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# MEDIA VIOLENCE HARMS CHILDREN: A KUWAIT CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examines the relationship between violent media exposure and aggression among 332 Kuwaiti youth aged 18–24, across four domains: television and film, violent news, gaming, and social media. Participants completed a structured questionnaire including demographic data and retrospective reports of media use from ages 6–17, focusing on violent content such as crime, fighting, horror, and action. Aggression was measured using the Arabic Buss and Perry (1992) Aggression Scales (Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, Hostility). Data analysis with ANOVA, t-tests, correlation, and regression revealed significant associations between violent media exposure and aggression, varying by platform. Childhood video game play strongly predicted overall aggression and all subdimensions. Social media, particularly Twitter (X) and WhatsApp, was linked to higher aggression. Television exposure predicted verbal aggression and hostility. Gender differences showed males higher in overt aggression, while females displayed comparable hostility and anger. Findings emphasize platform-specific and cultural influences on aggression development.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Media, Violence, TV, Social Media, Video Games, Kuwait.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Media violence has been a persistent concern in both academic and public debates, particularly regarding its effects on children (Anderson et al., 2015; Fuld et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2017; Gentile et al., 2011; Guo, 2022). Television, films, video games, news, and social media have all been scrutinised for their potential to shape aggressive thoughts, emotions and behaviours. Decades of research have shown that children are especially vulnerable, as they are still developing cognitive and emotional regulation skills that may limit their ability to critically interpret violent or harmful content (Lambert et al., 2016; Mattheiss et al., 2022). While the psychological and behavioural risks of media violence have been extensively studied, findings remain contested, with scholars debating the extent to which violent media exposure cases, reinforces or merely correlates with aggressive outcomes.

Despite the volume of research, most studies are rooted in Western contexts, which may not generalise to societies with different cultural, familial, and religious structures. In Kuwait, where children's media consumption is high and largely influenced by globalised entertainment, concerns about exposure to violent or harmful content are particularly salient. Understanding how different forms of media influence aggression within this context is essential, given strong cultural norms around family, gender, and morality. This paper examines prior evidence on the links between violent media and aggression, organised across four domains: children's television and film, violent news, gaming and social media.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Children today engage with a wide range of media platforms that frequently present violent imagery (Ybarra et al., 2008; Ybarra et al., 2022). Mainstream programming often normalises aggression, promoting concerns about long-term effects on children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. According to Anderson et al. (2017), there is evidence of both short-term and long-term negative effects from a number of meta-analyses conducted over the previous 60 years on media violence and violent video games. While numerous studies document links between violent content and higher aggression levels, other caution against assuming direct causality. This scholarly divide underscores the need for research within specific cultural contexts, such as Kuwait, to assess how media violence interacts with local social and family dynamics.

Television and film remain among the most

influential media platforms for children, with animated cartoons and action films often embedding violence within entertainment. Recent content analyses in the United States found 20 to 25 violent acts per hour in popular children's cartoons, five times higher than prime-time television. Around two-thirds of these acts were paired with humour, while only a small fraction depicted consequences, contributing to desensitization and weaker understanding of real-world harm (Martins & Riddle, 2021). Such depictions risk encouraging children to view violence as entertaining rather than harmful (Muller et al., 2020). Furthermore, theories such as "Social Learning Theory" suggest that repeated exposure to such portrayals can normalize aggression by modelling violent behaviors as acceptable strategies for resolving conflict (Bandura, 1977). Empirical evidence supports this: Huesmann (2007) found long-term correlations between early exposure to violent television content and later aggressive behavior in adulthood. In Kuwait, where much children's television is imported and dubbed into Arabic, children may be especially exposed to Western action-oriented narratives, potentially reducing cultural filters that would otherwise mitigate aggressive messages.

However, the relationship is not uniformly negative. Some studies indicate that children differentiate between fictional violence and real-life aggression, especially as they grow older (Mitrofan et al., 2014). Others argue that violent content in cartoons is often stylised or exaggerated, limiting its direct impact (Ferguson et al., 2012). For instance, Buckingham (2013) critiques the 'moral panic' narrative, suggesting exposure may support ethical reasoning when paired with discussion and media literacy. Similarly, some research suggests superhero or law-enforcement content helps children differentiate between justifies and unjustified aggression (Bortz & Swanson, 2018; Martin, 2023; Ramsy, 2020).

Thus, while television and film violence have been consistently linked to increased aggression, the degree of impact appears to vary by age, parental mediation, and cultural context. In Kuwait, where family supervision is strong, but media is increasingly globalized, the balance between risk and resilience remains unclear.

