

# A Review on the Psychological Effects of Media on Children

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**Abstract** - Peers do believe that children's negative reactions towards witnessing high levels of violence on media may become spontaneous, and may risk to other abnormal situations, in their later phase, over time, jeopardizing their emotional security and social behaviour problems. Of the media, Children are increasingly becoming heavy consumers giving rise the perception of the world as a dangerous place. This subject with its essential consequence has remained one of the most- urgent, as well as hotly disputed topics, in psychological studies. At the same moment it has been subjected to a searching critique and a debate to the psychologists as well as the researchers for many decades. Suggestively, this review considers various dimensional studies that suggest and figure out an appropriate discipline of psychology and research that can meet with, comprehensively, the specific coping styles, their preoccupation or vigilance or the state of aggression and violence, which are directly related to a major threat to the upcoming generation, in the future.

**Keywords** - Media Violence, Internalization, Externalization, Censure, Desensitization, Depression, Viewer control, Demographic.

## I. INTRODUCTION

To begin with the beginning, hardly does a family, chiefly its children, living in this global environment, remain unaffected to the exposure of media violence, may be whether, consciously or inadvertently. Indeed, one of the most difficult decisions parents and child rearers have to face, on a daily basis, is the decision, whether or not to allow a child with the modern Media. But, doing so a parent may feel unjustified towards a child, for killing his/her will of choice. But, we can speak, in any particular case, this stipulation is reasonable from a moral point of view. Then and there, a child is not just entitled to make her own choices but also face the distressing consequences. The big cause is that frequent exposure to media violence during childhood could be related to violent

behaviour, later in life of a child. Those kids get more aggressive and violence-prone.

Thus, it becomes necessary to understand why media violence is so dangerous in its impact.

### *The General Concept*

It is really strange that sometimes some aspects of the entertainment media -video games, music, television, movies, magazines and other print media etc., as well as use of these media, via computers and cell phones-(usually violent) impinge on its young viewers, in form of some psychological behaviour (usually negative), but it is also clear that they (media) are still loved to be watched. The average youth devotes about 7.5 hours on media each day. Also, those parents who are strict about their children parents set limits spent, on average, 3 fewer hours per day [1].

Nearly, all parents are used to be worried about their children hanging out with the "wrong crowd." To such media lovers, arguing becomes their style of justification to continue with. But, when this pattern is more frequent, intense or long lasting, their children are at increased risk of emotional and behavioral difficulties. Thus, it becomes necessary to the peers and researchers to study these severe exposures to violence shed by the media, so as to draw out the chief victims -the siblings of those parents, from the future lasting threats -both emotionally and behaviourally, reducing their distress.

A long research history of child psychology has advocated a positive relationship between the modern entertainment media and its harmful consequences, on the children and youth. These impacts have been related with a wider range of negative upshots in children, with externalizing and internalizing psychological problems. Various models have been proposed which are based on emotional-security, hypothesizes that children are affected and

distressed by development of such violent media exposure because it threatens their sense of emotional, psychological, physiological security and social safety.

The present piece of review shall study and summarize the potentiality of nature of media (powerful cause of violent behaviour) violence on children and adolescents, and decide the vital role physicians, conscious parents and the entire society will certainly provide ability to help regulate their kids and young children, emotionally and soothingly enabling them to find strong resolution, traditionally, and shall give consideration to the future directions and implicate with the social policies, setting researches afresh.

## II. RESEARCHERS MYTH, METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACH

Although, media violence has many unhealthy effects on children and adolescents, it has been and will always be, a staple of our media environment, it is appropriate to point out especially when challenging presentations are aired in which children are likely to see them, and when unsuitable programming is vigorously marketed to vulnerable young people [2].

Not of all the media research methodologies apply to all situations equally. The underlying psychology of media (considered as a major source of entertainment, now globally) and its impact (seldom healthy) is often misinterpreted, especially in the case of impact of 'media violence', on kids and children. For example, a child on media violence, and a smoker on smoking, both cannot be randomly assigned for any measured period to undergo any experiment, just to study their results of developing effects of violence or cancer, respectively. There exists a margin for all methodologies. Therefore, no two methodologies can be correlated or considered similar and it is similar even in a psychological study. Usually, the research (otherwise limited) opted by the media violence researchers, perform longitudinal studies, on their young (class) of viewers, in order to study their psychological changes such as aggression, emotion, intelligence and chiefly the violence, over time. The media fails to bring forth these unhealthy outcomes that directly affect the youth, with the media violence.

Although, the evidence to early exposure to media violence, as a contributing factor to the development of aggression, has increased, still much of the research pertaining to media violence has focused only on short-term effects and reported significant relations. Researchers gather information on kids TV-violence screening, identification with hostile TV characters, judgments of practicality of TV violence, aggressive conducts, and intellectual skill, as well as parents' socioeconomic condition (measured by educational level), aggressiveness, parenting practices and attitudes, and parent's TV usage (i.e., TV-viewing frequency and TV-violence viewing).

