Parental Mediation as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Violent Media Contents Exposure and Aggressive Behaviour of In-School Adolescents

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Abstract

This study, through a correlational survey of 603 adolescent students in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria, aimed to find out if parental mediation is a moderator of the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour. The researchers used Violent Media Contents Questionnaire and In-School Adolescents' Aggressive Behaviour Questionnaire for data collection. To analyze the data collected, the researchers used Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and simple linear regression statistics. Results showed that the extent to which parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents was very high. It was also found that parental mediation significantly moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. Therefore, parents could play an active role in managing and regulating in-school adolescent's media contents consumption and invariably influence the extent they display aggressive behaviour.

Keywords: aggressive behaviour, parental mediation, violent media contents, in-school adolescents

1. Introduction

1.1 Parental Mediation and Violent Media Contents

Parents are among the most crucial socializing agents that assist schoolchildren to learn and maintain positive attitudes, skills and knowledge. In order to assist schoolchildren socialize properly, parents often employ several strategies like reinforcement, rule-making, discussion, and modelling. This is called parental mediation strategies. The concept covers those techniques that parents employ for controlling, managing or interpreting media contents among their children (Warren, 2001). Kutner, Olson, Warner, and Hertzog (2008) stated that the techniques utilized by parents for controlling children's media use are referred to as parental mediation. Parental mediation relates to parents' efforts aimed at translating the intricacies of the media into expressions comprehensible to children at different cognitive levels of development (Stanaland, Lwin, Yeang-Cherng, & Chong, 2015). In this study, parental mediation are the strategies utilized by parents in monitoring and controlling their children's violent media consumption. These strategies used by parents for mediating on adolescents' media contents consumption could vary and may involve a combination of two or more strategies. Parents can mediate on how children interact with the media through restrictive mediation, active mediation, co-using mediation or eclectic mediation (Eseadi, 2016; Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya, & Eze, 2019).

In restrictive mediation, parents create rules to manage children's media use with regard to the type of contents and the amount of exposure. In other words, parents who practice restrictive mediation set limits on screen time as well as contents (Lwin, Stanaland, & Miyazaki, 2008). Contributing, Nathanson, and Yang (2005) stated that restrictive

mediation means setting rules on children's television viewing like content type or the number of times they view TV programmes. With regard to internet use, technical mediation is often seen as a sub-form of restrictive parental mediation. Technical mediation is seen as parents' installing a filter or computer software that monitors children's internet use and prevents children from visiting specific websites or unsuitable websites (Eastin, Greenberg, & Hofschire, 2006; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

According to Kutner, Olson, Warner and Hertzog (2008), the most commonly used parental mediation strategy seems to be restrictive mediation. Restrictive mediation may be considered less efficacious when compared with active mediation because it may not facilitate children's development of skills of critical thinking (Fujioka & Austin, 2003). On the other hand, if a child obeys parents' rules, Shin (2010) opined that it could reduce the child's likelihood of being exposed to those media contents considered less desirable. Despite the fact that restrictive parental mediation may not encourage adolescents to intensely comprehend the expectations of their parents and internalize them as sets of attitudes and/or beliefs, it could possibly influence their immediate behaviour.

Active mediation requires having a discussion with adolescents about the objectionable aspects of media contents and tolerable ways of consuming media contents. In other words, parents who practice active mediation would explain the significant aspects of the media contents to their children, highlighting its meaning and context (Lwin, Stanaland, & Miyazaki, 2008). According to Nathanson and Yang (2005), active mediation, involves discussing with adolescents about television, like discussing the programmes, content and advertising. In an earlier contribution, Nathanson (2002) classified active mediation into three forms, namely, positive, negative or neutral. When parents are endorsing or admiring the media content, it is called positive active mediation (Nathanson & Botta, 2003). The use of parental judgment or critique of media messages, like discussing the negative effects of advertising techniques or violent contents is called negative active mediation refers to (Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Nathanson & Botta, 2003). In neutral mediation, parents may combine both positive and negative active mediation, or they may exhibit neutral active mediation (discussion which cannot be categorized solely as positive or negative active mediation) (Nathanson, 2002).

