

Chapter Thirteen
THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION VIEWING ON CHILDREN

BY

MRS OGHIA TOR, FLORENCE
DEPARTMENT OF NIGERIAN LANGUAGES
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, AGBOR

This work is concerned with the impact of television viewing on children; its benefits and shortcomings. It talks about the origin of television, and definitions of television by different experts. This paper goes on to find out why people watch television, that people watch television as a result of "uses and gratification", environment, and family. It also points out the benefits of television to children. The benefits are both educational and entertaining. This work also looks at how parents can guide their children's television viewing. And this is by; crating viewing limits, planning TV viewing, participating and monitoring, and analyzing commercials. Finally, shortcomings of TV viewing on children are pointed out. These defects includes; social and emotional behaviour, creativity and language skills, and school achievement.

Introduction

There is certainly nothing wrong with children viewing television. What should be considered is, how much television a child watches and what effect it has on his life. Television viewing has a tremendous impact on children, in terms of the number of hours they watch per day and what they see. The impact of TV viewing is both negative and positive, and this work is concerned with both the positive and the negative impact on children.

Television is a source of information and knowledge for children in particular and for people in general. It is used extensively for educational broadcasting and it is a major entertainment and recreational activity in homes.

Kubey and Csikzetzmi halyi (1990) observed that television viewing is the most relaxing daily activity, since it is effortless. Condry (1989) noted that children between the ages of 2 and 11 watch varieties of children's programmes including cartoon,

teenagers between 11 to 17 years of age watch more sitcoms, while men and women watch their programmes of their interest.

Television has probably been the most effective of all the mass media in making people aware of a wide range of human problems ranging from pollution to homelessness. It has made people have awareness and acceptance of various kinds of illness, both physical and mental.

Studies have also shown that extensive television viewing may be associated with violent or overly aggressive behaviour, poor academic performance, precocious sexuality, obesity, and the use of drugs or alcohol. Television viewing should have a beginning and an end, like playing a game or seeing a movie.

Experts agree that it is not good for a child to be exposed constantly, several hours a day, day after day, or week after week, to television violence. Research has shown that such exposure has at least four effects on children. Three include; making children less sensitive to the pain and suffering of others, they may become more fearful of the world around them, they may be more likely to behave in an aggressive manner toward other people, and they may get unrealistic sense of the amount of true violence that exist in the world. (American Psychological Association, 2005).

Origin of Television

What can be referred to as television was the first demonstration made by Edward Belin in France, in 1922, when he transmitted flashes of light. Charles Jenkins used a mechanical spinning disk as a demonstration for what was called the first working model of television in Washington, 1925.

In 1927, Philo Farnsworth transmitted the first all electronic television signal. Also the first successful camera pickup was made by Vladimir L. Zworykin 1929. This was believed by many historians to be the beginning of television (James 1991).

Definition of Television

The television is an audiovisual medium and one of the popular electronic media of instruction. Television is a piece of electrical equipment with a glass screen which shows broadcast programmes with moving pictures and sounds. (Advanced

Learner's Dictionary). Television is the transmission of visual images by means of electromagnetic waves. The television camera scans the field of view and activates a photoelectric cell, the impulses from which propagated as electromagnetic waves cause the receiver (television set) to scan the viewing screen in steps identical with those of the scanning camera, thus reproducing the field of view on the screen. (The

New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language.

Television is an electronic system of transmitting still or moving images (usually with sound) to receivers that project a view of the image on a picture tube or screen (and create the sound). Like motion picture, television consists of a series of successive images, which are registered on the brain as a continuous picture because of the persistence of vision. (MC Craw-Hill Encyclopedia of Electronics and computers).

Why People Watch Television

Generally speaking, people watch television for several reasons. These vary from children, adolescents to adults. Jones (1995) observed that one of the reasons is "uses and gratification, or "needs and gratification". He stated that the principle of "Uses and gratification" accounts for why people watch television rather than what they watch on the television. This idea is the root to what he called "functionalist paradigm", that is the needs of the individual. The needs are mainly to do with continuity, order, integration, motivation, guidance, socialization, and adaptation. All these differ in societies. "Uses and gratification" is seen as what people really do with television. That is the viewing of television programmes rather than its effects on people.

