

Thinking critically with psychological science

Psychology



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Effects of television on frequent viewers Study the descriptive method:

Television viewing and violent behavior were evaluated for over 17 years in a community sample of 707 individuals. There was a considerable connection between the amount of time spent watching television during adolescence and early adulthood and the likelihood of following violent acts against others. This association remained significant after previous violent behavior, childhood neglect, family income, neighborhood violence, parental education, and psychiatric disorders were controlled statistically.

Three to five violent acts are depicted in an average hour of prime-time television and 20 to 25 violent acts are depicted in an average hour of children's television. Research has indicated that viewing television violence is associated with aggressive behavior.

To investigate whether television viewing during adolescence and adulthood is associated with an increased likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior, it is necessary to assess television viewing and aggressive behavior repeatedly during adolescence and adulthood, and to evaluate environmental and personal characteristics that could lie beneath this association in a large, diverse, community-based sample. We report the conclusion of the Children in the Community Study, a community-based longitudinal investigation that meets these methodological criteria.

Participants were 707 families with a child (51% male) between the ages of 1 and 10, randomly sampled from two counties in northern New York State, for whom data were available through 1991-93 regarding television viewing and through 2000 regarding aggressive behavior. Interviews were conducted with these families in 1975, 1983, 1985-86, and 1991-93. The youths in the study, randomly selected from age-eligible offspring, were administered

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questionnaires that assessed a wide range of aggressive acts in 2000.

The mean age of the youths was 5.8 (SD = 3) in 1975, 13.8 (SD = 3) in 1983, 16.2 (SD = 3) in 1985-86, 22.1 (SD = 3) in 1991-93, and 30.0 (SD = 3) in 2000.

Low family income was defined as mean income below the U. S. Poverty Level. Low parental education was defined as less than a high school education for either parent. Verbal intelligence (IQ) was assessed in 1983 and 1985-86 by using a picture-vocabulary test. IQ scores were averaged, and scores below 90 were considered to be low. Childhood neglect was assessed from data from a central registry, from retrospective self-reports obtained in 1991-93, and from the maternal interviews. Additional items in the study protocol assessed neighborhood characteristics, peer aggression, and school violence

Childhood neglect, growing up in an unsafe neighborhood, low family income, low parental education, and psychiatric disorders were significantly associated with time spent watching television at mean age 14 and with aggressive behavior reported at mean age 16 or 22. Age and sex were significantly associated with aggressive behavior, but not with time spent watching television at mean age 14.

There were significant associations between television viewing during early adolescence and subsequent aggressive acts against other persons after the covariates that were significantly associated with television viewing and aggressive behavior were controlled statistically.

Television viewing at mean age 14 remained significantly associated with any subsequent aggressive act against another person after controlling for prior (AOR = 1.86; CI:

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1. 32-2. 61) and subsequent television viewing (AOR = 1. 46; CI: 1. 05-2. 60). Television viewing at mean age 14 was not associated with risk for subsequent property crimes, including arson, vandalism, or theft. Time spent watching television during early adolescence was associated with risk for subsequent aggressive acts among youths with and without a history of aggressive behavior. The statistical interactions of television viewing with sex and previous aggression were not significantly associated with subsequent aggressive behavior.

Study 2, the experimental method:

This study once again disproves the sometimes-popular notion of "catharsis," that violence viewing helps purge people of their hostile inclinations. To the contrary. And this increase in hostility is not necessarily short-lived. A 1999 experiment looked at the emotional and interpersonal consequences of repeated exposure to gratuitous violence. Researchers randomly assigned both male and female college students to view either intensely violent or nonviolent feature films for four days in a row. On the fifth day, in a purportedly unrelated study, the participants were put in a position to help or hinder another persons chances of future employment. The surprising results indicated that both the men and the women who had received the recent daily dose of film violence were more harmful to that persons job prospects, whether she had treated them well or had behaved in an insulting fashion.

The repeated violence viewing apparently provided an enduring hostile mental framework that damaged interactions that were affectively neutral as well as those that involved provocation.

Differences between descriptive research and experimental research:

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Descriptive research designs include the following:

Simple descriptive

Comparative descriptive

Correlation

A simple descriptive research design is used when data are collected to describe persons, organizations, settings, or phenomena.

With a comparative descriptive design, the researcher describes two or more groups of participants. For example, a researcher administers a questionnaire to three groups of teachers about their classroom practices.

The researcher chooses the three schools because the schools vary in terms of the amount of professional development that they provide to teachers.

A correlational research design is used to describe the statistical association between two or more variables.

In experimental research, the researcher manipulates or varies an independent variable and measures its effects on one or more dependent variables. In a true experimental design, the researcher randomly assigns the participants who are being studied (also called the subjects) to two or more comparison groups. Sometimes the comparison groups are referred to as treatment and control groups. Participants in the treatment group receive some type of treatment, such as a special reading program. Participants in the control group do not receive the treatment.