Effects of Media Violence on Mental Health of Viewers

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Abstract

It has been evident that violence showing through media is creating numerous issues in youth as well as in younger children. In this study we have scrutinize the effect of violence exhibiting through the media, on the mental health of a viewer and as well as its effects on economics. By using a primary data methodology, a total of 100 respondents submitted their response to the database for this study. Majority of the participants in the survey were females aged between 18–24 years. The results have shown that by picturing violent content on media has an impact on mental health, both long term and short-term impacts depends on the content and its severity.

Introduction

The impact of media now days is inevitable. We are living in the era where we are surrounded with different form of media, be it print media or social, electronic or any other form; they all are so important and becomes so necessary that sometimes it feels like life is unimaginable without them. We are the age of rapid change, every new day, a new form of technology is introducing to us, but with all this sort of advancement; there are some of its disadvantages as well. Considering media helpful and informative there are a few of its bad impacts on our health as well. Among those bad influences that our health is facing, one most important is violence on media, it is the worst form of problem, people are facing intense form of violence on media on daily basis. Which is affecting our mental health. It has been witnessed in many studies that violence on media is imposing side effects on our mental health, which in the long run is destructive for the society. Showing mass shooting, mass killing, distractive content on movies is directly leaving the impression on our mind which is not good at all. Recent studies and surveys showing that excessive content of violence on media is making people sick, specially the younger generation of our society, children are being so naïve, watching the content which is not suitable for their mental health as their brains are in development stage. Media violence and media vulgarity both are polluting the minds of our generation.

There is another aspect of the violence on media, which indicate the impact of media violence on the society in context of reduced efficiency of an individual because of disturbed mental health which ends up in economic loss of the society collectively. Studies are available which are agreed, that due to media violence, the efficiency of economic activity decreases, as it disturbs the viewer by creating a negative impact on the mind which leads to the lack of concentration at the work place. Due to increased violence in the society, government spend more its resources to invest on security and military spending, in addition to that, it is also found that people stayed in stressed due to constantly watching violent content on TV, Movies and in Video Games, which cause their brain to work less efficiently on work place causing a collective loss of efficiency. There is also a research present in the literature that concluded the opposite result of media violence by summarizing the conclusion that due to violent content, crimes reduce. It was explain in the study by Dahl, et al (2009) that during the time when people watch the aggressive content, the crime report at that specific time duration was less.

Literature Review

Bushman, B. J et al. (2007) examines the effect of video game violence in an experiment of a 20 min video games paly among the eight of the violent and nonviolent games played by participants. Then they let them to watch a videotape of 10 min containing scenes of real-life video game, during this time, their heart rate (HR) and galvanic skin response (GSR) were monitored. It was evident that Participants who earlier played a violent video game had lower HR and GSR while viewing filmed real violence, demonstrating a physiological desensitization to violence.

Bobkowski, P. S. *et al* (2011) examines the effects of new (the Internet, cell phones, social networking) and old (television, music, movies, magazines) media on the health and wellbeing teen-agers. The specific kinds of content on the aggressive behavior of teenagers, gender roles, sexual relationships, body image conflicts, obesity and substance use also were reviewed and in the end the media literacy as a hopeful strategy for enhancing teenagers use of the media in the future was considered.

Drabman, R. S. et a (1975) conduct a study on 10 Ss in each cell of the $2 * 2 * 2$ design, showing an aggressive film passages of a widely held TV show for 15-min depicting 6 killings and other vehement acts and a nonaggressive film of a baseball game for 15 min. The results exhibited that after watching the violent film, the conduct of other children was monitored. The results conclude that violent content gives negative impacts on the minds of its viewer.

It was concluded by Wartella, E. *et al* (2003) that violent TV, video games and films increases the aggressive demeanor of its viewer. It was witnessed that the effects seem bigger for more serious forms of vehemence, but the effects on severe forms of violence are also significant ($r = .13$ to $.32$) when equated with effects of other violence risk factors or medical effects regarded important by the medical community (e.g., effect of aspirin on heart attacks). The base of the research was large, diverse in terms of its method, media genres and in samples.

Signorielli, N. (1989) concluded that mantel illness was appeared in one fifth of all the programs shown in the primetime distressing 3% of the foremost characters. According to the study the chances for mentally ill characters to get employed outside home were very little and if by any chance they got employed, they were expected to be seen as disasters. It was shown in 17 annual week-long samples with harmful and commonly defamed image of mental sickness and mentally ill.

DellaVigna, el al (2015) took a survey by covering extensive net to cover the impacts of media on different aspects such as "learning, family choices, labour and relocation decision, environmental choices, health, crime, public economics, attitudes, consumption and savings, and development economics" by creating five themes such as demand for entertainment with economic impacts as by products, second media effects crowding out alternative activities, third and fourth were short and long run effects and economic impacts of media exposure and fifth was policy impacts both substitution effects and media exposure of entertainment industry.

Dahl, et al (2009) study the incidents of assaults of same day with the release of violence base and aggressive blockbuster movie releases during the time period from 1995 to 2004. The results of the study concluded that violent crime decreases on days with greater theater audiences for violent movies. The effect is partly due to voluntary prostration. It was summarized in the conclusion of the study that one million increase in the audience for violent movies reduces violent crime by 1.1 to 1.3 percent.

