INFLUENCE OF EXPOSURE OF CHILDREN TO VIOLENT FILMS IN SELECTED STATES IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, **Umeanozie Chidinma Ugochinyere** a postgraduate student of the Department of Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka with registration number PG/PGD/16/81259 hereby declare that the research embodied in this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted either by me or anyone, in part or in full for an award of any degree of this university or any other institution.

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CERTIFICATION

This study titled *Influence of Exposure of Children to Violent Films in Selected States in Southeast Nigeria* is an original work carried out by Umeanozie Chidinma Ugochinyere in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Postgraduate Diploma Degree in Mass Communication, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Almighty GOD, for all he has done for me, especially his mercy and grace upon my life.

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ABSTRACT

Studies spanning decades on the influence of media have most often inferred that the media have certain kind of influence on the audience perception and attitude. The level of influence has been varied as noted in literature on Bullet Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory, Theory of Learned Behaviour and Theory of Selectivity. This study therefore was an attempt to evaluate the influence of exposure of children to violent films. It aimed at finding out if exposure to violent films can impact a child's behaviour. Using the theory of selectivity and social learning theory, the study adopted a descriptive approach. The population of the study was drawn from children in four schools across Enugu and Anambra states with one school drawn from an urban area and the other from a rural area in both state. The study found that thereis minimal exposure of children in the South East to film and their exposure to violent films is also minimal. The study recorded that there is no significant relationship between exposure to violence in film and violence in real life. Children get exposed to violent films based on choices made by parents or friends, for the thrill of the action and also due to lack of alternative films to watch. It therefore recommended that parents should pay more attentionto the movies consumed by their children and should aswell guide them on how to avoid peer influence when their friends try to make them watch films with violent content.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

Film is one of the oldest forms of modern communication. Its history can be traced to the development of camera, then to the theatres and now the digital media. This multifaceted development phases of the media compelled Seppälä(2015, p. 2), to acknowledge that,"there is no film *history*, only film *histories,* there is no master narrative that can accommodate everything".

Film has moved from the screens of theatres to become what is popularly referred to as television drama and other genres. For McQuail(2004), the 'separation of film and cinema' refers to the many ways in which films can be seen, after initial showing in a film theatre. These include television broadcasting, cable transmission, videotape and DVD sale or hire, satellite TV and now broadband Internet (p. 33).

However, the strength of film like other forms of mass media lies in its ability to emulate society by re-enacting its past and present situations in an attempt to shape its future through the theatrics and dramatic effects while at the same time serve as pastime for the audience. In modern times presentation of any sort falls into this trajectory on which art sits as a centre to enunciate a spectrum of an aesthetic quality for mass consumption, where popular culture sees performance art itselfas a product for the mass audience(Basnet, 2016, p. 2).

Film is thereby harnessing the richness of mass media while retaining the artistic concepts embedded in drama and filmmaking. This gives it the chance at achieving mass effects on a mass audience drawing from the fact that the media may not only set agenda for discussion but can influence how we think about issues such as our disposition to things. This is due to

repeated exposure "because television occupies a large part of people's lives" (Bandura, Social cognitive theory, 1989).

Basnet (2016), citing (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, & Tincknell, 2004) noted that "in their point of view we can understand popular culture to be a consumption of capitalism forms under influence of mass media. So performance art, like media generate the sense of what popular really is (p.3). This view is in line with the view expressed by Scheufele(2000, p. 309), that "Mass media have the power to increase levels of importance assigned to issues by audience members". Consequently, their conceptions of social reality are greatly influenced by vicarious experiences– by what they see and hear –without direct experiential correctives (Bandura, Social cognitive theory, 1989). He went further to add that "the more people's images of reality depend upon the media's symbolic environment, the greater is its social impact" (p.22).

While film in most part remain a re-enactment of social reality, some scholars argue that film like most media not only informs behaviour but are also informed by the society. They posit that this ability of the media to shape perception is buttressed by the notion that "whether it be thought patterns, values, attitudes, or styles of behaviour, life increasingly models the media" (Bandura, 1986; Pearl, Bouthilet, & Lazar, 1982). Because television occupies a large part of people's lives, the study of acculturation in the present electronic era must be broadened to include electronic acculturation" (Bandura, Social cognitive theory, 1989)and the influence media such as film violence in informing behaviour, especially for children.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Since time began humankind has gathered round camp fires in the dark to listen to stories. They remind us of who we are, where we have come from, and where we want to go (Victoria University of Wellington, 2011, p. 2). This tradition of storytelling and entertainmentevolved to cinema and is embodied in modern film and in similar fashion it is

intended to instruct the viewers through subtle (symbolic) messages. As McQuail(1999) puts it, "the media are believed to cause intended change, unintended change, minor change, facilitate change, reinforce what already exist or prevent change". Thus, the media is an imitation of society and exposure to media can be said to influence certain changes in the audience. Bandura(1989), noted "because of the bidirectionality of influence between behaviour and environmental circumstances (media), people are both products and producers of their environment.

Media consumption have increased tremendously in recent years especially among the teenagers. This is especially so with the proliferation of digital mobile technologies that serve to meet the media needs of the audience. These includes mobile phones and laptop devices.On the average people "spend almost 11 hours a day consuming media" (Howard, 2016).Most of this time is spent viewing film whichis also referred to as movies on online platforms.Netflix, one of the biggest providers of online film streaming services reported that viewers collectively spent more than 140 million hours watching movies per day and one billion hours per week in 2017 (Netflix, 2017).

Studies have found that 91 percent of movies on television contained violence, even extreme violence(Worth, 2008). It has been noted that "the amount of gun violence in top grossing PG-13 films has more than tripled since 1985 (Romer, 2014). This violence in film has become more prominent in content targeted specifically at children. Studies analysing the content of popular cartoons noted that they contain 20 to 25 violent acts per hour, which is about six times as many as prime time programs (American Academy of Pediatrics - Committee on Communications, 1995). Overall, 46 percent of television violence occurs in cartoons (Seawell, 1998).

With these bombardment of children with violent media contents, many scholars worry that the children may turn out to become violent as an emulation of their media experiences.

Studies have shown that "there is strong evidence that exposure to violence through the media can increase aggressive behaviour in children" (Federal Communications Commission, 2007). While there are multiple factors that lead to violent actions, a growing body of literature shows a strong association between the perpetration of violence and the exposure to violence through the media (American Acedemy of Family Physicians, 2006).

Some studies found the strength of association to be nearly as strong as the association between cigarette smoking and lung cancer, and stronger than the well-established associations between calcium intake and bone mass, lead ingestion and IQ, and failure to use condoms and acquisition of HIV (Singer & Singer, 2001). While most of the studies are carried out in the United States, there is lack of studies that focus on Africa and in Nigeria in particular. This study therefore specifically focuses on finding out if exposure to violent films have any influence on the children in South East Nigeria.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

This study has the following specific objectives:

1. To find out the level of exposure of childrento violent films in South East Nigeria.

2. To ascertain the frequency of exposure to children in South East Nigeria to violent films.

3. To evaluate the form of influence of violent film exposure on children behaviour.

4. To find out the factors that lead to exposure to violent films.

1.4   Research Questions

To address the issues raised in this study, the following research questions were put forward:

1. What is the level of exposure of children in South East Nigeria to violent films?

2. How frequent are children in South East Nigeria exposed to violent films?

3. Does exposure to violent film have any form of influence on children behaviour?

4. What are the factors that lead to exposure to violent films?

1.5   Significance of the Study

This study will provide empirical data for understanding the relationship between exposure to violent films and children. Therefore, it will help to provide information for National Film Censors bodies and media regulators on the type of contents to permit, especially those targeted at children.

