



A STUDY OF PARENTAL MEDIATION STRATEGIES IN CHILDREN'S VIEWING OF TAMIL TELEVISION REALITY SHOWS WITH REFERENCE TO MADURAI DISTRICT

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the practice of parental mediation concerning children's engagement with Tamil television reality shows in Madurai district. As media content proliferation increases, parents must be aware of the ways in which their children are navigating their viewing experiences. This research aims to investigate children's television viewing habit and also assesses the relationship between parental mediation practices. The study used survey research method. The data was collected from 330 respondents both from parents (165) and school going children (165) both from government and private school. Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using statistical software. The findings suggested that children view television reality shows more on weekends than on their school days. The findings also suggested that the parental mediation strategy is in the form of co-viewing when they watch reality shows.

Key Words: Television, Parental Mediation, Reality Shows, Viewing Habit, School Children, Survey, Co-Viewing.

1. Introduction:

The influence of television on children's perceptions, attitudes, and development has drawn more attention in a time when media is dominant. The need of parental mediation and co-viewing methods grows along with children's exposure to television content. In most homes, television is considered an integral part of the family activity that continues to take most of the young people's free time (Vittrup, 2009). Television in the twentieth century had a lot of impact on views especially children. On an average studies have found that young children spend two hours a day in front of the screen. According to Vande water, Seoung-Eun, Xuan, and Wartella (2005) Viewing habits typically increase throughout elementary school years and decreases during high school years.

Daniel, Aletha, Kelly, Schmitt, John & Reed, (2001) stated that, TV viewing is related to improved creative ability, better school readiness and higher ambition. This research also suggested that Children's emotional and cognitive developments are impacted by the amount of time in front of the television.

Today's children have easy access to television and have granted to use multiple platforms in television sector. Parents play a very important role in their children's television viewing habit. Parental mediation refers to the interaction that parents have with their children about their media use. (Pavleen & Manisha, 2014). Children naturally look to their parents to develop an overall understanding of who they are in the social environment since parents have extensive knowledge of the world. So, parental mediation typically is believed to be a parental intervention that can prevent unwanted media effects. (Nathanson, 2001) The word -mediatel derives from the Latin word medium, meaning an intervening substance or something that is in the middle (Erin, 2012). Parents are therefore required to teach their children to the cultural norms of the social model around which families are based because of their place in the social structure.

There is also a variation in the level of parental concern over children being exposed to inappropriate television content as a result of the viewing habits of the parents. Sandstig (2013) stated that parental mediation is most prevalent in homes where parents' belief in the effect of television on children is the strongest. According to Nathanson (1999) parental mediation is conceptualized as a three dimensional construct. Parents utilize three distinct approaches to limit the amount of television their children are exposed to: active mediation, restrictive mediation, and co-viewing mediation. Parents use active mediation through discussing or explaining the television content, whereas, restrictive mediation involves prohibiting of viewing television content. Co- viewing mediation occurs when parents watch television with their children without discussing television use or content. (Nathanson, 2001; Warren, 2005). Reality television shows is a genre of television programming that is unscripted and putting ordinary people in extraordinary situation. Childhood is the most important part in a children's life, but today children are grown up in a media saturated world where they want their children to sing, dance and expose their talent in media especially television channels. Children who view reality shows were more significantly associated with wealth, popularity and beauty. Parents also play an important role in the viewing habit of the children. They compare the participant of reality show with their children and also want their children to become popular and attain fame in a short span of time.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

The following are the main purpose of study:

- To explore the television viewing habits of the children
- To identify the level of parental mediation strategies among children

2. Review of Literature:

In recent years television seems to be the most popular medium of communication and has attracted its viewers ranging from young children to age old. Elizabeth (2005) examined that in recent years increased attention has been focused by many professions with regard to its impact on human lives at any stage of development. Children's viewing habits tend to increase

during elementary school and to decrease during high school.

