



## **Media Violence and Quality of Life among Young Children and Youth in Sialkot, Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – Media has proved to be a handy tool in education, arts, science, sports, and culture. People spend most of their time watching television, playing video games, and surfing the internet. This study aims to identify how violence in media affects the quality of life among children and youth.

**Design/methods/approach** – A random sample of 181 individuals ranging in age from 7 to 24 was collected online using a Google form questionnaire. An organized self-report Questionnaire had four segments: 1) Consent Form; 2) Demographic Information of Participant; 3) The Content-based Media Exposure Scale(C-ME); 4) Quality of Life Scale (QOL). First part of C-ME shows that exposure to anti-social media content had a negative relationship with quality of life scale [ $r = -.189$ ,  $n = 181$ ,  $P = .011$ ] while second part of C-ME (neutral items) had a positive relationship with quality of life scale [ $r = .265$ ,  $n = 181$ ,  $P = .00$ ].

**Findings** – Findings of this study suggest that lower quality of life is a genuine and developing phenomenon among young children and youth. Training programs for guidance about media content should be customized to be reasonable for each social setting.

**Research implications/limitations** – Sample size could be increased due to compliance with COVID-19 SOP. Online data were collected via Google forms. More research is required to eradicate this issue among children and youth, turning into aggression later in life. This study welcomes all upcoming researchers to work on this for better results.

**Practical implications** – The results of this study show a positive relationship between media violence and quality of life among young children. The quality of life is highly deteriorating because of anti-social media content in various countries. It shows that lower quality of life is a genuine and developing phenomenon among young children and youth. Training programs for guidance about media content should be customized to eradicate current issues in the community.

**Originality/value** – Results of this study highlight the relationship between media content and the quality of life of young children and youth, but this broad topic still requests conclusive discussion and research worldwide.

**Keywords** Media violence, Quality of life, Young children, Youth

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

Children and youngsters grow up in a world saturated with media use. Media has proved to be a handy tool in education, arts, science, sports, and culture. People spend most of their time watching television, playing video games, and surfing the internet (Tanwar & Priyanka, 2016). Media violence includes visual depictions of physical hostility by one human or human-like character against another (Huesmann, 2007). Violence is an anti-social behavior to harm a living being. Violence can be physical, verbal abuse, intimidation, aggressive humor, and other forms of aggression. These violent behaviors can be found on television and the internet in various countries. Media violence can be defined as portrayals of violence in the media that glamorize and sensationalize violent acts toward other human beings and show them acceptable behavior (DOGUTAS, 2013). According to Hinde and Groebel (1991), modern game consoles make it easier for players to develop strategies, and digital media content can now present almost real torture with actual killings. The effect of media viciousness can be fundamentally clarified by how aggressive behavior is compensated. Forty-seven percent of these children drawn to violent media material may also want to be associated with dangerous situations, compared to 19 percent drawn to other media worldwide (Padgaonar, 1999).

Quality of life refers to the standard of health, comfort, and happiness. Thus media is playing a significant role in negative mental health negative behavior, i.e., aggressiveness and discomfort as described above. In this way, media violence directly affects the quality of life of children (DOGUTAS, 2013). It is because media is inexpensive and easily accessible, and it provides entertainment at a low cost. Children spend an average of 3 hours per day in front of the television. It is the most popular out-of-school activity (Buss, 1961).

Video diagrams in electronic media present agony, even genuine homicide scenes, while PC games allow the client to effectively mimic the mutilation of 'adversaries.' In addition, the internet has evolved into a venue for adolescent sex entertainment, rough factions, and fear-mongering rules. This type of faulty thinking causes stressors in children, leading to the onset of a wide range of side effects (Rahanam & Khan, 2016). Screen time is associated with several problems like fitness, internalizing problems, cardiovascular risks, behavior problems, self-esteem, hyperactivity and inattention, sleep and diet, and energy intake (Stiglic & Viner, 2019).

