

Assessing The Effects of Television Programs on Students at Essence High School, Kaduna

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Abstract: Television viewing is still prominent among young people living with their parents. Exposure to some of its programs/contents have however been linked to incidents of social vices such as open violence, illicit sex, drug abuse and other related acts. This study sets out to explore the influence of television viewing on student behavior and academic performance among secondary school students in Kaduna metropolis. The objectives of this study are to determine the level of secondary school students' exposure to television programs, identify the type of programs/contents that secondary school students view on television and examine the perceptions of secondary school students on the effects of television viewing on their habits and behavior. The theoretical frameworks adopted for this study is Cultivation theory of mass media as advocated by George Gerbner (1976), which proposes that heavy viewers of television are thought to be imbibing attitudes that leads to the belief that the world created by television is an accurate depiction of the real world. A qualitative study, it employed a focus group discussion method to elicit relevant information, including key informant interview. The students of Essence Secondary School, at 10 Kashim Ibrahim Road in Kaduna metropolis, were the targets of the study, but collaborative data were also elicited from parents and teachers. Results show that television viewing does take away from credible academic performance, as well as influence behaviors and actions of the students.

1. Introduction

Television is one of the most popular entertainment media present in most homes and accessible to children of all ages. Because of age and inexperience,

children are generally thought to be vulnerable to all sorts of messages displayed on television sets daily. This study is aimed at assessing the effects of television programs on the behaviors and habits of students enrolled in Essence International (Secondary) School, Kaduna.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As one of the most popular public media, television is prominent in young people's daily lives. Television still adorn our living rooms in most homes, and become the first item of entertainment outside the children's' door. While educational programs that begin by teaching children alphabets, colors and shapes early in life, tend to draw the attention of busy parents, research has shown that some television programs/contents are inappropriate especially for young minds. Unfortunately, television is a convenient pastime and viewers of all ages have access to all its programs/contents without restriction or inhibition.

Studies by Samrat (2008); Robertson, et al, (2013) concluded that television viewing is harmful to the cognitive development of young minds. Furthermore, their studies revealed that there is a link between television viewing and incidents of social vices such as open violence, illicit sex, drug abuse and other related immoral acts.

The focus of this research is the anti-social behaviors observed amongst children that are directly linked to contents portrayed in certain television programs. It is geared towards assessing the link between television viewing and its effects on the behavior of young people at the Secondary School level in Kaduna, using Cross High School as case study.

2. Background to the Study

2.1 Television as a Medium of Communication

In describing communication, Rodman (2006) posits that: communication refers to the process whereby human beings share messages. The message may be entertainment, information, or persuasion. It may also be verbal or visual, intentional or unintentional. In fact, it may unintentionally evoke a different meaning between the person sending it, from the one who receives it. Ugboajah (2001) cited in Obe, (2008:2) sees communication as: The process which involves all acts of transmitting messages through channels which link people via language and symbolic codes used to transmit such message.

Television is a compact structure that creates intimacy by bringing the world into our homes, sharing varying values and attitudes. Television is one of the most commonly recognized forms of media found in many Nigerian homes. Rodman (2006), states that Television remains the most time consuming activity, just as it continues to remain a major source of news and information. It is the medium through which politics is conducted via sight and sound, and it is humanity's main form of entertainment. It also continues to be one of the world's most powerful sales tool.

Daramola (2005) further asserts that: Television is a sight and sound medium of communication which transmits sound and pictures from given broadcasting studio to millions of homes everyday by means of electromagnetic waves, and is bound to shape people's beliefs on how to relate with their environment. In terms of technological advancement and development Fiske (1992), concludes that; with the changing times, you can now receive your television signals even in your car which makes it much easier with modern technology. Television signals could be received in any part of the globe.

3. Related literature

3.1 Children and Television Viewing Habit

According to Van (1990) television viewing refers to the art of paying time ahead of a television screen while participating actively or passively in what's being displayed. He disclosed that television viewing habit can also ask the quantity of your time a private spent viewing television programs, nature of such programs, the age of the viewer. Gunter and McAleer (1997) view television habit because the average viewing time of people. He continued, television

viewing pattern may impact positively or negatively on individuals' cognitive development. Viewing television programs for 1-2 hours daily on the typical may enhance an individual's cognitive skill development, while a habit of three hours or more of television viewing of general audience programs may reduce the time individuals would spend engaging verbally and socially with relations and significant others which are perquisite for effective cognitive skill development due to its alluring colors and sound, television is especially attractive in infancy, becoming the child's first and most enduring contact with the mass media and an integral part of the general environment during which infancy development occurs, Victoria, (2009).