It will provide information for parents and guardians as to the type of contents to permit their children and ward to view and also motivate them to activate the various parental guidance control systems in the media devices available to the children.

The study will also provide literature that will stimulate further research and also help to enrich the body of existing literature on media and violent contents. Through the investigation of the relationship between the variables contained in the study, it will serve to validate existing media theories or portend new vistas for scholars to explore.

1.6   Research Hypothesis

H.1 There is significant relationship between exposure of children to violent films and violent behaviour

H.0 There is no relationship between exposure of children to violent films and violent behaviour.

1.7   Definition of Terms

The following terms are operationally defined to enhance understanding of the basic concepts employed in this study:

Film: This refers to any media titled visual production that is produced in a storied manner with the intention to amuse, educate, inform, or entertain having a specific time duration and is transmitted or accessed through television, cinema, online streaming media, video tapes or discs. In this study, the term will be used interchangeably with movie, or broadly as television or broadcast media.

Exposure: This is the conscious perception or observation or viewing of media contents for the purpose of entertainment, education, information or as a form of diversion. For this study it includes both active and passive participation in media viewing experience.

Children: People who are within the ages of five to 19 years. For this study it will refer to anybody who is within the ages of five and 19 years as those within this range are seen to be within their formative years before adolescence when most of what is learned at this stage may materialize through life. Also, at this stage they can make meaning of information presented in films.

Violence: Any activity that pertain to disruptive behaviours and may endanger the life of the perpetuator or that of others. Or any activity that may lead to the destruction of property, cause civil unrest, cause emotional or psychological disability to another person. This includes the use of guns, fighting, rape, robbery, stabbing, destruction of public properties, any forceful obstruction to access of utilities and any other activity that bears similar weight that may be consider harmful or injurious to self or others.

1.8   Scope of the Study

This study focused on influence of exposure of violence film on children and the study area was restricted to selected states in South East Nigeria. For this reason, only audio/visual contents that are considered as being under the various genres of film will be studied and the target population will be restricted to children who are below the age of 19 years within the South East of Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Scope of the Review

There are diverse works written in regards to film and children and also violence in film and the exposure of children to televised violence. However, to help understand the relationship between the variables of this study and also for the purpose of directionality and focus, the existing body of literature will be x-rayed under the following subheadings:

- **Overview of film**

- **Exposure of Children to film**

- **Violence in film and Children**

- **Film Violence and Real Violence**

- **Theoretical framework –**

    - Theory of selectivity

    - Social cognitive theory/ Social learning theory

2.2   Overview of Film

The history of film is one that many scholars have said to be not only broad but also multidimensional. The history of film reaches as far back as ancient Greece's theatre and dance, which had many of the same elements in today's film world (Envisage International Corporation, 2018). According to McQuail(2004), film began at the end of the nineteenth century as a technological novelty, but what it offered was scarcely new in content or function. It transferred to a new means of presentation and distribution an older tradition of entertainment, offering stories, spectacles, music, drama, humour and technical tricks for popular consumption (p. 32). Soon film as a medium gained popular acceptance.

From classical Greek plays performed live in ancient amphitheatres and five-cent machines at carnivals, flashing images that created the illusion of a dancing nude, to our modern digital

technology and special effects(Envisage International Corporation, 2018), film has evolved into one of the most widely consumed media content today.

In an attempt at explaining the process of adapting from reality into dramatic performances which gave rise to modern film, Metz (1974),wrote that film "tells us continuous stories; it 'says' things that could be conveyed also in the language of words; yet it says them differently. There is a reason for the possibility as well as for the necessity of adaptations."

This reason Hutcheon(2003), in her work titled *From Page to Stage to Screen: The Age of Adaptation* went forward to explain that, "when we adapt, we create, using all the tools that creators have always used: we actualize or concretize ideas; we make simplifying selections but we also amplify and extrapolate; we make analogies; we critique or show our respect. When we do all this, does it matter whether the narrative we are working with is "new" or adapted? Our post-Romantic valuing of the original is, after all, a late addition to a long history of borrowing and stealing--or, more accurately, of sharing stories" (p.40). Film is therefore seen as an adaptation from reality.

According to (Hutcheon, 2003), Gombrich offers us a very useful analogy. Gombrich suggests that if an artist stands before a landscape with a pencil in hand, he or she will "look for those aspects which can be rendered in lines"; if it is a paintbrush that the hand holds, the artist's vision of the same landscape will be in terms of *"masses "* instead... The linear and single-track medium of language will produce a different version than the multitrack film, with its amalgam of music, sound, and moving visual image (p.43). Thus, film becomes a clear reproduction of society serving our need for diversion and at the same time transmitting values and beliefs that can in turn help to shape our actions in society.

This is "because it (film) embodies and conveys the values and beliefs of the culture within which and for which it is made. Popular art forms, such as film, are of special importance because they speak to the most central of those values and beliefs (Auger, na).Film continues

to provide audiences and the individual spectator with incomparable opportunities to experience imaginatively the lives of others, which can only affect and enrich us, making us more rounded individuals by such encounters(Mactaggart, na). Therefore, the exposure, especially of children to film can be seen as a process of acculturation – behaviour building.

2.3   Exposure of Children to Film

In today's digital society, the media can be said to be somewhat ubiquitous as it is present with us and around us in numerous form such as smart phones, television, radio, cinema and computer devices. Children, adolescents and young adults consume entertainment from a variety of sources that are accessible 24 hours a day, are mobile, and offer passive, as well as more active engagement (American Acedemy of Family Physicians, 2006). This is such that from waking up to carrying the daily activities and till night fall we are constantly exposed to one form of media content or another.

A poll in America revealed that children watch up to six hours of television a day, much of it unsupervised and intended for adult viewers (Oyero & Oyesomi, 2014). Another study by McDonough (2009) noted that "on average, children ages 2-5 years spend 32 hours a week watching television. Kids ages 6-11 years spend about 28 hours a week in front of the TV". Nearly 60% of children have televisions in their bedrooms and the growth of satellite and digital TV has brought new channels devoted to cartoons (Muss, 1999).

Though cable TV and local stations offer diverse kind of contents, movie forms one of the most viewed content on television and streaming platforms today. On the average, people spend "about 4½ hours a day watching shows and movies. Another key finding shows that services for streaming or subscription video on demand, such as Netflix or Hulu, were in just as many households as a DVR" (Howard, 2016).

More recent research suggests that children today are exposed to more screens than ever before, which can multiply viewing opportunities (Fitzpatrick, Oghia, Melki, & Pagani, 2016). For example, British children today will grow up with access to an average of five different types of screens, including smart phones, tablets and computers (Jago, Sebire, Gorely, Cillero, & Biddle, 2011). Furthermore, in the United States, close to one-third of children aged 3 or younger have a television in their room (Common Sense Media & Ride out 2011). Indeed, it is estimated that the typical child in an industrialized nation will spend an average of 3 years in front of screens before their seventh birthday (Sigman, 2012).

This growing consumption of media especially of film has also led to a significantly high level of exposure of children to various genre of movies. Some researchers have found cartoon to be the most prominent of movie genre that children are exposed to. In a research in Michigan University performed by Sharmin, she said that children are attracted to the cartoon content much more than the academic traditional ways of learning, due to the well written scenarios, audio & visual effects and colours. These factors are enough to cause the child to absorb information dozens better than that absorbed from a teacher in a classroom (Habib & Soliman, 2015).

