



## THE IMPACT OF MEDIA-VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

M.A. Rahaman<sup>1</sup> and A.A. Khan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Bangabandhu Sheikh MujiburRahman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj-8100; <sup>2</sup>Sociology Discipline, Khulna University, Khulna 9208, Bangladesh

### ABSTRACT

Media violence on children has been recent phenomenon and this concentration getting prominence in the developing countries particularly in Bangladesh. Exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music and video games, represents a significant risk to the mental and physical health of children and adolescents. As the study showed that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares and fear of being harmed. The study is an attempt to understand how, due to rapid expansion of technology and recent media developments i.e. video recorders, computer games and the internet impact on child behavior through medias. Furthermore, increasing extremely violent images and video, movies and its aftermath obviously have been focal attention for the development planners, practitioners and social researchers for these consequences. Methods of research are mainly based on both primary and secondary sources thus; it includes field observations, documentary analysis and interviews. The study also extensively tried to explore the causes and consequences of violent behaviors of children in relation media-exposures. Being explanatory in nature, SadarUpazila under Gopalganj District was selected purposively for this endeavor. For this purpose 100 adolescents age group (12-18 years) were taken for this purpose and both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Principle of proportionality also applied for this endeavor. Hence, the study explores the determining factors which are significantly concerned to the socio-cultural matter related to violence of media exposure in the study context. The impact of media-violence on children and adolescents seem to alarming. Parents are often not playing their vital role for helping to diminish this powerful cause of violent behavior. Children may become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, children may be more fearful of the world around them and children may be more likely to behave in aggressive or hurtful ways toward others. Pediatricians and other child health care providers can have advocacy for a safer media environment for children by encouraging media literacy. Thus more thoughtful and proactive role of media can be useful and effective to diminish such violence in considering the social reality.

**Key words:** Impact Media-violence, Children, Adolescents

### INTRODUCTION

Now a days' media has been indispensable leading source of information, news, communication and amusement in the digital globe. It plays very strong role in strengthening the democracy of a country, nation building, economical, social and cultural development of a nation, to know about all over the world. Media-violence is universal, in contrary, its negative impact brings more destruction in the society. The impact of media violence can primarily be explained through the fact that aggressive behavior is rewarded. 47% of those children who prefer aggressive media content would also like to be involved in a risky situation as compared to 19% with another media preference in the world (UNESCO 1998). In addition, nations with a high level of technological development reinforce the risk-seeking tendency. The broad spectrum of different available audiovisual communication means have increased the desire to permanently satisfy

physiological stimulus needs which are triggered through aggressive media content. Children and adolescents have always been interested in arousing, and often even violent stories and fairy-tales. With the occurrence of mass-media, film and in particular television however, the quantity of aggressive content daily consumed by these age groups has dramatically increased. As factual violence, especially among the youth at the same time is still growing, it seems plausible to correlate the two, media violence and aggressive behavior.

Video-graphs in electronic media presents torture even real murder scenes, computer games enable the user to actively simulate the mutilation of 'enemies', and the internet has become a platform for child pornography, violent cults, and terrorist guidelines. Even with these phenomena, however, it is crucial to realize, that still the primary causes for aggressive behavior will most probably be found in the family environment, the peer groups, and in particular the

\*Corresponding author: Mohammad AnisurRahaman, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Bangabandhu Sheikh MujiburRahman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj-8100, Cell: 01716574252

social and economic domain. (Groebel, J. &Hinde, R. (eds),1991). Risky behavior by children and young adults can include violence against others, lack of remorse for consequences. The type of faulty thinking creates stressors in children which can lead to the onset of many different symptoms in this realism.

**Statement of the Problem:** The Academy of Pediatrics, 2010 stated “More than one thousand scientific studies and reviews conclude that significant exposure to media violence increases the risk of aggressive behavior in certain children, desensitizes them to violence and makes them believe that the world is a ‘meaner and scarier’ place than it is.” If children begin to think that this type of violence is normal behavior these thoughts are often said to be difficult to change later on in life. This is similar to the studies of domestic violence where children who are exposed to violence either become offenders or victims because they believe that what they are exposed to is the norm. The children and adolescents being are important asset in our society. Every effort should be made to provide them equal opportunities for development so that they become robust citizens physically fit, mentally alert and morally healthy endowed with the skills and motivations need the societies. The neglected children and juveniles fall an easy prey to criminality. The adolescents claim the highest share in violence due to dashing nature, lack of foresight, uncritical enthusiasm, physical strength, endurance and desire for adventure. While violence is not new to the human race, it is an increasing problem in modern society. With greater access to firearms and explosives, the scope and efficiency of violent behavior has had serious consequences. We need only look at the recent school shootings and the escalating rate of youth homicides among urban adolescents to appreciate the extent of this ominous trend. While the causes of youth violence are multi-factorial and include such variables as poverty, family psychopathology, child abuse, exposure to domestic and community violence, substance abuse and other psychiatric disorders, the research literature is quite compelling that children's exposure to media violence plays an important role in the etiology of violent behavior.