Gunter and McAleer (1997) opine that viewing habits range from the kid who watches no television in the least to the kid who stays in front of the TV all the time. The longer a toddler spends watching television at any time, the harder he or she is to distract. Television is found in many homes and it requires a minimal skill to work, such children find it easy to control. consistent with Swanson, (2012); The "average child," between the ages of six and eighteen, will have spent 4,000 hours taking note of radio and CDs, watched 16,000 hours of television, and watched several thousand more hours of flicks. This assertion is further supported during a survey by Certain & Kahn (2002) showing the share of your time young children watch television is said to relate to many variables.

3.2 Media as Agents of Socialization

A prominent scholar of communication, (McQuail, 2005) also assert that media are the foremost powerful agents of socialization on the earth today and widely believed to play a neighborhood within the early socialization of youngsters and future socialization of adults, because socialization is such a long-term process. The thesis of media socialization has two sides: on the one hand, the media can reinforce and support other agencies of socialization; on the opposite, they're also viewed as a possible threat to the values set by parents, educators and other agents of group action the most logic underlying the thesis is that the media can teach norms and values by way of symbolic reward and punishment for various sorts of behavior.

3.3 Effects of Television Viewing on Children's Behavior

Children, are very impressionable at their young age, as such watching television have both positive and

negative impact. Samrat (2008) and Robertson et al. (2013) believe that television affects the way that children think and act in some way. Growing up, children have become more influenced by television than by their parents. When children watch television, they are physically passive yet mentally very active, absorbing information, ideas, and values. Television has the potential to generate both positive and negative effects, but many researches seem to have paid more attention to the negative effects than the positive ones. Some of the positive effects of television will be presented below.

3.4 Positive Effect of Television Viewing on Children Behavior

Wetzel, et al. (1994) conducted a study which concluded that a combination of sound and still pictures aid the learning process a great deal. That is to say, the mixture of sound and either still or moving images is simpler than simply making still images move. Kozma (1991) also found that television's combination of multiple symbol systems, that is its combining of speech, text, still images, and moving images yields greater learning gains than media. However, television's multiple modes can portray content through a spread of approaches, e.g., linguistic, aesthetic, logical, or narration, thus more effectively matching viewers' various intelligence preferences. Children's viewing of educational television programs are shown to support significant and lasting learning gains, while an excessive amount of viewing of other sorts of programming could also be this suggests that there's a positive relationship between children's viewing of educational television programs and their cognitive performance.

3.5 Negative Effect of Television on Children

3.5.1 Neurological Effect

This refers to the effect television has on systema nervosum especially regarding structure, functions, and abnormalities. Research indicates that most brain parts, including those liable for logical thought, are passive during television viewing and produces brainwaves within the low alpha range. Some scientists believe that release of high amounts of dopamine reduces the quantity of the neurotransmitter available for control of movement, perception of pain and pleasure and formation of feelings especially when an individual spend much time watching television.

According to Swanson (2012) while alpha waves achieved through meditation are beneficial, too much

time spent in low alpha wave state caused by television can cause unfocused day dreaming and inability to concentrate as most part of the brain, including parts responsible for logical thought, tune out during television viewing. Swanson (2012) discussed in his findings that, a child viewing rapid-fire television, is more likely to develop attention challenges later in life. He further claims that television viewing is directly or indirectly associated with neuro-cognitive development of the children.

3.5.2 Mean World Syndrome

"Mean world syndrome" is a term coined by George Gerbner (2002) to describe a situation where the kind of violence a person is exposed to induces him to believe that the world "is more dangerous than it actually is." Other scholars, Nabi and Sullivan (2001) took the issue further by claiming that the amount of violence on television may influence the prevalence of violence in the general society, and that the number of opinions, and attitudes that viewers may form while watching television may have a direct influence on their real perception of the world around them.