It is important to note that the rise in media consumption by children is suggested to have a significant level of relationship to their exposure to violent films. Fitzpatrick, Oghia, Melki, & Pagani(2016) stated in their study that, in addition to spending much of their free time watching television, much of the content children view is likely to be violent (p. 2). This is so because according to a survey of general programming to assess the extent of violence on television by the US National Television Violence Study, 61% of programmes contained some form of violence (Federman, 1995).

2.4   Violence in film and Children

According to Brotherson (2015), a child's brain is like a house that has just been built. The walls are up; the doors are hung. Then you go to the store and buy electrical wiring, switches, a fuse box and other electrical supplies, you bring these supplies to the new house and set them on the floor. Will they work? Probably not. You first must string the wiring and hook up all of the connections. This is quite similar to the way our brains are formed (p. na).

Children are often seen to be at the peak of their learning curve as they grow. At this point of their lives they are accessing each experience and media contents to see what is most acceptable for them to learn and implement. This is in the view that what is most presented equates what is most acceptable and good thus desiring. They also seek for the most acceptable people as role models after whom they hope to shape things about their life. Some of these role models are sought in the media especially in movies.

> Child's brain at early ages always seek new experiences, that is why what is delivered in cartoon gets toddlers glued to their chairs while watching Animated Series. A well written scenario, right audio & Visual effects and a descent looking character, are all the main factors for the child to get stuck for the cartoons hero, and enough for his brain to begin automatically following his path and trying to be a copycat even for the finest details, including way of speaking, thinking, body language... and even the way of dressing up(Bjorkqvist & Lagerspetz, 1985).

With the increased rate of exposure to violence in film, chances are that children may want to adopt or copy these violent act to practice in their daily lives as a norm because it was seen in a film. Studies and meta-analyses have found that exposure to media violence can induce increases in aggressive and violent behaviour in these populations (Fitzpatrick, Oghia, Melki, & Pagani, 2016). While the level to which media violence may affect children or be instilled in children may not be uniform due to certain variables such as age, parental guidance, society and cultural values, the tendency however remains once they are exposed. There is consensus amongst the scientific community that early experiences often matter more than those that occur later in life (Heckman, 2006). The consequences of exposure to violent

media are likely to vary according to a child's age and developmental stage. In particular, child development specialists recognize that preschool years mark a sensitive period for social, cognitive and behavioural development (Fitzpatrick, Oghia, Melki, & Pagani, 2016). Studies have shown that "an average of 20–25 violent acts are shown in children's television programmes each hour, with an average of three to five violent acts during prime-time television viewing" (Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005). The frequency of exposure to violence in film may also have a contributory factor to the extent at which the child is likely to exhibit or copy such violent behaviour. This is because when a behaviour is repeated it takes a stronger stance, and the likelihood of recall gets stronger. This idea is emphasized by Septiadi(2007), who states that "violence that appears excessively and with no reason in a TV Cartoon Show, cause excessive increase in Adrenaline production which cause instable state of mind. The child then begins to act nervously and aggressively towards normal situations or during his playing time with his mate" (p. na.).

> We learn by observing the world around us, and by acting on that world. We learn rules for how the social world works. We learn behavioural scripts and use them to interpret events and actions of others and to guide our own behavioural responses to those events. These various knowledge structures develop over time. They are based on the day-to-day observations of and interactions with other people, real (as in the family) and imagined (as in the mass media) (Anderson, 2000).

Children who are at their formative years are trying to draw connections between events and as they do so, so also are the cells in their brains trying to establish cellular connections which will in turn form their pattern of thought and behaviour. The connections that are created in children's brain are wither strengthen by repeating experience, or are weakened by not being used (Habib & Soliman, 2015, p. 250). Though early scholars such as "Freud and Lorenz believed that aggressive behaviour is rooted in human nature. They believe that aggression is a hidden force in human that is gradually compacted and eventually will need to be discharged (Haghighat, Tabatabaee, moazedian, & Sabetimani, 2014), the exposure to

filmed violence may serve as a trigger or rather help to activate this perceived innate tendency.

Therefore, if a child is constantly being bombarded with violence in the films they watch, they may develop a very strong violent personality which they may sustain throughout life.

It is important to note that the way violence is presented in films also matter. The way these filmed violence is perceived can be influenced by the action in scenes before the violence and the scenes action after it, that is, the consequence or result of such violence. These may help to emphasize or glorify the act of violence or condemn it. As Tanwar & Priyanka(2016) put it, heroes are violent, and are rewarded for their behaviour. They become role models for youth. It is "cool" to carry an automatic weapon and use it to knock off the "bad guys." The typical scenario of using violence for a righteous cause may translate in daily life into a justification for using violence (p.243). Such acts propagated in films become a foundation on which the child may build subconsciously. This is because the process is often psychological, that is, learned behaviour gets acquired while they watch the film. This is such that their response to acts of violence becomes less and less active. Research bySege, Bradley, & Lang,(2015) shows that,the typical pattern of enhanced startle reflexes during aversive picture viewing was not apparent when violent pictures were preceded by a cue that predicted the upcoming aversive content. Thus, the startle blink was not enhanced when a cue predicted upcoming violent content, whereas startle was reliably augmented in the absence of a predictive cue, replicating many previous studies(e.g., Bradley et al., 2001) (p. 3).

Habib & Soliman (2015, p. 262), citing a research performed by Dr. Huesmann, noted that this type of violence delivered for kids, would have one of two possibilities of effects on the child. First, a case called desensitization, which means that the child loses logic thinking of the result of his actions. He becomes unable to predict the correct outcome of his actions, he begins to substitute the cartoon characters with himself and his friends, he then would like to

repeat these situations which caused him to laugh—like an adult that would repeat a speech from a movie or a TV Show with a friend to recall laughing—then his mind incorrectly begins to persuade the child that hitting a friend with a hard object is not a matter that would cause harm. Gradually and with excessive violent scenes, the kid's behaviour is programmed to react violently to most of his surroundings actions and situations(Gunter, 1985)(Iamurai, 2009).

The natural and extrinsic effects of their actions, in turn, partly determine their thought patterns and emotional reactions (Bandura, Social cognitive theory, 1989). Therefore, one can infer that repeated exposure of the youth to violence in film can have a certain type of influence. Desired or not. This may inform learned behavioural pattern in a child which will in turn direct their responses to future events in real life. Thus, learned violent behaviour may become manifested in real life situations or may inhibit proper response to acts of violence.

2.5   Film Violence and Real Violence

Issues bothering film violence translating into real violence in life has been of concern to scholars for a long time now. With the advent of television and its wide uses in homes coupled with the steady increase in violence shown in films, researches have been conducted to find out the extent to which film violence can cause or affect real violence. According to Phillips(2018), efforts to empirically measure the impact of media on aggression and violence continued, albeit with equivocal results. In the 1950s and 1960s, psychological behaviourism, or understanding psychological motivations through observable behaviour, became a prominent lens through which to view the causal impact of media violence (p. 10).

For some researchers, violence in media cannot be attributed as the necessary cause or singular cause of violence in real life. However, most agree that film violence have impact on acts of violence in reality. Giroux(2015) noted that, while it would be wrong to suggest that the violence that saturates popular culture (film) directly causes violence in the larger society,

it is arguable that such violence serves not only to produce an insensitivity to real life violence but also functions to normalize violence as both a source of pleasure and as a practice for addressing social issues.

