

## **Media, Violence and the Culture of Victimization: A Sociological Analysis of the Socio-cultural and Psychological Impacts of Media on Youth**

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### **Abstract**

Exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music and video games, represents a significant risk to children and adolescent's personality and growth. Extensive research evidences indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares and fear of being harmed. The present research analyses the socio-cultural and psychological impacts of media on youth studying at Secondary Level education in Tehsil Batkhela, Malakand Division, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The data was collected from 100 students of Class 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of four selected schools using simple random sampling technique. The study reflects that apart from the positive role of media; it is also responsible for creating numerous socio-cultural and psychological impacts among youth. These impacts predominantly include tension, fear, anxiety, frustration, aggression, and deviance that lead to victimization of the viewers. The research recommends that an initiative is inevitable in such circumstances to overcome the hastily-spreading consequences of media, where the primary responsibility must be shouldered by PEMRA in terms of policy implementation.

### **Keywords**

Media, Culture of Violence, Impacts, Social, Cultural, and Psychological

### **Background of the Study**

Worldwide, violence is used as a tool for exploitation and victimization of people and is an area of concern for law makers, social scientists and culture experts who attempt to suppress and stop its consequences. Literary debate over the issue of violence and victimization cover a broad spectrum varying from physical altercation among persons, indulging in war and genocide, where millions may die as a result (WHO, 2010). Violence and victimization has many consequences i.e. it may include psychological harms, deprivation and mal-development, which reflects a growing recognition of the need to include violence that does not necessarily result in injury or death, but that, nonetheless, poses a substantial burden on individuals, families, communities and health care systems worldwide (Steve, 2005). Many forms of violence against women, children and the elderly, for instance, can result in physical, psychological and social problems that do not necessarily lead to injury, disability or death. These consequences can be immediate as well as latent and can last for years after the initial abuse. Defining outcomes solely in terms of injury or

death thus limits the understanding of the full impacts of violence on individuals, communities and society at large (Krause et al, 2008). **Violence** and victimization is thus an extreme form of aggression such as assault, rape or murder and has many causes, including frustration, exposure to violent media, violence at home or neighborhood and a tendency to see other people's actions as hostile even when they are not (Cantor & Nathanson 1997).

Similarly, violence in media and its victimization is universal and is prevalent in all its forms throughout the globe and is primarily presented in a rewarding context (Groebel, 1999) thus has always been part of human life and spend time through watching TV, movies and videos (Ferraro & Kenneth, 1995; Comstock & Scharrer, 1990). Today, more than 600 million people use internet and have access to media (both print and electronic) where the number of surfers is exceeding alarmingly. Statistics show that about 97% of homes with children have CD players, and 89% have either a personal computer or other video-game equipment (Federal Trade Commission, 2000) which create a variety of physical and mental health problems in shape of aggression, violence, fear and depression (Wilson & Jordan, 2009; Huesmann et al, 1997). Studies indicate that children between the age of 08 to 18 years spend an average of 6 hours and 21 minutes each day using entertainment media (television, commercial or self-recorded video, movies, video games, print, radio, recorded music, computers, and the Internet) (Roberts et. al, 2005) while between the age of 03 and 06 years spend an average of almost 2 hours each day using screen media (television, movies and computers). Televisions are also commonly available in bedrooms, with 19% of infants, 29% of 2- to 3-year-olds, 43% of 4- to 6-year-olds, and 68% of children 08 years and older having a television in their bedrooms (Rideout & Hamel, 2006). Resultantly, multifarious risks increase with the presence of television in children's bedroom that include the risk of obesity by 31% and that of smoking tends to double (Dennison et. al 2002) whereby parents fail implement rules and monitor the children's use of media (Borzekowski & Robinson 2005; Edison & Porter 1903).

