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MULTIPLE HOMICIDE AND THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION

In this paper, the author discusses the crime of multiple homicide and public's perception by analyzing mass murder as one of the most serious crimes against life and body. The issue of prevention is not only a matter of criminal law, but also applies to the media that report on crimes. Mass killings are not a new crime, and as such they are criminalized in the Criminal Code, but in relation to reporting on them, new, preventive forms of work should be undertaken. In reporting on mass killings, written and electronic social media should respect a code of ethics that would oblige them to inform the general public about the injured and endangered right to life of individuals. By avoiding the incitement of Amok violence or Werther's syndrome, and by supporting positive examples as prevention, the possibility of further mass murder and violence would be minimized. Only through reporting in accordance with professional standards and ethical rules can adverse effects be avoided.

Keywords: mass killings, copying crimes, prevention, professional reporting.

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Instead of an introduction

Mass murder is considered one of the most serious crimes against life and bodily integrity today, not only because of the number of people killed and injured, but also because of the message to the public that everyone can be a target, to how we try to prevent it. The murder of multiple persons does not qualify as a “new” crime because it has been recognized as such for several decades. In criminal law, it is defined as a criminal offense of aggravated murder. But the fact is that since the 1960s, the media have dealt with this crime much more intensively, reporting on all the details that the victims suffered.

The crime of murder of several persons (aggravated murder), which can also be referred to as mass murder, is a complex and destructive act that occurs as a result of many factors. In cases of mass killings, it seems that the media is largely responsible for learning about models for copying the manner in which a crime is committed. One element that is relevant to the spread of mass murder and other “contagious” behaviors is imitation. Developing different strategies with the idea that they work in such a way as to change the probability of mass killings is the obligation of the competent institutions, but the professional attitude of the media in reporting is certainly the basis for the full implementation of these strategies, in order to prevent the imitation of these crimes, and to minimize the imitation of these crimes. When it comes to crimes against life and limb, copying behaviour fuelled by media coverage is not only related to the murder of multiple persons. The media effect has also been shown in suicides, including mass killings, and may also play a role in other extreme events such as domestic terrorism or racially motivated crimes with lethal consequences.¹

However, we should not read what is not written: the media are not responsible for the crimes that are committed, but with their writings they can influence everyone who is informed through their content. That is why it is important in court proceedings (and not only with the competent regulatory authorities) that professionals recognize the phenomenological forms of Werther’s syndrome or the Papageno effect, and although criminal law comes ultima ratio only after crimes have occurred, court decisions also have a role in general prevention.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5296697/>

Knowledge of the phenomenology of the murder of several persons is therefore especially important for state authorities that monitor the development of the state of crime in society and prosecute perpetrators of criminal offenses *ex officio*. From Werther's syndrome, to the Papageno effect, to the Amok attacks today, we conclude that modern criminal law must accompany both media coverage, including social media postings, and the way in which the public is informed.

The Sorrows of Young Werther (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774) by J.W. von Goethe depicts the torments of the protagonist who, as an adolescent, has to balance his expectations and social conventions, but also his frustration with the unrequited love of the girl Lota, which is why he eventually commits suicide. After the publication of the novel, chroniclers wrote that the novel was occasionally banned, due to literary imitations of behavior and frequent suicides. In this way, the question is formulated as to how literature (art), and today media writing, affects public opinion. In Goethe's time, Werther syndrome was a hypothesis for a correlation between frequent suicides and sensationalist reporting. Imitations are more common if information is given about age, appearance, education, but also motivation.

In contrast to Goethe, *The Magic Flute* (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1791) the great Mozart, through the character of Papageno and three boys who advise him to call the lost person with music, offered solutions to such difficult situations when we are in crisis, through giving constructive solutions. Prevention is possible through the Papageno effect and responsible reporting. In reality, things are not so simple and require individual analyses that would point to possible directions out of the spiral where once violence has begun, it always gives rise to new violence. Media coverage of mass killings mostly speculates about the possible motives of the perpetrators of the crime, but also about other details of the crime that may affect potential new perpetrators. These details include descriptions of the weapons used, the order in which the perpetrator killed the victims, as well as the number of deaths and injuries (Lankford, 2016). According to published data, many mass murderers knew about their predecessors, which they learn about through articles in the media, including online research (Langman, 2018). According to Duwe, multiple murders are crimes where the perpetrators have the most influence on each other, where media reports can inform the perpetrators about the motives and the way they are used in committing aggravated murders (Duwe, 2005).

