

## Glorification of Violence among Adolescents: A Potential Hazard

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**Introduction:** Violence among adolescents is a major public health issue that has negative impacts on both the individuals involved and society as a whole. Research has shown that glorification of violence, especially in media, including television, movies, and video games, can contribute to the acceptance and perpetration of violence among adolescents.

**Aim:** This paper aimed to review the literature on the prevalence of violence in media and its effects on adolescents.

**Method:** A narrative review of the literature that included published articles on prevalence, acceptance, and glorification of violence among adolescents were sourced and reviewed.

**Result and Conclusion:** The present paper infers the role of media exposure of violence on adolescents. It also discusses the potential ways in which this issue can be addressed through media literacy education and other prevention strategies.

**Keywords:** *Violence, Adolescents, Media, Social Media*

Adolescence is a period of enormous physical and psychological changes. Globally considered an age group between 10-19 years, it is a period in which an individual's capacity for abstract and critical thinking develops, there are experiential changes in social perception and social expectations which further moulds the development of a sense of self-awareness (WHO, 2011). The psychological perspective of adolescence period, since the pioneer contribution of G. Stanley Hall has been viewed primarily as a phase of internal turmoil and upheaval, which can be comprehended as a metaphorical representation of human ancestors' shift from being primitive to being civilized (Lerner & Steinberg, 2009). With 253 million adolescents in the



age group 10-19 years India has the largest adolescent population in the world (Census 2011, Ramadass et. Al., 2017), putting emphasis on the demographic significance of the adolescents as they play a key role in shaping the future of the country, primarily being the potential agents of social, economic and political change.

Adolescence should be viewed as a fragile and crucial period for mental well-being. It is a period of significant changes in psychosocial and emotional experiences, as well as cognitive and intellectual capacities along with hormonal and neurodevelopmental alterations. Changes in the adolescent's environment both affect and are affected by the internal changes of adolescence. These external influences, which differ among cultures and societies, include social values and norms and the changing roles, responsibilities, relationships and expectations of this period of life. (WHO, 2020).

An estimate of 10-20% of adolescents worldwide experience mental health conditions, that mostly remain underdiagnosed and undertreated. Multitude range of factors determine mental health outcomes in adolescents. The more risk factors adolescents are exposed to, the greater is the potential impact on their mental health. Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include a desire for greater autonomy, pressure to conform with peers, exploration of sexual identity, and increased access to and use of technology. Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between an adolescent's lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future. Other important determinants include the quality of their home life and relationships with peers. In addition, Violence among adolescents is a pressing concern globally, with rising incidents of aggressive behaviour, bullying, and even severe criminal activities. Violence and socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health (WHO 2021).

Violence in adolescent and children has been an emphasis of study theoretically as well as empirically since a long period of time and there have been a surge in studies analysing



aggressive behaviours and violence in adolescents and children, thus reflecting the growing seriousness of the subject (Card et al. 2008). Violence can be understood to be the intentional use of physical force or power, which may be a threat or a real act, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation, as defined by World Health Organization (WHO,2021). Violence, in this context, is not only understood to be encompassing or causing physical harm, rather it may also incorporate situations where psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation take place. It establishes that acts of omission or neglect, rather can also be considered as forms of violence (Rutherford et al., 2007). WHO emphasises adolescents and youth violence as a global public health problem, which doesn't only negatively impacts the individual involved, but also has an impact on the society as a whole. The nature of violence can range from bullying and physical fighting to more severe sexual and physical assault to homicide (WHO, 2020).

Violence among adolescents is a major public health issue that has negative impacts on both the individuals involved and society as a whole. The many forms of violence can have serious and lasting consequences, not only for the victims, but also for the perpetrators. Research has shown that glorification of violence in media, including television, movies, and video games, can contribute to the acceptance and perpetration of violence among adolescents. Since decades, violence has been portrayed as an acceptable action and mode of behaviour in cinemas and media globally, and has been glorified. Understanding the adoration and appraisal of violence within this age group is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. This paper explores the myriad influences that contribute to the normalization and glamorization of violent behaviour among adolescents. This paper reviews the literature on the glorification of violence in media and its effects on adolescents. It discusses the potential ways in which this issue can be addressed through media literacy education and other prevention strategies.



