EXPOSURE TO MEDIA VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

Exposure to media violence has long been a subject of concern for researchers, educators, and policymakers due to its potential impact on children's behaviour. This research explores the link between exposure to media violence and aggressive behaviour in children. In the present study, a sample of 500 children of various schools in Dibrugarh district, Assam were taken as a sample. Class teachers of the students were included as part of the research. The findings reveal a significant correlation between frequent exposure to violent media and increased aggressive behaviours. The study underscores the importance of implementing strategies to promote media literacy, fostering parental engagement, and encouraging the development of non-violent conflict resolution skills in children. These findings have significant implications for public health, education, and media regulation policies aimed at reducing aggression and promoting healthier developmental outcomes in children.

Keywords: Media violence, Aggression, Media literacy, Online Gaming, Parental engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Aggression and violence are pervasive and destructive behaviours that compromise human life quality. The spectrum of violent acts, including murder, kidnapping, rape, and child abuse, seems endless. Children are particularly vulnerable to being victims or perpetrators of violence (Maguire and Pastore, 1998). Schools play a critical role in violence prevention, and early intervention is crucial for students exhibiting aggressive behavior. Understanding the multifaceted etiology of aggression is essential for effective intervention. One readily available source of aggression is media, which can normalize violent acts and encourage imitation. The term "media" has evolved to include electronic devices like tablets, smartphones, and gaming systems. Aggression is defined as behavior causing harm or hurt to others, while violence is a subset of aggression involving extreme physical harm. Research suggests that exposure to violent media, such as video games, can increase aggressive behavior, cognition, and affect (Anderson and Edward, 2005). Studies have also shown that media violence exposure can

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shape attitudes toward violence and predict aggressive beliefs (Anderson, Gentile, and Buckley, 2007). Furthermore, individual susceptibility to media effects can vary based on social-contextual factors (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

H1: There will be no significant relationship between media exposure and overtexpression of aggression.

H2: There will be no significant relationship between gaming and aggression

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY :

Aggression among children has emerged as a significant concern in contemporary society, with increasing instances of violent behaviour witnessed both in school and community settings. One of the most pervasive sources through which children are exposed to violence is media—ranging from television, internet content, to online video games. Children are particularly vulnerable as they are in a critical phase of development and often model behaviors they observe. With the ease of access to electronic devices and the growing prevalence of violent content in media, understanding the impact of such exposure has become essential. The study is rooted in the concern that children frequently encounter aggressive and violent imagery which may normalize such behaviours and influence their own actions. Furthermore, schools, as structured environments where behaviour is shaped and monitored, are ideal settings to examine these influences. By analysing the relationship between media habits and aggression in children aged 9–12, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform educational policies, parental strategies, and media regulation, ultimately aiming to promote healthier psychological development in children.

METHODOLOGY:

Research Design:

The present study follows a descriptive research design. The study provides information about the media usage among children and its various correlates. In the present study, the sample consisted of two groups of participants. These two groups were the students of the different schools & their respective class teachers. Simple Random Sampling method was used to draw the sample form the population.

Population of the study:

In the present study, the population was children from both the gender, i.e., male and female, in the age group of 9-12years, studying in various co educational schools under the state board (SEBA) of Dibrugarh district.

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Sample Size:

In the present study, the sample consisted of 500 children who were students of various schools in Dibrugarh district. The class teachers of those students were also a part of the study and the behavioural checklist of Aggression scale was filled by them for the respective students.

Inclusion criteria of the sample:

The study's subjects were chosen according to the following standards:

1. Students from English medium schools
2. Students from co- educational schools.
3. Students from the state education (SEBA) board.
4. Those children who were in the age group of 9-12 years.
5. Those students were selected who have access to internet usage, television viewing and play online games.
6. The class teachers of the respective students.

Exclusion criteria of the sample:

1. The study excluded students who had physical disabilities.
2. Students identified with any childhood disorder were also excluded from the sample.

