

Impact of Exposure to Violent Media, Trait Aggression, and Peer Influence on Antisocial Behavior in Adolescents in Haryana

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the influence of exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence on antisocial behavior among adolescents in Haryana. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 200 adolescents (N = 200) aged between 14 and 18 years through purposive sampling. Standardized tools were used: The Exposure to Violent Media Scale, Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), Peer Pressure Inventory (Brown, 1986), and Antisocial Behavior Checklist by Achenbach, 1991. Statistical analyses included Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis. Results indicated that exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence were all significantly positively correlated with antisocial behavior. Moreover, multiple regression analysis showed that trait aggression was the strongest predictor of antisocial behavior, followed by peer influence and violent media exposure. Findings highlight the need for awareness programs and early interventions to manage media consumption, address aggressive traits, and promote positive peer environments among adolescents.

Keywords: Violent Media, Trait Aggression, Peer Influence, Antisocial Behavior, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving digital world, adolescents are exposed to a vast array of media content, including violent imagery across television, movies, video games, and online platforms. "Violent media" refers to content that depicts intentional harm by one character upon another (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). The pervasiveness of such content raises concerns about its potential role in shaping adolescent behavior, particularly in fostering antisocial tendencies. "Antisocial behavior" is defined as actions that violate societal norms and the rights of others, often manifesting as aggression, deceit, or rule-breaking (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Adolescence is a critical period for social and emotional development, during which environmental and individual factors jointly influence behavior patterns. Among these, exposure to violent media, inherent aggressive traits, and peer group dynamics are pivotal. "Trait aggression" refers to a stable predisposition to respond with aggressive behaviors across diverse situations (Buss & Perry, 1992). Adolescents high in trait aggression may be more susceptible to external influences, such as violent media, which may normalize or glorify aggressive responses.

"Peer influence" is the impact that a peer group exerts on an individual's attitudes, values, or behaviors. During adolescence, peer relationships become highly influential, with peers often shaping behaviors more strongly than parents or teachers (Brown, 1986). The state of Haryana, with its rapidly urbanizing society juxtaposed with traditional rural life, presents a unique context to explore these dynamics. Increasing access to smartphones and digital platforms even in rural areas has heightened adolescents' exposure to diverse media, warranting closer scrutiny of its psychological consequences. The present study focuses on understanding the combined impact of violent media exposure, trait aggression, and peer influence on the emergence of antisocial behavior among adolescents in Haryana.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A considerable body of research has established links between violent media exposure and aggressive or antisocial outcomes. According to Anderson and Bushman (2001), repeated exposure to violent media content "can increase the accessibility of aggressive thoughts, desensitize individuals to violence, and foster a belief that aggression is a normative or acceptable response to conflict." A meta-analysis by Greitemeyer and Mügge (2014) also confirmed that violent video game exposure is associated with increased aggression and decreased prosocial behavior. Trait aggression is considered a major personality risk factor for antisocial tendencies. Studies indicate that individuals high in trait aggression are "more prone to interpret ambiguous stimuli as hostile and to respond with aggressive actions" (Bettencourt et al., 2006).

Bushman and Anderson (2001) proposed the General Aggression Model, which posits that individual differences like trait aggression moderate the effects of situational factors, such as media exposure, on behavior. Peer influence during adolescence plays a central role in shaping behavior. Dishion and Tipsord (2011) noted that "association with deviant peers predicts a range of antisocial outcomes, including substance use, theft, and violence." Adolescents seeking

acceptance may conform to peers' antisocial norms, especially if combined with personal vulnerabilities like high trait aggression or violent media consumption.

Research Gap

In India, studies focusing on adolescent media exposure and antisocial behavior are limited, especially in regional contexts like Haryana. Research by Kaur and Arora (2019) revealed rising concerns about violent behavior in Haryana's youth, linking it to media influences and peer dynamics. However, comprehensive empirical investigations involving trait aggression alongside environmental factors remain scarce.

Thus, the current study addresses a significant gap by examining these interrelated factors within the sociocultural landscape of Haryana.

Need for the Study

The increasing engagement of adolescents with media in Haryana necessitates urgent attention to its behavioral consequences. Simultaneously, personality traits like aggression and the dominant role of peer groups in adolescence may either exacerbate or mitigate the effects of media exposure.

Despite rising concerns about youth violence and delinquency, limited empirical evidence exists on the interactive effects of violent media, aggression traits, and peer influence on antisocial behavior among adolescents in Haryana. This study seeks to fill this gap and inform preventive and interventional strategies for youth development.

METHODOLOGY

Statement of the Problem

To examine the impact of exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence on antisocial behavior in adolescents in Haryana.

Objectives

1. To assess the relationship between exposure to violent media and antisocial behavior.
2. To assess the relationship between trait aggression and antisocial behavior.
3. To assess the relationship between peer influence and antisocial behavior.
4. To examine the combined predictive power of exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence on antisocial behavior.

Hypotheses

1. There is a significant positive relationship between exposure to violent media and antisocial behavior.
2. There is a significant positive relationship between trait aggression and antisocial behavior.
3. There is a significant positive relationship between peer influence and antisocial behavior.
4. Exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence are significantly predict antisocial behavior.