Unlike fictional media, news presents real-world violence in ways that may heighten children's sense of fear, anxiety, or hostility. This includes exposure to terrorism, war, and crime, often accompanied by graphic visuals (Holman, Garfin, and Silver 2024). Cultivation theory suggests that repeated exposure

to violent news coverage can distort perceptions of reality, leading children to view the world as more threatening than it is (Andersen et al., 2024). Studies have shown that exposure to graphic news images is associated with heightened stress, nightmares, and even symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in young viewers (Awan et al., 2022; Lengua et al., 2005). The realism of news content intensifies its effects. Graphic coverage has been associated with imitative behaviors, heightened fear responses, and long-term desensitization (Huesmann and Taylor 2006). Cognitive consequences include concentration difficulties, while emotional effects may persist into adulthood (Ybarra et al., 2022). For children in Kuwait, news reports on regional conflicts and terrorism may carry particular salience, given the country's proximity to areas of political instability.

Nevertheless, the risks appear greater when violent news is consumed without parental mediation, especially in societies where children are heavily exposed to global cable channels and unregulated digital feeds. In Kuwait, where traditional family structures emphasize parental authority, mediation practices may serve as a protective factor, though research in this context remains limited.

The gaming industry, now exceeding \$229 billion in 2024, markets heavily to children (Grand View Research, 2024; Smirni et al., 2021). Video games, particularly those in the action and shooter genres, have drawn sustained attention for their immersive and interactive forms of violence. According to the General Aggression Model (GAM) (Anderson & Bushman, 2018), repeated violent gameplay can increase aggressive thoughts and desensitize players to violence. Neuroimaging studies have shown short-term changes in brain activity linked to aggression after violent gaming sessions (Ritchie et al., 2024), while other research suggest modest but consistent associations changes in brain regions linked to impulse control and aggression regulation (Smirni et al., 2021). Furthermore, repeated play of first-person shooters has been associated impulsivity, reduced empathy, and higher aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2018; Lopez et al., 2024). In Kuwait, where gaming cafés and online multiplayer games are increasingly popular, particularly among boys, these risks may be amplified by social reinforcement.

However, counterarguments remain strong. Critics highlight that many studies rely on artificial lab experiments measuring aggression through tasks that may not reflect real-world behavior (Ferguson et al., 2012). Others, such as the 'Catharsis Theory'

suggest that violent games can provide safe outlets for anger or even foster teamwork and problem-solving skills in multiplayer contexts (Kersten & Greitemeyer, 2022). Moreover, others highlight potential cognitive benefits, improved attention, visuospatial skills, and memory, linked to enhanced hippocampus activity (Palaus et al., 2017). Many children themselves describe gaming as a stress-relief and social activity (Desai, et al., 2021). This suggests that individual differences, such as personality traits, parental involvement, and cultural norms, moderate outcomes (Junco-Guerrero et al., 2024).

For Kuwait's youth, the rapid uptake of gaming culture creates a pressing need to understand not only risks but also the social and recreational benefits of gaming.

Social media introduces unique challenges, as violent content is algorithmically amplified and often encountered with adult mediation. Algorithms prioritise engagement over safety, increasing encounters with graphic imagery, cyberbullying, and hate speech (Skeggs et al., 2025). Children and adolescents may come across graphic videos, online bullying, or extremist material, with research linking such exposure to heightened anger, hostility, and desensitization. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok, highly popular among Kuwaiti youth, present particular risks given their short-form, rapidly consumed content that often blurs entertainment and reality. These normalize harmful behaviors among peers, and trivializes violence through memes or parody (Morales, 2023). Studies link such exposure to increased aggression, anxiety, and emotional desensitization (Liu et al., 2021).

Cyberbullying, a prevalent form of digital violence, is strongly associated with depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, and suicidal ideation (Beghin, 2020). The anonymity and virality of online spaces amplify harm, while children routinely bypass weak age restrictions to access adult content (Jarvie & Renaud, 2024). Algorithmic reinforcement creates echo chambers that repeatedly expose children to violent material, deepening desensitisation. Nonetheless, children and their parents are able to actively curate their feeds, reducing exposure to violent material (McAlister et al., 2024). In Kuwait, where smartphone penetration among youth is among the highest globally (Go-Globe, 2023), the challenge lies not only in regulating content but also in equipping children with the critical skills to navigate digital environments.

Across television, news, video games, and social media, violent content consistently raises concerns about children's aggression, emotional regulation,

and desensitization. Yet findings remain divided, with cultural context, gender, and parental involvement emerging as critical mediating factors. Most existing research has been conducted in Western contexts, over-looking how cultural, familial, and religious norms shape children's interpretations of violence. Moreover, gender differences remain underexplored, particularly in contexts like Kuwait where gender roles are strongly structured.

