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# Dramatic Treatment Of Drug Addiction Through Media: From Persuasive Techniques To Dramatic Television Effects

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## **Abstract:**

Mass communication is the essence of persuasive communication to the masses, and its dynamism is manifested through a variety of tools. Its general goals are usually achieved through the media, as a form of persuasive art that aims to influence individuals and groups through rational dialogue and emotional appeals, but with scientific and objective methods. In this context, drama plays a significant role as a media product with social, economic, cultural, and civilizational importance in preserving and developing societies within the framework of developmental media. Today, the drama industry has become an intellectual outlet for addressing social problems, incorporating functional elements that align with ethical frameworks and the commitment to credibility. The dramatic structure works to depict, solidify, and shape mental images of various social issues, intertwining technological and artistic factors within social and cultural contexts, while operating within scientific and methodological frameworks.

Therefore, the nature of addressing drug abuse through television drama can be characterized by objectivity that serves societal interests. However, it may also experience dramatic deviations that could have negative repercussions on individual and societal behavior.

**Key Words:** Media treatment - drama - drug addiction - mental image - stereotype - social persuasion

## **Introduction:**

Communication is a social phenomenon that takes place within a system, which consists of networks and modern communication channels that affect public communication functions, especially in terms of public opinion exchange and societal issue discussions. As communication plays a crucial role in the existence of societies and is a fundamental requirement for their survival and continuity, it achieves social cohesion by developing collective values, reinforcing adaptation according to community standards, and guiding and enhancing social behavior.

Given the rapid proliferation of mass communication channels, they are considered essential tools in the integration and structure of the cultural environment and communication system, utilizing various mechanisms and means to help the social framework overcome obstacles and social problems that threaten its stability. Among the most significant social problems is deviant behavior, with one prominent manifestation being drug abuse. Drug abuse is not representative of specific variables or characteristics within society, but rather encompasses various ages, genders, social classes, and even genders. This presents us with a non-standardized situation, where conformity to societal values and standards is lacking.

To restore balance from this state of imbalance, suitable mechanisms and means must be relied upon to address the need resulting from deficiencies in the socialization process, which occurs through mass communication channels. This is due to individuals' failure to perform their functions or a malfunction in performing them within the social organization's various institutions such as the family, school, and media. The social reality, therefore, necessitates the implementation of mechanisms that contribute to reducing the escalation of this phenomenon - drug abuse - particularly through the media, which carries content that is considered an effective means of influencing individuals' behaviors and attitudes within a dynamic social process relying on three key elements: the sender, the receiver, and the media content.

Considering that the media "often implies directing ideas and knowledge,<sup>1</sup>" media outlets perform a vital function through

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<sup>1</sup>FernanTiro: Media, What I Know about Translation by Mahmoud El Ghandour, Arab Publications, Lebanon, First Edition, 1979, p. 7.

the media treatment of phenomena using two main approaches: preventive and remedial. In this research paper, we will focus on the dramatic treatment, examining the adopted methods in the dynamics of the dramatic work as a communicative art form constructed within a cultural context, with a particular emphasis on Arab (Egyptian) and Western (Hollywood) drama as models.

### **1- Basic Concepts:**

#### **• Stereotype:**

"Hamilton" argues that a stereotype is a system of deeply rooted beliefs in individuals' minds, while "Haslam" believes that a stereotype is a set of beliefs about the ethics of a group of people that another group tries to reject from its life and existence explicitly<sup>2</sup>. According to the "Webster" dictionary, a stereotype is anything that is shaped or processed in the same way, impression, or customary manner of belief or thinking. Although stereotypes can be biased and trivial and reflect marginal reactions, they can also be non-trivial or unbiased, far from subjectivity, and sometimes approach objectivity if they are based on principles and higher ideals or if they are a reflection of opinions and experiences of knowledgeable individuals<sup>3</sup>.

Walter Lippmann refers to these images in our minds that provide us with ready-made standards for judging things and interpreting events<sup>4</sup>. They are a systematic and condensed process that refers to the world and expresses our values and beliefs<sup>5</sup>. It is the perception that comes to mind when mentioning a person, group, or nation due to the accumulated cognitive associations in memory that have formed preconceived judgments without considering individual,

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<sup>2</sup>Ad-Daqqouqi (Ibrahim Elias): *The Image of the Turks among the Arabs*, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2002, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Zaher (Maher Farid): *The Mental Image of the Teacher as Reflected in Television Drama among Adolescents*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ain Shams University, Egypt, 2000, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup>Sayed Khalil (Mohamed) and others: *Self-Image and the Other*, Dar Al-Hariri, Egypt, 2004, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup>Saleh (Sulaiman): *Media and the Manufacture of the Mental Image*, Al-Falah Library for Publishing and Distribution, Kuwait, 2005, pp. 151-154.

gender, or cultural differences among its members and groups<sup>6</sup>.

