

The Influence of Media Violence Exposure on Children: An Analytical Study of Parents Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of rough media content on children as per point of view of their guardians. It was explored how exposure to savagery in TV and video recreations impacts children's behavior. Survey, research method was employed. Data was collected from 150 mothers of children in Islamabad through stratified random sampling technique, divided equally between housewives and working women to ensure diverse perspectives. The Cultivation Theory was applied in this study. According to the results, children who frequently watch violent content on TV programs and play violent video games exhibit increased aggression and behavioral changes. Parents reported that their children watched violent action content on TV or in video games, leading to more aggressive interactions with their friends and family members. The results showed that many children spend a lot of time watching TV and playing video games, especially fighting games, which might affect how they behave. Parents observed the changes in their behavior, which led to aggression and violence, and this happened due to the introduction of savage media substance. Overall, this research shows important results about how media violence affects children's behavior and highlights the important role that parents play in watching and guiding their children's media use.

Keywords: *Media, Children, Changes in Behaviour Cultivation Theory Aggression.*

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Introduction/Background

In the 1900s, there were important changes in how people think and interact because of the rise of mass media. Mass media, like radio, TV, movies, videos, video games, and the internet, are very important in our everyday lives. They greatly influence what we believe, how we act, and what we consider important. Television has become an important part of many family activities. In many homes, the living room is set up around the TV, making it the center of family activities.

Some children even do their homework in front of the television. So, TV has become the main way kids get entertained and learn new things. Since Pakistani media opened up in 2002, many new TV channels have appeared, showing many different types of programs. These include news, cartoons, dramas, music, reality shows, crime shows, current affairs, documentaries, movies, and dance shows. Sadly, a lot of these programs have violent parts that can influence how kids act.

Children don't think about things the same way adults do. They don't have enough experience and skills to understand what they see, and they often can't tell the difference between make believe and real life. For example, kids between 3 and 10 might think that everything they see on TV is real and true. This makes them more at risk of the bad effects of television. Watching a lot of violence can make kids more aggressive. Watching one violent show can make people more aggressive. Kids who watch shows with lots of realistic violence that happens often and isn't punished are more likely to copy what they see. They also see a lot of violent stuff on TV from different programs, like dramas, shows, crime shows, and news.

Most primetime TV shows have 70% violence, and kids' shows have 93% violence. During the years 1973 to 1995, shows on prime-time television showed about 5 acts of violence every hour, while children's shows had about 23 acts of violence per hour (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1994). Video games are a popular way for kids, especially boys, to have fun, but many of them are violent. Many kids play video games for at least two hours a week. Fourth-grade boys play video games for an average of 9.5 hours each week. (Funk, 1997). Violent shows and video games can hurt kids by making them act more aggressively toward other people. After seeing a lot of violence on TV or online, kids might start to think that violence happens a lot in real life, and this can make them scared. Violent video games have a stronger negative impact on how children act than violent shows on TV (Sherry, 2001). Media can influence how people

think and see the world. Since TV became popular, many studies have looked at how it affects the behavior and thinking of children.

A survey in England found that parents think watching TV has influenced how their kids live, dress, behave, and talk. It was found that 61% of programs showed violence, while only 4% had a message against violence. In 55% of the programs, violence in real life was shown, but only 16% showed that there were lasting bad effects. In 45% of the programs, the person who did the violence was not punished. In 71% of the scenes, there was no negative feedback or sadness about the violence, and in 42% of the cases, the violence was shown in a funny way (Barbara, 1996). Children learn to be aggressive from seeing violence in movies and TV, thinking they will get rewards if they act aggressively toward others. Violence and bad things on TV affect children less than violent video games do (Anderson, 2001).

Watching violent media for a long time is one of many things that can make children act more aggressively and violently. Some kids like watching violent stuff, but it can make them feel stressed, scared, and anxious. Kids might get used to real violence if they see too much violence in movies, video games, or on TV. Violent TV shows and movies can lead to bad personality traits and make children more aggressive.

This study wants to help parents manage how much media violence their kids see and change how they think about violent toys and actions. It also gives advice to people in charge of the media about how to think more carefully about how they show violence in their stories.

Literature Review

Television has long been considered a significant hindrance to education, as it takes time away from other activities and can impact how well students do in school (Murray, 1993). Educationalists fear that television viewing may displace children's reading habits and negatively impact their academic achievements (Gunter, 1990). A study in London found that boys aged 12 to 17 who watch violent shows on TV tend to behave more aggressively. Watching violent TV shows is linked to more aggressive behaviors in kids as they become young adults (Bushman, 2001).