Multiple studies have shown a strong association, and suspicion or suggestion of causality between exposure to violence in the media, and aggressive or violent behaviour in viewers (American Acedemy of Family Physicians, 2006). These studies, some of which engaged in controlled research point to a direct relationship between exposure to violence in film and violence in society. However, other researchers opine that violence in film is simply a representation of violence in society which does nothing than the dramatic exposition. According to Phillips(2018, p. 15), there is no linear relationship between crime and its representation. He added that, "cultural criminologists have indeed rejected direct, causal relationships in favour of the recognition that social meanings of aggression and violence are constantly in transition, flowing through the media landscape, where bits of information reverberate and bend back on themselves, creating a fluid porosity of meaning that defines late-modern life, and the nature of crime and media within it" (p. 15).

Such opinions are at variance with other scholars who hold that media violence are sources of desensitization. They hold that when children are constantly exposed to films with violent contents, they no longer perceive acts of violence as being violent, rather such acts are perceived as normal or at best, ways of living in the society. This therefore has two implications. The first is that they may begin to see violence as normal and have no emotional response to the person suffering from the violent act. The second part is that they may carry acts of violence with the view that it does not really hurt or matter at all. This is similar to the view expressed by researcher, Thomas A. Kooijmans in Habib & Soliman (2015), who noted from his study that the violence that appears excessively and with no reason in a TV Cartoon show cause excessive increase in Adrenaline production which cause

instable state of mind. The child then begins to act nervously and aggressively towards normal situations or during his playing time with his mates (p. 262).

Despite all these views however, there seems to be a relationship with the presence of violence in movies, the exposure of children to such films and perhaps the frequency of exposure and the psychological development of such children. this may or may not take into account the tendency of film violence becoming real violence in society. However, as most researchers have suggested, that aspect should not be completely neglected. The reason for this is that violence occurs at an alarming rate(American Acedemy of Family Physicians, 2006). In a given year, more U.S. children will die from gunfire than will die from cancer, pneumonia, influenza, asthma, and HIV/AIDS combined (Children's Defense Fund, 2004). The American Academy of Family Physicians (2006) went forward to state that "the rate of firearm-related death or injury in the United States is the highest among industrialized countries, with more than 32,000 deaths each year. In recent years, this has meant that 88 people die each day from firearm-related homicides, suicides, and unintentional deaths (para. 3).

With these staggering number of deaths and destruction, it becomes imperative to curtail any possible likelihood for violence in society to increase by a single margin. As Huesmann (2003, p. 6), puts it, the co-occurrence of the increase of media violence and increase in societal violence does not prove the two are related, but it does suggest that the relation between them should be investigated.

Therefore, to understand the probable relationship between the variables in this study, it is important to employ theoretical clarification as they stand as guides along the path of scholarly investigations.

2.6   Theoretical Framework

Theories help to illuminate issues surrounding relationships such as cause and effect, the degree of relatedness, and so on between known variables. More importantly, when issues are placed in theoretical perspectives, it becomes easier to understand the dynamics of their relationship. For this reason, two theories were employed for this study – *Theory of Selectivity* and *Social Cognitive/Learning Theory.*

2.6.1   Theory of Selectivity

This theory has been called by many different names such as *The Active Audience Theory*(West & Turner, 2010), *The Selective Processes* and has also been studied under topics as *Cognitive Consistency*, *Attitude-Change Theory*(Baran & Davis, 2012) and *Assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory*. The underlying issue in all of these presentation is that the audience to some degree has control over the media they choose to consume. That is, they select what media content to consume based on their expected needs. As Baran & Davis(2012), aptly notes, audience members' use of media reflects their existing interests (p. 400).

This theory is in apposition to previously existing theories which presented the metaphor of a passive audience who is disposed to the media without control or specific interest. Instead, in this regard the audience are described as active members who decide from the multiplicity of media contents what to consume or exposed themselves to in anticipation of need satisfaction. This presupposes four levels of audience engagement with the media which Blumler(1979), outlines to as utility, intentionality, selectivity, and imperviousness to influence. These levels of engagement have their varied meaning and impact as Baran & Davis(2012, p. 252) outlined:

- **Utility:** Media have uses for people, and people can put media to those uses.

- **Intentionality:** Consumption of media content can be directed by people's prior motivations.

- **Selectivity:** People's use of media might reflect their existing interests and preferences.

- **Imperviousness to influence:** Audience members are often obstinate; they might not want to be controlled by anyone or anything, even mass media. Audience members actively avoid certain types of media influence.

These shows that the media such as film are created to meet the diverse needs of the audience such as education, entertainment, information or diversion and the audience can actively select from the collection of available films which one will meet his specific need at a particular time. That is, the selection of what to view is determined by the audience as a means to satisfy certain motivation. This act of selecting from the broad collection such as audience deciding to see a movie from DStv or to stream from NetFlix or Hulu all reflect the audience expectations. Today due to the wide range of movie providers such as local stations, subscription television such as DStv and online streaming services such as Netflix, the audience have a broader range of choice to select from and their choice reflect their interest. This choice is often determined by the fact that the audience want to emphasize control over what they are exposed to in the media. Thatis people's tendency to expose themselves to or attend to media messages they feel are in accord with their already-held attitudes and interests and the parallel tendency to avoid those that might create dissonance(Baran & Davis, 2012). This entails that people make their decisions of what film to watch in relation to those around them This is encapsulated in the theory of selectivity.

What we decide to expose ourselves to from the decision point of selecting media contents may go a long way in influencing our experiences as to what we take away or retain as a result of the content we got exposed to and in terms of what we start to consider or think

about in life in relation to the selected media content. These three levels of experiences form the core of the theory of selectivity and they are captioned by attitude change researchers as selective exposure, retention, and perception respectively.

It is widely believed that through selectivity of media contents our experiences of life may vary from one another due to the type of media contents we decide to select. For example, certain people have preferences for comedies, others prefer action packed thrillers and some other individual may prefer adventure movies. A subject such as climate change may be addressed in all three genres but tailored in line with the specific genre. For the comic movie, climate change may be presented in a humorous way which may reduce the level of seriousness that audience should pay to it. In the action movie the same issue will be shown in a manner that may evoke sudden response to be taken to avert the disasters that are portrayed in the movie. While for the adventure it might show a disruptive impact of climate change that may cause the audience to empathize with the characters in the movie or rather it may depict the triumph of human over natural forces. All these three perspective will evoke different level of responses from the audience which may shape their attitudes towards climate change and issues to pertain to it.

According to Çitak (2009), people learn about different life patterns and public policy by televisions and thus develop attitudes. In other words, media formulate their thoughts, their world view, their behaviour and attitudes (p.1392). thus, exposure to violent films may predispose a child to violent behaviour or at least structure their responses to violent acts.

Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis(2005), reported a British government-sponsored study that investigated the relation between media violence and crime in 82 young offenders and 40 non-offenders. By contrast with a previous English study of young offenders and non-offenders in a community sample, this investigation of offenders in secure environments showed that they self-reported spending more time than non-offenders watching satellite,

television, and video films. Additionally, they reported higher preferences for violent films and identified with violent role models. Significant differences were also evident on psychometric measures, with offenders demonstrating less empathy and moral development, and more aggressive temperaments and distorted perceptions about violence than did non-offenders (p. 706).