Therefore, individuals' stereotypes are formed through cognitive accumulations based on meanings and interpretations derived from values and beliefs, shaping opinions and attitudes based on the subject's perception, influenced by the quality of relationships and interactions towards it in a positive or negative manner.

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Considering that drug abuse or addiction represents a deviant behavior as it falls outside the framework of religious, social, and legal norms, and the social problems resulting from it, it creates a negative stereotypical image of drug users and addicts. The media is considered one of the primary sources in constructing the stereotypical image or conveying the social reality of drug addicts, especially through television, which relies on sensory tools such as sound, visuals, and linguistic translation, making it a mass media with a comprehensive nature that combines features of other media such as cinema, radio, and press.

Through the content it broadcasts, the media contributes to solidifying the stereotypical image. However, what we are investigating is how to approach this existing stereotype in society, not by erasing it, but by addressing deviant behavior that produces the image of the addicted individual within a preventive and remedial framework using drama.

• **Mental Image:**

Husserl defines it as a mental activity that involves bringing a certain subject to consciousness through the same consciousness. A mental image is any mental activity or process that involves evoking a set of characteristics and

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<sup>6</sup>Shifra (Ali Khalil): *Media and Stereotypical Image, Image of the Arabs and Muslims as a Model*, Dar Osama for Publishing and Distribution, Jordan, 1st edition, 2015, p. 11.

attributes of a subject in the mind, perceiving them, organizing them, and visualizing them in the human mental apparatus<sup>7</sup>.

The mental image is constantly evolving because individuals are exposed to new information, which means the possibility of adding, removing, or replacing certain parts of the image with others. The image is a product of the messages received by the individual in the past and present, as there are many inputs that influence the image and its ability to grow and develop<sup>8</sup>.

Galton also affirmed that individuals use their personal models to form and express images. People differ in how they form mental images because they are exposed to different sensory models through which they evoke mental images. Therefore, their mental images differ.

With the ongoing technological advancements, which have made the media a source of forming mental images through methods and approaches aimed at achieving social persuasion through symbols, connotations, and meanings to express ideas and shape attitudes, the media image, in its various forms and diverse content, especially through audiovisual media, including programs, advertisements, movies, and series, plays a significant role.

In this context, drama, with its narrative context, works on conveying and reinforcing images, harmonizing the linguistic function as a system of signs expressing ideas, as described by De Saussure in his book "Course in General Linguistics," and the function of the photographic image as a technique that allows the fixation of the image of objects and their models in an influential manner, aiming to understand reality as well.

Therefore, the media image of the subject stems from mental conceptions and is presented by the media as conceptions of an intellectual elite<sup>9</sup>. The image presented through dramatic production on addiction is a technically manufactured image designed to influence a complex cultural system by formulating symbols for the message. This may lead to contradictions in the directions of presenting the image, as the media influence the dissemination of the image without creating it from scratch. This brings us to the question of how media processing

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<sup>7</sup>Zahran (Maher Farid): Previous reference, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup>Mohamed Aft (Hiba): *The Image of Rural Women in Drama*, Arabi Publishing and Distribution, Egypt, First Edition, 2021, p. 112.

<sup>9</sup>Mohamed Aft (Hiba): *The Image of Rural Women in Drama*, p. 112.

intervenes between the mental, stereotypical image and the phenomenon manifested in the form of the media image.

• **The concept of persuasion:**

Abdulrahman Aissawi defines persuasion as subject to the laws governing the processes of perception, cognition, and motivation. He states that individuals tend to be persuaded by suggestions believed to come from socially prestigious individuals<sup>10</sup>.

Layla Dawood defines persuasion as a primary mechanism for shaping opinions and positions<sup>11</sup>.

As for Wallace, he sees persuasion as the impact of the source on the recipients in an appropriate manner, helping to achieve desired goals through a specific process, where messages are tailored for this influence<sup>12</sup>.

Therefore, the process of persuasion is the process of influencing others to guide their behavior, positions, and beliefs, or to reinforce or change them, using logical and rational thinking, employing arguments and logical evidence, which is known as conscious persuasion. Emotions and feelings can also be used in this process, appealing to motivations and inclinations.

• **Drama:**

Drama is a form of art that revolves around the depiction of a story involving characters entangled in events. The story is conveyed through the dialogue exchanged between the characters. Words are the means of expressing the thoughts, feelings, and desires of the individuals imagined by the writer<sup>13</sup>. Drama can be auditory, visual, or audiovisual, depending on the medium used.

