

The Relationship Between Exploitative Show Viewing Habits and Aggressive Behavior in Adolescents

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Abstract

Background: Exploitation is a form of crime and violence that can jeopardize a child's future. Adolescents who frequently watch exploitative content are more likely to exhibit aggressive tendencies and may become desensitized to violence in daily life, leading to both physical and psychological consequences. This study aims to explore the relationship between the habit of watching exploitative shows and aggressive behavior among adolescents. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 76 adolescents in Aceh, Indonesia. Data on demographics, viewing habits of exploitative shows, and aggressive behavior were collected using a researcher-modified questionnaire. **Results:** Over half of the respondents were female (57.9%), with the majority categorized as heavy viewers of exploitative shows (69.7%), and aggressive behavior identified in 59.2% of participants. A significant association was found between the habit of watching exploitative shows and aggressive behavior (p -value = 0.002, OR = 5.790). **Conclusion:** Adolescents who frequently consume exploitative content struggle to regulate their behavior effectively, as the dependency on such shows fosters aggression. Adequate supervision of adolescents is crucial, and it is recommended that social media platforms prioritize broadcasting educational content to promote positive personality development.

Keywords: Exploitation Viewing Habits, Aggressive Behavior, Adolescents, Indonesia

Introduction

Child exploitation constitutes a grave violation of legal norms, involving actions that contravene regulations for personal or unilateral gain, often at the expense of others (Adawiyah et al., 2024). In cases of child exploitation, the harm inflicted is borne entirely by children, regardless of the motives behind the actions. This highlights the urgent need for child protection to safeguard the well-being of future generations and ensure the continued development of society and the nation.

Recent data reveal the alarming prevalence of violence against children. In October 2023, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported 1,478 cases of child violence. Among these, 615 cases involved sexual crimes, 303 cases were categorized as physical or psychological violence, 126 cases pertained to children in conflict with the law, and 55 cases involved economic or sexual exploitation. Additionally, from January to December 2022, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) recorded 32,687 cases of violence against women, of which 25,053 involved children as victims (KPAI, 2023).

Adolescence marks a critical period of mental, emotional, social, and physical development. During this stage, individuals undertake key developmental tasks, such as accepting their physical condition, achieving emotional independence, building healthy relationships through interpersonal communication, and adopting socially responsible behaviors to transition successfully into adulthood. Adolescent development encompasses physical growth, cognitive advancement, and personality and social maturation.

However, exposure to media content with violent or exploitative elements significantly influences adolescent behavior. Adolescents, who are still learning to discern right from wrong, are particularly susceptible to imitating what they see and hear, including aggressive actions and inappropriate language from their surroundings or media (Anantasari, 2016). Research has shown that teenagers who frequently watch violent or aggressive shows are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior compared to their peers. Even cartoons often depict aggression, further normalizing such behavior among young viewers (Syam and Nurhalisah, 2023).

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Continuous exposure to violent media desensitizes adolescents, causing them to perceive aggression as normal and acceptable. This desensitization can lead to habitual violence in daily life. The consequences of aggressive behavior in adolescents are far-reaching, encompassing physical harm and psychological impacts such as trauma, fear, insecurity, diminished enthusiasm for learning, and reduced self-confidence. Socially, victims of violence may withdraw from interactions, fearing threats or rejection, and become isolated from their peers (Rahmawati and Asyanti, 2017).

The influence of media on adolescent behavior cannot be overstated. Adolescents who spend hours watching violent or exploitative content exhibit higher levels of aggression than those who do not. The amount of time spent consuming media and the nature of the content are critical factors in shaping behavior. Holmgren et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of parental supervision over viewing habits, advocating for reduced screen time and monitoring of content to mitigate problematic media-induced behaviors in children.

Given the substantial influence of violent media on adolescent behavior, targeted interventions are essential to promote healthier viewing habits and support the positive development of adolescents. This study aims to explore the relationship between the habit of watching exploitative shows and aggressive behavior among adolescents, providing evidence to inform preventive strategies and enhance adolescent well-being.

Method

This cross-sectional study was conducted among adolescents attending junior high schools in North Aceh Regency. The population included students aged 13 to 15 years, with participants selected using a simple random sampling technique to ensure equal representation. Data collection was conducted using a researcher-modified questionnaire designed to gather demographic information, habits of watching exploitative shows, and aggressive behavior. The reliability of the instrument measuring the habit of watching exploitative shows was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.833, indicating a high level of reliability.

During data collection, the researcher introduced themselves to the respondents, explaining the study's objectives, significance, and procedures. Informed consent was obtained, and each respondent signed a consent form before participating. The questionnaire was distributed individually, and the researcher provided clear instructions on how to complete it. After collecting the completed questionnaires, the researcher performed data cleaning to ensure accuracy and consistency in the responses. Each item in the questionnaire was systematically categorized for analysis. The data processing involved several stages: checking the completeness and accuracy of responses, coding variables for analysis, entering data into statistical software, and organizing the data into tables for interpretation. Finally, univariate analysis was conducted to describe individual variables, and bivariate analysis explored relationships between the variables of interest.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed, adhering to key principles such as autonomy, beneficence, justice, nonmaleficence, veracity, confidentiality, and accountability. These principles guided all stages of the study, from planning to data analysis. The researcher obtained approval from the school principal before initiating data collection.