Media evidently has a noticeable impact on our lives and behaviors, especially the immature, impressionable and weak-minded people in our society. In a short span of time, most children can imitate a movie character, sing an advertising song, or show other impressions of what they learn from media. These examples may include posing indecently or expressing violent behavior. Children only have to put a movie into a DVD player, open a magazine, click on a website, or turn on the television to get involved in all kinds of experiences, (Kimz 2008).

How does televise violence result in aggressive behavior?

Usually children age between 4-5 years imitate aggressive acts on TV in their play with peers and it continues during adolescences. Before, children are unable to distinguish between fact and fantasy and may view violence as an ordinary occurrence. In general, violence on television and in movies often conveys a model of conflict resolution. It is efficient, frequent, and inconsequential. Heroes are violent, and, as such, are rewarded for their behavior. They become role models for youth. It is ‘cool’ to carry an automatic weapon and use it to knock off the ‘bad guys.’ The typical scenario of using violence for a righteous cause may translate in daily life into a justification for using violence to retaliate against perceived victimizers. Hence, vulnerable youth who have been victimized may be tempted to use violent means to solve problems. Unfortunately, there are few models of nonviolent conflict resolution in the media. Additionally, children who watch televised violence are desensitized to it. For the endeavor, major objectives are as to identify the factors contributing to develop media violence; how problems generated by the media and to influence teenagers; and policy implications to reduce media violence.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

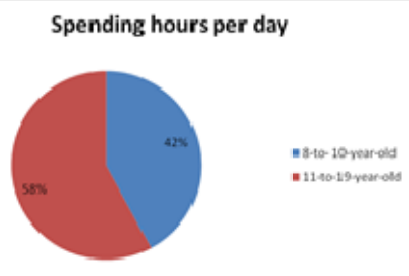
The methods of the study mainly based on primary social survey thus; it includes field observation, documentary analysis and interviews. Both qualitative and quantitative data were used. This study was carried out in *Gopalganj Sadr* district in Bangladesh and the area was selected purposively. A sample of 100 (50% of children age group 10-18 year and 50% of them were parents) were selected and interviewed. A principle of proportionality has been applied for selecting target group and study areas. Secondary data were collected from related journals, books, papers and other relevant government and non-government organizations/ institutions. Data have been collected from August 2016 to December 2016 for this purpose of the study. Collected data have been analyzed and interpreted through relevant and potential socioeconomic variables. For descriptive analysis of data, inferential statistical techniques and software package were used for the purpose of study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study show that children are mostly influenced by media and they learn by observing, imitating, and making behaviors their own. Aggressive attitudes and behaviors are learned by imitating observed models. Research has shown that the strongest single correlate with violent behavior is previous exposure to violence (DuRantet *al.* 1996). Evidently children younger than 8 years cannot discriminate between fantasy and reality, they are

uniquely vulnerable to learning and adopting as reality the circumstances, attitudes, and behaviors portrayed by entertainment media (Flavell JH 1986). There are other, new-fangled forms of violence to which children and adolescents are exposed. According to present study, 15% of music videos contain interpersonal violence. Still another new source of violent exposure is access to the internet and video games. There is little data on the incidence of violence on the internet; however, there is concern about sites that may advocate violence, provide information on the creation of explosive devices, or reveal how to acquire firearms. There is also little research on the impact of violent video games (Bandura A, et al., 1961). We do know, however, that they are extensive and have a role-modeling capacity. The fact that the child gets to act out the violence, rather than to be a passive observer, as when viewing television or movies and through other relevant medias.