Visual drama relies on characterization and visualization, aiming to provide an enjoyable viewing experience. It is a means of mass communication and encompasses various fields

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<sup>10</sup>Masbah (Amer): *Social Persuasion: Theoretical Backgrounds and Practical Mechanisms*, Diwan Al-Matabi'at Al-Jami'iya, Algeria, 2nd edition, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Same reference, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup>Same reference, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup>Attiya (Ezz El-Din): *Television Drama: its Components and Regulations*, Islamic University of Gaza, p. 46.

such as theater, cinema, and television. However, they share a common origin, dramatic structure, and composition<sup>14</sup>.

Aristotle defined drama as the art of expressing ideas about life, made possible by actors<sup>15</sup>.

Drama refers to situations or events that involve conflicts between individuals or groups. It showcases patterns of social interactions that impact communities and individuals. Drama seeks to elucidate social, cultural, and political dynamics through a narrative style, reflecting complex and controversial social issues. It sheds light on social transformations and changes, aiming to deepen understanding and raise awareness of social problems through the process of representation in films, TV series, and radio dramas. Despite being relatively young compared to other art forms, television drama has successfully carved out its place among the majority of artistic expressions. Visual drama derives its significance from its openness and interaction with other tools, despite the complexities involved in its production<sup>16</sup>.

It serves as a shining representation of a specific reality in a particular time and place, depicting collective pains and popular struggles. It reflects the nation's culture and its economic, religious, and political challenges in a given era<sup>17</sup>.

#### • **Television drama**

Television drama is considered one of the most pervasive and influential forms of mass communication. It serves as an interactive medium that engages the auditory and visual senses through the use of sound, imagery, and motion. It has been established that humans acquire 90% of information through vision, 8% through hearing, and 2% through other senses<sup>18</sup>. The eye is particularly drawn to motion more than any other sensory input. Television has become intrinsically intertwined with drama, serving as a primary medium for presenting works and engaging with the audience as a highly immersive communicative tool. Its characteristics, which encompass the captivating effects of sound, imagery, and the

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<sup>14</sup>Same reference, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup>Mar'i (Hassan): *How to Write Television Plays*, Rashad Press for Printing and Publishing, Lebanon, First Edition, 2003, p. 161.

<sup>16</sup>Same reference, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Same reference, p. 34.

<sup>18</sup>Shukri (Abdel-Majeed): *Visual Drama*, Arabi Publishing and Distribution, Egypt, 1994, p. 18.

fulfillment of cognitive and psychological satisfactions for viewers, establish its strong connection with the recipient. Furthermore, its presentation of diverse subjects through various dramatic formats, be they comedic or tragic, addresses themes that intersect with everyday social life across different social, cultural, age, and gender demographics. This has been instrumental in bestowing television drama with an influential position in shaping the ideas and opinions of the viewing audience, as well as influencing their perspectives, cultures, and behaviors<sup>19</sup>.

• **Media Framing:**

Media framing refers to the attempt to understand the motives behind media outlets' coverage of a specific event or the framing of a particular issue. These motives can lead to the addition or distortion of information in a manner that reflects the agenda of an institution in presenting the event and reflects the biases of the communicator in selectively highlighting certain facts while neglecting others<sup>20</sup>.

• **Dramatic Treatment:**

Dramatic treatment involves preparing the story for a dramatic work and highlighting its main plotlines. This includes developing a precise screenplay for the work, dividing it into acts, acts into scenes, and scenes into shots, while also writing the dialogue<sup>21</sup>.

• **Addiction to drugs:**

The World Health Organization defines addiction as a psychological and sometimes organic condition resulting from the interaction between the living being and the drug. It is characterized by behavioral responses that usually include a strong urge to take drugs continuously or intermittently to achieve psychological stimulation and often to avoid

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<sup>19</sup>Attiya (Ezz El-Din): Previous reference, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup>Bakhoush (Najib): Media Treatment of the Phenomenon of Digital Addiction, *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Volume 11, Issue 01, March 2022, p. 704.

<sup>21</sup>Aqeel (Mahdi Youssef): *The Attraction of Cinematic Image: A Study in the Aesthetics of Cinema*, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Jadid Al-Mutahida, Lebanon, 2000, p. 213.

unpleasant effects of withdrawal, leading to temporary or chronic narcosis that harms the individual and society<sup>22</sup>.

• **Communication and forms of human expression:**

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human life. Cooley Horton defines it as the mechanism through which human relationships exist and evolve. It encompasses all communication systems, from the most natural and spontaneous to the most culturally complex.

A) Verbal communication: It involves using a linguistic system that can be written and is characterized by specific linguistic symbols with meanings. Edouard Sapir states that "the network of cultural patterns prevailing in a particular civilization is explained by the language that expresses that civilization<sup>23</sup>." It refers to the use of spoken words, phrases, and sentences as a means of communication between individuals to convey and exchange ideas and opinions effectively.