Procedure:

The procedure for the present study included approaching schools and getting the consent of the school authorities. In the briefing about the study, it was highlighted about the participation of the teachers as well as the students. Once the briefing was done, the formal consent letter was given to the authorities for their approval & signature. Confidentiality of data will be ensured, and it will be used exclusively for

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research. The students were than administered the Overt Aggression Test and the Media Habits Questionnaire. The class teachers of the respective students were than briefed about the Behavioral Checklist, and the instructions to fill them were given. After the collection of data, the statistical analysis has been carried out to test the hypothesis that has been stated.

Tools used:

The research tools included the Aggression Scale, which combines the Overt Aggression Test and Behavioral Checklist. The overt aggression test was filled by the students and the Behavioral Checklist was filled by the respective class teachers regarding the behavior of each of the students. The Media Habit questionnaire was a self constructed questionnaire to understand the media habits of the children.

MEDIA HABITS QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire on media habits sought to obtain details about:

i. No of hours a child spends on media usage

ii. The genre of programs and movies that they like most(action thriller/ animated/comedy)

iii. If they idealize any fictional character, and if they do, for what reasons.

iv. What is the frequency of their internet usage?

v. Which are the most easily available mediums for internet usage?

vi. The purpose of their internet usage.

vii. The most frequently used form of media

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RESULTS:

Table 2.1: Aggression level

BCL - level with Gender

	Gender					
	Male		Female		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Extremely high	6	2.4	0	0	6	1.2
High	22	8.8	21	8.4	43	8.6
Above average	90	36	17	6.8	107	21.4
Average	118	47.2	92	36.8	210	42
Below average	10	4	73	29.2	83	16.6
Low	4	1.6	29	11.6	33	6.6
Extremely low	0	0	18	7.2	18	3.6
Total	250	100.0	250	100.0	500	100.0

The above table (2.1) shows the level of aggression in boys and girls. 2.4% of boys

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are in the extremely high category, and no girls fall in this category. 8.8 % of boys' f all under the high aggression level, and 8.4% of the girls fall under this level. 36 % boys fall under the above average aggression and 6.8 % of girls fall under this category. 47.2% of the boys are in the average aggression level and 36.8 % of girls are in the average aggression level. 4% boys are in the below average level, and 29.2 % girls are under this level. Low aggression levels were observed in 1.6% of boys and 11.6% of girls, with a notable absence of boys in the lowest aggression category. For extremely low aggression, there were no boys, whereas, 7.2 % of girls fall under this category.

For the total scores, it was found that 1.2% was under extremely high category, 8.6 % in the high category, 21.4% in the above average category, 42% in the average, 16.6 % in the below average category, 6.6 in the low aggression category. 3.6% were in the extremely low aggressive category.

The Behavioral Checklist (BCL) is filled by the teachers regarding the behavior of the students. The BCL was one of the subtests that can be filled by the teachers or the parents of the respective students regarding the behavior of the student. However, in order to reduce the level of parents' biases, it was given to the class teachers to fill the responses regarding the student.

Objective 1: Investigating the link between media exposure and overt aggressive behavior.

Ho- There will be no significant relationship between media exposure and overt expression of aggression.

		MHQTT	Total_Subset_I	Sub_test_II
MHQTT	Pearson Correlation	1	.526**	.670**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	500	500	500

Table 3: Correlation between MHQ and OAT

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The above table (3), shows the correlation between media habits questionnaire and the Overt aggression test. The correlation co efficient between MHQ and subtest I is .526, which is significant at 0.01 level of significance. A significant correlation of 0.670 was found for subtest II, with a significance level of 0.01. Hence, the null hypothesis cannot be accepted. The result shows that there is a significant positive correlation between media exposure and overt expression of aggression. The children are exposed to different forms of media. In order to understand the exposure, time, genre (are they exposed to violent content), and duration were probed into further. It can be observed from table 2.1, that, none of the participants fall under extremely low level of aggression. On the other hand, 1.2% of the participants were in the extremely high aggressive level.

