



# JOURNAL OF MEDIA AND INFORMATION WARFARE

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Global Media Versus Peace Journalism

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# Our Media And Our Violent Generations In The World: A Psychological Perspective

Ihshan Gumilar, Abdul Rasyid

## ABSTRACT

*Media are reflections of our social life. Violence frequently appears in our media through various programs. Exposing too much of violence in the news and other programs will create a generation that is thirsty for violence and perceives it as common means to achieve their own goal. The media influence a way of thinking of young generations and automatically create the perception of violence as something which is acceptable, then, the actual behavior is correspondingly displayed. As youths generations, sooner or later they will hold a role in the society when they grow up later on. They will act (violent) accordingly in the society based on their own knowledge (pertaining to the violence) that has been shaped for many years through the media. When many youth generations produce violent behaviors society will turn into chaos. Consequently, the violent society will shape a violent world.*

*Emphasizing too much on the importance of gained profits, from exposing violent programs especially, is not the only side that has to be given attention but the social problems that result is more important and demand much more cost than the obtained profits itself.*

*Implementing some policies that confine the broadcast of too much violence is a way of improving the situation. It is further followed by emphasizing the role of religion and parents in the family setting, while cooperating with educational institutions is taken into consideration as well.*

## 1. Introduction

The human being has a basic psychological need which is to make an affiliation with others and it is within himself. Curiosity is also an

innate feeling within a human being regardless of object that triggers it. In reducing the pressure of needs, especially, to have a relationship and curiosity, requires some tools as a bridge. Here, media, printing or electronic, have been playing a role to communicate among human beings all over the world. It can be used for many purposes depending upon the interest of the human being himself.

Each generation has distinguished characteristics that differentiate it from another generation. Nowadays, the youth has been part of electronic media trend that can be accessed easily and become a symbol of the advancement of current generation. Presently, people are less likely to be separated from the media. It is so because there are no media which people do not know about, what happens around them as well as other parts of the world.

Apart from the advantages of the media existence, society has been shaped by the media to some extent. The media which people rely on provide information that fill up the minds of human beings. Specifically, the youth who receive information without any attempt to screen are influenced by the media.

The violent programs in the media contain violent actions which are influential to its viewers. Adolescents, particularly who are in a state of searching for identity are very much vulnerable to that kind of program. They behave in a real situation somehow reflecting what they have seen in the media. Not only does visual play a role in the contribution to violence but audio also takes the same role e.g. lyrics of music.

Exposure to violent action can shape the mind of adolescents toward the acceptance of violence in daily life. Having that perception can be translated into actual behavior in the society. In general, a group of societies can shape this earth as the most inconvenient place for human generations. This paper basically looks at the influence of media toward the adolescents from a psychological perspective.

## **2. Psychological Profile Of Adolescents**

Adolescent is a critical period whereby a person is considered not adult yet, nor in a category as a child. In other words, they are undergoing the transformation from the childhood period into the adult one. In this period, the adolescents are easily influenced and change from one thing to another since they are still searching for who they are,

looking for comfortable and suitable things for themselves. In addition, their cognitive ability is not fully developed so changing behaviors are frequently experienced.

According to a concept by Erikson, the adolescent period focuses on personal identity (Nikolso and Ayers 2004), which consists of genetic inheritance (biological factor) and socio-cultural aspects (environmental factor). Both factors play a role in shaping the identity of the adolescents. They ask frequently "who am I?", "where do I come from?" as a process of searching for the identity. The identity evolves throughout childhood in which the process of internalizing and assimilating values and roles of people who surround them (significant others) takes place. The personal identity of anybody depends on how society responds to his or her action. Likewise, the media which are considered as resource and reflection of the society are taken into account as the picture of the society by the adolescents. Consequently, violent behavior that is commonly depicted in the media is deemed as something which is acceptable and common among the people in the society. Erikson explains further the process of creating the identity is not significant and optimal unless they commit to certain roles, values, and sexual orientation (Nikolso and Ayers 2004). The programs that are available in the media contain certain values that are adopted and translated into actual behavior and it is fixed as their role which is included in part of searching for the identity.

Apart from that a behavioral perspective looks at the human actions as simply resulting from rewards and punishment that are gained from the environment after performing certain actions (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart, and Roy 2006). The violent actions of adolescents can be considered to be acceptable whenever they do them, then, they gain certain rewards from the environment such as praise and acceptance from their peers.

However, Albert Bandura, a prominent psychologist suggested that human action is not simply the result of getting rewards or avoiding punishment, but there are reciprocal interactions between the human being and the environment. He added that human beings act on certain actions by watching and imitating from others (Steinberg 2005). In other words, there is a process of internalizing the information which is exposed from the outside. The aggressive behavior did not just result from getting the reward, but also from watching, imitating and internalizing that kind of behavior from the environment, the media specifically, prior to be implemented into overt behavior.

Although human beings are not able to free themselves from the influence of the environment according to the observational learning approach of Albert Bandura, they are active agents who have freedom and ability to filter and choose the stimulus that come from the environment.

### **3. Influence Of Media On Shaping Aggressive Adolescents.**

The interaction between society and individuals cannot be separated from one another since both contribute to the development of each other. Different societies have different models of culture that consist of fibers-music, drama, theater, films- that make a web of cultures (Miedzian 1995). Every child who is born into different cultures has different attitudes, behavior, values, and ways of thinking. It does so because he has gone through a process of socialization, which is inculcating values from one generation to another generation which consisted of different values and norms, depending upon the society.