B) Non-verbal communication: Non-verbal communication is not the only means of human interaction. It is also a non-linguistic symbolic social system that consists of natural objects or human creations designed to achieve specific goals. These patterns include body movements, body positions, facial expressions, gestures, and the use of objects outside the human body, such as clothing, jewelry, decorations, tools, musical instruments, symbolic arts, tactile and olfactory signals, as well as institutional systems. These patterns are connected to kinship ties, customs, traditions, religions, legal systems, and economic markets<sup>24</sup>.

Therefore, non-verbal communication encompasses all means that do not primarily rely on spoken language to convey meaning. Instead, it relies on other means such as body language, facial expressions, gestures, tactile and visual communication, such as drawing and photography. Non-verbal formats have been adopted to organize forms of communication between individuals, groups, and civilizations. In theater, especially in silent theater forms like mime and

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<sup>22</sup>Al-Bara'een (Abdullah Abdulaziz): *Social Work in the Field of Drug Addiction*, Dar Hamed for Publishing and Distribution, 2014, pp. 16-17.

<sup>23</sup>Al-Amrani (Mustafa): *Communication: Models and Challenges*, Al-Alam Al-Kutub Al-Hadith, Jordan, 2016, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup>Jaques Durand: *Forms of Communication*, Dunod Edition, France, 1984, p. 5.

pantomime, we recognize the importance of body language in its indicative and kinetic manifestations as a substitute for verbal language<sup>25</sup>.

## **2. Persuasion Strategies:**

There are various methods and techniques employed by the sender to effectively deliver a message and achieve its intended goal. Thus, the nature of the subject necessitates the use of appropriate and suitable approaches by the message sender. One of the most important strategies for persuading an audience include:

### **a. Psychodynamic Strategy:**

This strategy relies on intelligent utilization to convey persuasive messages without self-resistance, psychological negation, or cognitive negligence<sup>26</sup>. It employs psychological methods, such as dismantling arguments and focusing on emotions, to understand the targeted audience through a deep comprehension of prevailing social and cultural dynamics within the society or community. Employing this strategy leads to the acceptance and positive response to the message, as it influences the cognitive components of the recipient (the audience) by relying on fundamental concepts in its application. These include considering psychological needs, motivations, beliefs, interests, fears, values, opinions, and positions as essential factors for individual behavior.

### **b. Socio-Cultural Strategy:**

In this regard, "Defour" argues that one of the established strategies is to envision the social expectations of the group... and in this regard, the received message should find social endorsement<sup>27</sup>. Social endorsement is achieved through the alignment between individual behavioral rules and standards within the community. This is accomplished through the process of socialization, both intentional and unintentional, by which individuals adopt the culture of the society and the collective rules and behavioral standards through social learning, imitation, and conformity. This facilitates integration and adaptation, protecting individuals from social exclusion and marginalization in case of deviating from the shared general behavioral norms, contradicting social expectations.

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<sup>25</sup>Al-Amrani (Mustafa): Previous reference, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup>Masbah (Amer): Previous reference, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Same Reference P54

From a media perspective, utilizing this strategy involves presenting media content that is connected to culture and societal values. It serves as tools for influencing behavior by utilizing cultural and social symbols, both verbal and non-verbal, to effectively communicate and impact individuals' behaviors.

Therefore, this strategy relies on the intellectual, cognitive, and belief background of individual and societal behavior in a harmonious manner.

### **c. Meaning Construction Strategy:**

The persuasion process, according to this strategy, targets the individual's cognitive structure in order to replace existing meanings or create new ones, modify them, or solidify them. It requires having sufficient knowledge to effectively engage with the individual's cognitive system. For this purpose, we present the audience with an adequate amount of information that leads to the construction of meanings within their cognitive framework, which, in turn, influences the emergence of behavior that aligns with the persuasion and influence plan<sup>28</sup>.

According to communication scholars, this strategy is the method through which media content affects behavior by developing beliefs about the real world by organizing meanings in the form of themes and arranging them in a hierarchical order based on their importance to individuals and society.

This strategy relies on the employment of experts and influential personalities who are perceived as credible and trustworthy. It also focuses on linguistic systems and imagery within dramatic narratives to stimulate emotions and provoke thinking through symbols that reflect the intended message to the audience in accordance with their social expectations, interests, and inclinations. By doing so, the dramatic objective is achieved, as the content becomes susceptible to acceptance and dissemination, especially if it aligns with the cultural and social context of the audience.

### **3. Techniques of Persuasion and Influence:**

These are the tools used to influence the opinions and behaviors of individuals and communities through presenting arguments, evidence, and reasoning based on logical and rational aspects. The technique employed may not solely rely on reason but also on emotional control, focusing on the

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<sup>28</sup> Same Reference P55

fundamental needs and desires of individuals. This is achieved through content that varies depending on the nature of the medium, particularly in audiovisual media, where emphasis is placed on the role of language with its connotations, social symbols, and its ability to direct attention to the subject matter. This requires a deep understanding of the audience's characteristics and the use of appropriate methods to capture their interest and achieve persuasion for the presented vision through the content.