### 1.1. Theoretical Background

This study is based on the General Aggression Model (GAM) (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; DeWall et al., 2011), which gives us the theoretical framework to understand violence and aggression and their links to the quality of life. Current thoughts, emotions, and levels of excitement of an individual are likely to be affected by media violence. Media violence can cause people to act aggressively and negatively impact their quality of life. Exposure to violent content on television primes aggressive cognitions, elevates negative behaviors, and promotes physiological arousal. These problems in the individual affect life differently. These internal states guide Perceptions-related behavior

A behavioral reaction is chosen the ongoing social experience, resulting in a feedback loop. Continuous exposure to violent media (such as bullying or continuous use of violent video games) can lead to the development of an aggressive personality and impact one's quality of life in the long run. As a result of constant exposure to harmful media content, media users may become more aggressive in their viewpoint by developing negative perceptual predispositions, mentalities, convictions, and practices (Bartholow et al., 2005; Gentile et al., 2014). Displaced Behavior Theory, which explains why social media has a connection with quality of life, is the theory that explains the framework of this study. According to this theory, people who engage in unhealthy behaviors such as watching harmful media content and have less time for face-to-face social interaction are more likely to have mental health issues and low quality of life (Coyne et al., 2020; Escobar-Viera et al., 2018).

### 1.2. Literature Review

Previous studies on this topic found that traditional devices such as televisions, computer game control centers, and PCs are associated with poor sleep quality (Hale & Guan, 2015; Kenney &

Gortmaker, 2017). However, some studies have seen no impact from PC use (Li et al., 2007). Intelligent device use, such as cell phones and tablets, has also been associated with an unsatisfactory quality of life. As a result of the lack of sleep caused by media use among teenagers, some studies have linked the use of media devices during the day or at night to a decrease in youth quality of life (Foerster & Rössli, 2017; Schoeni et al., 2015). Because exposure to media violence has been linked to aggressive behavior, it may prompt bullying as a less extreme form of aggressive behavior (Dittrick et al., 2013). When we talk about violence, we have to consider the term “aggression.” After studying the relationship between violence and aggression, we will accomplish a quality life.

Prolonged exposure to aggressive media programs such as violent video games and films as a youth is associated with hostility. Previous studies claimed that commitment to TV viciousness during these early stages could lead to misshaped perspectives on society and the adequacy of specific practices. Significantly, kids copy what they see, hear, or watch on the media. By watching animosity in the media, youngsters figure out how to be forceful in new manners, and they additionally make inferences about whether being forceful to others will result in specific positive outcomes (Raji et al., 2014).

Previous research has established a link between aggressive media presentation and school bullying (Dittrick et al., 2013). A study was conducted to examine media usage among Nigerian youth in Nigeria. It was discovered that the situation is not any better in low-income countries such as Nigeria. Most children and teenagers aged five to twenty years old consume media that contains a high level of violence (Ukoha, 2013).

Björkqvist (1985) exposed 5- to 6-year-old Finnish children to either violent or non-violent films. Two raters who did not know which type of film the youngsters had seen then observed the children playing together in a room. Compared to children who had seen the non-violent film, those who had just seen the violent film were rated much higher on physical assault (hitting other children, wrestling, etc.) and other forms of aggression. The results for the physical assault were highly significant. Two related randomized experiments demonstrated that exposure to media violence could lead to increased physical assaults by teenage boys, at least in the short run. Many studies have also examined the immediate effect of media violence on aggressive thoughts or emotions. Brief exposure to violent, dramatic presentations on TV or in films causes short-term increases in youths’ aggressive thoughts, emotions, and behavior, including physically aggressive behavior severe enough to harm others. A final longitudinal study worth discussing examined the effect of adolescent and early adult television viewing habits on later violent behavior (Johnson et al., 2002).