This points to the assumption that our media choices may have significant level of influence on our behaviour or social learning. The fact here is that the audience can make decision or select the media content (film) they watch to get exposed to. From this we can infer that one may choose to see a movie that contain less, moderate or no violent scenes. However, the assumption here is that their choice of film may have some level of influence in informing change in attitude. This assumption is in line with the supposition presented by the proponents of Social cognitive theory/ Social learning theory.

2.6.2   Social Learning/Cognitive Theory

With the emergence of new media and increased user engagement, communication theorists are finding ways to explain the effects of prolong exposure to media, the influence of content exposure on behaviour change/formation or reinforcement and the social implications of these variables in the wide society. In this light Baran & Davis(2012), explains that social cognitive theory proved to be a useful way of understanding how people learn behaviours from television. By differentiating between imitation and identification and identifying several different modelling processes, such as observational learning, inhibitory and disinhibitory effects, and vicarious reinforcement, it helped explain how individuals learn from the media (p. 207).

The idea is that people learn through observation and in this case observing what is presented in the media experience. That is, exposure to media is expected to produce some level of learning through observation. According to Bandura (1977), learning would be exceedingly

laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (p. 198).

From the above statement, we can infer information embedded in the media contents that what people get exposed to can inform their action in future events as they serve as guide. The implication is that, when children get exposed to violent acts in the media, the ideas get instilled in their brains such that it can help them structure their action in future similar event in real life. This idea is not to be taken in face value.

To illuminate the assumptions presented in this theory one need to understand the phases of social learning. Oyero & Oyesomi,(2014), explains that social learning occurs through four main stages of imitation, namely: close contact, imitation of superiors, understanding of concepts, and role model behaviour. They went further to explain that attention includes modelled events (distinctiveness, affective valence, complexity, prevalence, functional value) and observer characteristics (sensory capacities, arousal level, perceptual set, past reinforcement). Retention involves symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, motor rehearsal. Motor Reproduction, includes physical capabilities, self-observation of reproduction, accuracy of feedback. And Motivation involves external, vicarious and self-reinforcement (p. 101). All these levels caption in the cognitive learning process explain how from observing actions in film we process them, mentally assign symbolic meaning to them such that they become a part of us then eventually we put them into action at the desired moment. This desired moment may be a violent event when we may choose to respond by violent as our exposure from the film as taught us.

Thus acts of violence may not only be seen on screen, rather they are learned by the audience who eventually applies this learning in life as time goes on. This view is shared by Oyero & Oyesomi (2014), who noted that whatever children learn while watching cartoons, they tend to act out thereby influencing their mode of socializing with other children and with the world in general.This generally may be influenced by the level of exposure, frequency and also other social cultural variables within the environment of the audience. Research regarding aggressive cues and priming effects attempted to add some specificity to social cognitive theory, as did the developmental perspective(Baran & Davis, 2012).

In summary, we can assume that the exposure of children to violent films may have some influence in their perception and response to acts of violence and this is affected by the frequency of exposure. Also, we can infer that some degree of observational learning occurs when children are exposed to television and this learning may govern some of their action in future. However, the extent to which the learning occurs and the likelihood that what is learnt may be applied is to some extent dependent on other social variables including the child's psycho-social environment.

Therefore, there is a relationship between exposure to violent film and the development of children, however, there is no direct relationship between increase in exposure to violent films and real life violence as the learning from films is mediated by other variables.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1   Research Design

This study adopts descriptive research design and employs survey method. This is because the data needed to provide answers to the questions raised in the studycan best be sourced from the media audience. That is, children who are exposed to film within the south-east region of Nigeria. This was done in an expository manner that is yet representable through statistical values in order to establish meaningful relationships between the exposure of childrento violence in film and its possible influences.

3.2   Population of the Study

The general population for this study comprises all children within the south east of Nigeria between the ages of five to 19 years. This is because at this stage they are believed to be within their formative years and are regarded universally as children. To arrive at the total figure of this population, data was drawn from the census figures provided by the National Population Commission. This data placed the total population of Nigeria at 140,431,790 and that of the South-East at 16,395,555 as at 2006. However, using an annual growth rate of 3.2% as proposed by the United Nations Development Programme, the estimated population for south-East Nigeria was placed at 23,977,707. This figure represents the entire population of the South-East. So to get at the population figure of those regarded as children in this study, the percentages for those within the age range was got from the general figure. According to (Allan, 2016), the sum of the percentage of those within the ages of five – 19 years equals 36.35%.

To arrive at the figure for those with the required ages the following calculation was done:

$$\frac{Total\ Populatio\ of\ South\ East}{100} \times \frac{percentage\ of\ ages\ 5-19}{1}$$
$$= population\ of\ the\ study$$

$$\frac{23,977,707}{100} \times \frac{36.35}{1} = 8,715,896$$

Therefore, the population of the study is all children within the ages of five to 19 years which is estimated to be 8,715,896.

3.3   Sample Size

Using the creative system research calculator with a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5 to calculate the sample size given the population of the country as at the time of the study, a sample size of 384 was recommended. Thus, the sample size for this study is 384. This is based on the premise that whatever data gotten from this fraction of the population can be estimated as being representative of the generality of the population with a plus or minus 5 margin.

Determine Sample Size

Confidence Level:	●95% ○99%
Confidence Interval:	5
Population:	8715896

Calculate   Clear

Sample size needed: 384

Figure 1: Sample size calculator

3.4   Sampling Technique

This study adopted multistage sampling technique. In the first stage balloting without replacement was used to select two states from the entire South-East region of Nigeria. At this stage Enugu and Anambra were selected. At the second stage, one urban and one rural area was selected in each state using convenience sampling procedure. This is to ensure accessibility to all selected areas. Then, at the local area level purposive sampling was used to administer the questionnaire to school children at selected schools in the various areas. This

is to ensure that the questions were given to those who are within the required age and who have significant level of education to supply the required responses.

See the table below for the distribution of the population across the selected states based on the proportion of the population of each state within the region.

Table 1: Distribution of the sample size across the selected states using population density

State	Total Population	Percentage of population	% of Sample size
Anambra	2,220,811	56.11	215
Enugu	1,737,078	43.88	169
Total	**3,957,889**	**100**	**384**

3.5   Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire with open and close-ended questions will be used as instrument for data collection in this study. The instrument will be administered directly to each of the respondents.

3.6   Test for Reliability

The instrument for this study was tested through a pilot study conducted within three selected primary and secondary schools in Enugu Metropolis. After this pilot study, some modifications have been made to enable the tool generate the most appropriate data.

3.7   Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected for this study will be analysed using digital statistical tools such as the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The information generated from the data will be presented through simple tables and charts with accompanying explanatory paragraphs to expatiate on the figures in the tables and charts for the purpose of clarity.

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Data Presentation

Following the sampling procedure as stated under the methodology for this study, the research tool was administered to students in a total of four schools across Anambra and Enugu states. In order to minimize shortfall in return, oversampling was done. That is, instead of the 384 questionnaire as recommended in the sample size, 400 questionnaires were administered. This was especially important as the population comprises of children who could make errors that would invalidate some of the questionnaire. So after removing the invalid questionnaire from the total number returned, 381 valid questionnaires were gotten thereby making a shortfall of just three.

The data got from the 381 questionnaire are presented below. In the first phase only the demographic data are presented while in the second phase the demographic data are combined with the research specific questions in order to provide answers for the questions raised in the study.

