

**Mediation as a Moderating Factor of
Aggression Behaviors from Watching
Television**

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Abstract

Many studies demonstrate that children's television shows are saturated with violent acts (Martins & Wilson, 2012) and that watching violent television shows reinforces violent behavior in young viewers (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). Nevertheless, adult mediation can mitigate these negative effects (Nathanson, Eveland, Park & Paul, 2002). Still, until today, the contribution of mediation that is given in television programs is not clear. Moreover, the contribution of each of the mediation measures and the differential contribution of these measures, whether assimilated in the programs or given by an adult, have not been examined, and they are empirically tested in this study.

The theoretical basis of the research is mediation theory (Feuerstein, 1979; 1980; Klein, 1996) and the mediation measures that have been developed by Klein (Klein, 1996). The mediation theory is one of the leading theories in the field of teaching and education, and has been examined in diverse areas and different cultures (Klein, 1996). According to this theory, the interaction between the child and his/her human environment has an important influence on the child's development. Namely, that the child's development depends on the amount and quality of mediated learning s/he has experienced (Feuerstein, 1979; 1980). Mediated learning is an aware process, which is designed to match the environment and the educational program to the child's abilities and interests. In this process the adult tries to give information to the child, make him/her focus, explain connections, share feelings (Klein, 1996). Mediated learning attempts to organize the world for the child in order to render it meaningful, important and relevant (Klein, 2000). Although the contribution of this theory to the explanation of children's development in different areas has been examined in many studies, it has not been used in the context of watching television shows.

The purpose of this study is to examine the contribution of mediation to the explanation of aggressive behavior of children in kindergarten and to identify what contributes to effective mediation while viewing. This is order to suggest a new theoretical framework for understanding the influence of television viewing on children's behavior, and to examine the contribution of mediation theory to explaining the influence of watching television while mediation is assimilated in the programs themselves. This is in comparison to traditional ways of mediated learning.

In order to achieve the goals of this research, two separate but complementary studies have been conducted. In the first study violent behavior and the features of the violence in the programs were examined, while encoding the mediated messages in the programs themselves, in the context of violent behavior. Mediation was divided according to whether it encouraged or condemned violent behavior. This analysis was done by comparing three different methods of analyzing television programs content, and with the goal of explaining the contribution of mediation to the analysis of program content and its features. In this research, 40 hours of broadcasting were sampled from four children's television channels (The Children's Channel, Nickelodeon, The Education Channel and Disney Channel), a total of 176 programs.

In the second study the influence of mediation on children's aggressive behavior was tested after viewing. 216 kindergarten children between the ages of 4 to 7 years old, ($M=5.11$, $SD=7.78$) participated in this research, 114 boys and 102 girls. In order to examine the mediation's impact, 14 kindergartens were observed. In each kindergarten the children were divided randomly into groups of five. Each group was assigned randomly to one of the seven groups of research, so that every group watched the same segment of the television program, but each time with a different intervention. This way, each group got a different kind of mediation (mediation of meaning, mediation of expanding, mediation of regulation or no mediation at all), and a different kind of mediating character (mediation by an adult or mediation assimilated in the television program).

The findings from the first study show that there are differences between mediation that is given according to aggressive behavior and aggressive characters (for example, the age of the aggressive character or the personality of the aggressive character). There are also differences in the mediation that is given according to the different types of aggression (for example, physical aggression or verbal aggression). For example, there were differences between the mediation that was given towards violent behavior of an adult compared to the mediation that was given towards violent behavior of an adolescent. Moreover, it was found that violent acts that were the least frequent in the television shows (for example, guilt and social exclusion) got condemnatory mediation, while the most frequent types of violent behavior on television shows (such as physical aggression and verbal aggression) did not get unambiguous condemnatory mediation. **The findings of this study emphasize the need to encode television programs while taking into account the mediation**

measures. This is in order to get a more accurate and significant view of the aggressive behaviors that are displayed in programs, since the encoding methods of today are deficient.

In the second study it has been found that mediation reduces aggressive behavior after viewing television, and one of the discoveries that arise from the findings of this study is that assimilated mediation in the television program can reduce violent behavior after viewing television. Examination of the influences of the different mediation measures on aggressive behavior shows that mediation of meaning contributes in the most obvious way to reducing aggressive behavior after watching television.

These findings provide a different perspective on analyzing of television programs in general, and a new explanation for the impact of watching television shows in particular. In addition to findings regarding the unique characteristics of mediation and its contribution to reducing the negative effects of watching aggression on television, this research indicates that it is not enough to examine the aggressive behavior on television shows. The messages that accompany this kind of behavior should also be examined since these messages have a significant impact on the viewer's behavior as well.