

## **EXAMINING CHILDREN LEARNED VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR THROUGH MASS MEDIA CONTENT: A STUDY OF OBASAJO MODEL SCHOOL, JOS. NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Several research investigations confirmed there is relationship between violent behavior learned by adolescents and media content. It is on this premise that the study seek a different perspective to confirm the reality of violent content and media effect on adolescents' behavior in Jos Metropolis considering the spite of deviant behaviors that does not conform to moral and legal standard in our society. Survey design was implored where a structured and standardized questionnaire was issued out randomly to adolescents, parents and teachers seeking their opinions on the spite of social vices bedevilling our society and its relationship to children exposure to certain media content. The study confirmed that violent behavior and all forms of social vices in the society is a product of an exposure to media content where these adolescents imitate and experiment the behaviour they observed. Conclusively, recommendations were made challenging media organizations, regulatory agencies and parents to as a matter of fact regulate certain content of the media from the view of adolescents where an upright society can be enhanced.*

**KEYWORDS:** Deviant behaviour, violent behaviour, Experimentation. Adolescents, Media content.

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### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Communication refers to conveying or transfer of information from one person to another (Lemish, 1997). Communication begins at birth and ends at death and is common to all human beings. Mass media refers to any printed or electronic media designed to carry messages to large audiences. Mass media comprises those channels of communications, which are used in receiving heterogeneous audiences simultaneously. Examples of electronic media include radio, television, cinema, interactive multimedia, communication through internet, e-mail, mobile phones among others. Print media include: Newspapers, magazines, billboards, exhibition display, poster leaflets among others. People use mass media for reasons such as: gathering information for the purposes of acquiring knowledge, for personal identification so as to gain insight into oneself, to change the attitudes and behavior of the targeted customers, for integration and social interaction with other people and for entertainment (Cantor, 1999). Earlier researches indicated that majority of electronic media consumers were and still are young people, especially TV broadcast and cable channels, videos, radio and cinema and more recently the internet, email and the mobile phones. Factors that may determine the type of media used by an adolescent include: gender, age, race/ethnicity, social class, and religion, place of residence (rural or urban, among other factors (Cantor & Omdahl, 1999).

Other factors that influence the young person's social welfare include: Maltreatments in the family, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, genetic factors, social cultural factors, emotional deprivation, reinforcement of violence and aggression, cognitive problems, psychiatric disorders, group influences, racial/ethnic conflicts, poverty, failure of the school structure among others. Different types of mass media could be used either to create awareness, increase knowledge or to change the attitudes and behavior of the targeted population in this study

Exposure to media violence is positively related to subsequent aggressive behaviors, aggressive ideas, arousal and anger, and a negative effect on behaviors (Bushman & Cantor, 2003). Signifying that aggressive tendencies, anger arousal and deviant behaviors of adolescents have a correlation to violent media content. The involvement of young people in crime has been on the increase over the past few years (NACADA, 2009). While young people are mainly associated with petty crimes, there is increasing anecdotal evidence of involvement in violent crimes including the use of firearms (Otieno, 2004). There has been significant increase in violent behavior among secondary school students over the past few years (Mburu, 2004). In the month of July 2004 alone, 11 secondary schools containing approximately 3,000 students were closed down due to strikes and violence. Students burnt down school buildings, resulting in the death of one pupil (UNICEF, 2000). And these to some extent are influenced by exposure to the mass media who most times does not consider the implications of these contents on these young ones who are disposed to act and experiment behavior observed.

A survey conducted by the Centre for Adolescent Health and Development and UNICEF in 2003 revealed that 58% of the youth had been involved in general theft and 30% did so due to idleness (Erulkar, 1998). A survey on the experiences and lifestyles of adolescents in Central province showed that 12% of boys and 10% of girls had stolen from a shop or kiosk (Erulkar, 1998). All these have been reported in the mass media and consequently, this may be having some relationship in the subsequent cases of adolescents' misbehavior. Otieno (2004) observes that adolescents' actions are largely influenced by what they watch, read and participate in. Cases of abductions, kidnapping, murder, rape, incest among other vices are highlighted by mass media almost on daily basis. Social and religious motivated aggressions have been reported and documented. In the churches, fighting over leadership positions and claims of corruption have been many in virtually all denominations, with details being availed by the media (Erulkar, 1998).