**This study addresses these gaps by asking the following questions:**

- How do different forms of media use, i.e. television, video games, news, and social media, relate to aggression and The Aggression Dimensions (physical, verbal, anger, hostility).
- What is the strength and significance of these relationships in predicting aggression.
- Are there gender differences in aggression, and what predictive factors influence these differences in the context of Kuwait.

### 3. METHOD

**Sample:** A total of 332 young Kuwaitis were recruited using a non-random, opportunistic sampling method. Participants were between 18 to 24 years of age, including 109 males (32.8%), and 223 females (67.2%), with a mean age of 21.03 (SD = 1.99). The sample represented all six of Kuwait's governorates: Hawalli (8.8%), Ahmedi (19.4%), Farwaniyyah (29.4%), Jahra (16.4%), Mubarak Al-Kabeer (9.4%), and the Capital (16.7%). Participation was voluntary, and individuals were respectfully invited to complete the study questionnaire. The study was reviewed and approved by the College of Social Sciences Research Committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection.

**Variables:** The primary instrument of this study was a structured questionnaire. Demographic information collected included age, gender, and governorate of residence.

**Media use was measured through three single-item self-report scales assessing retrospective exposure between ages 6 and 17:**

1. Television use - "How much did you watch TV when you were younger (6-17 years old)?"
2. Video game use - "How much did you play video games when you were younger (6-17 years old)?"
3. Social media use - "How much did you use social media in general when you were younger (6-17 years old)?"

Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 = never use at all to 7 = *too much*. In addition, frequency of use of Kuwait's most popular social media platforms - X (Twitter), WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok - were assessed using the same seven-point scale (Al-Kandari, 2020).

Participants also reported their exposure to violent content across television, video games and social media during childhood. Measured themes included crime, violence, conflict, fighting, horrors, blood, boxing and wrestling, action, adventure and fantasy. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale (1=*never* to 5=*always*). Test and re-test for these single-item measures was strong, with correlations ranging from .92 to .96.

The Aggression Scales (AS), created by Buss & Perry (1992), were employed in Arabic. This instrument has been previously validated with Kuwaiti youth samples (Al-Husaini, 2000; Al-Kandari & Al-Beeli, 2017).

**The scale consists of 29 items rated on a four-point Likert scale (0 = strongly disagree to 3 = strongly agree, measuring four subdimensions:**

- Physical Aggression (9 items, e.g. "If someone hits me, I hit back," "Given enough provocation, I may hit another person," and "Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.")
- Verbal Aggression (5 items, e.g. "I frequently find myself disagreeing with people," "I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them," and "I may tell people what I think of them when they irritate me.")
- Anger (7 items, e.g. "I get angry easily but get over it quickly," "I let my frustration show when I'm frustrated," and "I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.")
- Hostility (8 items, e.g. "I feel like I've gotten a raw deal out of life at times," "I am sometimes consumed by jealousy," and "Other people always seem to get the breaks.")

The overall reliability of the scale and its subscales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The Aggression Scale's alpha was .84, whereas the subscales' alpha ranged from .86 to .90. Content validity of the study measures was further confirmed by expert review from five faculty members from (XXXXX) College of Social Sciences.

**Statistical Procedures:** All analyses were conducted using SPSS (version 29). One-way ANOVA was utilized to investigate variations in aggression across levels of television viewing, video game playing, and social media use across the

Aggression Scale and its four dimensions. Then, the association between the aggression dimensions and the degree of media consumption—including TV shows, movies, social media, and video games—was investigated using Pearson correlation. Furthermore, independent samples t-tests compared male and female participants on overall aggression and its subscales. Finally, regression analysis was conducted to identify the most predictive variable influencing aggression and its four subdimensions, with particular attention to gender differences.

#### 4. RESULTS

To examine the differences of degree of watching TV, playing video games, and using social media in general in Aggression Scale and its four dimensions (Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, and Hostility), Table (1) show these differences by dividing using media by 3 categories (low, med, and high).

