

*Project Study Module*

*(Economics, Business and Social Science)*

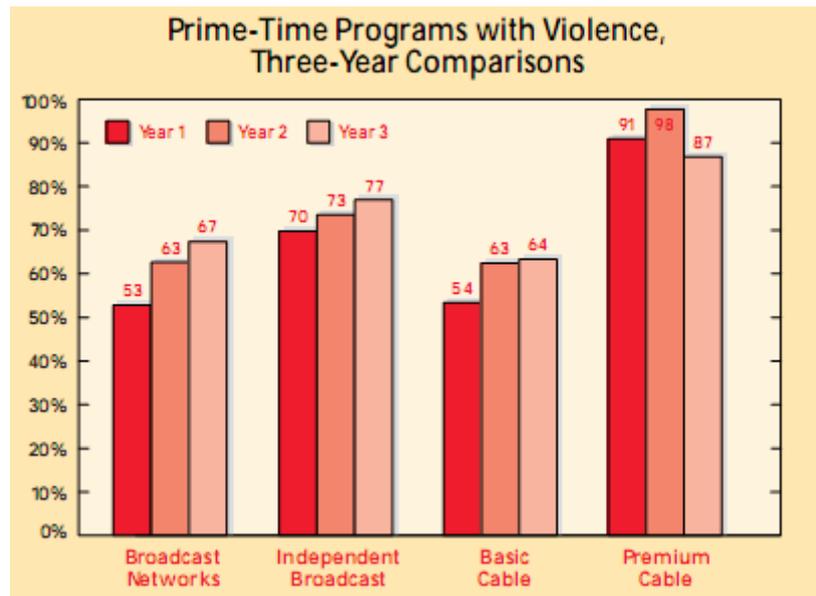
*The negative effects of television violence on  
youth aggression*

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## **1. Introduction**

According to the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) statistics in 1998, the violent content in television programmes have raised from 53% to 67% on broadcast networks, and from 70% to 77% on Independent Broadcast. It has also demonstrated that programmes with violence contain no less than 6 violent incidents hourly. The study hence indicates that adolescents who watch television will be easily exposed to violent interactions per prime-time television hour.

Owing to the increasing pervasion of violence viewed in on-screen media, concerns about the adverse effects of television violence on youth has therefore been raised among the public and researchers.



Source: University of California, Santa Barbara (1998)

In recent years, many researchers have pointed out the negative influence of violent television on youngsters. A correlational research conducted by DuRant, Neiberg, Champion, Rhodes, & Wolfson (2008) has found that youngsters watching wrestling 6 times a week were 184% more prone to the use of weapon and 144% more likely to fight with others. Hence, by comparing the behaviours between teenagers watching violent television and those non-viewers, the above research has shown that violence abounded in television is correlative to aggressive behaviour of young people. Besides, using experimental research to test the changes of 15-years-old teenagers before and after viewing violent cartoons, Hartnagel, Teevan, McIntyre (1975) has also proven that teenagers who think

television violence as justifiable are more likely to involve in violent acts than their peers.

In contrast, there are opponents against the research by DuRant, Neiberg, Champion, Rhodes, & Wolfson (2008). Kirsh (2006) in his data collected from 500 British 13-years-old youngsters found that there is neither direct nor indirect influence of television violence on how youngsters behave aggressively. Another researcher, Moeller, T.G. (2001) assessed more than 800 children and adolescents from 1998 to 2000, and founded that ‘boys who were initially low in aggressiveness showed a decrease in aggression following the violent television clip.’ As such, he argued that their original personalities, instead of the degree of violent television viewing, play a vital role to inciting themselves to aggressive behaviour. Nevertheless, he did found that both youth hostility and fear have increased due to frequent exposure to violent television shows.

The majority of the research, however, analyses the negative effect of television violence on various ages of adolescence. Moreover, the finding from Hartnagel, Teevan, McIntyre (1975) which is more than 30 years seems out-dated. Besides, some studies like Moeller (2001) claims may only be applicable to a particular

gender. Various ages may also lead to inconsistent results. Consequently, this research which is expected to update a more recent data will focus on a specific group of youngsters aged 17-20 and investigate whether or not television violence affect the aggressive behaviour of both genders.

## **2. Aims and objectives**

This research is trying to investigate how youngsters view the level of violence in television programmes. Besides, it aims to explore the negative influence of television violence on young people ranging from 17 to 20 years old and find out practical solutions in preventing violent acts.