Researchers administered measures of adult TV-violence viewing and adult aggressive behavior, and obtained archival data on criminal conviction and moving violation records from state records. While the causes of youth violence are multi-factorial and include such variables as poverty, family unit psychopathology, child cruelty, exposure to domestic and social violence, substance abuse and other psychiatric disorders, the research literature is quite undeniable that children's exposure to media violence plays an important role in the etiology of violent behavior. While it is difficult to determine which children who have experienced televised hostility are at the greatest risk, there appears to be a strong association between media violence and aggressive behavior within vulnerable "at risk" segments of youth.

However, in present there are majority of research studies that have been made, but relatively on small sections of the world societies have been benefitted. The present areas of ongoing research are the different circumstances under which children from different cultural / racial groups /gender react to media-violence together with the different ways in which they respond.

## III. STUDYING THE IMPACTS

Many of the studies show that even though youth who are already violent tend to seek out violent entertainment, they will still be inclined towards the exposure to violence. Although shootings in schools around the world periodically prompt politicians and the general public to focus their attention on the

influence of media violence, the medical society has been alarmed, with this issue.

The Research science has related exposure to media violence with a variety of physical and mental health problems for children and adolescents, for their aggressive and violent behavior, maltreatment, desensitization, fear, depression, nightmares, and sleep disturbances. Talking globally, even in American regular and significant cross-cultural studies field experiments laboratory experiments, relations between media exposure and its increased impact - aggression and violence- have been found [3].

At Harvard, the new Center on Media and Child Health has listed more than 2000 research reports [4] and substantiated the strength of the association between media violence and aggressive behavior found in meta-analysis [5] is greater than the association between calcium intake and bone mass, lead ingestion and lower IQ, and condom nonuse and sexually acquired HIV infection, and is nearly as strong as the association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer [6]—associations that clinicians accept and on which preventive medicine is based without question.

It is observed that media influenced Children the most- by observing, imitating, and adopting behaviors [7]. Several different psychological and physiologic processes underline media-violence effects on the degree of aggressive attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and sentimental index [8] studies sanctify that children little than 8 cannot discriminate between fantasy and reality, and may be vulnerable to some of these learning processes and thereby, be more influenced by media violence [9]. Nonetheless, even older adolescents and young adults are adversely affected by witnessing media violence, demonstrating that the ability to discriminate between fantasy and reality does not refrain one from the effects of media violence [10].

The so called popular media promote hostility negative attitudes among young genre. A related intuition is that the words and deeds of children have a different and new status or significance for the grave future.

### *Impacts on Aggression, Desensitization, and Interpersonal Hostility, Fears, Anxieties and Sleep Disturbances*

Most of the researchers' attention has focused on studying the way media affects the interpersonal behaviors of children and adolescents, consistent evidences have proven that violence viewing shoots up intense fears and anxieties in young viewers. In most surveys it was found that the effect and symptoms like the psychological trauma, such as anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress were directly proportional to the number of television viewing hours, per day [11].

Similarly, in an another study of the parents of almost 500 children in kindergarten through fourth grade revealed that the amount of children's television viewing (at bedtime) and having a television in one's own bedroom, were significantly related to the frequency of sleep disturbances [12]. In a random national survey it was reported that 62% of parents with children between the ages of two and seventeen complained that their children had been frightened by something they saw in a TV program or movie. 19 with children between the ages of two and seventeen said that their child had been frightened by something they saw in a TV program or movie [13].

In the study conducted of the students, reporting fright reactions 51% reported disturbances in eating and sleeping, 14% reported mental anxiety, and 35% reported subsequently avoiding or dreading the situation portrayed in the program or movie. Furthermore, more than one-fourth of the respondents said that the impact of the program or movie viewed six years earlier was still on their mind, at the time of reporting.

Furthermore, the effects of these depictions are not only in the memories or words but persist to disturbance and unnecessary anxieties that can readily lead to physical sickness and interfere with routine school work and other normal activities. For the most part, it must be said that it is the media involving violence (i.e., perceived threat of violence) that frightens children or harms them.

However, it is significant to note that parents often find it hard to predict children's anxiety towards

television and films because a child's level of cognitive development influences how he or she perceives and responds to media stimuli. This research shows that as children mature cognitively, some media images and events become less likely to disturb them, whereas other things become potentially more upsetting. This change is a result from development in children's mental understanding of the fantasy-reality distinction [14].

Former research suggests that preschoolers most likely responded to images victims and expressions of emotional distress; older elementary school children most likely responded to the idea of their own and their family's vulnerability to attack; teenagers, like adults, were able to grasp the enormity of the events and the long-term implications they presented for civilized society [15].

#### IV. ADAPTABLE TOOLS AND DEFENSIVE MEASURES

Today 99% of homes have televisions. In fact, more families have televisions than telephones. Over half of all children have a television set in their bedrooms. This gives a greater opportunity for children to view programs without parental supervision. Providentially, many proficient and expert psychologists worldwide including various schools and missionaries have gathered potency toward the prevention and eradication this social concern of media originated conflicts and their exposure to the children. In this order various protective processes have been set both on social and legal standards, can diminish the negative psychosocial hazards and risk factors.

