

THE EFFECTS OF SMALL ARMS POSITIVE MEDIA COVERAGE ON LEBANESE  
YOUTH

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A Thesis  
presented to  
the Faculty of Humanities  
at Notre Dame University-Louaize

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Media Studies: Television Management & Production

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by  
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APRIL 2022

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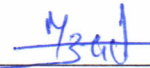
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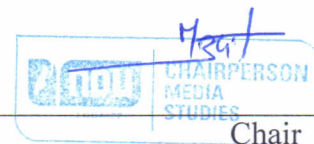
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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the effects of the small arms' positive portrayals in the Lebanese news on youth.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods has been adopted to understand the correlation between violence in Lebanese news and youth behavior.

On the quantitative level, a survey was carried out with Lebanese youth who watch frequently and less frequently the Lebanese news. 102 responses were received and were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Moreover, a qualitative analysis has been conducted with four interviewees with an extensive experience in the field of NGOs, peace building, arms control, conflict resolution, political science, reporting, and psychology. The interviews were recorded via Zoom and transcribed.

The findings showed that heavy exposure to violence and small arms in Lebanese news leads to aggressive behavior among youth. It also showed that the Lebanese and Arab culture accepts widely the use of small arms within its culture and perceive it as a sign of strength rather than a weakness.

The limitations of this study consist mainly of the snowball sampling technique which limits the validity of the results especially that the number of respondents was only 102 participants.

*Keywords:* Small Arms, Media, Violence, Lebanese news, Youth, Exposure

## **Introduction**

Small arms might refer to the concepts of conflict, violence and probably war. While the word “Media” often implies the notion of the “fourth power”. This proves how the media in general have control over its audiences. Some people assume that the media portray certain things through direct news and perhaps “subliminal messages” that are probably absorbed by our minds without even realizing it thus shaping our perceptions (Harley, n.d.).

One of Lebanon’s major issues today is sectarianism in every single aspect, manifesting itself on all the different levels in society, including the media’s sector (Cochrane, 2007). Lebanon’s different channels are politically and religiously affiliated. The issues in Lebanese media are numerous to a high extent, from subjectivity to misleading stories, yellow journalism, sectarian incitements, hate speech and so on (Maharat, 2016).

Sectarian conflicts and violence are ignited by the media (Cochrane, 2007). Different studies conducted by “Small Arms Survey”, an international research company, show that “Small arms and light weapons are responsible for the majority of direct conflict deaths” (Parker; Wilson, 2016). Have we ever noticed how much the media in Lebanon depict in their reports and news excessively the issue of “small arms”? How many times have we heard Lebanese people saying that a small arm is a “need” for everyone in order to ensure one’s own life protection? Are small arms in the media reflecting a reality we are living already? Have we ever asked ourselves

about the positive portrayals of small arms in the Lebanese media and the impact of this on people's perceptions?

Using the cultivation theory, this paper will analyze, the effects of the positive depictions of small arms usage in Lebanese media on the receivers.



## **Literature Review**

This review of literature will first identify the definition of small arms. It will then discuss the arms control processes in the Middle East, the portrayals of arms in Lebanese media and finally the effects of media violence on people.

### **The Definition of Small Arms**

According to the United Nations (2005), the exact definition of small arms and light weapons is “Any portable lethal weapon that expel or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive, excluding antique small arms and light weapons or their replicas”.

Small arms are generally guns made for personal usage. They include revolvers, inter alia, self-loading pistols, sub-machine guns, carbines and rifles, light machine guns and assault rifles (United Nations, 2005).

However, “light weapons” are generally weapons that are used by a crew of two or three people, even though they may be used by one individual. For example: heavy machine guns, inter alia, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, portable anti-tank guns and others... (United Nations, 2005).

According to Small Arms Survey, which is an independent international research project in the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, a worldwide accepted definition of a 'small arm' or of a 'light weapon' does not exist. The Small Arms Survey largely adopts the proposal done by the 1997 UN Panel of Governmental Expert, where small arms are considered rifles and carbines, revolvers and self-loading pistols, sub-machine guns and

light machine guns, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket, assault rifles. Light weapons are hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, heavy machine guns, portable anti-aircraft guns, recoilless rifles, portable anti-tank guns, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems and mortars of calibers of less than 100 mm (Parker; Wilson, 2016).

### **Arms Control Processes in the Middle East**

Arms control processes in the Middle East should be highlighted in order to define where the Middle East, and specifically Lebanon, stand in terms of holding small arms.

For Bilal Y. Saab in 2013, who is an expert on Middle East security and politics with a particular focus on the Levant and the Gulf; arms control in the Middle East is a hard process that will take years and generations in order to be achieved, because of the ongoing non-resolvable religious, ethnic, and territorial conflicts in the Middle East. As long as there is an Arab-Israeli conflict in the region, it's quite impossible to achieve any progress in terms of arms control in the region. Many international attempts have been directed towards implementing Control Arms policies within the Arab governments, however, these attempts were pointless (Saab, 2013).

Gamal M. Selim (a Consultant in the Arab institute of Military Production); showed in 2013 the different Western plans and strategies to control arms in the Middle East in the Post-Cold War Era, as well as constraints and motivations in the light of the Arab Spring resulting in ramification on the Western Control Arms Plan. He posited that arms control in the Middle East isn't evolving, despite all the Western plans, because of the non-ending Arab Israeli conflict, Arab Spring, possibility for military act by Israel and the US against Iran to prevent its nuclear program and finally the national sovereignty and power of regional powers in the Middle East

requiring a strong security and military defense armament. Therefore, arms control seems impossible at the moment.

After the Arab Spring<sup>1</sup> protests, governments in the Middle East responded to the revolutions by using many types of weaponry against the masses, including shotguns, tear gas, firearms, water cannons, ammunition, rubber bullets, Grad rockets, mortars. In Syria for example, Amnesty International stated that the government used heavy weaponry as well as small arms on civilians in order to crush the revolution (Amnesty International, 2011).

In response to the mass violations, inhuman abuses and human rights violations committed by governments of the Middle East in the uprisings of the Arab Spring and in response to the civilian protests against the regimes, Amnesty International called for the stopping of the export/import and international transfer of arms (the trade and government-to-government supplies and aid), to the internal security forces of Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen, and for the imposition of arms embargoes on Libya and Syria, in order to ensure that no further weaponry and technical support from states are supplied, since this will create a higher risk of violation of human rights (Amnesty International, 2011).

### **The Depictions of Arms in Lebanese Media**

In an interview with Nabil Dajani, the Professor of Communication at the American University of Beirut, he stated that the Lebanese media were inflaming sectarianism, but believed that the media shouldn't be blamed solely, since Lebanese politicians control the media. The blame should also be directed to the Lebanese government since it allowed such reinforcement of sectarianism in media images, news, and videos (Cochrane, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> Arab Spring: A concept signifying the multiple and systematic uprisings and revolutions in the Arab world against the authorities, which led to violence and civil wars in the Arab territories (Abdel Salam, 2015).

Examples of depictions of small arms in Lebanese media can be explored through the news bulletins of Lebanese TV channels: For instance, the framing of the death of previous Yemeni president Ali Abdallah Saleh was interpreted differently by each channel. On Future TV, violent videos were shown without censorship of his dead body and a subjective bias interpretation was given to the audience saying that the Houthis are criminals trained by Iran (Future TV, 2017). On Al Manar TV, an interpretation for the case according to their own position was given as well with too much poetry promoting violence and sectarian incitement and less objective news in the intro while using the title of “Project of conspiracy and sedition” and showing a video of Houthis saying that there is a conspiracy from KSA by ISIS in order to spread chaos in Yemen (Al Manar, 2017).

Media in Lebanon reflect the sectarian Lebanese political system. Future Television, for example, is a Sunni channel, LBCI belongs to Christian Maronites, Al Manar belongs to the Shia political party Hezbollah and NBN is backed by the head of the Amal party Nabih Berri.

For example, by watching either Future or Al Manar channels, we can directly understand their political agenda. Both rely enormously on violence, including the use of small arms in their news (Cochrane, 2007). On Al Manar, promo clips with violent scenes containing the use of small arms are broadcast almost daily showing “martyrs” shot with small arms from the July War against Israel in order to show Hezbollah’s military power and capacities, also music videos that focuses on Southern Lebanon, supporting the Lebanese army and always focusing on Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah (Cochrane, 2007).

Al Manar’s framing of the news clearly reflect its political position and agenda, by using in certain cases the portrayals of small arms in order to give extra attention to cases in South Lebanon and Beqaa (Shiite areas), Syria, Palestine and Iran (Cochrane, 2007).

On Future TV, clips and promos tackling the Rafik Hariri's legacy are shown on a regular weekly timing along with videos promoting and favoring the March 14th movement, through using violent scenes including the use of small arms (Cochrane, 2007).

A study conducted by Maharat Foundation in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program -UNDP's "Strengthening Civil Peace in Lebanon" for 2015 studied violence in Lebanese media and its consequences on the social, political, and educational level (Maharat, 2016).

According to this study, Articles 2, 4 and 11 of the Journalists Pact of UNDP signed by Lebanese media institutions, stipulate the following:

Article 2: "Journalists shall commit to strengthen national unity and coexistence, respect religions, refrain from instigating sectarian or confessional strife, and reject violent disobedience movements, crime and abasement."

Article 4: "The Lebanese media shall act with professionalism and social responsibility when broadcasting a live coverage of events, violent scenes, or the immediate reaction and behavior of journalists that may influence the public opinion."

Article 11: "Journalists shall regulate the tone used in newspapers editorials, TV and radio breaking news, in addition to talk shows of the audio-visual media, in compliance with the principles and basics of journalism. Journalists shall also refrain from spreading a spirit of violence and strife." (Maharat, 2016).

The study found that the highest percentage of violent images is related to political and war events which constitutes 86% in Lebanese newspapers.

As for TV content, the study showed that violence is a main component of the Lebanese journalistic material, where fear is the main factor used (Maharat, 2016).

