

**TV VIOLENCE AND CHILDREN'S ATTITUDE, AGGRESSIVENESS
AND VIOLENCE: A CASE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS ON CHILDREN
IN SINDH, PAKISTAN**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the effect of violence and aggressiveness should on television among the children. It also find out the difference on the basis of gender, educational level, ethnically and areas of residence. For this study the researchers collected data from 624 respondents through random sampling from 5th to 8th class students of Sindh province. Data was analyzed through SPSS Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) to ensure objectivity in the results of the study.

The study found that there was least presence of aggressive tendencies among the children, while compromise in case of any conflict. However a insignificant number of children silence that gang fight and even a negligible number of children in Cable Towns with a small increase in Non Cable Towns seems inclined to acquire weapons for their protection in the same situation. As the majority of children of both Cable and Non Cable Towns are of light viewers, the possible effects of television violence seem seldom among children of the region. The trend is present in both genders with a slight difference. Views about handling weapons, the results were surprising to note that majority of children were not interested in handling weapons, especially in Cable Towns. However in Non Cable Towns, a significant number of boys were interested in handling the weapon. In Non Cable Towns the junior grade children were more interested to use the weapon. On ethnic basis, Cable Town children were looking more interested in using weapons in comparison to Sindhi Speaking children, while in Non-Cable Towns, majority of Sindhi Speaking children showed their interest in operating the weapons. The study proves that there is correlation between increasing content of television and effects on young viewers.

Keywords: Cable Television, Sindh Province, TV Violence, Aggressive Attitude, Ethnicity.

INTRODUCTION

Present work is focused on the impact of television and cable television on life of children in rural as well as urban areas of Sindh

region. Through literature review it was revealed that majority of researchers, parents and various quarters of society and governments showed concern on possible negative effects of television on the viewers, especially on children. The amount of viewing of television was assumed as major issue of their studies, while the exposure of violence over television apprehensive towards growth of aggressive behavior among the young minds was also probed carefully. The researchers also highlighted the concern of parents and researchers about cultural imperialism transmitted through satellite channels, affecting local social roles and values. 'Effects of Television on Children' is a popular area of media research all over the world. And as such enough material is available but it is not the case in Pakistan.

In 2001, in India, a research project on "Media Violence and its impact on Children" was undertaken by Centre of Advocacy and Research. The project was supported by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and Ford Foundation and was comprised on the children of 6-12 years age, with different socio-economic background in five main cities i.e. Delhi, Lucknow, Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad. The research found a lateral and strong association between media fictional crime and real crimes. In some cities, children showed their intense interest in realm. They were found better informed about crime world, leading criminals and forensic sciences. They were also found able to recall televised violence presented about three years ago.

In Pakistan, Zuberi (1992) carried out a study addressing this issue found that 'Although the effect of time of viewing did not prove significant statistically, heavy viewers showed more inclination towards aggression. The effect of gender, ethnicity and economic status proved significant statistically. It was found that heavy viewer boys of middle income families and with cultural familiarity about fire arms etc. develop some kind of a disposition to act aggressively. Among their light viewer counterparts, this disposition remains less distinct.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For this reason this section encompasses a review of the major findings of concerned studies carried out in different countries underscoring the scarcity of similar research conducted in Pakistan,

inviting indigenous researchers to focus their efforts for probing more into this important area.

The story of research on effects of mass media begins in 1920s in United States, when concern was shown about motion pictures for negative influence on children. Cited by Wimmer & Dominick (1993), "The Motion Pictures Research Council, with support of Payne Fund sponsored 13 studies on impact of movies on children' The studies found out that motion pictures were a significant source of information along with variety of attitudes and behavior for children."

In 1970s, a number of studies were carried on social effects of mass media. The famous Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee indicated correlation of the reinforcement factor to viewing television violence with aggressive behavior. In this regard, CVS (A major American Television Network) commissioned two studies: one discovered no relationship between television attitude (Milgram & Shotland, 1973) while other research conducted in UK, discovered link in watching violence and making it (Belson, 1978). Jensen R. & Oster E. (2008) found another positive change effected by cable television in rural areas in regarding decrease in toleration level for domestic violence and increase in assertiveness of woman and in school enrollment. Katz (1987) stated that in some cases media effects were limited to reinforcement. The survey of 450, New Jersey school children indicated that heavy consumers overestimated the danger and were more afraid than other children.

Ron Solby, a researcher of Harvard University, specifically explained that there are four effects of violence on television on children which will influence the development of their personalities: (1) Aggressor effect, where the rude personality increases on children, (2). Victim effect, where children become coward and it is hard to trust the others, and (3). Observer effect, where children do not care about the other's difficulties.