In elementary school, viewing habits increase, and in high school, viewing habits decrease. Television viewing habits are shaped most effectively during the years right before and after adolescence. The American academy of pediatrics (AAP) discourage television viewing of preschool children and recommends a daily limit of 1 to 2 hours of quality program for older children. Despite these recommendation, many studies in the last ten years have shown most of the children surpass this recommended exposure time. (Austin, et al. 1997). Kelly (2009) concluded that TV, interactive video games, and the Internet can be excellent sources of education and entertainment for kids. But too much screen time can have unhealthy side effects. Therefore, parents should monitor and limit their children's use of video games, TV, and computers and the Internet. As a result, it is imperative that children, parents, and teachers are educated regarding the television viewing habit of the children. Also, it is advisable to encourage kids to engage in a variety of free-time activities, such as reading, playing with friends, and participating in sports, which can all play a vital role in helping them develop a healthy body and mind. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends parents to mediate their children's exposure to television and media in order to limit negative effects. This parental involvement and the family environment in particular have to been shown to offer protective effects for children. (Mustafa, 2010)

2.1 An overview of Parental Mediation Techniques:

Being parent is one of the most fulfilling and rewarding experiences a person can have, but it is also the toughest responsibility. (Amy, 2006) According to Pearson et al. (2011), parents play significant role in their child's television viewing habits translate their concern in to action by providing supportive home environments. Mediation typically is believed to be a parental intervention that can prevent unwanted media effects. (Nathanson, 2001). Parental mediation refers to the interaction that parents have with their children about their media use. (Pavleen and Manisha, 2014) Tigist (2014) also define parental mediation as follows: Parental mediation is strategies parents use to control, supervise or interpret media content. This study uses parental guidance, parental monitoring, and parental control alternatively and they all indicate parental mediation.

According to Toresa, (2013) family is fundamental for children to fully accept the proposed meanings to modify the preferred meaning or to make an oppositional interpretation. Findings from Daniel, et al. (2001) indicate that children's viewing time is influenced by parental rules limiting the time spent watching TV and by parental TV viewing, suggesting not only the importance of what parents require their children to do, but also the importance of what parents themselves do. Thus, parental TV viewing habits and rules-setting behaviors need to be changed to reduce children's TV watching time. According to Nathanson (1999) parental mediation is conceptualized as a three dimensional construct. Different labels have been used throughout the years to describe subtypes of mediation, however, three strategies of mediation and the outcomes of those practices have been developed and employed in a variety of parental mediation studies.

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2.1.1 Active Mediation:

According to Nathanson (2001), active mediation is parents talking with children about what they are viewing on television. This mediation type has been labeled differently such as instructive guidance, discussion, evaluation or explanation. This helps the parents to discuss the television content with their children. Active mediation also demonstrates deliberate comment and actively explaining the nature and selling intent of TV content by parents. (Pavleen and Manisha, 2014). By employing this method it will enhance the critical thinking skills of the children and the media content being consumed.

2.1.2 Restrictive Mediation:

It is setting rules about children's television viewing such as acceptable show and the amount of hours. (Nathanson, 2001) According to Nathanson (2002), restrictive mediation occurs when parents set rules about children's viewing which can last and limiting the content of television viewed. According to Alison, et al. (2013) kindergarten and first-grade children whose parents restricted television viewing were better able to understand an episode of a television program shown in the laboratory than other children. Furthermore, these children tended to understand the distinction between television and the real world better than other children. In subsequent analyses of the same data set, Alison et al. (2011) found that this relationship was particularly strong among the girls in the sample. Restrictive mediation of media may be viewed as a form of parental monitoring. This strategy is an involved process with parents having direct supervision and control of their child's media activity to protect from harmful exposure leading negative outcomes. (Jason, 2006)

2.1.3 Co-viewing Mediation:

Child and adolescent media use increases when parents are regularly co viewing. In accordance with social learning theory (Bandura, 1994), children and adolescents mimic the media consumption habits of models, including their parents. The findings from Tigist (2014) have demonstrated that co-viewing is found to be the most prevalent television mediation style in the sampled homes with 80% of the parents reporting to using this mediation style (co-viewing), followed by active (12%) and restrictive (8%) mediation styles. Studies indicate that co-viewing can bring a positive outcome. Nathanson (2001) stated that co-viewing can increase understanding of children's programming. This means children who watch educational programs. With their parents may learn more from the material than others children do.

