
Social Learning Theory and Bobo Doll Experiment

Canadian born American psychologist Albert Bandura theorized the social learning theory in 1977. Bandura agreed with most behaviorist learning theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning, but wanted to include the importance of behavior being and how it is learned by imitating others through observational learning.

Bandura's research on observational learning, aggression, and how we imitate others is quite relevant till this day as violence is shown everywhere especially through media.

The social learning theory has been used to understand aggression and psychological disorders more broadly. Bandura's theory has also been used to explain human behavior in relation to the interactions between cognitive, behavior, and environmental influences. The theory has also been utilized in the understanding of behavior modification, and has also been considered the foundation of the behavior modeling technique which is used in training programs. There are principles to consider in the social learning theory being attention, memory, and motivation. Attention involves a model or modeled events to take place while an individual is observing the behavior that is taking place. Memory is simply retaining what was seen and encoding the behavior and later rehearsing it. Finally, for motivation it is need or desire to use what was learned through the model and reinforcing it. An example of this can be a middle school or high school basketball player losing a basketball game simply because he or she could not pass a defender and shoot a three. This person then sees an article describing different basketball moves to do on tough defenders which would catch the attention of the person who had just lost. They would be attentive and motivated in observing the information and moves that they would be shown and later imitate them in order to improve and to grow as a player. This would be reinforcement as the player is continuously doing the action or behavior and strengthening it for the next game. Also, considering that the basketball moves are legal and don't go against any of the rules the player would be even more motivated in doing it since it wouldn't involve any punishment. If a behavior is modeled to an observer and has a punishment the chances of the behavior being imitated are lowered.

Bobo Doll Experiment

The social learning theory is three main principles of observing, imitating, and modeling are shown in one of Bandura's famous Bobo Doll Experiment (1961). In this experiment Bandura wanted to see if it was possible for young children to imitate aggressive behaviors by observing others. There was a total of 72 children in this experiment between the ages of 3 to 6 years old, which were then separated into three groups and split in half by gender in order to determine any difference. The first group made up of 24 children, 12 being male and the other 12 being female, were separated into individual rooms where an adult or in this case the model enters the room and shows aggressive behavior towards a bobo doll. A non-aggressive model was shown to the second group of 24 where an adult entered rooms and remained quiet while playing with a toy set and ignored the bobo doll. Finally, the last group of 24 were simply a control group and were not presented with any of the other models used in the experiment. In the Bobo Doll experiment adults are used as models in order to see how the children would imitate the behavior, and emotion portrayed in front of them. The aggressive model demonstrates physical

aggression towards the bobo doll such as punching, kicking, hitting it with a mallet, and throwing it around alongside with some verbal aggression. Once the model had left the children who were observing responded with similar behaviors, imitating what they had previously seen towards the bobo doll.

Bobo Doll Results

The results that were seen after the experimentation served as great evidence towards Bandura's theory on behavior and aggression. Children who observed the model who showed aggressive behavior towards the bobo doll showed more aggression than the non-aggressive and control group. Also, a small number of children who were in the model's aggressive behavior group displayed no aggression. Girls who were in the model's aggressive behavior group showed more physical aggression if the model was male, and if the model was female they showed more verbal aggression unlike the boys. Boys would imitate the same-sex model's behavior more than the young girls would. Finally, another result that was noticed is that boys showed more physical aggressive behavior than girls, but there was little to no difference when it came to verbal aggression.

Bobo Doll on Film

Bandura's experiment impacted views towards observational learning and how aggressive behaviors and behaviors in general, could easily be learned by observing and imitating others. As Bandura's experiment began to cause this impact the television was also growing in popularity and becoming more affordable for families. This led to televisions being implemented into households which sparked interest in Bandura's theory on observation. Two years later Bandura continued his experiment but with a new approach which was to compare how children would respond to a model demonstrating aggressive behaviors similar to that of the bobo doll on film rather than in real life. The film was shown on television with two different setups one simply being an adult beating up the bobo doll, and the second with an adult dressed up as a cat doing the same behaviors. Similar to the Bobo Doll Experiment in 1961, the results came out the same with children imitating the model's aggressive behaviors they had observed on film. This has caused controversy and many debates on whether or not violence on television could be leading to more aggressive behaviors or acts in children and everyone else. Seeing the results and aftermath of Bandura's experiment it is safe to say that violence that is shown in real life or television lead to more aggressive behaviors being learned and reinforced. However, an important factor to consider that was left out in these experiments was punishment and if it would lead to a decrease in the possibility of children imitating aggressive behaviors. Punishment is the opposite of reinforcement which would attempt to decrease the operant response shown by the children in the experiment. An example of a negative punishment that could have been used in this experiment is taking away the toys from the kids. Giving rules, and yelling at the model for the bad behavior being demonstrated would serve as a positive punishment since it is adding and not taking away anything. If children were to see the model's violent behavior punished or having consequences would lead to more and different results. Violence is often shown on television without having no punishments such as revenge, only having satisfaction and no consequences. Many movies and tv shows have violence and aggressive behaviors as entertainment which is completely fine as it allows those observing it to enjoy something that isn't reality. However, this must be considered and needs to be understood especially the possibilities and risk of seeing violence on television.