Objective 2: Examining the link between online gaming and aggressive behavior..
Ho- There will be no significant relationship between gaming and aggression
Table 5 (a): Pearson correlation coefficient

		Total_Subset_I	Sub_test_II
MH18	Pearson Correlation	.486**	.468**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000
	N	500	500

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table 5(a), shows the correlation between Media Habits questionnaire and Overt Aggression scale (Self Assessment-subtest I & II). The data shows that the correlation is significant at 0.01 level of significance when computed with Subtest I & Subtest II. The correlation coefficient with Subtest I is .486** which shows a high positive correlation. Similarly with Subtest II, the correlation coeffiecient is .468** which also shows a high positive correlation between the two variables. Thus, the null hypothesis cannot be accepted. This indicates that children who spent more time playing video games also showed that were higher on the aggression scale.

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DISCUSSION:

To study the relationship between media exposure and overt expression of aggression, the correlation coefficient was calculated and it was found to have a high correlation between media exposure and aggression. The correlation coefficient was calculated with Subtest I as well as Subtest II. With both the subtest, the coefficient was found to be significant at 0 .01 level of significance. This indicated that higher the numbers of hours spend by children viewing various forms of media, the aggression level was found to be higher f or them. For students who spend less number of hours on viewing television or playing online games, it was noticed that they were engaged in some form of hobbies (cycling, painting etc) or in co curricular activities (singing and dancing classes, yoga, sports like table tennis, taekwondo etc) during the time that their peers were busy in media consumption. These activities that they were engaged in, leads to channelizing their pent up energy. Aggression can also vary depending on the types. Bullying, name calling, out grouping are also overt expression of aggression. The correlation that was found between media habits and aggression can be supported by various studies that have been carried out that in this field. Extensive researches in this field show the correlation between these two variables.

Huesman and Eron (1976) confirmed earlier findings that frequent viewing of violence on television promoted aggressive behaviour among children in the age group of 6 to 11 . Such children, they be boys or girls, thought television portrayed real life and felt a strong identification with the show’s aggressive characters. They also engaged frequently in aggressive fantasies.

Pediatricians, teachers, and caretakers can help mitigate violence by shaping parental attitudes toward children’s media use, integrating critical viewing skills into school curricula, and working with regulators and media producers to minimize children’s exposure to violent programming.

To study the relationship between online gaming and aggression, the correlation coefficient was calculated, and it reflected a high positive correlation between online gaming and aggression. The questions in the questionnaire were designed in a way to find out the time duration of playing online games on weekdays and weekends or school holidays. However, it was observed that, children spent more time playing online games on school days rather than on weekends because, on weekends or holidays they played with their f riends more and had

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to attend other co curricular classes like signing schools, drawing classes and home works kept them occupied. The genre of video games that they played showed significant gender difference, girls preferred academic games while boys were more engaged in action simulation and other thriller games. The reason for showcasing interest in particular genres can be social as well. Girls from a young age are nurtured in a way to be polite, to be less aggressive and subsequently their interest also inclines in that manner. Peer pressure is another crucial aspect. For both the genders, if the interests are not similar to their peers, they may be bullied, called names or even laughed at., they are even out grouped and seen as an outsider if the tastes, genres, likes and dislikes are not similar. However, in the data collected it was noticed that few students were different and did not fall in the peer or social pressure. Online games, spanning various genres and formats (single-player, multiplayer, massively multiplayer), are accessed via online channels and require internet connectivity. Online gamers can be categorized as casual or professional based on factors such as playtime, commitment, gameplay complexity, and purpose (recreational or professional).