**Table (1): Differences Degree of Watching TV, Playing Video Games, And Using Social Media in General in Aggression Scale and It Four Dimensions.**

| Variables                    | Low   |       | Med    |       | High  |       | F-value |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
|                              | M     | SD    | M      | SD    | M     | SD    |         |
| <u>Degree of Watching TV</u> |       |       |        |       |       |       |         |
| Aggression Scale             | 33.42 | 12.97 | 33.92  | 11.15 | 34.95 | 13.57 | 1.581   |
| Physical Aggression          | 13.60 | 5.23  | 14.41  | 4.60  | 15.02 | 6.30  | 1.088   |
| Verbal Aggression            | 4.53  | 2.64  | 4.38   | 2.33  | 3.97  | 2.51  | .425    |
| Anger                        | 8.13  | 3.43  | 8.13   | 3.16  | 8.60  | 3.64  | 1.008   |
| Hostility                    | 7.54  | 4.68  | 7.88   | 4.07  | 8.51  | 4.66  | .338    |
| <u>Degree of Playing VG</u>  |       |       |        |       |       |       |         |
| Aggression Scale             | 32.21 | 12.11 | 36.393 | 12.68 | 37.12 | 12.11 | 3.769*  |
| Physical Aggression          | 13.58 | 5.46  | 15.81  | 5.12  | 14.94 | 4.43  | 1.276   |
| Verbal Aggression            | 4.20  | 2.39  | 4.45   | 2.68  | 4.73  | 2.60  | 8.927** |
| Anger                        | 7.77  | 3.08  | 8.64   | 2.84  | 9.61  | 3.97  | 1.153   |
| Hostility                    | 7.60  | 4.22  | 8.21   | 5.23  | 8.60  | 4.55  | 5.962** |
| <u>Degree of using SM</u>    |       |       |        |       |       |       |         |
| Aggression Scale             | 31.39 | 10.40 | 31.44  | 11.70 | 34.97 | 12.69 | 3.522*  |
| Physical Aggression          | 12.13 | 5.03  | 13.63  | 5.03  | 14.67 | 5.27  | 1.140   |
| Verbal Aggression            | 3.85  | 1.79  | 4.17   | 2.25  | 4.48  | 2.64  | 6.370** |
| Anger                        | 7.75  | 2.94  | 7.13   | 2.93  | 8.72  | 3.44  | 2.060   |
| Hostility                    | 7.88  | 3.94  | 8.11   | 4.38  | 8.14  | 4.50  | 2.85*   |

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01

Table (1) shows that there no significant differences of degree of watching TV in Aggression Scale and its four dimensions (Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, and Hostility). Significant differences were found in the degree of playing video game and using social media in general in aggression scale, verbal aggression, and hostility. No significant differences were found in the degree of playing video game and using social media in general in physical aggression and anger. Respondents with a high

degree of playing video game and degree of using social media in general when they were children are higher in aggression scale, verbal aggression, and hostility compared with the lower and med users. No differences were found in watching TV.

To examine the relationship between Aggression Scale and its four dimensions with degree of using media in general, TV movies, social media tools and Video Games, Table (2) show these association.

**Table (2): Correlation Coefficient Between Aggression Scale and Its Four Dimensions with Degree of Using Media in General, TV Movies, Social Media Tools and Video Games.**

| Degree of using              | Aggression(all) | Physical Aggr. | Verbal Aggr. | Anger Aggr. | Hostility |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|
| Degree of using Media        |                 |                |              |             |           |
| Watching TV                  | .095            | -.089          | .058         | .064        | .039      |
| Playing VG                   | .37**           | .12*           | .22**        | .21**       | .31**     |
| Using Social Media           | .181*           | .096           | .19          | .11         | .16**     |
| Degree of using Social Media |                 |                |              |             |           |
| X (Twitter)                  | .12*            | .15**          | .12*         | .18**       | .16**     |
| Facebook                     | .059            | .13*           | .056         | .20**       | .13*      |
| Snapchat                     | -.015           | -.003          | -.025        | .044        | -.010     |
| YouTube                      | .094            | -.83           | .097         | .12*        | .085      |
| WhatsApp                     | -.21**          | -.12*          | -.18**       | -.16**      | -.19**    |
| Instagram                    | .11             | .093           | .10          | .057        | .089      |