Yet there is a difference between watching television and playing a reality shows. However, playing Reality Shows is more interactive in nature and, therefore, a far more -immersive activity than watching televisionl (Nikken & Jansz, 2006). Hence it the parents should monitor the children media viewing behavior.

3. Research Methodology:

This study uses descriptive survey design. According to Frey & Cissan (2009) Survey method seeks to ascertain the beliefs, attitudes, values or behaviors of a population of interest from a sample of respondents selected from that population. Using survey methods will also enable the collection of data from a larger sample and generalization to the entire population. The study area is Madurai city, Madurai is a city with a rich cultural legacy and historical significance that is situated in the southern region of India's Tamil Nadu state. The study focuses on parents of school going children. Primary data were collected using pre-tested

questionnaire. The researcher collected the data from childrens (N=165) and parents (N=165).

The purpose of the questionnaire was to learn more about children' television reality shows viewing habits. To find out how much time and what kind of content are children viewing in television. Furthermore, the questionnaire had questions related to the level of parental mediation. The researcher created the measures for this part in order to address the children's general viewing habits. The scale has four point Likert type scale ranging from (1) Never to (4) Often. After the data was collected, different statistical tools was used like percentage tables and graphs to draw conclusions for the study.

4. Data Interpretation:

In this section the results of the study are present based on the objective. The first part presents background characteristics of the participants. The second part proceeds to discuss findings on children television viewing habit. Finally the last part discusses the findings regarding the practice of parental television mediation and the frequently used mediation strategies.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the respondent

Demographic Characteristics		Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender (Parents)	Female	80	48
	Male	85	52
Gender (Children)	Female	66	40
	Male	99	60
Education	10th	11	7
	12th	16	10
	Undergraduate	89	53
	Postgraduate	40	24
	Others	9	6
Income (Per Annum)	Lessthan60,000	22	14
	Lessthan1,00,000	26	16
	Above1,80,000	117	70

From the selected 66 (40%) female and 99 (60 %) male students, the majority of the parents, 85 (52%) were fathers and 80 (48%) were mothers. Regarding educational status of the respondents, 11 (7%) only completed 10th while the data showed that 16 (10%) have completed 12th while 89 (53%) have completed undergraduate. Whereas, respondents who have postgraduate take 40 (24%) while other education qualification comes around 9 (6%).

The study also revealed that 14 % of the respondents earn less than 60,000 per annum. Furthermore, 16% earn less than 1,00,000 per annum and 70% respondents earn an income of above 1,80,000 per annum.

4.2 Parental and Children Television Viewing Habit:

Different questions were posed to respondents in order to analyze their television viewing habits, particularly viewing time and program preference. The results of the study in relation to parental watching time are shown in Figure 4.2

