearly 39% of people globally in 2024 reported that they actively avoid news, compared to 29% who did so in 2017 (Reuters, 2024). The researchers also found that the lonelier and more depressed the study participants were, the more likely they were to watch television, using the activity as a means of escaping negative emotions (Hellweg, A., 2021).

Among social workers and psychoanalysts, there is growing concern that increased access to films and programs with violent content broadcast on television may lead to increased violence and aggression in the behavior of children and adolescents. In general, increased television viewing is associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety, although it is also possible that these mental health problems drive children to watch more television. Early mental health disorders associated with excessive television viewing include autism, attention deficit, addictive behaviors, and Alzheimer's disease in adulthood. Prolonged exposure to violent and hypersexualized content in television programming causes both physical and psychosomatic health problems, such as hormonal imbalances, mood disturbances, increased risk of cancer and early puberty, slowed metabolism, eating disorders, and increased obesity (Silva, P., Mckinzie, K., Harpham, T., & Huttly, S., 2005).

Just as there are studies that demonstrate the negative effects of television on mental health, there are also studies that show the opposite. "Contrary to the popular beliefs you may have heard from your parents growing up, TV can be good for your mental health when used responsibly as entertainment, as opposed to excessive binge-watching," states an article published by the University of Birmingham (Birmingham University, 2022). The article outlines reasons why, when used positively, television and radio can be beneficial for mental health. The first is that they serve as a source of advice and support, and the second is that they

provide a form of escapism through virtual social connection and the sense of hope that television programs bring for the future.

Mental health is influenced by various internal and external factors related to the individual. Based on the latest data from the World Health Organization (2022), 1 in 8 people globally experience mental health problems, with 4% of the global population suffering from anxiety and 5% from depression. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 there was a projected increase of 26% and 28% in cases of anxiety disorders and depressive disorders, respectively. Mental health is also closely linked to the impact of digital technologies. The blue light emitted by these devices interferes with the brain's ability to transmit information necessary for the production of produce the sleep hormone melatonin (Harvard Medical School, 2020).

Given that television content consumption is increasingly intertwined with social media platforms, it becomes essential to examine the effects these platforms exert on audiences. With the migration of traditional television to digital environments, Johnson (2024) argues that the technological consequences of shifting to internet-delivered television demand new theorizations of television as software, new digital tools and methods, and audience research that pays more attention to less engaged and unconnected audiences. Sanders et al. (2024) compared the effects of television and social media. "...the more TV a child watched, the poorer their literacy skills were. But if the program was educational or if the child was watching with a parent, we found there was a benefit to their literacy...Our research found more social media use was associated with mental health issues and risk taking." (Sanders et al., 2024). In contrast, a study conducted by Jones et al. (2024) observed a positive though very small association between social media use and anxiety, while no such association was found for depression or stress. The Pew Research Center Report (2025) shows that roughly half of teens, but fewer think they negatively affect them personally. Prolonged hours spent in front of smartphones using platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, and others combined with social isolation and feelings of dissatisfaction with life, and the inability to fulfill personal dreams and desires cause young people to experience increased feelings of hopelessness, insecurity, low self-esteem, emotional instability, and uncertainty about the future (Twenge, J. M. et al., 2018). News video consumption predominantly occurs on online platforms rather than on the official websites of audiovisual media channels (ISSH, 2022).

Among the mental effects, Mustafa (2022) mentions anxiety and depression. Children are not immune to these effects either. The author notes that the brain is not fully developed until the age of 25, with another phase of rapid development occurring around the ages of 16–17. "Promoting messages that change is possible, that struggles can be overcome, that help is available, and that speaking openly about one's thoughts and feelings is beneficial has the potential to produce positive effects on viewers" (Cambridge University, 2020).

Mass media, due to their vast reach and continuous exposure, possess a unique ability to shape perceptions and influence public opinion among large populations. In fact, media plays a crucial role in forming our ideas and understanding of various issues and events. The often negative and inaccurate portrayal of mental health issues in general, and of individuals with psychiatric disorders in particular, reinforces misconceptions and false beliefs about mental illness. "Raising awareness of these negative consequences and sensitively reporting on issues related to mental illness in general, and suicide in particular, can contribute to reducing suicide rates and addressing the stigma and discrimination associated with mental disorders" (Primack et al., 2018).

