

MEDIA INFLUENCE ON ADOLESCENTS LIFE: VIOLENCE AND SEXUALITY

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Увеличеното място и роля на средствата за масова комуникация в съвременния свят обясняват и засиления изследователски интерес към тях. Настоящата работа се опитва да проследи една от най-широко изследваните теми – насилието в медиите и последствията върху младежите от една страна, а от друга да насочи вниманието и към една по-малко изследвана, но също така провокираща множество дискусии тема – сексуалността. Разгледани са някои от теориите и изследователските резултати в тези две области, както и някои от нашите изследвания, свързани с влиянието на медийното насилие върху емоционалното състояние на юношите.

The observing of the nowadays world presents an increased importance of the role of mass media communications in the everyday life of an individual. More than 3500 researches, including laboratory experiments, traditional co-relational and longitudinal researches, discuss the negative influence of the media presented violence in general, especially on children and youth, who are not only more vulnerable, but also more willing to spend time for the media products (Strasburger & Grossman, 2001).

The mass media have been shown to affect a broad range of children and adolescents' health-related attitudes and behaviours including violence, eating disorders, tobacco and alcohol use (Champion & Furham, 1998; Escobar-Chaves et al., 2005). In general, the media depict a world in which unhealthy behaviours such as physical aggression, unprotected sex, smoking, and drinking are glamorous and risk-free (Brown & Witherspoon, 2002).

Adolescents and Media

The mass media are an increasingly accessible way for people to learn about and see a different kind of behavior. The media may be especially important for young people as they are developing their own beliefs and patterns of behavior. Adolescents are active consumers of messages broad-

cast on radio and television, printed in magazines, distributed on the Internet and presented in video games (Werner-Wilson et al., 2004). Young people spend an average of 5 to 6 hours each day with some form of media. Violence and sexual talk and displays are increasingly frequent and explicit in this mediated world (Kunkel et al., 2003).

Larson (1995) suggested that media usage changes, often becoming more individualistic, as adolescents begin to develop their sense of self. The experience of adolescents while they develop may impact how media is selected and how influential the messages are. Roberts (1993) has also examined adolescents and established that it is not only development differences that affect the impact which media has on youth, but so do the individual abilities, interests, social relations, and short- and long-term needs of the adolescents. Other characteristics of adolescents including gender, race, class, and family environment have also been shown associated with media influence (Brown & Newcomer, 1991; Steele, 1999).

In qualitative, multi-method study, Steele (1999) found that gender differences might be present in the selection of media to be viewed or listened to. Adolescent girls appear to be affected differently by print media and more likely than young males inclined to read and have positive attitudes toward magazines. Girls use these magazines as discussion starters and to supplement sex education classes, whereas boys have reported that they consider the seeking and snaring of advice to be unmasculine behavior (Kehely, 1999). Girls have also been reported as more likely to seek media showing romance and therefore more likely to be exposed to sexual content (Donnerstein & Smith, 2001).

Further, in our survey (N=355, X age= 22,8) men and women differ in their interest to some mass media topics like crime presentation ($t=2,61$; $p=.009$), erotic ($t=7,39$; $p=.000$), and movie genre – action-adventure ($t=7,09$; $p=.000$), romantic ($t=-7,22$; $p=.000$), and drama ($t=-5,11$; $p=.000$). From fig.1 is obvious that men prefer to view crime presentation, eroticism and action-adventure movies, whereas women direct their interest to romantic movies and drama.

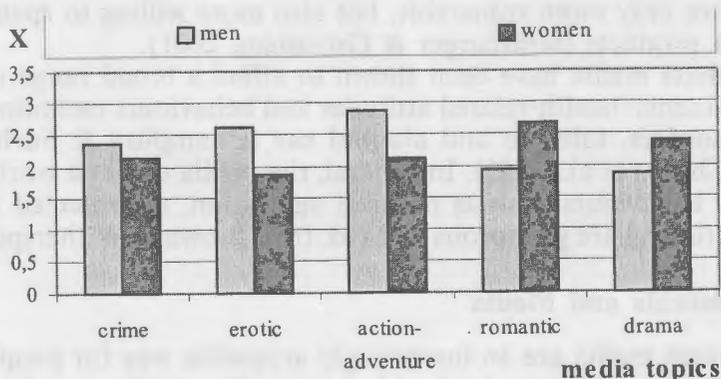


Fig.1. Gender differences in some mass media topics