

The Psychological and Pedagogical Influence Of Media Broadcast on Teenagers

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Abstract: In the present stage of society development we can talk about the presence of media environment which is expanding progressively and is becoming more and more a serious factor for the development and personality formation of adolescents. The rapid development of electronic media is of particular importance.

It is noted that there is a certain difference in the immediate response to the media information and it is related to and depends on the personal inclination to aggression.

This type of media environment presupposes the occurrence of stressful experiences reduces sensitivity to violence and forms negative attitudes towards reality in our country. A conclusion should be drawn that the negative influence of the media has to be reduced. First of all, this requires that teachers, parents, children and journalists should be more informed and then it requires that adequate prevention programs should be created.

1. Introduction

According to some American authors, children experience the interaction with this environment almost constantly and they devote to it the greater part of their free time. It has to be emphasized particularly that electronic media are characterized by an extremely powerful potential impact. Television has the possibility to present the world in which we live from a different perspective and with different means.

The seeming clarity and imperativeness of the screen effect are the reason why people talk about mixing the media (virtual) and the actual (true) reality and even about the fact that the virtual reality is replacing the real one. The studies held so far come as a result of research done by the three major broadcast programs of the Bulgarian television. The impact of the dominant type subjects (crimes) on experiences, attitudes and behaviour was monitored in the first place on the basis of media messages. The results showed that the most common reaction was fear, horror and discomfort. In the second place, there comes the expression of interest, curiosity, anxiety and in the third place, indifference, annoyance and boredom. Other experiences are much less common, such as disgust, anger, sadness and self-esteem. It is noted that there is a certain difference in the immediate response to the media information and it is related to and depends on the personal inclination to aggression.

It has to be noted that according to the studies, the media in our country focus on facts, events and aspects that have a negative character. The most representative subject is crimes, i.e. behaviour related to violence and aggression. This type of media environment presupposes the occurrence of stressful experiences reduces sensitivity to violence and forms negative attitudes towards reality in

our country. A conclusion should be drawn that the negative influence of the media has to be reduced. First of all, this requires that teachers, parents, children and journalists should be more informed and then it requires that adequate prevention programs should be created.

2. Theory of the problem

The influence of the media is becoming increasingly intensive, entering more and more pervasively the life of the Bulgarian society. This influence is strongly expressed, especially in the teenagers' group and seriously competes with the educational influence of well-established traditional institutions like family and school.

Some research conducted to establish the influence of multimedia on preparatory grade pupils by R. Stamatova [5,6,7], finds that these children have the support of their family to watch certain TV programmes which do not correspond to their age.

Children kill their classmate, beat up an old man to death, commit murder during armed robbery, swear at their teachers, rape, bully their schoolmates, an ever increasing percentage of them try drugs.

Violence has many faces – it can be *not* only physical, but also psychological. In the opinion of psychologists, violent behaviour gains ground when, by using aggression, a teenager manages to achieve their goals and when the models offered for imitation to children in the family, on television, at school or in online games contain violence. It is dangerous when the child sees models of aggressive behaviour everywhere, when the aggressiveness of children's favourite action heroes is presented as civil virtue, when they learn to solve their problems only with the fist-law of the stronger.

Who teaches violence to our children – directly or indirectly, consciously or not, what factors' influence turns them into bullies and oppressors?

We must note that there is a computer game where the idea is to run over as cruelly as possible the greatest possible number pedestrians. The various ways in which they are crushed can be seen in colour and with a good resolution. This is supposed to entertain the player. A smiling driver pierces a pedestrian with a sharp pointed object. Blood gushes from him and he dies in agony. This morbid game is called „Carmageddon”. Our children play this game before they have been taught to make two crucial differences: between „good and bad” and between „blood on the screen and real blood”. The favourite movies on the list are mainly actions and love stories. Such as „Troy”, „Lord of the Rings”, „Harry Potter”, „I, Robot”, „The Monster”, „Anaconda” , „Ghost Ship”, „Resident Evil”, „Kill Bill” - all with a lot of blood and aggression.