After surveying over 1,000 children and adolescents in New Zealand, researchers found that the amount of time spent watching television during childhood and adolescence was associated with an increased risk of being diagnosed with an anxiety disorder in early to mid-adulthood. (McAnally, H., Young, T., & Hancox, R. J., 2019). According to Ferguson (2024), there are numerous reasons why consistent news avoiders may disengage from information, including a

lack of trust in mainstream news sources, unappealing content, unattractive formats, or the production of unpleasant emotional responses. Ferguson offers three key recommendations as potential solutions: adapt news channels and formats, implement a constructive news strategy, and enable greater audience engagement by the media. Can television shows have a positive influence? Yes, according to a UCLA report, but only when approaching topics in a credible and supportive way. In a study, 157 children aged 13 to 17 were asked whether they had watched the series *13 Reasons Why*. Of those, 68 had seen season 3 of the show, while the rest had not seen it. However, 92% of those who had watched it sought out more information on mental health topics afterward. They discussed issues such as suicide, mental health, and bullying with peers, parents, or partners. Moreover, the study revealed that a fictional story was more effective in changing behavior than a documentary filled with statistics and experts. In other words, accurate information combined with emotional storytelling is a powerful mechanism for changing behaviors and attitudes. Considering the increased risk of developing mental health problems during adolescence, normalizing conversations about mental health can support efforts to destigmatize help-seeking behaviors” (UCLA, 2021). The British series *Adolescence* (2025, directed by Philip Barantini), broadcast on Netflix, for example, could help hundreds of thousands of people reflect on mental health challenges more effectively than hundreds of hours of lectures.

2. Methodology, Hypotheses and Research Questions

The methodology of the study is based on a set of mixed methods, aiming to cross-analyze data obtained from the monitoring of current audiovisual content, from an online questionnaire addressed to audiences, as well as from qualitative interviews conducted with experts. The questionnaire was distributed online to the audience from October 1st to December 31st, 2024, and was completed by 769 participants across Albania. Before distribution, the questionnaire was tested with 10 professionals, students and individuals with a high school education to assess how the questions were understood. The design of the questionnaire had its main criteria: inclusion of the core questions of this study, clarity and comprehensibility for all types of audiences, ease of completion as it was distributed online, and a length limited to 15 questions to encourage easy participation. Participant selection for the online questionnaire was guided by the objective of capturing the perspectives of audiences engaged with television content, whether through traditional television channels or via social media platforms. To ensure broad reach and data richness, the questionnaire was disseminated through the official social media profiles of the Albanian online media outlet Gogo.al (www.gogo.al), which has approximately 5,700 followers on Facebook and 1,650 on Instagram. Additionally, in an effort to ensure diversity within the target audience, the questionnaire was also shared with students from both public and private universities, as well as through other channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The audiences reached were mixed to ensure a representative percentage across all age groups, levels of education, regions, and other relevant demographics. The responses were either single choice (one answer) or multiple choice (several answers), as well as open-ended questions. The table below presents some of the demographic data.

Table No. 1. Demographic Data of Surveyed Audience

Demographic Characteristics of Questionnaire Participants (N = 769)			
Age	Place of Residence		Education
18-30 years old –44.2%	Shkodra County 3.3%	Elbasani County 3.3%	Primary and Secondary School – 7.2% High School – 15.2% Professional School –4.4% Bachelor – 21.7% Master – 47.6% PhD – 3.9%
31-40 years old –29.3%	Kukësi County 1%	Fieri County 1.4%	
41-50 years old –14.2%	Lezha County 5.9 %	Berati County 0.7%	
51-60 years old – 9.6%	Dibra County 1.2%	Korça County 2.1%	
Mbi 60 years old – 2.7%	Durrësi County 15%	Gjirokastra County 0.9%	
	Tirana County 64.4%	Vlora County 1%	

The monitoring was carried out in two phases. During June, July, and August 2024, the content of television news editions was monitored, while in September and October 2024, the content of television programs was carefully analyzed. The selection of television channels for monitoring was based on their influence on Albanian audiences. The chosen channels were Top Channel, TV Klan, Vizion Plus, RTSH, and News24. For television programs, two different time slots were selected: afternoon programs and prime-time programs. In both phases, content was accessed via the official YouTube channels of these networks. In selecting experts for qualitative interviews, criteria such as academic and professional authority and broad representation across fields including media, communication, sociology, and psychology were considered. The experts included: Blendi Salaj, moderator at Top Channel; Erlis Çela, media and communication expert; Gëzim Tushi, sociologist; Ramadan Çipuri, media and communication expert; Entela Binjaku, sociologist; and Milena Turtulli, psychologist.