|                              |        |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Tic Tok                      | .061   | .061  | .022  | .023  | .041  |
| Degree of Watching TV        |        |       |       |       |       |
| Crime                        | .17**  | .14*  | .19*  | .21** | .20** |
| Wars                         | .21**  | .16** | .20** | .12*  | .19** |
| Fighting/Killing             | .18**  | .14*  | .26** | .15** | .21** |
| Horror                       | .22**  | .16** | .28** | .19** | .27** |
| Blood                        | .12*   | .15** | .21** | .11*  | .19** |
| Wrestling/Boxing             | .12*   | .16** | .21** | .11   | .18** |
| Adventure                    | .22**  | .043  | .12*  | .16** | .20** |
| Action                       | .23**  | .056  | .14*  | .094  | .18** |
| Fantasy                      | .27**  | .16** | .11   | .11*  | .23** |
| Degree of using Social Media |        |       |       |       |       |
| Crime                        | .25**  | .020  | .056  | .056  | .15** |
| Wars                         | .11    | .069  | .19** | .027  | .12*  |
| Fighting/Killing             | .20**  | .18** | .24** | .12*  | .23** |
| Horror                       | .17**  | .085  | .27** | .14*  | .19*  |
| Blood                        | .26**  | .12*  | .30** | .16** | .26** |
| Wrestling/Boxing             | .061   | -.009 | .17** | .068  | .102  |
| Adventure                    | .18**  | .14*  | .27** | .088  | .21** |
| Action                       | .27**  | .005  | .068  | .072  | .14*  |
| Fantasy                      | .244** | .058  | .14   | .066  | .16** |
| Degree of using Video Games  |        |       |       |       |       |
| Crime                        | .32**  | .070  | .12*  | .15** | .23** |
| Wars                         | .23**  | .006  | .23** | .064  | .19** |
| Fighting/Killing             | .23**  | .051  | .28** | .035  | .21** |
| Horror                       | .30**  | .18** | .29** | .12*  | .29** |
| Blood                        | .24**  | .065  | .25** | .081  | .22** |
| Wrestling/Boxing             | .42**  | .12*  | .31** | .16** | .35** |
| Adventure                    | .28**  | .15*  | .33** | .096  | .27** |
| Action                       | .32**  | .11   | .25** | .12*  | .27** |
| Fantasy                      | .49**  | .11   | .24** | .16** | .36** |

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01

Data in Table 2 shows that playing video game for the respondents when they were children has significant associations with Aggression Scale and all of its four dimensions (Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Anger, and Hostility). The more they used video games, the higher means of aggression in general.

Regarding the degree of social media use, the X (Twitter) and WhatsApp consider the more tools that related to the aggression scale with its four dimensions. Results shows that the more respondents using X (Twitter) when they were children, the higher mean of aggression scale and its four dimensions. In contrast, negative association were found between the degree of using WhatsApp and aggression scale and its four dimensions. The more respondent using of the WhatsApp, the less mean in aggression scale and its four dimensions. Others social media were limited in the association with aggression scale and its four dimensions.

Data show that there are significant positive association between degree of watching special movies in TV (crime, wars, fighting/killing, horror, contains blood, wrestling/boxing, adventure, action, and fantasy) with aggression scale and majority of its

dimensions. The more respondents watch these kinds of movies, the higher mean that they have in aggression scale and its four dimensions. In social media, participating and watching crime. Fighting/killing, horror, blood, adventure, action and fantasy events and contents used by respondents when they were children in social media were associated with aggression scale, while fighting/killing and blood contents in the social media are associated with all the aggression subscales or dimensions. Horror and adventure contents were associated with three dimensions of aggression.

Results shows that there are significant positive association between degree of respondents' degree of using video games that contained crime, wars, fighting/killing, horror, blood, wrestling/boxing, adventure, action and fantasy contents with aggression scale and the hostility and verbal aggression. Less associations were found with the physical aggression and anger dimensions.

To determine the most associated and predictive variables influencing aggression and its four dimensions, regression was used. Table (3) displays the relationships and predictive variables.

*Table (3): Regression Coefficient of Aggression Scale and It Four Dimensions (Physical Aggression, Verbal*

*Aggression, Anger, And Hostility) On Degree of Watching TV, Playing VG, And Using SM.*

