
**TELEVISION VIEWING HABIT AND PUPILS' COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT:
A LITERATURE REVIEW STUDY**

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Abstract

Television is an audio-visual resource used in instruction in education. It is one of the audio-visual resources that interest children most due to the several children's programmes that it contains. They include story hour programme, several cartoon networks, children's drama/play etc. television viewing by children can be abused when it becomes a habitual behaviour in children. Television viewing can have a positive impact in children cognitive development when they are moderated. In the course of the study, several studies were studied on the views of other researchers on television viewing habit of children. In the course of the review of several studies, findings of the study showed that Moderate TV viewers attained basic verbal reasoning skills more than high TV viewers followed by low TV viewers. The analysis also showed that moderate TV viewing facilitates the development of basic arithmetic's skills. Intense viewing habit seems to be very harmful to the development of essential arithmetic skills. It was therefore recommended that Parents and guardians should endeavour to control or minimize the access to television set and frequency of television viewing by pupils.

Keywords: Television, television viewing, Audio-visual resources, cognitive development, habit etc.

Introduction

Television is one of the most accessible sources of information which can be used to reach out to educate children and can also enhance their cognitive development. Television is an audio-visual aid which appeals to both the senses of hearing and seeing at the same time (Dike, 1993). Broadcast media like television have brought the reality of child's development directly into our homes, helping to assist parents engage children in TV programmes that can aid their cognitive development (Patil, 2012). Television viewing by children has become so popular to the extent that children have formed the habit of watching television on a daily basis. Television appears to have become the child's way of life; educationally, socially, emotionally etc. (United Nations Education and Socio-Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2009) Television is one of the most important means of

communicating current information, advertisement, entertainment programs directly to our homes etc. It is one of the most common audio-visual resources in our homes. Television is an electronic communication medium that allows the transmission of real-time images and sounds (Ernie, 2018). The importance of television in education and provision of information cannot be overemphasized. It is a unique medium that communicates information, education, advertisement, entertainment, publicity, propaganda and other services to people by combining the elements of sound, picture, motion, color and drama. Television shows can be used to teach young people important values, norms and life lessons.

Furthermore, television viewing is the act of watching television programs for the purpose of acquiring knowledge and for entertainment. In other words, it is a process of viewing television programs with interest to learn and to entertain oneself (Ogakason, 2017). Television viewing refers to the attention an individual devotes to watching television set such as the amount of time children spend watching television programs/contents. Television viewing can be of general benefit to human beings especially children in bringing them into contact with other aspects of life that these children would not otherwise be aware of (Wartella, Vandewater & Ridout, 2005). Television exposes children to a range of entertainment, drama and other learning experiences. However, television viewing appears to have the capacity to take children away from other forms of play as it incorporates many activities which require time to watch (Chuckwueke (2020). The time children spend viewing these television programs appear to be a thing of concern to most parents, teachers and society at large. With the trend of digitization, there are several television channels which offer greater choice and quality of programs to children. Television programs such as cartoons, horror movies, songs and dance shows, live shows, educational quiz, food, stories and craft, media interviews etc. can inculcate certain behavioural traits in children such as fear, boldness, smartness etc. (Okodo, 2014). These television programs appear to have strong effect towards children which leads them to form television viewing as a habit.

Therefore, habitual television viewing by children takes away plenty of time from children. At times, the children find it difficult to pay attention to studies at home, instruction and other activities that can help them develop cognitively. It has been observed that children spend 45 minutes to 1 hour per day viewing television programs of different kinds. This has accounted for the poor performance of children at school. For instance, Nigerian children watch television for an average of four hours per day 28 hours per week; American children watch television for an average of 14 hours per week while Australian children spend 7 hours per week (Garba, 2015). Although television may provide a child with some degree of learning, giving too much attention to it may have a negative influence on a child such as setbacks on developing reading culture, revision of class work at home, carrying out other home assignments etc. The right to television viewing which is a prerogative of the child should be moderated to ensure that the all-round education of the child which is a natural occurrence associated with human growth is not hampered. In other words, uncontrolled television viewing may not be too healthy for a growing child knowing fully well that what children watch often have deep impression and almost control the way they act especially when television viewing becomes a habit (Biam and Yunusa (2015).

