



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**INFLUENCE OF MEDIA VIEWING HABITS ON ATTITUDE TOWARDS
AGGRESSION AMONG SCHOOLBOYS AT INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOLS IN KUALA LUMPUR**

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*Influence of Media Viewing Habits on Attitude towards
Aggression among Schoolboys at International Schools in
Kuala Lumpur*

By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
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Science**

23 October 2009



DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work specifically to my eternal beloved parents, who instilled in me the values of life and saw me grow to this stage and made me what I am.



Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Chairman: Prof. Dr. Md Salleh Hj Hassan

Faculty: Institute Of Social Science Studies

Violence is one of the global concerns today in all segments of the world.

Antisocial behavior in human beings is accepted to be associated to a number of physiological, psychological, domestic, and cultural aspects. The learning environments which a child is exposed are also assumed to contribute to the increase of aggressive behavior and attitudes. Media violence as one of specific learning condition is believed to be a potential contributor to the growth of antisocial behavior in children and youth.

Many studies have been conducted in the area of media violence and its effects on the young viewers. A major focus has been the relationship between media violence and aggressive behavior but, interestingly, research



regarding the relationship between media violence and attitudes about aggression is limited. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to contribute to the state of the research by predicting and comparing attitudes about aggression among adolescent boys on the basis of their exposure to violence in movies.

This study used a survey research design. Two hundred and sixteen adolescent boys aged 13-17 were selected from seven international schools on Kuala Lumpur location. The data were collected using four instruments: the Demographic Questionnaire, the Media Viewing Habit Questionnaire, the Affection toward movie violence scale, and the Attitudes concerning Aggression Scale. The results indicated that adolescent boys spend a significant amount of time watching movies on TV and DVD/CD as well. In addition, they are exposed to substantial amounts of media violence. At the same time, parental involvement with their adolescents' movie viewing is relatively limited.

Further results showed that there is significant difference between heavy and light viewers of movie violence in any dimension of their attitudes about aggression. Adolescents with "violent" movies preferred, however, were significantly more supportive of the attitude that aggression is acceptable and warranted, as compared to those who prefer movies with little or no violence. Additional results demonstrated that the "aggression-acceptable" attitude was significantly related to a set of variables. The

strongest predictors of this attitude in adolescent boys were affection toward movies, movie viewing habits, and the adolescents' movies preferred.

The results obtained in this research are discussed in terms of implications for both violence-prevention programs and media-awareness programs. Suggestions for future research are also presented.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putera Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

***Pengaruh Tabiat Penontonan Media ke atas Tingkah Laku
Ganas Di Kalangan Murid Lelaki di Sekolah Antarabangsa di
Kuala Lumpur***

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ABSTRAK

Keganasan merupakan kebimbangan global dalam setiap segmen di seluruh dunia. Kelakuan antisosial manusia diakui mempunyai hubungkait dengan beberapa aspek fisiologikal, psikologikal, domestik dan budaya. Suasana dan persekitaran pembelajaran di mana kanak-kanak didedahkan juga diandaikan menyumbang kepada peningkatan kelakuan dan tingkahlaku ganas ke atas kanak-kanak. Keganasan media sebagai salah satu aspek pembelajaran dipercayai sebagai penyumbang ke atas peningkatan kelakuan antisosial di kalangan kanak-kanak dan golongan belia.

Banyak penyelidikan telah dijalankan berhubung dengan keganasan media dan impaknya ke atas golongan penonton muda. Antara fokus utama adalah ke atas hubungkait di antara keganasan media dan kelakuan agresif, namun

amat menarik kerana penyelidikan yang melibatkan hubungkait di antara kegunaan media dan sikap kegunaan amatlah sedikit dan terhad. Objektif penyelidikan ini adalah untuk membandingkan sikap dan pandangan mengenai kegunaan di kalangan remaja lelaki berdasarkan kepada pendedahan mereka kepada kegunaan dalam filem.

Penyelidikan ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan pendekatan pengedaran borang soal selidik. Sejumlah dua ratus enam belas orang murid lelaki berusia di antara 13-17 tahun daripada 7 sekolah antarabangsa di sekitar Kuala Lumpur telah terpilih sebagai responden kajian dalam penyelidikan ini. Data kajian telah dikumpul dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik yang dibahagikan kepada 4 bahagian: i) Bahagian Demografi, ii) Bahagian Tabiat Menonton Media, iii) Bahagian Kegemaran Menonton Kegunaan Media dan iv) Bahagian Sikap/Pandangan ke atas Kegunaan. Antara dapatan kajian menunjukkan remaja lelaki memperuntukkan masa yang signifikan menonton filem di televisyen dan DVD/CD. Selain itu, golongan remaja lelaki ini juga didapati terdedah kepada kegunaan media yang agak tinggi. Di samping itu, keterlibatan ibu dan bapa bersama anak-anak mereka semasa menonton filem adalah amat kurang dan terhad dan berkurangan.