The high rates of war-related violent images and scenes are related to the Lebanese reality: the articles of the Journalists Pact signed by Lebanese institutions are clearly violated: the Literature review till now shows that the Lebanese media institutions rely to a high extent on showing violent images that include uses of small arms, therefore influencing the public opinion through provoking sectarian incitement, and finally threatening coexistence and disrespecting other religions and sects indirectly.

Other images pertaining to small arms' usage can also be found in Lebanese series, such as "Al Hayba" series that was the most popular among the Lebanese audience, generating very high ratings. In this first part, the series talks about a Lebanese lady who lived in Canada previously. After the death of her husband, she came to Lebanon to pick up her child from the village of "Al Hayba" on the Lebanese Syrian borders who was left with his uncle. The uncle of the child named "Jabal" (a leader of a mafia and arms-dealer) refused to let her take her son, however offered her the deal of marrying him to stay with her son. She had to accept the deal. Throughout the series, the Lebanese Canadian lady falls in love with the mafia leader "Jabal". Many of the Lebanese audience admired the personality of the violent mafia leader and arms-dealer "Jabal", some of them even took his character as an idol for "manhood", therefore reflecting our Lebanese and media perceptions of manhood (MTV Alive, 2017).

### **The Effects of Media Violence on Receivers**

Media violence can be compared to nutritional health issues where its reduction is as difficult as a diet habit change. Prevention should be used for children, since repeated heavy exposure will lead some children to develop aggressive beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, behavior scripts and desensitization. Because of the systematic exposure to media violence, individuals may become more accepting indirectly to violent situations, where violence

may seem as more common and tolerable, therefore increasing the individual's aggressive thoughts in his daily life (Gentile, 2003).

A research that was done on the influence of media violence on youth by the department of psychology in Iowa State University, showed that violent television and movies, video games and music increases the likelihood and probability of aggressive attitudes and violent behavior in both short-term and long-term contexts (Anderson, 2003).

Short-term exposure to media violence raises the probability of physical and verbal aggressive behavior, thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. Recent big-scale longitudinal studies provided evidence that systematic and frequent exposure to violent media in early childhood is linked with future aggression in life, including assaults and spouse violent abuse (Anderson, 2003).

Susan Moeller demystified in her book "Compassion Fatigue" the myths and symbols in American news, reporting and TV, which were sending the "Americanization" homogenized messages to the audiences, through criticizing the American journalism, press and broadcasting for the foreign news that are showing famine, diseases, and inhuman massacres, leading the American population to believe that they are actually happy with their so-called "democracy" and respect for human rights (Moeller, 1994).

The topic of small arms framing in Lebanese media is a case of "media violence" having its effects on the audience as well. The use of "Small Arms and Light Weapons" in the Middle East is seen as a "natural" habit and "Control Arms" processes are seen as difficult, especially after the Arab uprisings, ongoing regional and local conflicts including sectarianism and post-war effects in Lebanon. Small arms are considered as deadly weapons indulging violence and

chaos in societies and their portrayals in Lebanese media are present to a high extent. This paper will explore the effects of these positive depictions on the Lebanese audience.



### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory that will be used to answer the research questions is the cultivation theory, since it implies that the media cultivates perceptions. Therefore, throughout exposure, people will view the world as being similar to the television world (Shrum, 2017). Since media hold the power to normalize the use of small arms in the Lebanese society most of the time, the Lebanese people will perceive this usage as reflective of their lives

Messages we receive from mass media are full of words, images, sounds, colors, gestures/signs, and many other forms of expression that we understand according to our own way of perceiving the world. People usually respond to situations broadcast in the news based on their own perception of reality rather than the reality (Shrum, 2017).

According to Gerbner, three types of stories are intensely shown on television in order to form a society's culture: The first type is "how things work", which are imaginary stories that expose the unseen dynamic forces of people's lives. The second one is "how things are", which are reality stories, including the news, therefore confirming the dreams, aspirations, and regulations of a specific society. The third one is "what to do", which are stories that are told in order to reflect the good choices that should be made to conserve a society's values, culture and religion (Mosharafa, 2015).

Gerbner confirms that the cultivation theory is based on a form of learning that will be the result of a repeated and accumulated exposure to television, therefore, creating a mental thus rational image in the individual's mind, related to the society's values, norms, characteristics, and the different standards that are adopted by social groups, classes, and people (Mosharafa, 2015).

According to Gerbner, the founder of the cultivation theory, television viewers are divided into three types: the heavy viewers, who spend time watching TV more than four hours a day, the medium viewers, who spend time watching TV between two to four hours a day, and the light viewers, those who spend watching TV less than two hours a day (Potter, 2014).

The “cultivation theory” will be used as a framework for this study. The way Lebanese people perceive violence and in particular the use of small arms in media can be highly related to their own cultural expectations in terms of seeking their political and confessional interests. In fact, the civil war “desensitized” the Lebanese on this matter. Moreover, the media cultivate positive perceptions of people regarding small arms in Lebanese media.

An example of a previous research using the cultivation theory related to media violence would be an investigation that explored the effects of the television news coverage of the events of 9/11 attacks on people outside the US, where the results suggested that viewing the attacks on news generated negative emotions towards Islam, as well as bad relationships with Islamic friends (Lett, DiPietro, Johnson, 2009).

Looking at the topic from this lens would help gain more knowledge and understand the effects on the Lebanese generated by the positive portrayals of small arms in Lebanese media.

## Methodology

This section details the different methods used in the frame of this study. The thesis will adopt a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods

### Quantitative Method

A Quantitative method's main objective is to emphasize statistical or numerical analysis of information collected in an objective way through questionnaires, polls, surveys, and computation (Babbie, 2022). The main goal would be to generalize numerical data across a certain group of people or population based on a sample that will explain a particular research question or hypothesis (Babbie, 2022), which will allow researchers to understand behaviors, attitudes, and perspectives in a quantitative. In this study, the quantitative data will allow the researcher to answer the research questions and hypotheses.

As a procedure, the data will be collected through the use of survey method. A questionnaire is defined as an instrument of survey, which is a form including a series of questions designed to elicit specific answers in order to answer a research question or validate a hypothesis (Volchok, 2015). The data will be collected through snowball sampling throughout a link on Google Forms that will be sent to 102 participants from my own contact list, who will be asked to submit the questionnaire for my project. After having collected the 102 questionnaire answers, the results will be imported on Excel, then computed into SPSS. The results will be assigned numerical values, which will allow us to check for the reliability of results, and statistical tests will be created in order to analyze the results of each of the hypotheses.

The population consists of Lebanese youth males and females aged between 18 and 30 and living in the districts of Beirut, Keserwan, Mount Lebanon, Baalbek, North

Governorate and South Governorate. The sample includes respondents from different confessions and religions and different social statuses, who are divided between two categories: heavy viewers and light viewers. The justification of this sample would be that in order to validate the first hypothesis, whether in the same or opposite direction, the answers that will be submitted by the participants will be computed numerically in order to compare between those who watch frequently the news and those who don't in relation the dependent variable: resorting to the use of arms. As for the second hypothesis, the sample chosen allows us to interpret whether the Lebanese people perceive the news as being bias and politically affiliated or not, in relation to its association to the armed conflicts portrayed in the news. Also, the sample allows us to answer the research questions, throughout checking the effects on the attitudes of the Lebanese caused by the news' violence including the use of arms, as well as whether the Lebanese people are aware about conflict resolution through peaceful means without the use of arms or not.

After collecting the numerical data and doing each hypothesis' relative statistical test on the program "Statistical Package for the Social Science" - SPSS, the results will be interpreted and will be backed up by the qualitative analysis in the results' section, in order to be able to draw appropriate responses to the allocated research questions and hypothesis of this research.

### Qualitative Method

The qualitative method relies on observation in order to gather non-numerical data. This type of research focuses on the meanings, concepts, symbols, metaphors, and description of things rather than measures and numerical values. Therefore, the qualitative method answers "Why" and "How" rather than "How often" a phenomenon occurs (Boeree, 2005).

Conversational communication and open-ended questions are used in qualitative methods, which

allows for in-depth questioning of the respondents, and this will allow the research to take an in-depth view into the effects of the armed conflicts portrayed in Lebanese news on the people in relation to their attitudes, their attitude towards resolving conflicts and their perception about media bias and political affiliation in relation to the armed conflicts portrayed in the news. It will also provide a clear description, explanation and understanding about the reasons behind those effects, attitudes, and perceptions. Different perspectives regarding the research questions and hypotheses will be highlighted as well through the open-ended questions.

As a procedure, semi-structured interviews are used as a main tool for qualitative research. A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where the researcher will be asking questions to a respondent in order to acquire specific information, where semi-structured interviews tend to unfold in the conversation in order to provide the researcher with the exploration of issues that the participants feel important (Doyle, 2019). This allows us to explore answers in an in-depth manner with the interviewees and will allow us as well to find out interpretations and explanations in order to analyze the effects of armed conflicts portrayed in the news on the attitudes of the Lebanese, their perception regarding the use of arms and towards media's biases and political affiliations.

The first interviewee will be Mr. Ezzedine Al Asbahi, Yemen's ambassador in Morocco and the director of MENANSA (Middle East and North Africa Network for Small Arms). His position and field of expertise in small arms in the Middle East will add a great deal of information to the thesis regarding the effects of violent conflict and small arms that are portrayed in the news, as well as the perception and attitudes of the Lebanese in relation to the use of small arms.

The second interviewee will be Ms. Christina Foerch, a German reporter, and a resident in Lebanon, who previously worked for Daily Stars. She is a researcher in the field of small arms in Lebanon and the Middle East and worked on several projects with many NGOs within the field of peace building, conflict resolution, advocacy, and coexistence. Her experience with diverse Lebanese groups in diverse areas within Lebanon, will add a better understanding to the perceptions and attitudes of the Lebanese in relation to the use of small arms, as well as their mindset regarding the Lebanese news.