The hypotheses formulated for this study are as follows:

H1 - Albanian audiences express concern about television content in Albania, as they believe it focuses excessively on violent events, often featuring aggressive discussions and lacking educational and cultural programming, or offering programs without innovation. The audience perceives that their mood is mainly affected or stressed by certain types of audiovisual content, such as political talk shows, news editions, and reality shows.

H2 - Audiences believe that television channels in Albania dedicate little space to mental health issues and would be interested in programs that protect and improve their mental well-being. They suggest that television content should adopt a more positive approach when addressing topics and debates, include more mental health specialists as guests in programs, and feature more human-centered stories.

The research questions formulated for this study are:

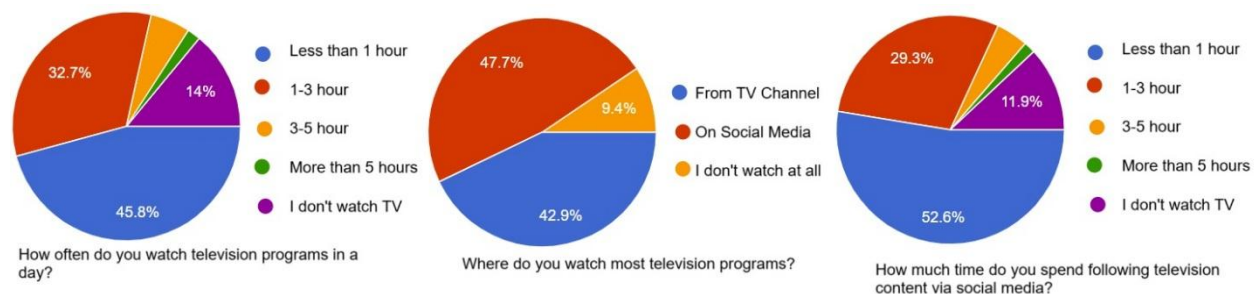
- What is the role and impact of audiovisual media in the protection of mental health?
- What is the quantitative and qualitative ratio between television content related to mental health and content addressing other topics?
- How can audiences be protected from audiovisual content that may negatively affect their mental health, and are individuals with mental health problems stigmatized in Albanian television content?
- How does exposure to crime-related news affect the mental health of audiences, and what are the consequences of this impact? What role do experts play in television programs regarding mental health?
- What are the examples of television programs in Albania that address these issues?

- How vigilant and educated are Albanian audiences regarding the effects that audiovisual content has on their mental health?
- What are the most effective strategies to protect audiences from television content containing violence and sexuality, and how can media literacy among audiences be strengthened regarding exposure to such content?
- What is the ongoing discussion on this issue, and what are the suggestions made by audiences and experts?

3. Audiences and television, analysis of the data

This study includes data collected from individuals who follow television content, based on responses to an online questionnaire distributed across Albania. A total of 769 participants took part in the study, which was conducted between October 1 and December 31, 2024.

The respondents are asked first about their habits of consuming television content, how many minutes or hours daily and from which platforms; television channels, social media platforms or both. They spend less than one hour watching TV (45.8%) and one to three hours (32.7%).



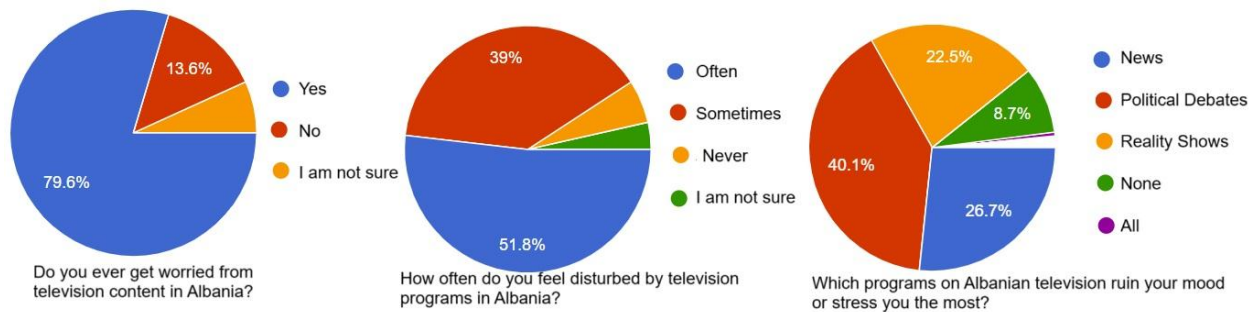
Graphs 1-3. TV viewing frequency, where do they watch television content and time spent watching television content on social media¹