Ayieko (2004) notes that cases of violent behaviors resulting in destruction of properties, deaths, rape of female students by their male counterparts and disruption of the learning process have been on the increase in the recent years. Cases of drug abuse among students, school drop outs of female students due to unplanned pregnancies, cases of abortion, among other anti-social behavior have been on the increase in our schools (Njau, 1994). More recently, cheating during the National Examinations resulting to the cancellation of results for many students and schools have been blamed on the use of mobile phones, particularly by secondary school students. Furthermore, students have taken to the western way of dressing with parents and teachers blaming the government for banning corporal punishment in schools, while teachers and government have blamed parents for poor parenting (Kiragu, 2010).

Obasanjo Model High, the focus of the study is situated in the Central part of Jos Metropolis in Plateau State. It's comprised of both primary and secondary school arm signifying an adequate number of adolescents population. All forms of deviant behaviour and social vices like rape, theft, bullying, gambling and all kinds of pervasive sexual behaviors have been observed and is invariably constituting a serious concern to the institution and the government. Sequel to this, the outcome of this study will not be in doubt as reliability will be ascertained. This study was guided by social learning theory pioneered by psychologist Albert Bandura (1969), and Operant Conditioning theory by B. F Skinner(1938). These theories assisted the researcher in understanding how levels of exposure to mass media were related to the students behaviors. Specifically, the researcher sought to investigate how exposure to mass media impacted to students' deviant behavior, interpersonal relationships, and as well as expression of aggressive behaviors.

In this study, the theory is applied to demonstrate how adolescents who are constantly exposed to mass media are likely to imitate the behavior of those they perceive as —good models, this is regardless of whether the media was watched, read or listened to. For example those who watch programs that portray physical violence are likely to imitate the same behavior. In addition, what students watch, read or listen to, is likely to influence them significantly. This defines the major posit of Social Learning theory.

Another relevant theory to this study as mentioned earlier is Operant Conditioning by B.F Skinner 1938. According to Skinner, rewarding a learning process results in perpetuating or maintaining a behavior while punishing a behavior extinguishes it. Skinner and other learning theorists, asserted that individual conditional adjustments to the environment was a result of lifelong learning process which entailed discovering relationships between actions and their immediate effects on the environment. To behaviorists, much of an individual's behavior is dependent upon its immediate consequences. Moreover, reinforcers exert a powerful influence on one's behavior. Reinforcers have both negative and positive aspects. In positive reinforcements, a behavior is conditional and gains strength because it is followed by a positive reinforce. Negative reinforcement results to escapist or avoidance behaviors. Escape conditioning occurs when an operant response consistently terminates an aversive stimulus. For example one getting to an addiction of smoking due to nicotine, or due to positive media advertisement of cigarettes. In this study this theory is used to illustrate how persistent exposure to mass media is related to students' involvement in deviant behaviors, as well as their use of reproductive health information.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The world has witnessed rapid expansion of the media industry, which has been brought about by technological advancements. Changes in media industry may have resulted in the many social changes being realized globally, Nigeria included. It is widely believed that media may probably be contributing considerably, either negatively or positively to the adolescents behavior. All mass media read, watched or listened to is usually recorded in the mind and revisited from time to time (Green, 1997). Lately, both print and electronic media are accessible to students within Nakuru County as evidenced by the many cinema halls, video businesses, and increased use of internet services within Nakuru town and its environs (Kiragu, 2010). Moreover, the disintegration of extended families and disregard for traditional cultural values due to among other factors, migration to towns in search of formal employment has affected

child's rearing adversely (Mullin & Linz, 1995). The end result has been heavy reliance on the mass media such as books, magazines, social media, television, radio, etc, to get the much needed information on sexuality and modeling. Consequently, many youths have tended to indulge in deviant behaviours.

Recent research done by NDLEA (2012) indicates that drug abuse among secondary school students have been on the rise in the recent past. Cases of physical violent behaviors among students leading to destruction of school properties, injuries and sometimes death have also been reported. In addition cases of school drop outs due to unplanned for pregnancies have been on the rise especially in schools within Nigeria (Kiragu, 2010). Conflicts between students and parents/teachers have also been common. Incidences of female students procuring abortions, thereby endangering their lives have also been reported. Most local researcher have tended to generally associate students' deviant behaviors to poor parenting and peer pressure (Kabaison, 2011). In the west, research findings indicate that there exists an association between adolescents deviant behaviors such as violence and exposure to mass media (Taylor, 2006). But this may not necessarily be true in Kenya which is located in a developing world setup, and whose communication technology may not be as advanced like in the west. Moreover, most of the respondents used as research sample in the west were children in the lower grades/classes, who had not attained adolescence stage of life.

