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Impact of Television Exposure on Aggressive Behavior Among Preschool Children



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Television is a form of mass media that can influence children’s behavior, particularly through the internalization of social values presented in various programs. Excessive exposure to television content may contribute to the development of aggressive behavior in preschool children.

Objectives: This study aimed to analyze the influence of television viewing on aggressive behavior among preschool children.

Methods: This study employed an analytic correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. The sample consisted of 130 preschool children selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using Spearman’s rho correlation test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results: The results showed a statistically significant relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior among preschool children ($p = 0.008$). The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.439$) indicated a moderate positive relationship, suggesting that higher exposure to television is associated with increased aggressive behavior.

Conclusions: Television viewing has a significant influence on aggressive behavior among preschool children. These findings highlight the importance of parental supervision and guidance in managing children’s media exposure to prevent the development of aggressive behavior.



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Introduction

Television and digital media remain among the most influential environmental factors shaping children's behavior, particularly during early developmental stages. Media exposure provides children with continuous access to visual and auditory stimuli that may influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development (Li, 2023; Radesky et al., 2015; Ybarra et al., 2022). Preschool children are especially vulnerable to such influences due to their limited ability to critically evaluate content and distinguish between fantasy and reality (Daly & Perez, 2009; Yan et al., 2023).

According to social learning theory, children learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Exposure to aggressive or violent content on television may lead children to internalize and replicate such behaviors in real-life situations (Bandura, 2016; Huesmann et al., 2003; Moise & Huesmann, 1996). Repeated exposure to media violence can normalize aggressive actions, reduce emotional sensitivity to violence, and increase the likelihood of aggressive responses (Gentile et al., 2011; Huesmann et al., 2003; Li, 2023).

A substantial body of evidence has demonstrated a strong association between media exposure and aggressive behavior in children. Longitudinal and experimental studies indicate that children who are frequently exposed to violent television content are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors, including physical aggression, verbal hostility, and disruptive conduct (Lee et al., 2024; Pagani et al., 2023; Ybarra et al., 2022). Moreover, meta-analyses and large-scale reviews have confirmed that media violence has both short-term and long-term effects on aggression, making it a significant public health concern (Greitemeyer & Mügge, 2014; Huesmann et al., 2003; Prescott et al., 2018).

In addition to content, the duration of media exposure also plays a critical role. Excessive screen time has been associated with behavioral problems such as impulsivity, hyperactivity, and aggression among young children (Madigan et al., 2019; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Children who spend more time watching television may have fewer opportunities for social interaction, physical

play, and emotional regulation development, further contributing to maladaptive behaviors (UNICEF, 2025; WHO, 2019)

Parental supervision and mediation are important moderating factors in the relationship between television viewing and child behavior. Studies have shown that active parental involvement, including monitoring, co-viewing, and discussing media content, can reduce the negative impact of media exposure on children's behavior (Nikken & Schols, 2015). Conversely, lack of supervision and permissive media environments may increase the risk of exposure to inappropriate content, thereby intensifying aggressive tendencies (Kaur & Singh, 2025; Lee et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research, differences in sociocultural contexts may influence how media exposure affects children's behavior. In many developing settings, limited parental awareness, unrestricted access to media, and lack of educational guidance may exacerbate the negative effects of television viewing (UNICEF, 2025; WHO, 2019; Yan et al., 2023). However, studies examining these relationships in diverse and low-resource populations remain limited, particularly among preschool children.

Understanding the relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior is essential for developing effective prevention strategies. Evidence-based interventions involving parents, educators, and healthcare professionals are needed to promote healthy media use and prevent behavioral problems among children (Pagani et al., 2023; Ybarra et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the influence of television viewing on aggressive behavior among preschool children.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative analytic correlational design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior among preschool children. This design allows for the assessment of the association between exposure and outcome variables measured simultaneously at a single point in time.

The study population consisted of preschool children, and a total sampling technique was applied to ensure that all eligible participants were included in the study. The final sample

comprised 130 respondents who met the inclusion criteria. Participants included preschool children whose parents or guardians consented to participation and were able to provide the required information. Children with incomplete data or who did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study.

The independent variable in this study was television viewing, while the dependent variable was aggressive behavior. Television viewing was defined as the exposure of children to televised content, including educational, informational, and entertainment programs. Aggressive behavior was defined as behaviors that may harm others, including both physical aggression (such as hitting or pushing) and verbal aggression (such as shouting or insulting).