The use of active mediation by parents could help strengthen adolescents' critical thinking about the media and protect them from media's negative effects (*see* Mendoza, 2009). Livingstone (2002) and Pasquier (2001) had earlier opined that discussing with children is more beneficial in guiding them compared to the use of restrictions. Children tend to learn more from educationally-focused media contents and acquire positive social behaviour when parents employ active mediation (Nathanson, 2002). Negative active mediation influences the socialization of children politically (Austin & Pinkelton, 2001). Parents might control the nature of violent content adolescents are exposed to if they view such content with adolescents and give their own opinions; parents' obvious explanations of their values and expectations no matter how old-fashioned they might seem are helpful and protective for adolescents (Strasbruger & Wilson, 2002).

Co-using mediation is defined as the sharing of media content experience by parents and their children without objective instruction or significant discussion (Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). The term 'co-using mediation' is also called 'co-viewing' in the context of television content consumption. Nathanson and Yang (2005) described co-viewing as the simple act whereby parents watch television with their wards without discussing its content, relevance or usability. Kutner, Olson, Warner, and Hertzog (2008) stated that some parents practice co-viewing (watching without open discussion) occasionally with adolescent boys.

Most parents watch media contents with their children so as to monitor the children's media viewing in that they are concerned about the harmful effects of the media on the children (Eseadi, 2016; Shin, 2010). Nathanson (2001) stated that parent-child co-viewing of violent television programmes was positively related to positive attitudes of parents toward violent television programmes, whereas active and restrictive mediation correlated with negative attitudes of parents toward violent television programmes. Similarly, Warren, Gerke, and Kelly (2002) noted that co-viewing was not linked to negative attitude of parents toward their children's television viewing, while active and restrictive mediation were. Nathanson (2001) observed that children aged 8-12years tend to perceive parents' watching television together as evidence of parents' positive attitudes toward the given type of programme (violent television shows). In other words, mere co-viewing without any critical commentary is likely to be perceived by children as parental endorsement of specific media materials rather than as parental intervention efforts. Consequently, co-viewing has been considered the least helpful parental mediation technique compared to active and restrictive mediation (Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Nathanson, 2001; Warren, Gerke, & Kelly, 2002).

In view of the three forms of parental mediation, Nathanson (2001) stated that parents' personal affinity with violent television programmes and perceived utility of the violence on their child are negatively related to restrictive mediation and positively related to co-viewing. But, these attitudes were unconnected to active

mediation. Warren (2001) and Warren, Gerke and Kelly (2002) noted that restrictive and active mediation results from parents' unhelpful viewpoints about media contents. Furthermore, Warren (2001) observed that parents who were very much worried about the harmful effects of violent television content consumption on their children were more likely than less worried parents to put into practice higher levels of both restrictive and active parental mediation strategies.

1.2 Aggressive Behaviour

Aggressive behaviour is an intentional act to cause harm to another person (Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya, & Eze, 2019). Aggressive behaviour refers to behaviour intentionally aimed at victimizing, harming or hurting another person in diverse ways including physical and psychological, directly or indirectly (Eseadi, 2016). A person who displays such behaviour is known as the 'aggressor', whereas the individual who is intentionally harmed is the 'victim'. Different types of aggressive behaviour exist and they include: physical aggression, hostile aggression, relational aggression, verbal aggression, instrumental aggression and emotional aggression.In physical aggression, the aggressor aims to hurt other people bodily by fighting, harassing, stabbing, biting, molesting, pushing, hitting, shooting kicking, torturing, vandalizing, shoving, or hair pulling (body (Al Sheekh Ali, 2013; National Youth Violence Prevention Research Centre, 2002; Sameer & Jamia, 2007). Therefore, as a form of hostility, the purpose of physical aggression is to cause damage to the body (Al Sheekh Ali, 2013; National Youth Violence Prevention Research Centre, 2002; Sameer & Jamia, 2007).