| Aggression Scale                |          |             |                 |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------|
| Variables                       | <u>B</u> | <u>Beta</u> | <u>t. Value</u> |
| Deg of play VG in gen.          | 1.88     | .130        | 1.89*           |
| Deg of use WhatsApp             | -1.82    | -.267       | -3.35**         |
| Deg of use SM wars              | 2.64     | .291        | 2.20*           |
| Deg of use SM Fighting          | 2.03     | .242        | 2.11*           |
| Deg of use SM wrestling/boxing  | 2.49     | .290        | 2.40*           |
| Deg of play VG blood            | 2.94     | .382        | 3.35**          |
| Deg of play VG fantasy          | 3.40     | .420        | 4.26**          |
| Adjusted R Square               |          | .320        | F=3.175**       |
| Multiple R                      |          | .468        |                 |
| Physical Aggression             |          |             |                 |
| Variables                       | <u>B</u> | <u>Beta</u> | <u>t. Value</u> |
| Deg of play VG in gen.          | 1.20     | .202        | 3.28**          |
| Deg of play SM WhatsApp         | -.485    | -.176       | -2.41*          |
| Deg of use SM wars              | 1.12     | .301        | 2.56*           |
| Deg of use SM Fighting          | .721     | .210        | 2.08*           |
| Deg of use SM wrestling/boxing  | 1.05     | .298        | 2.80**          |
| Deg of use SM fantasy           | .768     | .220        | 2.13*           |
| Deg of play VG blood            | 1.45     | .457        | 4.52**          |
| Deg of play VG Boxing           | .626     | .193        | 2.03*           |
| Deg of play VG fantasy          | 1.61     | .484        | 5.58**          |
| Adjusted R Square               |          | .490        | F=3.601**       |
| Multiple R                      |          | .603        |                 |
| Verbal Aggression               |          |             |                 |
| Variables                       | <u>B</u> | <u>Beta</u> | <u>t. Value</u> |
| Deg of play SM WhatsApp         | -.416    | .299        | -3.36**         |
| Deg of use SM Fighting          | .457     | .258        | 2.12*           |
| Deg of use SM boxing            | .603     | .334        | 2.59*           |
| Deg of use SM action            | .511     | .278        | 2.36*           |
| Deg of use SM fantasy           | .595     | .332        | 2.65**          |
| Deg of play VG horror           | .516     | .321        | 2.70**          |
| Deg of play VG blood            | .536     | .329        | 2.73**          |
| Deg of play VG wrestling/boxing | 3.88     | .231        | 2.06*           |
| Deg of play VG adventures       | .460     | .278        | 2.10*           |
| Deg of play VG action           | .363     | .220        | 2.01*           |
| Deg of play VG fantasy          | .659     | .385        | 3.67**          |
| Adjusted R Square               |          | .236        | F=2.409**       |
| Multiple R                      |          | .404        |                 |
| Anger                           |          |             |                 |
| Variables                       | <u>B</u> | <u>Beta</u> | <u>t. Value</u> |
| Deg of play SM in general       | .594     | .270        | 2.61*           |
| Deg of play SM WhatsApp         | -.520    | -.277       | -3.10**         |
| Deg of use SM wrestling/boxing  | .733     | .301        | 2.29*           |
| Deg of use SM adventure         | .636     | .272        | 2.17*           |
| Deg of play VG adventures       | .769     | .345        | 2.56*           |
| Deg of play VG action           | .508     | .230        | 2.08*           |
| Adjusted R Square               |          | .238        | F=2.413**       |
| Multiple R                      |          | .407        |                 |
| Hostility                       |          |             |                 |
| Variables                       | <u>B</u> | <u>Beta</u> | <u>t. Value</u> |
| Degree of playing VG in general | .342     | .172        | 1.88*           |
| Deg of play SM WhatsApp         | -.502    | -.207       | -2.20*          |
| Deg of use SM fantasy           | .959     | .161        | 3.01**          |
| Adjusted R Square               |          | .147        | F=1.783**       |
| Multiple R                      |          | .334        |                 |

\*P&lt;0.05; \*\*P&lt;0.01

According to the findings, respondents' most predictive and associated variables influencing aggression in general were their level of use of WhatsApp, their level of exposure to war, fighting, and wrestling/boxing content on social media, and their level of playing video games in general,

particularly those with blood and fantasy content. The degree of playing video games in general, particularly those that feature blood, wrestling, boxing, and fantasy content, the degree of using WhatsApp, and the respondents' exposure to war, combat, wrestling, boxing, and fantasy content on

social media were found to be the most predictive and associated factors influencing physical aggression.

The most predictive and associated factors influencing verbal aggression in respondents were determined to be the degree of playing video games, particularly those with horror, blood, wrestling/boxing, adventure, action, and fantasy content; the degree of using WhatsApp; and the degree of exposure to fighting, wrestling/boxing, action, and fantasy content on social media. The most predictive and associated variables influencing the respondents' anger, WhatsApp usage, exposure to wrestling/boxing, and adventure content on social media, as well as social media in general, were found to be the degree of playing action and adventure video games.

Lastly, the most predictive and related factors

affecting respondents' animosity were determined to be the extent of their use of WhatsApp, their general video game playing, and their use of social media containing fantasy content. With the exception of the degree of WhatsApp use, which had a negative correlation with the Aggression Scale and its four dimensions, all the variables displayed a substantial positive link.

Gender comparisons revealed significant differences in aggression expression. Men scored higher than women in physical and verbal aggression, consistent with global patterns of externalized aggression. However, no gender differences were observed for anger or hostility, indicating that both males and females internalize aggressive feelings and hostile cognitions to a similar degree, even if their behavioral expression differs. See Table 4.