Results

The demographic data indicated that the majority of respondents were 14 years old, accounting for 38.2% of the sample, and the respondents were predominantly female, representing 57.9%. Regarding viewing habits of exploitative shows, most adolescents (69.7%) were categorized as having heavy viewing habits, while the remaining 30.3% had lighter viewing habits. In terms of aggressive behavior, 59.2% of respondents exhibited aggressive tendencies, while 40.8% did not display aggressive behavior.

A cross-analysis of the viewing habits and aggressive behavior revealed that among adolescents with heavy habits of watching exploitative shows, 71.7% exhibited aggressive behavior, whereas only 28.3% did not. Conversely, among those with lighter viewing habits, 69.6% did not exhibit aggressive behavior, while 30.4% did. The statistical analysis demonstrated a significant relationship between the habit of watching exploitative shows and aggressive behavior, with a p-value of 0.002. The strength of this relationship was further analyzed using the Odds Ratio (OR), which indicated that adolescents with heavy viewing habits were 5.79 times more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior compared to their peers with lighter viewing habits.

Discussion

The study reveals that the majority of adolescents in North Aceh Regency have developed a heavy habit of watching exploitative shows, with 69.7% of respondents falling into this category. In contrast, only 30.3% of respondents fall into the light-watching category. According to Witherington (2016), habits are behaviors that become ingrained in individuals over time, often becoming automatic and resistant to change. Krahe (2015) describes violent shows as programs that focus on antisocial themes, sexuality, or violence, which can include physical, sexual, or mental abuse. These forms of content may feature inappropriate language, contributing to a harmful viewing experience.

This finding aligns with research by Kirani (2024), which examined the relationship between the habit of watching violent films and aggressive behavior in children. The study found that 54.15% of respondents who were heavy viewers exhibited higher levels of aggressive behavior. Similarly, Martins and Riddle (2022) noted that violent TV programs could negatively affect children's psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for stricter regulations on children's programming. Such shows may be more harmful for teenagers, as their psychological state is still developing, and repeated exposure can have long-term effects on their behavior. Taggart, Eisen, and Lillard (2019) conducted a study on children's television content, finding that violent content was inversely related to educational and prosocial content, further suggesting that exposure to violence may impair social development. Television shows, often aimed at children and adolescents, typically include violence, and this is often coupled with other engaging but harmful themes, such as fantasy and anthropomorphism.

The researcher posits that the high frequency of watching exploitative shows in this study may have led to increased aggression among respondents. Adolescents may experience a heightened sense of anger and irritability, which can manifest as conflicts with peers, teachers, or family members. Low parental control and the influence of media that often glorifies violent behavior are critical factors contributing to this trend.

Aggressive behavior among adolescents in Indonesia was observed to be prevalent, with 59.2% of respondents displaying aggressive tendencies. According to Hodges (2014), aggressive behavior is intentional harm directed at others, while Buss (2016) defines it as a response to perceived threats, which may include both physical and verbal aggression. Krahe (2015) similarly describes aggressive behavior as any action that causes harm to another, whether through physical or non-physical means.

The study's findings support the notion that violent media consumption influences aggressive behavior. In line with Trisna's (2019) research, adolescents who regularly watch violent shows tend to exhibit more aggressive behavior. The researcher suggests that spending extended hours watching violent content, such as action films, news, or soap operas featuring conflicts, contributes significantly to the development of aggressive tendencies in adolescents. This is particularly evident when they start to imitate the violent actions they see on screen, often leading to conflicts in school and home environments. Adolescence is a developmental stage where individuals are particularly susceptible to external influences, such as media portrayals of violence. These portrayals can lead to the normalization of aggressive behaviors, as adolescents may not fully grasp the consequences of their actions.

The study demonstrates a clear link between the habit of watching exploitative shows and aggressive behavior, with 71.7% of respondents who watched heavy violent content exhibiting aggressive behavior. Statistical tests yielded a significant p-value of 0.002, indicating that the relationship between these two variables is not due to chance. These findings echo the work of Mutiara (2022), who found a similar association in preschool children, although the relationship was not statistically significant in her study.

The comparison with other studies, such as that by Ranteallo and Mapandin (2018), supports the argument that prolonged exposure to violent television content contributes to the development of aggressive behavior. Violent media, according to research by Gentile et al. (2004) and Huesmann et al. (2003), has been shown to influence various forms of aggression, from mild verbal confrontations to more severe acts of violence.

Adolescents who frequently engage with violent media are desensitized to aggression, perceiving it as normal or even acceptable behavior. This phenomenon aligns with Delhove and Greitemeyer's (2021) findings that individuals who consume violent media tend to accept aggression as a legitimate response to conflict. The researcher assumes that the high consumption of violent shows may be reducing adolescents' sensitivity to aggression, leading them to view violence as a routine part of life. This desensitization could have significant physical and psychological consequences, including trauma, insecurity, reduced learning engagement, and diminished self-esteem.

In conclusion, the study establishes a significant relationship between the habit of watching exploitative shows and aggressive behavior in adolescents in North Aceh Regency. Adolescents who engage in extended viewing of

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violent shows are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, as media portrayals of violence become internalized and normalized. This reinforces the need for better media regulation and more active parental involvement in monitoring children's media consumption. Additionally, it underscores the importance of educating adolescents about the potential negative impacts of violent content on their behavior and psychological well-being.

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