

Violent video games and hostile expectations: a test of the general aggression

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



By 1975, a scientific research of media violence shows that there were ample amounts of data and documentation to confirm that violence in the media is linked to serious aggressive behaviors and that even small amounts of exposure was positively linked to the rise in violent behaviors.

Experiments based on these cases have increased by leaps and folds as a result of that. Aggressive and violent behavior is constantly the result of violent media based on three types of research studies. The outcomes of these experimental studies in lab and fields have proved that it is causal.

Exposure to violent media can cause aggressive and violent behaviors in many cross-sectional correlational studies. Early repeated exposure to violent media has shown to cause later aggressive and criminal behavior in longitudinal studies. Six national health organizations and the U. S. Surgeon General have publically agreed that media violence can be the rise of violent and aggressive behavior. There is not a lot of research based on this topic and the idea itself is a very new concept but, there is enough past research to confirm that exposure to violent games can increase aggressive and violent behavior.

Very little research has been done to acknowledge the psychological mechanism on aggressive behavior in both long-term and short-term exposure to media violence. Based on the General Aggression Model, aggression is caused by activating and applying aggression related knowledge structures which are stored in memory. It has come to the researchers' attention that aggressive people tend to interpret ambiguous social events in an unfriendly manner. What the researchers want to find out

is if a short term experimental manipulation — violent video games exposure — can briefly cause a hostile expectation bias like the ones observed among highly aggressive individuals. If the results come out positive, it is fair to imply that by making such hostile expectations chronically accessible, aggressive personality can be added by the repeated exposure to media violence. The General Aggression Model also states that social knowledge structures are acquired over time via learning. Based on that, hostile knowledge structures will become more complicated, separated and hard to change with repeated exposure. Through this way, constant exposure to violence will make hostile knowledge chronically accessible, thus forming an aggressive and violent personality.

General Methodology of Study

Participants: 112 men and 112 women who are undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology were recruited and randomly assigned to play either a nonviolent or violent game for 20 minutes after giving their consent.

Measurement of Variables: The researcher who wanted to measure violence and aggressive behavior due to media violence induced violent and nonviolent games to the participants and also asked them to list out possible outcomes to three different scenarios to see whether types of games will influence aggressiveness, the operational definition for this case is whether there will be aggressive behavior present among the participants who played the violent video games.

Data Collection Procedure: Four nonviolent games (Glider Pro, 3D Pinball, Austin Powers, Tetra Madness) and four violent games (Carmageddon, Duke Nukem, Mortal Kombat, Future Cop) were used in order to allow the results to be generalizable. Then, the participants were told to finish three ambiguous story stems which have previously been used in past research. All three stories ends with a question “ What happens next?” and the participants had to answer what they think the main character will be saying, doing or thinking next. The 224 participants were told to write down a total of 20 unique possibilities for the scenarios. It was reported that no participants knew that the study was about the effects of violent video games affecting aggressive and violent behavior.

Results & Findings

There were no significant changes observed between the four violent games played on any the subject variables, either men or women as well as no significant changes observed between the four nonviolent games on any subject variables, either men or women. As hypothesized, more aggressive responses were received from people who played the violent games than people who played nonviolent games. Men and women who played violent games perceived the main character from the game to have aggressive behaviors. As an example, a participant who played a violent video game predicted the main character of a “ car accident” story to “ shoot or stab the other driver”. Participants who played the violent video games were inclined to expect the main characters of each story to have aggressive thoughts and ideas. It can be seen from this experiment that men were prone to list down

more aggressive outcomes than females, but male participants and female participants had the same expectations that the main characters would display acts of aggression.

The above findings allow the experimenter to generalize the results to other nonviolent and violent games that utilizes each exemplar of each independent variable level. As predicted in the General Aggression Model, participants who played violent video games for 20 minutes were seen to show an increase in expectations that potential conflict situations will be handled aggressively. Those who played violent video games were more inclined to expect aggressive feelings, behaviors and thoughts from main characters in each stories. This phenomenon was observed without the participants being stimulated or provoked in any way.

Future Research Idea

For future research ideas, I propose that a study should be conducted among children under 13 to observe if they will show aggressive behavior when playing violent video games compared to children who play nonviolent video games over a span of time. The variables could be aggressive behavior, children aged below 13, violent video games, nonviolent video games and time. This is to find out, will violent video games cause an increase in children's aggressive behavior than compared to those who played nonviolent video games over time? By conducting this experiment, researchers will be able to find out if violent video games will ultimately affect and increase a child's overall aggressive behavior over time. This research is important because it will raise awareness to parents and

guardians and remind them to always be mindful of the games their children are playing to ensure that they will display lesser aggression.

Practical implications

The findings from the experiment to observe aggressive behavior among children below 13 who play violent video games than compared to those playing nonviolent games over a course of time can be used to improve the current quality of life. Video games are largely popular nowadays and children are mainly attracted to the violent ones. By studying the effects of violent games on a child's aggressive behavior over a period of time, we can urge parents to be aware of the games they are buying and the effect it will have on their child's growth or mental health.