The third interviewee will be Dr. Sonia Nakad, who has a PHD in conflict resolution, and is currently a consultant in peace building. She worked on many topics related to the use of small arms with a variety of NGOs in Lebanon. Her expertise and knowledge in the field of the use of small arms and its consequences will surely help in analyzing the different hypotheses and research questions of this thesis.

The fourth interview is Ms. Daad Ibrahim, a psychologist who worked previously with the NGO Permanent Peace Movement, as a project coordinator and trainer for conflict resolution, advocacy, and leadership. Ms. Daad is currently working with KAFANA NGO, and her long years of experience within the civil society will shed the light on the psychological impact of the Lebanese news' portrayal of small arms on the viewers' attitudes and perceptions.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted through Teams with the respondents and will be recorded. The data collected at the end will be summarized and added to the quantitative analysis' findings in the results section in order to be able to answer properly to the research questions and validate the hypothesis.

The two research questions will be the following:

- 1- Does the positive depiction associated to small arms usage on TV affect the perceptions of Lebanese views on this matter?
- 2- Does this positive picture cultivate desensitization or aggression among Lebanese viewers?

**Hypothesis 1:** The Lebanese people who spend a lot of time watching armed conflictual scenes, particularly in the Lebanese news, are more likely to resort to the use of arms than those who spend less time watching the news.

The independent variable: Time spent watching Lebanese news.

The conceptual definition of the independent variable “Time spent watching Lebanese news” is defined by the amount of exposure spent by an individual on watching news bulletins of Lebanese TV stations.

The operational definition of this independent variable will be measured by asking participants approximately how much time they spend watching the Lebanese news with the following options: “on a daily basis”, “on a weekly basis”, “on a monthly basis”.

The dependent variable: Resorting to the use of arms.

The conceptual definition of the dependent variable “Resorting to the use of arms” is defined by the behavior of using weaponry in a conflictual situation with the intention of hurting or killing another person or one’s own self.

The operational definition of this dependent variable will be measured throughout a Likert-type of scale with the options “1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree”, for the following statements: “Owning a small arm is a need in Lebanon.”, “Conflict and violence are interrelated.”, “In Lebanon, most of the times conflict will automatically result in

the use of violence.”, “I don’t mind using an arm to protect myself.”, “Each family should have at least a hidden arm in the house for safety reasons”.

Statistical test for Hypothesis 1: Since the independent variable will be measured categorically (through a nominal level of measurement) and the dependent variable will be measured continuously (through an interval level of measurement), the statistical test for the first hypothesis will be a T-test.

**Hypothesis 2:** The amount of violence pertaining to armed conflicts news reporting is positively associated to the level of bias the news holds based on political agendas.

The independent variable: The amount of violence pertaining to armed conflicts news reporting.

The conceptual definition of the independent variable “The amount of violence pertaining to armed conflicts news reporting” is defined by the amount of violence including the use of arms within the Lebanese news.

The operational definition of this independent variable will be measured through asking the Lebanese participants who watch the news to what extent do they consider that the Lebanese media show content related to the usage of arms in conflictual situations, through a semantic type of scale from low extent = 1 to high extent = 7.

The dependent variable: The level of bias the news holds based on political agendas.

The conceptual definition of the dependent variable “The level of bias the news holds based on political agendas” is defined by a political context where the media and individuals are unable or unwilling to understand any different or opposing point of view related to politics.

The operational definition of the dependent variable will be measured through a Likert-type of scale “1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree” for the following statements: “The Lebanese news tend to be biased”, “The Lebanese news tend to be



politically affiliated”, “The Lebanese media show subjective content related to its political supporters”, “The Lebanese stations, especially within the news, tend to use words that provoke incitement for its own audience against other Lebanese groups”.

Statistical test for Hypothesis 2: Since the independent variable will be measured continuously (through an interval level of measurement) and the dependent variable will be measured as well continuously (through an interval level of measurement), the statistical test for the second hypothesis will be Pearson’s correlation.

## Data Collection

### Quantitative Results

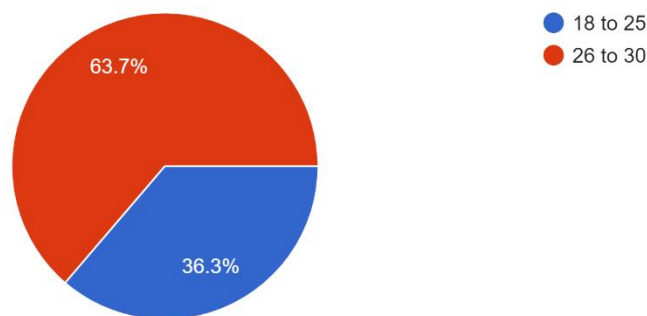
In this section, the data was collected through the survey method. The numbers were then analyzed using SPSS. The questionnaire had several sections that gather the participants' perspectives regarding the use of violence, Lebanese news, and their portrayals of arms. The survey was limited to youth aged between 18 to 30 years old. The discussion started with demographics, followed by the perceptions about small arms, then tackled the Lebanese news and small arms portrayals.

#### I. Demographics

The info collected in this section pertains to age, gender, and district. The following charts give an understanding about the respondents.

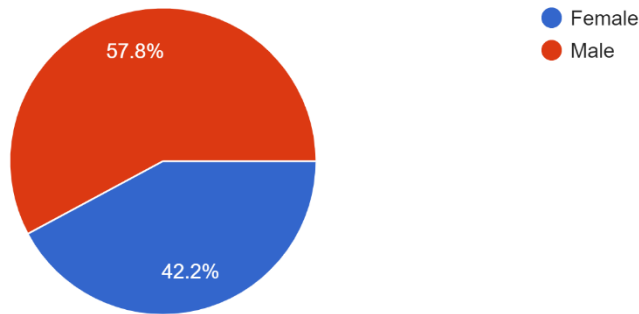
##### 1- Age

Age (If you are under 18 or 30+, thank you for your time!)  
102 responses



##### 2- Gender

Gender  
102 responses

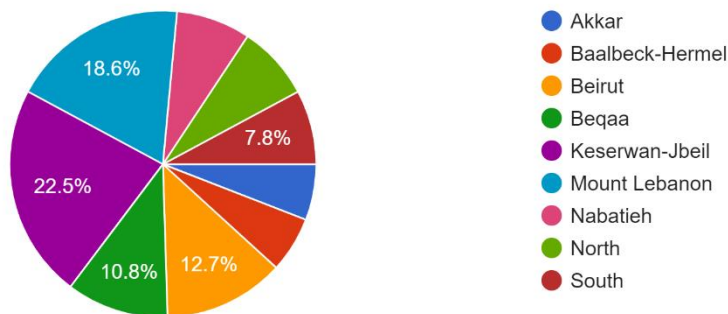


The first two figures show the results for age and gender. 63.7% of participants were between 26 and 30 years old and 36.3% were between 18 and 25 years old.

The female participants were 42.2% and the male participants were 57.8%.

### 3- District

District  
102 responses



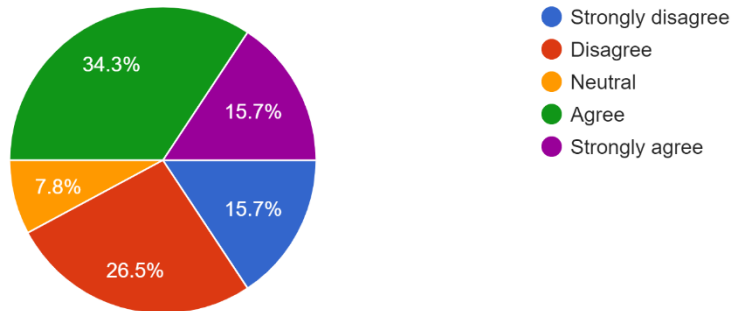
The districts' figure show that most of the participants who responded were from Keserwan-Jbeil (22.5%), followed by Mount Lebanon (18.6%), then Beirut (12.7%), Beqaa (10.8%), South, Nabatieh, and North (7.8%) and finally Baalbeck-Hermel and Akkar (5.9%).

## II. Perceptions about Small Arms

### 1- The Need of Small Arms' Ownership

State the level of agreement to the following statement: "Owning a small arm is a need in Lebanon."

102 responses

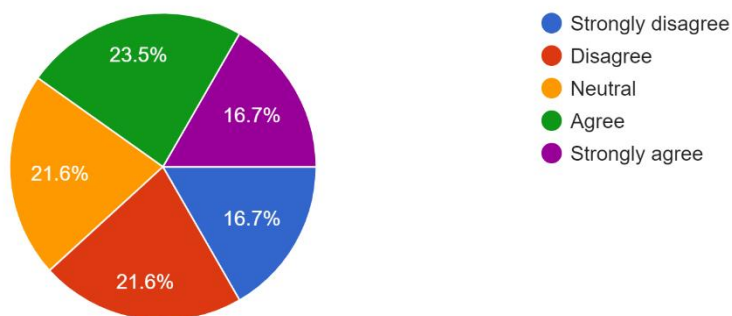


The chart provides the frequency of the level of agreement regarding the need to own a small arm in Lebanon. The results indicated that most of the participants (34%) agree that owning a small arm is a need in Lebanon, 26.5% disagree, 15.7% strongly agree, 15.7% strongly disagree.

### 2- The Interrelation Between Conflict and Violence

State the level of agreement to the following statement: "Conflict and violence are interrelated."

102 responses

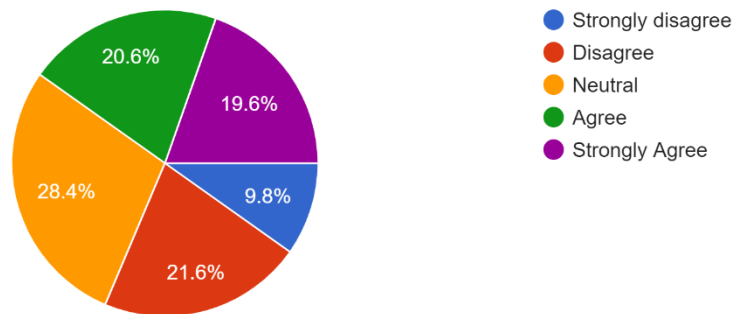


This chart provides the frequency of the level of agreement regarding the interrelation of conflict and violence. Most of the participants (23.5%) agree that owning conflict and violence are interrelated, 21.6% disagree, 21.6% are neutral, 16.7% strongly disagree and 16.7% strongly agree.