4.1.1 Demographic Data

In this aspect, data gotten from questions one to six are presented. The information constitutes details of age, gender, school, class and religion.

Table 2: Age distribution of the population

How old are you?			
Age (in years)	5-10	11-15	16-18
Total	71	176	134

Majority of the population are within the ages of 11 – 15 years. That is, they are within the middle age range of the population of the study.

Table 3: Gender distribution of the population

Boy	Girl
212 (56%)	169 (44%)

Young males (boys) make up a large part of the population with about 56 percent of the total population.

To get a more precise picture of the composition of the population, table 4 below presents the distribution of the population across gender and age. The data shows that while majority of the population (55.7%) are males, the highest single category of the entire population were boys between the ages of 11-15 (31%).

Table 4: Gender distribution across range

Ages	Gender		
	Boy	Girl	Total
5-10	51(13.4%)	20(5.3%)	71(18.6%)
11-15	118(31%)	58(15.2%)	176(46.2%)
16-18	43(11.3%)	91(23.9%)	134(35.2%)
Grand Total	**212(55.7%)**	**169(44.4%)**	**381(100%)**

Table 5: distribution of children based on class in school

Class	Count
Pri 4 – 6	93(25%)
JSS 1 – 3	169(44%)
SS 1 -3	119(31%)
Grand Total	**381(100%)**

Most of the children (44%) in the study were drawn from classes within JSS 1 – 3 as the table above shows.

Table 6 Distribution of the population according to type of parenting

Custodian Type	Count
Both Parents	150(39%)
Single Parent	117(31%)
Grand Parent	59(16%)
Guardian	55(14%)
Grand Total	**381(100%)**

This table shows that most of the children (39%) stay with both parents. That is, they live with their father and mother while only a few (14%) live in the custody of a guardian.

Table 7: Religious composition of the population

Religion Type	Count
Christians	253(66%)
Muslims	61(16%)
ATR	25(7%)
Other	42(11%)
Grand Total	**381**

An overwhelming number of the population are Christians (66%) with just a few Muslims (16%) and a fewer still who practice African Traditional Religion (7%).

4.1.2 Presentation of research specific data

The data presented below were drawn from the population's responses to questions raised in the questionnaire as a way of providing adequate answers to the research questions. Though the data are got from questions seven to 25, they were at some instances crossed-referenced with the demographic data to provide better insight and establish meaningful relationships.

To provide answer to research question one - ***What is the level of exposure of children in South East Nigeria to violent films?*** - the following data were analysed.

Question seven asked the respondents the type of movies they considered as favourite. The data in table eight shows the preferences of movie genre among the children.

Table 8: Distribution of preference of movie genre among the population

Favourite Genre	Count
Cartoon	49(13%)
Drama	60(16%)
Quiz/Spelling bee	35(9%)
Documentary	39(10)
Action/Thrillers	69(18%)
Adventure	47(12%)
Comedy	22(6%)
Science fiction	22(6%)
Music/Dance	38(10%)
Grand Total	**381**

A significant number of the population (18%) have preference for Action and Thrillers and this is followed by 16% who favour Drama. Science fiction is the most scarcely preferred genre amongst the children. While this may show their preference of movie genre, it does not create a picture of how often they actually do see such movies or how often they are exposed

to such media contents. Therefore, to find out their level of exposure various kinds of movies, table 9 is presented.

Table 9: Distribution of average number of movies seen per week

Movies Per Week	Count
1-2	81
3-5	148
6-10	91
More than 10	61
Total	**381**

To gauge the level of exposure of the children to movies first in a general sense, the data in table 9 reveals that while most of the children watch an average of 3 – 5 movies per week only a few see more than 10 movies. Therefore, it can be considered that there is considerable moderate exposure of children to movies in a general sense. Going further to put the issues into perspective, that is their level of exposure to violence in movies, this data was compared with the figures got from responses to question 10 in the questionnaire - *how many movies seen last week contains violence.* See table 10 below.

Table 10: Distribution of children based on the average number of movies seen last week and the level of violence they were exposed to

| Movies Per Week | Movies that contained violence | | | | Total |
	1-2	**3-5**	**6-10**	**All**	
1-2	20(5.25%)	14(3.67%)	25(10.50%)	22(5.77%)	81(21.26%)
3-5	13(3.41%)	25(6.65%)	70(18.37%)	40(10.50%)	148(38.85%)
6-10	53(13.91%)	38(9.97%)			91(23.88%)
More than 10		61(16.01%)			61(16.01%)
Grand Total	**86(22.57%)**	**138(36.22%)**	**95(24.93%)**	**62(16.27%)**	**381(100%)**

From the level of exposure to film by the average number of movies seen per week, when this figure is compared with the average number of movies that contained violence from the movies seen within the previous week we become able to estimate the level of exposure to violence in movies. From table 10 above, those who saw between 3-5 movies had the highest level of exposure to violence (18.37%) as most of those in this category making a total of 70

(18.37%) were exposed to violence in movies about six to 10 times. Though on a general note, there is a moderate (36.33%) level of exposure to violence in film as the table also shows. The table also revealed that the level of exposure to violence in movies does not have a direct relation to the total number of film a child is exposed to. This fact seen from the above table as those who saw more than 10 movies within last week did not constitute the highest number of children exposed to violence.

Therefore, in response to research question one, there is a moderate exposure of children to violence as only 36.22% children constitute the highest singular group of the total population were exposed to an average of 3-5 movies with violent scenes in one week. Those who opined that all the movies that they saw had violence were just 16.27%.

Research question two was raised to gauge *how frequent children are exposed to violence in movies*. This is very significant as psychologists have revealed that when an action is repeated especially in secession, it can become learned behaviour and trigger people to accept such actions as a norm. Therefore, in order to find out if the act of violence can become learned behaviour, the tables below examine the frequency of exposure to violence in movies.

Table 11: Frequency of movie exposure

Frequency	Count
Once in a week	140(37%)
About 3 times a week	137(36%)
Everyday	104(27%)
Grand Total	**381**

This table intends to show the frequency of exposure to film in general.It reveals that while there are no clear disparities in the numbers between light viewers (37%) and moderate viewers (36%) as they were just a fraction apart. It however noted there are just about little over a quarter (27%) who rarely see movies. While this table may present the rate at which they sit to watch a movie, it does not actually measure if they were seeing a repeated movie

within the week. Therefore,table 11 serves to give insight to the frequency at which the children were exposed to violence in movies within a week. This is regardless of whether they were seeing a repeated movie or not.

Table 12: Comparing frequency of movie exposure to exposure to violence in movies

	Exposure to movie with violence				
Movie exposure	**1-2**	**3-5**	**6-10**	**All**	**Total**
Once a week	50(13.12%)	25(6.56%)	25(6.56%)	40(10.50%)	140(36.75%)
About 3 times a week	16(4.20%)	59(15.49%)	40(10.50%)	22(5.77%)	137(35.96%)
Everyday	20(5.25%)	54(14.17%)	30(7.87%)		104(27.30%)
Grand Total	**86(22.57%)**	**138(36.22%)**	**95(24.93%)**	**62(16.27%)**	**381**

From the table above it is noticed that those who see movies every day (27.30%) were not the most exposed to violence in movie. Rather, part (15.49%) of the entire population who saw movies for about three times a week had the highest exposure to violence in movies. This goes to show that frequency of exposure to movies have no direct relationship to exposure to violence in movies. Also, there is a generally moderate frequency of exposure to movie with violence among children. This can be seen from the table which shows those who had 3-5 frequency as the most exposed (36.22%) to such violence.