**Table (4): Differences Between Male and Female in Aggression Scale and It Four Dimensions.**

| Variables           | Male  |       | Female |       | t-value |
|---------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|---------|
|                     | M     | SD    | M      | SD    |         |
| Aggression Scale    | 34.31 | 11.74 | 33.81  | 12.67 | .347    |
| Physical Aggression | 14.21 | 4.77  | 14.21  | 5.51  | -.011   |
| Verbal Aggression   | 4.65  | 2.71  | 4.22   | 2.38  | 1.45    |
| Anger               | 9.01  | 3.33  | 7.97   | 3.32  | 2.65**  |
| Hostility           | 7.04  | 4.11  | 8.30   | 4.54  | -2.43** |

\*\*P<0.01

Regression analyses identified media variables most predictive of aggression. Video games and social media use emerged as stronger predictors than television, underscoring the heightened impact of interactive and algorithm-driven platforms. Among social media, Twitter (X) and TikTok were the strongest predictors of aggression, while WhatsApp use predicted lower aggression scores, suggesting a potential protective role.

Gender-specific patterns were also evident. For

men, aggression was most strongly associated with exposure to violent, war-related, horror, and fantasy content across social media, video games, and television. For women, predictors were more limited, with aggression linked primarily to playing video games with fantasy content, using social media featuring war-related material, and watching television with action and adventure themes. See Table 5.

**Table (5): Regression Coefficient of Aggression Scale in General for Male and Female.**

| Variables                     | Aggression Scale |      |          |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------|----------|
|                               | B                | Beta | t. Value |
| Deg of watching TV in general | .073             | .011 | 5.29**   |
| Deg of play VG in general     | .013             | .002 | 13.55**  |
| Deg of use SM in general      | 2.70             | .437 | 9.27**   |
| Deg of watch violence         | -13.61           | 1.61 | 5.53**   |
| Deg of watch wars             | 17.03            | 1.87 | 8.07**   |
| Deg of watch fighting         | 5.53             | .578 | 3.65**   |
| Deg of watch horror           | 5.80             | .694 | 2.40*    |
| Deg of watch blood            | 3.64             | .403 | 3.06*    |
| Deg of watch action           | 2.92             | .301 | 2.16*    |
| Deg of watch fantasy          | 5.81             | .710 | 3.51**   |
| Deg of use SM crime           | 3.66             | .445 | 3.43**   |
| Deg of use SM violence        | 9.75             | 1.14 | 4.69**   |
| Deg of use SM wars            | 15.44            | 1.81 | 6.08**   |
| Deg of use SM fighting        | 21.84            | 2.44 | 6.67**   |
| Deg of use SM horror          | 10.27            | 1.19 | 5.90**   |
| Deg of use SM action          | 3.42             | .436 | 3.05*    |
| Deg of use SM fantasy         | 8.14             | .969 | 6.41**   |
| Deg of play VG crime          | 8.41             | .912 | 4.71**   |

|                          |      |      |            |
|--------------------------|------|------|------------|
| Deg of play VG violence  | 3.00 | .330 | 2.62*      |
| Deg of play VG fighting  | 7.87 | 1.09 | 2.69*      |
| Deg of play VG boxing    | 4.12 | .509 | 4.55**     |
| Deg of play VG adventure | 9.41 | 1.24 | 4.76**     |
| Deg of play VG fantasy   | 1.96 | .730 | 1.90*      |
| Adjusted R Square        |      | .924 | F=33.598** |
| Multiple R               |      | .952 |            |

|                           |      |      |        |
|---------------------------|------|------|--------|
| FEMALE                    |      |      |        |
| Deg of watch TV adventure | 2.21 | 238  | 2.04*  |
| Deg of watch TV action    | 2.43 | 275  | 2.11*  |
| Deg of use SM wars        | 3.40 | .327 | 2.40*  |
| Deg of play VG fantasy    | 4.17 | .521 | 4.58** |

|                   |  |      |           |
|-------------------|--|------|-----------|
| Adjusted R Square |  | .229 | F=2.563** |
| Multiple R        |  | .375 |           |

\*P<0.05; \*\*P<0.01

## 5. DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the impact of childhood exposure to violent media on aggression among youth in Kuwait, using Buss and Perry's Aggression Model (1992) as a framework. Findings assuming that media violence is linked to aggression, but not in a uniform way. Instead, different media platforms predict different aggression dimensions, and these patterns reveal important cultural and developmental insights.

Firstly, results show that verbal aggression and hostility were consistently associated with media use, whereas physical aggression and anger were not. This challenges simplistic claims that violent media directly causes overt violence. Instead, the evidence supports Huesmann's (2010) argument that violent media primarily cultivates hostile cognitions and verbal patterns of aggression, which may later escalate under certain social conditions. The Aggression Model helps explain this distinction: while physical aggression reflects over behaviour, hostility and verbal aggression reflect cognitive and expressive domains – domains more easily shaped by repeated symbolic exposure to violent scripts. In other words, violent media may not immediately produce fighters, but it does produce cynics and antagonists.