### 3- Conflict Resulting to Violence

State the level of agreement to the following statement: "In Lebanon, most of the times, conflicts will automatically result in the use of violence."

102 responses

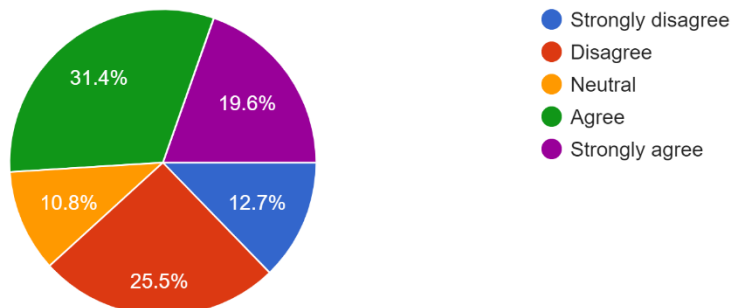


The above chart shows the level of agreement if conflicts in Lebanon will automatically result in the use of violence. It indicated that most of the participants (28.4%) are neutral regarding this statement, 21.6% disagree, 20.6% agree, 19.6% strongly agree and 9.8% strongly disagree.

### 4- The Use of Small Arms for Protection

State the level of agreement to the following statement: “I don’t mind using an arm to protect myself.”

102 responses

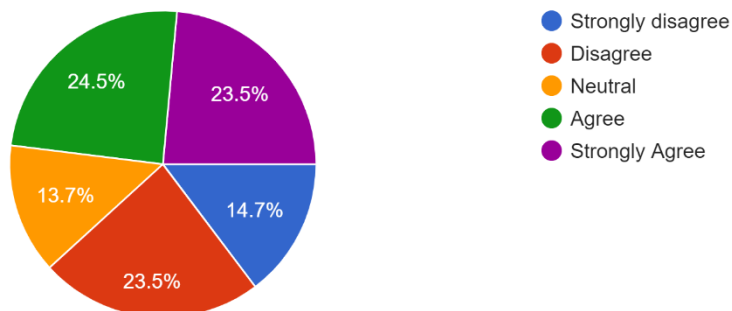


This chart illustrates the frequency of the level of agreement regarding personal arm usage for protection. The graph indicates that most of the participants (31.4%) agree they don’t mind using an arm to protect themselves, 25.5% disagree, 19.6% strongly agree, 12.7% strongly disagree and 10.8% were neutral.

### 5- Hidden Arms for Familial Safety Reasons

State the level of agreement to the following statement: “Each family should have at least a hidden arm in the house for safety reasons.”

102 responses

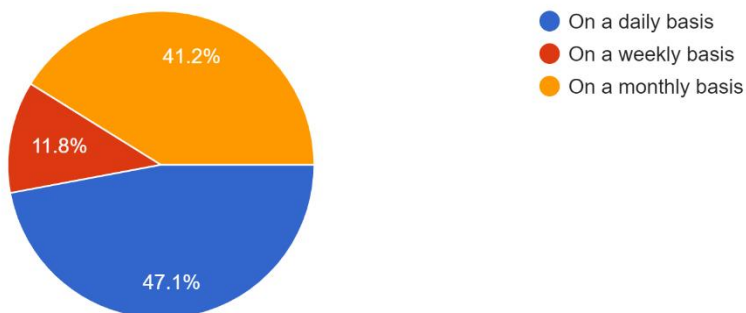


This graph shows the frequency of the level of agreement regarding the need for each Lebanese family to have a hidden arm in the house for safety reasons. Most of the participants (24.5%) agree, 23.5% strongly agree, 23.5% disagree, 14.7% strongly disagree.

### III. Lebanese News and Small Arms Portrayals

#### 1- Time Spent Watching the News

How often do you watch Lebanese news?  
102 responses

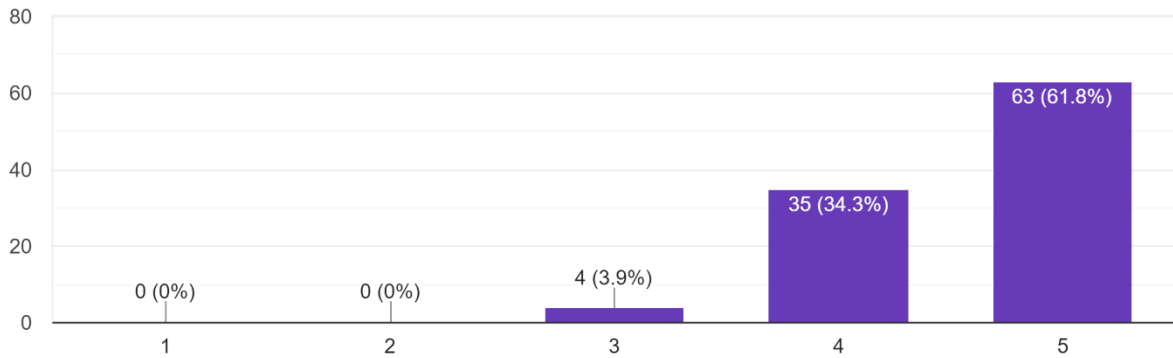


According to this graph, 47.1% of the participants watch Lebanese news on a daily basis, 41.2% watch the news on a monthly basis and 11.8% watch the news on a weekly basis.

#### 2- The Extent of Armed Conflicts in the Lebanese News

To what extent are the Lebanese media showing content related to the use of arms in conflictual situations?

102 responses

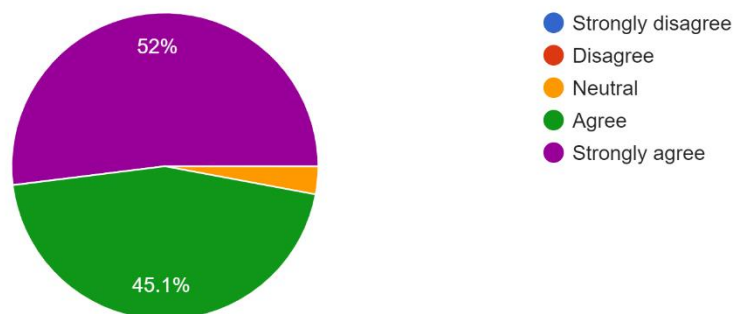


On a scale from 1 to 5, 61.8% of the participants stated that the Lebanese media show content related to the use of arms in conflictual situations. None of the participants disagreed to the following statement, which strongly indicates that the Lebanese media do show a lot of scenes related to the use arms in conflictual situations.

### 3- The News' Level of Bias

State the level of agreement to the following statement: "The Lebanese news tend to be biased."

102 responses



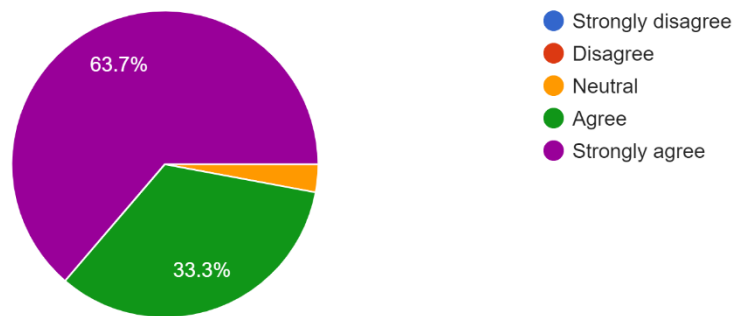


As indicated in this chart, most of the participants (52%) strongly agree that the Lebanese news tend to be biased, 45.1% agree and only 2.9% were neutral. None of the participants disagreed to this statement, whether strongly or not.

**4- The Political Affiliation of Lebanese Media**

State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese media are politically affiliated.”

102 responses

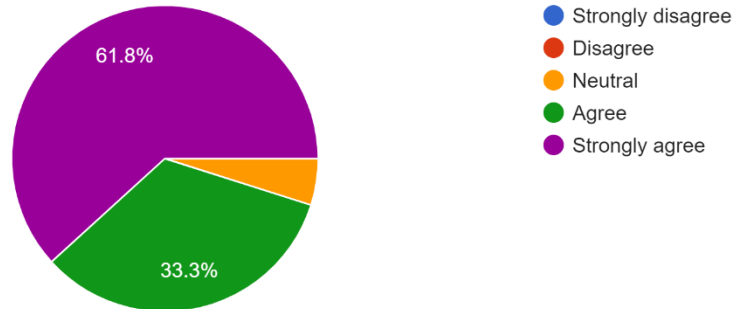


This chart shows that most of the participants (63.7%) strongly agree that the Lebanese news are politically affiliated, 33.3% agree and only 2.9% were neutral. None of the participants disagreed to this statement, whether strongly or not.

**5- The News’ Subjectivity Level**

State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese media show subjective content to serve political agendas.”

102 responses

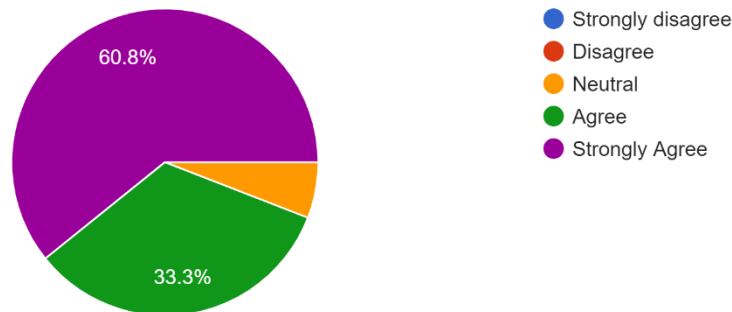


This graph demonstrates that most of the participants (61.8%) strongly agree that the Lebanese show subjective content to serve political agendas, 33.3% agree and only 4.9% were neutral. None of the participants disagreed to this statement, whether strongly or not.

