Annotated example of how to write an essay

Q: Discuss how media can influence children. Use specific examples to support your view.

Introduction

Media, particularly television, has a significant role in the everyday lives of children. The way media influences children can be both positive and negative. Quality television and written texts can provide positive role models and opportunities for learning. However, media showing excessive or gratuitous behaviours can be harmful to the development of children’s attitudes and values. Initially, a discussion about the many types of media will caution that it cannot be assumed media has the same effects on all children. Further, it will be shown that media can be actively used to achieve beneficial outcomes among children, including the range of educational television tailored for children that build social skills and introduce children to diverse themes and topics. In contrast, the negative impacts of media, including exposure to inappropriate material, creating a sense of entitlement, increasing peer pressure and restricting contact children have with real people will be examined. Finally, the amount and type of media, variety and quality of content will be discussed to highlight that media becomes harmful to children when exposure to media is not monitored or when children miss out on other activities, such as exercise and social play.

Body

Children can also be influenced negatively as a result of media. Over exposure to television and gaming are two examples of possible negative impacts on children. Research suggests that children who are over exposed to television are more likely to display aggressive behaviour than those who are not. For example, a ten year longitudinal study of over 430 children revealed that eight year old boys ’who were in the upper 20% of television exposure were significantly higher on measures of aggression than the study’s other participants’ (Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz and Walder 1972, cited in Sullivan 2013, p46). The study also found that these children continued to show aggressive behaviour throughout their childhood and teens (Eron, Huesmann, Lefkowitz and Walder 1972, cited in Sullivan 2013). Furthermore, these children, who were studied into their twenties and thirties, continued to show high measures of aggression (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski & Eron 2003, cited in Sullivan 2013). This suggests that over exposure to television can have long term and negative impacts on the behaviour of children. These effects not only impact aggressive behaviour, but also children’s attitudes and values (Clay, 2003). Additional research on the link between exposure to video gaming and aggression is suggesting similar findings, with a link between time spent on video games and higher scores on measures of aggression (Anderson and Bushman 2001 cited in Kirsh 2003). They suggest gaming influences aggressive behaviour, cognition, and physiological arousal. Given that 80 percent of the most popular video games on the market today are violent in nature (Diez 1998, cited in Kirsh 2003), the influence of gaming on levels of aggression are concerning. Media, then, can have a negative impact on levels of aggression on children who are over exposed to television and video games.

Conclusion

Media can have both positive and negative influences on children. Media, particularly television that is of high quality, expose children to learning opportunities and can provide appropriate role models for children. Early exposure to age-appropriate programs designed around an educational curriculum are found to enhance cognition and academic performance. Research suggests that parents who select well-designed, age-appropriate programs and view these programs with their children maximise the positive effects of media on their children. However, media which shows excessive or gratuitous violence can have long term negative effects on a child’s behaviour, cognition, and physiological arousal. There is also evidence to suggest that over-exposure to media can damage some children’s ability to connect with real people in everyday situations and there appears to be a strong link between over-exposure to media and the rise of obesity in children. Importantly, it appears that the risk of harmful effects of media are significantly reduced when parents monitor both the amount of time children spend in front of the television or computer screen as well as the content and suitability of the programs. Therefore, children can be both positively and negatively influenced by media, and the best safeguard against exposing children to harmful effects of media is by careful monitoring of the quantity and quality of media by parents.