Nonetheless, media violence comes into our homes mechanically through television, and is actively marketed to children and adolescents (even when the content is labeled as appropriate only for "mature" audiences) [16]. Moreover, it is extremely difficult to disseminate the message of media violence's harms. An important component of this difficulty is the fact that violent entertainment is a highly lucrative business and the entertainment industry is loath to communicate information suggesting that its products are harmful. An intriguing analysis by Bushman and Anderson, serves to our

information that even the media and press that reveal the evidence for the aggression-promoting effect of media violence has become stronger, but, the relationship was weaker and weaker [17].

There are various tools, such as media ratings and filtering devices like the V-chip, but with very little awareness publicity for these tools even parents have little understanding of them, or how to use them. Still education and better information of the effects of media violence to the parents is needed to receive about, and they need more convenient and reliable means of understanding what to expect in a television program, movie, or video game, that will help them counteract some of the negative effects of media violence on their children.

Research in cognitive development, for example, has explored effective ways to reassure children who have been frightened by media threats [18]. Strategies for coping with media-induced fears need to be tailored to the age of the child. Up to the age of about seven, nonverbal coping strategies work the best [19].

##### *The Rating Technique*

The most prompting and authentic (to some extent) the rating of media can put to some check. Still it is out of approach to the common minds. Many find the entertainment industry's media-rating logics difficult to use [20]. The movie ratings are used by approximately 3/4 of parents, but only about 1/2 of parents say they have ever used the video-game ratings, the television ratings, or the music advisories to guide their choices. Many parents find the ratings unreliably low, with an objective parental evaluation revealing as many as 50% of television shows rated WWF to be inappropriate for their teenagers.

Further disappointing, most parents do not even know that their television is equipped with a V-chip viewer control, and only 20% of parents actually use it. Video games with higher ratings may actually attract more young children (the "forbidden-fruit" hypothesis) [21]. The various media ratings are determined by industry-sponsored ratings boards or the artists and producers themselves, which may lead imperfect rating. Ratings are age based, which assumes that all parents agree with the raters about

what is appropriate content for children of specific ages.

Furthermore, different rating systems for each medium (television, movies, music and video games) make the ratings confusing, because they have little similarity or relationship to one another. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers an informational brochure that pediatricians can offer to parents and children to help them use the various rating systems to guide better media choices [22].

#### V. A FEW IMPLICATIONS

1. Remove television, video games and internet connections, from kid's bedrooms.
2. Co-watching television shows / movies with their children.
3. Limit "screen time" to 2-3 hours/day.
4. Check children for video games where the player scores points by killing a human target.
5. Children under 2 should avoid exposure to all entertainment media (television and movies).
6. Keep away from the glamorization of weapon-carrying and the normalization of violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict.
7. Stop the use of media or literature that serves, violence in a comic or sexual form or in any other situation in which the violence is amusing, titillating.
8. Eliminate unwarranted exposure of person-person violence and hateful, racist, misogynistic, or homophobic language or situations.
9. Choosing Music, parents should read lyrics easily available before deciding to purchase the recording.
10. Video games should not use human or other living targets or award points for killing, because this teaches children to associate pleasure and success with their ability to cause pain and suffering to others.
11. Use of violent video games should be restricted to age-limited areas of gaming arcades; the distribution of videos and video games and the exhibition of movies should be limited to appropriate age groups as well as rating marked on them.

12. Office counseling has often been effective, in the cases where the caretaker is helpless or puzzled.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Considering the seriousness of summary it becomes necessary to put theory into practice, taking into view the active agents rather than the invisible victims along with various causes, implications and consequences. A concrete link must exist between the parents and their children in order to achieve a common and general behaviour well being. On the same hand literacy expansion and psycho-educational programs with the parents must be shared. The means of optimism has been found as a significantly reliable mediator and moderator for a great many negative events on child outcomes. The still due philosophical task -that is to give a deeper account of these media that can explain more clearly the sense why children are undeveloped or why their lack development is significant, from a moral point of view.

The entertainment industries are, without a doubt, concerned with profits mostly, they sometimes react to large-scale criticism, and sponsors, whereas, local television stations prefer to avoid public reproach.

Further necessary to do, other than complaining about media practices, researchers and advocates for the welfare of children, is to work someway effectively, to diminish the negative impacts of media violence, by providing better public education about media influence, by developing and promoting more useful content labels and filters. It also becomes necessary to expand education for children regarding media literacy, helping them to distinguish between the phantom and the fact they see on any of the media, and engage them in a critical analysis of their own media choice.

Thus, future research are expected to develop a better understanding and familiarity with the impact of media-violence, on children including the further demographic variables such as sex and ethnicity, race and emotional intersects among kids, children and other elements of family and then settle some of the implications of these findings for parents and educators, and for the society at large.

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