### 6- Incitement and Hate Speech in the News

State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese stations use, in their news coverage, words that provoke incitement and hate speech against other Lebanese groups.”

102 responses



According to the above chart, most of the participants (60.8%) strongly agree that the Lebanese stations use, in their news coverage, words that provoke incitement and hate speech

against other Lebanese groups, 33.3% agree and only 5.9% were neutral. None of the participants disagreed to this statement, whether strongly or not.

Regarding the first hypothesis which is “The Lebanese people who spend a lot of time watching armed conflictual scenes, particularly in the Lebanese news, are more likely to resort to the use of arms than those who spend less time watching the news”:

The dependent variable “Resorting to violence”: the reliability level of all the questions related to this variable is acceptable since the Cronbach’s Alpha score is .970 which is greater than .7.

#### Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .970             | 5          |

The descriptive statistics of this variable (N=102) show a mean of 3.1333 and a standard deviation of 1.27402. Therefore, the mean score is closer to the value of 3 which is “neutral” when it comes to resorting to violence in a conflict.

#### Descriptive Statistics

|                     | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|---------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| ResortingToViolence | 102 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 3.1333 | 1.27406        |
| Valid N (listwise)  | 102 |         |         |        |                |

According to the descriptive frequencies on SPSS, the independent variable “Time spent watching Lebanese news” is divided as follows: 47.1% of participants watch the news on a daily basis, 11.8% of participants watch the news on a weekly basis and 41.2% of participants watch the news on a monthly basis.

Before proceeding with the independent T-test, the independent variable “Time spent watching the news” was then regrouped into two other groups: “On a daily basis” was grouped in “Frequent watching of the news” and the other two values “On a weekly basis” and “On a monthly basis” were grouped into “Less frequent watching of the news”. The reason of this regrouping into different variables is to be able to compare the means of the two groups (Those who spend a lot of time watching the news, on a daily basis, and those who spend less time watching the news by assuming that they only watch on a weekly and monthly basis) in the relation to the dependent variable tested “Resorting to violence”.

According to the independent T-test, the first hypothesis was supported. The independent t-test indicated that there was a significant statistical difference between those who watch frequently the news ( $M = 4.2542$ ,  $SD = .64806$ ) and those who watch less frequently the news ( $M = 2.1370$ ,  $SD = .75618$ ) ( $Welch's t(99.876) = 15.224$ ,  $p < .05$ ), such as those who watch frequently the news are more likely to resort to violence while resolving their conflicts than those who spend less time watching the news.

**Group Statistics**

|                     | Time_grouped             | N  | Mean   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| ResortingToViolence | Frequently Watching News | 48 | 4.2542 | .64806         | .09354          |

|                             |    |        |        |        |
|-----------------------------|----|--------|--------|--------|
| Less Frequent Watching News | 54 | 2.1370 | .75618 | .10290 |
|-----------------------------|----|--------|--------|--------|

**Independent Samples Test**

|                     |                                | Levene's Test<br>for Equality of<br>Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                            |                        |                                 |  |         |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---------|
|                     |                                | F   | Sig. | t                            | df     | Sig.<br>(2-<br>taile<br>d) | Mean<br>Differenc<br>e | Std.<br>Error<br>Differe<br>nce | 95% Confidence<br>Interval of the<br>Difference<br>Lower Upper |         |
| ResortingToViolence | Equal variances assumed        | .933  | .336 | 15.086                       | 100    | .000                       | 2.11713                | .14033                          | 1.83871  | 2.39555 |
|                     | Equal variances not<br>assumed |   |      | 15.224                       | 99.876 | .000                       | 2.11713                | .13906                          | 1.84123  | 2.39303 |

Concerning the second hypothesis “The extent of television violence related to armed conflicts perceived by the news audience is positively associated to their views of the level of bias and political affiliation the news holds”:

According to the reliability analysis of the dependent variable “the level of bias and political affiliation of the Lebanese people”, the Cronbach Alpha score is .911, therefore the reliability is acceptable since it is greater than .7.

**Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's<br>Alpha | N of Items |
|---------------------|------------|
| .911                | 4          |

The descriptive statistics of this variable (N=102) show a mean of 4.5539 and a standard deviation of .51178, therefore, the mean score is closer to the value of 5 which is “Strongly

agree” when it comes to the perspective of the participants regarding the level of bias and political affiliation that the media portrays.

**Descriptive Statistics**

|                          | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| BiasPoliticalAffiliation | 102 | 3.00    | 5.00    | 4.5539 | .51178         |
| Valid N (listwise)       | 102 |         |         |        |                |

The second hypothesis was supported as well. Pearson’s correlation indicated that there is positive significant relationship between the extent of television violence perceived by the news audience and their views of the level of bias based on political agendas, and that relationship is strong ( $r = .731, p < .05$ ). The extent of television violence perceived by the news audience is accounting for 53.43% of the variance in the outcome (the level of bias and political affiliation the news portrays).

**Correlations**

|                           |                     | ExtentArmedCo<br>nflictInNews | BiasPoliticalAffili<br>ation |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ExtentArmedConflictInNews | Pearson Correlation | 1                             | .731**                       |
|                           | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                               | .000                         |
|                           | N                   | 102                           | 102                          |
| BiasPoliticalAffiliation  | Pearson Correlation | .731**                        | 1                            |
|                           | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000                          |                              |
|                           | N                   | 102                           | 102                          |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### **Qualitative results**

In this section, the empirical data that was collected through personal interviews with Mr. Ezzeldine Asbahi, Dr. Sonia Nakad, Ms. Christina Foerch and Ms. Daad Ibrahim is discussed.

Concerning the first research question “Does the positive depiction associated to small arms usage on TV affect the perceptions among viewers about this issue?”:

According to Mr. Ezzeldine Al Asbahi, Yemen’s ambassador in Morocco and the director of MENANSA (Middle East and North Africa Network for Small Arms), the media always portray Lebanon as a fanatic country, where militia and war are constantly dominant. In the past, Lebanon used to be portrayed among the Arab states as the hub for cultures, art, tourism, and openness, however, today the media constantly show Lebanon as being a place for violence and death. Mr. Al Abahi believes that the purpose behind depicting Lebanon in such a negative spot, is to say that the entire Arab world is in the same spot as well.

The Lebanese media are constantly highlighting hate speeches especially within the news. The Lebanese news are constantly projecting not only a local, however a regional conflict as well, which is leading to more tension and polarization within the country, therefore the media will be affecting the Lebanese people’s perceptions automatically.

For Ms. Christina Foerch, a German reporter, and a resident in Lebanon, who previously worked for Daily Star (A Lebanese daily newspaper). the news influences the public opinion and perceptions of the people everywhere worldwide. It applies to Germany as well, where the media in general are constantly supporting Ukraine over Russia nowadays, therefore inciting the public

towards the Russian government. Most of the news tend to be subjective and only few can show the truth as it really is; an example would be Deutsche Welle in Germany where she used to work, where the journalists try to get different sources of information as much as they could in order to maintain their objectivity, however a total and absolute absence of subjectivity within the media is always impossible, therefore, leading to an dominant influence of the media over the audience when it comes to their perceptions and way of thinking.

The example of Europe can be highlighted nowadays since the Russian media was banned all over European countries. Concerning Lebanon, Ms. Foerch affirmed that the media's subjectivity is way more obvious, and the influence of the Lebanese news over its public is very clear. Everything that is shown on the media on a regular basis will affect people's emotional state of mind. Ms. Foerch posited that people react to visual content much more than written content. The media can be manipulative in many ways, that can be the choice of music within the reports for example. Everything visual will automatically affect the viewers' perceptions and behaviors. The Arab news stations show much more violent content than the Western ones: "You will notice the difference between them; the Arab news including the Lebanese news tend to be more bloody, shocking, and violent where the presence of arms is always included along with bloodshed and destruction. In Germany, Deutsche Welle has boundaries and limits regarding what to include in their reports. Journalists are not allowed to show body parts, wounds, victims... Ethics in media are highly important since some scenes might provoke aggression, hatred and even desensitization among the viewers" she said.

According to Ms. Foerch, the Arab audience is different than the Western one; the Arab audience is already used to visual violence. In Germany, if violent scenes are openly shown on



TV, the TV station will receive complaints from the Germans who do not accept violence in news.

The violence within the news is used to provoke sensationalism. It is used to normalize certain behaviors sometimes, that can be the use of weapons. Even online gaming can provoke aggressive behaviors among the children, who will unconsciously get used to violent and suffering scenes.

Foerch also stated that the Lebanese people tend to watch the news on TV that already supports their own political perceptions. She said “I used to work with NGOs on projects with students; we used to do trainings and workshops in different schools. In each training, we used to ask the students: What do you watch on TV? Which Lebanese Channel? They used to answer with one option only. Clearly, the Lebanese people tend to pick one source of information that already supports their own point of views and perceptions.”

For Dr. Sonia Nakad, who is a consultant in peace building with a PHD in conflict resolution, The Lebanese news are used to manipulate the audience emotionally, where people are mobilized very quickly because of their content. The news can provoke reactions in the streets because of specific info that are shared and can even create a civil war.

The attitudes of the Lebanese are highly influenced by the news. “For example, it’s almost impossible to see a Aounist watching MTV! The Lebanese people are not ready to hear anything that is not in their own comfort zone, simply because people don’t want to change their perceptions” she said. For Nakad, they would rather feel safe throughout reinforcing their own ideas through the Lebanese news. Even the social media pertaining to each TV channel (posts, comments, videos...) contain reinforcement for the people’s point of views.

Dr. Nakad mentioned that the media keeps repeating a vicious cycle by reinforcing the hatred between the groups, where the media reinforce the audience's perceptions and in return, the audience reinforce their own perception through the media.