Verbal aggression, on the other hand, refers to the use of words like yelling, swearing, name-calling, and screaming, to hurt other people. Verbal aggression encompasses acts like abusing with terrible words, showing anger, swearing, threatening, and being sarcastic just to inflict emotional and psychological injury on others (Sameer & Jamia, 2007). Verbal aggression also encompasses acts like use of threats, intimidation of others and indulging in malevolent mockery and calling of names (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; National Youth Violence Prevention Research Centre, 2002). Relational aggression is the deliberate act of hurting other's shared relations, their feelings of being accepted, or inclusiveness in a group (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Instances of relational aggression are backbiting, withdrawing love to attain what you wish for, excluding others from your friends list, and giving a person the "silent treatment" group (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). According to Brehm, Kassin and Fein (2005), relational aggression is a facet of indirect aggression which mostly focus on targeting an individual's social status and relationships like threatening to put a stop to a friendship, gossiping, backbiting and attempting to get others to hate the target.

Hostile aggression takes place when the perpetrator's major purpose is to cause injury to the target because of anger (Onukwufor, 2012). In other words, hostile aggression is a behaviour that is observed when the aggressor's major aim is to injure the target because the aggressor is angry. Instrumental aggression could occur with intention to injure another person, but is mainly a means toward achieving some other non-harmful objectives like to gain social approval or to acquire wealth (Onukwufor, 2012). Regarding emotional aggression, authors believes that injury is inflicted for its own sake and is an impulsive act usually perpetrated when the heat is still on (Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 2005).

There are different ways that aggressive behaviour could be expressed. Aggressive behaviour can be displayed either directly or indirectly. In direct aggression, the sufferer is present physically whereas in indirect aggression, the sufferer is not present physically. Aggression can also be displaced. In displaced aggression, a surrogate target often bears consequence (Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson, & Miller, 2000). In the displaced form of aggression, the surrogate target may not be culpable, but, by happenstance was found in the wrong place at the wrong moment. However, sometimes, as researchers have argued, the surrogate target may not be completely blameless as the target might have committed an inconsequential or trivial offense, known as triggered displaced aggression (Pedersen, Gonzales, & Miller, 2000). For example, an in-school adolescent rebuked by the parents or teacher might yell at a classmate who forgot to return his or her textbook or who playfully throws a pen at him or her. Triggered displaced aggression might occur when the perpetrator recalls the initial offense or when the perpetrator does not like the surrogate target, like, when the target is an outgroup member or has a personality flaw (Bushman, Bonacci, Pedersen, Vasquez, & Miller, 2005; Pedersen, Bushman, Vasquez, & Miller, 2008). Possibly, individuals indulge in displaced aggression for two major motives. One reason is because direct aggression against the source of provocation may be impracticable may be because the provoker is not available, or because the provoker is an intangible thing. Second reason is being afraid of revenge or retribution from the source may hinder one from aggressing directly. For example, a worker who was scolded by the manager may be hesitant to get revenge to avoid losing his or her job (Pedersen, Bushman, Vasquez, & Miller, 2008). Aggressive behaviour can also be expressed in active or passive form. With active aggression, the provoker responds in a hurtful manner (like

hitting, swearing). With passive aggression, the provoker does not respond in a helpful manner. For example, the provoker might fail to remember to deliver a significant message to the target. Since direct and active forms of aggression can be relatively risky (could result to injury or even death), most individuals would prefer to employ indirect and passive forms of aggression instead (Bushman et al., 2005).

1.3 Review of Some Previous Related Studies

Kirsh and Olczak (2002) examined the effects which the reading of extremely violent comic books (EVCB) versus nonviolent comic books (NVCB) have on how overt and relational ambiguous provocation situations are interpreted. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between trait hostility and hostile responding. Also, results indicated that the type of aggression notwithstanding, those participants reading EVCB reacted more negatively compared to participants reading NVCB. Finally, male participants were reported to have reacted more negatively to the overt situations, while female participants were observed to have reacted more negatively to the relational situations.