In response to the question of where they primarily watch television programs, the findings reveal a shift in audience behavior from traditional television sets to social media platforms. It is clear that audiences spend more time watching television content on social media platforms compared to using traditional television sets. The data clearly show that the majority of the audience spends less than one hour per day consuming television content via social media, while only a small portion of the audience spends extended time on these platforms. When

¹ The majority of respondents reported watching TV less than one hour per day (45.8%), while 32.1% stated they watch for between one and three hours daily. A smaller percentage (5.9%) watch between three and five hours, and only 2% watch more than five hours per day. Notably, 14.3% of respondents indicated that they do not watch television at all an insight worth further consideration. The majority of respondents (48.2%) follow television content through social media, while 42% still use traditional television sets. A smaller percentage (9.8%) reported not watching television content at all. Specifically on social media, 29.3% of respondents watch 1–3 hours, 52.5% watch less than 1 hour, 12% do not watch at all, while smaller percentages report watching 3–5 hours (4.6%) and more than 5 hours (1.7%). The proportion of audiences who do not follow any television content varies between 9%, 12%, and 14% across the three related questions. The majority believe they do not spend too much time watching TV compared to other activities such as physical exercise or socializing with friends. The total reaches 37.3%, indicating that a notable portion of the audience is either aware that their time could be spent differently or expresses uncertainty about their media consumption habits. Most people of 25.6% do not perceive television consumption as a problem, though a smaller percentage expresses uncertainty and concern about the time spent in front of the screen. When asked further about the types of programs they watch, audiences indicate through their responses that the majority are oriented toward films, TV series, and general entertainment. The rest of the audience also shows interest in educational, cultural, news, and sports programs. There is a clear trend toward services such as Netflix, which offer on-demand access to a wide range of content based on personal preferences. Responses regarding the types of television programs most frequently watched by audiences are more fragmented. The top three categories, ranked by the highest percentage, are entertainment programs (23.3%), news editions (19.4%), and reality shows (17.4%). Other categories received lower percentages, such as cultural programs (9.9%), educational programs (9.4%), political programs (8.5%), sports programs (6.8%), films (0.7%), soap operas (0.3%), and none (0.3%). The results indicate that audiences are more inclined to follow entertainment, news, and reality shows, while interest in cultural, educational, political, and sports programming is relatively lower.

asked whether they believe they spend too much time watching TV compared to other activities such as physical exercise, socializing with friends, etc., the majority responded “no” (62.7%), while a smaller portion answered “yes” (25.6%). When asked further about the types of programs they watch, audiences indicate through their responses that the top three categories, ranked by the highest percentage, are entertainment programs (23.3%), news editions (19.4%), and reality shows (17.4%).

The core questions of the questionnaire, whose data support one of the hypotheses of this study, are questions 6, 7, 8, and 9. These questions whether audiences feel disturbed by television content in Albania, how frequently this occurs, what specifically bothers them, and which types of content disturb them the most have yielded interesting responses that need closer examination. For example, there is a high level of agreement among 79.8% of respondents who answered “YES” to the question of whether they ever feel disturbed by such content. Similarly, there is strong consensus in the responses regarding how often this occurs, with 51.9% stating “Often.”, followed by “Sometimes” (39%), “Never” (5.6%), and “Not sure” (3.5%).



Graphs 4-6. Audience responses on whether they are bothered by television content, how often, and from which television programs²

Respondents expressed concern about the quality of television content, highlighting the lack of educational and cultural programming, as well as the low level of professionalism displayed by program hosts and guests. The use of inappropriate language and the emphasis on drama and conflict to attract attention were also frequently raised as issues.