## **3. Methodology**

### ***3.1.1 Primary Data: Questionnaire***

For primary research, a numerical questionnaire survey is administered to 50 students studying in International Study Centre. A total of 10 questions are asked to examine young viewers' perception towards television violence and its impact on youth aggressive behaviour. In attempt to process the answers more easily, the types of questions include multiple choices which require one answer chosen from several responses and checklist questions where more than one answer is acceptable. To avoid biases towards social desirable responses, respondents remain anonymous.

### ***3.1.2 Primary Data: Interview***

Besides, interviews are also conducted with 15 randomly selected youngsters aged 17-20 to provide additional details in evaluating the influence of television violence on aggression and in clarifying significant questions.

### ***3.2 Secondary Data: Findings by Eron (et al., 1972), Lytton & Romney (1991)***

Concerning the secondary data, findings by Eron (et al., 1972), Lytton & Romney (1991) are used to show differences between boys and girls on the effects of television violence.

## **4. Findings & Analysis**

### ***4.1 The impact of television violence on youth aggressive behaviour***

The respondents were requested to answer three questions to investigate the impact of violence on television on youth aggressiveness. Below 4.1.1 through 4.1.3 are the findings and analysis regarding its impact.

#### **4.1.1 Does viewing televised violence encourage youth aggressiveness?**

58% respondents agree that viewing televised violence results in a higher level of young viewers' aggressiveness, as youngsters can observe the violent act of diverse models on television and easily imitate their behaviour; whereas 42%

respondents hold an opposite stance, because they believe there are other variables affecting the effects of violent television to adolescents. 42% respondents also state that aggressive inhibition decreases after witnessing television violence, as it may scare young viewers by producing aggressive impulses on screen.

(Appendix: Fig 1)

#### **4.1.2 Does violent television increase youth fantasy-aggressive behaviour?**

Through collecting data from people who agree with increasing youth aggressiveness regarding violent television, 74% respondents agree and 26% respondents disagree that viewing television violence lead to higher engagement in aggressive fantasies which further result in greater aggressiveness. It can thus be concluded that one of the influential consequences of television violence is youngsters involving in more fantasy-aggressive behaviour, because most respondents (74%) believe violent television allows youth to imagine as if they were behaving aggressively, hence increase their likelihood to expose to actual aggression in reality. (Appendix: Fig 2)

#### **4.1.3 Does violent television make you more hostile?**

Approximately 63% respondents agree that higher levels of exposure to violent television make them more hostile, because they believe television violence would lead to a stronger identification with aggressive characters, causing them a higher hostility level. On the other hand, only 37% respondents believe that increased hostility levels of adolescents in the long run is the adverse effect of watching television, even though they think temporary negative emotions such as anger would rise after watching violent television. As hostility can be classified as one of the aggressive-supportive issues, so the above findings have investigated the correlation between youth aggressive-supportive behaviour and televised violence.

(Appendix: Fig 3)

#### ***4.2 The origin of youth aggressiveness***

Approximately 53% respondents said that the lack of parental concern is the source for youth aggressiveness. Nearly 22% respondents think youth aggressiveness is dominated by their personalities. Very few respondents believe that youth aggressiveness is due to the influence of bad friends. With reference to the above findings, it is obvious that the most important factor in causing youth aggressiveness is the little concern of parents. Besides, only a minority of respondents (19%) state that television violence is the source. That clearly implies

that televised violence viewing do not form an imperative role in causing adolescent aggressiveness. (Appendix: Fig 4)

#### ***4.3 Difference between boys and girls on the effects of television violence***

A 10-year experimental study by Eron (et al., 1972) have investigated that after watching televised violence, British boys are 64% more easily exposed to aggressive behaviour such as bullying and verbal insults than girls in the same age. Moreover, findings by Lytton & Romney (1991) have also suggested that a greater negative impact of television violence on boys than girls can be explained by social attitudes, which means boys becoming aggressive are more acceptable than that of girls in society. Another reason is lower code of conduct among boys. The findings have therefore concluded that sex difference is influential in examining the negative effect of violent television to youth aggressiveness. Besides, the secondary data also shows that social factor affects the impact of television violence on different genders to a considerable extent.