Violence dominates the big screen as well as the small screen where the percentage of PG (Parental Guidance) films produced has steadily dropped over the years (Auletta, 1993). Prevalence of fear in media is proving a new risk to communication and management systems proliferate (Erickson & Haggerty, 1997). Further, children who received the preventive intervention were also more inclined to view television violence as harmful and not reflecting true life (Anderson, Lepper, & Ross, 1980; Anderson & Sechler, 1986; Slusher & Anderson, 1996). However, if parents watch TV with their children and say nothing about the violent content, children report higher than normal aggressive attitudes (Nathanson, 1999) that dominate the nightmares, anxious feeling and truancy (Singer *et al.* 1995, Klein *et. al* in 1993). Research data derived from in-home surveys of 2,760 randomly

selected 14 to 16 year old adolescents in 10 urban areas regarding participation in potentially risky behaviors including drinking, smoking cigarettes and marijuana, indicates the excessive use of media. that there is a drastic increase among adolescents who listened to radio and watched music videos, movies on television more frequently, regardless of race, gender, or parental education level (Wallack *et al.* 1990ab). Besides, the amount of sexually explicit material has increased over the past decade in the “family hour (8 to 9 P.M.)” of television (Kunkel *et al.*, 1996& 1999). Further, media has also influence on familial life in shape of conflicts, jealousy, envy and rivalry (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990).

Resultantly, the long-term effects are likely to be long-lasting as well because the viewers learn and practice new aggression-related scripts that become more accessible for use when real-life conflict situations arise (Anderson & Karen, 2000). The current study encompasses the debate that the culture of media in today's modern world is victimizing the youth in multiple ways creating a number of negative consequences among young generation and emphasizes that the issue is addressable and inevitable to be illuminated.

### **The Current Debate and Study Argument**

The emphasis of the current debate reflects that media in all its forms has spread over globally. There has been a drastic change and development in internet, android phones, and video games are excessively available than ever. Such a variety and advancement in media enormously increases the time consumption of the users (mostly adolescents and youth), accounting almost five hours a day (Singer *et al.* 1995, Klein *et. al* in 1993). The use of media and time consumption among children and minors is an issue of paramount importance because they are more prone to its negative consequences and become the victims of the multifaceted impacts (Anderson *et al.* 2003). Resultantly, the current study creates an argument and formulates a question that does media violence causes violence in real life? In response, the question can be approached that violence in media is overt in the real life that needs censorship while on the contrary the reality is hidid through regulation (Altheide & David, 1976).

In the last couple of years, developmental changes in information technology and media have occurred by bringing negative consequences because of more projection to violence. Studies indicate that the ratio of physical violence has increased by 378 percent having an average of 40 violent act at per hour in programs offered on TV (Sparrow, 1999). In general, violence has been intensified during the last few decades and the victimization of the young generation has thus doubled than the previous (Slusher & Anderson, 1996), because media offers 'thrill' for children and creates a frame-of-reference for 'attractive role models'.

The intensity of media's influential status reflects its hazards at global as well as local level (Valkenburg & Janssen, 1999) but unfortunately there is scarcity of research to acclaim its negative consequences. Basically, children and youth are more prone to media and are excessively affected particularly in the developing countries where mass education and level of adjustment with media is lacking. Pakistani society and its youth are also explicitly confronted to evils of media due to variety of reasons that become a source of socialization and imitation of characters. In this connection, the current study has been formulated in order to illuminate the monstrous aspect of media in terms of its negative consequences on children and youth. The study is framed on the following basic objectives to acquire the desired results:

### **Study Objectives:**

1. To analyze the negative impacts of media on the psychological development of children
2. To identify various social and cultural consequences of media on children and youth

### **Proposed Hypotheses of the Study**

- H-1:** Free and non-controlled access of children to media is a leading cause of creating psychological problems to youth
- H-2:** Excessive and extensive watching of media leads to many social and cultural problems affecting children and youth

### **Procedural Process and Methodological Dimensions of the Study**

The current study is basically framed under quantitative approach of analysis that is based on both primary and secondary information. The study inclines to illuminate the socio-cultural and psychological consequences of media on youth in Tehsil Batkhela. The selection of samples was accredited through simple random sampling technique that focused on youth studying in class 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. In this regard, 100 children (as samples) were selected and interviewed through structured interview schedule in a face to face interaction. The collected information is statistically and quantitatively analyzed through SPSS with the application of Chi-Square test and Correlation technique.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Psychological Victimization of Media**