3.5.3 Aggression

Many television programs today display aggressive behavior in its storyline, beyond simple frowning or hitting, but to such extent of displaying raping and murder. According to Bushman and Huesmann (2001), one of the reasons for that circle and its powerful effect may not be unconnected with the fact that aggression and television violence 'feed off each other.' According to other scholars, violence is abundant in many television programs, (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). In a later study, (Huesmann et al., 2003) conclude that by allowing children to view violence, what we are impressing on their minds is the assumption that it is normal and acceptable to act likewise.

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Cultivation Theory of Mass Media

Cultivation theory was founded by George Gerbner in 1976, which claims intentional persuasion by the media, comparing television's socializing force to that of religion, claiming that it set norms, and homogenizes communities, much like religion in early human history. Also, that because television portrays much violence, people may develop Mean World syndrome, or the idea that the World is more violent than it really is. Gerbner categorized such

effects into two; first order and second order. For the first order effects, it refer to general beliefs about the world, while the second order effects involve specific attitudes toward certain aspects of the society, like the police. Shanahan, (1998) on his part posits that; "Cultivation is a method for gauging the impact of television on the beliefs, and behaviors of a people.

The theory suggests that what the media does is to take currently existing attitudes which are already present and re-present them in a different way or mode. Griffin (2012: 366) states that: Most people who abhor violence on the television set feel or believe it encourages aggressive behavior." The three kinds of effects are generally identified as: Cognitive, Affective, and Behavior centered.

5. Essence International School, Kaduna.

Essence International School, Kaduna was established almost forty years ago, in 1982. At its founding, it was one of the most popular and performance centered school that attracts children of the upper middle class at the lower end, and higher classes at the upper, living in Kaduna and nearby cities. It comprises of lower classes at pre-school level, to 12th grade (full secondary level).

5.1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussions are held between a researcher seeking specific data, and the group that is believed to have the knowledge sought by the researcher. It usually involves a small group (usually three to eight people) who share specific identifiers, in this case students, Fawole, et al, (2006).

The study employed the FGD method by forming two groups of eight (8), students that were randomly selected from each class (JSS1-SS3) making up a total sixteen (16) persons. The essence discussants are to find out the effects of television viewing on the habits of secondary school students which gave room for first-hand experience and information gathering.

5.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)

This method of collecting data requires the interviewer to ask questions in a face-to-face encounter. It is a direct investigation for data sought from the sources concerned. Somekh and Lewin (2005) suggest that it is a structured observation method suited for qualitative data gathering.

The researcher used this instrument to interview five (5) teachers and 7 (7) parents whose children/wards are students of Essence to get in-depth information

on the effects of television viewing on the behavior and habits of their secondary school students.

5.3 Research Questions

The research questions formulated for both focus group discussion and interviews are:

1. How much of television do secondary school students watch per day?
2. What are the effects of television viewing on secondary school students?
3. How devoted are secondary school students in watching television programs?
4. Are there specific television programs viewing times for secondary students?
5. What are the favorite television programs viewed by secondary school students?
6. Should secondary school students be restricted from some television programs?
7. Do secondary school students exhibit what they see from television?
8. For how long do secondary school students watch television programmes?

Q1. How much of television do secondary school students watch per day?

Majority of the students have access to the television set at home which implies that the television set is a common asset found in their homes. As a teacher, I can say that television is a common appliance found in many homes and as such many children including those at the secondary school level have access to the television set" This confirms that secondary school students have access to television and they are exposed to several programmes.
(Ms Mary Ikoloba, teacher.)

Most times when my children come back from school, they drop their bags, pick their food and face the television while having lunch, and even while doing their homework. They also find it difficult to wash their uniforms or do any house chores. Often, I have to force them to switch off the television before going to bed, there is hardly a personality shown in the television that they are not familiar with.
(Mrs. Fatima Zara, parent of SS1 student)

The level of exposure is high because my siblings and I, including the students watch movies and programmes every day.
(Helen Akut SS1)

There is no day we don't have a programme to catch up with from Monday to Friday, especially on joy TV.

(Sabi Mijinyawa SS3)

Q 2. What are the effects of television viewing on secondary school students?

Aside from relaxation, especially during their leisure time at home, my children watch television because they want to be updated with the new frontiers, they want to know what is happening in the world in order for them to be entertained and educated.

Hence, it is obvious that secondary school students access to the television set is determined by several purposes which includes; relaxation, enlightenment and entertainment purpose. Although, there are a lot of things that I don't particularly like from the programmes they view, due to the fact that some can corrupt and distort their attitude and influence them negatively. There are good programmes and there some that are bad for them.