Slater, Henry, Swaim, and Cardador (2004) examined how teen's sensation seeking, alienation, and victimization moderate the violent media contents–aggressiveness relation. Results indicated that violent media had a more robust effect on aggression among students who reported feelings of alienation from school and during times of increased peer victimization. Furthermore, the researchers reported that even if total use of violent media was linked to higher aggression levels, a robust within-individual effect was also observed.

Krahe, Busching and Möller (2012) investigated the longitudinal associations between adolescents' use of media violence and aggression in a sample of 1,715 (881 female and 834 male) high school students over a two-year period. The samples were selected from ninety-three classes across fourteen schools in various districts of Berlin. It was found that over the course of 24 months, media violence was a predictor of self-rated physical aggression as well as teacher-rated aggression. Results also indicated that there was no relationship between nonviolent media use and self-rated or teacher-rated aggression.

Tarabah, Badr, Usta and Doyle (2016) studied the relationship between exposure to various types of violence and desensitization in 207 school-aged Lebanese children. The researchers reported that 76 percent of the children were being exposed to violence; male children and those in the lower social economic status group were more exposed to violence. But the effects of violence were greater on female children when compared to male children. The violence led to desensitization that could make them acknowledge violence as customary and place them at risk for imitation of violent behaviours.

In a similar vein, Obikeze and Obi (2015) employed a descriptive survey design to investigate the occurrence and rate of aggressive behaviours among senior secondary school students in Anambra State. The study sample size was 500 students (280 female and 220 male students). The students were found to be manifesting aggressive behaviour frequently. Also, television viewing was among the major risk factors for aggression. In the study, male students were reported to be more aggressive compared to the female students.

1.4 Objective of the Current Study

The objective of this study is to find out if parental mediation is a moderator of the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour in a Nigerian sample of in-school adolescents.

1.5 Research Question

To what extent does parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents?

1.6 Hypothesis

Parental mediation will not significantly moderate the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents.

2. Method

This study is a correlational survey of 603 adolescent students in Onitsha Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. The adolescent students were in senior secondary school class two. Thus, they provided informed assent before completing the questionnaires. The researchers observed the research principles of the American Psychological Association in the conduct of this study. The researchers used the Violent Media Contents Questionnaire (VMCQ) and In-School Adolescents' Aggressive Behaviour Questionnaire (IAABQ) for data collection (Eseadi, 2016). The VMCQ is a self-report questionnaire of 20 items on violent media contents with a 4-point scale ranging from Always to Never. The IAABQ is also a self-report questionnaire of 29 items measuring

aggressive behaviour on a 4-point scale ranging from Always to Never. In a 2016 study, the VMCQ was reported to have a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88, and the IAABQ had a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.83 (Eseadi, 2016). To analyze the data collected, the researchers used Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and simple linear regression statistics. The study hypothesis was tested at 0.05 probability level.

3. Results

3.1 Research Question

To what extent does parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents?

Table 1. Partial correlation analysis showing the extent to which parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents

Variables Mediation	Parental	N	$\bar{X}$ SD	r_p	Decision
Violent Media Content	Co-using	60	3.30±.28		
Restrictive		168	3.26±.28		
	Active	198	3.23±.29		
	Eclectic	177	3.24±.29		
	Total	603	3.25±.29		
				0.82	Very High Extent
Aggressive Behaviour	Co-using	60	3.38±.34		
Restrictive		168	3.39±.36		
	Active	198	3.35±.37		
	Eclectic	177	3.38±.37		
	Total	603	3.37±.36		

N=number of respondents, r_p=Partial correlation coefficient.

