

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY CONDITION, GENDER AND AGE ON THE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR OF ADOLESCENTS PRONE TO VIOLENT MEDIA IN OGBOMOSO, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The effects of media violence is having serious impact on the adolescents overall development of adolescents although it is an indispensable part of their daily living. The study investigated the influence of family condition, gender and age on the aggressive behavior of adolescents that are prone to violent media. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population was made up of all the secondary school adolescents in Ogbomoso zone. Simple random sampling technique was used to select six secondary schools from the forty public secondary schools while two private schools were selected from the twelve viable ones. A total of 400 adolescents were selected for the research study. The Influence of Media Violence on Aggressive Behaviour Questionnaire (IMVABQ) developed by the researcher was administered to the participants. The questionnaire contained twenty – five items with a reliability co-efficient of 0.72. Three null hypotheses were generated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significant. Descriptive, t-test, ANOVA and Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) were the statistical tools used to analyze the data generated. The major findings indicated that there was a significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behaviour on the basis of family condition. The findings further stated that there was no significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behaviour on the basis of gender. The third hypothesis stated that there was a significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behaviour on the basis of age range. Based on the results of these findings, recommendations were made which include the incorporation of counselling programmes for adolescents to expose them to the evil of violent media programmes.

Keywords: Media violence, Aggression, Adolescents, Gender, Family, Condition and Age

Introduction

Mass media has been incorporated to the life of the generality of human beings. There is no day that will pass without man accessing and being influenced by the activities of the media. The world has now become a global village because of the interplay of media either through the radio, television, internet, video games and many other media through which communication and information is being harnessed. The media is not only used as a source of information but also for both education and entertainment. Despite the various advantages which the media brings, the major problem is the issue of violence. Over the years there has been a serious concern over the effect of media violence on social unrest and the adolescents' attitudes to it. There has been a growing concern over the emergence of various forms of the media ranging from video games to the television and internet facilities and the depiction of violence. As they increased in popularity globally so also the concern over their effects and influences on human beings especially the adolescents because they are a vulnerable group of people that are easily carried away with all these developments.

It is noteworthy that many television programmes and video games do not depict violence as a negative trait any longer. Researchers have observed that prolonged exposure to media violence could result in the increased acceptance of violence as an appropriate means of solving problems and achieving one's goal (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerspein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth & Wartella, 2003; Hogan, 2005; Strasburger, Wilson & Jordan, 2009). Thus many adolescents do not see or consider violence as evil but see such as a normal way of life. What is alarming is the fact that many children and adolescents spend a considerable period of time a violent media programmes on Television, internet or through video games. Exposure to media violence could lead to aggressive behaviors in adolescents. This also lends credence to the findings of Paik & Comstock (1994) who conducted a study to examine the correlation between media violence and aggressive behavior between 1957 and 1990. They found that even short-term exposure to violence caused aggressive behavior. However, the result outcome was aggression and not violence.

Nathanson (1999) opined that children whose parents discuss with them the inappropriateness of television violence or restrict access to violence television shows report lower aggressive tendencies than children whose parents do not discuss television shows. Again, Singer and Singer were of the opinion that when parents have an active mediating approach

toward television viewing of their children, this includes commenting regularly and critically about realism, justification and other factors that could influence learning, children are less likely to be negatively influenced by media content. Some other findings also suggested that either type of parental intervention may decrease the importance children give to violent television programmes, which in turn may lower children's aggressive attitudes.

According to Paik & Comstock, 1994; Bushman & Huesmann, 2001 in an empirical study, demonstrated that exposing people especially children and youth to violent behaviors on film and Television increases the likelihood that they will behave aggressively immediately afterwards. There is another issue among adolescents: the issue of acceptance of violent acts viewed on television. This acceptance happens gradually over many years. First, it starts with the child's acceptance of television as a companion, teacher and babysitter. After the establishment of this comfort level firmly, as the child moves into the adolescent stage when they are highly vulnerable to influences, they may begin to see a blurring of the lines between what is right and wrong on the part of characters they have come to know and trust on the television. For example, an adolescent may watch programmes that show drug dealers or organized crime figures as role models. For instance, if such role models make use of violence as a means of getting what they want, it may appear to be acceptable because the programmes do not show defined areas of right or wrong, nor do they show wrongdoers as being punished for their violent acts but the opposite is what often happens (Potter and Smith, 2000). Although, it has also been observed that not every adolescent acts violently in response to exposure to violent media. It was also noted that not all frequent television viewers necessarily act with physical violence (Kuntsche, Pickett, Overpeck, Craig, Boyce & Matos, 2006).