Media as a source of information and entertainment has influential role in fascination and persuasion of the viewers. Numerous studies in this connection reflect that contrary to the informatory role of media; it stresses the viewer(s) to

a high extent and bring psychological disorders. The primary information in the current study also reflects a variety of psychological impacts in shape of psycho-victimization through multi-dimensions. The field information thus demonstrates that excessive use of media creates fear (76%) and tension (67%) among the viewers.

Moreover, the analyses illuminate that media is a source of promoting anxiety (89%) and frustration (83%) to a high extent that promulgates negative impacts on viewers. Similarly, the response of primary information reflect that media promotes violence and aggression (78%) among the viewers that is evidently observed in their communal and social interaction. In addition, deviance (73%) is mostly the outcome of media especially through watching movies and other related programs that ultimately lead to an imbalanced and disorganized personality (See Table-1).

Table 1: Psychological Victimization of Media

Psychological Victimization of Media	Extent of impacts N=100	
	To greater extent	Up-to Some extent
Creation of Fear	76	24
Source of Tension	67	33
Source of Anxiety	89	11
Increase in Frustration	83	17
Causation of Aggression	78	22
Production of Deviance	73	27

**Test Statistics:**

The value of Chi-square is = 2.456 and the level of Significance = 0.000\*\*while the value of Lambda = 0.12 and Gamma = 0.025 which is showing a significant association with respect to media and victimization of viewers in the form of various psychological consequences.

The given data with respect to the value of  $P=.000^{**} < .05$  thus authenticate the relationship of media and psychological disorders and prove it highly significant with the value of  $\chi^2 = 2.456$ , D.f = 6. Apart from the given discussion, the bivariate analysis in the form of gamma and lambda on the already defined two point category (i.e. to some extent and to greater extent) the values obtained through chi-square ( $P=.000^{**} < .05$ ),  $\chi^2 = 2.456$ , D.f=6 and the results further express that dependent variable has strong association and relationship with independent variables. The value of lambda and gamma further authenticate the result that regressor variable

has close association with regressing variable. Thus, it is concluded that physiological impacts have strong correlation and relationship with media, especially of children and youth studying in schools. The given information of the correlation is mentioned in the table below:

### Correlation

Impacts of Media on Youth		Violent Media	Psychological Impacts
Violent media	Pearson Correlation	1	0.925**
	Sig. (2 - tailed)		0.000
	N	100	100
Psychological Impacts	Pearson Correlation	0.925**	1
	Sig. (2 - tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

(\*\*Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(125) = 0.925^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.86$ )

(Since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

The correlation further validates the result in manner that Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(125) = 0.925^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.86$ ; since 86% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one. It has been concluded that there is positive correlation between independent variable i.e. exposure to media and dependent variable; physiological impacts.

### Social and Cultural Consequences of Media

In the current scenario of modernity and technological advancement; the communicational technology has witnessed remarkable changes that are easily available to majority of the population at their door-step. Such an easy access and excessive exposure to media affects the social well-being of the viewer(s) while the cultural patterns also tend to suffer and lose their traditional and customary structure. In this connection, the empirical information emphasizes that the socio-cultural desensitization (78%) takes place while disharmony (80%) is caused due to exposure of youth to violent media.

Furthermore, media disrupts the social structure and bring disintegration in society and social affairs of the masses (72%) while immorality (86%) tends to prevail. Besides, the field data reflect that exposure to violent media is the source to produce rebellious attitude (69%) and draw their inclination to criminality and divergence in their social relations. In addition, the information favors the causation of individualism and emergence of conflicts (67%) as the outcome of violent media (see Table-2).