The most important techniques can be presented as follows:

**a. Modeling Technique:**

Modeling refers to the rules and characteristics adopted for the socialization process. It includes the individual or group's traits or cultural aspects, aiming to analyze the diversity of orientations and types of behavior in order to regulate social organization.

This technique is derived from social learning theory and aims to change and modify behavior or create new behavioral and cognitive learning, also known as human behavior development. However, it should be noted that individuals can learn negative behaviors, such as violence and criminal activities, by imitating models presented through dramatic scenes. Therefore, employing the modeling technique should be done consciously considering the psychological aspect of personality, and this is where media supervision plays a role in avoiding the unintended consequences of expectations.

**b. Social Proof Technique:**

This technique may overlap to some extent with the modeling technique as it relies on the principle of social proof as evidence for correcting incorrect social behavior. It is based on using real-life models from social reality as a reference for the target audience, often presented in documentary films.

It presents personal experiences, narratives of facts and events, and testimonials based on human social experiences derived from real facts. It also relies on scientific research to enhance the strength of arguments and increase their acceptance by the target audience.

**c. Directed Compliance Technique:**

This technique is based on respect and obedience to authority figures or social status and roles, such as religious leaders,

political leaders, legal professionals, doctors, and even celebrities who are also influential in society. The application of this technique depends on social categories that have positive social influence due to their image in individuals' mental perception, leading to belief. Some researchers consider this as an entry point to emphasize the importance of the source in the dynamics of persuasive communication. It encompasses elements of social status, authority, trustworthiness, expertise, social roles, or social functions, but in the way that the recipient perceives social persuasion<sup>29</sup>.

Directed compliance, as a persuasive technique, relies on building relationships that gain trust with the target audience by using a social position that has social acceptance and presence. This evokes the mental image or stereotype carrying the social impression about the sender, influencing the quality of response to the message through positive interaction in achieving persuasion.

The directed compliance technique can be effectively utilized in drama as a social representation tool, showcasing realistic life situations that aid the audience in understanding and accepting specific ideas. By stimulating critical thinking on particular issues and presenting new ideas and complex situations, this technique gradually reinforces the audience's mental image of social roles and responsibilities.

This technique is associated with three fundamental variables representing symbolic authority. The first variable is social ranks or titles, which are connected to positions of power and command respect and admiration based on social status, roles, and responsibilities. These roles include religious figures, political leaders, military ranks, prestigious government positions, and socially esteemed professions. The second variable is dress style, which is another symbol of authority, carrying connotations of respect and esteem, such as military uniforms or judicial attire. These symbols indicate dignity, firmness, discipline, authority, and punishment. The dress style or type serves as a symbolic characteristic within a specific cultural context, representing affiliation with a particular group defined by its appearance or color. It signifies professional or social belonging and exerts influence through visual cues in

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<sup>29</sup>Al-Badi (Mohammed Mohammed): *The Theoretical Foundations of Persuasion*, Al-Faisal Library, First Edition, 1986, p. 196.

non-verbal communication systems, leading to automatic compliance.

The third variable is adornments, referring to physical elements that also function as non-verbal communication components. Examples include the type of vehicles used, such as police cars, which are mentally associated with periodic surveillance. These adornments represent an additional non-verbal element within the communication system. They exemplify the material aspects that are part of the overall persuasive framework.

#### **Role-playing technique:**

This technique is based on the assumption, inspired by the sociologist Erving Goffman, that social life resembles a theatrical performance. Pierre Bourdieu further elaborated on this concept, suggesting that every communicative behavior falls within the realm of a social game, which is not only social but also psychological<sup>30</sup>.

Role-playing serves as a means to encourage participants to contemplate behavior change by embodying roles and characters that represent experiences of involvement, such as portraying drug addicts. This approach helps enhance awareness of the harms of drug addiction and its impact on individual social lives and societal consequences. This method is commonly referred to as psychodrama or psychological theatrical representation.

#### **4- Dramatic Approaches to Addressing Drug and Addiction Themes in Arab Drama, with a Focus on Egyptian Drama:**

Drama is considered one of the most captivating and engaging artistic media formats, attracting viewers. The time frame in which the dramatic presentation takes place plays a crucial role in achieving dissemination and impact. Moreover, the associated needs within this domain also require fulfillment.

The competition in the realm of drama, in general, has been linked to communal events, particularly the month of Ramadan, during which requirements change and needs intensify. This is especially true regarding the need for entertainment and diversion, practices that fulfill the desire for spending time. Consequently, drama has become an outlet for

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<sup>30</sup>Al-Amrani (Mustafa): Previous reference, p. 15.

eliminating the false social void in individuals' daily lives, particularly among young people.