Family conditions and media violence are often interconnected when it comes to the issue of adolescents. Adolescents are from different kinds of family setting, either from homes where the parents are together to homes where the parents are cohabiting without any serious communication or interaction. Again, there are those who are living with single parents or both parents are divorced. All these various conditions could have adverse effects on adolescents' attitude to media violence. Furthermore, the socio-economic statuses of adolescents also affect their viewing pattern of aggressive media programmes. According to Comstock and Paik (1991), low SES children on the average, watch more television and television violence than high SES children. Although, it is noted that the effect of media violence on aggression appears essentially the same on low and high – SES children and adolescents. However, there is generally a high dose of media violence given to low SES children which is yet another risk factor for adulthood violence

in this population (Kuntsche, Picket, Overpeck, Craig, Boyce & Matos, 2006).

Research findings have indicated increasing rates of aggression for both boys and girls who watched more television violence even when controlling for initial aggressiveness and many other background factors (Huesmann, Eron & Dubow, 2003). According to their findings, 39% of females that are high violence viewers had thrown something at their spouse in the past year (compared to 17% of other females), and 17% had punched, beaten or choked another adult while angry in the past year (compared to 4% of the other females) (Huesmann et al., 2003). Again, there was found increasing rates of aggression violence even when controlling for initial aggressiveness and many other background factors (Huesmann & Eron, 1986; Huesmann, Eron, Dubow (2003) cited in Huesmann & Taylor, 2006).

Age also has a significant impact on the influence of media violence. Older adolescents and young adults are adversely affected by consumption of media violence, demonstrating that the ability to discriminate between fantasy and reality does not inoculate one from the effects of media violence (Anderson, Gentile, Buckely, 2007). It has also been revealed that after experiencing media violence, children and young adults behave more aggressively, not less (66-68).

Research evidence has shown that a significant proportion of aggressive children are likely to grow to be aggressive adults and those seriously violent adolescents and adults were often highly aggressive and even violent as children. To them, the best single predictor of violent behavior in older adolescents, young adults and even middle aged adults is the occurrence of aggressive behavior at childhood (Huesmann Eron & Dubow, 2003; Huesmann, Lagerspetz & Eron (1984) cited in Huesmann & Taylor, 2006).

Despite the numerous research efforts globally on reducing the impact of media violence among adolescents and children, there are still great effects that it has on them. The seriousness of the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior among adolescents calls for this research effort. In spite of the entire write up, most of the dailies, television stations and internet present violence as a way of handling issues. Hence, many of these adolescents are sensitized to view aggression as a normal way of life. Some adolescents have accepted violence as an appropriate means of solving problems and achieving one's goal (Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerskein et al., 2003; Hogan, 2005 & Strasburge, Wilson & Jordan, 2009).

Again, it believed by many people that it is due to the increased violence on television and videogames shown as "fun" that is making more young people to commit violent acts. Many young people now commit crimes such as murder, assault, pick-pocketing and so on. This trend was not

common when there were no videogames or when every household didn't have a television set. The increase in the level of criminal acts among adolescents calls for a serious intervention to curb the trend. Many youths are no longer afraid or scared of carrying weapons and dangerous arms. Efforts must be made by different agencies to reduce the wide spread of violence in the various media programmes in the country.

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of family condition.
2. There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of gender
3. There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of age.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was the descriptive survey method. The descriptive survey method includes the collection of data from a specific population in order to describe the present condition of the population using the variable under survey. Therefore, the researcher considered the method appropriate for the present study. It is used to investigate the influence of family conditions, gender and age on the aggressive of adolescents prone to violent media in Ogbomoso, Nigeria.

Sample and sampling procedure

The target population for the study was made up of all secondary school adolescents in Ogbomoso zone. In all, there were forty public schools and twelve viable private schools as of the time of conducting this research study. Six secondary schools were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. All the secondary schools were written on pieces of paper and six secondary schools were randomly picked using the deep – hat procedure. Two private schools were also randomly selected from the existing list. This sampling technique was adopted because most of the students in all these schools were likewise experiencing this issue of aggression due to media violence. This issue is peculiar to most adolescents in all these schools. Since the researcher could not involve all these adolescents, then there was the need for randomization for effectiveness and efficiency in all 400 respondents responded to the questionnaire.

Research Instrument

The instrument for the collection of data in this study was developed by the researcher, titled: Influence of Media Violence on Aggressive

Behavior Questionnaire (IMVABQ). The items in the questionnaire were derived from information obtained from the review of related literature. The instrument contained two sections:

Section I: Deals with personal information about the respondents.