According to Ms. Daad Ibrahim, a psychologist working with NGOs within the field of peace building in Lebanon, the repeated exposure to violent behavior, including its presence within the news, will lead to its normalization among the audience. The first reaction to a violent scene might be shocking, however the repeated exposure to the same scene will be less shocking for the individual.

Ms. Ibrahim said that the exposure to violent scenes in the news will give the viewer a feeling of threat and danger, therefore, the fear will lead him to become more aggressive.

From a psychological point of view, Ibrahim confirmed that we tend to watch the Lebanese channel's news that validate our already existing perceptions when it comes to political affiliations. The element of fear is always present for the Lebanese people and the only way to contain this fear is to reinforce their feeling of belonging to a group (whether sectarian or confessional). Therefore, one of the ways of reinforcing their perception is by watching the channel's news that already support their group's point of view.

The viewer will feel unconsciously protected when he watches the channel that touches his emotions by addressing his group's own issues. He will never watch another Lebanese channel's news if it will insult his group's interests indirectly. His own channel will be giving him fake morals and fake motivation.

All the interviewees agreed that the positive depiction associated to small arms usage on TV does affect the young viewers' perceptions about this issue. Not only it affects their

perceptions, however it creates a vicious cycle, where they tend to reinforce their already existing perceptions through the news (including their perceptions about the usage of small arms), and in return, the media reinforce its message by affecting the viewers perceptions regarding the positive depiction associated to small arms usage.

Concerning the second research question “Does this positive picture cultivate desensitization or aggression among Lebanese viewers?”

For Mr. Al Asbahi, the Lebanese news are constantly projecting not only a local, however a regional conflict as well, which is leading to more tension and polarization within the country. Feelings of aggression are created based on the element of fear and the only way for the Lebanese to fight this fear and feel safe again is to vote for the right people who aren't related to the past civil war atrocities and who will be truly working for a better future, far from being stuck in the past. According to Al Asbahi, those people can be found in the civil society.

For Ms. Foerch, the news can influence the public opinion in Lebanon and the excessive amount of violence in the news (particularly those who show the repeated use of small arms), can affect or influence the Lebanese people's perceptions regarding the use of violence when dealing with daily conflicts.

People's emotional state of mind and behavior are affected, especially after watching visual and audio content related to small arms.

The Arab audience is already suffering from desensitization, since it is already used to visual violence, according to Ms. Foerch.

The violence within the news, including the excessive use of small arms is used to provoke sensationalism, throughout normalizing certain behaviors sometimes, that can be the use

of weapons, leading the individual to get used to violent and suffering scenes in an unconscious manner.

Dr. Nakad confirmed as well that the people who cannot skip the daily news are the people who will develop more stress. Not only they are stuck in the media's vicious cycle, however they develop feelings of aggression unconsciously due to the repeated exposure of violent scenes, including small arms.

For Ms. Ibrahim, unconsciously, the exposure to violent scenes in the news will give the viewer a feeling of threat and danger, therefore, the fear will lead him sometimes to become more aggressive.

Since there are no strict regulations in Lebanon that would ensure that the content within the Lebanese news is ethical and respecting of the viewer's emotions, the audience could easily develop feelings of aggression and desensitization.

Ibrahim gave an example of a Lebanese soldier during the civil war, who was holding a victim's head as if it was a sign of victory. She affirmed "Atrocities can be normalized due to the repeated exposure to violence."

The four interviewees agreed to the second research question, where aggression and desensitization are automatically created due to the repeated exposure to violence scenes, including the use of small arms within the Lebanese news. The four of them confirmed that there are no strict regulations in Lebanon regarding the aggressiveness of visual and audio content, which will lead to cultivate fear and stress among the viewers, therefore affecting their behaviors, way of thinking and attitudes in their daily lives.

Concerning the first hypothesis “The Lebanese people who spend a lot of time watching armed conflictual scenes, particularly in the Lebanese news, are more likely to resort to the use of arms than those who spend less time watching the news”:

Mr. Al Asbahi considered that the use of small arms in Lebanon is already excessive among Lebanese people; the civil war in Lebanon was the main cause of the excessive use of small arms among them, it has contributed to an easier access to weapons within two areas: firstly, the growing power of militias in the absence of a strong government and secondly, the lack of feeling safe as well as a constant fear in the absence of order and security in Lebanon, which led to the systematic acquiring of small arms among the Lebanese. Not to forget to mention that there is a positive culture regarding the use of small arms in Lebanon and the Arab world in general, where small arms are perceived as a sign of manhood, power, and strength. Thus, the culture in the Arab world in general lies in a tribal dimension, and this is reflected as well within the approach of the Lebanese news.

Mr. Al Asbahi considered that positive depictions unconsciously encourage the owner to commit a crime. Therefore, the presence of a small arm at home is negative and not positive at all. He affirmed “War victims are known to have been mainly victims of small arms and not victims of the war itself, where civilians get killed more than soldiers.” According to him, after the civil war, the Lebanese have forgiven the war atrocities to such an extent that led them to accept the war leaders within the government afterwards. The Lebanese people are currently going through a hard period that is leading them to own small arms for self-protection purposes, which is far from trying to resolve their conflicts through peaceful means.

Therefore, since Mr. Al Asbahi confirmed that the Lebanese mentality is in general accepting of the use of small arms culturally and since the positive depiction of the usage of

small arms if used frequently within the news, leading to its direct influence over the individual's perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes; the frequent watching of the Lebanese news will automatically lead the viewers to a higher probability of resorting to violence than those who spend less time watching the news.

According to Ms. Foerch and Dr. Nakad, the idea of owning a small arm and resorting to violence is already very widespread in Lebanon, which is mainly a consequence of the Lebanese civil war. Also, it's embedded within the entire Arab cultures in the Middle East since centuries. Not to forget to mention that hunting is a very widespread hobby in the Arab world. People just love the idea of small arms. Small arms have always been normalized in the Lebanese culture, and what encourages the people to own guns for their protection is the absence of strict regulations in Lebanon.

She gave the following example of a case that happened during a project with the Permanent Peace Movement NGO, where the project included a series of awareness workshops and trainings regarding the use of small arms in different regions in Lebanon. She said: "A child named Elio was killed in Dhour Shweir at home because he was playing with his brothers with the so-called "protection gun", where the trigger was pulled accidentally."

She said as well "Another lady was killed in Tripoli because of a stray bullet during a wedding, she was throwing rice from her own balcony. An awareness campaign about lethal weapons was launched afterwards."

Ms. Foerch confirmed that resorting to violence and particularly the use of small arms is embedded within the Lebanese culture and was amplified after the civil war. Since the news is used to manipulate people's attitudes, therefore, in this case it can be used to fortify their attitudes regarding resorting to violence in an easier way.

For Dr. Nakad, the Lebanese people in general lack knowledge about conflict resolution through peaceful means: “We lack a lot of knowledge related to conflict resolution through peaceful means. The traditions in Lebanon taught us that we must deal with conflict in violent ways, where a violent reaction through aggressive means contributes to positive outcomes. This is largely related to our culture in the Arab world” she said.

Dr. Nakad also posited that for the Lebanese, it is perceived as a way of expressing people’s emotions, such as happiness (weddings), sadness (funerals), anger, fear... Especially for men, since in the Arab culture, a man is not allowed to cry or express his emotions, therefore, the only way he can express his emotions is through violence. “If you express anger by shooting, you are a real man by all means”. This is how they think, and this is deeply rooted in their minds.

Dr. Nakad spoke about the “concept of masculinity” for Arab and Lebanese men, where being “strong”, “honorable” and “preserving the name of the family” are highly related to the use of weapons for men especially, which is perceived as a sign of strength rather than a sign of weakness. The Arab culture perceive the peaceful means as being “too idealistic”. They are not used to make time for things and are not willing to put energy or effort there.

Dr. Nakad agreed to the first hypothesis by saying that people who aren’t politically affiliated or who do not watch Lebanese news on local channels might be less aggressive than those who do; where at a certain point, people who watch the news less frequently will be less polarized and therefore, less aggressive. She said “some people cannot skip the daily news. Those people develop more stress. They will be more mobilized, and they will be more stuck in the vicious circle of reinforcement. On the other hand, people who aren’t updated with daily hatred speeches and the Lebanese news’ negativity, will be more relaxed and more open minded.”

Ms. Ibrahim considered as well that the repeated exposure to violent scenes will influence one's own behavior or attitude throughout reinforcing his aggressive reactions and therefore normalizing the use of small arms and resorting to violence in his daily life.

Ms. Ibrahim confirmed that the use of small arms is perceived as being heroic in the Lebanese culture, where it is perceived as a sign of strength. "Even in Lebanese series or movies, the use of small arms is perceived as being normal. The widespread and excessive use of small arms in Lebanon has no boundaries nor limits, and what is encouraging it further is the media itself and Lebanese news who are pushing unconsciously the audience to normalize their use" she confirms.

"The high pressure that the Lebanese people are going through is pushing them to be more aggressive, this is why, a big number of the Lebanese people own a small arm and tend to accept violence very easily as part of their daily lives." She declared.

All the interviewees confirmed that the repeated exposure to violence in the Lebanese news will provoke higher aggressiveness as a reaction to conflict, which is already accepted within the Lebanese culture. Small arms are widely accepted in the Arab culture, and particularly in Lebanon, since small arms have easier access, especially after the civil war. The vicious cycle of reinforcement is prominent between the Lebanese news and its audience: the more they watch the news, the more they become convinced about their culture which favors the use of small arms in conflictual situations. And what encourages them to do so, is the absence of strict regulations regarding the access to small arms and weaponry.

Concerning the second hypothesis which is "The extent of television violence related to armed conflicts perceived by the news audience is positively associated to their views of the level of bias and political affiliation the news portrays":



According to Mr. Al Asbahi, the violence (particularly armed conflicts) portrayed in the Lebanese news tend to provoke feelings of sectarian incitement. The media is always portraying Lebanon as being a fanatic country, where militia and war are constantly dominant.

For him, the atrocities of the civil war have led the Lebanese to forgive what happened to such an extent that led them to accept the war leaders within the government afterwards, therefore the Lebanese people are still highly politically affiliated.