Does TV violence affect children? Shall we blame games and films? In not so far 1995, Bertrand Tavernier's movie „Bait” won a Golden Bear at the Berlin festival for showing the reasons that lead two boys and a girl to the murder of several people in an especially violent way. The idea was borrowed from the crime news from 1984. *The main reason for these teenagers' crimes, according to Tavernier, is mixing up cinema with reality.* They could not counteract clichés from the screen with their own experience, evaluate them, reason from the moral point of view. They did not read anything, they did not have notions and opinions to dissociate them from screen reality. All they did was watch videos, play over and over the scenes that served as their models and dreamt of the life of movie stars.

The conclusion: *the guilt is not with the screen, but with the manner in which it is consumed. First of all, the responsibility for children's education lies with the family. The inadequate communication between its members (lack of time, strength and parental skills and lack of care for children), conflicts and crises in the family, too strict or too free education are among the basic risk factors for developing problem behaviour in children. Unfortunately, our society does not teach and does not help parents to acquire communicative skills, just as it does not teach this to children themselves.*

3. Study and results

The goal of this survey was to study the TV programmes preferred by 3rd and 4th grade pupils – 15 girls and 17 boys from a school in Burgas. We included in it questions intended to establish how much time those pupils spent in front of the TV or computer. Through these questions we investigated what programmes and films primary school students preferred and who their favourite heroes were.

The results from this survey conducted run in 4th grade show a difference between the girls' and the boys' answers to the first question: „What is the name of the games you play on the Internet?”

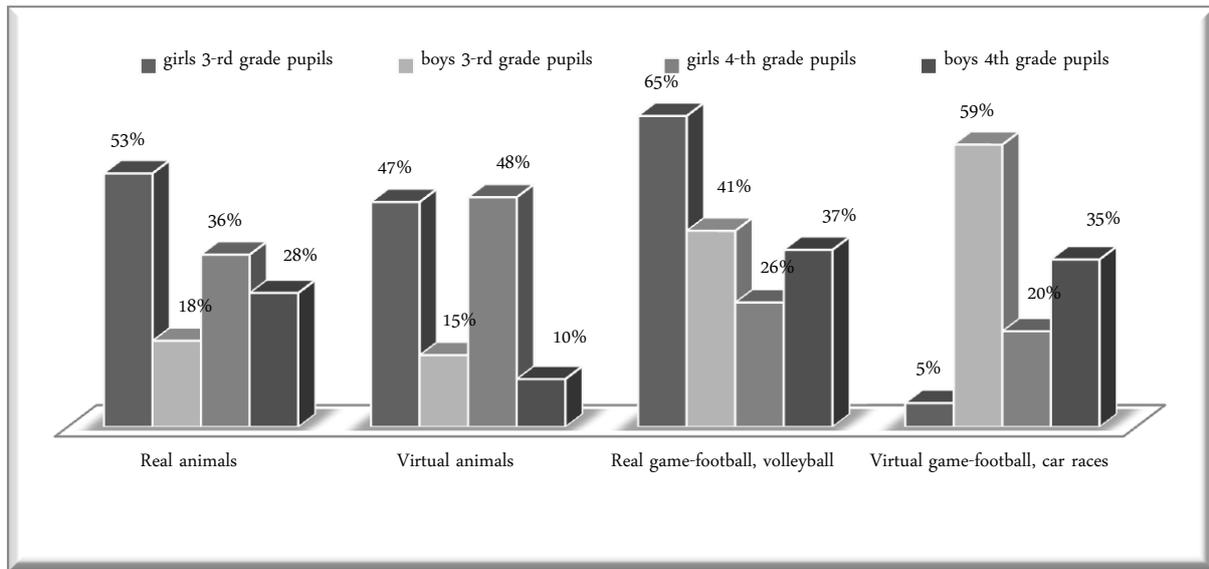


Fig 1. Preferences of 3rd and 4th grade pupils

Pupils describe precisely the plot of the game „Bad Boys” which includes „murders, blood, fight, shooting”. The answers of the boys are often in the first person singular and they write that their task is to fight, shoot and kill. These data from the study should draw the attention of parents, educators and psychologists because children take themselves as real participants in a virtual war. Alarm is caused by the fact that fighting games replace universal values – the participants not only shoot but believe that they have been chosen for a special mission. Presented in this way, the aim of the game creates a thrill for students that they are doing the right thing by fighting, and they feel almost heroes because of shooting the bad guys.