Before delving into Arab (specifically Egyptian) drama and its content related to drugs and society, it is important to note that our selection is based on the status of Egyptian dramatic production and its significance in the Arab consumer market, particularly the entertainment industry. According to "Mordor Intelligence," a research agency, it is estimated that the size of this market will reach \$42.72 billion by 2024 in the Middle East<sup>31</sup>. Additionally, the diverse production and its creative collective memory contribute to the artistic movement at the Arab level.

We have addressed the media treatment and handling of addiction and drug-related topics in Egyptian drama, focusing on two distinct periods. The first period extends from 1931 with the film "Cocaine" to 1993 with the film "85 Crimes."

The first film addressing the social context of drug addiction was presented in Egypt as a result of historical colonial influences during the presence of British and Australian soldiers who mixed with the camps during World War I. This phenomenon persisted until the early 1930s, but it was considered a transient pathological condition. The societal response to it was one of rejection and condemnation, leading to a halt in production until 1958 with the film "The Elder Brother," which depicted a young drug dealer. Subsequently, works addressing this theme continued.

An analysis of this dramatic series from 1931 to 1993 reveals that the dramatic treatment of the presented stories, according to analytical observations, had a stereotypical element and a contrived tool for excitement and suspense. The elements of excitement and suspense can be a valid and renewed introduction if writers and directors delve into the psychological motivations that turn an ordinary person into a criminal. Additionally, addressing the social and economic causes that contribute to the formation of criminal organizations can provide insightful content. While it is

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<sup>31</sup>Saeed (Islam): Al-Yawm Al-Sabea newspaper, Tuesday, 12th March 2024, 9:44 AM.

acknowledged that some films have explored this path, they remain exceptions to a general rule<sup>32</sup>.

This film series did not systematically and profoundly explore the true reasons and motivations behind drug use or addiction through scientific, intellectual, practical, and environmental background studies of the characters. Instead, the treatment remained superficial, using them as material for excitement and dramatic situations<sup>33</sup>.

As a result, drama did not adopt a realistic approach to the issue of drugs as a social phenomenon produced by psychological and social variables. These films were characterized by a stereotypical combination of elements, including:

- Depicting law enforcement institutions, such as the police, as punitive establishments.
- Linking drug addiction with family problems associated with sexuality, such as marital infidelity.
- Associating drugs with material gain, considering them a source of profit and a means to achieve social status and power through wealth.
- Presenting an image of Arab women who deviate from the general characteristics of femininity in general, and Arab women in particular.

Therefore, neglecting the psychological aspect of characters weakens the drama's ability to persuade and directs the dramatic line towards an ending that consciously relates to realism. This works to impact the viewers' psychological side and contributes to enhancing and modifying social behavior. Exaggerating the negative portrayal of women does not align with social perceptions and expectations of women's roles in general, potentially hindering social acceptance of these roles.

On the linguistic level, promoting products appears through expressions derived from the selection of titles for dramatic products, such as "Cocaine: The Temptation," "Realm of Hallucination," and "The Knives' Tricks." These phrases provoke thoughts of a love for discovery through verbal

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<sup>32</sup>Ragheb (Nabil): Stylistic Elements in Egyptian Cinema, Egyptian Cinema Files, Ministry of Culture, Egypt, Issue 15, page 319. [WWW.BOOKS.4.ALL.NET](http://WWW.BOOKS.4.ALL.NET).

<sup>33</sup>Same reference, page 320.

symbols that do not correspond to the cultural context of Arab societies.

On the other hand, despite the dramatic flaw resulting from the absence of psychological construction, it is possible to identify the most important themes raised by these films on the level of social and institutional relationships:

- The role of credibility in social relationships and its absence negatively affects the continuity of relationships, given the presence of a moral flaw that may lead to behavioral deviations.
- Highlighting the impact of drugs on social life, especially within families, which may lead to the breakdown of the family structure and disrupt the societal order in its functional form.
- Emphasizing the importance of collaboration between individuals and social institutions in limiting the spread of this phenomenon, such as the police institution, and portraying a positive image of it as a supportive entity for maintaining security, not merely a punitive institution. This way, the mental image of state institutions and their role in preserving public order is strengthened.

The dramatic context also presents dual tendencies characterized by positivity and negativity.

Employing the image of women in films in various forms, ranging from submissiveness, victimhood of deviant behavior, to empowered social women through their affiliation with the social control institution - the police - which has a professional role in curbing deviant and criminal behavior.

The image of addicts is limited to the male stereotype, but the focus of the image is directed towards the female gender, which may indicate a reverse and provocative propaganda targeting imitation within the female community.

