Parent Opinion Towards Child Exposure to Television

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to: describe parent demographic information, examine child’s exposure to television observed by parent, and determine parent’s opinion toward child exposure to television.

Pakkret district, Nonthaburi province was selected as a location of study. Sample size was 363 parents with children ages 6-12. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 2 public and 2 private schools. Data were analyzed and presented through frequency, percentage, means, and standard deviation.

Finding revealed that most respondents were female (72.45%), average age was 39.55 years old. Most parents remained married (95.60%), had 2 children (43.80%), held a bachelor’s degree or equivalent (52.07%), worked in a private company (29.20%), and had an average income of 16,592 baht. All children watched television, 3 – 4 hours a day (53.72%), between 06.01 p.m. – 12.00 p.m. (64.46%), children watched television with their siblings (36.09%) and cartoon was their favorite program (50.96%). The opinion level of parent toward child exposure to television was at moderate level (mean = 3.32).

Keywords: Parent Opinion, Child Exposure to TV
I. INTRODUCTION

New technologies and the “revolution information” of the 20th century have extremely increased our capacity to know, achieve, and collaborate. These technologies allow us to transmit information quickly and widely, linking distant places and diverse areas of endeavor in productive new ways, and create communities that just a decade ago was unimaginable (National Academies of Science, 2007). Technological advancement brings about tremendous impact on the media environment dominating fundamental role in modern society. The influence of the mass media on our lives is profound, it is not only to provide entertainment, but shape much of the information we utilize.

Today’s media environment is complex and varied, and offers people opportunities to select entertainment and information from a large number of television channels, radio stations, print publications, and new electronic media accessible through computer technology. Interestingly television remains a major industry, especially among industrialized nations, a medium of communication and source of home entertainment and certainly one of the most influential forces of time (Marshall, 2007).

Children today are living in a global village. They are part of a global audience that transcends local or even regional physical and cultural boundaries in consumption of television programs. As a global phenomenon, television promotes mainly what has been term as “late modernity” values, typified primarily commercialism, globalization, privatization, and individualization. This is “achieved as a result that children are being entertained by popular television programs originating from various parts of the world diffused through a process known as “The Megaphone Effect” (Dafna, 2007).

Investment in children and television is a global business of enormous proportions and values. For huge entertainment corporation, children are not future citizens but first and foremost they are consumers. Programs produced are generally not served children’s interest, but for the purpose of gaining business profit (Anura 2000). The recent explosion of television satellite and cable business offers numerous selections of programs offering dozens of channels. Children devote much of their time with television, continuous contact is thought to influence the way they understand and interpret both television and the world in which they live. The wide availability of television has raised parental concern about the amount of television and the type of programming to which children are being exposed, and its harmful effects related to child mental and physical health (The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2004).

Television’s popularity is still growing in spite of increasing competition from new media platforms and devices which made its availability easier and convenient for people to attain news, sport, and entertainment. Television has played an important role in our lives having a television set at home has become essential in today’s society and influencing us in many ways.
The availability of television has caused parents to develop concern (University of Michigan Health System, 2008). Children today are overly exposed to television, they are not engaging in activities needed for development and human companionship has been replaced. Children today depict values and behaviors from watching television.

According to the social learning theory founded by Albert Bandura a child develops new values and behavior through observational learning and imitating others (Spock, 2000). Children believe and imitate everything they see with their incapability of processing information imparted with their inadequate knowledge (Potter, 1998) and have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy and perceive distorted information of the world.

Parents should set limits on the amount of television viewing and foster discussion about the televised material this way child can approach the medium in a more serious way and become a critical viewer and resistant to harmful effects (Dafna, 2007). The aim of this study is to examine parent’s opinions and guidelines in dealing with their child’s exposure to television.

**Objective**

1. To describe parent demographic information.
2. To examine child’s exposure to television observed by parent.
3. To determine parent’s opinion toward child exposure to television.

**II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Communication**

Pearson and Nelson (1997) found that communication comes from Latin word, which means, “to make common”. In addition, the communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning. It is considered a process because it is an activity, an exchange or a set of behaviors, not an unchanging product. Communication is not an object that human can hold in their hands, it is the activity in which they were participating.

Communication can be divided into 3 types.

1. Action communication could be viewed as one person sends a message and another receive it. The speaker sends the message to the audience as a kind of inoculation in which the message is a short and may or may not take effect.

