

Television Induced Fear Scale, Coping Strategies to Reduce Fear from TV and Television Mediation Scale – Adaptation Process on Macedonian Sample-Our Experience



Psychology

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Maja Simonovska

Gestalt Institute – Skopje, Macedonia.

Emilija Stoimenova-Canevska

International Balkan University – Skopje, Macedonia.

Frosina Ristovska

Gestalt Institute – Skopje, Macedonia.

Abstract

The presented results were obtained from a pilot study concerning the children's television watching habits (aged 9 to 12), their fright reactions and their way of coping with the fear. In the following text we present a detailed report of the adaptation process of the scales: "Television Induced Fear Scale", "Coping Strategies to Reduce Fear from TV" and "Television Mediation Scale".

Introduction

The interest for the effects of watching television is constantly increasing. Besides the different agencies which measure the time different categories of people spent watching television, in the past years the number of scientific papers regarding this phenomenon in Macedonia is increasing.

The emergence of fear which appears while the viewers watch television is not rare. Today viewers of all ages can recall feeling frightened from different media material. According to Cantor different types of media material can cause fright reactions. The differences occur not only due to the type of stimuli, but also to the age of the viewers. Children aged 2 to 6 years old are mostly afraid from media characters which look or sound scary, such as ghosts, witches and monsters. They are more afraid from scenes containing injuries, violence and personal damage. They are also afraid from scenes that look real and are perceived as possible to happen in the real life. This is why they are more afraid from media material shown in the news. It is considered that children older than 13, perceive and react to the media material like the adults (Cantor, 2009; Cantor, 2011; Cantor, Nathanson, 1996, according to Wilson, 2008).

Today all programs in Macedonia are subdivided depending on the age appropriateness. We conducted a large study concerning children's habits for watching TV, their fright reactions to material seen on TV, coping strategies to reduce the fear and the type of parental mediation used to reduce the fear.

Before conducting the research, we translated the scales using double blind translation, than we checked the reliability of the scales and conducted item analysis. Depending to the obtained data we made appropriate corrections to each scale.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The study was conducted in two primary schools in Skopje, R. Macedonia in June 2011 ("Blaze Koneski" and "Gorgija Puleski"). A total number of 219 pupils from 4th, 5th and 6th grade filled in the paper based instrument which consisted of three scales: "Television Induced Fear Scale", "Coping Strategies to Reduce Fear from TV Scale" and "Television Mediation Scale". The pupils filled in the questionnaire during their classes. The 6th grade pupils needed around 30 minutes, while the 4th and 5th grade pupils needed 45 minutes to fill in the questionnaire.

Television Induced Fear Scale

Television Induced Fear Scale is created by Valkenburg, Cantor, and Peeters in 2000 (Valkenburg, Cantor, and Peeters, 2000). The scale is consisted of 18 lickert type items with three levels: never, sometimes and often. For the purpose of this research (to gain higher specificity) we extended the number of levels from 0 to 4, where 0 - never, 1 - very rare, 2 - sometimes, 3 - often and 4 - very often.

The scale is consisted of four subscales which measure the occurrence of four types of fear induced by watching television:

- Fear of Interpersonal Violence - 5 items
- Fear of War And Suffering - 4 items
- Fear of Fires And Accidents - 4 items
- Fear of Fantasy Characters - 5 items

Because two of the subscales have 5 items while the other two subscales have 4 items in order to even the number of items in each subscale we added items. In the subscale “fear of war and suffering” we added “Torturing people” („Мачење на луѓе“), while in the subscale “fear of fires and accidents” we added “Fire in the woods” („Пожар во шуми“).

According to the authors Cronbach alpha for the subscale “fear of war and suffering” was 0.76, for the subscale “fear of fires and accidents” was 0.76, for the subscale “fear of fantasy characters” was 0.76, and 0.83 for the subscale “fear of interpersonal violence”(Valkenburg, Cantor, and Peeters, 2000). According to the data obtained from the Macedonian sample Cronbach alpha for the entire scale was 0.938. We also measured Cronbach alpha for the subscales: “fear of interpersonal violence” 0.868, “fear of war and suffering” 0.846, “fear of fires and accidents” 0.863 and “fear of fantasy characters” 0.828. Since all calculated cronbach alpha’s were high the scale is acceptable to be used on Macedonian Samples.

The two items had high correlation with the other items in the scale and in their subscales, so we decided to keep them in the scale.

Coping Strategies to Reduce Fear from TV

The scale “Coping Strategies To Reduce Fear From TV” was created by Valkenburg, Cantor and Peeters in 2000 (Valkenburg, Cantor and Peeters, 2000). It is consisted of 21 lickert type items with three levels: never, sometimes and often. For the purpose of this research (to gain higher specificity) we extended the number of levels to 5, ranging from 0 to 4, where 0 - never, 1 - very rare, 2 - sometimes, 3 - often and 4 - very often.