The Lebanese news is encouraging fanaticism constantly, throughout highlighting hatred speeches and projecting local and regional conflicts including violence and the use of small arms, which is leading to more political tension and polarization within the country.

Ms. Foerch validated that the Lebanese media are highly politicized, throughout the words and violent scenes that are used in their reports to a very high extent. Each Lebanese TV channel is backed up by a political group, and the news are being shown to the people according to one source of information that would fit each group's position and perspective, and clearly the Lebanese people tend to pick one source of information that already supports their own point of views and perceptions.

Dr. Nakad declared as well that the news can provoke reactions in the streets because of specific info that are shared and can even create a civil war, therefore, further nurturing their political affiliations and level of biases.

Through Ms. Daad Ibrahim's experience in workshops with Lebanese civilians, she found a high level of political biases and fanatic attitudes among them.

"After all these years of working with different groups within the civil society, sometimes you meet a group and when you try to open a political conversation with them, you can easily spot the hatred towards other groups." She confirmed.

According to her, many Lebanese people perceive fanaticism as being a way of protecting themselves against the unknown.

According to all the interviewees, the violent scenes including the use of small arms within the Lebanese news, are used for manipulation purposes, leading to the reinforcement of each viewer's own political affiliation and level of bias. Each Lebanese tend to watch the channel that supports his own political perception, therefore, leaving him in his personal comfort zone.

### **Discussion**

Both hypotheses were validated based on the quantitative and qualitative research in this paper, as well as the literature review. The research questions were answered as well:

The Lebanese news are politically and religiously affiliated. The news' reports are highly subjective, misleading and contain a high amount of hate speech provoking

sectarian incitement (Maharat, 2016). According to the four interviewees and the survey respondents, the Lebanese media system is highly politicized.

The media and their audience are living in a vicious cycle, where the news reinforce the viewer's perception, and in return the viewer seeks the medium that reinforces his own perception so he could feel safe in his comfort zone.

This converges with the idea of Saab (2013) that arms Control in the Middle East is a difficult process that will take years and generations in order to be achieved, because of the ongoing non-resolvable political conflicts in the Middle East (Saab, 2013). The quantitative research showed that 50% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed on the statement of "Owning a small arm is a need". Therefore, this reflects clearly that the mentality of the Lebanese is very accepting for the use of small arms, and according to the interviewees, the Arab culture, including the Lebanese one, perceives small arms as being a symbol of strength and honor.

Many international attempts have been directed towards implementing Control Arms policies and regulations within the Arab governments, however, these efforts were useless.

Concerning the Lebanese news, the blame should be directed towards the Lebanese government since it allows such reinforcement of sectarianism throughout the use of violence (Cochrane, 2007). According to Ms. Christina Foerch, there is a clear absence of strict regulations regarding what is being shown on TV within the Lebanese news. Ms. Daad Ibrahim, confirmed from a psychological point of view that the repeated exposure to the high amount of violence, including the use of small arms will directly influence the individual's perception by reinforcing it, as well as his attitude, throughout increasing his aggressive thoughts and behaviors.

Media violence can be compared to an individual's daily diet routine, it can become a habit and its reduction might become difficult. The repeated and systematic violent media exposure will lead children to develop aggressive thoughts, behaviors, as well as desensitization. Violence may seem as more common and supportable (Gentile, 2003). Recent studies provided evidence that the excessive exposure to violent media in early childhood is associated with future violent behavior in life, including assaults and partner violent mistreatment (Anderson, 2003).

this goes along with the idea of Dr. Sonia Nakad who posited that the Lebanese people already lack the knowledge about conflict resolution through peaceful means, which will leave margin for them to use violence easily when put in a situation of a conflict. The media here play a role by reinforcing this fact. Also, the lack of knowledge regarding conflict resolution through peaceful means was clearly reflected within the quantitative research, where almost 40% of the participants agreed and strongly agreed that conflict and violence are interrelated, therefore reflecting this lack of knowledge that Dr. Nakad was referring to.

### **Limitations**

The snowball sampling fits the goals of this research paper in terms of acquiring numerical data, honest and in-depth answers from respondents, however it may generate errors to the research because of biased answers, therefore limiting the validity of the study. Also, the number of respondents to the quantitative part which is 102 is not enough to represent the entire Lebanese youth population. For future references, a larger sample could have been reached to collect more data.

Also, one of the biggest limitations of this study was the lack of studies and valid information related to this topic in Lebanon. Studies are scarce in this area.

Another limitation would be the absence of the media perspective pertaining to this topic in the thesis.

### **Recommendations**

In future studies, a recommendation would be to work on a larger sample using a probability method, that would allow more accuracy.

It would be preferable to include the media producers' perceptions. Interviews with different Lebanese channels' owners as well as journalists could be conducted in order to find out their own point of view regarding their published content.

Also, a gender perspective could be included since the perceptions of the Lebanese people might be related to their gender.

The study was only limited to the people aged between 18 and 30, therefore, a recommendation would be to include other age categories especially the age category that already lived and survived the Lebanese civil war, since their perception might be different than youth who did not face the war.

Moreover, the study was limited to the analysis of news content; however, it would be highly recommended to analyze the Lebanese series and movies as well, that reflect the Lebanese culture and way of thinking regarding the use of small arms and resorting to violence when facing conflicts.

## Conclusion

Lebanon is a buffer state and a hub of conflicts for foreign countries, where the international and regional pressure is constantly provoking local sectarian tensions among the different Lebanese groups, and this is clearly reflected in the media. The issue is not about the conflict itself, it's about the language used to resolve those conflicts. The preferred language used in Lebanon and the Arab world in general is the language of violence.

According to this research, the violence in media content affects the Lebanese people's attitudes and behaviors in a negative way. Therefore, the Lebanese news are encouraging the audience in an indirect way and on a subconscious level to resort to violence when resolving conflicts.

In conclusion, sectarian incitement is included in news, where violent scenes that are broadcast daily take a big part in provoking the public against each other, reflecting as well, the real perception of the Lebanese in terms of sectarian and confessional conflicts on the ground in Lebanon.

The answers in both the qualitative and quantitative part showed that media violence influences attitudes and behaviors of Lebanese youth.

To sum up everything, the relation between the Lebanese media and the Lebanese audience is correlated: the Lebanese media actually "reflects" the reality of the Lebanese perception. It also contributes to the reinforcement of their already-existing perceptions. It does the latter by showing ongoing violent scenes for the purpose of supporting each institution's own political affiliation.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

This survey is conducted for an MA thesis in Media Studies at Notre Dame University-Louaize (NDU). Your participation is voluntary; your identity will remain anonymous. The results will only be used for academic scholarly research.

Your input is highly appreciated. Pressing the next button indicates that you are voluntarily consenting to participating in this study. For further inquiry, feel free to contact the researcher:

Put your email here

### **I. Demographics**

**Age (If you are under 18 or 30+, thank you for your time!) \***

18 to 25

26 to 30

**Gender \***

Female

Male

**District \***

Akkar

Baalbeck-Hermel

Beirut

Beqaa

Keserwan-Jbeil

Mount Lebanon

Nabatieh

North

South

### **II. Perceptions about Small Arms**

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: "Owning a small arm is a need in Lebanon" \***

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “Conflict and violence are interrelated.” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “In Lebanon, most of the times, conflicts will automatically result in the use of violence.” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “I don’t mind using an arm to protect myself.” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “Each family should have at least a hidden arm in the house for safety reasons” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

### **III. Lebanese News and Small Arms Portrayals**

**How often do you watch Lebanese news? \***

On a daily basis  
On a weekly basis  
On a monthly basis

**To what extent are the Lebanese media showing content related to the use of arms in conflictual situations? \***

Low extent

1  
2

3  
4  
5  
6  
7

High extent

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese news tend to be biased” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese news are politically affiliated” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese media show subjective content to serve political agendas” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**State the level of agreement to the following statement: “The Lebanese stations use, in their news coverage, words that provoke incitement and hate speech against other**

**Lebanese groups.” \***

Strongly disagree  
Disagree  
Neutral  
Agree  
Strongly agree

**Appendix B: Transcripts of Interviews****Mr. Ezzedine Al Asbahi**

*1- As the director of MENANSA, how much do you find that the use of small arms in Lebanon is excessive among Lebanese people?*

The civil war in Lebanon was the main cause of the excessive use of small arms among Lebanese people; it has contributed to an easier access to weapons within two areas: firstly, the growing power of militias in the absence of a strong government and secondly, the lack of feeling safe as well as a constant fear in the absence of order and security in Lebanon, which led to the systematic acquiring of small arms among the Lebanese. Not to forget that there is a positive culture regarding the use of small arms in Lebanon and the Arab world in general, where small arms are perceived as a sign of manhood, power, and strength. Thus, the culture in the Arab world in general has a tribal dimension.

*2- Do you find that the use of arms is needed sometimes in order to resolve a conflict? If yes, in which cases?*

Of course not. Despite that I'm from Yemen, I have never bought myself a weapon. I believe that small arms will unconsciously encourage the owner to commit a crime instead of protecting him from the crime. Therefore, the presence of a small arm at home is negative and not positive at all.

War victims are known to have been mainly victims of small arms and not victims of the war itself, where civilians get killed more than soldiers.

*3- Do you think that the violence (particularly armed conflicts) portrayed in the Lebanese news tend to provoke feelings of sectarian incitement?*

Yes, the media are always portraying Lebanon as being a fanatic country, where militia and war are constantly dominant. In the past, Lebanon used to be portrayed among the Arab states as being a hub for cultures, art, tourism, and openness, however, today the media constantly portray Lebanon as being a place for violence and death. Personally, I believe that the purpose behind showing Lebanon in such a negative spot, is to say that the entire Arab world is in the same spot as well.

***4- How do you find personally, the approach of the Lebanese population when it comes to resolving conflicts?***

After the civil war, the Lebanese have forgiven the war atrocities to such an extent that led them to accept the war leaders within the government afterwards. The Lebanese people are going through a very hard period that is leading them to own small arms for self-protection purposes, which is far from trying to resolve their conflicts through peaceful means.

