

# [Case study: social psychology](https://assignbuster.com/case-study-social-psychology/)

Decades of studies and research into the mass media portraying evident allegations upon hostile aggression in society, is being linked to viewing anti social behaviour in the media and is somewhat of an open subject, with much controversy and hearsay. Mass media corporations such as newspaper publications, video game industries, film makers and television programmes are all under constant scrutiny within society as to whether or not aggression is linked upon exposure to anti social behaviour within these publications.

Aggressive behaviour can be hard to define because generally it can be physical, verbal or mental, however hostile aggression can be defined as impulsive and acts of anything unplanned in which the intent or goal is to cause harm or physical pain to the victim (TTRB, 2004).

According to David Putwain et al (2002), the social learning theory by Bandura in 1963, using the bobo doll experiment can highlight a possibility that children can learn aggressive behaviour, through watching figures of authority or anyone who they may look up to, also introducing reinforcement to induce aggressive behaviour was proved to have significance in replicating behaviour. This is a starting point, which highlights the basics of how behaviour is learnt through observation.

The evidence from Bandura’s experiment clearly showed that children can replicate aggressive behaviour when prompted to but it didn’t make use of individual differences and culture to evaluate a sturdy hypothesis, also biological and physiological implications were not considered. Children who replicate behaviour in a laboratory setting are not necessarily going to replicate behaviour in the real world, so evidently this case does not have a clear statement as to whether aggression is learnt through observation. Since Bandura’s early work a great number of other studies have conducted possible links between aggression and violent behaviour between the media and society (Stein, 1991).

In Gross (2010) Anderson, C. A. & Bushman, B. J. (2002) said that there has been evidence from experimental studies which state that playing a violent video game or watching a violent film increases aggressive thoughts, behaviour and feelings. Some surveys which were taken by members of the public supported a connection between aggression and violence in media publications.

Also stated in Gross (2010) is a study by Krahe and Moller in 2004 where they observed links between playing video games and two types of violent related thoughts, first was the belief that using hostile or physical aggression is acceptable, the second is the tendency to attribute hostile interactions to other people, which is also called the hostile attributional style.

A sample of 116 boys and 115 girls of the average age 13. 6, were asked to indicate how often they played a game from a list of 25 popular video games and to list 5 of their favourite games which they would recommend to a friend, each of these games had been rated for their levels of violence from a computer magazine, students were also asked to what extent they would find it okay to show different aggressive responses.

The study showed that boys played violent video games more frequently than girls and they would also recommend more violent games to their friends. For both sexes, the more often they played violent video games the more violent games they’d recommend to a friend, also the more they thought it was okay to act aggressively and find it acceptable.

However correlation studies such as this, has shown that there is a link between the amount of violent video game usage and aggression, but it cannot tell us if the more frequent use of violent video games is the cause of aggression, because both the violent game and aggression were measured at the same time (Gross, 2010), this is another case study which evidently doesn’t prove to have a sturdy hypothesis in proving violence in the media and aggression in society.

Some researchers have proposed the theory that physiological effects of violent media footage can cause aggressive behaviour, being exposed to violent imagery can be linked to faster respiration, increased heart rate and increased blood pressure. Also the fight or flight response predisposes aggressive behaviour in the actual world (Network, 2010).

A study from the; Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology Vol. 66 in 1963 indicates the effects of existing emotional states and rationalisation of aggression during portrayals of aggressive behaviour. Half of a group of college students serving as subjects were angered by means of insult prior to viewing justified or unjustified violence in a short film.

The subjects, who had been insulted and viewed the justified violence, demonstrated more aggression; viewing unjustified violence did not have the same effect. Media justification of violence lowers viewer’s inhibition upon aggressive behaviour in the real world, or lack of justification increases restraints against such behaviour (Berkowitz, Leonard and Edna Rawlings, 1963). This case study is an interesting one which uses physiological and biological aspects, the evidence from this can clearly state that prior feelings and emotions can compensate towards weather aggression is repeated upon viewing the anti social behaviour and weather the means of the violence was justified also played an important role.

All these case studies have evident hypothesise, however in the experiments and research materials there are many flaws and ethically invaluable results, so can these experiments really be labelled as convincing evidence? Let’s look at the flaws.

There are many flaws in studies about anti social behaviour in the media and aggression in society these include; measurement problems or measuring how much TV or video game violence is actually watched or played and controlling what is viewed, this is an almost impossible task for long term studies so most experiments are short term, also a lot of the older case studies relied on self reports or diaries of participants upon what was watched and for how long, this data can easily be manipulated and incorrect. Another retrospective self report included interviews, which are hindered to be unreliable too as the memories are prone to distortion and forgetting.

Those who did research through observing the participants where open to bias opinion and consistency in obtaining subjective results, an example of this would be what the researcher classes as aggressive behaviour might not be the same opinion as many other researchers, also laboratory based experiments can be too unrealistic, although in natural experiments researchers may have no control over certain variables creating unreliable results.

Cause and Effect is also a major issue in studies such as these, an example of this is; does anti social behaviour on TV make people more aggressive? Or do aggressive people just watch more anti social behaviour on TV? There are also a lot of different variables to consider, such as culture, background and individual differences including physiological and biological implications (Sammons, 2009).

They are many social factors which contribute towards unreliable results; these can be seen through childhood factors when using younger and older participants such as neglect, educational background, family income and even psychiatric disorders (APA, 2010).

Scientific studies and social studies have both used different methods of experimentation to obtain evident results to prove the link between hostile aggression in society and anti social behaviour in the media, however with too many opinions and variables to consider there isn’t one case study which completely proves to have enough evidence to support the accusation, almost all of the studies contain bias, unethical and unsupported information. However many of the case studies which relate to aggressive behaviour can to a minor extent be linked to social factors from viewing anti social behaviour in the media but overall it cannot be completely approved.

A quote stated by Jonathan Freedman of the University of Toronto from the media awareness network stated:

“ The scientific evidence simply does not show that watching violence either produces violence in people, or desensitizes them to it.” (Network, 2010).