Posing problems in this way can open a conversation between professionals at all levels, in order to seek solutions in order to minimize the mentioned dangers, with questions about what mass killings are, how to position the media in relation to reporting, whether it is possible to spot and perceive future dangers and ways to get out of them, and more. A similar problem is observed in crimes against sexual freedoms, where the media play a similar role as in mass killings (Pavlović, Paunović, 2020). In search of answers, we have analyzed the reporting of a part of the media on a specific serious murder of several persons, with certain conclusions and suggestions. But, let's start in order.

Determination of the crime of aggravated (mass) murder of more than one person

The right to life, threatened by murder, is considered the most socially dangerous crime in the field of so-called classical crime, and is present in all social structures and various conditions of interpersonal relationships. Given the consequence of endangering the right to life, the criminal legislation has also criminalized the criminal offense of murder, with its manifestations. Regardless of the different legal systems, they all recognize this crime, albeit with different incriminations in the protection of this right. The right to life and its protection applies to those who are born, but we believe that in connection with certain professions, we can also talk about the murder of several persons when it comes to unborn children, as subjects of law (Pavlović, 2022).

The definition of aggravated murder of more than one person in the context of the topic could be defined as an event of targeted gun violence in one or more locations over a 24-hour period with two or more people killed. Incidents such as gang violence or domestic murder do not qualify as mass killings according to most authors (Krouse & Richardsson, 2015). Mass shootings are defined as incidents that result in four or more deaths, while "active" shootings have no minimum (Lankford & Silver 2019; FBI 2008). Some authors, especially in the United States, have dilemmas about how many people must be killed and injured for a crime to qualify as aggravated homicide, out of two or three killed with at least five injured during the attack (Huff-Corzine, McCutcheon & Corzine, et al.

2014).² Terrorists commit serious murders for political gain, and mass murderers have no such motives. A lone wolf terrorist is an individual who commits the murder of multiple people because of a radical ideology that justifies violence (Borum, Fein & Vossekuil, 2012). In the case of aggravated (mass) murders of several persons in schools, we have not encountered a dilemma in the relevant literature that there is a certain number of killed and wounded victims that would be the limit of whether it is an ordinary or aggravated murder (two or more).

Regardless of the number of people killed (multiple persons) or the place where the crime of murder of multiple persons was committed, each of these situations can be determined as a mass murder (Duwe, 2019), without analyzing the individual motives of the perpetrator. For the purposes of this paper, we did not go into the individual motive of the perpetrator. The aim was to analyze the link between media coverage of mass shootings and the contagion effect it can cause to contribute to any future mass shootings. It is clear that the subject of our research and further analysis is neither multiple murders nor serial murders, but exclusively mass murders. Mass murderers commit crimes in a single act, which does not have to be simultaneous, and can last from a few moments to several hours. Mass killings include aggravated killings of multiple persons committed by shooting or using other firearms or cold weapons in an open or enclosed space. These murders take place through the so-called Amok attacks, as a complex social phenomenon of endangering security that requires early recognition as the only possible form of prevention of such violence (Vulević, 2019).

In some countries, such as the U.S. and Canada, the most talked about are mass shootings in schools where one student kills other students, teachers and support staff. But mass killings are also carried out in other places, such as parks, train stations, streets, and more, by other perpetrators. According to some authors, this type of perpetrator and form of aggravated murder is not so prevalent in theoretical work and research, because the perpetrators are generally found at or near the scene of the crime, dead or alive and ready to surrender, while this is generally not the case with multiple or serial killers (Dietz, 1996).³

²<https://www.euronews.rs/svet/fokus/78997/rast-broja-masovnih-ubistava-jedan-od-najalarmantnijih-trendova-u-sad-svi-povezani-s-desnicarskim-ekstremizmom/vest>