Therefore, all the above studies show that violence in media leads to aggression. Aggression directly affects mental health and leads to adverse health problems. Thus, indirectly, it will affect the quality of life of young children, which we wish to investigate. Online media is a largely undeveloped fundamental operator in maintaining emotional well-being issues. Unnecessary utilization of Social media drives a person to shocking outcomes that begin with anxiety and depression. Youth anxiety and time spent on social media sites are inextricably linked. They discovered significant manifestations of hopelessness among people who spent most of their time and energy on online training and displaying images of executives on remote informal communication media (Hilal Bashir & Shabir Ahmad Bhat, 2017). From the above literature, we concluded that media violence or exposure to harmful media content has a strong relationship with the quality of health.

### *1.3. Objectives of Study*

The study’s objective is to investigate the relationship of media violence on the quality of life in children and youth. It is focus on the two question: What is the relationship between media violence and quality of life in children and youth? How is exposure to anti-social media content affecting the quality of life of youth and children?

## 2. Methods

The target population of this study is young children aged 7 to 24 who are associated with administrative or instructive catalogs in Punjab. The inclusion criteria comprised every individual aged 7 to 24 years who were truly ready to fill the survey. A random sample of 181 individuals aged 7-24 years old was collected online via Google form questionnaire.

### 2.1. Research Design

To explore the relationship between media violence at various media structures (TV, movies/DVD/videos, and video/computer games) and the quality of life of young children and youth, we utilized a cross-sectional correlation design in the genuine examination.

### 2.2. Research Method

An organized self-report Questionnaire was utilized in the objective examination to analyze the connection between exposure to media at various media structures (TV, movies/DVD/ videos, and video/computer games) and the quality of life of young children and youth. This self-report questionnaire had four segments: 1) Consent Form, 2) Demographic Information of Participant, 3) The Content-based Media Exposure Scale (C-ME), 4) Quality of Life Scale (QOL). Moreover, instructions regarding the form were also included in the questionnaire.

The researchers created a demographic scale to gather data about the respondents' backgrounds. It included participants' age, number of siblings, birth order, gender, educational level, geographical data, household income, and religion. The Content-based Media Exposure Scale (C-ME), developed by Den Hamer, A., Konijn, E.A., Plaisier, X.S., Keijer, M.G., Krabbendam, L., and Bushman, was used to estimate exposure to media violence in this study (den Hamer et al., 2017). The Content-based Media Exposure Scale was a self-report scale that included 17 items to assess how frequently someone watches depictions of various media substances, such as fights, sex, drugs, cooking shows, and news, and others (e.g., destroying someone else's belongings or shooting at another person) regardless of the type of media that was being used (e.g., TV, web, videogames). With the end goal of this study, C-ME was used by the researchers to evaluate the respondents' exposure to media violence across these kinds of media: (on the Internet/TV/games/mobile phone/DVD). In the section of C-ME, participants were asked to tick a number for each statement to indicate how often they watched this type of content on the Internet/TV/ games/mobile phone/DVD. 5-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1=Never, 2=Incidentally, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, and 5=Very often. For Anti-social media content, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.85, For Neutral filler items (9 items), Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.75, and For Anti-social items and neutral filler items, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.80.

Quality of life in the current study was measured using the Quality of Life Scale by Carol S. Burckhardt. Quality of Life Scale was an anonymous self-report scale that consisted of 16 items to measure participants' life satisfaction. The instrument is scored by summing the items to make a total score. Different items regarding home comforts, health, relationships with parents and close friends were asked in the questionnaire. In the Quality of Life Scale section, participants were asked to circle the number that best describes how satisfied they were at that time. 7-point Likert scale was used ranging from 1=Terrible, 2=Unhappy, 3=Mostly Dissatisfied, 4=Mixed, 5=Mostly Satisfied, 6=Pleased and 7=Delighted. This measure was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .82$  to  $.92$ ) and its test-retest reliability was high, over 3-weeks in stable chronic illness groups ( $r = 0.78$  to  $r = 0.84$ ).