To find out if other factors have any influence on frequency of exposure to violence in film, table 13 and 14 below examine the relation between frequency of exposure and who the children live with and also who decides what movies to watch.

Table 13: Relationship between who the child lives with and exposure to violence in movies

	Frequency of exposure				
Who child lives with	**1-2**	**3-5**	**6-10**	**All**	**Total**
Both parents	36(9.45%)	56(14.70%)	40(10.50%)	18(4.72%)	150(39.37%)
Single parent	13(3.41%)	82(21.52%)	22(5.77%)		117(30.71%)
Grand parent	15(3.94%)			44(11.55%)	59(15.49%)
Guardian	22(5.77%)		33(8.66%)		55(14.44%)
Grand Total	**86(22.57%)**	**138(36.22%)**	**95(24.93%)**	**62(16.27%)**	**381(100%)**

From the data presented above, it shows that children living with both parents had a high frequency (39.37%) of exposure than those who live with other types of parenting or custodian. This is followed by those who live with a single parent (30.71%) while those living with a guardian had the least frequency of exposure to movie violence (14.44%). Therefore, this might entail that the presence of a parent increases the chances of exposure. This might be because the parents decide what to watch and they watch such with the children. To clarify this point table 14 is presented.

Table 14: cross analysis on who decides movies to watch and frequency of exposure to movie violence

Who decides movie to watch	Frequency of exposure				
	1-2	3-5	6-10	All	Total
Parents	31(8.14%)	67(17.59%)			98(25.72%)
Friends	33(8.66%)		58(15.22%)	62(16.27%)	153(40.16%)
Me	22(5.77%)	39(10.24%)			61(16.01%)
Siblings		32(8.40%)	37(9.70%)		69(18.11%)
Grand Total	**86(22.57%)**	**138(36.22%)**	**95(24.93%)**	**62(16.27%)**	**381(100%)**

From this table we see that to a great who decides what to watch may have significant impact on their exposure to violence in movie. This is because when their friends decide what to watch the frequency of exposure jumped to 40%. That means seeing movies with friends might have a huge influence on their exposure to movie violence. However, when the children themselves decide what to watch, the frequency reduced to the lowest at 15.01%.

We can therefore conclude that generally there is a moderate frequency of exposure to movie violence and the frequency of exposure is highest amongst children who live with both parents. Also, children are at higher risk of exposure to movie violence when their friends decide what movie they should watch.

Going further to provide answer for research question three which asked *if exposure to violent film has any form of influence on children behaviour*, the following data were generated.

When asked if they would like to practice what they have seen in violent movies, the children offered diverse opinions and their views are presented below. This is presented alongside frequency of exposure to see if the frequency has any impact on decision to practice act of violence.

Table 15: Responses of the children on whether they will like to practice violence seen in movies

	Frequency of exposure				
Like To Practice	**1-2**	**3-5**	**6-10**	**All**	**Total**
Yes	53(13.91%)	65(17.06%)		22(5.77%)	140(36.75%)
No	33(8.66%)	73(19.16%)	95(24.93%)	40(10.50%)	241(63.25%)
Grand Total	**86(22.57%)**	**138(36.22%)**	**95(24.93%)**	**62(16.27%)**	**381**

From the data we see that most of the population (63.25%) would not want to carry out the acts to violence seen in movies. Even those who had high frequency of exposure (24.93%) are of the view that they would not want to practice such violence. However, to get a clearer picture, that is, to separate how much of this position was taken as result of experience or just decisions based on movie exposure, the children were asked if they had actually tried some such acts. Their responses are presented below.

Table 16: Responses on whether they have acted out acts of violence as seen on movies

Ever tried such violence	**Count**
Yes	154(37%)
No	227(63%)
Total	**381(100%)**

From the table above only one third (37%) of the entire population had acted out acts of violence as seen in the movies.

This goes to show that while they may be a substantially moderate level of exposure to movie violence, it has not directly affected the behaviour of children as they do not intend to try out such actsneither have majority of them actually acted out such acts of violence. Therefore, we

can say that exposure to violence in movie has no significant level of influence on children behaviour as it does not lead to real violence.

Finally, to find out *the **factors that leads to exposure to violent films***, the following data were analysed and presented. These data provide answer to research question four of the study.

The children were asked if they enjoyed watching movies with violence. Their response is presented in table 17 below.

Table 17: Responses on whether they derive satisfaction from seeing violence in movies

Do you enjoy seeing movie violence	Count
Yes	157(37%)
No	224(63%)
Total	**381(100%)**

From their responses, it is clear that majority (63%) of the children do not necessarily derive satisfaction from seeing violence in movies. So to find precisely why then they have a significantly moderate level of exposure, other questions were raised such as *why would you watch a movie with violence?* Below are their responses.

Table 18: Why children watch movies with violence

Why See Violent Movies	Count
Character association	67(17%)
Thrill	77(20%)
Availability	53(14%)
Lack of alternative	67(18%)
Self-expression	57(15%)
Just for fun	45(12%)
Education	15(4%)
Others	
Total	**381(100%)**

About one in five children (20%) watch movies with violence just for the thrill and this is followed closely by 18% who watch it because lack of alternative. For this latter category,

they will not be watching movies with violence if they had a choice. For this reason, the children were asked how often are they able to make request or suggest what to watch. See their responses in the table below.

Table 19: How often are children able to decide what movie to watch

How often do you request what to watch	Count
Often	76(20%)
All the time	111(29%)
Once ina while	134(35%)
Never	60(16%)
Total	**381(100%)**

For more than one-third (35%) of the time, children are only once in a while able to suggest or request what movies to watch. This means that they do not have a dominant control over the movies that they are exposed to. That means they do not determine their level of exposure to violence in movies.

Therefore, while children do not opt for movies with violence as a result of satisfaction, majority of them do so for the thrill and lack of enjoyment. It is also instructive to note that the children do not have control over what movies they watch as they were only 35% who are able to make such request just once in a while.

4.2   Discussion of Findings

From the data generated through the research tool we have been able to make inferences that help to answer the questions raised in this study. However, to locate the findings in the realm of existing literature in order to fill a practical gap, the findings were discussed alongside other similar research study.

The study shows that children have a high preference for action and thrillers than the other genre of movies. Science fiction is the least preferred genre among children. It also noted that most children actually see between three to five movies per week showing a moderate level

of exposure to movies in a general sense. This is in line with the findings of Oyero & Oyesomi(2014), in their study of *Perceived Influence of Television Cartoons on Nigerian Children* who noted that "majority (66%) of the children watch cartoon for about one to three hours a week, an indication of children familiarity with cartoons" (p.103). Then going further to investigate the level of exposure to violence in movies, the study found that those who saw between three to five movies within the previous week had the highest level of exposure to violence in movies in all the categories. The study however found that there is a generally moderate level of exposure to violence in movies as the aggregate from all the levels of exposure revealed. It also noted that there is no relationship between level of movie exposure and exposure to violence in movies as those who were mostly exposed to movies showed less exposure to movie violence.