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9004327/>

According to the Criminal Code in Serbia,⁴ such a detailed elaboration of aggravated murder is not carried out, but in Chapter 13 - Criminal Offenses Against Life and Body, the criminal offense of murder and aggravated murder is criminalized. Unlawful, conscious and intentional deprivation of life of another person, as an unlawful act, is defined in the Criminal Code in Article 113 with a penalty of imprisonment from five to fifteen years. Article 114 (1) of the Criminal Code defines aggravated murder in several forms. In this article, the legislator separately, separately from the so-called ordinary murder, prescribes more serious, qualified forms of murder, which it calls aggravated murders. All forms of aggravated murder have basic features, common to every murder, i.e. unlawful deprivation of the life of another person, but more serious forms are accompanied by a special, qualifying circumstance that makes it more serious and socially dangerous than ordinary murder. The penalty for the perpetrator of the crime is aggravated murder, imprisonment of at least ten years or life imprisonment.⁵

It is clear that the consequences of the criminal offense of aggravated murder (murder of a higher person) are of such a nature that they require really increased attention in reporting, and in this context, more attention should be paid to this phenomenon in the time ahead, through the elaboration of existing laws and the creation of procedures for the future.

⁴ “Službeni glasnik RS”, br. 85 od 6. oktobra 2005, 88 od 14. oktobra 2005 - ispravka, 107 od 2. decembra 2005 - ispravka, 72 od 3. septembra 2009, 111 od 29. decembra 2009, 121 od 24. decembra 2012, 104 od 27. novembra 2013, 108 od 10. oktobra 2014, 94 od 24. novembra 2016, 35 od 21. maja 2019.

⁵ “Službeni glasnik RS”, br. 85 od 6. oktobra 2005, 88 od 14. oktobra 2005 - ispravka, 107 od 2. decembra 2005 - ispravka, 72 od 3. septembra 2009, 111 od 29. decembra 2009, 121 od 24. decembra 2012, 104 od 27. novembra 2013, 108 od 10. oktobra 2014, 94 od 24. novembra 2016, 35 od 21. maja 2019.

Here are a few examples and a few questions about it

Although in this paper we deal with the topic of reporting on mass killings, due to the way of detecting the perpetrators of crimes and the event itself, we will give an example of post festum writing. In 2003, Polish writer Christian Bala described the murder of a Polish businessman (2000) whose body was found in Wroclaw in the Oder River, Poland. Bala was sentenced to 25 years in prison for the crime of murder. In his defense before the court, he said that in his book he only described the murder that was reported in the Polish press, and that it was about literary freedom. However, the details in the book were known only to the police and the perpetrator of the murder, so during the court proceedings according to the court decision, Bala was held accountable for this crime.

The book itself could not be used as evidence, but a convicting decision could be made through the evidence gathered. Although more than five years passed from the murder to the trial, the question is how much the analysis of the content could have led to this trial even before it was actually revealed. During the trial itself, the media very carefully reported on the event itself, with full professionalism and without sensationalism. In Poland itself, after this trial, the content of the book and the media reports, there was no similarly committed crime of murder. The effect of the imitation in this case was not even noticed.

In another case, which does not resemble the one described in the novel *Amok*, but is about the (mass) murder of several people committed in May 2023 in our country (Republic of Serbia), the media reported in accordance with their editorial policies. This is a court proceeding that has not yet been completed, so we will not write about the process itself, but we would define the problem that may exist in such situations.

According to Meindl and Ivy, the media can play a significant role in promoting what is called the copying effect, whereby individuals can be inspired by media coverage to carry out their own attacks. This especially, if detailed descriptions of events and perpetrators are given, images and videos that can be understood as sensationalist reporting. (Meindl & Ivy, 2017). Even the framework of writing about the murder of multiple faces can be described as a sensation. To reduce the effect of contagion, Meindl and Ivy (2017) suggest that the media should avoid over-reporting mass shootings, and instead focus on reporting

the facts of the event without sensationalizing the violence or the perpetrator. Taking a proactive role in promoting the right to life and bodily integrity, emphasizing the social and environmental factors that contribute to mass shootings, and expressing views that can reduce the risk of future events, we come to professional reporting.