For the purpose of the study, a systematic search of electronic databases including PubMed, PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Cochrane Library was conducted. The search strategy included keywords such as "violence," "adolescents," "media," and related terms. Studies published in English from year 1980 to 2023 were considered for inclusion. Peer-reviewed articles, systematic reviews, meta-analysis reviews, studies employing randomized controlled trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental designs, longitudinal designs as well were eligible for inclusion. Studies focusing on other age groups primarily were excluded.

With the advancement of technology, media has evolved significantly in terms of presentation, forms, and utility. This evolution has inadvertently contributed to the rise of aggressive behaviour and violence among adolescents. The impact of media violence over time can be understood through studies conducted across different decades. Representations of violence in the media desensitises audiences to violent behaviour and actions and exposure to violence portrayals in the media can lead to subsequent viewers' aggression through dis-inhibition (Heusmann, 2007). It is further understood, that imitation of aggressive behaviour makes youngsters act in forceful or destructive manners toward others" (Bandura, 1986).

With the advent of 1990s, representation of violence was idealised with heroic attributions, as a major source of entertainment, through the medium of Cinema and television. It has been established that portrayal of violence on cinema, television (movies, tele-soaps, animated media) increase aggression and hostility in children and adolescents. Children who watch more media violence on a daily basis behave more aggressively on a daily basis (Paik and Comstock, 1994). Furthermore, as discussed exposure to violence portrayals in the media can lead to subsequent viewers' aggression through disinhibition (Huesmann, 1998).

Studies conducted in the 2000s further elaborate on the significant role of media in leading to increased aggression among adolescents. Wide range of screen activities lead to 'acts of



violence' and assume that exposures most necessarily result in violent or aggression behaviour (Ghosh,2007). It is observed that fictional television and film violence contribute to both a short-term and a long-term increase in aggression and violence in young viewers. Television news violence contributes to increased violence, principally in the form of imitative suicides and acts of aggression. Exposing people, especially children and youth, to violent behaviour on film and TV increases the likelihood that they will behave aggressively immediately afterwards. Additionally, early exposure to media violence, that promote aggressive behaviour in young children can contribute to increasingly aggressive and ultimately violent behaviour many years later as well. (Bushman & Huesmann 2001 ).Video games have been found capable of producing an increase in aggression and violence in the short term. (Anderson and Bushman, 2001, Anderson et al., 2004 ) Haninger and Thompson (2004) in their study emphasized that 94% of games rated (by the video game industry) as appropriate for teens are described as containing violence, and ratings by independent researchers suggest that the real percentage may be even higher.

Based on principles of observational-learning theory, when violence is portrayed as justified, viewers are likely to believe that their own aggressive responses to a perceived offense are also appropriate, so they are therefore more apt to behave aggressively. Anderson et. al, 2004, throw a light on the mechanisms through which exposure to media violence heightens aggression and violence. While in the short term media violence boosts aggression by priming pre-existing aggressive thoughts and behaviours, causing heightened physiological arousal, and inducing an automatic tendency to imitate observed violent actions; the long term impact is a resultant contribution of media violence to aggression through various learning processes. These processes result in the development of enduring and readily accessible aggressive scripts, interpretational schemas, and beliefs that endorse aggressive social behaviour, while also reducing individuals' sensitivity to violence.



Furthermore, rewarding perpetrators for their violence raises the likelihood that viewers will model the aggressive act. Thus, media portrayals in which violence is rewarded increases the risk of aggressive behaviour. Moreover, seeing unpunished media violence may also enhance learning of aggressive thoughts and behaviours.( Kumar, 2009; Huesmann et. al. 2003 ). It is important to note that the relationship between media violence and real-world violence and aggression is moderated by the nature of the media content and characteristics of and social influences on the individual exposed to that content( Huesmann 2006 ).

For more than a decade now, social media has been the centre of political, economic, social, and religious life. The development of information communication and technology in social media has brought tremendous changes in the way people think, act and live (Ozukum, 2021). Growing teenage violence can be attributed to increased exposure to all kinds of external stimuli, especially mobile phones and other gadgets, which gives them easy access to content with extreme forms of violence. The major media what individuals regularly use are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. Online media post on disputable and disparaging comments against any religion, local area, gods, famous characters have more prominent repercussion. TV news also contributes to rising violence, especially through imitative suicides and acts of aggression. Video games have been shown to increase aggression and violence in the short term.

