The negative impact of media on children and teens essay sample

Sociology, Violence

Today in our society you can't watch TV without seeing or hearing about sex, you can't listen to the radio without hearing foul language, or hearing about drugs or related scandal. It's affecting our society as a whole and more importantly, our younger generation. In a matter of seconds, most children can mimic a movie or TV character, sing an advertising jingle, or give examples of what they have learned from the media. Sadly, these examples may include naming a popular brand of shoes, striking a sexy pose, or play fighting. Children only have to put a movie in the DVD player, open a magazine, click on a website, or watch TV to experience all kinds of messages. The younger groups of children are most likely to imitate the behavior after viewing a movie or TV show.

Media offers entertainment, culture, news, sports, and education. Media is an important part of children and teenager's lives and TV has much to offer. But some of which it offers may not be what parents want their children to learn. Sometimes you can see the impact of media right away, such as when children watch superheroes fighting and then they copy their moves during play time. But most of the time the impact is not so immediate or obvious. It occurs slowly as children see and hear certain messages over and over again. Children who witness violence on a daily basis are much more likely to solve conflicts in a violent way. According to the article, " Sex and Violence, Is Exposure to Media Content Harmful to Children?" Kotrla states, " In children and adolescents, greater exposure to violence in media has been correlated repeatedly to increased aggressive attitudes and behaviors" (51).

Children and teenagers who identify with the sophisticated cool and the attraction of cigarettes and alcohol don't see them as unhealthy or deadly. For some instances such as sex is portrayed on TV and it makes it seem like sex has no negative results, such has a disease or an unintended pregnancy. Whatever form they take ads, movies, computer games, music videos; messages can be good or bad for children and teenagers.

The effect of advertisements of food for children is quite a serious matter. Advertisers use specific methods to target children consumers, but these methods are not always successful or ethical. Children of all ages spend most of their leisure time watching televisions or surfing through the internet rather than engaging in physical activities. But sadly children today are less active than in previous generations. As a result of this lifestyle change, obesity is becoming an epidemic among our youth. The media plays a major role in the epidemic of childhood obesity since it greatly influences many aspects of the lives of our youth. Exposure to the media greatly affects the children's choices including the type of food they eat.

According to the article, " International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders: Journal of the International Association for the Study of Obesity", Masi, states, " The influence of programmers ' contents on childhood obesity development thus relies on two different aspects: (a) Television use of food: The present use of food in movies, shows and cartoons may lead to a misconception of the notion of healthy nutrition and stimulate an excessive intake of poor nutritional food. The potential of the movies or televised model of food use in terms of increasing industrial sales

is confirmed by the habit of food companies to pay the movie or TV production to place their products in movies or programmes. (b) Television body shape depiction: This is a topic in which the ambivalence of meanings and feelings remains he main problem. Television programmes are criticized because obese subjects are shown in a much lower percentage than in real life and this is likely to result in a worsening of the isolation in which obese subjects are often forced to live" (S106).

Television's fast-food advertising can especially affect children's food and nutrition-related knowledge as well as purchase decisions. In many situations junk food purchases increase due to the requests by children to their parents. When children accompany their parents to the store, they are more likely to ask for fruit snacks rather than actual fruit. This is a result of commercials for the fruit snacks aiming toward the children by using cartoons.

Advertising also has an impact on children's product and brand preferences and affects their consumption behavior. The fast-food industry is quite smart and sly by which their markets promote to children these kid-oriented meals that often include toys as a way to make them more attractive. Clearly, the advertisers have been successful in meeting their objectives, as they have been drawing consumers by the millions and achieving enormous growth within the industry.