How successful we were in this, and the media were invited to such reporting by the highest state and political leadership in the very days when this crime was committed, but also how much we will encounter professional reports in the future, will be shown by the prevention of such and similar crimes, so that they will never happen again.

Analysis of media coverage of mass murder in early May 2023 in Serbia (event of May 5 - research)

We followed the printed editions of the daily newspapers Politika, Večernje novosti, Dnevnik and Kurir from 06.05.2023 to 14.06.2023, which is a period of 40 days. The questions of how sensationalist the newspaper reports (because we did not follow other media, from the internet portals onwards) were or were not sensational, and whether journalists could have done their job better, are rhetorical in nature. Namely, the task of the media is to report on violence and crime, in this case on an event with incalculable consequences for us as a society, because it is really rare for such serious murders to happen. The defendant for this crime, U.B., was charged with killing nine people, two of whom were minors, on May 4, 2023, in the villages of Malo Orašje near Smederevo and Dubon near Mladenovac, by firing an automatic rifle and a pistol, and attempting to take the lives of another 20 people, of whom he wounded 12 of them.⁶

Reporting on such a crime is fraught with challenges not to cross the line that separates the socially acceptable and the socially unacceptable. In some previous works, we mostly encountered situations where the victims' rights to reverence for them were violated, or the presumption of innocence of the defendants, in this case it was a completely different topic. Namely, it was necessary to strike a balance between objective reporting and fighting possible panic. At the same

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/srbija-68903381>

time, it was necessary to take into account whether we could show an image that would not create the effect of infection or possible copying by some new, potential perpetrators.

The unit of quantitative analysis of the research was the texts in the hard copy editions of the daily press, which had as their theme the reporting on the mass murder in the villages of Malo Orašje and Dubona, whether it was written about the suspect or the victims. During the analysis of the content, we paid special attention to the number of articles, places or sections where they were published, the number of days, published photographs, the identity of the victims and perpetrators, authorized texts or unsigned, state measures, titles of articles.

All analysed data were accompanied by qualitative analysis.

Table No 1

	Daily news							
	Politika		Dnevnik		Večernje novosti		Kurir	
40 days 104 articles	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Total number of articles	17	16	13	13	32	31	42	40
Number of days in which articles were published	13	32	10	25	21	52	25	62
Number of days with title on the front page	3	23	5	50	10	48	13	52
Number of days with articles accompanied by a photo	9	69	7	70	19	90	25	100

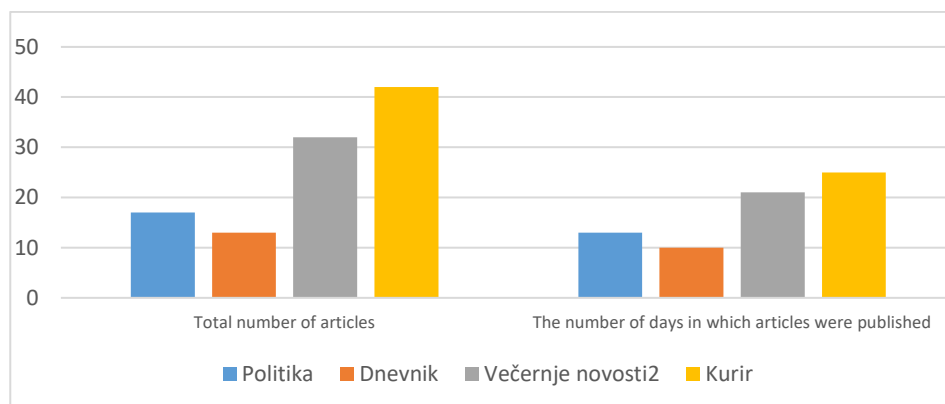
A total of 104 articles related to this event were published in all four daily newspapers during this period. The largest number, as many as 42, was published in Kurir (40%), 32 in Večernje novosti (31%), 17 in Politika (16%), and only 13 articles in Dnevnik (13%).

In Politika, articles were published in editions in 13 days out of 40 days (32%), in Dnevnik in 10 days (25%), while Večernje novosti and Kurir published articles related to this topic in 21 days out of 40 days (52%), and in 25 days (62%), respectively.

