

VIOLENT TELEVISION HARMS CHILDREN: PARENTING STYLE PREDICTS AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS IN CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the different role of parenting styles adopted by Sabahan parents that may contribute to the occurrences of aggressive behaviors amongst children who viewed violent television excessively. The study was conducted in various rural and urban areas of Sabah, involving 626 boys (N= 367) and girls (N=259) children. A self-developed questionnaire based on the adaptation from Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ) by Buss and Perry (1992), Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) by Achenbach (1986), Childhood TV Violence Measures (CTVVM) by Huesmann and Eron (1986) and Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) by Buri (1991) was used in this study. The findings showed that, children in Sabah spend 3.3 hours a day watching violent television programs which shown a positive correlations with status violations. It is also found that the occurrence of status violations is momentous in the rural area compare to urban. Parenting styles that play a very important role in this occurrence was tested for the predictor. Permissive parenting style has been identified as a style adopted by most parents and contributed to the manifestation of the circumstances.

Keyword: television viewing, aggressive, parenting styles

INTRODUCTION

It is undoubtedly that every household in Malaysia possesses at least one television set. It has become a center of everyday life for every Malaysian, regardless for their age or sex. For some reasons, parents think that having a television set at home, unquestionably would keep their children at home in safe and sound. Nevertheless, having too much television viewing may initiate other problems among their children. Especially during the early years of age. The effects of television are long lasting. The amount of television violence and aggressive observed at age 8 can be predicted aggression at age 18 (Haugaard, 2001). Pattern of aggression often starts early in life. Haugaard, (2001), also claimed that, 55 percent of boys and 41 percent of girls show signs of aggression by the age of 2 while 25 percent of boys and 34 percent of girls reveal the patterns of aggression by the age of 5.

These patterns of aggressiveness may be influence by many factors. One of the most significant is the exposure to the violent television programs as Berns (1994), suggests that, studies on televised violence have supported the belief that watching much programs results in an increase in aggressive behavior. This possibility derives from the notion that, their comprehension of television contents and its intension is not as adults who are able enough to weigh right from wrong. Supporting this notion Chandler, (2004); the more the violent is

viewed, the greater the likelihood of aggressive behavior would be occurred. Children who are exposed to excessive television watching aggressive and violence that are very much realistic may be easily influenced by what they see. For example, in programs where violence is used frequently to settle disputes reinforce the value that aggressive behavior is acceptable. Statistic gathered by Herr, (2001), indicates that average Americans watch television for 6 hours and 47 minutes each day. This means, American children watch television for 1,680 minutes in a week. That fact and figures bring to the conclusion of American children will watch 8,000 murder scenes and 200,000 violent acts in the television before the age of 18. Therefore, by taking the social cognitive learning and learning by imitation theories in perspective, the fact how the increase of aggression and violent behavior manifesting by today's children is seriously critical.

Aggressive Behaviors and Television Influences

Extensive television viewing may be associated with violent or overly aggressive behavior, poor academic performance, precocious sexuality and the use of drugs or alcohol. Television can be a powerful influence in developing value systems and shaping behaviors of the children since it is one of the most influential mass communications in today world.

The nature of television is to provide info-entertainment, in which sexuality, aggressive and violent acts seem to be the favorite themes in their programs. Unfortunately, these acts can even be seen in cartoons watched by children. As Kirsh (2005), has put it, violence in cartoon is an integral part of cartoon content, children are exposed to violence in cartoons in a greater frequency than in live-action dramas. Table 1 below, somehow confirms that children's genre in the television programs reported by Gentile (2003), and contains higher percentage in violent content compare to the same content found in drama for adults.

**TABLE 1:Percentage of Violent Television Programs by Content and Genre.
Source: Gentile (2003).**

CONTENT	GENRE	(%)
Type of violent	Children's	Drama
Excessive violence	31	40
Fantasy violence	87	11
Violence with humor	68	16
Use of body as weapon	43	31

Parenting Styles

Each of the parenting styles differ in the manner of parental demandingness-control and parental acceptance-responsiveness. Sigelman and Rider (2006) and Steinberg (2005), refer acceptance-responsiveness as the extent to which parents are accepting, supportive, sensitive to their children's needs and willing to provide affection and praise when their children meet their expectation.

There are three fundamental of parenting styles introduced by Diana Baumrind (1966), authoritarian parenting styles, authoritative parenting style and permissive parenting style. Authoritarian parenting style has high parental demandingness-control and low parental

acceptance-responsiveness. In this dimension of parenting, parent inflicts many rules and demand obedience. Authoritative parenting style is a give-and-take manner of bringing up the children. It is a high parental demandingness-control and parental acceptance-responsiveness dimension. Parenting is based on the rationale the reasoning and being justify to the underlying family principle or policy. The third dimension on Baumrind's parenting style is called permissive parenting. It has a low parental demandingness-control but high parental acceptance-responsiveness. This parenting style has relatively few rules and makes relatively few demands (Sigelman & Rider, 2006).