Long-term exposure leads to the acquisition of social cognitions (scripts, world schemas, attitudes, and beliefs). Media violence is rationalized on the assumption that viewers experience catharsis (Nath 2021; Ozukum, 2021; Sadiq ,2021; Kewalramani, 2016; Patil, 2014). Entertainment content on OTT platforms including Netflix, Amazon, Hotstar and likewise. frequently showcase violent content in a heroic manner, promoting the generalization, social acceptance and imitation of such violent content by adolescent as well as youth.



Exposure to media has given rise to disruptive behaviours in children and adolescents, including repeated tantrums, arguments, hostility towards parents or authority figures, and bullying behaviour such as picking on small or younger children. It also includes causing or threatening harm to pets, other people or themselves. In older children and teens early sexual activity, smoking, alcohol and drug use can be signs of a problem (Tanwar & Priyanka, 2016). Shedding a light further, there are many factors that can contribute to violence among adolescents. These can include a lack of positive role models, a lack of effective communication skills, a lack of conflict resolution skills, and a lack of access to resources and support. Additionally, adolescents who have experienced trauma or have mental health issues may be more prone to violence.

Some studies have focused on the impact of media violence on *aggressive thinking*, including beliefs and attitudes that promote aggression. Other studies have focused on the influence of media violence on *aggressive emotions*—that is, on emotional reactions, such as anger, that are related to aggressive behaviour. It is important to keep these three types of outcome variables (behaviour, thoughts, emotions) separate, and to reserve the labels “aggression” and “violence” for behaviours intended to harm another person (Anderson et al. 2017).

While idealization, imitation and celebration of violence is seemingly becoming a global concern, it is essential to highlight that violence in Indian society is a growing concern. Media also serve the programmes based on violent behaviour and their exposure to the people is promoting violent behaviour. The exposure to certain violent portrayals can lead to positive or pro-social effects. The effects of exposure to media violence may be immediate and long term. Exposure to violence portrayals in the media can lead to subsequent viewers’ aggression through disinhibition. Youth constitute most vulnerable group to the influence of media. As adolescents and youth are facing problems of identity, freedom, physical and emotional changes, they are more vulnerable to exploitation. The impacts of media on culture, social



institution, inter- personal relationship etc has been well realized. Utilization of web, Television, WhatsApp and other web-based media, especially by juvenile adolescents are on expanding pattern. In year 2018, the number of social media users in India stood at 326.1 million. Social network users in India are expected to be almost 448 million in 2023 (Sahu, 2019).

It is important for parents, teachers, and all the stakeholders to be aware of the signs of violence among adolescents and to take steps to address the issue. This can include setting clear boundaries, teaching effective communication and conflict resolution skills, and seeking support from mental health professionals. It can also be helpful to engage adolescents in activities that promote positive socialization and healthy self-esteem. Ultimately, addressing violence among adolescents requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. By working together and providing support and resources to young people, we can help to reduce violence and create a safer and more positive environment for all.

Some Intervention Strategies that may provide support in the ever increasing concern of Violence among adolescents have been discussed as follows. Education and Awareness programs that raise awareness about the consequences of violence and promote non-violent conflict resolution are essential. Schools can play a pivotal role by incorporating such programs into their curricula. Along with this, Media literacy initiatives may significantly help adolescents critically evaluate the content they consume. Teaching young people to recognize and question the portrayal of violence in media can reduce its impact. A focus on Community-based programs that provide positive role models and constructive activities can offer alternatives to violence. Sports, arts, and mentorship programs can help adolescents build self-esteem and develop non-violent ways to achieve their goals. Lastly, Family Support through counseling and parenting programs can create a more nurturing home environment.





Empowering parents as well as the adolescents with skills to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts non-violently is crucial.

The glorification of violence among adolescents is a complex issue requiring a multifaceted approach. This review has provided compelling evidence that exposure to media violence stimulates aggressive and violent behaviour in young viewers, significantly increasing the long-term risk of violent behaviour beyond childhood. Media violence poses a serious threat to public health by contributing to real-world violence and aggression. The research clearly demonstrates that various forms of media—including fictional television, film violence, television news, video games, and content on social media and OTT platforms—play a significant role in increasing aggression and violence, both in the short term and across the life span. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the impact of media violence on individuals and society and by understanding the various influences and implementing comprehensive intervention strategies, it is possible to mitigate the impact of violence and promote healthier development for adolescents.

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