More so, television viewing habit refers to the attitudes and actions of an individual towards television viewing. This appears to depend on the age of the individual and the time spent in viewing television. For instance, if an individual spends more than 2 hours on daily basis viewing television for one month or more, it becomes a habit and it may lead to unproductive lifestyle. El-Houfey and Elserogy (2013) state that television viewing habit gives children a distorted image in life, and makes it hard for children to distinguish between reality and fantasy. However excessive television viewing habit seems to deprive children from achieving successively. More so, most children appear not to be inquisitive anymore because they are not connected to other activities in their environment as they get so attached and glue their eyes to the television most of the time viewing uneducational programs on the television. Hence television viewing habit can be healthy or unhealthy depending on what pupils view and the amount of time spent on viewing them. In other words, what pupils view and the amount of time spent on viewing them can promote or inhibit proper child development and efficient child learning outcome.

Children differ in their viewing habits, some view for 1 hour daily, while some view for 2 or more hours daily. For example, viewing television programs, especially educational ones appear to engender children's social and cognitive skills among others. Viewing television for 1-2 hours daily on the average appear to enhance pupils' cognitive skill development, while a habit of 3 hours or more of TV viewing appears to reduce the time pupils will spend in other activities which are prerequisite for effective cognitive skill development (Ngwoke, 2011). However, high TV viewing on certain TV programmes that portray contents that are not appropriate to the developmental age of children may impede children's cognitive development.

Television viewing appears to cause the viewer to release alpha waves. According to David (2014) while alpha waves achieved through meditation are beneficial, too much time spent in low alpha wave state caused by TV can cause unfocused daydreaming and inability to concentrate as most parts of the brain, including parts responsible for logical thinking, tune out during TV viewing. This connotes that prolonged exposure to rapid image changes (like on a television show designed for children during critical periods of brain development, especially during childhood), may precondition the mind to expect high level of stimulation. This may then make the pace of real-life objects and experiences to less able to sustain children's attention. Patterson (2016) stated that watching television for extended periods has been associated with decreased ability of children to concentrate on lessons and focus on tasks. This connotes that prolonged exposure to rapid image changes (like on a TV show designed for children) during critical periods of brain development (especially during childhood), may precondition the mind to expect high level of stimulation. Children learn every day and what is learnt in one stage affect the other stages either positively or negatively. Television may transmit an immeasurable amount of message to the viewer more than can be imagined at that very moment. Similarly, Zimamman and Christakis (2005) concluded that excessive television viewing could cause frontal lobe damage in children which may cause cognitive problem as attention deficit, hyperactivity disorders, depression and increase appetite which are inimical to healthy cognitive development.

Cognitive development refers to the process of growth and change in intellectual or mental abilities such as thinking, reasoning, and understanding as well as the acquisition

and consolidation of knowledge. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) view cognitive development as an individual's active process of constructing the methods and contents of human thoughts through socially designed interactions with the physical and social environment, especially socially created symbols such as language, writing and number systems. Operationally, cognitive development refers to the ability to reason in order to be able to solve problems. This does not mean only complex problems but daily problems children encounter. For example simple verbal or arithmetic problem and other problems that may arise in the environment. These require verbal, arithmetic and general skills. All these appear to help children in their lives; and in effect enhance their cognitive development. Excessive television viewing habit appears to be an aberration as it appears to influence children's behavior especially those in primary school.

Primary school child is a young person between 6 – 12 years who attend primary school. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), (2013), in her National Policy on Education, primary education is the education given in institutions for children between the ages of 6 to 12 years. At this age children are highly inquisitive, dramatic and imitative. Currently, in Nsukka Education zone, many families seem to be either single or dual income parents. Often, this phenomenon places pupils alone in a home with the unrestricted access to a TV either in the sitting room, in the bedroom or both. In this circumstance, nobody is there to censor what children view on TV. Working parents do not seem to have the excess time which is required to effectively and satisfactorily operate existing censorship systems. However, the amount of time spent by pupils viewing TV, and the amount of time spent viewing offensive contents are of great concern to parents. In many occasions, it is observed that some pupils watch home videos in front of business centres even during school hours. The effect is that such pupils displace domestic chores, reading at home, assignments and sports for TV viewing. The consequences are not far-fetched because some of these pupils grow up to become TV addicts. Without appropriate cognitive development, pupils may find it difficult adjusting to school and school-related activities.