The process of socialization can occur through various factors such as family, school, media and community (Berns 1997). Here the media is considered to be the very focus of discussion since it spreads and instills values to many people in the current situation regardless of age, place, and time.

A research has shown that the likelihood of aggression has been increasing through the information that is spread through media- music, television, video game, film-both in short-term and long-term effects (Anderson et al. 2003). The research also suggested that the degree of aggression is not solely contributed by the media, both the individual characteristics (e.g. types of personality, level of temperament), and social environment (e.g. parents, siblings, peers) do contribute to the variety of aggression levels.

Five experiments of Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks (2003) have shown that the effect of songs that contain violent lyrics increase the likelihood of aggressive thought and feeling. The songs with the violent lyrics influence the evaluation of situation and emotional state and (finally) decision to make certain behavior. In addition to that many people believe that listening to violent and aggressive music while in a state of anger can help him or her to release tension. Nevertheless,

it is contradictory to the result of the study which showed that “Listening to angry, violent music does not appear to provide the kind of cathartic release that the general public and some professional and pop psychologists believe” (Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks 2003). The particular song that contains violent lyrics has implications on both short and long-term conditions in the minds and feelings of people.

The violent media have become a moderator to the aggression for people who have high tendency to behave aggressively in nature, (Bushman 1995). A study has shown that people who have high trait aggression experienced more anger after watching violent movies than the counterparts who are low in the trait of aggression (Bushman 1995). Furthermore, the study concluded that visual violence can affect and increase the likelihood to behave aggressively in the high trait aggressive people compared to the low trait aggressive ones.

The research is very much in line with this temporary situation of the world in which many young people can easily get the violent movies and visual information that can heighten the tendency of aggressive behavior, which is already attached to be part of their nature.

Therefore, the role of media, both audio and visual, have to be taken into consideration and weighted back in light of affecting minds and emotions of the younger generation. Ways of thinking and perception are common words that are always heard in daily life, though some people take its role lightly, but, in fact, it contributes a lot to the behavior, especially, the aggression of young people. Finally, the aggression-related information of the media affects the youth’s mind, that is translated into overt behavior more or less, since the adolescents are less likely to be detached from the media in this global world.

#### **4. Chaotic Generations Create Chaotic Society**

The relationship between society and individual cannot be looked at separately. Both are influencing one another. The society obviously consists of human beings and the individuals are affected by the condition of the society in which they are living in. As the youth generations are trained to perceive violence as something acceptable or to be less sensitive to the violent actions, the whole society is natured to accept these actions as a result.

If the media still promote the violent and aggressive actions for the sake of economic profits, the whole society should carry the consequences of gaining the profits itself such as spending more money to treat youths who are trapped in drug abuse, free sex, and put in jail due to juvenile delinquent problems. The cost of negative effects resulting from gaining the personal economic profits, by exposing certain movies and programs that encourage the adolescents to adopt negative values, is higher than personal profits itself.

A freedom of expression has become almost a common argument to legalize any actions of human beings. Naturally, the individuals want to have the freedom to choose and act on certain actions (Johnmarshall 2005). However, there is no absolute freedom since one's freedom is confined by another individual's freedom (Miedzian 1995). The prohibition of polluting air is to deprive human beings of taking dirty air that can affect their healthy life, the prohibition of taking away another person's life is to deprive of eliminating a chain of one generation and making chaos in the society. Likewise, the freedom of expression in the media should be limited with respect to poisoning the minds of youngsters and society as a whole.

Thus, the process of educating the youths through the media should be taken properly since today's generations are the ones who will take and shape a future life. If the current media act as "baby sitter" of the youngsters provide negative values that shape them to become a chaos generation, the chaos society will appear as the reaction toward the value of media.

## **5. Conclusion And Suggestion**

The condition of society the same applies depends upon the condition of individuals and to the quality of individuals that is influenced by the condition of the society in which they live in. The media as part of contributors in shaping public opinions and type of society have to provide positive information in order to produce health cycle of life on which the influence of each element can run properly.

Exposure to violent actions in the media, both audio and visual, has negative impact on the existence of mankind in the world in the short and long-term period. As the youth adopt negative values from the media, then, they as future holders will act accordingly to the values (violence) that they have internalized.

There are some elements that need to be taken into consideration in order to reduce the current situation in which the acceptance of society has become part of daily life. Firstly, creating and implementing some policies to restrict the media in exposing violent actions, both in audio and visual, should be taken consistently as the action against the violent acceptance. Secondly, the role of parents in the family cannot be abandoned to make the better peaceful world while imposing religious values that promote a peaceful world. The role of family should be given attention since it is the utmost society which is first encountered by human beings. Finally, educational institutions have to play a role in fixing the current situation because education is a significant method imposing certain values. Fixing and improving our younger generations are our responsibility as part of elements of society.

Positive contributions that help the development of the world have been contributed much by the media through which people can know certain progress in the field of technology, economic, politic, education, culture, and so forth. Moreover, the role of media will become better when the violent exposure is allocated less for the public consumption. Individual, society, and media are shaping who we are and who I am. Finally, the malicious society forms the malicious world.

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