***5- Do you perceive the Lebanese news as being biased and politically affiliated? If yes, do you think that this leads to more tension and polarization in the country?***

The Lebanese media are constantly highlighting hatred speeches especially within the news. The Lebanese news are constantly projecting not only a local, however a regional conflict as well, which is leading to more tension and polarization within the country. The only way for the Lebanese to feel safe again is to vote for the right people who aren't related to the past civil war atrocities and who will be truly working for a better future, far from being stuck in the past. Those people can be found in the civil society.

**Ms. Christina Foerch**

***1- As a previous reporter residing in Lebanon and researcher in the field of small arms, to what extent do you find that the Lebanese are affected or influenced by the news that is conveyed to them?***

This applies to every country in the world; the news is constantly influencing the public opinion. And it applies in Germany as well, where the media in general are constantly supporting Ukraine over Russia nowadays, therefore inciting the public towards the Russian government. Most of the news tend to be subjective and only few can show the truth as it really is; an example would be Deutsche Welle in Germany where I used to work, where the journalists tried to get different sources of information as much as they could in order to maintain their objectivity, however a total and absolute absence of subjectivity within the media is always impossible.

The example of Europe can be highlighted nowadays since the Russian media was banned all over European countries. Concerning Lebanon, the media's subjectivity is way more obvious, and the influence of the Lebanese news over its public is very clear.

***2- Do you think that the continuous violent reports in the news (particularly those who show the repeated use of small arms), can affect or influence the Lebanese people's perceptions regarding the use of violence when dealing with daily conflicts?***

Of course. Everything that is shown on the media on a regular basis will affect people's emotional state of mind. People react to visual content much more than written content.

The media can be manipulative in many ways, that can be the choice of music within the reports for example. Everything visual will automatically affect the viewers' perceptions and behaviors. The Arab new stations show much more violent content than the Western ones. If you watch CNN or France 24 for example, you will notice the difference between

them; the Arab news including the Lebanese news tend to be more bloody, shocking, and violent where the presence of arms is always included along with bloodshed and destruction. In Germany, Deutsche Welle has boundaries and limits regarding what to include in their reports. Journalists are not allowed to show body parts, wounds, victims... Ethics in media are highly important since some scenes might provoke aggression, hatred and even desensitization among the viewers.

Sadly, the Arab audience is different than the Western one; the Arab audience is already used to visual violence. In Germany, if violent scenes are openly shown on TV, the TV station will start receiving complaints from the Germans who do not accept violence shown in news.

The violence within the news is used to provoke sensationalism. It is used to normalize certain behaviors sometimes, that can be the use of weapons. Even online gaming can provoke aggressive behaviors among the children, who will unconsciously get used to violent and suffering scenes.

**3- *How much do you find that the Lebanese media is politicized? (Throughout the words and violent scenes that are used in their reports)***

To a very high extent obviously. Each Lebanese TV channel is backed up by a political group, and the news are being shown to the people according to one source of information that would fit each group's position and perspective.

**4- *Do you find that the Lebanese people tend to watch the news on TV that already supports their own political perceptions?***

Definitely! I used to work with NGOs on projects with students; we used to do trainings and workshops in different schools. In each training, we used to ask the students "What



do you watch on TV? Which Lebanese Channel?” They used to answer with one option only. Clearly, the Lebanese people tend to pick one source of information that already supports their own point of views and perceptions.

**5- *To what extent do you find that the Lebanese people in general tend to accept the idea of the use of small arms for the sake of their own protection?***

This idea is very widespread in Lebanon. It’s mainly a consequence of the Lebanese civil war. Also, it’s embedded within the entire Arab cultures in the Middle East since centuries. Not to forget to mention that hunting is a very widespread hobby in the Arab world. People just love the idea of small arms.

Small arms have always been normalized in the Lebanese culture, and what encourages the people to own guns for their protection is the absence of strict regulations in Lebanon, unlike Germany.

A child named Elio was killed in Dhour Shweir at home because he was playing with his brothers with the so-called “protection gun”, where the trigger was pulled accidentally.

Another lady was killed in Tripoli because of a stray bullet during a wedding, she was throwing rice from her own balcony.

An awareness campaign about lethal weapons was launched afterwards.

**Ms. Sonia Nakad**

**1- *As an instructor in Political Science at the Lebanese American University and as an expert in peace building and conflict resolution, do you find that the Lebanese people in general lack the knowledge about conflict resolution through peaceful means?***

We lack a lot of knowledge related to conflict resolution through peaceful means. The traditions in Lebanon taught us that we must deal with conflict in violent ways, where a violent reaction through a violent mean contributes to positive outcomes.

This is largely related to our culture in the Arab world.

***2- Do you find that the Lebanese culture in general tend to accept the use of small arms when it comes to resolving conflicts or perhaps the use of small arms in celebrations (such as weddings or funerals)?***

Yes, it is largely accepted in our society. The first reaction in the Lebanese people's minds is to resort to violence, where the access of guns for people will automatically encourage them to use it when dealing with conflicts.

It is perceived as a way of expressing people's emotions, such as happiness (weddings), sadness (funerals), anger, fear... Especially for men, since in the Arab culture, a man is not allowed to cry or express his emotions, therefore, the only way he can express his emotions is through violence. "If you express anger by shooting, you are a real man by all means". This is how they think, and this is deeply rooted in their minds.

It's kind of the "concept of masculinity" for Arab and Lebanese men, where being "strong", "honorable" and "preserving the name of the family" are highly related to the use of weapons for men especially, which is perceived as a sign of strength rather than a sign of weakness. On the other hand, peacebuilders perceive this idea as a seen of weakness. The Arab culture perceive the peaceful means as being "too idealistic". They are not used to make time for things and are not willing to put energy or effort there.

**3- *How much do you find that the Lebanese news tend to be biased and politically affiliated?***

A lot! Most of the fundings come from political parties. The Lebanese news are used to manipulate the audience emotionally. People are mobilized very quickly because of the Lebanese news. The news can provoke reactions in the streets because of specific info that are shared and can even create a civil war.

**4- *Do you consider that the attitude of the Lebanese might be influenced not only by their environment, but also by the Lebanese news?***

They are highly influenced. For example, it's almost impossible to see a Aounist watching MTV! The Lebanese people are not ready to hear anything that is not in their own comfort zone, simply because people don't want to change their perceptions. They would rather feel safe throughout reinforcing their own ideas through the Lebanese news. Even the social media pertaining to each TV channel (posts, comments, videos...) contain reinforcement for the people's point of views.

Therefore, the media keeps repeating this vicious cycle, by reinforcing the hatred between the groups: the media reinforce the audience's perceptions and in return, the audience reinforce their own perception through the media.

**5- *Do you think that people who aren't politically affiliated or who do not watch Lebanese news on local channels might be less aggressive than those who do?***

At a certain point, yes. Because they will be less polarized and therefore, less aggressive. They might have opinions however it wouldn't be a vital issue for them. For example,

some people cannot skip the daily news. Those people develop more stress. They will be more mobilized, and they will be more stuck in the vicious circle of reinforcement.

On the other hand, people who aren't updated with daily hatred speeches and the Lebanese news' negativity, will be more relaxed and more open minded.

**Ms. Daad Ibrahim**

*1- As a psychologist working with NGOs and within the field of peace building in Lebanon, do you consider that the repeated exposure to violent scenes might influence one's own behavior or attitude?*

Definitely! The repeated exposure to violent behavior will lead this behavior to become normalized among the audience. The first reaction to a violent scene might be shocking, however the repeated exposure to the same scene will be less shocking for the individual. Eventually the individual will get used to it.

Unconsciously, the exposure to violent scenes in the news will give the viewer a feeling of threat and danger, therefore, the fear will lead him to become more aggressive.

Sadly, there are no strict regulations in Lebanon that would ensure that the content within the Lebanese news is ethical and respecting of the viewer's emotions.

An example would be a photo of a Lebanese soldier during the civil war, who was holding a victim's head as if it was a sign of victory. Atrocities can be normalized due to the repeated exposure to violence.

*2- Do you find that the Lebanese news contain huge amounts of violent scenes including the use of small arms?*

Definitely. The use of small arms is perceived as being heroic; it is seen a sign of strength. Even in Lebanese series or movies, the use of small arms is perceived as being normal. The widespread and excessive use of small arms in Lebanon has no boundaries nor limits, and what is encouraging it further is the media itself and Lebanese news who are pushing unconsciously the audience to normalize their use.

***3- Through your experience in workshops with Lebanese civilians, did you find a high level of political biases and fanatic attitudes among them?***

Sadly yes, after all these years of working with different groups within the civil society, sometimes you meet a group and when you try to open a political conversation with them, you can easily spot the hatred towards other groups.

Many Lebanese people perceive fanaticism as being a way of protecting themselves against the unknown.

***4- From a psychological point of view, do we tend to watch the Lebanese channel's news that validate our already existing perceptions when it comes to political affiliations?***

Definitely. The element of fear is always present for the Lebanese people and the only way to contain this fear is to reinforce their feeling of belonging to a group (whether sectarian or confessional). Therefore, one of the ways of reinforcing their perception is by watching the channel's news that already reinforce their group's point of view.

They will feel unconsciously protected when they watch the channel that touches their emotions by addressing their group's own issues. They will never watch another Lebanese channel's news if it will insult their group's interests indirectly. Therefore, their own channel will be giving them fake morals and fake motivation.

*5- Since you previously worked with Kafa NGO, to what extent does the Lebanese mentality in general accept violence as part of our daily life, including the use of small arms?*

Small arms are means used by the Lebanese for their own protection from their own perception. There are no strict regulations regarding small arms ownership and sadly, small arms are easily accessible. The high pressure that the Lebanese people are going through is pushing them to be more aggressive, therefore, a big number of the Lebanese people own a small arm and tend to accept violence very easily as part of their daily lives.