**Media Violence: Does Media Violence Cause Violent Behavior?**

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**Does Media Violence Cause Violent Behavior?**

Since the development of screens, psychologists, parents, teachers and other stakeholders have wanted to know the impact that media content has on the behavior and psychology of children and youths. Violence in media (television, games, films and on the internet) have defined characters that are portrayed to harm others physically. In most media, such characters are portrayed as heroes and role models that the children and youth should look up to in society. As a result of years of study of the impact of media violence on behavior, there is evidence of harmful effects on children exposed to such media violence. This paper will discuss the impact of media violence on the behavior of young viewers. It will prove that media violence has a negative impact on behavior and leads to aggressive thoughts, behavior, desensitization, lack of empathy, hostile appraisal and angry feelings that are negative traits of behavior.

**Background**

Television and media have become a common part of human life. Despite warnings by healthcare professionals of the impact of screen time on children, over 90% of the children in the country are regular TV watchers. Such children are exposed to different content that directly influences their perception of the real world.  According to gaming demographics, there are over 214 million gamers in America with 51.1 million of those being children (Engelstätter & Ward, 2022). Games have a tendency of also promoting violence which impacts children’s psychology in different ways.

The proponents of media violence suggest that it is part of entertainment and teaches the watchers on realities of the world around them. On the other hand, opponents of media violence exposure argue that it has a negative impact on the watchers as it influences their psychology or thought process and thus their behavior. A child exposed to media violence for instance is likely to become more aggressive easier than one that is not exposed to media violence. This paper takes the stand that media violence is directly linked to violent behavior.

**Media Violence and Violent Behavior**

Media violence is a risk to public health as it leads to an increase of the real-world scenes of violence and aggression. Anderson and Bushman, (2018) show that fictional television and film violence contributes to short term and long-term negative impacts on behavior. Short term impacts on behavior are mostly due to processes such as priming, arousal and the immediate mimicking of the violent behavior observed in the media.  Priming is when the activation of the brain cells based on external stimuli exciting the brain and causing an action. Mimicking is trying out the actions witnessed on media in real life leading to increased aggression and lack of empathy to others.

Media violence also leads to desensitization to violence. Bender et al. (2018) provides an overview of how the exposure to media violence leads to desensitization   to violence among different age groups. The authors identify that screens have become ubiquitous in American society and exposure to screen violence is on the increase. They analyze different studies to come to the conclusion that after exposure to violence, children and teenagers no longer feel violence being a vice and take it as a normal part of human experience. They are thus not afraid to engage in violent behavior as they lose empathy towards others based on what they have watched and how violence is portrayed in the media. In such scenarios, children and youths become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others hence the violent and aggressive behavior.

Media violence is also likely to lead to fear where those exposed will be afraid of the world around them. Media violence is portrayed in day-to-day life settings. For instance, in video games violence is made part of the tactics of winning the game showing that without violence you cannot win. Translating this to the real world, children are likely to develop prosocial behavior and antisocial attitudes as they develop the notion that everyone around them is violent and aims to harm them for personal benefits (Anderson et al., 2017).

**Conclusion**

Based on the provided analysis of the impact of media violence on behavior, it is possible to conclude that media violence causes violent behavior in the short term and also in the long term. Through processes such as priming, and mimicking what is watched, children and youths are likely to adopt aggressive behavior that they watch on the television or media. They are likely to copy the actions of the idols they see in the media with the notion that such behavior and aggressions are accepted in society.

For long term effects, exposure to media violence influences the perception individuals have about violence. For instance, children that are exposed to media violence at young ages are likely to develop into adolescents that are aggressive, and lack empathy towards others. They are likely to be desensitized to violence and thus become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others. They develop a notion that violence is the way and engage in violent behavior without regard to its consequences.

**References**

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