Today's youth are influenced with violence in today's present world. Different forms of media create images that appeal to the children and teens

by which they can incorporate in their daily lives. The widespread of media violence due to the graphic depictions of today's video games is engulfing our youth. Most of the violence observed with the youth is usually observed through the television, movies, and video game media. The type of violence portrayed by the media is typically always glamorized and the negative long-term consequences of violent behavior are rarely depicted. According to the article, " The Impact of Media Violence on Children and Adolescents: Opportunities for Clinical Interventions", Beresin explains,

" Over the past 30 years there has been extensive research on the relationship between televised violence and violent behavior among youth. Longitudinal, cross-sectional, and experimental studies have all confirmed this correlation. Televised violence and the presence of television in American households have increased steadily over the years. In 1950, only 10% of American homes had a television. Today 99% of homes have televisions. In fact, more families have televisions than telephones. Over half of all children have a television set in their bedrooms. This gives a greater opportunity for children to view programs without parental supervision. Studies reveal that children watch approximately 28 hours of television a week, more time than they spend in school. The typical American child will view more than 200, 000 acts of violence, including more than 16, 000 murders before age 18. Television programs display 812 violent acts per hour; children's programming, particularly cartoons, displays up to 20 violent acts hourly".

It is also very obvious that video games have become the favorite activities for the youth. The younger generation allow themselves to follow along the trends and violent actions, because of what's on television or music videos, and incorporating it into their lives. This is the reason media is able to change and update the type of violence that is usually directed towards these youth, due to their vulnerability and wanting to, fit in or be cool among their peers.

The effect the media has on adolescent girls in regard to body image has had negative impacts, such as an obsession with body weight and what the society views as the " perfect body". The media can be seen as partly responsible for the pressure adolescent females' face in consideration to body issues. These pressures could be responsible for adolescent girls developing serious eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. These by which are two serious eating disorders which are affecting adolescent girls. According to the article, " Teen Health and the Media" it says, " The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that eating disorders affect more than 5 million Americans each year". Throughout the 20th century we have seen the female ideal has become progressively thinner over the years.

In today's society, teenage girls are constantly being pushed and pulled into a million detrimental directions thanks to the media. With television, magazines, cell phones, and computers, women are constantly faced with advertisements and suggestions from the media. It is becoming impossible to avoid them; because they practically are everywhere we turn. Advertisements for make-up, hair products, and clothing are among the few

that are the most influential to adolescent girls. They tend to feature flawless faces and very thin models.

When a girl turns on the television, she is force-fed with commercials of super-skinny women with picture-perfect hair and fake body parts. According to the article, " Teen Health and the Media" it states, " One in every three (37%) articles in leading teen girl magazines also included a focus on appearance, and most of the advertisements (50%) used an appeal to beauty to sell their products". At times, women on TV have close to nothing on which complements their seductive attitude and they always get the guy they are pursuing. This sets an unattainably high standard and misleading message to teenage girls universally.

The media portrays " flawless" and " thin" as beautiful, thus creating a standard for what teenagers aspire to look like. The constant exposure to these beauty-oriented advertisements can have a very negative influence on adolescent girls. It causes young girls to become self-conscious of their bodies and to obsess over their physical appearance. According to the article, " Teen Health and the Media" it explains, " The commercials aimed at female viewers that ran during the television shows most often watched by teen girls also frequently used beauty as a product appeal (56% of commercials)". This obsession has led many women to become so insecure with themselves that it can lead to many unhealthy practices, with society and the media being the ones to blame.

Television, movies, magazine and music videos are some of the many ways today's young children and teenagers are influenced. These outlets create an image appealing to children and teens in which they want to aspire to be. The media, entertainment industries and fashion designers have created an image containing a more negative look for our youth occupying sexuality, violence, coarser language and revealing clothing.

In order for young children and teenagers not to be drawn into the negative impacts of the media, there has to a good foundation at home. According to the article by the US Department of Education, " What can I do to keep the media from being a bad influence on my child", it explains, " Limit the amount of time your child spends viewing

Monitor what your child watches and listens to

Suggest TV programs that you want your child to watch.

Talk with your child about the difference between facts and points of view

Talk with your child about misleading ads

Consider buying a V-chip for your TV or a filter for your computer Talk with your child about the risks of visiting computer chat rooms. Talk with other parents

Provide alternatives to media entertainment

Model alternative forms of entertainment".

If parents follow these guidelines it will help to minimize the negative impact of the media on their children's life. The key is for parents or guardians to consistently define boundaries and rules by which are essential for proper

growth in a child's or teenager's social, emotional and physical development. This will effectively help the child's or teenager's life tremendously.

Works Cited

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