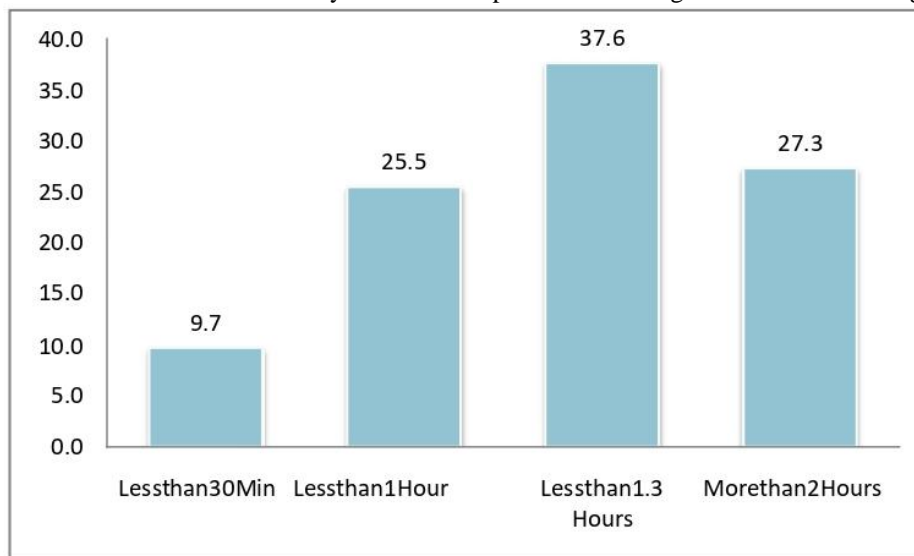


Figure 4.2: Parental Television Viewing Hours

Figure 4.2, above, illustrates the distribution of parents according to their daily viewing hours. Out of 165 respondents, 62 respondents (37.6%) reported watching television 1hr - 1:30 min per day, followed by 45 respondents (27.3%) who watch television more than 2 hours daily. Furthermore 42 respondents (25.5%) watch television less than 1 hour were as 16 respondents (9.7%) watch television less than 30 minute.

Table 4.3: Parental Television Program in order of preference

Preferred Television Program	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
News	6	3.6
Comedy	12	7.3
Documentary	8	4.8
Movies	36	21.8
Debate Shows	15	9.1

Reality Shows	49	29.7
Sport	13	7.9
Drama	10	6.1
Music	16	9.7

As seen in Table 4.3 above, the result indicated that the most frequently watched television programs are reality shows 49 (29.7%), followed by Movies 36 (21.8%), Music 16 (9.7%), Debate shows 15 (9.1 %) Sports 13 (7.9%) Comedy 12 (7.3%) Documentary 8 (4.8%) and finally parents prefer to watch News (3.6%).

4.4 Children’s Television Viewing Habit as Reported by Parents:

Parents reported their children’s viewing habit in terms of time spent viewing, program selection and program preference. Figure 4.2 and 4.3, below, presents children television viewing hour both on school days and weekends respectively as reported by parents.

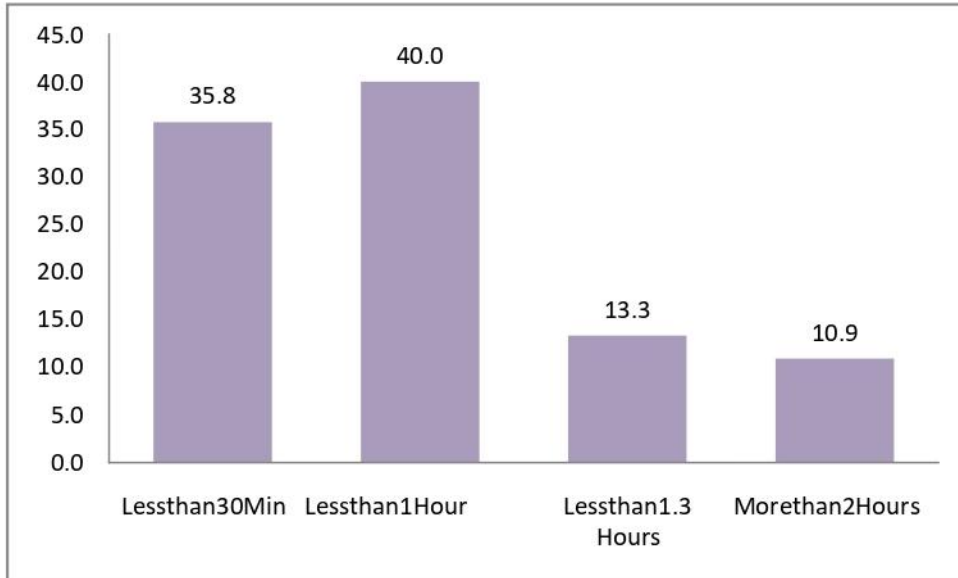


Figure 4.4: Children Television Viewing Hours on school days

The figure 4.4 demonstrates that 18 (10.9%) children view television for more than two hours during school days. 22 (13.3%) children view television for one hour and thirty minutes. In addition, the graph shows that 59 (35.8%) of the respondents reported that their children view television for less than thirty minutes during school days, while 66 (40%) of the children view television only for less than one hour.