Roger (1994), said that television viewing as a daily practice become a habit. Environment could also be considered as a factor which determines television viewing. Jones (1995), noted that programmes which are related to a viewer's upbringing either by social class, or race make the viewer to have specific expectations or needs for the programmes.

The Benefits of Television to Children

Television viewing is of a great benefit to children both in education and entertainment. Television is a lecture series produced on video tape and used for instruction on close circuit channels. Study athletes or student teachers take television to the field to record and observe with their pupils/students.

Television is used as medium for students/pupils, for creative communication. Onwuazo (1991), observed that television is a medium of communication that furnishes multiple avenues for rich learning experience. In terms of education, television has

unlimited possibilities for bringing learning experience to the viewers. It has a very wide view beyond its local area and into the world of environment for numerous sources that could never otherwise be readily accessible. The majority of people alive today in industrialized societies were brought up on television. James (1991).

Television could be seen as a transmitter of wealth of information and positive experience to children. In fact, advances made in education television have been in a positive side. For example, educational television began in Italy, in 1958, with courses in vocation, and transmission for secondary schools. In the early 1900s, 17 percent of Italian television programme was focused on educational and school broadcast. Television programmes enhance the development of children in language abilities, concept formation, reading skills, and social area of life.

The British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, offers about 150 television series for primary and secondary students. Fink (1992) reported that in Latin America, some countries use broadcasts to support the work of teachers in schools, to eradicate illiteracy and importing information to isolated rural population (including the children). This is done through public health, agricultural methods, and other social and practical subjects.

Japan's educational broadcasting programme reaches more than 90 percent of Japan's primary and secondary schools (which includes children.) It has special offerings for the mentally and physically handicapped, a wide range of transmissions under the general heading, "social education". This includes; foreign languages, vocational and technical instruction, advice on agriculture, forestry, fisheries, business management and special programmes for children, adolescents, and women Fink, (1999).

In Nigeria, television plays an active role in the education of the general public and children in particular. In most of our schools today, teachers use television in the classroom to aid their teaching. Many children today, learn poems and recitation of language alphabets (especially the English language) through television viewing. Children TV programmes, such as cartoons, broadcast, sports, debates, drama, quiz, dance, and short stories are for both entertainment and education. Television viewing performs positive function in children, both within and outside school environment.

How Parents can Guide their children's Television viewing

Children TV viewing can be guided by "creating viewing limits. This is done by knowing the number of hours children watch television. Children's viewing can be limited to 1 to 2 hours a day. Their TV viewing habits should be established by parents

because watching TV is often more habit than choice. Since children model their behaviour after their parents, the latter should eliminate some television viewing by participating with their children in alternate activities. Such activities are reading, sports, conversation, games, and hobbies.

Planning children TV viewing is also very important. The children should be encouraged to watch variety of programmes appropriate for their level of understanding. The television should only be turned on for specific programmes.

Parents can participate and monitor their children. Parents should know what their children watch on television. They should ask them questions on what they are watching, and explain situations that are confusing. Children should be encouraged to watch characters who are cooperating and caring. Such programmes can influence them in positive ways.

Finally children should be taught by their parents how to analyze commercials on TV. They should be helped to evaluate the validity of products advertised on TV, and should recognize exaggeration of the products.

Shortcomings of children Television viewing

Research has shown that as the amount of time spent in watching TV goes up, the amount of time devoted not only to home work and study but other important aspects of life, such as social development and physical activities decreases. Constant watching of television does not do the children good. It does not make them smarter or improve their school performance.

As children benefit from watching television, so it has negative effect on them. TV affects social and emotional behaviour of children. Studies on television viewing revealed that the amount for violence on TV is increasing. Viewing violent programmes can make children have fear, get worried, or suspicious and may increase tendencies toward aggressive behaviour. Also in a study conducted by an institute of mental health, it was observed that there is a significant relationship between viewing televised violence and behaving aggressively.