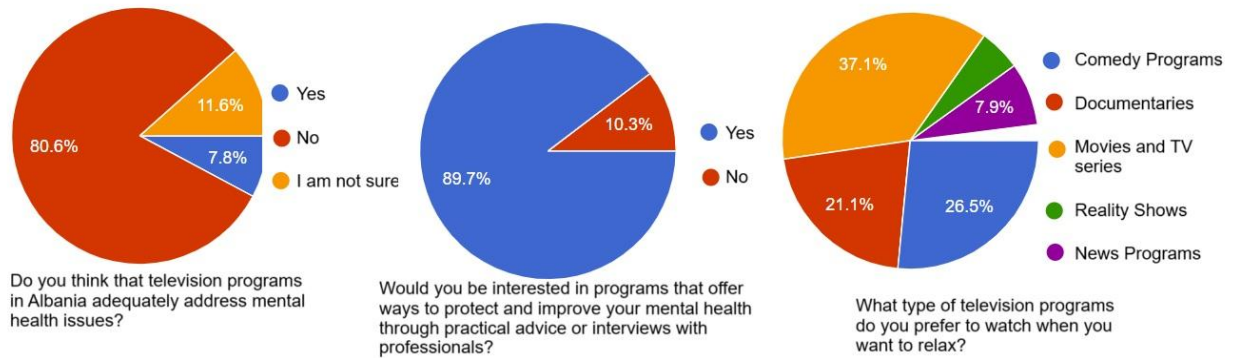
When asked which programs most negatively affect their mood or cause stress, a significant percentage of respondents pointed to political talk shows. This question reveals that political programs are the type of content that most negatively impacts the mood of Albanian audiences (40.6%), followed by news programs (27%). Reality shows rank third (22.2%), while 8.1% of respondents stated that no programs affect their mood.

Overall, audiences express the greatest concern regarding content related to violence, aggressive discussions, and the lack of educational and cultural programming. The questionnaire results reflect a strong demand for more responsible television programming content that provides value to the audience, stimulates critical thinking, and creates opportunities for meaningful and constructive discussion. Others are critical of programs that promote vulgarity and violence. Several emphasize that the media often focus more on marketing than on providing useful information, particularly in relation to health. This reflects

² Most respondents stated that what disturbs them most about television content in Albania is the excessive focus on violent events (61.4%). Other concerns include highly aggressive discussions (46.9%), lack of educational content (60.7%), lack of cultural programming (30.4%), lack of innovation in programming (21.3%), lack of entertaining shows (20.2%), and too many advertisements (19.4%). Political talk shows appear to have the strongest impact on audience mood and stress levels. This result suggests that programs dealing with political topics and news may have a direct impact on the emotional perception of the audience, creating a more tense and dissatisfying atmosphere for many viewers.

a broader concern about the negative impact of the media on society and highlights the need for more balanced and educational content for audiences.

In the following three questions 10, 11, and 13 audiences provide insightful data that support another hypothesis of the study, the extent to which Albanian television channels dedicate space to mental health issues, whether audiences would be interested in programs that protect and improve their mental health, and what they believe television could do more in this regard.



Graphs 7-9. Graphs showing whether audiences think that television content adequately addresses mental health issues, whether they would be interested in programs to protect and improve their mental health, and what programs they watch when they want to relax.³

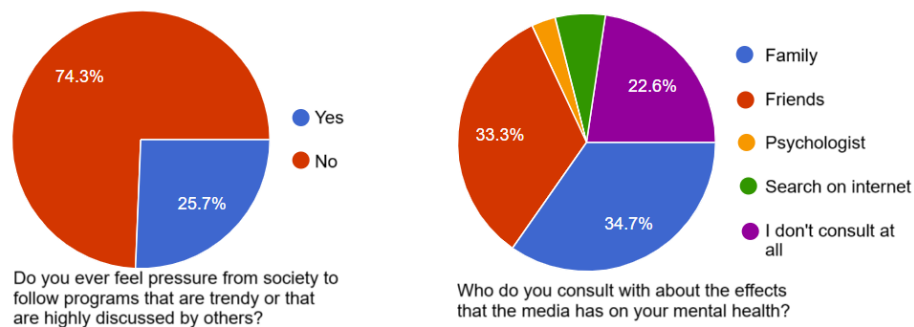
Audiences believe that television channels do not adequately address mental health issues in their programming (81%), while only 7.7% believe they do. In response to the following question whether they would be interested in programs offering ways to protect and improve their mental health through practical advice and interviews with professionals an even higher percentage responded “Yes” (89.7%), with only 10.3% responding “No.” These results reveal an extraordinary level of interest from the audience in programming that provides practical guidance and professional insight on improving mental well-being.

