

VIOLENT MEDIA AND CHILD BEHAVIOUR : A STUDY OF PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Rachita Shrivastava Roy*

ABSTRACT

The present study is aimed to examine the effect of violent media on child behavior and how the parents look at it. For the study sixty parents (30 mothers and 30 fathers) of school children were selected from the Rohini area of Delhi. All of them belong to middle class families. For data collection a questionnaire of five questions was set. Percentage and Chi-square were used in data analysis. Data analysis clearly shows that parent feel violent media are not suitable for their children. Violent media make children desperate and aggressive.

Key Word: Violent Media, Violent and Aggressive Behavior

* Assistant Professor, Govt. VYT Autonomous PG College, Drug, Chhattisgarh, India

Background

For quite some times we are observing in various media, reports of violent behaviour in children on many occasions. This is quite unnatural to their age and reported mainly from the metro cities. This may be associated with the ill-Exposer of certain programs in the television or may be due to the violent mobile games they are used to. Research on violent television and films, video games and mobile games reveal unequivocal evidence that media violence increases the likelihood of aggressive and desperate behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts. Media violence is defined as visual portrayal of acts of physical aggression by one human or human-like creature against another which is intended to hurt or kill or may be just physical or emotional force and energy. Parents, as always, being concerned about the growth of their child, are disturbed by this trend. Let us try to find out what are the parents' perspective and the way out.

National Institute of Mental Health (1982) identified the following as major effects of seeing violence on television:

1. Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others.
2. Children may be more fearful of the world around them.
3. Children are more likely to behave in aggressive or harmful ways toward others.

W. James Potter (2005) describes Immediate and long term effects from exposure to Media violence as follows:

- Immediate Effect:**
1. Behavioral Effect - Imitation, Triggering Novel behavior, Inhibition and Attraction
 2. Physiological Effect - Fight/Flight and Excitation Transfer
 3. Emotional Effect - Temporary Fear
 4. Attitudinal Effect - Immediate Creation/Change of Attitudes
 5. Cognitive Effect - Learning Specific Acts and lessons
- Long-term Effect:**
1. Behavioral Effect - Training behavior
 2. Physiological Effect - Physiological habituation and Narcotizing
 3. Emotional Effect - Desensitization and Cultivation of fear
 4. Attitudinal Effect - Long term reinforcement of attitude/beliefs
 5. Cognitive Effect - Learning social norms

Review of Related Studies

George Gerbner (1982), Children who watch violent shows were more likely to strike out at playmates, argue, disobey authority and were less willing to wait for things than those children who watched non-violent programs.

Huesmann and Taylor (2006) found that fictional television and film violence contribute to both a short-term and a long-term increase in aggression and violence in young viewers. Television news violence also contributes to increased violence, principally in the form of imitative suicides and acts of aggression. The relationship between media violence and real-world violence and aggression is moderated by the nature of the media content and characteristics of and social influences on the individual exposed to that content.

Paik & Comstock (1994) reported an inverse relationship between viewers' age and the magnitude of the effect of TV violence on aggression and other antisocial behaviors.

Media violence affects both males and females. Although some studies like Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz, Walder (1972) found stronger relations between media-violence viewing and aggression for boys than for girls.

Studies of violent television, film, and video games (e.g., Anderson & Dill, 2000, Bushman, 1995; Bushman & Geen, 1990) have found that highly aggressive individuals show greater effects (on aggressive behavior, attitudes, emotions, and beliefs) of exposure to media violence than their relatively less aggressive counterparts.

Research on media violence in India is limited. The Media Advocacy Group (MAG-1994) and UNESCO (1999) conducted research on *Violence on Television*. Methodologically elusive, both studies indict a wide range of screen activities as 'acts of violence' and assume that exposure must necessarily result in violent or aggressive behavior. Certain shifts between the studies are noteworthy.

The MAG report was concerned about the impact of violence on both children and adults, particularly lower income group males, while the other report concentrated exclusively on children. According to UNESCO, in India, Parents or school teachers have found that TV images have deeply disturbed children resulting in insomnia, fear of solitude, anger, and other psychological disturbances. This is a violence of another kind on our children.