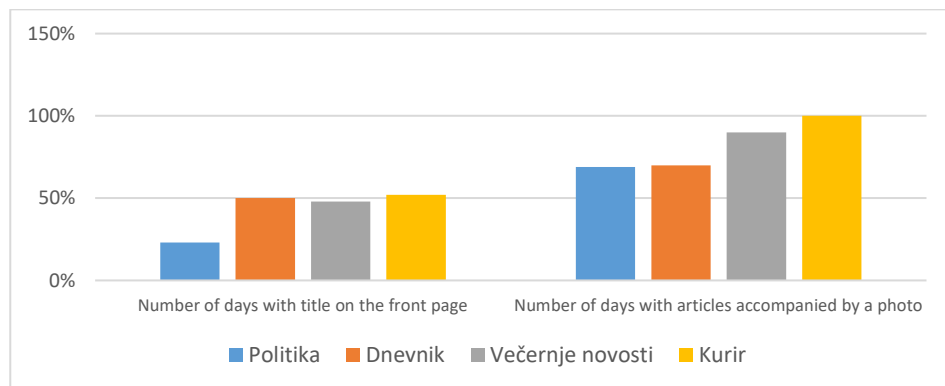
In Dnevnik, in 5 out of those 10 days, the articles were accompanied by the headline on the front page, in Večernje novosti in 10 out of 21 days, and in Kurir in 13 out of 25 days, which is about half of the day when the articles were published. Only in Politika did they follow the text parts with highlighting on the front page of their written editions in much fewer cases - 3 times out of 13 days (23%).

Photographs accompanied articles in all four daily newspapers, of which, in Kurir, all articles were illustrated with photographs - 100%, and in Večernje novosti almost all - only in 2 days there were no photos with the text - 90%. In Politika, a slightly smaller number of days was with a photo - 69%, and in Dnevnik this number was similar and amounts to 70%.

Grafics No 1



Grafics No 2



Reports about this event have been published in various sections. The largest number of articles in all newspapers were published in the main columns, especially in the first 10 days after the event. Later, the articles, according to their content, were arranged in standard rubrics for the analysis of similar events.

In Politika, the largest number of articles, 9, were published in the Chronicle section. In the sections Events of the day and Society, 6 and 2 articles were published.

In Dnevnik, the largest number of articles was also published in the section Current - 6, in Politika and Judicial 3 and 4 articles each. Vecernje Novosti has formed a column Massacres in Serbia and 16 articles have been published in it, and 9 articles in the Chronicle section. In the sections Actual, Events and Society there are a smaller number of articles, 5, 1 and 1.

In Kurir, the largest number of articles was published in the Topic of the Day section - 25, and in the Chronicle 14 articles.

Table No 2

	Daily news							
	Politika		Dnevnik		Večernje novosti		Kurir	
Categories	No of articles	%		%		%		%
Events of the day	6	35						
Current			6	46				
Massacres in Serbia					16	50		
Topic of the day							28	67
Society	2	12			1	3		
Chronicle	9	53			9	28	14	33
Policy			3	23				
Court			4	31				
News					5	16		
Events					1	3		
Total number of articles	17		13		32		42	

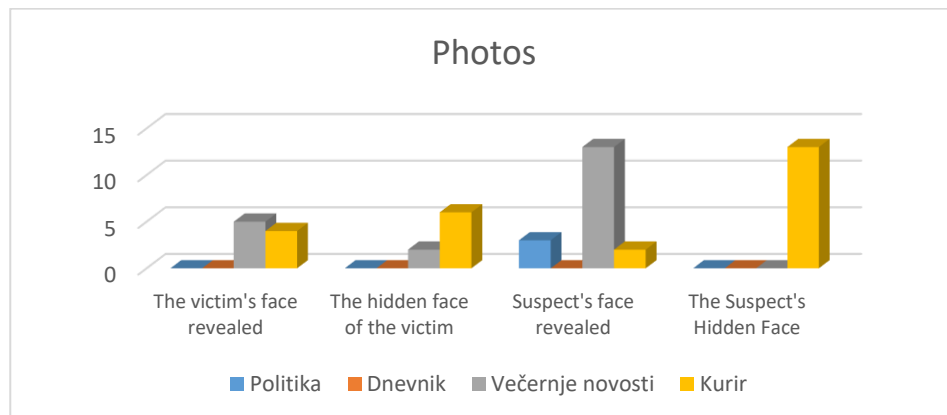
Appreciating the writings through the principle of privacy and protection of the integrity of the subjects about whom it was written, there was not a single article with a photo of the victim in any form in the monitored newspapers Politika and Dnevnik. On the other hand, the photographs of the killer were published in Politika three times with his face uncovered, while in Dnevnik it was not published even once.