Impact of TV viewing on pupils' cognitive development

Findings from several reviews revealed that moderate TV viewers attained basic verbal reasoning skills more than high and low TV viewers. There is also a significant difference in the mean scores of high, moderate and low TV viewers on test of attainment of basic verbal reasoning skills in favor of the moderate TV viewers. This finding is in agreement with Bandura (1961) social cognitive learning theory of human development which stresses the importance of observational learning, imitation and modeling. Whatever children view on the television form part of their behaviour, language and dressing. The finding of this study is also in consonance with the findings of Hilmes (2011) that children find TV viewing interesting and would likely develop more rapidly in response to educational items involved especially when its instruction is used as supplement to teaching processes. It has been proven to be very effective in educating the masses. Children who were frequently exposed to educational instruction on TV perform well in school. The researcher observed that this finding could be so because most pupils model their lives on the actors and actresses whom they view on the television. They tend to

imitate what they see and hear. The finding could also be true because children enter kindergarten with a larger vocabulary than the pre-television generations.

Findings also revealed that moderate TV viewers attained essential arithmetic skills followed by low TV viewers more than high TV viewers. Children whose TV viewing is moderated are likely to spend more time engaging in other activities. This is also in agreement with the study conducted by Ngwoke (2011) who found that moderate TV viewing habit engendered the development of basic arithmetic skills among pupils. Furthermore, TV if properly used can stimulate pupil's development and creativity; it can promote pre-social behaviour, enhance pre-reading and voluntary reading skills. The findings of this study also agree with the findings of Vandewater et al. (2006) that viewing uncensored television programmes displaces more educative activities such as homework, voluntary reading, creative plays or even getting enough sleep which are very crucial for sound cognitive skills development and academic achievement. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher made some conclusions: Moderate TV viewing habit facilitates verbal and arithmetic reasoning skills.

Therefore, although TV viewing habit may be a very effective communication medium that has great potential to introduce children to a much wider range of experiences and ideas that would otherwise not be possible high television viewing is unfavorable to cognitive development. So moderated and censored TV viewing is likely to stimulate basic arithmetic skill development among pupils.

Conclusion

Television is one of the many types of audio-visual resources often installed in our homes and used for instruction. Television viewing has proved to be instrumental to helping children facilitate their cognitive development when they are properly quidded by their parents /quarrians. Therefore, it the parents/guardians that should determine which TV programme and when children should watch. The television assist in faster learning, enhance teaching and learning experience with children at home and school, makes children take active participation in the teaching and learning process etc. Television as audio-visual resources combine both textual material with visual materials, audio and videos to educate children.

Recommendations

The study suggests that televisions are needed in the classrooms to argument teachers' efforts in teaching children subjects like Basic English, Basic Mathematics, Basic Sciences and Social Studies at the primary school level. Another implication is that teachers need to be knowledgeable about the use of television for teaching and learning school subjects at the primary School level. Parents, teachers and caregivers should be mindful of what pupils watch on the TV, the amount of time they spend watching it and how they internalize TV programs. Therefore teachers, parents and caregivers should moderate the time in which TV is viewed. So, it is important to map out time for homework, house chores, family interaction, sleep and rest, TV viewing and other physical and recreational activities.

Large amount of time spent watching TV threatens the cohesiveness of the family, home work, and domestic work, taking part in physical activities as well as having enough

sleep. Therefore, parents and guardians moderate the extent of children's viewing of television. To this end, it for this purpose that the study is to determine the influence of TV viewing habit on pupils' cognitive development in Nsukka Education zone, Enugu State.

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