Researches related to gaming in the past decade have explored different dimensions of gaming and its effects on human behavior. Although, the world of gaming has gone through tremendous change, this has been an area of interest for researchers from quite some time. The present state of gaming has become more real than reel. The improved advancements in technology and software have made the gaming world as real as possible. With these advancements, the numbers of researches in this area have increased manifolds. The literature available of the current times however shows mixed responses to linking violent video game playing with aggressive behavior. An interesting profile, in one of the studies suggests that certain psychological characteristics such as aggression, self -control, and narcissistic personality traits may predispose some individuals to become addicted to online games. That points out that it is not the violent video games that leads to aggressive behavior display but it is the personality characteristics and other inherent traits in an individual that leads one to become addicts of violent video games, and it acts as a trigger. This is an interesting fact that has been revealed, because most of the researches link violent video games as a causal or triggering factor for aggressive behavior. This gives another perspective to researches on online gaming. Online games, which are educational in nature, when used by trained psychologists, special educators become an effective tool f or helping learners with special needs. Various special educators and therapists across the country and globally are making learning for these special children interesting through online games. But, the growths of educational games are

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not as popular as the shooter games, real time strategy games are. The demands of games which are higher have high level of combat fighting, killing involved.

The Indian online gaming market, valued at $290 million, is projected to reach $1 billion by 2021.Internet penetration is projected to increase from 31% currently to around 53% of the population by 2021. The Smartphone users, projected to be 470 million by 2021, are expected to enable this rise in internet penetration. The availability of affordable smart phones is expected to prompt a shift from the current feature phone users to smart phones.

The findings of this study can be supported with the help of previous researches conducted by Hollingdale J and Greitemeyer T (2014), 'The effect of Online Violent games on level of aggression'.This experimental study involved 101 participants randomly assigned to one of four conditions: offline/online neutral or violent video games. After gameplay, participants completed questionnaires and participated in a task measuring behavioral aggression. Results showed that violent video game players exhibited more aggression than neutral game players, with online/offline gameplay having minimal impact on this effect. Although the negative effects of video games are highlighted in most researches, it is too simplistic to consider video games as "good" or "bad".

Heiden. J, Braun. B, Müller. K, Egloff. B (2019), sought to illuminate the relationship between video gaming and the psychological well-being of gamers. Questionnaires on personality and psychological health as well as video gaming habits were administered to 2,734 individuals (2,377 male, 357 female, Mage = 23.06, SDage = 5.91). Findings showed a moderate negative correlation between problematic gaming and psychological well-being, including symptoms, emotions, coping mechanisms, and self-esteem. Additionally, gaming motivations and genre preferences were linked to psychological functioning, particularly for those playing for distraction or action games. Considering the positive correlation with aggression found in other studies, the psychological impact of gaming cannot be underestimated.

India led the world with a 165% growth in online game downloads between 2016-2018 (Statistica, 2020). The surge in gamers raises concerns about addiction and other psychological issues. In response, the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) has recognized gaming disorder, enabling healthcare professionals to better address its risks and develop prevention and treatment strategies.

Research indicates that gaming disorder impacts a small percentage of gamers. Nonetheless, gamers should be mindful of their gaming time, especially if it interferes with daily activities,

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and monitor any potential negative effects on their physical and mental health, as well as social relationships (WHO, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study reveal a significant positive correlation between media exposure and overt aggression in children, as well as between online gaming and aggressive behavior. Children who frequently consume violent media content or spend considerable time on action-based online games demonstrate higher levels of aggression. Gender differences were also observed, with boys generally displaying higher aggression levels, possibly due to greater engagement with violent or action-themed media. These results underscore the urgent need for preventive measures such as enhancing media literacy among children, promoting parental monitoring of media consumption, and encouraging alternative, constructive outlets for energy such as extracurricular activities. The study contributes to the growing body of literature that advocates for responsible media use and highlights the psychological consequences of unregulated exposure to media violence.Given the increasing penetration of smartphones and internet access among children, these findings carry strong implications for public health and education stakeholders. There is a pressing need for collaborative efforts among parents, educators, policymakers, and media producers to mitigate the negative effects of media violence and support the emotional well-being of children

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