

Influence of Violent Films on Youth Behavior

Posted on October 9, 2018

Media Influence on Youth Development

Media has a powerful impact on the youth and influences their thoughts. Youths are easily manipulated in their development stage, and their consumption of the media without regulation or censorship can hugely influence their way of thinking (Anderson, Berkowitz, and Donnerstein, 2003).

Growth of Gun Violence in Films

According to Bushman and Jamieson (2013), the violence shown in films has tripled since 1985. Youths are exposed to gun violence despite them not using guns. Showing guns on the films by the film producers has an impact on the youth by strengthening the effects and giving them a script for using the guns. Viewing violent programming and video games instills violent aggression among them (Brown, 1996). According to Mukherji (2014), viewers tend to consume media that displays content they can relate to and are closer to reality. Such films make them think or motivate them to change their view about certain issues in society (Tripathy, Maharana, and Gochhait, 2015).

Visual Media and Behavioural Effects

Visual media has a greater impact on the youth; it directly influences their behavior and attitude. Visual media has more negative influence than any other media. A study by Praveena in 2014 revealed that violence broadcast in the media propagates violence among the youth and impedes peace among them. A different study by Dahl and Vigna revealed that violent crimes decrease as large film theatres show violent movies. The result of the study revealed that this is mainly due to voluntary incapacitation, especially between 6 am and 12 am. The study also revealed that one million increases in the audience for violent movies lower such crimes among the youth by 1.1 to 1.3 percent.

Social Learning and Adaptation to Violence

There is a strong connection and an indication that human behavior adapts to what they see and hear. The human brain adapts and trains itself in such a way that external influences in thinking affect how people behave in life (Phillips, 2007). There is a connection between video game violence and youth violence, which attests that exposure to violence results in the violent tendency among the youth. Being a victim of violence and participating in it are closely related. Experimental studies on

youth violence and exposure to violent content in the media show a small bivariate relationship between video game exposure and youth violence (Decamp and Ferguson, 2017).

Alternative Explanations for Youth Aggression

Studies by some scholars are suspicious of the impact of media on youth violence and have cited some factors such as family and peers, with others arguing that the violent nature of people follows the path of genetic risks such as poor upbringing in the sense of emotional distance from the caregiver and harsh environment. Theories of criminology support and purport that strong family bonds curb crime, and poor parenting, especially of children with deviant behaviors, increases the risk of violent behaviors (Decamp and Ferguson, 2017). A study by Surette and Maze considers the media effect to be too distal to have an impact on youth. Their study has it that media does not have an immediate impact on a child the same way real-life exposure to violence would (Decamp and Ferguson, 2017). This theory by Surette and Maze has been backed up by some other studies that also purport that the media has no incentive to motivate criminal behavior among youths. Evidence suggests that reality testing starts at a tender age of 4, and that ability develops fully by age 12. Brain imaging deconstructs the notion that exposure to violent media content leads to emotional desensitization, usually seen in real-life exposure to violence.

Media Consumption and Childhood Aggression

Aggression among children can be largely attributed to the media content they consume. Their attitude and thinking are shaped by what they realize within their environment. Children are naturally empathetic, and this makes them adaptive to what they see, hear, and play with. The age and the development of a child determine what his or her mind absorbs. Children develop emotional empathy from the media content they watch, and this might contribute to fear and anxiety among them. According to Wilson (2008), exposure to the media affects a child's social development, and violent media content contributes to aggression in them. Prolonged exposure to violent video games impacts negatively on children as compared to watching educational programs that foster altruism, cooperation, and tolerance among children (Slater et al., 2003). Wilson's study also revealed that children's susceptibility to media influence is determined by other factors such as gender, age, and how they perceive and identify with the characters they see in the media. According to Stossel, parents should monitor their children against watching violent scenes on the media, which has a direct correlation to increasing crime among the youth. Repeated watching of the violent scene in the media motivates one to commit the crime (Stossel, 1997).

Crime Imitation and the Influence of Violent

Scenes

Some studies also suggest that people are motivated by crime, and on viewing their occurrence, they are driven to commit one. A study by Gerbner posits that there are numerous scenes of violence on television that motivate people to commit a crime. This indicates that the media can perpetrate violence in the society (Gerbner, 2010). The media has been accused of portraying a section of some communities as violent, especially African Americans and Hispanics, which sometimes forces them to fulfill such media profiling by engaging in crime.

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