Section II: Comprised some items on the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior. In the entire questionnaire contained twenty – five items. The 4 point likert – type response format was adopted for section II.

Very Much True of Me - 4

True of Me - 3

Rarely True of Me - 2

Never True of Me - 1

The instrument was validated by experts in the field of guidance and counselling and educational psychology to establish its usability and applicability. Again, the instrument was pilot – tested using different respondents from the original adolescents meant to be tested **four weeks with** twenty – five adolescents. A reliability co-efficient of 0.72 (Cronbach alpha) was obtained. The instrument was administered to the 400 randomly selected male and female adolescents in both junior and senior classes. Both the rural and urban schools and the private and public schools were among the respondents that participated in filling the questionnaire. The researcher, with the assistance of some teachers administered the questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaires were collected immediately after the administration which guaranteed 100% collection.

High level of aggressive behavior as a result of exposure to - scores from 63 – 100 media violence

Low level of aggressive Behavior as a result of exposure to - 62 and below media violence

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive , t-test and ANOVA and Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) statistical techniques to test the null hypotheses.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of family condition

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for adolescents on the basis of family condition

Family condition	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Parents staying together	59.82	8.5	280
Divorced	64.84	8.8	25
Staying with a single parent	65.23	10.9	43
Both parents are dead	62.71	7.3	7
Parent living separately	66.02	8.0	43
Total	61.44	9.0	

The descriptive statistics of adolescents' result of family condition indicated that adolescents with highest mean scores are those with parents living separately with a mean of score of 66.02 while those with parents staying together had the least mean score of 59.82. Those whose both parents are dead had the least standard deviation of 7.3 and those staying with a single parent had highest standard deviation scores of 10.9.

Table 2: One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) results on the Influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of age

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Critical F
Between groups	2558.902	4	639.726	8.41*	2.37
Within groups	29877.150	393	76.023		
Total	32436.053	397			

* Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significant (P<0.05)

Table 2 shows that the calculated F-ratio of 8.41 is greater than the critical F-ratio of 2.37 at alpha level of significant. Since the calculated F-ratio of 8.41 is more than the critical F-ratio (2.37), the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of family condition. Since there is a significant difference among adolescents on the influence of media violence using analysis of variance (ANOVA), the Duncan multiple Range Test (DMRT) was used as a post- hoc test to determine the family condition that was responsible for the significant difference noted in the ANOVA results in table 2.

Table 3: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) showing differences on the influence of media violence among adolescents on the basis of family condition

Family condition	Mean	No.	Group	Duncan grouping
Parent living separately	66.0	43	5	A
Staying with a single parent	65.21	43	4	B
Divorced	64.8	25	3	C
Both parents are dead	62.7	7	2	D
Parents staying together	59.8	280	1	E

In table 3, the Duncan multiples Range Test (DMRT) results was used to determine which of the family conditions mean (s) led to the significant difference noted in the ANOVA results in table 2. The DMRT results showed that group 5 with a mean score of 66.0 is not far from group 4 with similar score of 65.2. It is quite different from group 1 with mean score

of 59.8, thus, the significant difference noted in the ANOVA results in table 2 was a result of the fact that groups 1 and 2 differed in their means from groups 3, 4 and 5. Thus, the hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of family condition was rejected.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on the basis of gender.

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation, Degree of Freedom and t values of the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior among male and female adolescents

Gender	No.	Mean	SD	DF	Cal t-value	Critical - value
Male	201	61.46	8.9	398	0.00	1.96
Female	199	61.46	9.1			

Table 4 shows that the calculated t- value 0.00 is lesser than the critical t- value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level of significant. Since the calculated t- value (0.00) is lesser than the critical t- value (1.96), the null hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is no significant difference between male and female adolescents on the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior. There was difference only in the standard deviation, but the mean score was the same for the two groups, but not significant as recorded in the t- test score.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on

Aggressive behavior on the basis of age.

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of adolescents on the basis of age on the influence of media violence on Aggressive Behavior

N	Age range	Mean	Standard deviation
80	9 – 12	62.9	8.6
230	13-16	60.0	8.6
90	17- above	63.90	9.8
400	-	61.4	9.0

Table 4 shows the total number of adolescents in the different age ranges. In the age range '9-12', 80 adolescents responded to the questionnaire with a mean score of 62.9 and SD of 8.6, those in second age range '13-16' had a mean score of 60.0 and SD of 8.6. While the last age range of '17 and above' had the highest mean score of 63.9 and the highest SD of 9.8. That is, this last set of adolescents had the greatest influence of media violence than the other age groups.