Social Learning Theory says that kids often copy things they see, especially if they have a good reason to do it (Dorr, 1986). TV affects how children act because they tend to copy what they see on screen. The first few years of life are very important for learning how to interact with others, and kids' actions are greatly affected by what they watch on TV during this time (Passolunghi, 1974). Kids learn about themselves, life,

and how to act in different situations from many sources, including TV (Gunter, 1990).

Parents have noticed that their young kids often act violently, copying what they see on TV. Sometimes, these actions are aimed at younger brothers or sisters (DeGaetano, 1990). In 2001, a sad event happened when a 6-year-old girl was accidentally killed by a 12-year-old boy who was pretending to do wrestling moves. A 17-year-old boy in Texas burned himself while trying to do a trick he saw on an MTV show. These events show the "copycat effect," where people try to do things they see on TV. Boys and younger kids are more likely to copy others than girls and older kids.

A study aimed to find out if kids are more likely to copy aggressive behavior they see in real life, in movies, or in cartoons. It found that kids who witnessed aggressive behavior played more aggressively than those who didn't see it. Children who watched real-life aggressive people copied their behavior more than kids who saw cartoons. However, there was no big difference in how children copied others, whether they watched live demonstrations or films. The study found that seeing humans acting aggressively in movies has the biggest impact on how people behave aggressively (Goldstein, 1996).

The Bobo Doll Experiment, done by Bandura in 1961, included 24 preschool kids who were divided into three groups. One group watched adults playing meanly with a Bobo doll, another group watched adults playing nicely, and a third group didn't see any adults at all. The study found that kids who saw aggressive role models acted more aggressively themselves. Boys were more aggressive than girls after seeing male role models. This experiment showed how watching aggressive behavior can affect how children act.

Cultivation Theory helps us understand how violent media can affect people's behavior. It says that watching violent media for a long time can change how people see the world, making them think that there is more violence in real life than there actually is (Gerbner & Morgan, 2002). Television has become the main source of entertainment, ideas, and information, taking over from other options (Tankard, 2001). This monopoly leads to people sharing similar ideas, roles, and values. Gerbner and Gross created the Cultivation Theory, which said that watching a lot of television affects all heavy viewers in the same way. For example, people who watch a lot of violent shows on TV might think that crime is very common in society. In contrast, those who watch less TV might think differently (Tankard, 2001).

Many studies have looked at how violent video games affect children's behavior. Anderson (2001) looked at many studies and found that playing violent video games leads to more aggressive actions, thoughts, and feelings, while reducing helpful behaviors toward others. This finding matches previous research showing that violent video games can be bad for kids' behavior (Sherry, 2001). A global study by UNESCO on media violence (Groebel, 1998) discovered that 93% of children in cities or towns with electricity spend over half of their free time watching TV. Watching a lot of TV, especially shows with violence, greatly affects how children act and think. The study showed that kids with a TV in their bedrooms are more likely to watch bad shows. Only 43% of parents try to stop their kids from seeing inappropriate content.

When children see violent scenes in media, they may become less sensitive to real violence. Huesmann (1986) found that kids who watch a lot of violent shows on TV are more likely to think that being aggressive is a good way to solve problems. This belief can make kids more scared and worried because they see the world as a more unsafe place. Also, kids who often see violence in media might care less about others' pain and may be more likely to act aggressively.

Theoretical Framework

The media is now one of the main ways people get information and entertainment. So, most people believe what it says is true. Cultivation theory helps us understand how violent media can change people's behavior. It helps us understand how watching violent media affects children's behavior and growth. The theory says that if a child often watches shows full of violence and crime, they might think their own world is also filled with violence, crime, and bad people. This is because they can't easily tell what is real and what is make-believe. In the second half of the 1900s, television quickly became very popular, and understanding how it affects people is important according to cultivation theory. At that time, television became the main way people found entertainment, ideas, and information, making other sources less popular (Tankard, 2001). It changes how people think and act. The main theory used to examine how violent media affects behavior is called Cultivation Theory. This theory suggests that watching violent media for a long time can change how people see the world, leading them to think it is more violent than it really is (Gerbner & Morgan, 2002)