This study therefore sought to investigate the effects of violent media content on adolescents in Jos metropolis, using Obasanjo model school as a case study.

### **Research Question**

- What is the relationship between exposing children to violent televised content and behavioral defects?
- Does exposing children to violent content affect their inter-personal relationships with their peers?
- How has the television though its programme enhances children's cognitive abilities?

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To determine whether levels of exposure to televised violent content is related to students' interpersonal violence
- To correlate the level of imitation of violent televised content between gender
- To investigate the extent to which levels of exposure to televised violent content is related to students' levels of physical violence
- To investigate if at all televised content influence children's moral development.

### **Research Hypotheses**

Ha1. There is a likelihood that adolescents exposure to media violent content will affect behavioral conducts significantly.

Ha2. There is a significant relationship between levels of exposure to media violent content and students interpersonal relationships.

Ha3. There is a likelihood that children who are exposed to media sexual violence will adopt pervasive sexual behavior.

### **Significance of Study**

The findings of the study will be of significance especially:

- i. To the government in formulating policies and laws that may regulate media industry from showcasing violent content because of its far reaching implication on youths.
- ii. To counsellors and teachers in efforts to identify the likely cause of deviants behaviour among adolescents.
- iii. It is therefore hoped that this study will provide valuable information leading to positive mass media influence on adolescents in general.

### **METHODS**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted survey research design which assisted the researcher in investigating and understanding the relationship between televised violent content and students' expression of deviant behaviors which included: drug abuse, interpersonal relationship, sexual behaviors, physical violence. This design was appropriate due to its suitability in collecting peoples' opinions, attitudes, habits or other social issues that form part of the objectives of the current study (Orodho, 2005). It is indeed advantageous because it allows for large sample size

#### **Population of Study**

The population for this study include adolescents and teachers of Obasanjo model school and parents who were randomly selected from Hwolshe are of Jos South LGA of Plateau state. The reason for the choice of this population is because of their experience and knowledge on children who are exposed to television programmes and the adolescents who are directly exposed to violent TV contents . A total number of two hundred (200) respondents were sampled randomly from the target population for this study. By dividing the sample frame, one hundred and twenty (120) of the respondents were students, eighteen (18) teachers, and seventy (70) parents.

#### **Methods of data collection**

Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were implored. For the primary methods, the researcher went to Obasanjo Model School Jos, Nigeria with consent letter and with a structured and standardized questionnaire. When permission was granted, the researcher in question addressed the respondents assuring them of their confidentiality and suggested that the respondents should be free to ask questions in areas they feel will constitute doubts and should answer the questions in honesty as all information and responses will basically be for academic purposes. The questionnaires was distributed and returned within an hour. The choice of questionnaire gives greater confidence to the respondents to express themselves freely because of anonymity and It facilitates easy data processing through coding.

### **RESULTS**

The quantitative data obtained was analyzed using a computer package SPSS (version 20 for windows). The results are presented in this section using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically chi square and Pearson Correlation statistics were used to test the significance. Cross tabulation of selected variables was also found useful (Gatumu, 2008). The

significance level was set at  $\alpha=0.05$ . Descriptive statistics used to analyze qualitative data included: frequencies, percentages, means, graphs e.tc.

**Table 1 Descriptive data for Demographic Information**

Demographic Information		Freq	Percent
Age	12-15YRS	70	35.0
	16-19YRS	75	37.5
	19-21 YRS	55	27.5
	Total	200	100.0
Class	JSS1	3	1.5
	JSS11	14	7.0
	JSS111	33	16.5
	SSS1	24	12.0
	SSS2	64	32.0
	SSS3	62	31.0
	Total	200	100.0
Gender	MALE	109	54.5
	FEMALE	91	45.5
	Total	200	100.0

### ***HYPOTHESIS I***

There is a likelihood that adolescents exposure to televised violent content will affect behavioural conducts significantly.

**Table 3: Correlation table showing the significant relationship between exposure to televised violent content and behavioural conducts**  
**Correlations**

		TELEVISION VIOLENCE	PHYSICAL VIOLENCE
TELEVISION VIOLENCE	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1 200	.462(**) .000 200
Physical violence	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.462(**) .000 200	1 200

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).



Table 3 indicates the relationship effect between levels of exposure to televised violent content and adolescents behavioural conducts.

Although the hypothesis did not state the direction, result shows that there was a significant positive relationship ( $r = .462$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). The result shows that the alternate hypothesis is confirmed.

### ***HYPOTHESIS II***

There is a significant relationship between levels of exposure to media violent content and students interpersonal relationship.