#### ***4.4 How youth aggressive behaviour can be prevented?***

Basing upon the data collected from questionnaire and interview, more than half of respondents (57%) think parental guidance is the most effective in preventing youth aggressive behaviour. According to 23% of respondents, watching non-violent television effectively prevents youth aggressiveness. Besides, 11% respondents believe youth aggressiveness can be prevented by education, and 9% think consulting health professionals can curb the existence of youth aggressiveness. The findings have thus concluded that choosing between violent and non-violent programs have significant impact on youngsters. Moreover, education is also a prevention though it is not classified as the most useful suggestion as implied in the findings. (Appendix: Fig 5)

## **Conclusion**

It is very clear that witnessing violent television do have a negative influence on youngsters ranging from 17 to 20-years-old.

Youth aggressiveness can be encouraged by viewing televised violence due to their imitation of violent characters. On the basis of responses, higher level of aggressive fantasies can be exhibited by a greater exposure to violent television.

The results found have also indicated that youth psychological problems like callous attitudes towards the use of aggressiveness are associated with their preferences for violent television programs, while short-term impact on youth hostility has also been observed.

Overall, the role of television violence is not vitally imperative in explaining the origin of adolescent aggressiveness. Instead, answers reported by most adolescents have highlighted the importance of parental concern, because their negligence could make youngsters without sufficient love and care, thereby becoming rebellious and aggressive gradually.

Moreover, gender differences reveal a large effect of television violence on youth.

There are no observable changes before and after violence viewing to the aggressive behaviour of girls in the findings; whereas boys have been badly influenced by televised violence as they are more impulsive.

Last but not least, my project shows that television violence cannot be classified as the most significant origin in forming youth aggressiveness. However, it

exacerbates the level of aggressive behaviour to a large extent. Hence, it is hoped that after this study, the government can handle this issue wisely, like providing more parental guidance and spend more on youth education in choosing appropriate content viewed on television, so that they will not easily fall victim to greater aggressiveness.

### **References**

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## **Appendix**

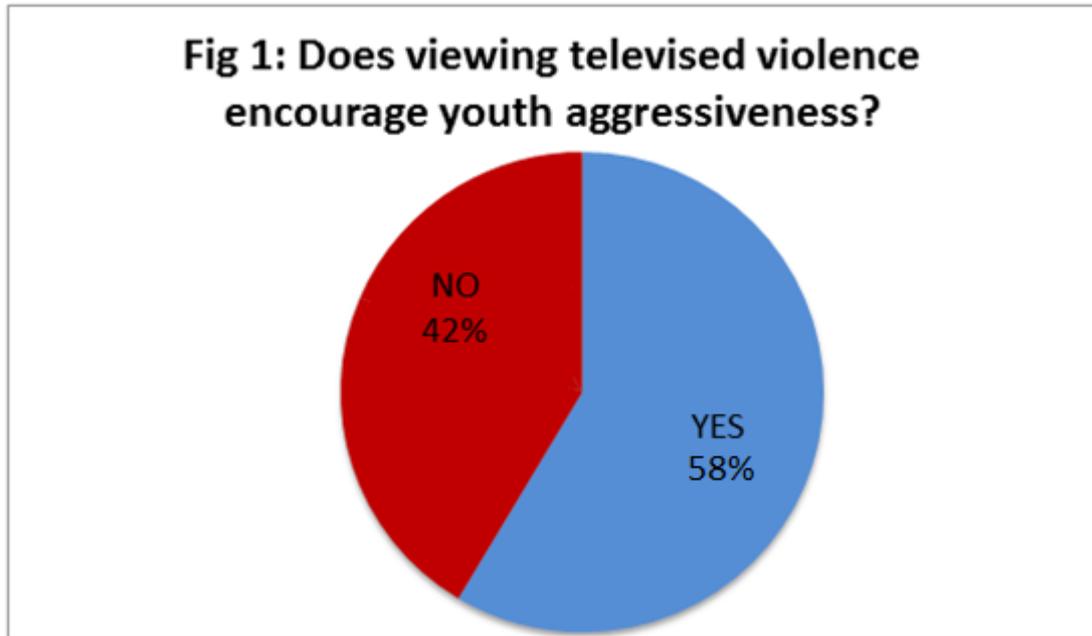
### **1. Questionnaire**

#### **Evaluating the impact of television violence on youth aggression**

1. Your gender
<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
2. Your age group
<input type="checkbox"/> 17-20 <input type="checkbox"/> over 20
3. How much violence do you think television contains?