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory was created by George Gerbner and Larry Gross. It suggests that watching television over time changes how people see the world around them. This theory says that people who watch a lot of television are more likely to see the world as a scary and dangerous place, which is called "mean world syndrome" (Gerbner & Morgan, 2002). This idea is especially important for kids, who are more easily affected by what they watch on TV. Gerbner and Gross first said that TV affects all heavy viewers in the same way. Cultivation Theory is a good fit for this study because it helps us understand how watching violent media can affect children's thoughts and actions over time. This theory suggests that watching a lot of TV, especially shows with violence, can change how people see the world. It makes them think that the world is more dangerous and violent than it really is (Gerbner & Morgan, 2002)

Application of the Study

The study looks at how kids who often see violent movies or shows view the world. Using Cultivation Theory, the study can look at how watching violent TV shows and playing violent video games a lot can change how children act, making them more aggressive and scared. It is especially helpful for looking at how media violence affects children's thoughts and actions in the long run because it focuses on the effects of seeing violence many times over a longer period.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objective of the study was to examine how exposure to violent media content influences the behavior of children.

Research Questions

1. How does the frequency and type of violent media content influence children's behavior?
2. How does exposure to violent media content affect the behavior of children?

Research design and Methodology

This study uses a research method that focuses on numbers and measurements to look at how exposure to violent media affects children. This design helped understand how the different things being studied are related to each other. For this research, a survey was used to explore how

watching violent media affects children's attitudes and behaviors. A good questionnaire was used to collect information, which helped the researchers get detailed answers from the selected group of people.

The survey method was selected because it would enable the collection of quantitative data on a greater scale, ensuring that the results would bring statistically reliable insights into the link between watching violent media and how people act. A questionnaire was developed meticulously to include relevant questions to cover different dimensions of children's behavioral responses to violent content, such as aggression, emotional regulation, and social interactions. This approach ensured that the data collected was structured and detailed enough to help researchers identify trends, patterns, and correlations in how violent media content influences children's attitudes. Since a standardized instrument and approach of sampling were used, the study was set to produce findings that could contribute meaningfully to the academic discourse on media effects and child development.

Population

The population for this research study consisted of mothers of children living in Islamabad, Pakistan, because it is the capital of Pakistan. Due to the need for an explanatory approach to these children, analysts were unable to select the children as the population under consideration. They selected mothers whose children were aged between 3 and 10 years.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, the researchers selected the city of Islamabad for the purpose of the research, where they selected mothers of children aged between 3 and 10 years. In this regard, 150 mothers were chosen as the sample size, employing stratified random sampling techniques. The stratification was according to the occupational statuses of mothers into two categories housewives and working women, (68 mothers) from each. The questionnaire was designed to collect detailed information regarding the children's behaviors on the research objectives. Out of 150 questionnaires that were distributed among the selected mothers, a total of 136 were returned, The remaining 14 were not returned or incomplete and could not be used for analysis. The responses of 136 completed responses were systematically coded and analyzed using SPSS, to ensure that meaningful insights that are aligned to the research objectives were obtained.

Results and Discussion

Table 01

Media types usage by children

S.No	Children Activities	Frequency	Percent
1	Movies watch	36	26%
2	TV watch	41	30%
3	Online Video games	19	14%
4	Mobile and Computer	29	22%
5	Sports activity	11	8%
	Total	136	100.0

According to the results, the activities children engage in and preferred media as well as physical activities. It was found to be watching television with 30% of the children or 41 out of 136 and 26% watched movies. Mobile phones and computers are used by 22%.

Table 02

Types of content children like to watch

S. No	Media content Children like to watch	Frequency	Percent
1	Musical Program	16	11.76%
2	Educational Program	18	13.24%
3	Entertainment Program	12	8.82%
4	Cartoon Movies	7	5.15%
5	Online Gaming Streams	32	23.53%
6	Interactive Learning	12	8.82%
7	Fighting Games	39	28.68%
	Total	136	100.00%

According to the results in the table, It was found that the findings of the research give a thorough classification of children's preferences based on various types of media content. Fighting Games is the category, which tops the lists with a frequency of 39 (28.68%). It showed that children like action and competitive content. Online Gaming Streams were the second

most favored choice with 32 responses (23.53%). Educational Programs ranked third, with 18 responses, or 13.24%, representing a sizeable category that emphasized both learning and entertainment. Musical Programs also featured 16 responses which represent a preference by children. Entertainment programs and interactive learning shared equal frequencies, each with 12 responses (8.82%). This suggests that children's attention is fairly evenly between general entertainment content and educational programs. Overall, the results indicate that children like an active, engaging, and experiential forms of multimedia, combined with educational and musical content that remains highly important.