2. Interaction communication could be viewed as one person sends a message to a second person, who receives it and responds with another message. The speaker and receive take turns being speaker and listener in a linear fashion.

3. Transaction communication could be viewed as communication which simultaneously send and receive messages rather than act exclusively as senders or receives. In other words, people are continually sending and receiving message.

**Development Communication**

Quebral (1971 cited in Ongkiko and Flor, 2003) defined development communication as “the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its
people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equity and the larger fulfillment of the human potential.” Development communication requires creativity in communication messages through the use of various communication media and materials. It also uses the scientific method to enrich its own field through research where theories and principles can be derived and applied to development problems. Furthermore, development communication applied systematic methods in making decisions and planning how to efficiently carry out communication interventions.

**Media Theory**

**Cognitive Neoassociationist Theory**

Berkowitz (1986 cited in Evra, 2004) asserted that viewing aggression disinherit viewers’ controls on aggressive behavior. If the aggression is approved and the disinherit increases, aggression is more likely, although the aggressive acts are not necessarily imitations of the specific acts seen on television.

According to Berkowitz, even neutral stimuli can evoke aggressive behavior when they are associated in one’s mind with aversive conditions or events. That is, negative feelings evoke aggressive tendencies and this process underlies the aggression that often follows frustration. Virtually any type of negative effect, even depression and sadness, can activate or trigger the anger-aggression network if the feeling is sufficiently intense, but some types of affect, such as feelings of agitation, may be more likely to prime it. In addition, later comments or objects may serve as retrieval cues for aggressive thoughts that occur during the viewing of a violent program through a system of semantically related concepts.

**Cultivation Theory**

The cultivation hypothesis as espoused by Evra (2004 cited Gerbner, 1980 Gross,1982 Morgan, and Signorielli, 1986) suggested that heavy television viewing leads to or cultivates perceptions of the world that are consistent with television’s portrayals. The more time spent viewing television, the more likely the viewer is to accept television’s version of things, especially in areas in which the viewer has little direct experience such as in the expectation of violence or in getting information about other groups with whom the person does not interact. Wright explained that the cultivation theory predicts or expects frequent viewers to give more “TV” answers or answers consistent with television’s portrayal of the world as shown in content analyses than of the real world as shown by actual statistics.

According to the cultivation perspective, the amount of viewing or exposure is a very important variable in television’s impact on thought and behavior. Heavy viewers differ systematically from light viewers in beliefs, values, and assumptions that may relate in consistent ways to the groups’ life situations and views. Cultivation theory assumes that heavy viewers are less selective in their viewing, engage in habitual viewing, and experience a good deal of sameness of content. Moreover television impact is greatest when it functions as the only information source and when it is relevant to the person. Lighter viewers are more likely to have many other diverse source of information such as social
interaction, reading, and vocational experience that take up much of their time and displace TV viewing time. They have a greater number of behavioral models, and they are also perhaps less likely to take television content seriously. Heavy viewers have few other sources of ideas and thus are more likely to report reality perceptions that are consistent with television portrayals.

**Opinion**

Maier (1965) defined opinion as an expression of attitude in one part; the other is an interpretation of a fact. The interpretation of the fact will be based solely on the interpretation’s experience and idea.

Opinion was defined by Isaak (1981) as ways to express one’s idea about a certain situation. Opinion is different from attitude because opinion concentrates only on the subject, but attitude concerns everything involving the subject. It is usually distinguished from an attitude on the basis of generality. That is an opinion has to do with specific issues, thus an attitude can be thought of as being manifested in a number of opinions (Isaak, 1981 cited Eysenck, 1954).

Good (1973) gave many definitions of the word “opinion” as follows:

1. In general definition, it was a belief, thought, analysis and attitude that had not been proven correctly and still needed more evidence and facts.

2. True definition was an analysis or a critical thinking with a plan from a believable source.

3. Public Opinion was an analysis by the whole group of people or the society, which had a lot of influence from the mass population.

Webster (1967) defined opinion as an expression based on a decision or point of view about a person or things. It is a way to predict a situation by personal belief and feeling. That feeling must be stronger than impression but less than a true feeling.

