
Harmful Consequences Of Media Violence

“Violence is like a strong perfume. It may seem good from afar, but as soon as you get close it is sickening”. Today we live in a society where violence is everywhere, it seems every movie is an action blockbuster, every song is more vulgar than the last, every video game is based on killing another human being, and every TV Breaking News is a story about a mass shooting. Violence in the media leads to aggressive behavior, a desensitization to violence, bullying, fear, anxiety, nightmares, and depression. Violence is defined as “behavior involving physical force intending to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something”. This viewing of negative behavior is not beneficial to ones’ mental well-being, should not be popularized by the mainstream media; in fact, it is more harmful than entertaining.

Firstly, there is strong evidence that exposure to violence in the media will lead to aggressive behavior. A 1960 study demonstrated this theory. Researcher tested how preschoolers would react when shown a film of a man beating a doll. After viewing the film, the children were put into a room with a variety of toys, including the exact same doll shown on the film. According to Psychology Today “they beat the doll with a mallet, and they punched and kicked it. What was most surprising was that the children found new and creative ways to beat up the doll, and they played more aggressively with the other toys in the room as well” .

In addition, people with mental illnesses are especially affected by violence in media as compared to other mentally healthy people. If someone is more vulnerable to violent media, then there is a strong possibility that they would pick up the characteristics of the action hero, video game character, or model the violent behaviour that is constantly portrayed by the media. In 2000, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found school shooters tend to have a mental illness of some kind, and that violence in media played a contributing factor in the school shootings. Also, in the past forty years, news articles were eight times more likely to mention video games as a motive in the report following school shooting.

The amount of violence in media has skyrocketed in the past few decades. Whether it be in TV, movies, music, or video games, this leads to a big problem with the over exposure of violence and people starting to become desensitized. The children who become desensitized tend to “become less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others” , lose empathy, increase their aggressive thoughts and actions, and become more fearful to the world around them. This change to their personality will turn children into more aggressive and emotionless adults.

Children also tend to copy what they see on tv and video games. If a child sees people fighting, they will copy it, most likely it will be on another child. This leads to physical aggression between children as well as bullying. Violence does not have to be physical, “Violent episodes can take the form of physical altercations as well as emotional taunting” , because of the increase in anger, aggression, and temper the children will take out their rage on the other children by hitting or insulting their classmates.

Fear is another factor in how violence effects children. Fighting, murder, aggression, and vulgarity will cause emotional upset, fear for violence, and anxiety in children. With the constant violence in movies, tv, and video games, the number of children who have suffered from these

problems must be significant. The more gruesome portrayal of the real world in movies and video games has also been proven to create a false sense of the real world and scare children into thinking that fiction is reality.

Sometimes the fear can lead to problems that will affect everyday lives. Did you know that people who watch violent movies or play a mature video game before bed are 13 time more likely to have bad dreams and nightmares? If a child were to watch one of these movies or play one of those games before bed constantly, they could then develop problems like insomnia and night terrors. The children who do develop problems will not want to sleep and will suffer from sleep deprivation. Other symptoms are moodiness, fatigue, headaches, and an increased risk of a stroke.

The most common long-term problem with an exposure to violence in media is an increased risk of a person's psychological well-being deterioration. "Among the various mental health problems, depression is one of the major problems they encounter". In fact, depression among children aged twelve to seventeen has "increasing from 8.7 percent in 2005 to 12.7 percent in 2015", and that is only for the people who have been diagnosed with clinical depression. What are the odds that in a day and age where violence in our media is so prevalent and our depression rates are drastically increasing both at the same time? The group of people who have had the sharpest increase in diagnoses are the target demographic for violent video games as well as action movies.

Aggressive behavior, a desensitization to violence, bullying, fear/anxiety, nightmares, and depression are all symptoms of an exposure to violence in media. If the mainstream media did not glorify this behavior, it is my opinion, we would have less aggressive people and a decrease of mental health related cases.

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