

Chapter 86

Violent Video Games and Their Relation to Aggressive Behaviour in Late Childhood in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Most of the European and American literature suggests that playing violent video games can increase aggression in real-life situations in children, but the extent to which this is true in Pakistan is largely unknown. This is a correlational study that explored whether the amount of time spent playing violent themed video games was associated with aggressive behaviour and whether playing different kinds of violent themed video games could predict aggressive behaviour in late childhood. The sample of 100 children (mean age 13.37) was taken, and children were asked to fill in a diary when they played videogames for a week. The results revealed the time spent playing violent video games (role play, action and fighting, and first-person shooter) was positively correlated with aggression; however, only role play and first-person shooter video games were positive predictors of aggressive behaviour. Current research suggests that if children spend more than 30 minutes a day playing violent video games, their chances of learning aggressive behaviour may increase.

INTRODUCTION

Considerable research has explained that playing violent video games can increase aggressive behaviour in children and adolescents (Anderson et al 2010). For studying the association between playing violent video games and aggressive behaviour in children, Bandura's social learning theory has received support from researchers (Paik & Comstock, 1994; Wilson et al, 1997). Bandura and colleagues conducted an experiment in 1961 with 73 preschool children and suggested that children learn behaviour by ob-

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serving models. Children who observed a man kicking, hitting and pulling a Bobo doll exhibited more aggressive behaviour towards the Bobo doll in comparison to those children who had not observed that aggressive behaviour. They replicated the findings in 1963 and proposed limiting children's exposure to violent media content (Bandura, 1973, 1986). Since then this debate has continued in academia (Konijn et al., 2007). Children are often involved in playing games (outdoors and indoors) but due to the shift in trends towards playing video games, especially fighting video games, the chances of learning aggressive behaviour have increased (Krish, 2002). Therefore, presumably, if children play violent themed video games they may exhibit aggressive behaviour in real-life situations.

Aggression and Violent Video Games

The first meta-analysis on the relationship between aggressive behaviour and playing violent video games was conducted by Anderson and Bushman in 2002. They found significant effects of violent video games on aggressive behaviour, cognition, emotions, prosocial behaviour and biological arousal and advocated the General Aggression Model (GAM). Based on this model, it was found that various longitudinal studies, meta-analyses, event-related studies, and studies with juvenile delinquents reported that playing violent themed video games predicted aggression in adolescents and children (Anderson et al., 2008, 2010; Bailey et al, 2011; Delisi et al., 2013; Greitemeyer & Mugge, 2014; Liu et al., 2015).

Previously, in a study, four- to six-year-old children were observed while playing games of their own choice. The results showed that those who played aggressive games exhibited more violent behaviour than those children who played their usual games (Silvern & Williamson, 1987). Similarly, research conducted with five- to seven-year-old children, half of whom played a violent video game while the other half played non-violent video games, reported that the former exhibited more aggressive behaviour than the latter (Schutte et al., 1988). Likewise, the results of another study carried out with seven- and eight- year-olds showed that children who played violent video games behaved more aggressively in interpersonal relations afterwards than those who played non-aggressive video games (Irwin & Gross, 1995). The same result was found in survey research with teachers of sixth- and twelfth-grade students (Fling et al., 1992). Furthermore, it was observed that if children played video games in high temperatures this increased their aggressive behaviour (Anderson et al, 1995).

In spite of the above findings, a few researchers have not supported this argument (Graybill et al., 1985; Scott, 1995). For example, Winkel et al (1987) suggested that their research participants who played violent video games did not show aggression when playing a teacher-student role-play game. Similarly, Ferguson (2007) conducted a meta-analysis and established the argument that studies which presented a positive association between violent video games and aggression were more likely to publish than those that showed negative results. Later on, in 2008 Ferguson and colleagues introduced the catalyst model (CM), which stressed that if a child or adolescent has a predisposition to anger, only then does he/she manifest aggressive behaviour, which ultimately develops his/her aggressive personality. They disagreed with the notion that playing video games can develop aggressive behaviour in a child, which contrasts with the GAM. There is literature that supports their argument that antisocial personality traits can predict aggressive behaviour in adolescents, rather than playing violent video games (Ferguson & Kilburn, 2009; Ferguson et al., 2012; Furuya-Kanamori & Doi, 2016; Huesmann et al., 2017). However, Anderson et al. (2014) criticised their research by pointing out its various methodological limitations. Regardless, this discussion shows that the results are mixed (Wiegman & Van Schie, 2000; Grifóths, 2000).

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