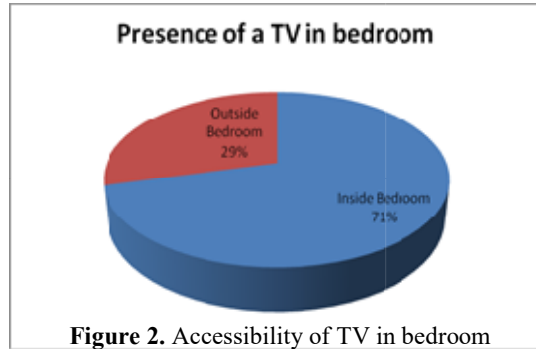
Conventional media like television, including latest medias (cell phones, tablets, internet and social media) are the dominant elements to children’s lives. Although television is still the predominant medium for children and adolescents, new technologies are increasingly popular. The American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000 (AAP) continues to be concerned by evidence about the potential harmful effects of media messages and images; however, important positive and prosaically effects of media use should also be recognized. Pediatricians are encouraged to take a media history and ask to media questions at every well-child visit: How much recreational screen time does your child or teenager consume daily? Is there a television set or internet-connected device in the child’s bedroom? Parents are encouraged to establish a family home use plan for all media. Media influences on children and teenagers should be recognized by schools, policymakers, product advertisers, and entertainment producers (Pediatrics, 2011).



**Figure 1.** Spending time (hours) to enjoy television per day

**Source:** Authors Compilation Based on Field Survey, 2016

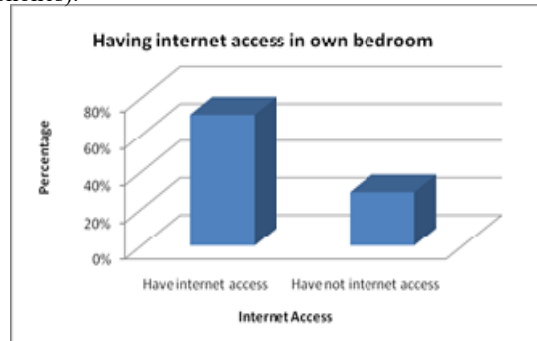
The study shows, the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day (42%) with a variety of different media, and older children and teenagers spend >11 hours per day (58%).



**Figure 2.** Accessibility of TV in bedroom

**Source:** Authors Compilation Based on Field Survey, 2016

In presence of television (TV) set in a child’s bedroom increases these figures even more, and 71% of children and teenagers having accessibility TV in their bedroom. Young people now spend more time with media than they do in school, it is the leading activity for children and teenagers other than sleeping. In addition to time spent with media, what has changed dramatically is the media landscape. TV remains the predominant medium (>4 hours per day) but nearly one-third of TV programming is viewed on alternative platforms (computers, tablets, or cell phones).

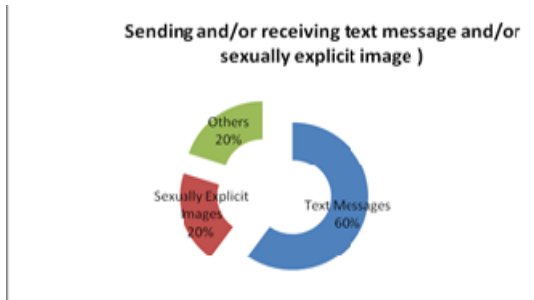


**Figure 3.** Having internet access in own bedroom

**Source:** Authors Compilation Based on Field Survey, 2016

As per present study, children and teenagers have internet access (84%), often high-speed, and one-third have access in their own bedroom. Computer time accounts for up to 1.5 hours per day; half of this is spent in social networking, playing games, or viewing videos. New technology has arrived in a big way: some 75% of 12- to 17-year-olds now own cell phones, up from 45% in 2004. Most often teenagers (88%) use text messaging. Teenagers actually talk less on their phones than any other age group except for senior citizens, but in the first 3 months of 2011, teenagers 13 through 17 years of age sent an average of 3364 texts per month. Half of teenagers send 50 or more text messages per day and one-third send more than 100 per day. Teenagers access social media sites from cell phones and as reviewed in a

recent clinical report from the American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011, the social medias, mainly Facebook offers opportunities and potential risks to young wired users, they are often using several technologies simultaneously, but multitasking teenagers are inefficient. Despite all of this media time and new technology, many parents seem to have few rules about use of media by their children and adolescents. In a recent study, two-thirds of children and teenagers report that their parents have no pressure or special guidance about time spent with media. Only few parents are strict about cell phone using for their children.



**Figure 4.** Sending and/or receiving text message and/or sexually explicit image

**Source:** Authors Compilation Based on Field Survey, 2016

More than 60% of teenagers send and/or receive text messages and the study showed they gradually increased tiredness at school levels. Study found that 20% of adolescents either sent or received a sexually explicit image by cell phone or internet. In a series of policy statements, the AAP, 2010 has delineated its concerns about media violence sex in the media, substance use music and music videos and infant media use.