The results show that only for a year more and more boys learn new computer games and choose more aggressive plots. Class tutors state that pupils prefer films and computer games with violence. However, the conclusions from the surveys also show a positive tendency for 4th grade pupils to watch popular science films and search for additional information on the Internet in order to prepare for subjects such as „Man and Society”, „Man and Nature”, and they look for information about famous persons on the Internet.

The data from the surveys conducted in 3rd and 4th grade pupils show the necessity of giving media literacy to students.

Alarm is caused by those data from the surveys in 3rd and 4th grade pupils concerning the hour until which children watch TV in the evening.

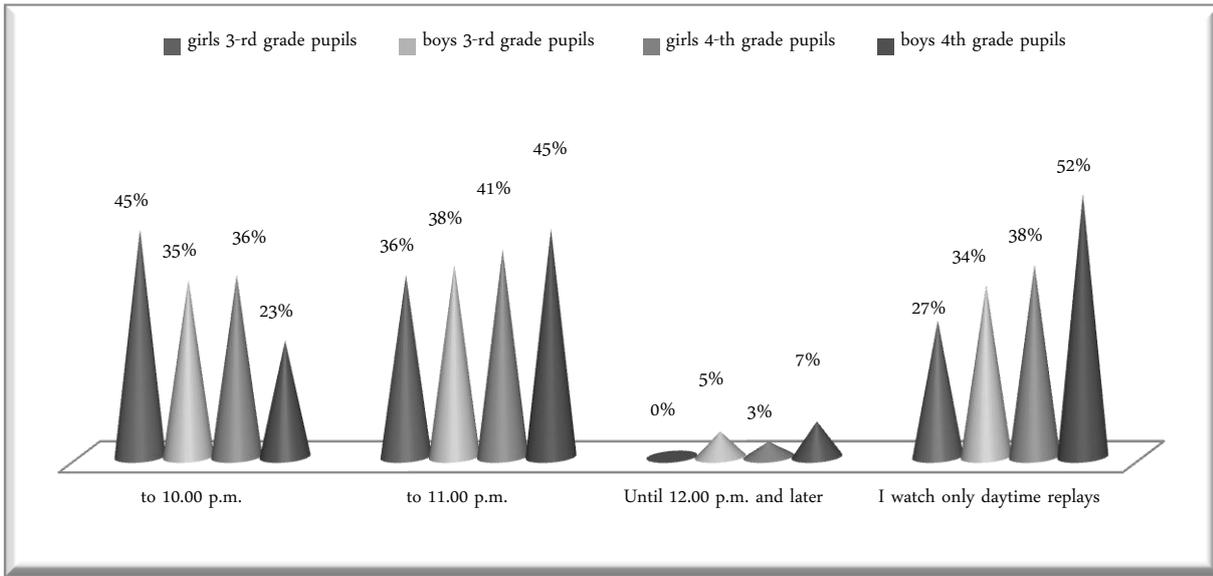


Fig 2. Time spent in front of the TV screen

To questions such as „Which are your favourite children’s programmes on TV?” and „Which are your favourite heroes from children’s programmes and films?” 28% of 3rd and 4th grade pupils expressively respond that they do not watch such programmes. A girl specifies that she “used to watch such films when she was little”.

The preferences of the remaining 4th grade pupils are differentiated as to sex. The only film watched by both girls and boys is the comedy series “Sonny with a Chance”. Boys prefer watching animations and movies on the children’s “Disney Channel” including “Fast and Furious”, “Home Alone”, “Batman: The Brave and the Bold”, “Zack and Cody”, “Spiderman”, “Aladdin”, “Fish Hooks”. 3rd grade boys prefer the same films. The heroes of these films are shown as favourites by both 3rd and 4th grade boys.

The surveys in both grades do not register a great difference in the girls’ preference for certain films. 3rd and 4th grade pupils like the movie about Hannah Montana. It has an entertaining plot, she tries to find the balance between school, friends, and her secret life of a pop star.

To the question „Which are your favourite heroes from children’s films?” the girls from both grades answer Hannah Montana, the mermaids from the feature series „H2O” and the heroines from „Wizards of Waverly Place”.

There is a difference between the results from the surveys in 3rd and 4th grade pupils, in the answers to the question „Do you watch films and programmes for adults?” Two children are positive that they do not watch such programmes but give as their favourites heroes from films and productions intended for adult viewers. The remaining 99.2% are regular viewers of programmes and films intended for adults. The data from the questionnaire in 4 shows a greater differentiation in children’s preference for certain types of programmes.