Table 6: Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) results on the influence of Media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of age

Source	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F calculated	F critical
Between groups	1201.782	2	600.891	7.60*	3.00
Within groups	31373.656	397	79.027		
Total	32575.438	399			

* Significant at 0.05 alpha level of significant ($P < 0.05$).

Table 5 shows that the calculated F-ratio of 7.60 is greater than the critical F-ratio of 3.00 at alpha level of significant. Since the calculated F-ratio of 7.60 is more than the critical F-ratio (3.00), the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is a significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of age. Furthermore, since there is a significant difference among adolescents on the influence of media violence using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) was used as a post-hoc test to determine the age group(s) that was responsible for the significant difference noted in the ANOVA results in table 5.

Table 6: Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) showing differences on the influence of media violence among adolescents on the basis of age range

Duncan grouping	Mean	No	Group	Age range
C	60.0	230	1	13-16
B	62.9	80	2	9-12
A	63.9	90	3	17 - above

Table 6: The Duncan Multiple Range Test (DMRT) results were used to determine which of the age range mean(s) led to the significant differences noted in the ANOVA results in table 5. The DMRT results showed that group 3 with a mean score of 63.9 is not far from group 2 with a similar mean score of 62.9. It is quite different from the group with a mean score of 60.0. Hence, the significant difference noted in the ANOVA results in table 6 was as a result of the fact that groups 3 (17 - above) and 2 (9-12) differed from group 1 (13-16). Thus, the third hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Tables 2 and 3 show that there is a significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of family condition. The family type or condition often plays very great impact on whether an adolescents will be influenced by the effect of media violence. Many of these adolescents are from broken homes where they do not have serious supervision from their homes on what to do and watch or what not to

do. Many of these adolescents are on their own and they often embark on watching violent programmes at viewing centres and film houses or cinemas. Often times, many of these adolescents are early callers in the school and abscond from the school late in the day to go to viewing centres or to where they can play video games. This is related to the assertion of Comstock & Paik (1991) who observed that low socio-economic children on the average watch more television and television violence than high socio-economic children, Kuntsche, Picket, Overpeck, Craig, Boyce & Matos (2006) were also of the opinion that high dose of media violence were given to low SEs children which is yet another risk factor for adulthood violence in this population.

There is no significant difference in the influence of media violence on the basis of gender. The results of the study showed that gender did not have influence on media violence on aggression among adolescents used for the study. The result is indicated that both male and female adolescents were equally affected by media violence. Huesmann & Taylor (2006) found that media violence affects both males and females. Although Huesmann, Eron & Dubow (2003) found similar effect for males and females older than 15 years. However, they found that there was some gender differences in the kinds of aggression associated with early childhood exposure to media violence.

There was significant difference on the influence of media violence on aggressive behavior on the basis of age. There were three different age ranges: 9-12, 13-16 and 17 and above. The result indicated that those in the third age range level of 17 and above recorded greater influence than those in the other two age ranges. The findings corroborates Paik and Comstock (1994) who found an inverse relationship between the viewer's age and magnitude of television violence on aggression and other anti-social behaviors. Whereas, Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis (2005) observed that there is consistent evidence that violence imagery on television and in other media increases the likelihood of aggressive or fearful behaviors in younger children especially in boys. Whereas Kronenberger, Mathews, Duns, Yang, Wood, Larsen, Rembusch, Lowe, Giauque & Lurito (2005) reported that children and adolescents exhibiting chronic, severe, aggressive behaviors were exposed to more television and videogame violence than those not exhibiting such behaviors, even when controlling for intelligence, general

Implications and Recommendations

Given the significance of the findings of this study, it is fundamentally important that adolescents should reduce their exposure to viewing of violent media programmes. The fact that both male and female adolescents were influenced at the same level, it is then essential that they

reduce their viewing of violent programmes. Adolescents should spend more of their precious time on meaningful and worthwhile ventures that will enhance their overall development.

The significance of the family condition on the influence of adolescents' viewing pattern should not be neglected. Hence, parents, guardians, teachers and professional counselors should assist adolescents from broken homes and those whose parents are dead to avoid being addicted to violent media programmes. Parents must be encouraged to assist their adolescents to view and utilise media programmes that are not violent. The issue of age range and exposure to media violence is another significant factor that must be carefully looked into by both professional counsellors and teachers.

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