Dede Mulkan (2007) said that the result of Dr Brandon Canetrwall's research from Washington University strengthens that survey. He attempted to find statistical correlation between the increases of crimes especially violence and the coming of television in three countries (Canada, U.S., and Africa). The result showed the number of murder in Canada and America had been increasing almost 100%. At the same time, the possession of television increases with equal comparison. In South Africa, TV programs had been permitted in 1975.

Canter wall then explained that TV does not directly affect people who conduct murder, yet it has gradually affected them since they were children. Therefore, there three stages of violence recorded in the research: at first, the number of violence increases among children, several years later the violence increases among teenagers, and finally the most dangerous violence occurs when adult people conduct murder.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the violent effects of cables televisions on the children of Sindh province.
- To find out difference between aggressive and non-aggressive children viewers of Sindh province.
- To search for the different levels of aggressiveness between cable and non-cable viewer children.
- To determine the factors of adopting aggressive behavior among the children.

HYPOTHESIS

Cable television viewer children are inclined more to adopt aggressive behavior than those children who watch Pakistan Television (PTV).

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The theory closely related to the present study is cultivation theory. George Gerbner (1976) in this theory suggests that “Television has the power to influence the reality, and it is primarily responsible for our perceptions of day-to-day norms and reality (Infante *et.al.*, 1997).

According to Severin & Tankard (1997), “The basic forms of Cultivation theory suggest that television shapes, or ‘cultivate’ viewers’ conceptions of social reality. The pooled effect of large scale television exposure by viewers finely shapes the perception of social reality for individuals and as a whole, for our culture. Gerbner advocates that the mass media cultivate those attitudes and values which are already present in a culture. He states, “The media maintain and propagate these values amongst members of a culture, consequently binding it together. Gerbner and his associates found heavy-television viewers are more affected and they are more likely

to perceive the world as it was presented on television. This means heavy viewers tend to view the world as a distinct place.”

The theory further points out that there is also difference between two groups of television viewers: the heavy viewers and the light viewers. People, who watch television for a lot of time (heavy viewers), are likely to be more influenced as the world is portrayed in television programs than individuals who watch television for less time (light viewers), particularly on those issues and aspects for which the viewer has little first-hand experience. It assumes that light viewers may have more information sources than heavy viewers. ‘Resonance’ or becomes the significant effect on the viewers when what they see on television resembles with what they have experienced in life. This way, the television content amplifies the cultivation effect.

According to Gerbner, those who watch television four hours a day, are labeled as heavy viewers while those who sit before TV less than four hours a day are named as light viewers. Heavy viewers watch more amount of violence, therefore are more affected with ‘Mean World Syndrome’- an assumption that the world is worse than it is in actual.

Daniel Chandler (1995) said that according to Gerbner, the heavy viewing of television is shaping standardized and fearful masses. The cultivation theory is a scientific approach. Gerbner has defined heavy television viewing by setting a numerical value as viewing television for four or more hours a day. Gerbner and his colleagues assert that television drama has a small but substantial effect on the attitudes, beliefs and judgments of viewers regarding the social world.

Judith Van Evra (1990) raises the point that young viewers with less experience may depend on television for information more than other viewers. However, Hawkins and Pingree differ and say that some children may not experience a cultivation effect at all because of unable to understand motives or consequences of the content. Lone viewers are more open to a cultivation effect than those who view with others.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure the objectivity in the results researchers used quantitative method. Survey techniques were used to measure the

opinion of the target population, while, data was collected through a questionnaire comprise of 76 questions. The population was divided into two broad section i.e. cable town and non-cable town residents. Data was collected by random sampling method from 624 respondents of Sukkur, Nawabshah (now Benazirabad) and Hyderabad. Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS Version 15) was used for data analysis in the present study, to make sure the impartiality in the results.

DATA ANALYSIS

Effects of television on child behavior, especially the growth of aggressive tendencies in young viewers are the element which has ever been most important social issue for the parents, educationalists and researchers in all parts of the world.

In United States, the concern for depiction of violence over television led the issue to Senate in 1954 and again in 1961. The Senate Report (1964) and National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (1968) concluded that a great deal of television programs include violence. Both the reports showed their concern for possible adverse effects of these programs on young people. (Liebert, R.M. & Sprafkin J., 1988) In 1960s George Gerbner declared his renowned 'Cultivation Theory', which suggests that heavy viewers of television believe the world similar to the images they have watched on TV since a long period.

