

### **Abstract**

Television viewing pattern among children in Sri Lanka is found to be similar to developed countries but the influence of television violence on children has not been researched.

The aim of this study was to measure the relationship between exposure to television violence and aggressive behaviour in school children and to analyse the urban/rural and gender differences in the relationship. Study was carried out among children in Years 3,4 and 5 (n=198). Aggressive behaviour among children was assessed by the class teacher using a questionnaire. Information on television watching of children was obtained using a questionnaire filled by parents for a period of one week. Violence rating system was developed for the purpose of the study and extent of exposure of children to television violence was calculated. Opinion of parents regarding television violence and aggressive behaviour was obtained from a sub sample of parents (n=50) using in-depth interviews.

Mean duration of telecasted television programmes viewing per day was 2.25 hours for weekdays and 3.1 hours for weekends. On average boys watched television for a longer duration compared to girls and children from schools of urban settings watched television for a longer duration compared to children from schools of rural settings. Cartoons were the mostly watched type of programme. Results showed a statistically significant relationship between exposure to television violence and aggressive behaviour. In analyses for differences, this relationship was significant among boys but not among girls. Children from schools of both urban and rural settings showed significant relationship but the relationship was stronger among urban school children. Parents were not much aware of the extent of violence in television programmes their children watched or its effects on children.