Kajian lanjutan menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan di antara penonton yang banyak dan kurang menonton kegunaan dalam filem dalam apa juga dimensi berkenaan sikap mereka kepada kegunaan. Golongan remaja yang gemar menonton kegunaan dalam filem kebanyakan berpendapat kegunaan adalah sesuatu yang dibolehkan, berbanding dengan

golongan remaja yang kurang gemar menonton keganasan dalam filem. Dapatan kajian seterusnya juga menunjukkan sikap 'penerimaan-keganasan' mempunyai hubung kait yang signifikan dengan sekumpulan pembolehubah. Antara hubung kait yang kukuh mengenai sikap terhadap keganasan laku ini di kalangan remaja lelaki adalah kegemaran kepada filem, tabiat menonton filem dan genre filem yang menjadi kegemaran golongan remaja.

Dapatan kajian yang diperolehi daripada penyelidikan ini dibincangkan dari sudut implikasi untuk program pencegahan keganasan dan program kesedaran media. Cadangan untuk penyelidikan akan datang juga dibincangkan dalam tesis.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on **23 October 2009** to conduct the final examination of **Zoheir Sabaghpour Azarian** on his Master of Science thesis entitled “**Influence of Media Viewing Habits on Attitudes towards Aggression among Schoolboys at International Schools in Kuala Lumpur**” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at other institutions.

ZOHEIR SABAGHPOUR AZARIAN

Date:

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CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION

The main topic of this study is the impact of film violence on youth attitudes which has been focused by a lot of the research (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron 2003; Arnett 2007; Uhlmann & Swanson 2004) as a fact contributing to antisocial behavior.

The theoretical framework of the present study is social learning theory. The majority of studies which are done by social learning theorists such as Bandura (1965a) have exposed that modeled aggressive behavior can lead to aggressive responses in viewers.

Nowadays rising violence in schools has encouraged many investigators to search for and understand potential causes of violent actions in our youths. A number of variables have been targeted as separate fundamental factors. For instance, lack of parental direction could be the most important predictor of violent behavior but moral concerns and methodological limitations prevent true experimental examination of this element in the laboratory (Von & Carlsson 2000).



Due to the substantial impact of technology, exposure to the media has been a purpose of research as well: the global depends on the media as a pattern for social tendencies, and the media provides a model for social behaviors by way of movies, television, magazines and other related resources (Huesmann & Malamuth, 1986).

Arousing and even violent stories and fairy fictions have been always interesting to children and adolescents. However, the quantity of aggressive content that every day consumed by these age groups has considerably increased (Nabi & Sullivan 2001). Real violence is still growing amongst the youth at the same time and it looks believable to correlate these two phenomenon media violence and violent behavior (Sams & Truscott 2004).

The rapid development of technology related with video recorders, computer games and the internet has extremely increased the violence images that obviously need more attention. Realistic torment scenes and even intentional killing portraits presented by films and computer games allow the persons to actively simulate of enemies. Besides the internet apart from its prosocial possibilities has become a base of child pornography, violent cults, and terrorist guidelines. However, it is essential to comprehend that prime causes of violent behavior which perhaps found in family position or environment, the peer groups and specific the socioeconomic conditions, those children rising in (Hinde & Groebel, 1991).



As can be noted that the development of cultural directions, world views and attitudes, as well in the universal distribution of values and images are mainly effected by the contents of media which daily viewing by the people. They also reflect and direct the cultural tendencies as they are major components of the society as well as straight means of intergroup violence and war publicity.

According to an old opinion that drama is an action which affords an opportunity for audience to release their strong emotions safely via sympathy with the people and events represented in the performance. This perspective takes us back to at least as far as ARISTOTLE, who wrote in THE ART of POETRY that drama is: "a representation . . . in the form of actions directly presented, not narrated; with incidents arousing pity and fear in such a way as to accomplish a purgation of such emotions." (Berkowitz, 1964)

Aristotle derived the term of notion of catharsis from the Greek word of purgation which has survived till the current time. In discussion, it can be heard that whether or not people who watch violence scenes in animated and motion pictures and TV Programs can be provoked violent activities by observing such scenes. In other discussions, film violence, far from leading to real violence, can actually have positive effect in which the spectator might purge himself of hostile impulses by watching other people behave violently, even though those people are merely actors appearing on a screen.