In another study, Bryant, J & Thompson S. (2002) observed that "In 1963, Albert Bandura and Walters' Social Learning Theory supported this media violence and aggression link. At the end of 20th century, a three year study on television violence conducted by researchers at several leading universities again confirmed the link between viewing violence and subsequent aggressive behavior.

In a report, released in 1998 by the National Television Violence Study, in America, it was found that, "not only the proportion of violent television programmes on prime time network and cable shows increased since 1994, but way the violence is portrayed on these programmes actually encouraged children to imitate the behavior they see."

To measure these effects, a number of longitudinal and experimental studies were carried in various countries. Researchers believe that longitudinal study is the best method to investigate this

issue. As these enquiries require highly trained expert researchers, funds and other facilities, it is too early to think for this kind of research in Pakistan.

How to Face Enemy

In present study, it has been attempted to investigate the possible effects of violence in TV content on the children with Cable and Non Cable television connections in Sindh province. In this regard, respondents were asked indirect question reflecting presence of aggressive tendencies in their minds. Two questions were asked, first about the way to deal the enemy and second one was about use of weapon. The findings were as follows:

TABLE 1.1
TOWN WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO TAKE
DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY

How to face enemy * cable Crosstabulation

			cable		Total
			Cable Towns	Non Cable Towns	
How to face enemy	By Forming Gang	Count	22	21	43
		% within How to face enemy	51.2%	48.8%	100.0%
	By Compromising	Count	254	257	511
		% within How to face enemy	49.7%	50.3%	100.0%
	Defeating enemy with magic	Count	5	6	11
		% within How to face enemy	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%
	Acquire weapons for self Protection	Count	7	17	24
	% within How to face enemy	29.2%	70.8%	100.0%	
	Any other	Count	13	9	22
		% within How to face enemy	59.1%	40.9%	100.0%
	No reply	Count	11	2	13
		% within How to face enemy	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	312	312	624
		% within How to face enemy	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

The Table 1.1 shows the opinion of the respondents when they face enemy. Majority of the respondents of Cable Town 254 and Non Cable Town 257 out of 624 were said that they will compromise when they face enemy. The results shows that Cable Television respondents less reluctant than Non-Cable television viewers about violence.

TABLE 1.2
ZONE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO TAKE
DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY

	Sukkur					Nawabshah (now Benazirabad)					Hyderabad				
	By Forming Gang	By Compromising	Defeating enemy with magic	Acquire weapons for self Protection	Any other	By Forming Gang	By Compromising	Defeating enemy with magic	Acquire weapons for self Protection	Any other	By Forming Gang	By Compromising	Defeating enemy with magic	Acquire weapons for self Protection	Any other
Cable Towns	9	86	3	0	1	9	78	0	3	12	4	90	2	4	0
Non Cable Towns	4	93	1	1	3	13	79	3	7	2	4	85	2	9	4

The data in Table 1.2 shows that a very significant number of children believe in compromise in case of conflict in all zones of Cable and Non-Cable Towns.

However, an insignificant number of children in all zones of Cable Towns believe in retaliation in shape of forming a gang to deal the enemy. Only a negligible number of children in all zones were in favor of acquiring weapons for self protection.

FIGURE 1.1
CABLE TOWN WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO TAKE
DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY
(A) CABLE TOWNS

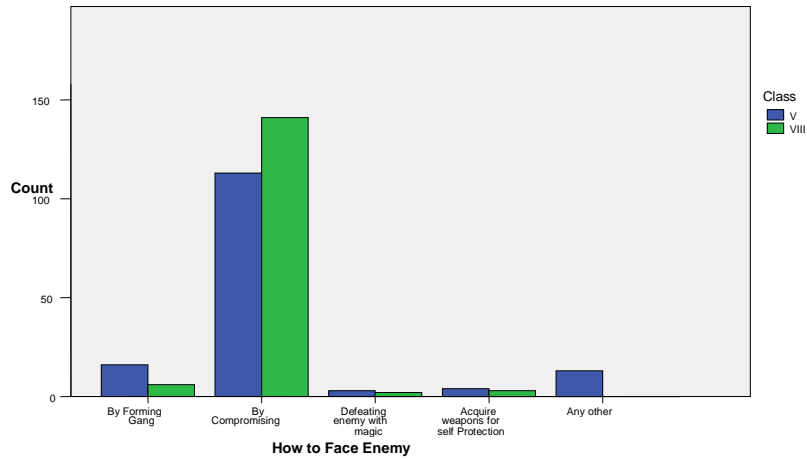


Figure 1.1 represents that on grade basis, it is visible in the tables that very significant number of senior as well as junior grade students is more inclined towards compromising to deal the enemy in cable-towns residents.