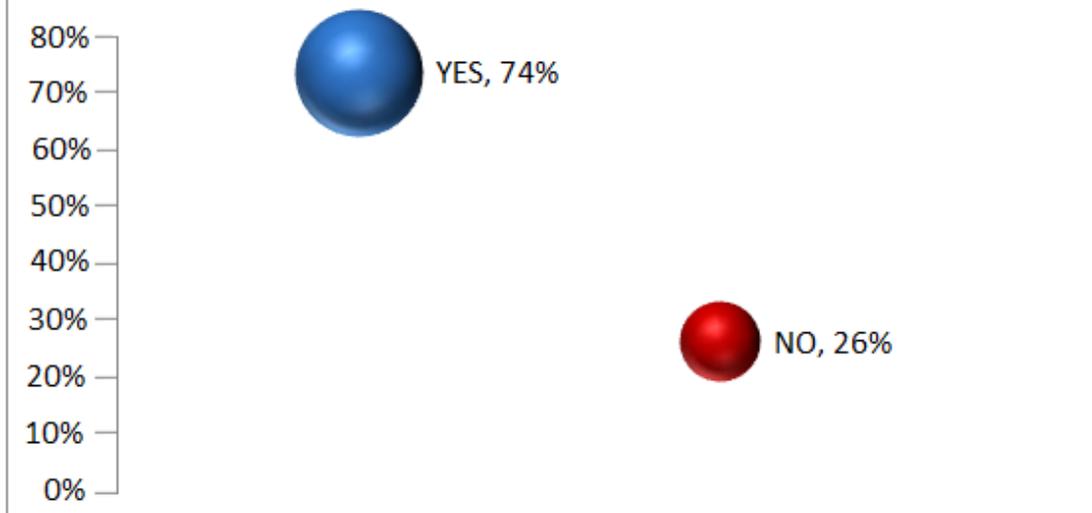
<input type="checkbox"/> Little <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> A Lot
4. Do you watch television containing violent content?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Do you agree that violence on television is justified?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. Do you think the violence watched on television will make you act more violently?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Reason(optional): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> No, Reason(optional): _____ [Skip to Q8]
7. Do you think watching violent television increase your fantasy-aggressive behaviour?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Reason(optional): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> No, Reason(optional): _____
8. Does violent television make you more hostile?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Reason(optional): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> No, Reason(optional): _____
9. Which factor do you think is the origin of youth aggressive behaviour?
<input type="checkbox"/> Watch too much violent television
<input type="checkbox"/> Little concern of parents
<input type="checkbox"/> Personality factors
<input type="checkbox"/> Influenced by bad friends
10. What solution(s) do you think is/are most effective to prevent youth aggressive behaviour? (Choose more than 1 answer is acceptable)
<input type="checkbox"/> Parental Guidance
<input type="checkbox"/> Watch non-violent television
<input type="checkbox"/> Education (e.g. media use )
<input type="checkbox"/> Consult health professionals

2.



3.

**Fig 2: Does violent television increase your fantasy-aggressive behaviour?**



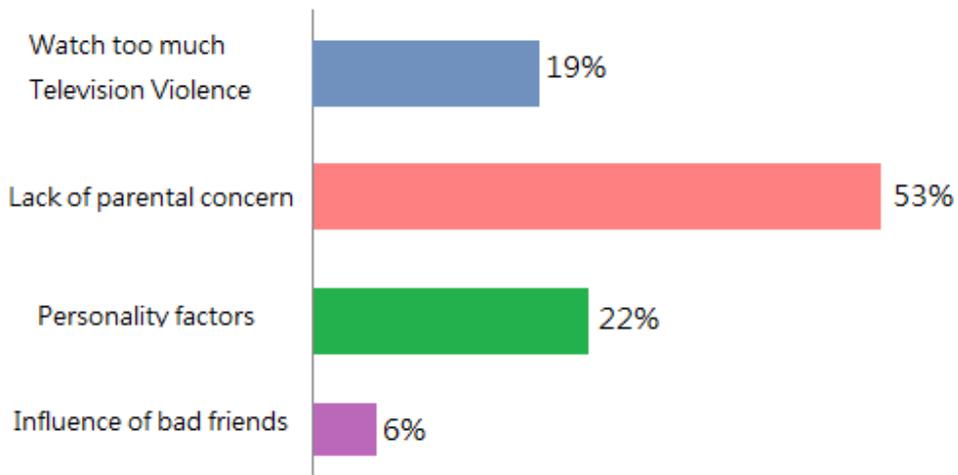
4.

**Fig 3: Does violent television make you more hostile?**



5.

**Fig 4: What is the origin of youth aggressiveness?**



6.

**Fig 5: How youth aggressive behaviour can be prevented?**