The majority of respondents (50.5%) believe that there should be a more positive approach in developing media content and debates; 41.2% think that more mental health specialists should be invited to participate in Albanian television programs; and 16.8% believe that there should be greater inclusion of human stories in the discussion of topics and debates. The additional suggestions call for more ethical content, less banality, and a professional and impartial approach, especially in the treatment of topics related to children and society.

When asked whether they ever feel pressured by society to follow programs that are trendy or widely discussed by others, 74% of respondents said no, while only 26% said yes. The result allows us to understand that the majority of the audience believes they have autonomy in choosing programs, and only a small portion of people admit that they might feel compelled to watch certain programs due to social pressure.

³ Responses to the question about what type of television programs audiences prefer to watch when they wish to relax are primarily concentrated on films and series (37.3%), comedy programs (26.3%), documentaries (20.9%), reality shows (5.3%), and informational programs (8.1%). Respondents suggested a wide range of content, including specific shows from well-known channels, services such as Netflix, music, sports, cultural, entertainment, and educational programs, as well as critiques of current content that they believe negatively affects their mental health.

34.6% of respondents stated that when it comes to the effects that media has on their mental health, they consult with family; 33.3% consult with friends; 6.2% search for information online; and a significant portion, 22.9%, do not consult anyone at all. Only 3% say that they consult a psychologist. Although audiences report that they rarely consult directly with a psychologist, they expressed a strong willingness to watch programs featuring experts who provide advice and practical strategies for protecting mental health.



Graphs 10-11. Data showing societal pressure on audiences to watch certain programs and whether audiences are consulted about the effects of television on their mental health and with whom

From these responses, we understand that audiences are deeply connected to their families and friends, whom they trust even with mental health issues influenced by the information and content they consume. The results reveal a clear tendency within Albanian society to seek support for mental health issues primarily from close individuals, such as family and friends, rather than seeking professional help from psychologists or other sources.

4. Television content monitoring and experts' insights

The monitoring of crime-related television reports during the summer months (June–August 2024) reveals a notable increase in such content across Albanian TV channels. For instance, News 24 recorded a rise from 14 reports in June to 22 in August. A similar trend was observed on Top Channel (from 13 to 19), Vizion Plus (from 15 to 21), and RTSH 1 (from 4 to 7). These patterns suggest a tendency among broadcasters to prioritize coverage of violent incidents, accidents, and conflicts during the summer, a time traditionally associated with lighter programming.

Despite the presence of various socially oriented shows, the number of programs explicitly addressing mental health remains minimal. Monitoring conducted in June 2024 across five national channels showed that airtime dedicated to mental health topics was negligible. This scarcity is partially attributed to seasonal programming changes, as many regular shows go on hiatus during the summer, and the remaining content focuses primarily on entertainment and celebrity news. Even when mental health is mentioned, it is often approached indirectly, framed within broader discussions such as elderly leisure time, rather than being treated as a standalone, in-depth topic. This lack of attention to mental health issues in mainstream programming raises critical concerns about editorial priorities and the role of television in shaping public discourse on well-being. The monitoring results underscore a clear imbalance between the abundance of emotionally intense news and the limited space allocated to mental health education or support. The implications of these findings are further reinforced by expert perspectives, which provide depth and context to the data. Interviews with professionals, including media experts Erlis Çela and Ramadan Çipuri, psychologist Milena Turtulli Bregu, and sociologist Gëzim Tushi, highlight the psychological impact of violence, inappropriate programming, and reality shows

on viewers' mental health. According to Turtulli Bregu and Entela Binjaku, the persistent broadcast of violent or sexually explicit content can have particularly harmful effects on youth, fostering increased aggression, behavioral issues, and emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression. These outcomes mirror audience concerns and emphasizes the urgent need for more responsible content strategies.

Erlis Çela underscores the challenge posed by social media, where algorithms amplify engagement often at the cost of user well-being. He warns that the "bombardment" of emotionally charged, or sensationalist content contributes significantly to emotional exhaustion and depressive symptoms. Educating audiences about harmful content is an important step in addressing this issue. This highlights the dual burden faced by modern audiences: traditional media's emotional intensity, compounded by algorithm-driven exposure on digital platforms. Most audiences are not fully aware of the negative effects that television and social media content can have on their mental well-being. According to experts, Albanian audiences have a low level of media literacy and awareness when it comes to understanding the impact of media on mental health.