On the other hand, authorities of equal position assert that film violence is a "preparatory school for delinquency"(Carlson, Laczniak & Walsh 2001). In this view the emotionally immature can be seriously affected by fighting or brutality in films, and disturbed young people in particular can be led into the habit of expressing their aggressive energies by socially destructive actions (Berkowitz, 1964).

It is necessary to describe two terms obviously: media violence and violent behavior. Since reliable observation and systematic analysis usually requires limited and objective definitions.

These terms have different definitions used by different people at different times. But media violence in most research studies have been defined as the depiction of overt physical action that hurts or kills or threatens to do so (Berger, 2006).

The definition of media violence refers to visually portrayed physically aggressive acts by one person against another. This definition represents an attempt to describe the kind of violent media presentation as theories about the effects of media violence that is most likely to teach the viewer to act violently. Movies and programs depicting violence of this type were common from 20 years ago, and still they are common at this time (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006).

The definition assumed for violent behavior can also be significant for how the experiential research is understood. The studying of media effects on behavior have



focused by most researchers on what they recognize violent behavior. The definition of violent behavior conditions that accepted by most researchers refers to an act physical or nonphysical that intended to injure or irritate another person. These are composed of many sorts of behavior that do not seem to fit the regularly understood meaning of violence. Nevertheless, physical aggression may range in severity from acts such as pushing or shoving to more serious physical attacks and fighting, even extending to violent acts that carry a significant risk of serious injuries (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006).

Background of Study

A flood of consideration has focused in the past several decades on the potential adverse behavioral effects. There has been increasing investigation of the harmful effects of media violence on youth and their real life performance connected with television and films viewing.

From 1950's, numerous researches (Leonard, 1964; Horton & Santogrossi, 1978; Noffner & Cantor, 2007) have been carrying out to investigate the relation among violent television entertainment and audience violent behavior. Paik and Comstock (1994) conducted the meta-analysis of media violence, which indicated that brief exposure to violent considerable displays on television or films reasons increases in the violent behavior of youth, inclusive of physically aggressive behavior.



The growth of violent behavior in children may be caused by growing apprehension that exposure to violent media. Scientists have considerably improved throughout qualitative and quantitative studies the understanding of how media violence can generate, prompt, or increase the probability of violent actions (Nathanson, 2002).

Aggressive behavior in humans is recognized to be related to a number of physiological, psychological, familial, and cultural factors (Kirsh, 2006). The child is exposed by specific learning conditions which are also believed to contribute to the development of antisocial behavior (Chatfield, 2002). Attitudes toward real-life recently proposed by investigators and educators that violence play a mediating role in the paraphrase of aggressive feelings into violent behavior (Velicer, Huckel, & Hanson, 1989). Thus, attitudes may have a significant influence on behavior, principally on violent behavior.

TV violence has been an important issue in discussions that whether or not it causes violent behavior amongst audiences. The relation between heavy exposure to TV violence and succeeding violent behavior has been studied for more than thirty years. On this inquiry it has been determined that there is a connection between viewing TV violence and violent behavior , and a large body of experimental and longitudinal research has been estimated.

Other researches indicated that problems in other fields of social behavior can be sourced to heavy exposure to screen violence. For instance, it can make people become



both frightened of the world around them and more accepting of violence in the real life as exhibited by others (Singer & Singer, 1986).

Scientists have expressed desensitization theory as one method of illumination as outcomes of research concerning to both the cognitive and social development of youth that illustrate how children's behavior is impacted by exposure to violent media substance.

Most humans have an innate negative emotional reaction when they are exposed to violence which described by the desensitization theory (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron, 2003). This may be the root of physiological response, such as an increased heart rate or perspiration. But it can reduce this reaction in which the viewer becomes desensitized over time due to the increased and repeated exposure to violence.

Anderson and Evans assert that, "through repetition children become both pleasurable aroused by and desensitized to violence" (Anderson & Evans, 2003). Desensitization theory, in this approach, articulates the long-term effects of media violence by declaring that over time, exposure can decrease innate negative response and nervousness towards violence and reduce responsively to real-life violence.