FIGURE 1.2
NON-CABLE TOWN WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO
TAKE DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY
(B) NON CABLE TOWNS

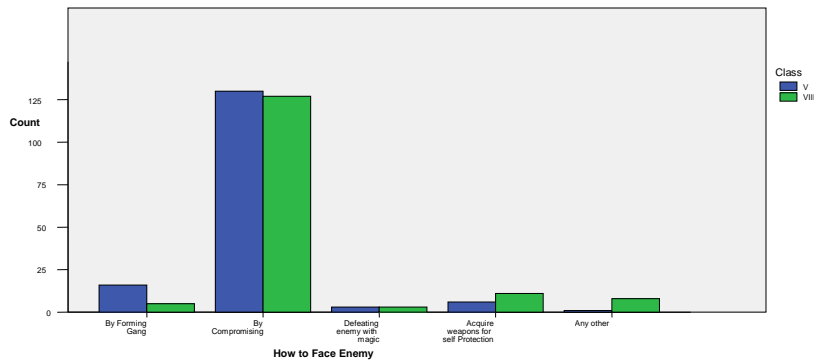


Figure 1.2 represents that on grade basis, it is visible in the tables that very significant number of senior as well as junior grade students is

more inclined towards compromising to deal the enemy in both Cable and Non Cable Towns.

FIGURE 1.3
GENDER WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO TAKE
DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY
(A) CABLE TOWNS

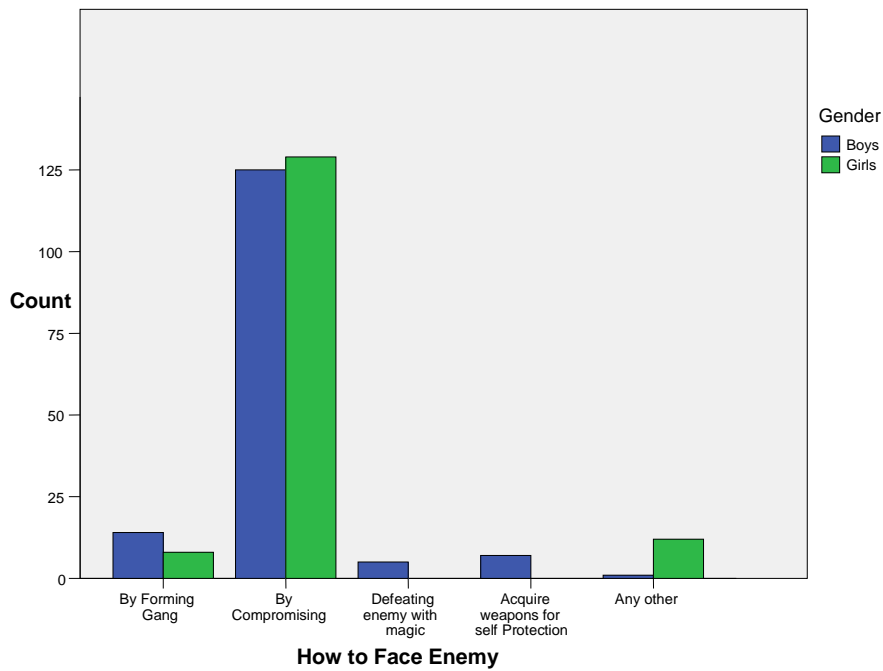
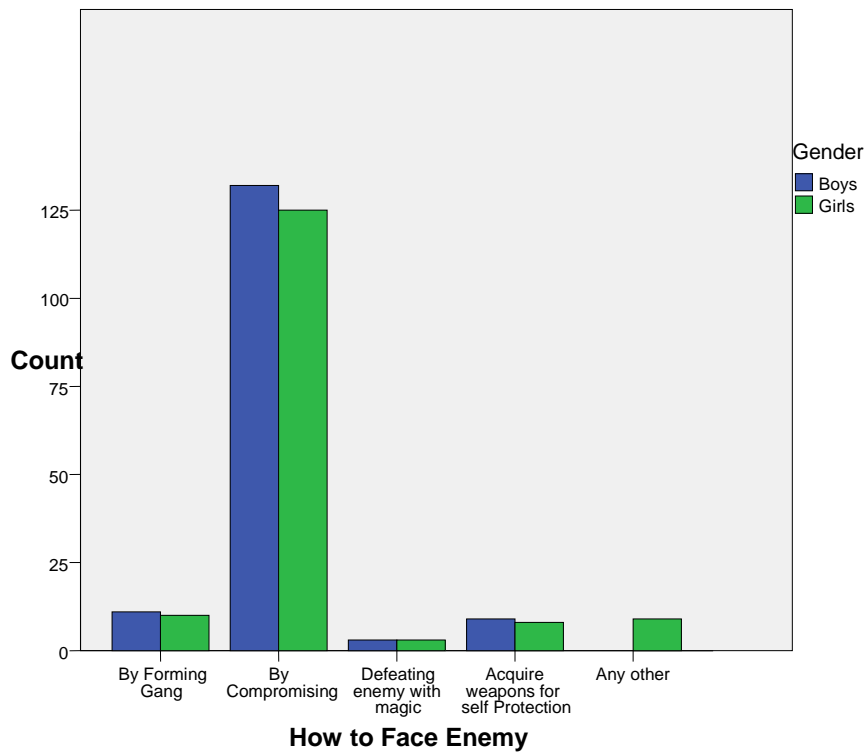