Table 2: Media and Socio-cultural Consequences on Youth

Media and Socio-cultural Consequences	Extent of Social and Cultural Aspects	
	To Some Extent	To Greater Extent
Prompting Desensitization	22	78
Develop Disintegration in Society	28	72
Spread immorality among youth	14	86
Crating Disharmony	20	80
Produces Rebellion Thoughts	31	69
Creates individualism and Conflicts	33	67

*The Chi-square result i.e. 1.987 and the level of Significance = 0.000\*\* while the value of Lambda = 0.08 and Gamma = 0.015 thus authenticate the association of media and producing various social and cultural problems*

*The value of  $P = .000^{**} < .05$  with value of  $\chi^2 = 1.987$ , D.f=6 shows a significant relationship between media and social and cultural aspects of youth*

The Bivariate analysis has been use with the help of chi-square test in order to test the hypothesis. Result of chi-square test i.e.  $P = .000^{**} < .05$  and  $\chi^2 = 1.987$ , D.f=6 further demonstrates that random variable are strongly interacted with non-random variables. The results of chi-square test and numerical value of gamma and lambda fall in the acceptance region of symmetric diagram which validate the proposed hypothesis. The correlation of the data has also been suggested in the following table;

## Correlation

Social and Cultural Aspects		Media Violence	Social and Cultural Problems
Media Violence	Pearson Correlation	1	0.946**
	Sig. (2 - tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Social and Cultural Problems	Pearson Correlation	0.946**	1
	Sig. (2 - tailed)	0.000	
	N	100	100

\*\*Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(125) = 0.946^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.89$ ).

(Since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one)

Thus, the correlation further support the result like i.e. \*\*Correlation is highly significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed),  $r(125) = 0.946^{**}$ ;  $p < .01$ .  $r^2 = 0.89$ ); since 89% of the variance is shared, the association is obviously a strong one), which shows that there is positive correlation between the dependent and independent variable.

## Conclusion

The world has become a communicational hub where the distances are largely abated and abolished through the hasty advancement in communicational tools. Among them, media has always been top-listed that is an influential source of communication and projection and thus cause persuasion and imitation among the viewers. The current research study has intensively analyzed the projection of violence in media through its adverse consequences especially on youth and students. The study thus exerts that electronic media in the current scenario has been over-dominated by the projection of violence in numerous aspects that draw negative impacts on viewers.

Human as a psychological being observes, perceives and learns at every step of its life whereby human psychology confronts number of agitations and tends to adjust with them. Results of the study in terms of psychological impacts reflect that violence in media badly affects the mental well-being and psyche of the viewers. The information express that fear/phobia dominates human psychology surrounded by anxiety, frustration, tension and aggression. In addition, the young viewers adopt and learn the deviant behaviors that are found in their actions at the familial and communal level.



Besides, social structure and cultural patterns are more open to changes and alteration at any level including technological advancement. The projection of violence in media draws endless impacts in the social relations and cultural practices of the society. The empirical analysis conclude that excessive use of media bring changes in the social structure while causing disintegration in society and proliferate immorality among youth. Besides, the social structure and cultural setup confront disharmony because of production of rebellious actions by the community members (youth and students) that predominantly lead to conflicts and individualism. In the nutshell, the study comes to the conclusion that violence in media has overtly adverse consequences for both the psychological and socio-cultural well-being of the viewers and particularly the youth, which is considered as the basic and precious asset of society.

### **Recommendations**

Conclusively, the study unanimously recommends that:

- The role of parents in terms of socialization, check and balance in the daily routine of the children is inevitable. Parents must have a stabilized pattern of the daily activities to distribute their time for study, rest, play and watching TV. Further, they must ensure the programs watched by their children are free of violence and other filthy materials.
- The concerned authorities, such as PEMRA and cable operators, are the responsible personnel for bringing stability and censoring the unhealthy versions out of the programs, dramas, movies . Such authorities must be sensitized and intimated through researches and other means to ensure the prime responsibilities for the well-being of masses.
- Religion and religious control is almost half of the overall social control and prevention from deviance. The religious patrons and leaders must play their due role to intimate the masses about religious restrictions and obligations. This is the only way, where the people can be prevented from deviance and immorality.

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