A Parents Television Council, 2013 (PTC), revealed some major findings on media violence in their December, 2013 issue mentioning that every broadcast show in the study contained violent depictions that qualified for the label 'graphic' violence. The following forms of violence comprised 77% of the violent and graphically violent depictions that aired during primetime broadcast on TV-14 rated shows: Child molestation, rape, mutilation/disfigurement, dismemberment, graphic killings and/or injuries by gunfire and stabbings, violent abductions, physical torture, cannibalism, burning flesh, suicide, beatings, guns and bladed weapons that were depicted but not used, and dead bodies.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although the study does not cover all the scenario of children and media violence, despite from the above discussion present media inevitably playing prominent role to reduce or reproduce violence or muddle among the children. The matter of fact is

that parents should monitor and be more attentive to their children in any way. In the act of a busy life we all tend to forget the real life issues. Parents need to pay more attention to their children's lives and not sit with them in front of the television, whether it is for movies, video games, or general television shows. However, from key findings of the study it appears that the expansion of media particularly electronic medias having impact of causing violent behavior of children. Schools and homes should teach children conflict resolution. Increasing social awareness and government authority should concern to the networks, cable vendors, local stations, agencies, and political officials for taking effective steps when violence is persisting, needs adequate warnings and action where applicable. With anticipation, media will not be overly frustrating, and they will not present information or images that could be so overly scary they might spawn excessive worry or anxiety or nightmares or too advanced as to create questions or interests that the child is not intellectually or emotionally ready to handle these. Parents may want to help their children and teens select play and entertainment materials that are balanced in content. Moreover, the study intend to take into new avenue of research knowledge for any future endeavor regarding development and wellbeing of children and adolescents in relevance to impact of media-violence in particular the society in the country considering the reality.

## Recommendations

As per findings of the present study and AAP recommendations the following steps can be put forwarded:

- Guardians' as well as pediatricians' should aware about pervasive influence of wide and expanding varieties of entertainment that media have on the physical and mental health of children and adolescents. When excessive usage of media found by a child, thereafter needs to evaluate and intervene aptly regarding child's behaviors, fears, or sleep disturbances.
- Needs to be limiting screen time (including television, videos, computer and video games) to 1 to 2 hours per day, using the v-chip, avoiding violent video games in homes where they may be observed or played by young children, and keeping children's bedrooms media free.
- Should ensure that only nonviolent media choices be provided to patients in outpatient waiting rooms and inpatient settings. Specific content guidelines should be established for entertainment options at all child and adolescent health care settings. Movies, video games and print media should be prescreened.
- In different cultural settings, pediatricians should encourage parents, schools, and communities to

educate children to be media literate as a means of protecting them against deleterious health effects of media exposure. Media education should involve teaching how media work, how media can influence the ways that we perceive reality and develop attitudes, how to determine whether media messages are appropriate, and how to reject messages that are not healthy.

- Pediatricians should have advocacy for more child-positive media, not censorship. And should support and collaborate with media producers, applying expertise in child health and development toward creating child-friendly and truthful media. The entertainment industry should be urged to extend personal concern for the well-being of children.
- Avoid carrying the glamorized weapon and the normalization of violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict.
- Eliminate the use of violence in a comic or sexual context or in any other situation in which the violence is amusing, titillating or trivialization.
- Eliminate gratuitous portrayals of interpersonal violence and hateful, racist, misogynistic, or homophobic language or situations unless explicitly portraying how destructive such words and actions can be.
- If violence is used, it should be used thoughtfully as serious drama, always showing the hurt and loss suffered by victims and perpetrators.
- Music lyrics should be made easily available to parents so they can be read before deciding whether to purchase the recording.
- Video games should not use human or other living targets or award points for killing, because this teaches children to associate pleasure and success with their ability to cause pain and suffering to others.
- Play of violent video games should be restricted to age-limited areas of gaming arcades; the distribution of videos and video games and the exhibition of movies should be limited to appropriate age groups.
- Pediatricians should advocate for simplified content-based media ratings to help parents guide their children to make healthy media choices. A new child- and family-friendly rating system that describes media content in several areas (violence, language, sex, nudity, etc) is needed so parents can align their children's media exposure to their personal values.
- Pediatricians should remember and remind their patients' families, that if we do not buy or use entertainment media that are harmful to children, these media will no longer be produced.

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