Figure 1.3 shows that, on gender basis , in Cable Towns, its compromising option is slightly more supported by girls than all other options, They have rejected the option of acquiring weapon for protection in the conflict situation, while an insignificant number of boys has shown their inclination to acquire weapons for self protection.

FIGURE 1.4
GENDER WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO TAKE
DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY
(B) NON CABLE TOWNS



In Non Cable Towns, on gender basis, it shows that girls are more inclined towards compromising option, while boys has an edge in remaining options of forming gang , defeating enemy with magic and to acquire weapons for self protection.

FIGURE 1.5
ETHNICITY WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TO
TAKE DECISION AFTER FACING ENEMY

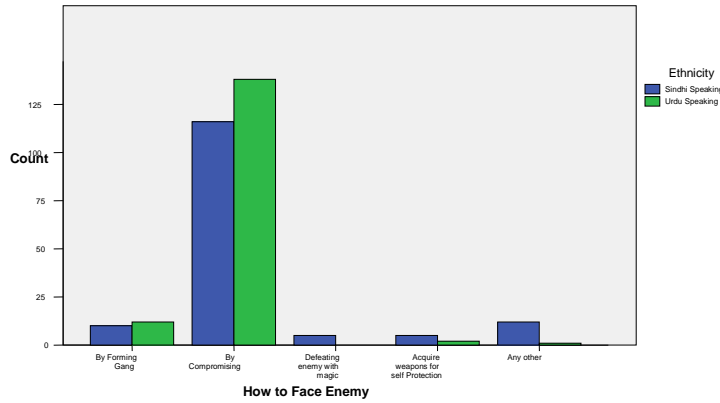


Figure 1.5 shows that very significant number of both Sindhi and Urdu Speaking children is in favor of compromising option in case of conflict, in both Cable and Non Cable Towns. The table also shows that slightly more of the Urdu Speaking children are inclined towards forming gang to deal the enemy.

Use of Weapon

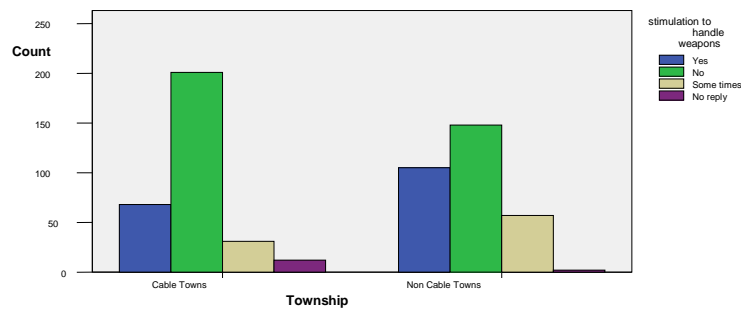
TABLE 1.3
TOWN & ZONE WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS
TOWARDS STIMULATION TO HANDLE WEAPONS

	Sukkur				Nawabshah (now Benazirabad)				Hyderabad			
	Ye s (f)	N o (f)	Som e time s (f)	No repl y (f)	Ye s (f)	N o (f)	Som e time s (f)	No repl y (f)	Ye s (f)	N o (f)	Som e time s (f)	No repl y (f)
Cable Towns	18	75	6	05	27	63	12	02	23	63	13	05
Non Cable Towns	28	47	27	02	36	50	18	00	41	51	12	00

Table 1.3 shows that in all zones of Cable Towns, significant number of children is not in favor of use of weapons, while one third

children are inclined toward least use of this option. However a sizable number of children are still wish to operate the weapon.

FIGURE 1.6
TOWN WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS



In Table 1.6, in Non Cable Towns, significant number of children is interested to operate weapons is higher than children in Cable Towns. The seldom operation of weapon is also favored by more children in Non Cable Towns, while the number of children against this option is significantly lesser than the children in Cable Towns.