Moving on to another period, contemporary drama has played a role in shaping the viewers' mental image regarding many social issues. After monitoring and analyzing the media observatory of the Fund for Combating and Treating Addiction and Substance Abuse in Egypt for the years 2011, 2012, and 2013, it was confirmed that drama effectively contributed to the indirect promotion of smoking and its various forms<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup>Anti-Addiction and Treatment Fund: Ministry of Social Solidarity (Egypt)<http://drgcontrol.org.eg>

The observatory revealed that 72% of high school students obtain their knowledge about addiction and drugs from television drama.

Through the analysis of the content of 27 dramatic works in 2022, scenes related to addiction and drugs were classified as follows<sup>35</sup>:

- Smoking scenes: accounting for 9.2% of the total duration of the works, highlighting different types of smoking: 7.70% cigarettes, 12% hookah, 3.8% pipe, 7% e-cigarette. It is worth noting that a single scene may include multiple types of smoking.

- Alcohol scenes: accounting for 5.0% of the total duration, with the prominent types of drugs being alcohol at 86%, cannabis at 26%, heroin at 9%, and marijuana at 3%. Similar to smoking scenes, a single scene may involve multiple drugs.

#### **Influencing behaviors and beliefs:**

Drama has shown habitual behaviors in 71% of cases for the purpose of forgetting worries, 20% for light-heartedness, 6% as pain relief, and 2% for aiding concentration. It is possible for a scene to contain multiple beliefs.

Medical experts, including Dr. Wael Safwat, an internal medicine specialist and a representative of the International Society of Addiction Medicine, have affirmed that drama has become a covert means of advertising smoking<sup>36</sup>.

This can be analyzed through the connection of scenes with the ability to make decisions and personal freedom.

The association of smoking with social situations related to problems makes dealing with the situation a simplistic framework that does not seek to find solutions. Instead, smoking becomes a symbolic tool representing the existence of a social problem, and the accumulation of social problems leads to the repetition of this behavior, resulting in health issues such as airway obstruction, cardiovascular diseases, and vascular diseases.

#### **Positive aspects of Egyptian Arabic drama:**

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<sup>35</sup>Same Reference

<sup>36</sup>Alam (Hope): Television Drama as a Main Cause of Drug Spread Among Youth"Al-Youm Al-Sabea Newspaper, 06.07.2014. [www.youm7.com/stori/2014/7/06/%D8%AC](http://www.youm7.com/stori/2014/7/06/%D8%AC).

Arabian drama has shown positive dramatic lines, especially after the issuance of the Commitment Document for Drama Producers in 2015, regarding the portrayal of drug-related issues and adherence to age ratings for dramatic works. The statistical results have shown:

- A decrease in the percentage of smoking scenes from 13% of the total duration of works in 2017 to 2.9% in 2022.
- A decrease in the percentage of drug use scenes from 4% to 0.5% during the same years.
- Complete absence of scenes depicting children engaging in drug use.

Consequently, the results of the media observatory were considered an official scientific reference for the development of the International Framework Convention of the World Health Organization in 2018, aimed at implementing measures to address all forms of indirect marketing of tobacco products<sup>37</sup>.

From this, it becomes evident that the legal framework has contributed to achieving control over dramatic works.

Analysis of the media portrayal of addiction in Western drama:

Hollywood is considered the oldest film industry with roots dating back to the history of cinema in the United States. It is the primary source of the most successful films in global cinema, which also tackle numerous subjects present in the social context. Here, we will highlight the most important films that address the topic of drugs.

- The film titled "Basketball Diaries," released in 1995, is a dramatic and crime biographical portrayal. The main character is a student and a basketball player, and the story is inspired by true events that the writer documented in his diary between the ages of 12 and 16. The dramatic line leads the student into the world of drugs and crime, turning him into a criminal unable to escape the drug world. The film's dramatic context reinforces the negative image of drug use and addiction.

Among the negative consequences of drug use on both individual and societal levels, on an individual level, it is depicted through the disruption of the student's academic and

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<sup>37</sup> Anti-Addiction and Treatment Fund: Ministry of Social Solidarity (Egypt) <http://drgcontrol.org.eg>

athletic career, leading to a social decline based on variables related to educational success and athletic excellence.

Highlighting the teenage demographic to emphasize the danger of drugs on this group is crucial due to the unique characteristics of this stage, which are psychological and social tendencies towards imitation and emulation. This makes them susceptible to engaging in social actions driven by emotions, far from objectivity and rationality in practice.

Here, the strategy of psychological dynamics in persuading viewers, especially the youth demographic, about the dangers of drugs is evident. It involves altering their social trajectory through a dramatic narrative that presents arguments, but with a focus on emotions. This approach allows the film to achieve its social objective, which is steering teenagers away from drugs.