**Child and Television**

Children devote much of their free time to watching television which accounts for more of a child’s waking time than any other activities—seemingly enamored of the screen—and continuous contact is thought to influence the way they understand and interpret both television and the world in which they live. Although children have everyday contact with other media and many other forms of expression and communication, visual media alone are seen as speaking a "universal language," accessible regardless of age questions about program content and its use by children, television's influence on children's attitudes, knowledge and behavior, and appropriate public policy toward children's television have been central to the discussion of this medium throughout half century as the electronic hearth (Alexander, 2008).

**Child Exposure to Television**

Boyse (2008) believe that television has its good side. It can be entertaining and educational, and can open up new worlds for children, giving them a chance to travel the globe, learn about different cultures, and gain exposure to ideas they may never encounter in their own community. Programs with positive role models can influence people to change
their behavior for the better. However, the reverse can also be true: Children are likely to learn things from TV that parents don't approve. TV can affect kids' health and family life.

III. METHODOLOGY

Population of this study was parents with child ages 6-12 years old from purposively selected schools 2 private 2 public from a total of 55 schools in Pakkret district, Nonthaburi province which amounts to 3,934 parents.

Yamane formula (1973) was employed to calculate the sample size, the total of 363 parent served as respondent of this study.

Questionnaire was used as research instrument. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts consisting of both close and open ended questions: parent demographic information, child exposure to Television Observed by parents, and parent opinion towards child exposure to television.

Data were collected during May 2009 from 2 private and 2 public schools. Data were analyzed and presented through frequency, percentage, means, and standard deviation. Opinion was grouped into three levels as follow:

1.00 – 2.33 = Low level of opinion
2.34 – 3.66 = Moderate level of opinion
3.67 – 5.00 = High level of opinion

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

From 363 respondents 27.55% of respondents were male and 72.45% were female. 45.73% were between the ages of 41 – 56 years old, followed by 33.61% ages 31 – 40 years old, and 20.66% ages 18 – 30 years old. The average age of respondents was 39.55 years old. The minimum age of respondents was 18 years old and the maximum age was 56 years old.

Majority numbers of respondents at 95.60% were married. 43.80% of respondents have 2 children while 41.05% have only 1 child, 15.15% have 3 or more children. The minimum number of children respondents have was 2 and the maximum number was more than 3.

Majority of the respondent at 52.07% of respondents have an educational level of bachelor's degree or equivalent, 28.93% with secondary level followed by 13.77% with primary level and, 4.41% with Masters Degree.

29.20% of respondents were working for a private company while 25.90% were working in the governmental sector followed by 14.33% that were working in state enterprise, 12.40% have other type of occupation such as labor work while 10.47% owned a business and, 7.71% were housewives.

The monthly income, of 23.69% of respondents was 10,001 – 15,000 baht while 22.59% earn 3,000 – 10,000 baht, 19.28% earn 25,001 – 30,000 baht, closely follow by 19.01% earn 20,001 – 25,000 baht, and 15.43% earn 15,001 – 20,000 baht. The average monthly income was 16,592 baht. The minimum monthly income respondents earn was 3,000 baht and the maximum was 30,000 baht.

All children watched television, 53.72% watched 3 – 4 hours of television program per day while 26.17% watched only 1 – 2 hours per day, and
20.11% watched 5 hours or more per day. Children watched a minimum of 5 hours or more and a maximum of 3-4 hours per day.

Most children at, 64.46% of children watched television between 06.01 p.m. – 12.00 p.m., followed by 31.13% watched between 00.01 p.m. – 06.00 p.m., while 4.41% watched between 06.01 a.m. – 12.00 a.m. 36.09% of children watched television with their siblings while 34.98% with their father and mother, 15.98% with family, and 12.95% alone.

Most of the children at, 50.96% liked watching cartoon, followed by 25.89% who like soap opera, 13.22% liked movies, while 5.51% liked varieties, and 1.38% liked sports.

Parent opinion toward child exposure to television was at the moderate level with a grand mean of 3.32. Findings indicate that parent expects child to complete his/her homework before watching television, mean = 4.04. They would like their child to participate in other activities than to watch television mean = 3.91. They fear television’s influence on child’s behavior, mean = 3.78. And they perceive television to be educational and increase child’s academic ability, mean = 3.75. However, parents were unsure whether they are satisfied with children’s program, mean = 2.84. They were uncertain whether television is considered a babysitting tool, mean = 2.91. And they were hesitant whether child can develop habit of turning on the television, mean = 2.92.