Data were collected using structured questionnaires completed by parents or guardians. The instrument consisted of two sections: one measuring television viewing exposure and the other assessing aggressive behavior. Television viewing was assessed based on exposure to different types of content, while aggressive behavior was measured using multiple items reflecting both physical and verbal aggression. Responses were recorded using ordinal scales.

Prior to data collection, the instrument was evaluated for validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted using correlation analysis, and all items were found to meet the required validity criteria. Reliability testing demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, indicating that the instrument was suitable for data collection.

Data collection procedures included obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians, distributing questionnaires, and collecting completed responses. All responses were reviewed to ensure completeness before data analysis.

Data analysis was performed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics and variable distributions. Inferential analysis was conducted using the Spearman's rho correlation test to examine the relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior, as both variables were measured on

an ordinal scale. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance. The strength of the correlation was interpreted based on the correlation coefficient value.

This study adhered to ethical principles in research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants' parents or guardians prior to data collection. Participant anonymity was ensured by using coded identifiers, and all information was kept confidential. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Results

A total of 20 pregnant women participated in this study. The analysis focused on comparing sexual activity patterns before and during pregnancy within the same respondents.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Category	n (%)
Age	25-45 years	87 (66.7)
	>45 years	43 (33.3)
Gender	Male	30 (23.3)
	Female	100 (76.7)
Education	No formal education	17 (13.3)
	Primary school	13 (10.0)
	Junior high school	26 (20.0)
	Senior high school	56 (43.3)
	Higher education	18 (13.3)

A total of 130 respondents were included in this study. The characteristics of respondents were described based on age, gender, and educational level. The majority of respondents were within the adult age group (66.7%), while the remaining participants were older than 45 years (33.3%). In terms of gender, most respondents were female (76.7%), whereas males accounted for 23.3% of the sample. Regarding educational background, the largest proportion of respondents had completed senior high school (43.3%), followed by junior high school (20.0%), higher education (13.3%), no formal education (13.3%), and primary school (10.0%).

Table 2. Television Exposure and Aggressive Behavior

Variable	Category	n (%)
Television Exposure	Negative	52 (40.0)
	Positive	78 (60.0)
Aggressive Behavior	High risk	74 (56.7)
	Low risk	56 (43.3)

With respect to television exposure, most respondents were categorized as having a

positive influence from television viewing (60.0%), while 40.0% were categorized as having a negative influence. In terms of aggressive behavior, more than half of the respondents were classified as having a high risk of aggressive behavior (56.7%), whereas 43.3% were categorized as having a low risk.

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of Television Exposure and Aggressive Behavior

Television Exposure	High Risk n (%)	Low Risk n (%)	Total n (%)
Negative	43 (33.3)	9 (6.7)	52 (40.0)
Positive	31 (23.8)	47 (36.2)	78 (60.0)
Total	74 (56.7)	56 (43.3)	130 (100)

The cross-tabulation analysis revealed that respondents exposed to negative television influences tended to have a higher proportion of high-risk aggressive behavior (33.3%) compared to those with low-risk behavior (6.6%). In contrast, among respondents with positive television influence, a higher proportion demonstrated low-risk aggressive behavior (36.7%) compared to high-risk behavior (23.5%). These findings indicate a pattern in which negative television exposure is associated with a greater tendency toward aggressive behavior.

The inferential analysis using Spearman's rho test showed a statistically significant relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior ($p = 0.008$). The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.439$) indicated a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that increased exposure to television, particularly negative content, is associated with higher levels of aggressive behavior among preschool children.

Discussion

The present study demonstrated a significant relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior among preschool children, with a moderate positive correlation indicating that higher exposure to television is associated with increased aggressive tendencies. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of social learning and moral disengagement, which suggests that children may learn and justify aggressive behaviors through repeated exposure to modeled actions in media (Bandura, 2016). When children observe aggressive acts in television content, they may imitate such behaviors, particularly

when these actions appear rewarding or without consequences.

The findings of this study are in line with previous empirical research demonstrating a significant association between media exposure and aggressive behavior in children. Early studies have shown that exposure to media violence is positively correlated with aggressive tendencies in preschool children (Daly & Perez, 2009). More recent evidence also supports this relationship, indicating that children exposed to violent television content are more likely to exhibit both physical and relational aggression (Gentile et al., 2011). In addition, longitudinal and meta-analytic studies confirm that repeated exposure to violent media contributes to increased aggressive behavior over time (Prescott et al., 2018; Ybarra et al., 2022).