Experts also raise ethical concerns. Çipuri and Tushi argue that the failure to adhere to ethical standards in media production fosters stigma, reinforces harmful stereotypes, and cultivates an atmosphere of social exclusion, particularly toward individuals with mental health conditions. As Blendi Salaj notes, "To protect the mental health of audiences, television must prioritize credible, educational, and emotionally supportive content." He advocates for programming that encourages empathy, reflection, and emotional balance, warning against the damaging effects of sensationalism.

Together, the monitoring data and expert insights draw a coherent picture: current television programming trends, particularly those emphasizing violence and spectacle, are not only failing to support mental health but may be actively undermining it. The convergence of quantitative monitoring and professional opinion calls for urgent reconsideration of media responsibilities in promoting public well-being.

5. Conclusions and an invitation to further discussion

This study concludes that the impact of television is multidimensional and can have significant consequences on the mental health of the audience. News, especially those related to traumatic and harmful events, have the potential to cause emotional and mental distress, reinforcing the increase of anxiety, depression, and emotional insecurity among viewers. Importantly, audiences themselves recognize these adverse effects and actively propose concrete measures to mitigate them. These include increasing the presence of mental health topics in programming, reducing aggressive and sensationalist content, incorporating mental health professionals into media discourse, and promoting greater diversity in audiovisual offerings. Such findings underscore the urgent need for responsible and ethically guided content production.

Notably, the consistency of the study's conclusions across multiple methodologies, both through content monitoring and questionnaire, strengthens the validity of the findings. While quantitative monitoring revealed a predominance of crime and violence-related news, audience feedback aligned closely, identifying political debates and news reports as the most distressing types of content. Similarly, expert interviews echo audience concerns, highlighting violence and reality television as particularly detrimental to mental well-being. Audience responses confirmed these trends, naming political programming (40.6%) as their greatest source of concern, followed by news (27%) and reality shows (22.2%). Collectively, these insights reveal widespread dissatisfaction with programming that prioritizes conflict over education or cultural enrichment.

The study also reveals that Albanian audiences perceive television content as overly focused on violent incidents, characterized by aggressive discussions and lacking in creativity, educational value, and cultural depth. Many viewers feel that such programming negatively affects their emotional state, with political debates, news broadcasts, and reality shows cited as primary contributors. Furthermore, respondents expressed a strong interest in content that promotes mental health, advocating for a more constructive and empathetic approach in media narratives. This includes featuring mental health professionals, presenting more human-centered stories, and moving away from sensationalism.

The findings suggest that Albanian television exerts a tangible influence on viewers' emotional well-being, and that exposure to violent or low-quality content may contribute to psychological strain. As such, there is a clear and immediate need for reform in television programming, emphasizing educational, entertaining, and mental health-oriented content delivered in a respectful and destigmatized manner.

This is where the responsibility of the media industry becomes evident: to protect the mental health of its audience without compromising engagement or viewer retention. Another key observation is that audiences are increasingly consuming television content via social media platforms rather than traditional remote-controlled viewing. This shift presents both a challenge and an opportunity for broadcasters to adapt their strategies to evolving digital consumption habits.

The study further calls for a reevaluation of editorial policies and a broader cultural shift to elevate public awareness and strengthen mental health support through media. The involvement of mental health professionals and a deeper consideration of audience concerns are essential to building more resilient and psychologically supportive ecosystems. Given the media's powerful role in shaping public perception and behavior, it has the potential to positively influence mental health discourse, promote emotional well-being, and foster informed, reflective communities.

Additionally, the question of media literacy emerges as a critical point of discussion. Enhancing audiences' ability to critically evaluate media content is crucial for safeguarding mental health in this environment.

While this study is grounded in the Albanian context, a country of approximately 2.7 million people, the implications and recommendations extend beyond national borders, inviting broader reflection and dialogue.

-Should the responsibility for improving media literacy lie primarily with the media industry, or should audiences be encouraged to take active steps toward self-education and critical media consumption?

-Should universities, professional associations (e.g., psychologists), and other societal actors be more actively involved in shaping mental health narratives in the media, or should we wait for media industry to initiate change?

-Is it more realistic to aim for a flawless, ethically sound television industry, or should efforts focus on equipping audiences with the tools to selectively consume content that supports, rather than harms, their mental health?

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