The film "Breaking the Babo" was released in 2011. It is a Brazilian documentary that narrates the history of the war on drugs starting from the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 1961. The film relies on a series of interviews with former world leaders, including the President of the United States Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Brazilian Fernando Henrique Cardoso, as well as leaders from Colombia, Switzerland, Norway, and Mexico. It was filmed in 18 cities worldwide and featured interviews with 168 individuals, including police officers and prisoners. The film showcases scenes from around the world and explores the American prison system.

This film employs two main techniques to achieve social persuasion regarding the dangers of drug use and addiction. The first technique is social proof, achieved by presenting personal experiences of prisoners and providing evidence that confirms the fate of addicts or drug traffickers through the exposure to the prison system. Consequently, the film's dramatic construction is based on real social evidence, which enhances the strength of the arguments, influences the viewers' psyche, promotes pro-social behavior, and reduces susceptibility to errors.

The second technique is directed compliance, achieved by involving socially influential figures and positions of power and authority. Here, the importance of social status emerges as a key variable influencing this documentary drama. The higher the source's social status, the more likely they are to be

influential during the persuasive communication dynamics<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, social roles, particularly the professional roles presented in this film, played a powerful role in influencing the audience, despite the variations among the roles portrayed. These roles carry high social status implications and embody elements of credibility such as trustworthiness, loyalty, dignity, and confidence, especially as they represent official and security entities in their respective countries.

Consequently, this film highlights the power of social rank authority by employing appropriate leadership figures. It also emphasizes the social class position associated with the subject of the documentary production, which is addiction, by showcasing different spatial domains to illustrate the extent of the phenomenon in societies without geographical boundaries.

The film "The Panic in Need Park" is a 1971 movie that falls under the genre of romantic drama. It revolves around a group of teenage heroin addicts, shedding light on the emotional relationships among teenagers and how they can lead to deviant behavior.

This film adopts a dynamic psychological strategy and utilizes social proof techniques by employing dramatic events that give rise to ethical issues beyond the scope of addiction. It demonstrates that drug abuse not only affects individuals on an individual level but also has social implications. It is part of a series of interconnected social problems. Furthermore, the film draws attention to the influence of the developmental stage and its specificity on teenage behavior, particularly in the construction of relationships through sequential processes and social simulation. This contributes to the spread of deviant behavior within peer groups, making it a common model of teenage behavior regardless of gender, where the degree of simulation becomes a fundamental mechanism in interactions and relationship-building.

Additionally, the film highlights the crucial point of focusing on individuals' psychological aspects and their role in inclining towards drug use. It emphasizes the psychological construction of personality and its relationship to drug addiction.

On the other hand, the film raises ethical issues resulting from drug abuse, such as betrayal. However, the cultural context of

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<sup>38</sup>Al-Badi (Mohammed Mohammed): The Theoretical Foundations of Persuasion, previous reference, p. 198.

Hollywood cinema differs from the Arab cultural context, which is governed by moral religious teachings, customs, and traditions that direct behavior and prevent deviation from general behavioral norms.

Furthermore, upon analyzing the portrayal of drug phenomenon in Arab and foreign films, it is evident that there are numerous intersections, particularly in terms of defining drugs, their types, the ways they are consumed, and acquiring linguistic competence related to the phenomenon. This makes drama a source of knowledge for different social groups.

The utilization of Western drama in employing dynamic psychological strategies is more prominent than in Arab drama, but this does not negate the development and growth of contemporary Arab drama in employing such strategies.

The utilization of Arab drama for comedy in addressing this subject in previous time periods was predominantly comedic in nature, which weakened the seriousness of the portrayal and thus deviated from achieving the true objectives in addressing these social issues.

#### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, media remains vital and effective in societal development by raising awareness about social problems and contributing to finding organized solutions through artistic creativity that attracts audiences with its thrilling and persuasive techniques, carrying intellectual depth either overtly or implicitly. This helps establish a mental image where positivity and negativity intertwine. Within this dynamic influenced by persuasive mechanisms, it becomes a process governed by a combination of social, psychological, material, and even physiological elements with all their variables and interactions as an integrated unit that cannot be fragmented. Dealing with drama in a fragmented manner obscures the vision, thus deviating from the true objectives.

The path of media in general, and drama in particular, will only achieve stability and credibility within the framework of commitment to ethical rules and regulations as a fundamental element in maintaining the balance of the moral order, adhering to agreements that achieve a balance between media freedom and the interests of society in addressing issues and social problems based on comprehensive scientific knowledge and interpretation within a meaningful framework guided by scientific principles and methodologies. By doing so, it avoids

the functional failure of drama in addressing social problems. In this context, we arrive at the role of media governance through pre-screening of dramatic productions before they are presented in the media.

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