On the other hand, in the Evening News, a photo of the killer was given 13 times, always with his face uncovered. Photographs of the victims were published 7 times, 5 times with blurred faces of underage victims and 2 times with uncovered faces. In 10 of its daily editions, Kurir published photographs of the victims, 6 times with their faces hidden, and in the remaining 4 cases, the photos of adult victims or wounded persons were fully uncovered. Photographs of the killer were published in almost all articles (23 out of 25 published), but almost always (21 out of 23) in a blurred edition.

Table No 3

	Daily news			
	Politika	Dnevnik	Večernje novosti	Kurir
Number of articles with a photo of the victim	0	0	7	10
Number of articles with the victim's face revealed	0	0	5	4
Number of articles with the victim's face hidden	0	0	2	6
Number of articles with a photo of the killer	3	0	13	23
Number of articles with the face of the killer revealed	3	0	13	2
The Hidden Face of the Killer	0	0	0	21

Grafics No 3



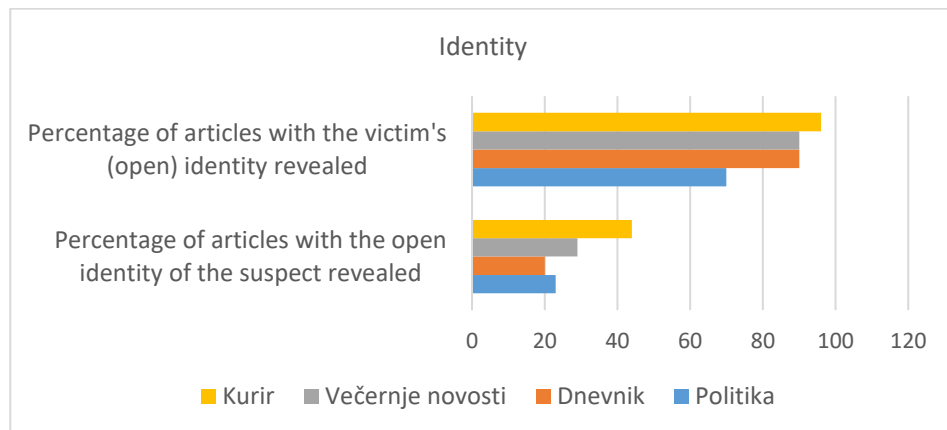
In relation to the data on victims, in the monitored period, the most publications with the identity of the victim, either in the form of initials or full name and surname, were in Kurir 44%, followed by Večernje novosti (29%), in Politika (23%), and the least in Dnevnik (20%).

Information about the identity of the killer was not revealed with his full name and surname, only in the daily newspaper Kurir, but the initials “U.B.” were always used. On the other hand, in the Evening News, the full name and surname of the killer are always listed. The full identity of the killer (either through his initials or full name and surname) was revealed 24 times in Kurir, 19 times in Vecernje Novosti, and 9 times in Politika and Dnevnik.

Table No 4

	Daily news							
	Politika		Dnevnik		Večernje novosti		Kurir	
Number of days with articles:	Broj	%	Broj	%	Broj	%	Broj	%
With the victim’s initials	3	23	1	10	0	0	11	44
With the victim’s identity revealed	0	0	1	10	6	29	0	0
With the initials of the murderer.	1	8	8	80	0	0	24	96
With the identity of the killer revealed.	8	62	1	10	19	90	0	0

Grafics No 4



The texts that were published were mostly original, author's texts, directly related to the event itself. Quotes from statements of various personalities, information from officials, testimonies were published.