Research Design

The study employed a correlational and predictive research design using quantitative methods.

Sample

A purposive sample of 200 adolescents (N = 200) aged 14–18 years was drawn from schools and tuition centers in urban and rural areas of Haryana (including Rohtak, Sonipat, and Karnal).

Inclusion Criteria:

- Adolescents aged 14–18 years.
- Regular access to television, internet, or mobile media.
- Willingness to participate with parental consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Diagnosed psychiatric conditions.
- Non-consent from participant or parent.

Tools Used

1. **Exposure to Violent Media Scale** (Huesmann&Eron, 1986).
2. **Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ)** (Buss & Perry, 1992).
3. **Peer Pressure Inventory** (Brown, 1986).
4. **Antisocial Behavior Checklist** (Achenbach,1991).

Procedure

Permission was obtained from school authorities and tuition centers. After briefing participants and obtaining parental consent, questionnaires were administered in classroom settings under supervision to maintain standardization. Confidentiality was assured.

Statistical Analysis

SPSS 25.0 was used. Analyses included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression to test hypotheses and explore relationships among variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table1 Descriptive Statistics for Exposure to Violent Media, Trait Aggression, Peer Influence, and Antisocial Behavior

Variable	N	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Exposure to Violent Media	200	42.56	8.90
Trait Aggression	200	70.18	11.25
Peer Influence	200	53.47	9.62
Antisocial Behavior	200	40.82	7.95

The results indicate that adolescents reported moderate levels of exposure to violent media, trait aggression, peer influence, and antisocial behavior. The standard deviations suggest reasonable variability within the sample.

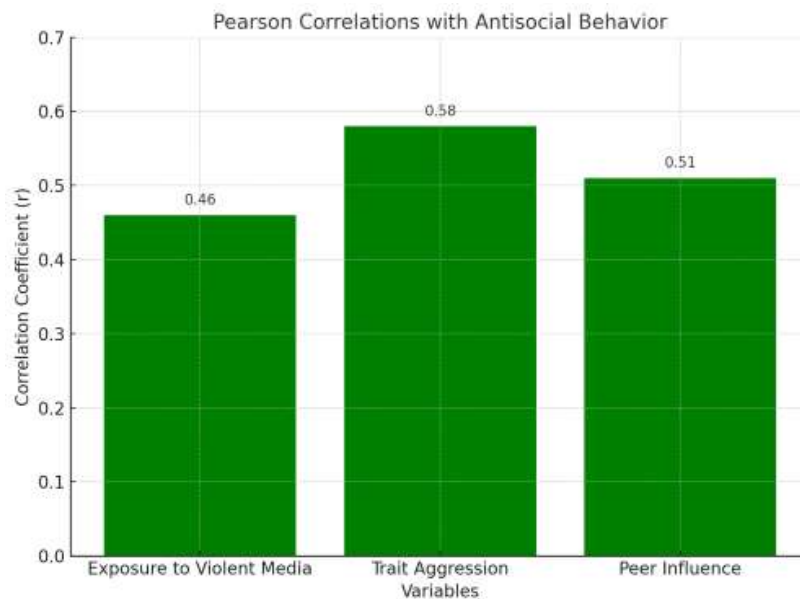
Correlation Analysis

Table 2 Pearson Correlation between Exposure to Violent Media, Trait Aggression, Peer Influence, and Antisocial Behavior

Variables	Exposure to Violent Media	Trait Aggression	Peer Influence	Antisocial Behavior
Exposure to Violent Media	—			
Trait Aggression	0.42** (p < 0.01)	—		
Peer Influence	0.38** (p < 0.01)	0.44** (p < 0.01)	—	
Antisocial Behavior	0.46** (p < 0.01)	0.58** (p < 0.01)	0.51** (p < 0.01)	—

p < 0.01

Graph: 1 Shows the correlations of Exposure to Violent Media, Trait Aggression, and Peer Influence with Antisocial Behavior



The correlation results reveal significant positive relationships among all the variables. Exposure to violent media showed a positive correlation with antisocial behavior ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$), supporting the first hypothesis. Trait aggression was even more strongly correlated with antisocial behavior ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), while peer influence also had a significant positive association ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$).