### 2.3. Data Analysis

After the data collection, Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 20 was utilized with the end goal of data entry, control, and examination. The gathered information was cleaned and screened for any incomplete or missing information. Calculation of means, standard deviations, frequencies of the study variables, and description of participants' demographic information was done by utilizing descriptive statistics. Correlation bivariate analysis such as Spearman correlation coefficient, Pearson correlation coefficient, and standard multiple regression was used.

### 3. Result

Demographic Information of Participants: From the complete sample of the current study, 70.2% of the participants were females, and 29.8% were males. Age of participants was ranging from 10-24 years (M= 4.30, SD = 0.802). The number of siblings ranged from 1-9 (M=3.82, SD=1.756), and the birth order was also in quite the same range of 1-7 (M=2.59, SD=1.445). The education level of participants was from primary to undergraduate (M=4.03, SD=0.999). Participants were from different geographical areas, 45.9% of the sample were from urban areas, and 54.1% were from rural areas (M=1.54, SD=0.500). 97.8% of participants were Muslims, and 2.2% were non-Muslims (M=1.0221, SD=0.14741). Household income ranged from below 10k to 100k and above (M=2.6298, SD=1.0069).

This segment aims to respond to the main research question, “What is the relationship between exposure to media violence and Quality of Life?” Results of Pearson’s product-moment coefficient of the current examination uncovered a significant relationship between content-based media exposure and quality of life. The content-based Media Exposure Scale (C-ME) has two kinds of items. First, eight items are based on exposure to anti-social media content, but the last nine are based on neutral media content. Thus, researchers independently correlated both parts of C-ME with the quality of life of young children and youth.

Relationship: First part of C-ME which shows exposure to anti-social media content had a negative relationship with quality of life scale [ $r = -.189$ ,  $n = 181$ ,  $P = .011$ ] and this correlation is significant at 0.05 level, while second part of C-ME (neutral items) had a positive relationship with quality of life scale [ $r = .265$ ,  $n = 181$ ,  $P = .00$ ] and this correlation is significant at 0.01 level. Thus, results uncovered that media violence actively contributes to deteriorating the quality of life of young children and youth. There was a negative relationship between media violence and quality of life. Standard multiple regression uncovered a statistically significant relationship (negative correlation) between media violence and Quality of life or life satisfaction [ $r = -.189$ ,  $n = 181$ ,  $p = .011$ ]. Media violence predicts a 12% decline in quality of life. Standardized coefficients Beta for exposure to media violence was  $-.252$ ,  $p = .001$ , and for the second part of C-ME, it was  $.316$ ,  $p = .000$ .

It found a positive relationship between media violence and low quality of life. Individuals who scored high on anti-social items of C-Me were found with low quality of life. This outcome could be because of the explanation that anti-social media content has a critical penetration into youngsters’ and youths’ life and play an active role in their development. They learn violence from the violent content of media. They indulge in different crimes because of anti-social content they watch on different media platforms.

Exposure to violent and anti-social media had a negative correlation with the quality of life, which means that more exposure to violent media results in a poor Quality of life. On the other side, watching a healthy medium on the media positively correlates with the quality of life, which means it will positively affect you if you watch a healthy medium.

Table 1. Correlation Among the Variables of Media Violence and Quality of Life in Young Children and Youth

Variables	1	2
Anti-social items (C-Me)	-	
Neutral items (C-Me)	.202	-
Quality of Life	-.189	.265

Table 2. Regression Analysis for Media Violence Affecting the Quality of Life of Young Children and Youth

Variables	B	SE	B	t	p
Constant	65.537	3.864		16.961	.000
Anti-social items	.539	.112	.316	4.425	.000
Neutral items	-.396	.112	-.252	4.425	.001

Table 3. Regression Analysis for Media Violence Affecting the Quality of Life of Young Children and Youth

Variables	B	SE	B	T	P
Antisocial items	.539	.112	.316	4.425	.000
Neutral items	-.396	.112	-.252	4.425	.001

