

The Role of Television Programs on the Aggressive Behavior of In-School Adolescents in Makurdi Metropolis

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Abstract: With the advent of mass media, including television and more recently video and computer games, children and teenagers are exposed to increasingly higher doses of aggressive images. The present study examined the role of television programmes/viewing content on the aggressive behavior of in-school adolescents in Makurdi metropolis. Specifically; to identify the content of television programs watched by in-school adolescent; to assess variance in socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on their imitative behavior and to determine the role of these programs on verbal and physical aggression of viewers. The study used both primary and secondary information in achieving the set objectives; simple random sampling technique was used to select 320 respondents in the study area. Using descriptive and Pearson's correlation, it was discovered that 95% of respondents are exposed to media violence and 40.3% of respondents watch it for prolonged hours, that is more than four hours a day. Variance in socio-demographic characteristics of respondents had no effect on their imitative behavior, meaning all the demographic variables has no role to play on the ability to model what is portrayed in television programs. But the researcher discovered a significant positive correlation between television viewing content and aggression. The findings reiterate the concerns expressed by parents, educators and social psychologist that television programs influence children aggressive behavior. Some of the recommendations are; Improving media rating systems, developing more pro-social programming as an alternative to television programs portraying forms of antisocial behavior and funding public education programs.

Keywords: Adolescent, Violent media, Physical aggression, Verbal aggression, violence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Concern about children and popular media has a long history. Plato proposed to ban poets from his idea republic, because he feared that their stories about immoral behavior would corrupt young minds. In modern times, moral pressure groups have tried to protect children from popular literature, the music hall, cinema, comics, and television video nasties. It is important to see the issue of television violence and children behavior in a broader social, cultural and historical context. The effects of media violence have been vigorously debated for several decades. Televised violence is of special concern because of its vivid and realistic nature and its easy accessibility to children. Huston et al (1992) noted that, most children spend more hours watching television than they spend in any other activities except sleep and they are often indiscriminate viewers. Bushman and Green, (1990) reported that, because children watch so much television, it serves as a major source of imitative behavior and may alter their overall aggressive thoughts and views of life. The fact that television portrays so much aggressive behavior concerns parents and educators as well as social psychologists.

Four variables have been shown to influence the amount of imitation of media violence. First, the more realistic the portrayal of violence, the greater the imitation. The same violence is more effective when presented as a real event than as fiction. "Aggression cues", or points of similarity between the filmed violence and the subject's real-life experience, such

as a weapon or a character's name, can increase aggression. Second, more imitation occurs when violence is presented as justified. Violence committed by the hero in revenge for previous harm produces greater imitation than violence that is unfair to the victim. Third, imitation increases when violence is effective that is when aggressors are rewarded with wealth, happiness and social approval. Fourth, imitation is more likely when the viewer is in a psychological state of readiness to aggress for example, when he or she is emotionally aroused or angry. Anger; however is not a necessary condition for imitation of violence.

Liebert and Baron (1972) conducted an experiment using real television programs in which they measured the willingness of children to hurt another child after watching a program in a laboratory, children were shown either a race track or an aggressive program and then allowed either to facilitate or disrupt another child's game. They could hurt the other child by pressing a button to make the handle hot which the child was holding. (Actually, there was no child, so no one was really harmed). The children who viewed the violence were subsequently most likely to press vigorously a special red button which supposedly would transmit a burning pain to another child. This was particularly the case with boys. In addition, when the children were later observed at play, those who had viewed the aggressive program showed a stronger preference for playing with weapons and aggressive toys than did the other children. Bandura and Walters (1998) note that, television has recently gained attention as a cause for inappropriate behavior in children, however overlooking the environment in which children are watching television often happens. In circumstances where a guardian is not present, television becomes a parental surrogate. Television then becomes a useful tool in interpersonal development. The purpose of this study was to observe and correlate television viewing content of in-school adolescents, with two forms of their aggression; verbal and physical aggression irrespective of their personality type.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (1996, 1997) in their study "Global Media Violence", showed that 93% of the students who attend school and live in electrified urban or rural areas have regular access to television and watch it for an average of three hours a day. This represents at least 50% more than the time spent on any other out of school activity, including homework, being with friends or reading. This results justifies the assumption that television is the most powerful source of information and entertainment besides face to face interaction. In many countries, there is an average of five to ten aggressive acts per hour of television. Violence among youth is also on the rise, making it plausible to correlate the two, even though we believe that the primary causes for aggressive behavior in children are to be found in their family environment, and the social and economic conditions in which they are raised. People who are already aggressive use the media as further confirmation of their beliefs and attitudes, which in turn are reinforced through media content. Depending on a child's already existing, experiences, values and the cultural environment, media content offers an orientation, a frame of reference which determines the direction of one's own behavior. Viewers do not necessarily adapt what they have observed, but they measure their own behavior in terms of distance to the perceived media models. Most of the research on media violence and how it affects the aggressive behavior of viewers have been conducted in the western climes, and a lack of this studies in non-western cultures, or African settings like Nigeria, suggested the full effect of culture and society are yet to be well studied and understood. The desire to conduct this research in Nigeria and compare the results with what is obtainable in the western world prompted this study.