DISCUSSION

1. Mothers or female guardian (72.45%) were usually the ones who pick up their child from school more than the fathers or male guardian (27.55%). The majority number of parents were between the ages of 41 – 50 years old (37.19%) which means that in order to have a child ages 6-12 they must begin baring their child at the age of 34 a common age range for parents today because women have become more independent and are longing for career advancements with greater responsibility. Marriage is no longer a first priority for women and usually comes later (Office of National Statistics, Ministry of Information Technology and Communications, 2008).

Nearly all parents are married (95.60%) with a majority having 2 children (43.80%). The educational levels of most parents are bachelor degree or equivalent (52.07%) which is considered the standard education level today. Parents mainly work in private and governmental sector with a monthly income of 10,001 – 15,000 baht (23.69%). Low income suggests that parents are incapable of providing constructive time or engaging their child in productive activities due to their financial constraint and it is likely that parent hold more than one job per day in order to earn extra money. Parent’s developmental history, education, work, marriage, family finances and personality generally shape parenting style (Children’s Health Encyclopedia, 2006).

2. All children watch television because virtual images take children away from reality. They watch 3 – 4 hours of television a day (53.72%). It is a widely accepted fact that the extended families of traditional society are being gradually replaced by the nuclear families of modern society therefore there the
existence of grandparents and other relatives in the extended family are no longer available to assist in child care (Mathana, 1991). This changing family structure has many implications on the welfare and lifestyle of the population. Long hours of television are generally due to parent’s inability to provide constructive pastimes or financial ability to engage their children in other productive activities (Jiva Education, 2009). Children watch television between 06.01 p.m. to 12.00 p.m. (64.46%) on weekdays after completing their homework and relaxing while having dinner with their siblings (36.09%) because parents regularly work over time. Without parents supervision children are free to watch any type of programs 6-12 years of age this type of freedom is considered inappropriate for children. Although more than half like watching cartoon (50.96%) because they provide humor it also contains violence and sometimes sexual themes that parents might find unsuitable for children.

3. Opinion of parents toward child exposure to television was at a moderate level which means that respondents have a tendency to irregularly provide guidance and close observation toward their children’s television viewing. Some parents perceived that television is educational and increase child academic ability. It is true that television can be a source of learning; it can open up new worlds and provide opportunities for children to learn all kinds of things so that they can become aware of worldly events. But numerous child development and educational experts express great concern with television's numbing effect on children's brains. Many studies suggesting that our child's minds are not developing the way they should, and this is attributed in large measure to excessive television viewing (Jackson, 2004). On the other hand, some parents have different perspective toward television they would like their child to participate in other activities than to watch television. Early studies have revealed that television displaces productive activities such as interaction with others, reading, and play which are important to child’s healthy development of social, emotional, and intellectual skills (Anderson et al., 2001 cited MacBeth, 1996; Williams, 1986). They fear television’s influence on child’s behavior. A number of hypotheses have been suggest the concerning possible effects of television on children’s behavior in which children learn from television and then go out and reproduce them especially violent and aggressive behavior (Severin and Potter, 2001).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
A. CONCLUSION

Respondents were mostly female. The average age was 39.55 years old. More than half the parents remain married and 40% have 2 children. Most parents hold a bachelor’s degree or equivalent, work in a private company and earn a monthly of 10,001 – 15,000 baht. The average income was 16,592 baht.

Child Exposure to Television Observed by Parents

All children like watching television, nearly half of the children watch between 3 – 4 hours a day more than half of the children watch television between 06.01 p.m. – 12.00 p.m. with their siblings and cartoon is their favorite program.
Opinion level of parent toward child exposure to television is at a moderate level.

**B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Parent should supervise child’s television viewing, avoid leaving young child to watch television alone with siblings, determine suitable programs and generate discussion.

2. Parent should supervise child when watching television. Limit child’s television viewings to no more than one or two hours per day, restrict firmly the number of programs watch.

3. Parent should supervise child to complete his/her homework before watching television. Assist child in finding alternative activity other than to watch television aim at positive family integration.

**Suggestions for Further Study**

1. A study of parent opinion toward television programs such as cartoon for children ages 6-12 years old.

2. A study of parent opinion toward the influence of television on behavior of children ages 6-12 years old.

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