TV affects creativity and language skill. Children who spend a great deal of time watching television have less time for playing, reading, doing homework, and talking with other children and adults. Language skills are best fostered through reading and active two-way participation in conversations and play activities. Excessive TV watching can interfere with growth and language skill in children.

Television also affects school/academic achievement. Research has shown that the amount of time a child spent on homework is significantly related to how well he does in school. Since television viewing can interfere with the completion of

homework, assignments, and reduce the amount of sleep a child gets, excessive viewing could adversely affect a child's grades and alertness in school. One researcher on children's television viewing habits said that the amount of television watched, or thought to have been watched, by children has caused considerable concern for parents and educators alike. It is thought that children remain glued to set for long periods of time, viewing unsuitable programmes which may adversely affect not only their cognitive and emotional development, but their academic achievement. There is no doubt that children are susceptible to the images which they see on the television screen.

Finally, children need to discover their own strengths and weaknesses in order to find fulfillment as adults in both work and play. Watching television does not lead to these discoveries, but limited children's involvement in those real-life activities that might offer their abilities a genuine testing ground. And young children's real life activities are better than the adult made fantasies that are offered on television.

Conclusion

Since children cannot do without watching television, there is need for parents to censor the programmes watched by their children. Television should be looked at as a resource and not as a menace. Public TV stations which offer impressive programmes on nature, literature, history current events and arts should be consulted.

Studies have shown that television increases the general vocabulary of children, especially when it involves term referring to outer space. Television can increase children range of interest since it exposes them to different activities and topics they might not otherwise encounter.

Television has been viewed as a source of a wealth of information, but doubts have been cast over its ability to enhance academic performance. It has been said that it can impair a child's progress at school, and because of the considerable number of hours spent viewing TV, however, television becomes a disproportionately informational and attitudinal source. Parents should also keep in mind that television often portrays sexual behaviour and the use of alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs in inviting terms. This is not suitable for children.

Suggestions

Parents should express their views to the producers of TV programmes. They should explain their personal feelings about undesirable programmes. This can be done by writing to their local TV station or to the programme sponsors. Parents can

demonstrate while the child is still very young that TV is a medium to be used selectively. They can literally point to children in the direction of informative and educational programmes. There are some remarkable things for children to see and enjoy on television which parents can impart to their children and discourage undesirable programmes.

James (1991), suggested to libraries for the provision of television services because many people rely on television. And it is preferred as a source of information by them. These services could be television broadcast, and distance learning. Instruction is broadcast live from the library and learners, including children at remote areas can communicate with the instructor. The libraries can also produce story hours for children, puppet shows, dramatic performances and discussion groups.

REFERENCES

- American Psychological Association (2005), Violence on Television: Washington D.C. American Psychology Association Publications.
- Ceil, N.L. (1988), Help Children Become moze critical IV Watchers: Urbana Eric Publication.
- Fink, D.G. (1992), Broadcasting in the New Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 15, 15th ed: London: University of Chicago, pp. 210-215.
- Hornby, A.S. (1995), AdvancedLearner 's Dictionary of Current English: New York. Oxford University Press.
- James, C. (1991), The Multimedia Library: Materials Selection and Use, 3rd New York: Academic Press, pp. 159-179.
- Jones, D.M. (1995), Why People Watch Television: London Routledge.
- Kubey, R. and Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990), Television and the quality of life: How viewing sharps everybody's experience: Hillsdate, New Jersey. Lawrence E. Associates Publishers.
- Lawrence, T.L. etal (1994), The New Lexicon Websters Dictionary of the English Language: Lexicon Publication N.C.
- Mima, Spencer, (1993), Elementary and Early Childhood Education: US Eric Pub.
- Okwo & Ike (1995), Educational Technoloo: Basic Concepts and Issues: Nsukka. University Trust Pub.
- Onwazo, E. (1991), Developing Library Collection: Onitsha.Ameco Prints.

Sybil, P. Parker (1988), Mc Graw-Hill Encyclopedia of Electronics Computers: New York.

Of  || | EDUCATION |

JOT ED)

Publication of School of Education
Federal College of Education
(Technical)
RM.B. 1044, Asaba

Vol. 7, No 7— January 2006