(Mrs Bola Babatunde, parent of SS3 student.)

There are good attributes I have observed from some students as a result of certain television programmes which has enlighten them about life, and even challenge them educationally. Some of my students can do well in science and technology which were information they got from television programmes. I also know many of my students who misbehave as a result of imitating the lifestyle of their favorite characters on television, although they do not engage in such act within the school premises. We do not have the right to punish them because they do it outside the school environment and as such we expect their parents to discipline them and observe (monitor) the type of programs they watch on television.

Thus, students who view television programs that display characters that are fond of drugs, among others, tend to be influenced by such actions and may as well imbibe them in their daily lives which can affect their physical and psychological wellbeing.

(Mr. Isa Danlami, teacher SS3)

Viewing has help me a lot cause when I hear some new words I look for their meaning in the dictionary including how to use those words in sentences. I also learn about new technology, fashion, and lifestyle of some countries.

(Gimbiya Yusuf, student SS2)

I don't think it has any effect on me, only that I have to wait for my older siblings to finish watching television so we can go to bed together, because I can't go to the bedroom and sleep alone at night.

(Iliya Shuwa, student JSS1)

Q 3. How devoted are secondary school students in watching television programs?

As soon as they hear the tune of their favorite television program plays, their concentration and attention shifts away from their books and study towards watching the television program. Television viewing affects my children's academic performance especially when they view television rather than studying for their exams. Sometimes they also suffer from sleeplessness, which affects their school performance as they are found to develop headaches, and also sleep during lesson hours because of the hours they spend viewing television. I had the course to believe that one of my children was not performing up to my expectation in her academics because she spends more time viewing television than studying. I had to correct such habit by engaging my children in extra classes in order to limit the attention they give to viewing television.

(Mr. Peter Adun. Parent of SS1 student)

I have observed that they devote much of their study hours to watching television programs. Several parents have complained to the school management on the poor academic performance of their children and have resulted to restricting the number of hours their children watch television. I have listened to some of their discussions with their classmates at leisure hours, which are centered on various television programs and movies; which tells you how devoted they are to viewing certain programs on television.

(Zipporah Sule. Teacher SS 3)

When I am watching Ashook, I don't want anyone to be calling me or talking, so that I can pay complete attention and enjoy the program.

(Chukwuma Ifeanyi, student JSS2)

I pay attention and listen so that I can hear what they are saying and I don't like missing any part of the programme.

(Anita John, student JSS3)

Q 4. Are there specific time for secondary students to view television programs?

Yes, as it is now, I only allow my children to view programs during the weekends after they are done with their assignments and other house work. They are prohibited from viewing television when they have other works to do.

(Mrs. Sarah Samuel. Parent of SS1 student)

My parents only allow us to watch television in the evening after we wake up from siesta.

(Sanga Paul, student SS1)

In my house we watch television only on Saturdays and Sundays
(Chioma Ezeoke, student JSS2)

Q 5. What are the favorite television programs viewed by secondary school students?

From a close observation of the way my students behave and Interact with their peers, is easy to conclude that their favorite television program are movies, especially foreign movies such as Indian movies, Philippines movies, and musical videos. I always hear them talk about a new musical song released by an artist and the kind of clothes and material things used in the video
(Dan Sambo teacher SS1)

My favorites programs are Kindred Heart and Mehek from Bollywood, as well as Philippine movies.
(Joe Simon, student SS2)

I prefer action movies. I don't like slow movies. I love American movies.
(Eunice Samson, student SS1)

Q 6. Should secondary school students be restricted from some television programmes?

There is a limit to everything. Of course they have to be restricted so that they don't form bad habits. We should not allow our children to be trained by the television, it our duty as parents to ensure that our children should are brought up with good values. As a parent, I urge parents to monitor what their children view on television and sanction wrong behaviors. Secondary school students are teenagers and would copy whatever crosses their way, so we need to safeguard their future by restricting access to contents they view.
(Mrs. Shola Owoye Parent SS1 student)

We should be restricted so as to regulate how we watch programs and when we watch them.
(Patricia Nnamani, student SS3)

Sometime it is good but not all the time. Parent should allow us to be free sometimes.
(Evelyn Sheyin, student JSS3)

Q 7. Do secondary school students exhibit what they see from television?