The scale is consisted of four subscales which measure four strategies for coping with the fear induced by watching television:

- Physical Intervention - 5 items
- Cognitive reassurance - 6 items
- Social support - 5 items
- Escape - 5 items

Because three of the subscales consist of 5 items, and only one has 6 items, we added one item in the three subscales. In the subscale “physical intervention” we added the item “You start singing, („Си потпевнуваш“), in the subscale “social support” we added the item “You squeeze your brother’s/sister’s hand” („Ја стискаш раката на брат ти/ сестра ти“) and in the subscale “escape” we added the item “You hide behind the armchair” („Се криеш зад фотелја“)

The reliability of the scale was tested on children in Netherlands and USA. The obtained Cronbach alphas were 0.71 for the subscale physical intervention, 0.70 for the subscale cognitive reassurance, 0.66 for the subscale social support, and 0.68 for the subscale escape (Valkenburg, Cantor and Peeters, 2000). The reliability tested on the Macedonian sample showed that Cronbach alpha for the entire scale was 0.899. Cronbach alpha for the subscale “physical intervention” is 0.8306, for the subscale “cognitive reassurance” is 0.685, for the subscale “social support” is 0.764 and for the subscale “escape” is 0.586. Since all calculated Cronbach alpha’s were high the scale is acceptable to be used on Macedonian Samples.

We also tested the internal correlation of the items in the subscales and in the entire scale. The correlation for the item: “Do you just continue watching?” („Продолжуваш да гледаш“) which is part of the subscale “Escape” was -0.301, while regarding the entire scale was -0.249. This is why we decided to change this item with “You go to another room” („Одиш во друга соба“).

The item.” ...do you tell yourself that what you see can never happen in your home?” („Си велиш дека она што го гледаш никогаш нема да се случи во твојот дом“) had a correlation lower than 0.30 in the subscale and larger than 0.30 in the scale. This is why we changed it to “You tell yourself that it can only happen on TV” („Си велиш дека тоа се случува само на ТВ“).

The item “Do you tell yourself that you are too big to be afraid?” (“Си велиш дека си премногу голем/а за да се плашиш”) which is part of the subscale “Cognitive Reassurance” regarding the entire scale had correlation 0.256, and regarding the subscale 0.449. According to de Vaus (de Vaus, 2004) if the correlation of the item is lower than 0.30 the item should be excluded from the scale. Having in mind that the item has correlation higher than 0.30 within the entire scale we decided to keep it.

While the pupils were filling in the questionnaire, the ones which didn’t have siblings, were asking us how should they answer the question “You squeeze the arm of your brother/sister” („Ја стискаш раката на брат ти/ сестра ти“). This is why we changed the item to “You squeeze the arm of the one who watches with you” („Ја стискаш раката на оној со кого гледаш“).

Television Mediation Scale

The Television Mediation Scale was created by Valkenburg, Krmar, Peeters and Marseille in 1999 (Valkenburg, Krmar, Peeters and Marseille, 1999). The 15 item scale is a Likert type with four levels: never, rarely, sometimes and often. For the purpose of this research (to gain higher specificity) we extended the number of levels to 5, ranging from 0 to 4, where 0 - never, 1 - very rare, 2 - sometimes, 3 - often and 4 - very often. The scale is consisted of three subscales:

- Restrictive Mediation - 5 items
- Active (or instructional) Mediation - 5 items
- Social Coviewing - 5 items

The Television Mediation Scale is intended for parents, we have adapted the items so the pupils assess their parent behavior.

The reliability of the scale was tested among parents from Netherlands and USA. The authors state that the Cronbach alpha for the three subscales that have varied from .79 to .91 among Dutch and American parents (Valkenburg, Krmar, Peeters and Marseille, 1999). According to the data that we obtained on the Macedonian sample Cronbach alpha for the entire scale was 0.779. But, the items “...watch together because you both like a program?” („Заедно гледате затоа што ви се допаѓа програмата“), “...watch together just for the fun?” („Гледате заедно само за забава“) and “...do you laugh with your child about the things you see on TV?” („Заедно се смеете на нешто на ТВ“) and “...do you watch your favorite program together?” („Ја гледате заедно неговата/нејзината

омилена програма“) had correlation lower than 0.3. Since four items from a subscale consisted of five items had a correlation lower than 0.3, we decided to remove the entire subscale.

After removing the subscale “social coviewing” the Cronbach alpha for the entire scale is 0.809. Cronbach alpha for the subscale “Instructive Mediation” is 0.757, and for the subscale “Restrictive Mediation” is 0.725.

Discussion

The aim of the pilot study was to check the reliability of the scales: “Induced fear for watching television”, “Coping strategies to reduce fear from TV” and the “Parental Mediation Scale”. The pilot study revealed that it was necessary make adjustments of the scales. Some of the items were changed and some were excluded from the scales.

In the Parental Mediation Scale we excluded the entire subscale “Social Coviewing” due to the low correlations among the items. The reason for the low correlation may be due to the fact that the scale is intended to be answered by the parents, and in this case we have adjusted it so the children evaluated their parent’s behavior.

The changes in the scales can also be due to the differences in the communication process concerning manners of conduct connected to watching television. We have translated and adjusted the items, but still we believe that for a future research it will be very useful if there are open items at the end of the scales where the pupils can enter their own answers concerning their behavior.

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