The teenagers may be divided into several groups as concerns their TV preferences. Most numerous (32%) are the fans of feature films, most of which popular titles like “I, Robot”, “The Mummy”, “Iron Man”, “Texas Ranger”, “Terminator”. Students who gave series titles are also 32%. Among the favourites are Turkish productions like “Forbidden Fruit”, “Falling Leaves” and the European “Dreamers”, “Grey’s Anatomy”. A significant number of children prefer funny programmes like “Palna ludnitsa”, “Gospodari na efira” – 24 %.

The results of the survey show that only 12 % of fourth-grade pupils prefer crime films, mainly the series “Crime Scene Investigation”. One student states that he likes psycho-thrillers, especially the title “Paranormal Activity”. One student watches the popular science channel “History” and the programme “Yoga Zone” together with her Mum.

Our major conclusion is that the preference of children for certain programmes or films is formed under the influence of parents and the family environment. In 4th grade children start showing more and more individual preferences for certain TV programmes and cinema genres.

By comparison, children in 3rd grade are still under the strong influence of the family environment, they imitate and accept their parents' choice as concerns the subject and content of what they watch on TV, on the home DVD player or on the computer.

About 97% of 3rd grade pupils are regular viewers of films and programmes intended for adults. Answers show that students like films and series for adults with a crime plot – nearly 30 % of students in this class watch them regularly. 3rd grade pupils wrote specific titles, 19 % of them admitting that they are watching the crime series „Crime Scene Investigation”. A significant number of pupils from 3rd grade – 19 %, like films from the crime genre.

It appears from the results that actions are a preferred genre by 19 % of 3rd grade pupils. This affirms the opinion that parents and educators should pay attention to the fact that about 32 % of children watch horror films and can specify titles. A 3rd grade pupil says: “I watch films with horror and ghosts”.

The titles given most often by students are “Ghost Whisperer” and “Bloody Mary”. Only 7 % of children admitted that they were afraid while watching the films. The questionnaires have also collected other horror film titles: “The Soul Eater”, “Hannibal”, “Mom’s Got a Date with a Vampire” etc. All the pupils questioned and watching horror films answer the question “Are there any TV programmes and films that frighten you or worry you?” - negative.

4. Conclusion

The following conclusion may be drawn when comparing the preferences of the 3rd and 4th grade pupils questioned:

① With each year that elapses, children direct their attention more and more to programmes and films intended for adults.

② There is a positive tendency that less 4th grade pupils watch horror films and crime productions.

③ It is a hopeful fact that the majority of 4th grade pupils do not like the heroes of films and programmes for adults, heroes mainly of series and comedy productions. They start expressing a personal opinion more and more often and form aesthetic and moral evaluations of the personages.

④ It's noticeable that 3rd and 4th grade pupils do not watch at all (or watch with limitation) popular science and educational programmes. There are no examples of scientific TV productions on the vegetable and animal world, on non-living nature, on the cultural-historic heritage of the world, on the various types of arts.

⑤ It is disturbing that in their everyday communication with the media (mainly TV) pupils do not have access to screened works of high artistic and educational value.

Not interpreting these results in detail, we must however note that the mass manifestation and concern may be related to a great extent to threatening words. Such stress conditions have a widespread effect. It is known that, on the one hand, an individual exercises a negative influence on an individual's activity, and on the other hand, the commitment to the social environment impedes the socialization of young people.

We must specially emphasize the fact that children and teenagers perceive the world around them as dangerous, threatening, and hostile and these are serious problems as concerns the psychological comfort of their development and socialization.

Another study of ours discovered interesting tendencies regarding the borrowing of aggressive models of behaviour from TV shows. In terms of their content, these programmes are of a single type. They are specially directed wrestling matches in the form of performance shows, consisting mainly in the exchange of strikes for the purpose of winning physical mastery and victory.

It is necessary for us to protect our children from the negative influence of the media, criminality, and the negative social environment by helping them join actively various extracurricular activities, by teaching them labour and technologies for work in the applied arts because, in the words of Prof. Minko Balkanski “The future lies in labour” and children are our future.

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