Bickham, *et al.*(2006) investigated the relationship between TV viewing time, content, context, and peer integration. As children spend more total time watching TV, they spend a significantly shorter amount of time with friends as compared to those who don't. Thus, viewing television causes poor peer relationships and thereby increases the risk for social isolation, anxiety disorder, agoraphobia, and antisocial behavior, including aggression and gang involvement. Ray, *et al.*(2006) reported that children having exposure to violence through media had poorer school performance and its impact on their psychosocial adjustments was detrimental.

An appropriate and practical study of effects of media violence on children is difficult. Nevertheless, the change in behavior of the children may be observed. Parents can do this easily. Usually parents know what kind of program is mostly viewed by their children and the effect it has on them. This is the reason in the present study it is tried to find out the opinion of the parents.

The specific objectives of the present study are as follows.

1. To study the parents' view on the effects of violent media on children aggressive behavior.
2. To study the parents' view on the effects of violent media on children violent behavior.
3. To study parents' opinion on comparison between violent video games and violent TV programs.

According to the above objectives, Null hypotheses are formulated.

1. There will be no significant effect of violent media on children's' aggressive behavior according to parents.

2. There will be no significant effect of violent media on children's violent behavior according to parents.
3. There will be no significant difference between violent video games and violent TV programs in reference to harmfulness according to parents.

Sampling

For the study, 60 parents (30 mothers and 30 fathers) of children, age group between 10 and 18 were selected by random method from the Rohini area of Delhi. All of them belong to middle class families.

Tool

For data collection a questionnaire of five questions were set.

Data Analysis and Results

Percentage and Chi-square were used in data analysis. For every question separate Chi-square and percentage were used.

Table-01 : Percentage and Chi-Square

SI No	Questions	Yes %	No %	Chi Square
1	Are violent media good for your child.	18	82	40.96 **
2	Have you find any change in his/her behavior due to viewing violent media.	60	40	4 *
3	Do you feel your child is more aggressive than before while viewing violent media.	30	70	16 **
4	Is your child becomes violent very soon.	15	85	49 **
5	Are violent video games more harmful than violent TV programs.	68	32	12.66 **

** Significant at 0.01

level of

* Significant at 0.05 level of

The above table shows the percentage of response of parents and Chi-square value. The testing of hypothesis is done through Chi-Square method.

1. In response to the first question, 18% respondents said 'Yes' and 82% said 'No'. The Chi-Square value is obtained 40.96 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. So it can be said that parents' feel violent media are not good for their children.
2. In response to the second question, 60% respondents said 'Yes' and 40% said 'No'. The Chi-Square value is obtained 4.00 which is significant at 0.05 level of confidence. So it can be said that parents found changes in the behavior of children due to violent media.
3. In response to the third question, 30% respondents said 'Yes' and 70% said 'No'. The Chi-Square value is obtained 16.00 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. So it can be said that parents feel violent media make their children more aggressive.
4. In response to the fourth question, 15% respondents said 'Yes' and 85% said 'No'. The Chi-Square value is obtained 49 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. So it can be said that parents feel his child become aggressive and violent very soon.
5. In response to the fifth question, 68% respondents said 'Yes' and 32% said 'No'. The Chi-Square value is obtained 12.66 which is significant at 0.01 level of confidence. So it can be said that parents feel violent video games are more harmful than violent TV programs.

Thus the above data analysis clearly shows that parent's feel violent media are not suitable for their children. An historical examination of the research also reveals that such exposure has significant risk factor for aggressive and violent behavior. How and what effects such media program will leave on children also depends on how young people interpret and react to violent media content.

Conclusion

1. Violent media make children aggressive.
2. Violent media make children more violent.
3. Violent video game is more harmful in comparison to violent TV program.

Suggestions

1. Soft and friendly TV programs are suitable for viewing with the children.
2. Full attention should be given to what your child is viewing.
3. Motivate to watch educational and enrichment programs.
4. Discourage viewing violent programs.
5. TV should not be a part of the child's bedroom.

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