Figure 4.5: Children Television Viewing Hours on Weekend days

The figure 4.5 displays that 69 (41.8%) children view television for more than two hours during weekend days. 42 (25.5%) children view television for 1hr - 1:30min. In addition, the graph shows that 36 (21.8%) of the respondents reported that their children view television for less than one hour weekend days, while 18 (10.9%) of the children view television only for less than thirty minutes.

Table 4.6: Children’s television program in order of preference

Preferred Television Program	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Cartoon	32	19.4
Drama	14	8.5

Movies	26	15.8
Educational Programmes	19	11.5
Reality Shows	56	33.9
Sports	18	10.9

In table 4.6 parents were asked to report their children's preferred programs. Accordingly, the data revealed that 56 (33.9%) of the respondents reported to their children preferring to watch reality shows while 32 (19.4%) chose to watch cartoon programs, 26 (15.8%) chose movies as their children's favorite television program and they choose educational programs 19 (11.5%) respectively. Moreover, the data also revealed that Sports 18 (10.9) and drama 14 (8.5) were the children's least choice.

4.7 Parental Television Mediation Practice Strategies:

The second objective of the study was to identify the parental mediation strategy among children while they are watching television. The 15-item scale assessed the level and kind of parental mediation by collecting a variety of mediation questions into three 5-item subscales of mediation: active mediation, restricted mediation, and co-viewing mediation. Minimum and maximum scores for each sub-scale were five and twenty, respectively.

Table 4.7: Frequency of Parental Television Mediation Strategies

Mediation Strategy	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Active Mediation	52	31.5
Restricted Mediation	27	16.4
Co-Viewing Mediation	86	52.1

It is shown in Table 4.7 that parents most regularly use co-viewing mediation style 86 (52.1%), followed by active 52 (31.5%) and restrictive mediation 27 (16.4%). The results showed that covieing mediation is most commonly used in government schools, followed by restrictive mediation and active mediation, while private school parents reported that active mediation is most frequently used, followed by restrictive mediation and co-viewing mediation equally.

5. Conclusion:

With reference to the primary themes of the research questions and the body of existing literature, an attempt will be made to interpret and draw meaning from the major findings of the current study in this section. The main purpose of this study was to find the children television viewing of reality shows and parental mediation strategies among children. The major findings are listed below:

The related literature which is study of the media use of children aged 5 to 10 finds that these very young children live in media- saturated environment and spend two hours daily in front of a screen on average. (Van dewater, et al. 2005) This study revealed the amount of hours children spend on TV, on both school days and weekends. According to parent's report that demonstrates that 18 (10.9%) children view television for more than two hours during school days. 22 (13.3%) children view television for one hour and thirty minutes. In addition, the graph shows that 59 (35.8%) of the respondents reported that their children view television for less than thirty minutes during school days, while 66 (40%) of the children view television only for less than one hour. So it is found that children watch television even during their school days.

Moreover in this study it was also found that 69 (41.8%) children view television for more than two hours during weekend days. 42 (25.5%) children view television for 1hr - 1:30min. In addition, the graph shows that 36 (21.8%) of the respondents reported that their children view television for less than one hour weekend days, while 18 (10.9%) of the children view television only for less than thirty minutes. The results has provided that children view television more on weekend and watch less on their school day. Majority of the children watch reality shows 56 (33.9%) which accounts for two hours a day during weekends.

This study also aimed to find out the kind of parental mediation strategies followed among the children. The results shows that parents most regularly use co-viewing mediation style 86 (52.1%) while watching reality shows, followed by active 52 (31.5%) and restrictive mediation 27 (16.4%). From this finding it is evident that either of the parents, mother or father co-view with their children while they watch reality shows in order to monitor the content they watch and sometimes they also educate their children on the viewing behavior. Followed by active mediation is indulged in household where either of the parent is staying in the home with the children. In the other side restrictive mediation strategy on television viewing is not possible by the parent because the children of today don't adhere to their parents words. So either of the parents could not take control over them.

The study concludes parents are instructed to pay more attention to the content children watch, and skeptical of their children than to anything they own. Whether they watch reality shows or any kind of content on television, parental mediation is required so that the media consumption goes in a right intended manner.

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