The study found an inverse relationship in the frequency of exposure to violence in movie and the frequency at which a child is exposed to movies. It also noted an increased frequency of exposure to movie violence with children who live with both parents than those living with their grandparents of guardian. This suggests that the children might be affected by the choices made by their parents in deciding what movies to watch as Haghighat, Tabatabaee, moazedian, & Sabetimani(2014), in their study of *Effects of violent movies on drawing symbols in seven to eleven years old boys* noted that "families are responsible for preparing films and computer games, according to the labels indicate the age appropriate program for their child to stop the adverse consequences of violence in future" (p. 491). Also, it was noted that the chances of a child's exposure to movie violence increases drastically when their friends decide what movies they should watch. This is about three times higher than when the child is given the chance to decide what movie to watch. This therefore suggest the tendency of peer influence in the frequency of children exposure to violence in movies.

In an attempt to find out if there is any logical relationship between exposure to movies violence and violent behaviour as Mangwere, Wadesango, & Kurebwa(2013) suggested that "television has great powers to influence the way children and teenagers behave" (p.108), the study asked some specific questions. From the responses generated it was noted that most children would not want to practice such acts of violence as seen in the movies. This is also consistent for those who had very high exposure to violent movies within the past week. The study also noted that most of the child have never exhibited such behaviour as a result of exposure to movie violence. Therefore, we can say that movie violence does not lead to real violence. However, this is in contrast with a study by Dr. Huesmann as cited in Habib & Soliman(2015)who opined that "violence delivered for kids, would have one of two possibilities of effects on the child. First, a case called desensitization, which means that the child loses logic thinking of the result of his actions. He becomes unable to predict the correct outcome of his actions, he begins to substitute the cartoon characters with himself and his friends, he then would like to repeat these situations which caused him to laugh, then his mind incorrectly begins to persuade the child that hitting a friend with a hard object is not a matter that would cause harm" (p.262). Other studies such as Browne & Hamilton-Giachritsis(2005) who studied *The influence of violent media on children and adolescents: a public-health approach* concluded that "empirical evidence for the notion that media violence causes crime is weak" (p. 706). Most studies were not able to establish a direct relationship between real violence and violence in movies.

The study found out that children do not necessarily derive pleasure from exposure to violence in movies. While one in five children will see such violence just for the thrill of it, a significant number of them get exposed to movies with violence due to a lack of alternative movies. If given the choice to select what to watch, the data shows that most of the children

will see a different movie instead of opting for a movie based on the violence in it. They rarely do have the chance to select or suggest what movies to watch.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1   Summary

This study had as it broad objective to determine the influence of exposure of children to violence films on their behaviour. This was in response to debates in existing literature on the possibilities of media having influence of people's attitude and that increased levels of exposure might heighten the tendency of media influence. The study was therefore anchored on the theory of selectivity which sees users as selecting media contents that they wish to get exposed to base on desires and previous experiences and also the social learning theory which posits that through exposure to media contents we acquire certain behavioural traits or experience behavioural modifications. That we learn behaviour from our exposure to media. The data for this study showed that there is a moderate level of exposure of children to media content as most of them see about 3-5 movies per week and also the frequency of exposure to film violence is equally moderate. This however, does not on its own negate the chance of influence on behaviour. The study went further to show that there is no direct relationship between exposure to violence in film and real life violence as most of the respondents opine that they would not want to practice such acts of violence as seen in films even though some of them say they derive certain levels of thrill from watching such films. Going further, the study noted that the factors that may influence children exposure to violent films are the decisions made by parents and friends in selecting what movies to watch, lack of alternative movies and the desire to seek certain levels of thrills.

5.2   Conclusion

Drawing from the purpose of this study and the data collected from the respondents, it can therefore be asserted that exposure to movie violence does not necessarily lead to violent behaviour in children. Also, the factors that lead to exposure to violent films are parental typologies – such that those who live with both parents have a higher tendency of being

exposed to movies violence – and children who watch movies with friends have a higher tendency of being exposed to movies violence. The lack of alternative and the desire for thrills are also other factors that influence a child's decision to watch movies with violence.

5.3   Recommendation

Based on the issues raised in this study and the findings from the data gathered, the following recommendations are put forward to curtail children's exposure to violent films:

1. Children should be guided and listened to when it comes to time to select movies to watch.

2. Parents should ensure that children are not always exposed to the same movies that they the parents are viewing as this will help to reduce the exposure of the children to movie violence.

3. Children should be given wider options of films to select from.

4. Films should be properly tagged or rated within the home to signify the presence of violent contents in order to preempt children as they go searching for what to watch.

5. Parents and guardians should be mindful of the company their children and ward keep so as to reduce the chance of high exposure to violence in film due to suggestions by friends.

6. Media outfit should reduce the amount of violent movies played during the day so as to ensure that there is less and less exposure of children to violence.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. How old are you? 5 – 10 ☐ 11 – 15 ☐ 16 – 18 ☐

2. What is your gender? Boy ☐ Girl ☐

3. What class are you in school? Pri 1 – 3 ☐ Pri 4 – 6 ☐ JSS 1 – 3 ☐ SS 1 – 3 ☐
   higher institution ☐ not going to school ☐

4. Who do you live with? Both Parent ☐ Single Parent ☐ Grandparents ☐
   Guardian ☐ Friends ☐ Alone ☐

5. Which of these best describes your religious practice? Christian ☐ Muslim ☐
   African Traditional religion ☐ Other ☐

6. What is your favourite kind of movie? Cartoon ☐ Drama ☐
   Quiz/Spelling bee ☐ Documentary ☐ Action/Thrillers ☐ Adventure ☐
   Comedy ☐ Science Fiction ☐ Dance/Music ☐

7. How often do you see movies within a week? Once a week ☐
   About 3 times ☐ Everyday ☐ Never ☐

8. How many movies did you see within a week? At least one ☐ about 2 – 4 ☐
   More than 5 ☐ can't remember ☐

9. How many of the movies seen last week contain violence? just one or two ☐
   3-5 ☐ all ☐ none ☐

10. What type of violence do you often see in movies? Fighting with hands and legs ☐
    shooting ☐ destruction of things ☐ use of fire and explosives ☐

11. How long would you say each of the violence lasted? 10 seconds ☐ about
    30secs ☐ 1min ☐ 2mins ☐ about 5mins ☐

12. Are violent actions frequent in the movies you see? Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Do you watch movies alone? sometimes ☐ all the time ☐ never ☐

14. Who often decides what movies to watch? parent ☐ friends ☐ me ☐
    siblings ☐

15. How often are you able to ask for what to watch? often ☐ all the time ☐
    once in a while ☐ never ☐

16. Where do the movies mostly come from? DSTV/Gotv ☐ DVDs/CDs ☐
    computer ☐ mobile phone ☐ purchased ☐ Video club ☐ Not sure ☐

17. Where do you stay to watch movies?　　sitting room ☐　　Bed room ☐

　　kitchen ☐　　friends' house ☐　　others places ☐

18. Do you enjoy seeing violence in film?　　Yes ☐　　No ☐

19. Why would you want to see a movie with violence? Character association ☐

　　Thrill ☐　　Availability ☐　　Lack of alternative ☐ Self-expression ☐

　　Just for fun ☐　　Education ☐

20. Would you like to practice what you have seen in the violent films? Yes ☐　　No ☐

21. Have you ever tried out some of the things you saw in television? Yes ☐　　No ☐

22. Are there any of the persons you see in violent movies that you would like to be like?

　　Yes ☐　　No ☐

23. If yes, who would like to be? the violent person ☐　　the one who suffers none ☐

24. Do you fight to get out of a difficult situation? Yes ☐　　No ☐

25. Do violent films make you want to fight or play with weapon or own a gun?

　　Yes ☐　　No ☐