Table 03

Exposure to violent media content and behavior of children

S.No	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Dramatic change in your children since he has been watching?	11	15	17	67	26
2	Do you think that your child has become forceful after observing?	16	29	12	55	24
3	Do you believe your child imitates behavior after watching	8	19	9	80	20
4	Are you irritated by your child's behavior?	8	20	24	71	13
5	Do you have ever received any complaints from the teacher about your child's aggressive behavior?"	7	36	61	23	9
6	Do you think contents have shaped your child's behavior toward toys	24	25	13	49	24
7	Do you believe that these contents have negatively impacted your child's personality	16	28	21	49	21
8	Do you think savage substance plays a crucial part within the advancement of negative behaviors	11	36	28	41	20
9	Do you think that seeing more violent stuff makes kids act worse	1	7	5	91	32

According to the results, it was found that the result of a children's survey on the influence violent contents have on children concerning their behavioral and personality changes. 136 participants in the study responded to each question using a Likert scale comprising five responses. The first question was a change in their children after being exposed to violent content. 49.0% agreed that there had been a big change, and 19.6% strongly agreed. However, 7.8% strongly disagreed, and 10.8% disagreed, indicating mixed opinions on the extent of change. The second question asked whether watching violent content had made children aggressive and the respondents, 40.2%, agreed with this statement, while 17.6% strongly agreed. Regarding imitation of behavior, most respondents (58.8%) agreed that children tend to imitate behaviors observed in violent content, with 14.7% strongly agreeing. Only 5.9% strongly disagreed. When asked if they were irritated by their child's behavior following exposure to violent content, 52.0% agreed, and 9.8% strongly agreed. However, some felt neutral about it (17.6%), while a smaller proportion (5.9%) felt that they strongly disagreed about being irritated, thus showing that irritation was common but not universal. The impact that violent content may have on the development of children's personalities, 36.3% agreed, with 15.7% strongly agreeing that it is detrimental to character building. Exposure to violent content means more maladaptive behavior in children, most respondents agreed (66.7%), while 23.5% strongly agreed. A small percentage only (0.7%) strongly disagreed and emphasized the relationship between violent media exposure and negative behavior. These findings reveal a consensus among respondents that violent content affects children's behavior in different ways.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that children who are exposed to violent media content, whether through television or video games, show significant behavioral and attitude changes. Many children indicated that they spent a lot of time watching television programs and playing video games-both of which consistently feature violent or aggressive content. The study found out that a large proportion of children prefer playing video games that involve fighting, as well as watching television programs such as cartoons and wrestling, which often portray violence. Children who watch television alone generally change station upon station, and they may, for example, stumble on to movies, cartoons, wrestling shows, or drama movies, which contain violent themes. Similarly, computer self-access for children increases the chances of exposure to video games that depict violence, hence affecting their behavioral development directly.

The results of this study strongly support that increased exposure to violent media content leads to greater aggression in children. More than 90.2% of the respondents supported that higher levels of exposure to violent media result in more negative behavioral outcomes. This indicates a clear and significant relationship between violent media consumption and the development of aggressive behaviors in children. More importantly, the findings of the study emphasize that children's media exposure must be monitored and regulated because otherwise, unmoderated violent exposure may always affect them.

Conclusion

The results of this study show a significant relationship between the viewing of violent television programs and video games and an increase in aggressive behaviors among children. Many children spend a lot of time watching television or playing video games that have violent content, such as wrestling shows, cartoons that have the theme of conflict, and fighting games. Most of these media devices contain high levels of violence which, although mostly unconsciously, children tend to imitate, those in the range between 3 to 10 years old. The same study also concludes that children's personalities and behavior are very different after repeated exposure to violent media content. Such a changed preference reflects even more wide-ranging behavioral changes, where children begin to imitate the aggression that they view onscreen. The study clearly shows that the more children are exposed to violent media, the more they are inclined towards becoming aggressive, and thus it has a resultant negative effect on their social interactions.

Recommendations

From the above findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to reduce the negative impacts of violent media on the behaviors of children:

1. Parental supervision and regulation: Parents must monitor and regulate the amount and type of media entertainment exposed to children. Children should be kept away from violent television programs and video games, among other forms of media that promote aggression.
2. Educational Programs and Alternatives: Schools and media producers should collaborate in developing and disseminating media messages that promote positive behaviors.
3. Raising Awareness Among Caregivers: Educating caregivers, including parents, teachers, and guardians, about the impact of violent media on children is essential. This can be done through workshops, informational campaigns, and discussions that highlight the potential risks of unmonitored media consumption.

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