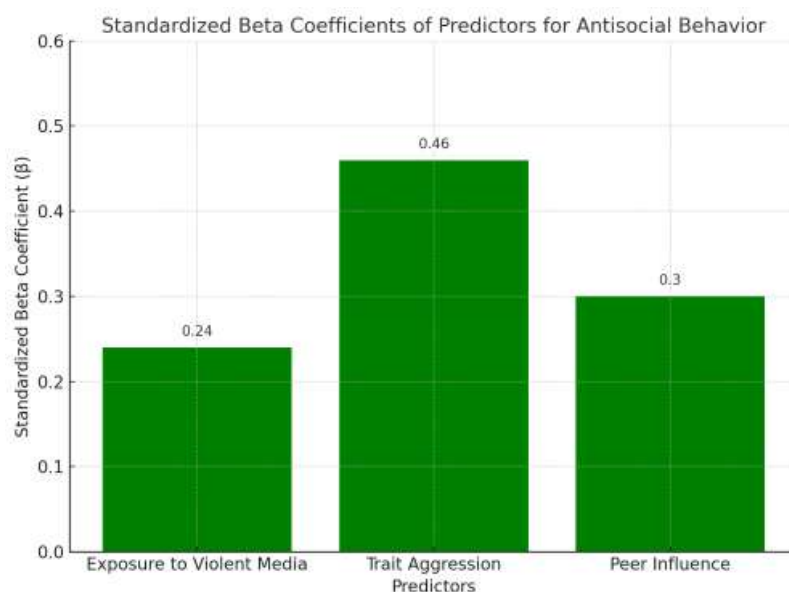
REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Antisocial Behavior

Predictors	B	SE B	β	t	p
Exposure to Violent Media	0.23	0.07	0.24	3.29	0.001
Trait Aggression	0.41	0.06	0.46	6.83	0.000
Peer Influence	0.29	0.05	0.30	5.80	0.000

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.47$, $F(3, 196) = 58.22$, $p < 0.001$

Graph:2 Predictors of Antisocial Behavior Among Adolescents



The multiple regression analysis, summarized in Table 3, reveals that the overall model was statistically significant, explaining 47% of the variance in antisocial behavior ($R^2 = 0.47$, $F(3,196) = 58.22$, $p < 0.001$). All three predictors—exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence—were significant contributors to antisocial behavior. Trait aggression emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$), followed by peer influence ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$) and exposure to violent media ($\beta = 0.24$, $p = 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

Based on the results presented through the correlation and regression analyses, all four hypotheses formulated in the study were confirmed. The first hypothesis, which proposed a significant positive relationship between exposure to violent media and antisocial behavior, was supported as the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) indicated a meaningful association. Adolescents with higher exposure to violent media were more likely to engage in antisocial behaviors such as aggression and rule-breaking. Similarly, the second hypothesis, which stated that trait aggression would be positively related to antisocial behavior, was validated, with trait aggression showing a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) with antisocial tendencies, suggesting that adolescents with higher aggressive dispositions were significantly more prone to antisocial conduct.

The third hypothesis, proposing a positive relationship between peer influence and antisocial behavior, was also supported, as peer influence correlated positively with antisocial behavior ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$), emphasizing the role of social dynamics in adolescent behavior patterns. The fourth hypothesis, which predicted that exposure to violent media, trait aggression, and peer influence would significantly predict antisocial behavior, was upheld by the regression model ($R^2 = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), with each variable making significant contributions, and trait aggression emerging as the strongest predictor, followed by peer influence and media exposure.

These findings robustly support the hypothesized relationships and align with prior literature emphasizing the multifactorial origins of antisocial behavior. Exposure to violent media significantly predicted antisocial tendencies, supporting Anderson and Bushman's (2001) contention that "consistent exposure to violent content fosters aggressive cognitions and desensitization to violence." Trait aggression was the most influential factor, reinforcing the General Aggression Model (Bushman & Anderson, 2001), which explains that individuals high in aggressive traits are more reactive to situational provocations. Peer influence also emerged as a crucial determinant, consistent with Dishion and Tipsord's (2011) observation that "peer contagion effects" can accelerate the development of antisocial behavior during adolescence. Overall, the study underscores that antisocial behavior among adolescents is not the result of a single factor but is shaped through the complex interplay of personal traits, environmental exposures, and peer group dynamics, highlighting the need for comprehensive, multi-level preventive interventions.

Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for educators, policymakers, parents, and mental health professionals. Schools should integrate media literacy programs to help adolescents critically evaluate violent content. Psychological interventions focusing on emotional regulation and aggression management should be implemented for adolescents high in trait aggression. Community initiatives must encourage positive peer engagement through supervised youth clubs and structured extracurricular activities. Parents should be educated about the importance of monitoring their children's media consumption and peer affiliations. Policymakers must consider establishing stricter regulations on violent media exposure among adolescents to create safer developmental environments.

Limitations

This study, despite its strengths, presents certain limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inferences, and self-reported data may be influenced by social desirability bias. The sample was confined to specific districts in Haryana, limiting generalizability to wider adolescent populations. Other potentially influential factors such as family environment, parenting styles, and socio-economic status were not controlled. Additionally, the study did not differentiate between types of violent media exposure, such as television, video games, or online content, which could have varying effects. Addressing these limitations in future research would strengthen the understanding of antisocial behavior among adolescents.

Future Suggestions

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to assess how violent media exposure, trait aggression, and peer influence affect adolescents over time. Studies should broaden the sample to include diverse socio-economic and regional backgrounds to improve generalizability. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, would enrich data and provide deeper insights into adolescents' experiences. Differentiating among types of violent media can clarify specific impacts on behavior. Additionally, exploring protective factors like emotional intelligence, parental attachment, and resilience could highlight strengths-based approaches to mitigating antisocial behavior and promoting adolescent well-being.

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