Rios, V. (2016) engrossed on the impacts of violence on economic feature accumulation, by reducing labour supply and growing investment budgets. With the help of demand and supply of the production factors, the paper checked the effects of crime and economic composition.

Methodology

Primary data was collected from people through survey forms consisting of close ended questions regarding the effect of media violence on mental health.

Results And Discussion

A total of 100 respondents submitted the database for this study. Most of the participants in this survey were female (81%). Maximum responses (77%) were recorded from participants of the age group 18–24 years.

Our results are as follows:

1. Our survey shows that 34% of the participants spend 3–5 hours on the internet, 31% of the participants spend more than 7 hours, 22% of the participants spend 5–7 hours, 11% of the participants spend 1–2 hours and 2% of the participants spend less than an hour. From this result we can see that majority of the participants spend most of their time on the internet.
2. According to the survey 49% of the participants watch drama, 21% of the participants watch situation comedy, 11% of the participants watch soap operas, 5% of the participants watch talk shows and the rest 14% of the participants watch other shows.
3. The survey results show that 57% of the participants think that television contains a large amount of violent content, 37% of the participants think that there is medium amount and 6% participants think that there is little amount. Most of the participants agree that a lot of violence is shown on television.
4. The survey results show that 67% of the participants agreed that violent behavior is influenced by violence on television, 30% of the participants responded with maybe while 3% of the participants denied. By these results we can see that most people agree that television plays a really big role in promoting violence.
5. Our results show that 85% of the participants think that violence on media is a big problem, 9% of the participants responded with maybe while 6% of the participants denied this. So according to the majority

we can see that violence shown on television is in fact a big problem.

6. Our results show that 88% of the participants agreed that by listening to violent music or by playing violent games our violent behavior increases, 9% responded with maybe while 3% denied this. Majority of the participants agreed that that violence is promoted by listening to violent music or playing violent games.

7. The survey results show that 69% of the participants agree that school violence is influenced by media violence, 26% of the participants responded with maybe while 5% of the participants denied.

8. Lastly 44% of the participants think that video games contain the most violence, 24% of the participants think that television contains more violence, 21% of the participants think that movies contain more violence, 6% of the participants think that social media promotes the most violence while the other 5% participants responded with different things.

Conclusion

Media and its influence are unavoidable in the sense that it has become the integral part of our daily life. We are dependable on it, so much so that it becomes the necessity for each and every household, it has become unimaginable to think a house without a TV set or a person without having access to internet, obviously it is a convenient and relatively less expensive source of information and entertainment. We are using it as an instrument to update, inform and amuse people about different issues and its diversity happening around the world on day to day basis. The use of social media varies bestowing to the socio-cultural, demographic and psychological facets of individuals. People chat, share ideas and visual material, and feel that they satisfy their needs of belonging along with the groups they have joined. Social media is not only a realm of freedom where individuals express themselves blatantly or covertly, but at the same time it is a place where several ways of violence emerges or even a mean is used for some aspects of violence. By visualizing the content, related to any sort of violence, it leaves a great impression on its viewer minds which in the long run effects and contaminate it.

Having said the media influence is so powerful in its own that it can change the perception and once thinking with its constant display of anything. In today's world wars are being fought through it. Negative propaganda can easily be spread with the help of media, it was said by Hitler that persistent display of lie can change the truth. Media violence is one among them, through continuous display of violence, today's generation has become less sensitive about fight and abusive language.

The results of our study show that visualizing violent media whether it is severe or not, has an impact on mental health. The long term and short-term impact depend on the content of the violence; the more severe it is the more long-term impact it has. Moreover, behaviors and actions can be affected through observing or viewing any sort of violence. When an individual view the violent content, their mood, feeling and emotional pattern changes along with the actions and behavior patterns. It is being concluded, that

the persistent exposure to media messages over time transforms the basic views of the viewer and eventually outlines the person's acuity according to media content (Gerbner, 1976)

When an individual view the violent content, they intentionally or unintentionally practice it in real life with the closed ones or strangers. This can cause more violence in our surroundings. Therefore, social media should not promote such violent content and their videos and should rather solve the issues or present them.

LIMITATIONS:

- Gender difference; The sample which filled survey constituted of most of the female population being around 80% while male population was less. This could pose a problem in generalizability of the results.
- Age bias: People belonging to a specific age group of 18–24 were part of this research. This could also affect generalizability of the result.
- People belonging to other age groups could have different view about effect of violence hence result could have been different.
- Most of the participants were educated. On the other hand, media sources are viewed by all populations even those who are not much educated. They might have different viewpoints and could have reported different effects.

Declarations

Competing interests

Authors declare that there are no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

Every author contributed to each of the sections. The idea was conceptualized by MK. Data collection & data analyzed, interpreted, and discussed the results was conducted by MK and writing an original draft. GZ was responsible for the introduction, literature review, final review, and editing. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Figures

Figure 1

See the Results and Discussion section for more information regarding this graphic.

Figure 2

See the Results and Discussion section for more information regarding this graphic.

Figure 3

See the Results and Discussion section for more information regarding this graphic.

Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

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Figure 7

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Figure 8

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Figure 9

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