FIGURE 1.7
GRADE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS IN CABLE TOWN
(A) CABLE TOWNS

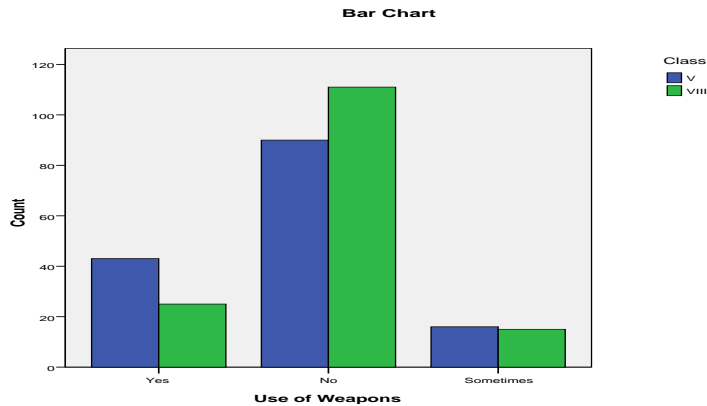


Figure 1.8 indicates that in Cable Towns, the children of junior grades are more interested to use weapons, while more children in senior grade are not in favor to operate the weapons by themselves.

FIGURE 1.8
GRADE WAIS DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS
STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS IN NON-CABLE TOWN
(B) NON CABLE TOWNS

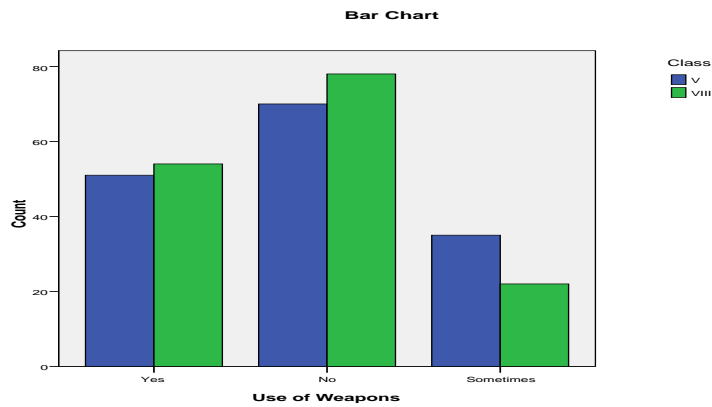


Figure 1.8 indicates that in Non-Cable Towns, the children of junior grades are more interested to use weapons, while more children in senior grade are not in favor to operate the weapons by themselves.

FIGURE 1.9
GENDER WAIS DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS
STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS IN CABLE TOWN
(A) CABLE TOWNS

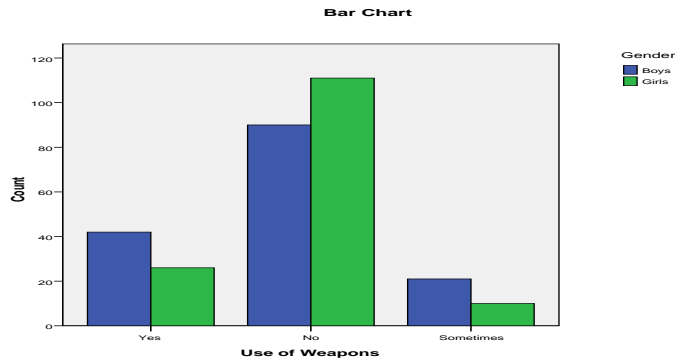


Figure 1.9 shows that on gender basis, in Cable Towns, a significant number of boys have shown a keen interest in operation of weapons than the girls. However, girls have an edge over the boys for not operating the weapons.

FIGURE 1.10
GENDER WAIS DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS
STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS IN NON-CABLE TOWN
(B) NON CABLE TOWNS

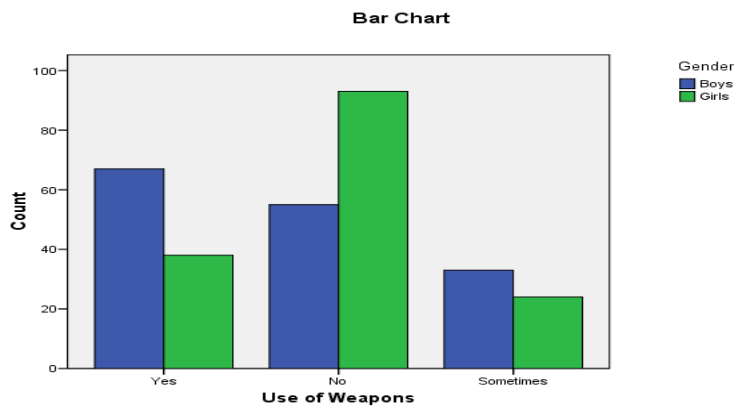


Figure 1.10 shows that on gender basis, in Non-Cable Towns, a significant number of boys have shown a keen interest in operation of weapons than the girls. However, girls have an edge over the boys for not operating the weapons.