**Table 4: Correlation table showing the significant relationship between levels of exposure to media violent content and students' interpersonal relationship.**

#### **Correlations**

		MEDIA VIOLENCE	INTERPE RSONAL CONFLIC T
MEDIA VIOLENCE	Pearson	1	.541(**)
	Correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT	N	200	200
	Pearson	.541(**)	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 indicates the relationship between levels of exposure to media violent content and student's interpersonal conflicts.

The result shows that there was a significant positive relationship ( $r = .541$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). The result shows that the alternate hypothesis is confirmed.

### ***HYPOTHESIS III***

There is a likelihood that children who are exposed to media sexual violence will adopt pervasive sexual behavior.

**Table 5: Correlation table showing the significant relationship between media sexual violence and pervasive sexual behavior**

**Correlations**

			MEDIA SEXUAL VIOLENCE	SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOR
MEDIA VIOLENCE	SEXUAL	Pearson Correlation	1	.279(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
		N	200	200
SEXUAL BEHAVIOR	RISK	Pearson Correlation	.279(**)	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
		N	200	200

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 indicates the relationship between exposure to violent media content and pervasive sexual behaviour among adolescents.

The result shows that there was a significant positive relationship ( $r = .279$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). The result shows that the alternate hypothesis is confirmed.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

There is a relationship between exposure to televised violent content and adolescent behavioral conducts. The first objective of this study sought to establish the relationship between exposure to televised violent content and adolescents behavioral conducts. To achieve this objective the study sought to test the alternate hypothesis which stated that, — There is a significant relationship between levels of exposure to televised violent content and adolescents behavioural conducts.

The students were required to indicate the extent to which televised violent content influenced their behavioural conducts. The results of the correlation in table 3 showed that the alternate hypothesis was confirmed, indicating that exposure to television or video violence has an influence on students behavioural conducts which will adversely affect their interactions with their peers, teachers or parents. This confirmed the position of Taylor(2006), that persistent exposure to televised violence will influence adolescents to engage in physical confrontations with peers, teachers, or even parents as compared to those who were less exposed. The study further showed that when students kept being exposed to violent programmes, it increases the chances of them becoming very aggressive individuals.

The second hypothesis posit that there is a significant relationship between levels of exposure to media violent content and students interpersonal relationship. The second objective of this study was to establish the relationship between levels of exposure to media violent content and students interpersonal relationships. The study made use of correlation test to analyze and confirm if a relationship exist between exposure to media violent content and students' interpersonal conflicts.



The results of correlation table 4 shows that media violent content has a positive relationship with interpersonal relationships. These findings implied that the more exposure to media violent content, the more the cases of inter-personal conflicts amongst the students. This therefore, leads to a conclusion that though weak there exists a relationship between exposure to media violent content and interpersonal conflicts among students. The findings of this research further confirmed the results of study by Huesmann and Eron, (1986) on the effects of televised violence as connected to interpersonal conflicts among adolescents. ....

The posit of the third hypothesis states that there will be a significant positive relationship between levels of exposure to televised violent content and students risky sexual behavior.

The study revealed that there exist a relationship between levels of exposure to televised violent content and students risky sexual behavior. The results of the correlation table 5 showed that it affirmed the findings of Jamah (2009) which indicated that risky sexual behaviors were at a rise among college students despite AIDS. These findings were also in line with the conclusions of Hall et al, (1982) that exposure to mass media has a positive relations with change in sexual behaviors among teenagers.....

## CONCLUSION

Plateau State, Nigeria like any other parts of the world, has witnessed drastic and rapid expansion of the mass media that largely magnify Western culture. Consequently, learning model from the media, such as aggression, drug abuse and sexual violence among students have been affected. This study therefore focused on establishing the relationship between levels of exposure to Mass Media violent content and deviant behaviour among adolescents in Jos Metropolis. A case study of Obasanjo model school Jos, Plateau State. The outcome of the study confirming that deviant behaviors ranging from drug abuse, rape, kidnapping, manslaughter, militancy, armed robbery and other social vices in Jos Metropolis is attributed to adolescents exposure to mass media violent content which in an agreement with the findings of Taylor(2006).

Conclusively, recommendations were made challenging media organizations in regulating violent media content, regulatory agencies in censoring mass media information so as to prevent harmful information being accessed by the youths , teachers and parents to as a matter of fact regulate and monitoring certain violent content of the media from the view of adolescents assisted them to make wise and informed choices regarding mass media content .

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