III. METHOD

A. Design:

The method used in this study is survey research design. The type of survey used is the cross-sectional correlational research method. The researcher did not intend to manipulate any variable but examine the impact relationship between the variables under consideration.

B. Participants:

(320) participants took part in the survey, from the original sample size of (676) due to late resumption to school. The data was further disaggregated by gender, age, religion, ethnicity and academic performance of participants. We had (51.6) 165 male students and (48.4) 155 female students participate. The age range of participants was 10-19, 10-14 years old

were (25.3) 81 and 15-19 years old were (74.7) 239. In terms of religion (92.1) 295 were Christians, (6.6) 21 were Muslim and (1.3) 4 did not indicate their religion. In terms of ethnicity we had (71.3) 228 Tiv by tribe, (75) 23.4 Idoma by tribe and Igede, Etulo and other tribes made up the remaining (5.4) 17. Majority of the participants were average students in school, (80.0) 256, (2.8) 9 were excellent and (17.2) 55 were below average.

C. Instrument of Data Collection:

The instrument used was the Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire. Buss and Perry (1992) designed and published the Aggression Questionnaire in the journal of Personality and Social Psychology. It is a 29 item questionnaire where respondents rank certain statements along a 5-point Likert-type scale from "extremely uncharacteristic of me" to "extremely characteristics of me". The questionnaire returns scores for four dimensions of aggression, Physical, Verbal aggression, Anger and Hostility. The internal consistency reliability of the used subscales were as follows: Physical aggression subscale: .85, Verbal aggression subscale: .72, total scale: .89. In section (A), data was collected on socio-demographic variables of respondents. In section (B), data was collected on television viewing content and imitative behavior of respondents. In section (C), data was collected on physical and verbal aggression of respondents.

D. Research Procedure:

Simple random sampling method was used for the selection of the participants under study. The hat and draw simple random sampling technique was specifically used. Even and odd numbers were written on pieces of paper, wrapped and mixed up in a container. The researcher went into classes randomly and respondents were asked to pick from the container of numbers, at the end, those who picked even numbers were briefed and given a copy of the questionnaire to fill in.

E. Method of Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics, such as averages, percentages and cross tabulation, in addition to inferential statistics (Pearson product moment correlation) were used to analyze data gathered for the purpose of this research.

IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Television Programs and Viewing Content

Television Content	Respondents	Percentage
High aggressive content	87	27.2
Moderate aggressive content	155	48.4
Mild aggressive content	62	19.4
Non-aggressive content	6	1.9
No response	10	3.1
Total	320	100

The result indicates that 95% of respondents are exposed to media violence in the study area.

Table 2: Television Programs and Viewing Frequency

Viewing Frequency Hours in a day	Respondents	Percentage
More than 4 hours/day	129	40.3
4 hours/day	71	22.2
3 hours/day	48	15.0
2 hours/day	41	12.8
1 hour/day	31	9.7
Total	320	100

This result indicates that a majority (40.3%) of the sampled population, watch television programs for prolonged hours, (more than 4 hours a day).