FIGURE 1.11
ETHNICITY WAIS DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS
STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS IN CABLE TOWN
(A) CABLE TOWNS

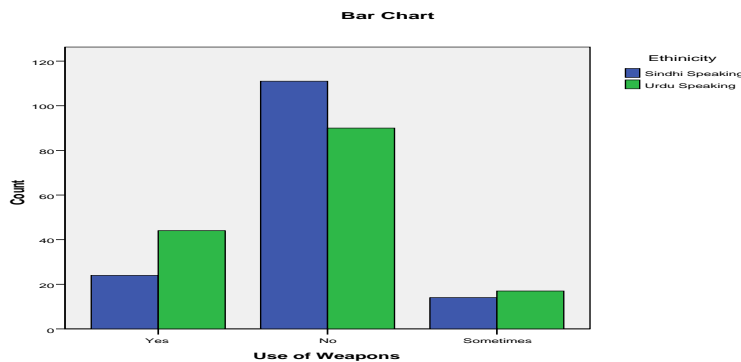
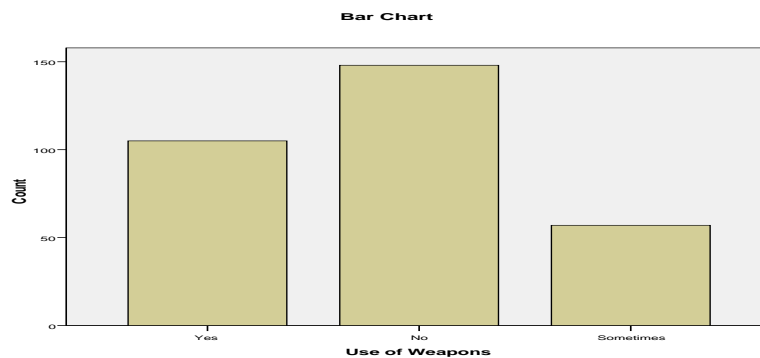


Figure 1.11 shows, in Cable Towns, on ethnicity basis, majority of Sindhi speaking children is not in favor of operating the weapons, while Urdu speaking children are more interested in operating weapons.

FIGURE 1.12
ETHNICITY WAIS DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS
TOWARDS STIMULATION OF HANDLE WEAPONS IN NON-CABLE TOWN
(B) NON CABLE TOWNS



In non Cable Towns, one third of Sindhi Speaking children are interested in operating the weapons, while a small number is also in favor of sometimes operating the weapons.

DISCUSSION

The issue of effects of Television violence on children has been studied by thousands of researchers in many countries especially in the developed countries, where the level of concern about the issue is much greater than the third world countries like Pakistan. A number of researches indicate that in some way the exposure of television violence to children leads them to real life aggressive behavior.

Dorr, (1986) said that according to George Gerbner's 'Cultivation Theory', frequent viewing of content that inevitably reflects a certain world view, cultivates such a world view in children who watch television. The theory also predicts that heavy viewers of these programmes would not be able to evaluate the violence already present in their real surroundings that may lead to a misconception about the world.

Cassata M.B. & Asante M.K.(1979), states that, "Bandura's 'Social Learning Theory' describes that when children watch any content, they can easily reproduce the same in any situation, they find suitable. This theory assumes that -aggressive behavior may be learned

through observation of aggression in TV programmes, and behavior modeling may occur. The Theory hypothesized to the extent that TV violence provides opportunities for audiences to learn aggression, to the extent that violent characters are presented as behavior models for viewers, audience aggression will result”.

Feshbach & Singer, (1971) said that Catharsis Theory states that viewing a drama in which powerful human emotions are represented and acted upon serves to decrease the reservoir of such emotions in the viewer. . It has also been posited that Catharsis may be more important for individuals of lower socio-economic status than for the middle and upper classes, who have the benefits of family unity and socialization (Cassata, *et.al.*, 1979).