Most of the articles are signed with the journalist's initials or full name. In Večernje novosti (19) and Kurir (22) there was approximately the same number of signed texts (either with the full name or initials or descriptively - Ekipa Kurira), which represented the majority in both newspapers. There was not a single article in Politika without some of the characteristics of a journalist. On the other hand, most of the articles were published in the Diary with no indication of who wrote them.

Table No 5

Number of days with articles where it is given:	Daily news			
	Politika	Dnevnik	Večernje novosti	Kurir
Identity of the journalist by full name / surname	6	1	18	10
identity of the journalist with initials / descriptive	7	5	1	12
The identity of the journalist has not been disclosed	0	4	2	3

From the titles of all the analyzed texts, it is obvious that most of them were with the connotation of conveying post-festum information about the event in question - Table 6, while the other part of the texts was followed by titles that pointed to the tragedy and shocking nature of the event itself - Table 7.

A number of articles present the measures of the state as a reaction to the event in question, and so are the titles that accompany them - Table 8.

Table No 6

	Titles of articles with the transmission of information
POLITIKA	<p>“He killed 8 people and wounded 14 with an automatic rifle.” “Injured in the crime near Mladenovac taken care of in three hospitals” “Uroš Blažić confessed to the murders in Dubona and Mali Orašje” “The last farewell of the victims in Belgrade and Mali Orašje” “Arrest of the father of an eight-time murderer” “A man from Mladenovac was taken to a prison hospital.” “The suspect’s uncle has been arrested.” “A mass murderer from Mladenovac has been detained extended” “A taxi driver who was a hostage to Uroš Blažić was interrogated”</p>
DNEVNIK	<p>“He killed eight people, wounded 14.” “The father of the suspect in the massacre” has been arrested. “The uncle of a mass murderer from Mladenovac has also been arrested.” “She lied that she was pregnant”, “Detention of the brother of a mass murderer from Mladenovac”</p>
VEČERNJE NOVOSTI	<p>“He shot them all while they were lying down”, “The monster has no regrets” “The victim was first searched for in the center of Mali Orašje” “There is still no rifle with which Uroš killed one by one” “Arsenal hid in the attic”, “Detention of the father of the murderer from Dubona” “The monster was not drunk or drugged”, “The mass murderer had no help” “Pregnant woman and taxi driver about the night of hell”, “We will hear as many as 50 witnesses” “She lied to the killer that she was pregnant and threatened them with bombs.” “Fathers testified about the tragic night”, “And the relative of the killer had a weapon”</p>

KURIR	<p>“I confessed to the crime, I fired a Kalashnikov because I wanted to scare the locals!”</p> <p>“Three funerals, brother and sister will rest together, and a mutual friend by their side.”</p> <p>“The background of the crime, I was not inspired by a 13-year-old boy from Vračar”</p> <p>“A young man is going to be watching.”</p> <p>“The father of the mass murderer from Dubona has denied his guilt.”</p> <p>“Miraculously, she survived, you need 50,000 euros for an artificial arm!”</p> <p>“A few minutes before the massacre, we enjoyed hanging out by the fire!”</p> <p>“In remembrance, the locals plan to erect a memorial plaque to the murdered at the site of the massacre.”</p> <p>“A mass murderer has been taken to the U.S. for observation.”</p> <p>“The killer’s uncle has been arrested, witnesses of the massacre are being questioned.”</p> <p>“A mass murderer from Mladenovac and the father of a boy killer from Vračar under the same roof”</p> <p>“Wise and brave, the confession of a woman who was kidnapped by a monster from Mladenovac”</p>
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Table No 7