Table 3: The Relationship between Tv Viewing Content and Physical Aggression of Viewers

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Df	P	Remark
Tv Content/Programs	320	48.34	10.44	.01	318	.05	Significant
Physical aggression		39.09	4.69				

This result indicates a significant positive relationship between television viewing content and physical aggression among in-school adolescents, ($r(318) = .01, p < .05$).

Table 4: The Relationship between Tv Viewing Content and Verbal Aggression of Viewers

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Df	P	Remark
Tv Content/Programs	320	48.34	10.44	.379	318	.01	Significant
Verbal aggression		36.71	8.23				

This analysis also indicates a significant positive relationship between television viewing content and verbal aggression among in-school adolescents, ($r(318) = .379, p < .01$).

Table 5: Mean Standard Deviation and Inter-correlation among Study Variables

No	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Age	1.75	.435	-						
2	Sex	1.48	.501	-.169	-					
3	Parental education Attainment	1.21	.430	.199	.126	-				
4	Religion	1.07	.249	.095	.123	.347	-			
5	Ethnic Group	1.39	.764	-.161	.090	-.037	.170	-		
6	Academic Performance	2.77	.767	.470	.109	.186	-.264	-.238	-	
7	Imitative Behavior	6.337	2.800	.011	-.066	-.073	.014	.012	.009	-

The Pearson correlation table above shows no relationship between Age ($r(318) = .011; p > .05$), Sex ($r(318) = -.066; p > .05$), Parental educational attainment level ($r(318) = -.073; p > .05$), Religion ($r(318) = .014; p > .05$), Ethnic diversity ($r(318) = .012; p > .05$), Academic performance of respondents ($r(318) = .009; p > .05$) and the imitative behavior of viewers.

V. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis two has being upheld, that variance in socio-demographic variables of in-school adolescent has no significant influence on their imitative behavior. This result is similar to the outcome of the following studies by other researchers, such as Paik and Comstock (1994) in their study "The Effects of Television Violence on Anti-social Behavior" reported an inverse relation between viewer's age and the magnitude of the effects of television violence on aggression and other anti-social behaviors. This means, the age of a child or an adolescent, practically does not determine whether he or she will be influenced by media violence. The result is similar to the findings in this study because increase in age does not correlate with increase in the ability to imitate media violence. Huesman et al (2003) in their study "Longitudinal Relations between Children Exposure to Television Violence and their Aggressive Behavior in Young Adulthood" reported that differences in intelligence do not explain the media-violence effects on aggression and there is little evidence that either high or low intelligence exacerbates the media violence effects. In this study carried out in a cultural sensitive environment "Nigeria", culture was measured using variables like; Ethnic Diversity and Religion, but the author found no positive significant effect of culture on imitation of media violence.

The first hypotheses which states that Television programs have no significant effect on the aggressive behavior of viewers has being rejected, because the result indicated a positive significant relationship between television programs watched and the physical and verbal aggression of viewers. The result of this research is very similar to the outcome of the following studies, by Rishante and Yakubu (2014) Children, Sex and Media Violence in Nigeria; Johnson et al, (2002) Television Viewing and Aggressive Behavior during Adolescent and Adulthood and Liebert and Baron (1972) Some

Immediate Effects of Television Violence on Children Behavior. These cross-sectional surveys also provide convincing evidence that frequent viewing of violence in the media is associated with comparatively high levels of aggressive behavior.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of the analysis that showed (95%) percent of in-school adolescents being exposed to media violence and also the outcome of analysis between television viewing content and aggressive behavior of respondents, suggest that action should be taken to reduce its impact on children at home, schools and the media industry.

A. Recommendations at Home:

An understanding of ways parents can help their children use television effectively might also help. Parents for example can; explain that the violence the child sees on television is not real. Explain how violent acts are staged for the screen. Discuss the consequence of such violence, if it were real.

B. Recommendations at Schools:

The use of media literacy courses is an example of an intervention that might be tried at the school level. These “Critical Viewing” programs were designed to help children understand how television works and how it affects them. Raising public awareness by addressing television violence as a public health issue might also help.

C. Recommendations for Media, Film Industry:

Encouraging policy makers to create and implement a scientifically based media products rating system. Develop more prosocial programming.

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