I have seen my children practicing martial acts such as karate with their peers. This is as a result of the influence of watching their favorite characters displaying such moves and techniques on television. The type of programs they watch affects their behavior. For instance, after watching a particular program my children practice what they watch as

they are always ready to engage themselves in a fight. Another issue is that of dressing which they copy from television, you see boys spoiling there trousers reducing it to pencil and they call it fashion, girls wearing clothes that expose parts of their body. This behavior prompted me to restrict the type of television programs they watch.
(Mrs. Grace Ituk. Parent of SS2 student)

Several cases of injuries as a result of incessant rough play among our students have been reported to the school management. It became a serious concern because many of the students involved in such playful acts do not even differentiate between the type of play and what they play with. This attitude influences their relationship with their peers. At times, we have to go about strip-searching our students to recover harmful instruments they used to threaten and even engage in a fight with their peers. Hence, such violent behaviors could bring about social vices.
(Mrs. Joel Shagaya. teacher SS3)

As for me I learn so many things like dressing and the way popular artists talk.
(Mary Chioma, student SS3)

Sometimes when I am walking on the street, I will subconsciously start kicking and fighting karate moves. One day, my friend and I were practicing karate from the movie we watched and he accidentally fell and sustained hand fracture.
(Bala Sani, student SS1)

Q 8. How long do secondary school students watch television programmes?

Most programs last for two hours but if you allow them, they will spend the whole day in front of the television from one program to the other. So I only grant them permission to watch just a single program which is being aired in the evening, from 6pm to 8pm, during weekends.
(Mrs. Maryam Sale. Parent of SS2 student)

In my home we can only watch one program which last for at most 2hours
(Jummai Isyaku, student SS3)

If my parents are not home, I can watch programs for 6 hours.
(Gloria Abraham, student SS1)

The findings of this study therefore reveal that:

- (i) Television viewing is prevalent among secondary school students of Essence, and probably applicable to other

students in Kaduna metropolis. Students watch television daily for relaxation, enlightenment and entertainment purpose

- (ii) The students prefer watching foreign channels, films/movies more frequently than local ones. Thus, they are exposed to certain foreign television contents that are alien to local values and traditions.
- (iii) Some are exposed to viewing unsupervised and unrestricted television programs that portray contents that are unsuitable for young minds, and have negative influence on habit formation of secondary school students. Such viewing pattern of television has been linked to incidents of anti-social behaviors such as, open violence, conflict and poor academic performance.
- (iv) Indiscipline displayed amongst students included, language misuse, rudeness to teachers, absenteeism from schools. This implies that secondary school students who watch movie stars on the television screen are likely to experiment with such habits among themselves.
- (v) Students in early years of secondary school may not have the ability to make a distinction between reality and fantasy.

6. Conclusion

From study, it is concluded that secondary school students are familiar with television set, and use them much. The teachers, parents and students appear to be in agreement to that statement, as described in the focus group interview. Some parents seem to be less concerned about students' exposure to the television programs. The available data analyzed from the study indicated that different television programs are viewed by the students "based on their preferences, which ranked films/movies as their most viewed programs and frequent viewership of foreign television channels. Some of the program contents seemed to influence the habit formation of the students negatively, as expressed by both parents and teachers, such vices as violence, aggression and poor academic performance. Hence, the implications of this study establish that there is a correlation between television viewing and negative habit formation among secondary school students of essence in Kaduna. As such the findings of this study support

the views of scholars who argue that television exposure appear harmful to the cognitive development of young people.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been formulated:

- Parents and guardians should endeavor to control or minimize access to television sets and reduce the frequency of television viewing by their children. This will enable them concentrate more in their education.
- Parents and adults should be active in monitoring and scrutinizing the type of channels and programs viewed by children, especially foreign television channels and programs.
- National film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) should ensure strict rules and regulations on the films and television programs that contain violence, illicit acts, and drug abuse. Hence, bans and penalties should be strictly levied on any television station(s) and channel(s) that deviates from the set down rules and regulation
- Close attention should be given to determine the influence of television on habits formation of students in public and private secondary schools.
- Parents and teachers need to bring to light the influence of television programs on subcategories such as urban secondary schools and rural secondary schools.

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