	Titles of articles emphasizing the tragedy of the event
POLITIKA	<p>“Shock after yet another mass shooting.”</p> <p>“Dad, he’s coming, I’m dying”, “Fear and silence rule the villages”</p>
DNEVNIK	<p>“Serbia Mourns: Ten Funerals in a Day”, “The Only Real Punishment Is the Most Severe”</p> <p>“I’m praying for their lives and a speedy recovery.”</p>
VEČERNJE NOVOSTI	<p>“The face of evil”, “I lost both eyes, I’m no longer a mother”</p> <p>“We Will Not Prepare Dalibor Wedding”, “Black Banners Instead of St. George’s Wreaths”</p> <p>“Prayer for our living wounds”, “No one wakes us up from this death”</p> <p>“The only real punishment is the one that is the most severe”, “Taxi driver still in fear”</p> <p>“Litija has never been more painful, prayer has never been sadder”</p> <p>“And we were killed, our children”</p>
KURIR	<p>“Bloody March”, “Heroic Death”, “Shrouded in Black”</p> <p>“It was terrible, four young people died instantly”</p> <p>“Gruesome testimony”, “And the killer from Mladenovac tortured animals”</p> <p>“He got into a taxi and held a bomb next to my head.”</p> <p>“A Parent’s Confession, He Killed Us Alive”</p>

Table No 8

	Titles of articles on state measures
POLITIKA	“We will disarm Serbia to save our children”
DNEVNIK	“Moratorium on the issuance of firearms licenses” “We will completely disarm Serbia”
VEČERNJE NOVOSTI	“Moratorium on Gun Licenses”
KURIR	“More than 3,000 long and short pipes handed over”

Based on the analysis of the published articles, we can conclude that the media’s interest in reporting on this event has declined sharply after a little more than 5 weeks from the event itself. The newspaper articles themselves were of the usual form and content that belongs to each of the monitored daily newspapers, which viewed this event in the light of not only the criminal offense of murder, but also the activities that almost immediately began to be carried out by the state apparatus as one of the prevention measures. Time ahead will show how well the media have actually done their job, but at the same time it gives them the opportunity to make positive strides in the next round of writing about this event, following the trial of the accused for this aggravated murder. Finally, when the final verdict comes, the media should speak out again, and all those who published articles about the event itself, for the sake of justice and truth according to the principle of respect for the right to life (Pavlović et Paunović, 2021).

Conclusion

Media coverage of the crime of killing more than one person (mass murder) can positively or negatively affect the behavior of the public and individuals. Therefore, responsible reporting on this issue is something that involves publishing only verified information necessary to clarify the broader context of the circumstances in which the mass murder took place. The demonstrated negative effects of contagion or imitation may pose a danger if the reporting encourages hopelessness, violence, and imitation.

The contagious effect that occurs after a mass murder can trigger a whole avalanche of events that have the idea of imitating that first event. That is why the role of the public, the role of the media in dealing with the consequences of the tragedy, is immeasurable, and requires exceptional professionalism, and not a sensationalist approach. In this way, the media can motivate to another, new criminal offense with a similar way of execution, through arming and provoking conflicts. On the other hand, responsible and professional reporting can mitigate harm, increase immunity in the community to dire consequences, and work on the feeling that other members of society are safe and secure. Thus, proper reporting can not only prevent the occurrence of what we will conditionally call imitations of mass murder (Werther syndrome), but it can also obtain a positive result in the prevention of such crimes against life and body (the Papageno effect).

A review of the relevant literature concludes that there is no universal answer to what it is that would be correct reporting on the cause of mass killings. Namely, it is difficult to say which approach would be good, but the fact is that several of them should be built, and this means that not only the reaction of state authorities is written, but also that the media themselves encourage changes in thinking. In difficult situations, journalists can help by sending serious messages, messages of positive examples. General formulations can help to understand the mass murder itself, without constantly holding a specific event. Legal professionals themselves should not comment on a specific event.

The sources of information should be as original and statistically correct as possible, without photos of the victims, but also of the defendant. News about

such a serious crime should not be published on the front pages, without unnecessary details, with an emphasis on information on forms of assistance and contacts of the competent institutions for this.

To conclude, that the observed dailies mostly reported in the way they usually do in cases of murders, but that we really very rarely encounter this number of victims, and that of mass murder. Reporting in accordance with the rules of the profession also implies a step for the better, i.e. media reporting that would lead to better prevention, without too violent details about the committed act, citing affirmative examples, from sports to culture. Only in this way can the influence of the public have its full meaning in a positive sense. At the same time, this paper aims to invite the professional and general public, in order to open a discussion on the existing incrimination and the reaction of criminal law to mass killings, respecting the principle of legality in its entirety.

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