Results in Table 1 shows that based on parental mediation, the mean score for violent media contents exposure was 3.30 with standard deviation of 0.28 for in-school adolescents experiencing co-using parental mediation; mean score of 3.26 with standard deviation of 0.28 was obtained for the in-school adolescents experiencing restrictive parental mediation; mean score of 3.23 with standard deviation of 0.29 was obtained for the in-school adolescents experiencing active parental mediation; mean score of 3.24 with standard deviation of 0.29 was obtained for the in-school adolescents experiencing eclectic parental mediation; and the overall mean score for violent media contents exposure when moderated by parental mediation was 3.25 with standard deviation of 0.29. Meanwhile, the mean score on aggressive behaviour was 3.38 with standard deviation of 0.34 for in-school adolescents experiencing co-using parental mediation; mean score of 3.39 with standard deviation of 0.36 was obtained for the in-school adolescents experiencing restrictive parental mediation; mean score of 3.35 with standard deviation of 0.37 was obtained for the in-school adolescents experiencing active parental mediation; mean score of 3.38 with standard deviation of 0.37 was obtained for the in-school adolescents experiencing eclectic parental mediation; and the overall mean score for violent media contents exposure when moderated by parental mediation was 3.37 with standard deviation of 0.36. The partial correlation coefficient (r_p) which is 0.82 indicates that to a very high extent, parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents.

Hypothesis: Parental mediation will not significantly moderate the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents.

Table 2. Summary of regression analysis showing parental mediation moderating the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents

Variables	N	F	R^2	B	Sig.
Violent Media Contents					
Parental Mediation	603	617.150	.673	.821	.000
Aggressive Behaviour					

The results in Table 2 revealed that parental mediation significantly moderate the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents, $R^2 = .67$, $F(1, 602) = 617.15$, $\beta = .82$, $p < .05$.

4. Discussion

This study sought to find out if parental mediation is a moderator of the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. This study found that the extent to which parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents is very high. The study confirmed that parental mediation significantly moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. The finding is in line with Krahe, Busching and Möller (2012) who showed that the relationship between exposure to violent media content and aggressive behaviour is moderated by parental monitoring. The finding is in line with that of Eseadi (2016) who observed parental mediation is a moderator in the relationship between violent media content viewing and adolescent students' aggressive behaviour. The finding is also in line with that of Onuigbo, Eseadi, Onwuasoanya, and Eze (2019) reported that the relationship between violent media content consumption and adolescent students' aggressive behaviour is moderated by parental mediation strategies. The implication of this finding is that parents still worry about the effects that violent media contents would have on adolescent students and are thus adopting strategies to help curtail adolescents' exposure to violent media contents. Also, in spite of parent-child disagreement during adolescence, many adolescent students still concur with parental mediation on violent media contents consumption. Therefore, parents can play an active role in managing and regulating in-school adolescent's media contents consumption and this would invariably influence the extent they exhibit aggressive behaviour. The use of parental mediation to curtail adolescents' consumption of violent media contents is necessary given the reports of adolescents' exposure to violent media contents. For example, Strasburger (1995) stated that music lyrics and videos watched by adolescents have high levels of violence. Maxwell, Huxford, Borum and Hornik (2000) and Taylor and Sorenson (2002) observed that media reportage featured intimate partner violence. Sargent, Heatherton, Ahrens, Dalton, Tickle and Beach (2002) reported a high level of severe violence in movies watched by adolescents. Ramasubramanian and Oliver (2003) noted that sexual violence is also being portrayed in the media. It is suggested that secondary school teachers and secondary school administrators should collaborate with guidance counsellors to provide the essential information and knowledge to students regarding the aggressive consequences of excessive exposure to violent media contents.

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that the extent to which parental mediation moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents is very high. Also, parental mediation significantly moderates the relationship between violent media contents exposure and aggressive behaviour among in-school adolescents. Therefore, parents could play an active role in managing and regulating in-school adolescents' media contents consumption and invariably influence the extent they display aggressive behaviour.

Note/Acknowledgements

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there are no competing or potential conflicts of interest.

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