In United States, in its report ‘Key Facts’ released on its web site, reviewed this important issue in detail and reported as stating that both public health and scientific communities do believe that viewing violence on television is very dangerous to children. The report cited a few selected studies in this respect suggesting different conclusions. Some representative conclusions are as under:

National Commission on the causes and prevention of violence, in its 1969 reported that television violence was a contributing factor to violent behavior in different forms. They also made it clear that television was not principle cause of violence in society.

In 1972, a study was conducted by Surgeon General’s Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior about impact of Television on children. The study concluded that there was ample evidence which indicated causal relationship between watching violent content on television and later on an aggressive behavior for some children in some specific situations.

In another study carried out by National Institute of Mental Health (US) in 1982, it was concluded that majority of the researchers are agreed on that viewing violence lead the children and teenagers towards aggressive behavior. They have discovered correlation between violence and aggression with some exceptions.

In 1993, American Psychological Association, in a study on the same subject also verified that higher televised violence is very much correlated with acceptance of aggressive attitude and behavior at higher level.

In 2000, some leading institutions of public health community in US like American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Psychiatric Association, American Academy,

American Medical Association, in a joint statement, said that majority of more than one thousand studies found causal connection of media violence and aggressive behavior in some children.

In 2001, in another report on youth violence by Surgeon General, media violence was believed as cause of increasing the physical and verbal aggressive behavior.

UNESCO also conducted an international study on TV violence and Children in 1998. The study discovered that children become violent to solve their problems. They also like super media heroes like The Terminator.

The present study results reflect the least presence of aggressive tendencies among the children. A significant number of respondents showed their mood for compromise in case of any conflict. However a insignificant number of children think the gang fight and even a negligible number of children in Cable Towns with a small increase in Non Cable Towns seems inclined to acquire weapons for their protection in the same situation. The Sindh region is generally known as a peaceful part of the world throughout history. The people living in this region are generally peaceful and tolerant in nature. Teachings of peaceful coexistence are common most among families. The children naturally adopt these tendencies in their own personality from their parents, peers and environment. As the majority of children of both Cable and Non Cable Towns are of light viewers, the possible effects of television violence seem seldom among children of the region. The trend is consistent in both genders with a slight difference. Similarly, when children were asked to declare their interest in handling weapons, the results were surprising to note that majority of children was not interested to handle weapons, especially in Cable Towns. However in Non Cable Towns, a significant number of boys were looking interested in handling the weapon. In Non Cable Towns the junior grade children were more interested to use the weapon.

On ethnic-basis, Cable Town children were looking more interested in using weapons in comparison to Sindhi Speaking children, while in Non Cable Towns, majority of Sindhi Speaking children showed their interest in operating the weapons. The above findings are the reflection of emerging situation in the region, where the graph of violence is at an increase and more television violence content is exposed to young viewers in Television content.

According to data of this study, the emerging trends reflect a number of socio- economic and psychological factors other than

television content might be responsible for this increasing interest in use of weapons among young viewers. Frequent access to Indian movies in local markets and on channels of Cable Television and in mini cinema houses situated in Non Cable Towns is another possible powerful contributor to this phenomenon. Besides, in Cable Towns, foreign channels with a number of programs and movies full of violent content are available to attract the young generation, posing threat and contributing to growth of aggressive tendencies in the society, on other hand in Non Cable Towns, terrestrial television channels have not proved its record to discourage the emerging tendencies of aggression in the attitudes of young minds.

CONCLUSION

The concern about the possible negative effects of visual media started in the first half of twentieth century, led media researchers and policy makers to investigate for possible effects of violent content on their children. In advanced countries, a bulk of research on media effects is focused on effects of violent content shown on television. The repeated investigations in Western World ultimately helped to formulate Cultivation theory. In the East and developing countries this area has not drawn due attention of concern quarters. In Pakistani context, Zuberi, N.A. (1992) in his study, found heavy viewer children to have more aggressive tendencies. However in this study, this factor found little support to such effect. As the majority of children are light viewers in Cable Towns, it comes across least contribution of Cable television in promotion of violence in our society. No doubt, during past few decades, this region has witnessed rapid growth of violence, sharp increase in crime rate, public disorder and frequent availability and consumption of fire arm toys among children, but the Cable television cannot be held sole responsible for the situation. The ground realities of geo-political developments in this part of globe and subsequently, the free flow of fire arms, emergence of tendencies of fundamentalism etc remained the main causes of establishment of a violent society. The present study has gained little support for Cultivation and Catharsis theory. On the other hand data supports more for Social Learning Theory. However junior graders, boys and Urdu speaking children in Cable Towns are seen somewhat inclined towards aggressive tendencies. The results need appropriate attention of the parents, media, and public policy makers in this regard.

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