Statements of Problems

Excessive hours of violent television watching in relationship to aggressive behaviors among Malaysian children may carry different outcomes due to the parenting style adopted by their parents. As mentioned by Jackson and Knepper (2003), the entertainment mediums of television and movies are two the most dangerous socialization agents. While at the same time, parenting practices and family management skills such as monitoring, problem solving and discipline are related to levels of anti social and aggressive behaviors in children (Hoghughi and Long, 2004).

Most studies on the relationship of violent television viewing and aggression conduct disorder were conducted on boys while studies on girls were more focused on aggression and delinquency. According to Putallaz and Bierman (2004), it is not surprising, therefore, that the theoretical models and empirical foundation for understanding the development of aggression have been based on research on aggressive boys. Therefore, three statements of problems have been out lined, which are:

1. Do boys display more aggressive behaviors compare to girls?
2. Do children in the rural area of Sabah display more aggressive behaviors in comparison to children in the urban?
3. What contributions do parenting styles have on the relationship between excessive hours of violent television viewing and aggressive behaviors among children?

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The purposive sample (N=626) were male (N=367) and female (N=259) children from rural (53.2%) and urban (46.8%) areas in Sabah. The mean age was 13.9. Samples were referred from the school counselor to take part in the survey.

Location

The survey was carried out in rural and urban areas of Sabah. The determination of these areas was based on the schoolchildren population as per June 2009. Areas with the schoolchildren population of less than 10,000 was classified as rural while the area of more than 10,000 schoolchildren population was classified as urban. Therefore, two urban areas were identified; Kota Kinabalu (23.5%) and Tawau (23.3%). While rural areas were, Kundasang (5.5%), Papar (12.5%), Kota Belud (13.4%) and Kudat (11.8%).

Instrument

A self-administered self-developed questionnaire based on the adaptation from Child Behavior Check List (CBCL) by Achenbach (1986) with Cronbach's value .82. Childhood TV Violence Measures (CTVVM) by Huesmann and Eron (1986) with Cronbach's value .76 and Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) by Buri (1991) Cronbach's value .72 was used to

survey the samples. A pilot study was conducted to test the instruments involving 42 samples in Likas (urban) and Penampang (rural) areas. The questionnaire was revised, simplified and finalized according to the result of the pilot study.

Data Analysis

The Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V 16.0 for windows was used to analyze the data. The statistical analysis results were presented in two methods; descriptive method showing the mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. While inferential method will explain the statistical analysis by using t-test, ANOVA and multiple regression.

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

TABLE 2: Parental Relationship among the Respondents

Distribution	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Biological Parents	553	88.3
Step Father	44	7.0
Step Mother	12	1.9
Grand Parents	11	1.8
Adopted	2	.3
Foster	.4	.6
Total	626	100

Majority of the respondents live with their biological parents (88.3%) while only a small numbers are not. Respondents staying with adopted parents (0.3%) is the smallest numbers collected in this sample.

TABLE 3: Mean Score for Violent Television Watching Hours and Aggressive Behaviors Components

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Violent TV Watching Hours	626	3.29	1.56
Property Destructions	626	13.59	2.45
Extreme Violent	626	8.98	1.95
Status Violation	626	14.73	3.06
Oppositional	626	10.08	2.04

The time spent for watching violent television (mean score=3.29, SD=1.56). Status violation has the highest score (mean score=14.73, SD=3.06) followed by property destruction (mean score=13.59, SD=2.45) and oppositional (mean score=10.08, SD=2.04). While extreme violent has the lowest score (mean score=8.98, SD=1.95).

TABLE 4: Percentage of responded items on aggressive behaviors and parenting styles (N=626)

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Stay out late without approval	270	43.1
Run away from home	161	25.7

Truancy	243	38.8
Destroy own things	417	66.6
Destroy family members' things	400	63.9
Destroy others' things	389	62.1
Not following rules and regulations	397	63.4
Do not like to follow rules and regulations	311	49.7
Parents seldom give advice and guidance	155	24.8
Make own decision without consulting parents	147	23.5
Advice and guidance given in a constructive way	223	35.6

Table 4 shows the reported particularized frequency and percentage of the responded items.

Inferential Analysis

TABLE 5: T-Test showing the differences between male and female involvement in status violation.

Status Violation	N	Mean	Std.Dv	df	t	Sig
Male	367	14.77	2.91	624	.379	0.129
Female	259	14.67	3.26			
Total	626					

* $p < 0.05$

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the status violation scores for males and females. There was no significant differences in scores for males ($M=14.77$, $SD=2.91$), and females [$M=14.67$, $SD=3.26$; $t(624) = .379$, $p > 0.05$].

TABLE 6: T-Test showing the differences between urban and rural areas on the occurrence of status violation among children in sabah.

Status Violation	N	Mean	Std.Dv	df	t	Sig
Urban	367	14.16	2.82	624	-4.46	0.04*
Rural	259	15.24	3.17			
Total	626					

* $p < 0.05$

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the status violation scores for urban and rural areas. There was a significant differences in scores for urban area ($M=14.16$, $SD=2.82$), and rural area [$M=15.24$, $SD=3.17$; $t(624) = -4.46$, $p < 0.05$].