From a developmental perspective, preschool children are particularly vulnerable to media influence due to their limited cognitive ability to differentiate between fictional and real-life situations. As a result, aggressive content may be perceived as acceptable or normal behavior. Studies have shown that early exposure to media violence can shape behavioral patterns that persist into later childhood and adolescence (Huesmann et al., 2003; Pagani et al., 2023). This supports the findings of the present study, where a substantial proportion of children exhibited a high risk of aggressive behavior.

In addition to content, the duration of television exposure also plays a critical role in shaping behavior. Excessive screen time has been associated with various behavioral problems, including aggression, impulsivity, and reduced emotional regulation (Madigan et al., 2019; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Recent studies further highlight that prolonged screen exposure in early childhood is influenced by individual, familial, and environmental factors, which collectively affect developmental outcomes (Lee et al., 2024). This suggests that not only the type of content but also the amount of exposure contributes to aggressive behavior.

Parental mediation is an important moderating factor in the relationship between television viewing and child behavior. Research indicates that children whose parents actively monitor and guide media use are less likely to develop

aggressive tendencies, even when exposed to media content (Nikken & Schols, 2015). Conversely, lack of supervision may increase children's vulnerability to negative media influences. This is supported by global evidence emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in regulating children's screen time and media consumption (UNICEF, 2025; WHO, 2019).

Furthermore, recent studies suggest that modern media environments, including animated content and digital platforms, may also contribute to aggressive behavior, particularly when they contain violent or graphic elements (Li, 2023; Yan et al., 2023). This indicates that the influence of media on child behavior extends beyond traditional television and highlights the need for broader attention to digital media exposure.

Despite these findings, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between television viewing and aggressive behavior. Additionally, the use of questionnaire-based data collection may introduce response bias, particularly when assessing sensitive behavioral outcomes. Future research is recommended to use longitudinal designs and objective behavioral assessments to provide more robust evidence.

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the growing evidence that media exposure plays a significant role in shaping children's behavior. The results highlight the importance of regulating television viewing and promoting parental supervision to reduce the risk of aggressive behavior among preschool children.

Implication and limitation

The findings of this study have important implications for child health and development, particularly in highlighting the role of television exposure in shaping aggressive behavior among preschool children. The identified association suggests that early media exposure should be considered a modifiable risk factor in behavioral development. These results support the need for integrating media literacy and parental guidance strategies into early childhood care and education programs to reduce the potential negative impact of media content.

However, several limitations should be considered. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between television exposure and aggressive behavior. Second, the use of questionnaire-based data may introduce response bias and subjectivity. Third, the study did not differentiate types of media content in detail or control for other potential confounding factors such as parenting style and socio-environmental influences. Future studies are recommended to use longitudinal designs and more comprehensive measurements to better understand causal mechanisms.

Relevance for Practice

The findings of this study are highly relevant for healthcare professionals, educators, and parents in promoting healthy child development. The results emphasize the importance of parental supervision and active mediation in managing children's television viewing. Healthcare providers, particularly nurses and early childhood practitioners, should incorporate guidance on safe media use as part of routine child health education.

In addition, educational interventions aimed at increasing parental awareness about the risks of excessive and inappropriate media exposure are essential. Limiting screen time, selecting age-appropriate content, and encouraging alternative activities such as play and social interaction may help reduce aggressive behavior. Therefore, strengthening collaboration between families, educators, and healthcare providers is crucial to support optimal behavioral development in children.

Conclusion

This study found a significant relationship between television viewing and aggressive behavior among preschool children, with higher exposure associated with increased aggressive tendencies. These findings support the view that media exposure plays an important role in shaping early childhood behavior, particularly through observational learning mechanisms. The results underscore the importance of addressing media use as part of early childhood development strategies. Effective management of children's television exposure, especially through parental supervision and guidance, is essential to

reduce the risk of aggressive behavior and support healthy behavioral development.

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Author Contribution

Gilang Ramadhan contributed to the study conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. S. Tauriana contributed to the study design, data interpretation, and critical revision of the manuscript. Yuana Dwi Agustin contributed to data analysis, manuscript review, and final approval of the manuscript. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of Use of AI in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that generative AI and AI-assisted technologies were used to support language editing and grammatical refinement of the manuscript.

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