Furthermore, gender differences observed complicate common assumptions. Men scored higher in physical and verbal aggression, consistent with global literature that men externalize aggression more readily (Card et al., 2008). However, women reported similar levels of hostility and anger. According to certain studies, men score higher on verbal and physical aggression tests. This is caused by a few things. According to Carré et al. (2017), (Carré et al., 2009), and Giammanco et al. (2005), one of their biological factors is testosterone. There are

also social and psychological considerations. Men are more likely to express anger Kim et al. (2020), maintain a masculine identity can make men aggressive (Overall et al., 2016; Stanaland & Gaither, 2020), and have lower levels of fear and behavior inhibition than women (Campbell, 2006). Concern the finding, this indicates that media violence affects the emotional and cognitive substrates of aggression across both genders, but cultural and gender norms regulate how aggression is expressed. In Kuwait's conservative cultural context, overt female aggression may be discouraged, leaving hostile cognitions to manifest in less visible forms. This reinforces the importance of examining aggression multidimensionally rather than collapsing it into single score.

Findings of this study also demonstrate that interactive platforms (video games, social media) exert stronger effects than television. Whereas television showed little direct link to aggression, games and social media – requiring active participation – were consistently predictive of hostility and verbal aggression. This supports arguments by (Gentile et al., 2011) that interactivity intensifies identification and rehearsal of aggressive scripts. Experimental studies have shown that playing violent interactive games raises physiological arousal, hostile thoughts, and aggressive feelings more than passively watching violent movies or playing violent video games on tape (Lin, 2013). It also reflects Kuwait's media ecology: children are among the heaviest social media users globally, and platforms such as TikTok and Twitter expose them to algorithmically amplified violent or hostile content.

Interestingly, WhatsApp use was found to negatively correlate with aggression. Unlike open platforms, WhatsApp is primarily family and community oriented in Kuwait, often serving as a

space for bonding rather than exposure to strangers' hostility. This suggests that not all media platforms are equally harmful; some may function as protective environments. Few Western studies highlight this, underscoring the importance of contextualised, culturally sensitive media research. According to certain research, WhatsApp groups may lessen aggressiveness in some cultural circumstances by providing emotional support and catharsis (Gondwe & Some, 2020). However, a large body of other studies contradicts this relationship. We think that the use's purpose, which is regarded as a crucial component, is the source of this. WhatsApp is said to be the most popular platform in Kuwait, where people of all ages use it for social communication. It helps users feel better emotionally and facilitates catharsis. For instance, a recent study conducted in Kuwait (Al-Kandari, 2020) revealed that WhatsApp is a medium that helps young people feel less alienated. In Kuwait, WhatsApp is utilized in a constructive social setting.

These findings strengthen the call to treat aggression as multidimensional and context-dependent. The Aggression Model captures universal tendencies, but their expression varies by platform and culture. In Kuwait, cultural norms dampen overt physical aggression but do little to prevent hostile cognitions shaped by media. This highlights how globalised media content interacts with local socialisation practices to shape aggression in distinctive ways.

According to our interpretation of the evidence, which generally supports the Social Learning Theory, violent media in Kuwait largely influences verbal and cognitive forms of aggression, such as anger, rather than overt physical aggression. This pattern illustrates how aggressive scripts are cultivated through symbolic modeling and then restrained by cultural norms that discourage physical aggressiveness, especially in women. Reciprocal determinism and reinforcement mechanisms also explain why family-oriented media, like WhatsApp,

may offer protective social contexts, whereas interactive media, like video games and social networking sites, intensify hostile cognitions. As a result, Social Learning Theory provides a useful framework for investigating how local cultural norms and global media material combine to create unique patterns of aggressiveness.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that exposure to media violence during childhood is linked to aggression in nuanced ways. Drawing on Buss and Perry's Aggression Model, results reveal that verbal aggression and hostility are more strongly associated with media use than physical aggression or anger, suggesting that violent content primarily shapes hostile cognitions and expressive forms of aggression rather than physical behaviors. Gender differences further indicate that men report higher physical and verbal aggression, but both genders share similar levels of anger and hostility, underscoring the universal cognitive and emotional impact of violent media.

Another important insight lies in the platform specific effects, with interactive media such as video games and social media showing stronger links to aggression than television. This underscores the need to move beyond outdated concerns about television violence and recognize the heightened risks posed by more immersive, participatory media environments. Overall, the study demonstrates that media violence harms children in nuanced and dimension-specific ways. By showing that aggression is not a singly construct but a spectrum of behaviors and dispositions, these findings call for more refined interventions. Efforts to protect children must address not only physical aggression but also subtler harms such as verbal aggression, hostility, and hostile worldviews that can shape long-term social interactions and attitudes.

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