TABLE 7: Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis on the influence of parenting styles on violent television watching hours and aggressive behaviors.

Parenting Styles (N)	R ²	ΔR^2	df	F	Sig
Authoritarian (626)					
TV hours	0.11		1,624	6.84	
Aggressive behaviors	0.26	0.05	2,623	8.47	.653
Authoritative (624)					

TV hours	0.11		1,622	6.65	
Aggressive behaviors	0.12	0.10	2,621	3.82	.033*
Permissive (625)					
TV hours	0.11		1,623	6.82	
Aggressive behaviors	0.03	0.17	2,622	12.42	.261

* $p < 0.05$

Authoritative parenting style is found has a significant contribution ($p < 0.05$) towards the decrease occurrences of aggressive behaviors by 2.8% . Compare to authoritarian parenting style which shows the increase of the probability for the occurrences by 1.6% and so does permissive parenting style by 5.6%.

DISCUSSION

In this study, violent television watching hours is the dependent variable, which has a positive correlation with status violation ($r = .12$, $p < 0.05$) among the children in Sabah. It is also found that, these children spent 3.3 hours per day watching violent programs in television (mean score=3.29, $SD=1.56$). Supporting this finding, Berk, (2009), verified that children of age 8-16 years old spend almost 3.35 hours a day watching television.

Different components of aggressive behaviors were tested in this study as shown in table 3. Status violation (mean score=14.73, $SD=3.06$) has the highest mean score among all four. This study has discovered that, most of these children (mean age=13.9) stay out late at night without parental approval (43.1%) and have at least, once ran away from home (25.7%) and also involve in truancy (38.8%). Most of the time they watched violent programs with their peer groups who were also sharing the same conducts. For them, watching violent programs in television is always fun and exciting with peer-group, but not at home with parents or siblings. This finding is also supported by Berk, L.E (2009), who confirmed that children spend almost 2.25 hours a day with their peers. As peer-group also acts as support-group, these children are at the same time completing each other and becomes a 'sub-culture' group whereby, to them entrusting in property destruction (13.59%) is not wrong. This is shown by the acts of destroying own things (66.6%), destroying family's member's things (63.9%) and destroying other people's things (62.1%). This is because 63.4% of them do not follow any rules and regulation in any places and 49.7% of them do not like to follow any established rules.

The occurrences of this phenomenon were also taken under consideration in this study. It is found that, there was a significant difference in happening between urban and rural areas. Numbers of children in the rural area commit to status violation is more [$M=15.24$, $SD=3.17$; $t(624) = -4.46$, $p < 0.05$] compare to the urban children ($M=14.16$, $SD=2.82$). This finding is supported by Habibah Elias, et. al (2009), that the phenomenon of aggressiveness is more serious in the rural area in comparison to the urban area.

Gender was also another aspect that this study was looking into seriously. It is found that, there was no significant differences in scores for males ($M=14.77$, $SD=2.91$), and females [$M=14.67$, $SD=3.26$; $t(624) = .379$, $p > 0.05$] in their involvement in status violation. Both gender from the rural areas of Sabah were found engaging in such conduct is probably due to lack of supervision from their parents. This finding is also being supported by Malhotra (2005), whereby in his study, it was found that, at the mean age of 13-14, male and female are almost equal in perpetrating aggressive behaviors.

Since parenting style plays a vital role in children up bringing, it is also could be a mode of transformation on children's aggressive behaviors. It is clear that there is a positive correlation between excessive hours of violent television watching and aggressive behaviors. In regards with the parenting styles, it is found that, authoritarian parenting style could

contribute to the raise of aggressive behaviors among the children to 1.6%. The small percentage is probably in appropriate to the nature of this parenting style that, parents always have their says and ways without giving any rooms to their children to act or think in more adaptive ways. This small amount is also because of rebellious acts due to the pressures being put on them.

From the study, it also shows that the incident of aggressive behaviors in correlation with the excessive hours of violent television watching is also high (5.6%) when the permissive parenting style is being practice. This fits the nature of the parenting style whereby, children are given their freedom to choose with a minimal supervision and guidance from parents. 24.8% of the respondents agree that their parents seldom give them advice and guideline on how to behave and 23.5% claim that they are allow to make their own decision without consulting their parents.

Nevertheless, with the practice of authoritative parenting style ($p < 0.05$), the correlation between excessive hours of violent television viewing and aggressive behaviors sees the decrease in percentage (2.8%) in comparison to authoritarian and permissive styles. This possibility is lucid enough when 35.6% of the respondents agree that their parents are consistent in giving advice and guidance based on rational in objective way.

CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, watching violent television do show a positive correlation with aggressive behaviors especially among the children in the rural areas. Gender, whatsoever do not really play an important role in this consequence. However, with the practice of authoritative parenting style, the scenario of aggressive behaviors among these children can be inhibited. This is because watching television without a proper parental guidance not just affecting the children behaviors but also may affect them through its content.

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