Effects and Outcomes of Violence and Aggressive Behavior

Television has grown exponentially and has been implemented into the daily lifestyles of many. Wherever and whenever television is found anywhere, whether that be in school, at work, at home or in someone's household television is everywhere. However, with this happening the amount of violence on television must be considered especially towards those that are not of age and shouldn't be watching it. There are so many television programs and the majority of them being ? of the programs have some sort of violence implemented into it whether it be verbal or aggressive. There have been studies saying that an average American child will see 200,000 violent acts and 16,000 murders before the age of 18. Before getting into what are the possible effects the number of hours wasted watching television should be considered especially since it can have a great effect on children who are being unmonitored by their parents or guardians. A television channel can be easily changed to a different program by the click of a button and if a children is being unmonitored by their parents or guardians the possibility of the children switching the channel are relatively high if they are uninterested in what they are watching. There has also been studies that television programs that are made for kids tend to have more violent acts and behaviors than those of adult tv. Television viewing begins at an early age of two which could be a possible reason why children become so easily addicted to watching tv. Typically children between the ages of 2 to 5 average about 32 hours spent watching television, and those who are 6 to 8 in average age around 28 hours a week. These numbers are even higher being around 1.5 hours more if the child has a television in his or her bedroom compared to those who don't. From the age range of 8 to 18 years of age 71% of this group has a television in their bedroom, and it is even said that parents and guardians encourage children to watch television from a young age. This could be because it entertains or educates the child, however these bad habits could be learned by others. According to Nielsen company the average American spends around five hours a day watching television instead of putting this time into something much more productive. The children themselves will simply imitate their parents or guardians and portray the same type of behavior which is watching television for an extensive amount of hours. Now with this high number of hours spent watching television also comes the possibility that children viewing numerous amounts of violent scenes would begin to see it as completely normal in reality or when doing aggressive/violent acts themselves.

Violent behavior in children has caused many problems and incidents for parents, adults, and even teachers at school teaching them. This sort of behavior can be shown in young children as well whether it's their first day at school or even at their own household. Most of the time these types of behaviors are not thought of and are not even considered possible risks in the near future for the children and others. There are many opinions when it comes to violent behaviors in children suggesting that the child would just simply grow out of it which leads to the parents or guardians not taking the behavior seriously since it is just seen as a phase or bad tantrum. Violent behavior can range from being physical aggression, verbal aggression, threatening, hurting animals, using weapons or tools to cause harm, or even destroying things around them. Watching television for such a high amount of hours could make the children who are doing these sort of violent acts think of them as being normal having no negative effects or any possible punishments and consequences. These sort of violent acts can potentially lead to children bullying others, no sort of self-control of the actions, anger management problems, getting easily frustrated to anything, and simply acting on impulsive behaviors rather than thinking things through when put into any sort of problem. That is why from a young age

aggressive behavior should be punished and children should be shown that there are consequences for such actions because if it is left untouched the child would continue to grow with such bad habits, reinforcing it and would never grow out of it. These aggressive acts and behaviors would only be reinforced and will continue to happen because of the results of past experiences.

Research studies have shown that violence on any sort of media has caused an increase in aggressive behavior and has even been evaluated through incidents that have happened in the past. A research study in 2002 reported by U.S. Secret Service and the US Department of Education evaluated 37 incidents of school shootings and attacks between the years 1976 to 2000. What was interestingly found is that the majority of the attackers had somewhat of an interest in violence whether that be through playing video games or watching tv shows, movies or any other sort of media. Also, in the year 2009 the American Academy of Pediatrics stated on the subject of media violence that the majority of research relating to the topic, indicated that violence in the media has been a great contribution to aggressive behaviors, acts, and even more. Furthermore, the ISRA also known as the International Society for Research on Aggression's media violence commission reported that for the past 50 years the amount of research studies on violence and media have shown that watching violence on television or playing violent video games, increases a greater chance for aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior also could cause the observers to feel less emotionally sensitive towards others, not caring or showing any sort of care and actually finding enjoyment and what they do.

Some people still disagree that observing violence on any sort of media will cause for an increase in aggressive behavior they will simply say that it is because of genetics, the environment that they live in or what they were taught. However, television can also be seen as a sort of education and as an environment as well because it is what the child is seeing and learning from due to the amount of hours spent watching television. A vast amount of studies have proven that violence in video games, movies, and tv shows on television have caused an increase in aggressive behavior making it undeniable.

Conclusion

To conclude violence in televised media has caused for an increase in aggressive behavior within children. Albert Bandura's social learning theory can be used in order to prove this statement and to rationalize why this is. Bandura's social experiment using the bobo doll amongst children was an eye opener for many and shows how children can imitate the behaviors of those who they are observing. All of this should be taken into consideration and the possibilities/outcomes of children seeing violent acts and aggressive behavior. In order to prevent any possible outcomes parents and guardians should monitor what their children are watching and what they are allowing them to watch. Another thing that should be considered is children watching televised media of their age range as the child would be more capable of watching the media that will be portrayed on television. Also, television programs for children should be inspected in order to prevent any sort of violent scenes being seen by the child watching. In all as the world continues to advance in technology comes the risk of violence and repercussions.