## 4. Discussion

This study has shown that exposure to violent and anti-social media negatively correlated with life quality. It means that more exposure to violent media results in a poor Quality of life. On the other hand, watching healthy media correlated positively with quality of life. It means that watching healthy media will positively affect mental health, leading to a better quality of life for people. The problem of violence is not a problem of a person or a group of people, but it is a global problem. Thus, violence in the media impacts people's mental health, leading to a lower quality of life. Media violence has an indirect relationship with the quality of life. Adverse mental health and harmful behaviors are the leading cause of poor quality of life, resulting from watching violent content on media. Several studies conducted over the last half-century have revealed that short-term exposure to anti-social media content on film or television increases negative and anti-social behaviors (Bushman & Anderson, 2001; R.G. Geen & Thomas, 1986; Russell G Geen, 1990; Murray et al., 1972; Stoff et al., 1977).

Adverse mental health and harmful behaviors are the leading cause of poor quality of life, resulting from watching violent content on media. Björkqvist, (1985) experimented with 5- to 6-year-old Finnish children and exposed them to violent or non-violent media content. Two raters were asked to observe the children playing in the room, and raters were not known about the content children were exposed to. Children who watched harmful or violent media content were rated high on physical assault than those who watched non-violent media content and other types of aggression. Results were highly significant (p .001).

It is considered that quality of life is confined to socioeconomic status and physical health only, but this study and previous studies showed that quality of life is referred to as psychological health. When children are involved in violent activities, e.g., watching violent movies cartoons, it will negatively affect their mental health. Thus, when mental health is affected, then automatically, it will also affect the quality of life. In order to maintain mental health and similarly better quality of life, children and youth have to avoid violent activities. Parents have a vital role in this aspect. Children are more indulged in media than participating in other activities besides school and sleeping (Rideout et al., 1999; Woodard & Gridina, 2000). Children spend more than 4 hours per day watching television or computer screens (Rideout et al., 1999; Woodard & Gridina, 2000), and this figure varies among children, with some spending even more than 4 hours per day on media or TV screens.

Parents can limit their children's and youth's unaided media exposure by investing more time in shared family activities, regulating gaming practices and online interactions, putting rules over electronic gadgets kept in open spots in homes, and limiting time spent using electronic media devices. Parents must install protection software to check their children's media activity. Guardians should build solid and cordial associations with their youngsters. Parents or caregivers must talk to their children about what they have seen or heard. It will enable the guardians to lessen the negative impact of violent media. Parents must talk about the quality of media content and its effects on the quality of their life. Parents should closely examine the effects of anti-social content on children's thoughts, cognitive processes, and quality of life. Parents should nurture their children's interest in physical activities and watching healthy media content. In this way, the negative effect of media can be lessened. Guardians and parents should build solid and cordial associations with their youngsters. Parents must talk about the quality of media content and its effects on the quality of their life. Media education should be part of children's school curriculum to lessen the adverse effects of media. It is necessary to pay attention to what kind of content children should watch in educational media.

At last, there is a need to address quality of life and advance preparing and backing instructors to manage the low quality of life in schools and homes. Policies approaches and

enactments must be developed to restrict further advancement of this harmful phenomenon of anti-social media exposure and guarantee that the media content is solid, neutral, and vital for learning to improve quality of life. Thus, parents, teachers, and researchers have to reduce the effects of violent media.

## 5. Conclusion

The current study's findings confirmed the link between media violence exposure and quality of life. Recent findings revealed that the quality of life is rapidly deteriorating due to anti-social media content in various countries. It shows that lower quality of life is a genuine and developing phenomenon among young children and youth. Training programs for media content guidance should be tailored to the needs of each social setting. The findings of this study highlight the relationship between media content and the quality of life of young children and youth, but this broad topic still requires conclusive discussion and research on a global scale.

## Declarations

### Author contribution statement

Salbia Abbas has conceived the presented Idea. Rabia Jamil, Laiba Idrees, Saira Abbas, and Khuzaifa Bibi have worked together on data collection, and all authors have worked hard to accomplish the Manuscript.

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### Data availability statement

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.


### Declaration of interests statement


The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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